



ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

01

Perspectives from Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the perspectives of Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela on the potential emergency of a pan-Atlantic system of relations beyond the North-North alliance and North South dependency. Interviews were conducted with specialists from various sectors in each of the aforementioned countries. We found a consensus on the perspective that increasing political and economic links between South America and Africa are being established. The increase in Chinese investments in South America and Africa is considered to be determinant to the on-going political and economic transformations taking place in the Atlantic basin. The role of EU is considered relevant, seen as a potential mediator and an actor able to somewhat balance US influence as well as Chinese presence in South America and Africa. Overall, a pan-Atlantic system of relations is not considered to be taking shape. All point out to the (political, social, economic, cultural...) differences found in the South Atlantic itself, as well as in relation to the North. The present findings should be considered by the EU when designing its external policies and initiatives involving Southern countries. It is our assessment that any venture

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ATLANTIC FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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1. Introduction¹

This paper is part of a group of studies aimed at analysing the differing perspectives in the Atlantic Basin region with regard to the potential emergence of a pan Atlantic system of relations. The paper must be seen within the context of the Atlantic Future project, which looks at rationales of cooperation in the Atlantic and, on this basis, advises the EU on how to strategically engage with the wider transatlantic relationship whilst acknowledging the ongoing redistribution of power.

With this underlying objective in mind, field research was carried out in the form of interviews in Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil between October 2014 and January 2015. The study incorporates responses from a total of 59 interviews. All those partaking in the study were presented with the same questionnaire vide containing a first section matching the expertise of the respondents (resources and environment; economy and finance; security; and people and institutions) and a general second section.

Recognizing the importance of acquiring a range of different perspectives, the exercise involved non-governmental organizations, academics, private sector representatives, trade unions, diplomats as well as political decision makers.

The purpose of these interviews was to collect information on the basis of which we could draw qualitative and, to a certain extent, quantitative conclusions with respect to the convergence and or divergence in norms and values across the Atlantic space, as well as to gauge the cooperation interests of the regions stakeholders. Moreover, an attempt was made to identify the overall perception to various specific changes and challenges in each of the thematic areas as well as risks and opportunities for Atlantic regional development. As with any study based on a small sample of experts, when reading the findings presented here, one should bear in mind that the data reflect the opinion of only 59 individuals and therefore do not necessarily represent a widely held consensus.

The paper is divided into four main sections, corresponding to each of the three countries analysed and the final remarks. Each one of these sections is further divided into sub-sections. The first provides an outline of the main trends, changes and continuities as well as risks and opportunities according to the each specific thematic area. In the second sub-section we identify the existence of convergent or divergent norms and values in the Atlantic space, as well as the potential for increased cooperation and regionalism. In addition, we look at potential cooperation scenarios in the region as well as prospective interregional initiatives. Key regional actors are considered and an analysis regarding how the EU can rethink its relations with emerging powers in the wider Atlantic space is developed. Finally, on the basis of the different perspectives observed during the interviews, we present some reflections regarding the possibility of a new pan-Atlantic system of relations emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and North-South dependency.

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2. Argentina²

2.1. Trends, changes and continuities

2.1.1. Economy and Finance

Argentinian experts working with the economy and finance sector generally consider that, over the last few years, the internal political and economic context of Argentina has not favoured a wider Atlantic agenda. Argentinian internal challenges, including restructuring of the debt, issues with energy supply, and the lack of investment in shale gas extraction infrastructure, are prioritised in these experts' agendas over the possibility of working towards Atlantic cooperation.

In what concerns the main economic and financial changes in the Atlantic basin, the interviewees considered that the topics raised by the project³ are not all equally relevant to the region.

The topics *negotiation of new free trade agreements* and *growth of trade and investment flows* were largely identified as the main drivers for change in the Atlantic (see figure 1 of the Annex section). In this regard, the ongoing negotiations of trade agreements with different geographic focus are seen as potential obstacles to the cohesion and relevance of this wider Atlantic area – as is the case of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) - and to North-South Atlantic relations – as in the case of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). On the other hand, it is considered that if the on-going negotiations between MERCOSUL and EU reach an agreement, this could have a positive impact on the development of further relations.

Trade and investments flows for Argentina are generally considered to be dependent on the world trade and economic order, in which Europe and US have been facing several trials. Conversely, China's economic power is considered to be increasingly attractive to many players in the Atlantic. "Emerging economies in the Atlantic that strengthened their ties with China benefitted from this increased relevance at an economic level", describes an expert from Argentina. The view of many Argentinian experts, over the next 10 years, is that the Asia-Pacific region is going to expand its influence, to a greater extent than that of Europe. Such idea is consistently met with resistance and concern. Experts highlighted that, at present, China is importing natural resources from South America to such an extent that it is discouraging these countries to invest in the production of value-added goods.

2.1.2 Security

From Argentina's perspective, the world international security context and the Atlantic basin developments over the last 20 years cannot be considered without looking at the repercussions of September 11th at the policy level. South American countries are no longer the security focus of North America, which has been reinforcing its security focus towards Middle East region. Moreover, while terrorism, under current classification standards, is not considered an issue which impacts security in the Latin America region, after the September 11th attacks there were institutional abuses regarding the use of force and violations of pre-established Human Rights standards in several Atlantic countries, as a result of anti-terrorist policies. The US surveillance program has been causing political tension between the US and several South American countries. Moreover, South American countries specifically, in

² In Argentina, there were a total of 21 interviewees, including 8 from the *economy and finance* thematic area, 2 from *people and institutions*, 7 from *resources and environment*, and 4 from *security*.

³ Negotiation of new free trade agreements, growth of trade and investment flows, new transport routes, construction of new infrastructure.

recent years, have seen an increase in violence from the government against its people, including by militarized police forces in some countries.

Argentinian experts from the security field recognise that increasing relevance has been given to the Atlantic South, which in turn led to increased political will to exercise influence (commercial and security related). Africa gained relevance at the regional and international level due to the conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Arab Spring in North Africa, and by the consequent regional impacts of such events. In addition, experts believe that the discovery of new oil reserves in the South Atlantic brought regional relevance to players such as Brazil and Argentina.

Specifically, at the Atlantic security level, (see figure 3 in the Annex section), there is an emphatic concern with the issue of “*illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans*”, classified as the most important security regional challenge in the Atlantic. It is described as highly profitable phenomenon, linking developed and developing countries in the Atlantic basin through complex criminal networks.

Mostly, it is believed that the topics *illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans, fragile states and maritime security* are deeply related. As the Atlantic basin countries’ capacity to secure its maritime borders against illegal activities influences not only the internal security context of the each country but also the security status of the region.

2.1.3. Resources and Environment

It is possible to follow a similar thread, focusing on the preservation of the region’s natural resources, in the discourse of all the experts interviewed. The preservation of coastal natural resources and marine flora and fauna, and the acceptance of some responsibility in preserving Antarctica are very relevant topics for the Argentinian experts working in both the public and private sectors.

Moreover, concerning the wider Atlantic context, the perception of the interviewees from Argentina is that much has changed over the last twenty years, particularly in the area of resources and environment.

The discovery of new reserves of oil in the South Atlantic brought regional relevance to players such as Brazil, Argentina and Angola. On the other hand, it is perceived that Europe, which previously was in a path to growth, with many investments in the vanguard of the striving for environmental sustainability, has become politically and economically indifferent to these issues as a result of the economic crisis. The US also is generally considered to have lost relevance, relatively speaking, with regard to environmental and climatic issues, observed both at the level of financial investment in resources and environment sector and at the level of development of related ideas and policies.

Largely, it is considered that over the last decade the transformation of the energy sector has contributed heavily to the development of new political and economic relations in the Atlantic basin. This perspective is consistent among the interviewees (see figure 2 of the Annex section).

Still within the topic of energy resources, for Argentina there is much to be done in terms of maritime studies, such as maritime border delimitation with regard to continental shelf limits, and the exploitation of energy resources. Moreover, the need to find a point of understanding with the UK in terms of the exploitation of the hydrocarbon basin is an important priority for the country.

Argentinian experts consider that the evolution of energy transfers within the Atlantic represents a key opportunity for the development of the Atlantic region, due to the

complementarity element between the Atlantic sub-regions, South America, Central America, Africa, Europe and North America. Finally bearing in mind the structural vulnerability of many South American communities, adapting to mitigate the effects of climate change is also of central importance.

2.1.4. People and Institutions

The historic, political and social experience of Argentina has contributed heavily to define the protection of Human Rights and democracy as core values in Argentinian internal policy. Such values have also been applied to the international policy agenda of this country.

Accordingly, the Argentinian experts interviewed unanimously considered that the topics *respect for human rights* and the state of democracy are the most relevant challenges within the main trends in the Atlantic basin region (see figure 4 in the Annex section).

The ongoing context of massive human rights violations in several African countries represents an important regional concern, not only due to the impact of these events on the social and institutional structure of these societies, but also due to the consequences these have in the security context regionally. Furthermore, many interviewees mentioned the setbacks on democratic values in several South American countries such as Argentina Venezuela and Brazil. The deficit of democracy is also pointed at the international decision-making bodies, which are considered not to be an effective representation of the international community.

The topics *diplomatic exchanges* and *migration trends* are considered secondary for Argentinian people and institutions experts.

In our interviews, we observed that the diplomatic relations towards the Atlantic are perceived as relations with two different blocs, North and South. Both are composed by diverse political and social challenges and opportunities for Argentina. At present, at the institutional level Argentina has been investing in new diplomatic representations in South American and African countries, as a consequence of converging political and economic interests with several of these south Atlantic countries. The relevance given to the topic *diplomatic representation* to the ongoing transformation of the Atlantic basin is well supported by the Argentinian political investment on new diplomatic representations.

2.2. Convergence and divergence in norms and values

There is a consensus among the Argentina experts that South America does not share a unique set of norms and values. For this reason, it is difficult to compare norms and values from South America with other Atlantic sub-regions when those norms are not consolidated within South America. Brazil and Argentina have major cultural, ideological, social and normative differences from Chile, Peru and Colombia and these must to be given their due consideration.

Overall, it is perceived that South America may have more in common in terms of values and norms with the European continent. The regional economic integration process of the EU is considered to have strongly influenced the strategic vision of South America. Moreover, the political, social and economic concepts of development, the free market and social policies applied in South American countries are considered a reflection of very strong cultural linkages with Europe.

The interviewees identify common norms and values between several Atlantic sub-regions such as the democratization of human rights, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and principles of the United Nations Charter. However, with regard to Africa, it is believed that the process of recognition of norms and values within the wider context of developing economic, political and internal social structures is still underway.

It is generally believed that there are norms and values shared across the Atlantic; however, they do not recognize a pattern in the Atlantic as a whole.

Moreover, we identified the perception of growing ideological division between the hemispheres, where Europe and North America are believed to be politically and economically closer than other sub-regions in the Atlantic. There are Atlantic basin countries, which consider that more open economies will enhance further development, while others favour more protectionist economic policies. On the other hand, the political and social shared experience of several south Atlantic countries, as a result of the colonization experience, draws a common thread through the regions. Several experts recognize that in Latin America there is an ongoing political and economic construction towards the South-South dialogue, aiming to integrate the Atlantic space as a square. In this regard, the creation of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZPCAS) is considered an important development at the political cooperation level.

We conclude that, bearing in mind the presented perspective of convergence and divergence in norms and values in the Atlantic, interregional cooperation initiatives in the future will strongly be influenced by this ideological and economic divided perception.

2.3. Prospects of cooperation

The idea of further cooperation initiatives in different sectors between countries in the Atlantic basin is considered very positive for the South Atlantic development. However, according to Argentinean officials, making it a reality is not as evident or as simple as it could be anticipated.

The interviewees generally share the perception that there are several regional challenges that would benefit from regional cooperation. Maritime security issues and energy matters are two of these fields. Confirming the ranking information given in the figures 3 and 4 (see the Annex section), interviewees agreed, for instance, that it would be important to create a common energy strategy to promote the sustainable development of the Atlantic basin and assure profitable negotiations with external actors. Moreover those international criminal networks linked to trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans demand and international integrated response.

Additionally, at the economic and political level, the increasing role of China in the region is often cited as an opportunity for greater cooperation between the Atlantic countries. This apparently contradictory assertion illustrates the deep reservations held by many of the respondents over the long-term effect of Chinese influence in both Africa and Latin America. In particular, there is discomfort over the extent of natural resource extraction, which satisfies Chinese demand for raw materials but adds minimal value locally, and over the influx of cheap manufactured products undermining domestic industry. The perception that such a state of affairs is not sustainable in the longer term is seen as a positive motivation for greater Atlantic cooperation.

However, it is doubtful that the drivers mentioned above can outlast the existing political social and economic obstacles.

Firstly and more importantly, Argentina sees a deficit of understanding of the main objectives and interests of different players in the region, which contributes to lack of political will for further cooperation in several fields and ultimately to the absence of effective political and diplomatic initiatives with a wider scope. The perception is that Europe and North America do not understand the historical social and political experiences of several South American and African countries.

In addition, the asymmetry between different regional players often hinders the construction of a common regional agenda. In general, there is the perception that different levels of

development are reflected in the effectiveness of their internal and external policies. Additionally, these differences are likely to affect the results of the negotiations, such as the example given by the difficulties in negotiating trade agreements with African countries.

The internal political, economic and social context of Argentina is also perceived as an obstacle for further participation in other partnerships. Due to the high level of inflation, for example, it is not possible to achieve price stability; small businesses also face long delays when attempting to export, on top of the existent export taxes in almost every sector. Difficulties are also faced when importing. In addition, there is a perception of significant degradation of Argentinian academic and political institutions in recent years.

The latent political and diplomatic tension between Argentina and the British government's positions towards the Malvinas / Falkland Islands adds tension to the North-South context. As a consequence, the Argentinian diplomatic representative highlighted that third party position on this matter ultimately influences the environment in which negotiations with third parties takes place.

We conclude that, in terms of prospects for cooperation, all of the interviewees expect more cooperation in the Atlantic region but then again this is considered to be largely dependent on the development of projects within the south-south sphere.

2.4. Regional actors and interregional initiatives

From the graphic presented below, it is possible to gauge that Argentina's main focus regarding key regional players capable of increasing their interregional links and gaining weight in global affairs lies mainly with the South Atlantic actors. The interviewees highlighted the role of Brazil, Argentina, MERCOSUL, US, USAN and the private sector as the main actors capable of playing a role in the Atlantic.

On the other hand, it is perceived that the main decision-making power on global issues lies with the US and the EU and that nothing is being done to reverse this system and include the rest of the region in the decision-making process.

We observed a great resistance to the influence or domination from Northern actors in the South Atlantic region. As one interviewee stated, "It's hard to think of the Atlantic with the United States in it".

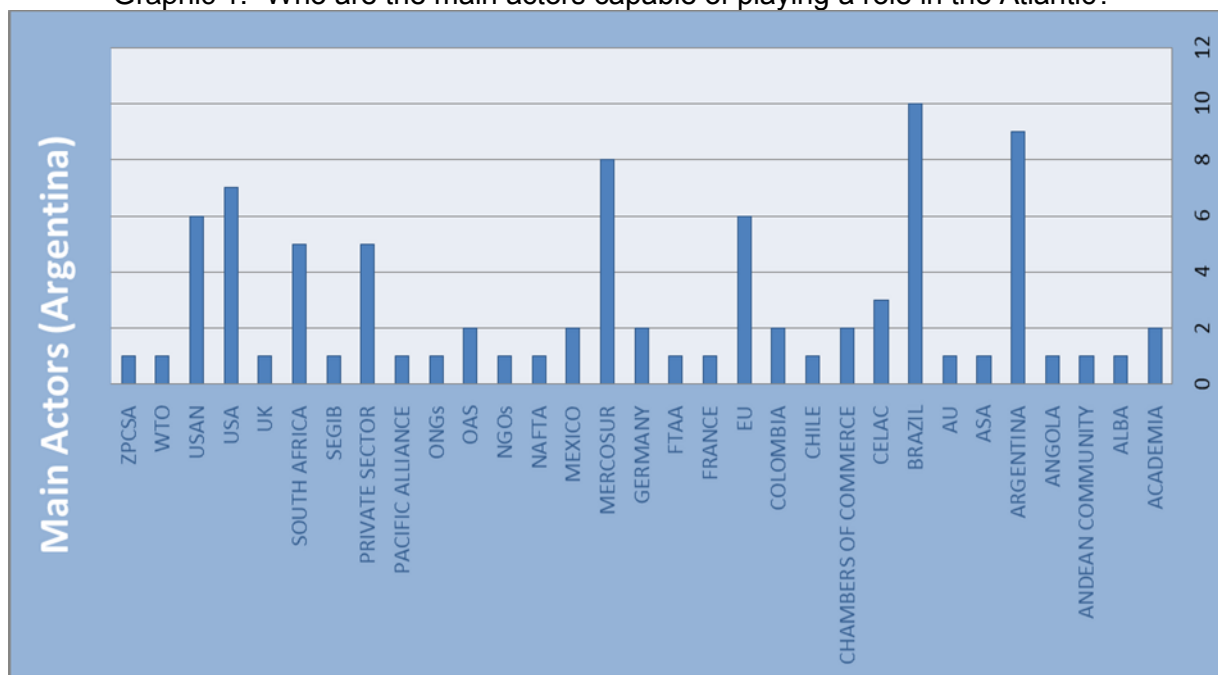
However, in terms of interregional initiatives, a political or trade agreement between South America and Europe is more likely than with North America. It is expected, for instance, that once an agreement has been reached between MERCOSUL and EU in the proposed treaty, there will be more converging interests between these regions, and consequently more interregional initiatives. Contrariwise, there is a clear resistance to the ongoing TTIP negotiations and to the impacts of this in the south Atlantic. "Will the TTIP be an economic NATO that will jeopardize this South-South cooperation?" asked one respondent.

We conclude that for Argentina there have not been considerable changes with regards to key regional actors, capable of playing a role on the political level in the region. However, there is an increasing expectation that actors in the South hemisphere take a more prominent role on regional and international issues in different fields, contributing to an effective redistribution of power.

Finally, in terms of the prospective interregional initiatives on the wider Atlantic context there is a consistent perception of lack of political will, due to not only different interests but also to the lack of strategic thinking about the wider Atlantic region. First, while there are converging interests, for instance, between Southern Atlantic countries, as well as between the Northern Atlantic countries, these, however, are not necessarily Atlantic interests across the entire region. Secondly, it is perceived that the key players in the Atlantic are looking for the best

opportunities but from uncoordinated perspectives. “There are countries looking towards the Pacific and others towards the Atlantic”.

Graphic 1: “Who are the main actors capable of playing a role in the Atlantic?”



2.4.1 The Role of EU

The political construction of the EU is generally considered very positive, fostering and supporting the promotion of civil rights and democratic policies in South America. The experience of regional cooperation and political integration of the EU is considered a positive influence for the development of political and economic structures in South America. Moreover, the EU represents a reference to the region due to, for instance, the development of sustainable policies as well as the innovation capacity of the private sector.

We observed that Argentinians attribute an overall interesting role to the EU as an important mediator, an actor capable of balancing the influence of key players in the region. This was mentioned for the case of US influence in South America and Chinese increasing presence in the South Atlantic region.

However, there is a group of experts, which believes that over recent years there has been a loss of relative influence of EU in South America. Experts working in the security field, for instance, explain that the EU has lost its relevance in South America due to a shift from the institutional and political relationship towards and economic and trading one.

The internal asymmetries of the EU countries are questioned, and principally how these asymmetries will influence its initiatives in the wider Atlantic. The negative impact of a potential TTIP agreement on the context of the current EU economic and social model is also observed. Many commented on the subject of a non-existing effective economic diplomacy that represents more than the lobbying interests of some European countries. We perceived a strong opinion over the fact that the existing interregional cooperation initiatives are not under the EU's responsibility but rather comprise initiatives of European countries in the region, acting independently.

This leads us to question how the EU can rethink its relations with emerging powers in the wider Atlantic space. It would be important for the EU to garner a greater insight into the political and historical background, as well as on South America and the Atlantic basin economic matters.

There is a full understanding that cooperation is structured from the perspective of the donor, not necessarily approaching the reality as seen from the context of the receiver, and that the end result may be more effective if the format of cooperation between regions were more flexible.

In addition, it is mentioned by more than one respondent that the EU should put an end to its double standard and become more open, allowing other regional actors to introduce their products in international markets. Developing countries have difficulty in being competitive, due to the subsidies given to European economies, such as the existing Common Agriculture Policy. As a consequence the EU's action could be more influential in the South America by reducing the protectionist measures at the agricultural level.

2.6. Conclusions

While Europe and North America have been the most relevant regions to Argentina, this relevance has been decreasing to some extent due to the emergence of Asia-Pacific relations. In this regard, even though Europe and North America are perceived to have maintained their significance, in particular with regard to technology and innovation, the growth of China's relevance cannot be disregarded. Indeed, Chinese investments in several productive sectors in South America and Africa have allowed economic growth (at different levels) of several countries.

In addition, an increasing political ideology and consequent diplomatic line which seeks to further develop existing ties between South America and Africa can be witnessed. This ideology may be partially explained by feelings of shared historical colonial past and the present need to develop. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the private sector is more concerned with the immediate/domestic problems they face due to the crisis. They expressed a pragmatic point of view and stated that these domestic issues should be dealt with before an outward-looking strategy could be developed.

Therefore, we may conclude the overall perspective is that a pan-Atlantic space is not taking shape. Experts believe that the North-South division is still very strong in Argentina's convictions – perhaps a result of current government policies. In any event, Argentinians see the North and South Atlantic as two very different regions, with sometimes divergent policy perspectives, and are sceptical that such a wide Atlantic space could come to exist in the foreseeable future.

3. Brazil⁴

3.1. Trends, changes and continuities

3.1.1. Economy and Finance

There is a consensus regarding an important shift in the field of economy and finance in the Atlantic over the last decade. In fact, all the sub-regions of the Atlantic - North America, Europe, Africa, South America the Caribbean - are believed to have faced a relative decline in importance as a result of the growth of the Asia-Pacific region. In this sense, it seems to be widely accepted that interactions in the Atlantic cannot be studied without considering Chinese presence. Africa, for instance, is often described as a region which has benefited from the development of economic and political relations not only with the Southern hemisphere but also from Chinese foreign investment and cooperation initiatives.

As a consequence *international trade and investment flows* are seen as particularly relevant topic to the development of further relations between economies, (see figure 6 in the Annex section). As a consequence many commented on the potential of this topic to the creating of further relations between private and public sectors of different Atlantic basin countries. The economic growth experienced by Brazil over the last decade, which brought about an increase of foreign investments in Brazil and the internationalisation of large Brazilian companies much contributes to this perspective. The activities of Brazilian companies in Africa, for example, may be mentioned as an example of the private sector opening channels for more political cooperation.

Also, it is general belief that international agreements would strongly contribute to the establishment of a more integrated Atlantic region. In spite of the lack of success of the EU MERCOSUL treaty, Brazil still sees this type of initiative as central to strengthen north-south Atlantic interests. However, negotiations and the actual treaties should ensure that southern Atlantic countries' interest are also realised.

Lastly the main trend regarding the *construction of new infrastructure and new transport routes* in the Atlantic are generally described as very dependent on the growth of trade and investment flows which, according to the general perspective, will most likely take place between within South American countries and African countries.

3.1.2. Security

Views regarding regional security are that, although security threats are placed in certain parts of the Atlantic region, they have a regional bearing. For example, drugs, weapons and humans trafficking in Northern Africa has a clear impact in the Atlantic basin. The way these issues relate to other illegal activities, often subsidising them, makes illicit trafficking a pressing concern to both developed and developing countries.

Some respondents took issue with the very use of the term of "fragile states", which is seen as a tendentious concept created by the North.⁵ Yet it is recognized that there are some African countries with less developed political, economic and security institutions. Besides facilitating illegal activities, such weak institutions make it more difficult to respond to local threats - which may potentially become a regional or even international threat. The Ebola epidemic is an example of this.

⁴ There were a total of 20 experts interviewed in Brazil, among which eight economy and finance specialists, five people and institutions specialists, four resource and environment specialists, and three security specialists.

⁵ It is interesting to notice that this kind of "resentment" towards the North appeared in several occasions in the three countries analysed.

There is a wide perception in Brazil that there exist important opportunities for north-south and south-south Atlantic cooperation, especially in the area of maritime security, which is considered a core issue for regional cooperation. Brazil perceives instability in Africa as a potentially national security threat, particularly after the discovery of the 'pre-salt' reservoir. In addition, the emergence of several South Atlantic actors such as Nigeria, Angola, Argentina and Venezuela have contributed to increasing security concerns about the South Atlantic.

Another recurrent point on the interviews was the controversy of interventions in the internal affairs of States on the basis of human rights violations. This was repeatedly pointed out as a divisive factor between the North and South.

An important issue in other parts of the Atlantic, terrorism is seen by Brazilian experts as somewhat irrelevant to South America and Brazil in particular (see figure 7 in the Annex section). However, they acknowledge the international implications of the terrorist threat and the fight against it, and consequential impacts to South America.

3.1.3. Resources and environment

Brazilian experts believe that North America and Europe have a very important role in shaping environmental policies and related international law. They also have had an important contribution to the development of technologies allowing a more efficient use of natural resources.

However, it is generally accepted that the virtual monopoly on resources and environmental matters is shifting in the last 10 years, and African and South America countries are gaining considerable relevance. Their natural resource capacity, renewable energy potential, and recent foreign investments make these countries key regional actors in the Atlantic.

Considering the recent developments in Brazil, it is not surprising that the 'transformation of the energy sector' is seen as the most relevant topic to be addressed on interregional cooperation initiatives (see figure 8 in the Annex section).

The strategy of using energy as a means to promote regional inclusion and cooperation is mentioned by many as the most effective. Brazilian respondents from the private sector consider the transformation of the energy sector as essential to the development of the South American region and therefore, constant investment is necessary in order to develop this activity and role within the energy mix in a sustainable and competitive manner. Moreover as a result of the impacts of climate change, which have already been felt at several levels in all regions of the world, there is a greater investment in transforming the energy sector. A change in the policies of global subsidies that currently support the exploitation of fossil fuels is considered necessary; simultaneously, an increase in the subsidies to sustainable energy technologies is considered essential.

Additional challenges from those suggested by the project are perceived, such as deforestation and China's potential for increased consumption and its incalculable environmental global impacts. The impact of subsidies given by the international community to fishing fleets, which over exploit common resources, has the seas is also of great importance.

3.1.4. People and Institutions

Brazilian experts have the view that a multi-polar world is taking shape, where North America and Europe are no longer the distribution centre of power.

It is generally accepted that southern Atlantic countries are gaining international relevance and, consequently new political and economic interests are emerging in international organizations. New sub-regional organizations are being created, such as UNASUL and

CELAC, to a certain extent mitigating the unbalance between South and North. As a reflection of this perception, much relevance is given to *diplomatic exchanges*, which is seen as one of the main changes in the Atlantic basin. It should be noted, however, that four out of the five experts interviewed were Brazilian diplomats.

Additionally, the *respect for human rights* is perceived as an important challenge to the development of several Atlantic countries. In this regard, it is possible to draw a clear division between North and South Atlantic based on several instances of significant human rights violations. Although these issues represent a greater challenge to South America and Africa than to the North Atlantic societies, their regional impacts should not be downplayed. An evident example of how human rights violations in one region may have an impact in other regions is the current migration challenges faced by southern European countries and the EU.

The state of democracy represents a central political concern for Brazil, not only domestically but also at international level. Domestically, there are states both in South America and Africa with major issues concerning democracy, the rule of law and institutions. Internationally, there is a manifest concern with regard to the representation of states in global decision making forums, such as the UN Security Council. “To what extent are people represented in these institutions of international order today?”, “Where is the principle of equality of states represented?”, “How is it that such important issues, and with so much impact in countries outside of these decision-making bodies, are discussed behind closed doors by five states alone?” were some of the questions raised by Brazilian experts.

Overall we may conclude that Brazil defends the democratization of international institutions in an increasingly multi-polar world. Consequently, and according to these experts, the emerging discussion of the Atlantic wider relations must be kept under a multilateral perspective where north and south countries’ interests and agendas are properly recognized.

3.2. Convergence and divergence in norms and values

South America as a region is described as having different influences as well as political and historical experiences with common linkages with almost every other Atlantic sub-region. Experts noted that one cannot dissociate South American culture and values from its historic construction: the European colonization, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution.

Experts from all areas perceived South America as a very complex region in terms of the composition of norms and values. Generally, they observe that Argentina and Uruguay have much in common with Europe, whereas Brazil, Colombia and Cuba also share cultural norms and values with Africa.

Europe and North America are considered to be influenced by Greek and Latin culture, intrinsically linked to Christianity. As a result of the historical links (colonisation, migration, cultural, economic, ideological influence...) of both regions to South America, their political and social institutions had a deep influence on the institutional development of southern countries. It is generally believed that the values and norms most shared are related to the social, political and economic ideology; equality and fraternity, representative democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms. The organisation of government the pattern of consumption, the defence of labour rights and laws, as well as welfare states were the most cited commonalities in the Atlantic region.

However there are those who believe that the existing controversial norms and values, although key to the region’s political and economic development, also contribute toward a North South divide making it almost impossible to find a common Atlantic vision. We conclude that differing experiences alongside the social political and economic constructions of these sub-Atlantic regions display controversial political and ideological perspectives.

Portuguese and Spanish colonization of Latin America introduced certain religious values (values concerning morality and family, the role of woman in society, sexuality, among others) into South American's own set of values. At present, issues related to these value standards tend to be more predominant in Latin American and African societies than in North Atlantic societies.

Several experts also pointed out to more recent cultural and political links which are currently being constructed between Africa and South America, which is normally referred to as "regional Atlanticism".

We note that even the concept of a *wider Atlantic system* of relations caused considerable controversy among the experts interviewed. Some of them understood that the project used an artificially produced concept, which in itself was a form of shaping a pre-defined view about the region.

A third perspective is added in which this division is not only characterized by values and norms, but by the North (center), a richer South (semi-periphery) and a poorer South (periphery). The North-South divide, more than geographic delimitation, is perceived as the relation between more and less developed countries. It is suggested that the relations between Atlantic countries themselves need to be addressed in blocks. The USA and Europe share a more a developed context and in this case, reinforces the North-South divide.

We conclude that for most of the Brazilian experts, the convergence in values and norms is far more relevant than the North-South divide. However, across all different fields, it is also clear that when we look at the Atlantic concept, it is instantly associated with the South Atlantic region. As a consequence, we may conclude that for the Brazilians, despite the recognition of shared values with Europe and North American countries, the identification of the Atlantic as a space is reserved to the South Atlantic region.

3.3. Prospective cooperation scenarios

The complexity of the Atlantic historical context largely affects the Brazilian perspective of governance and cooperation in the Atlantic basin. It is generally observed that each sub-Atlantic region has its own political, social and economic realities, thus, constituting different "spaces".

The cooperation initiatives between Brazil and Africa are difficult to implement due to the lack of, on the one hand, resources from Brazil and, on the other hand, proper infrastructure in Africa.

Cooperation with Europe and North America faces resistance from the South due to the perception that initiatives and the way they are implemented are imposed by the North. There exists a sentiment that the North thinks they know better, they know how to correctly address the South needs, which make countries in the South feel patronised.

The lack of progress on trade talks which could potentially liberalise international trade on sectors that would benefit southern countries (e.g. agriculture), fundamental differences between political agendas on several issues, the lack of a strategic Atlantic thinking, all contribute for the perpetuation of development asymmetries.

Also in security cooperation initiatives, one finds strong resistance from the South, being NATO's presence in the southern hemisphere the most cited concern in the area of security.

However, there are also positive perspectives for cooperation. Those highlight the complementarity between North and South Atlantic. The triangular cooperation initiatives in several fields in Africa involving Brazil and Europe are considered to be very important not only for African countries but also to Brazil.

The majority of experts believe that cooperation in the Atlantic is driven by business interests and the ongoing transformation of the energy sector. Concerns linked to climate change were also perceived as a driver for cooperation.

Moreover, the presence of external actors in the region, such as China, constitutes an important motivation for more political cooperation in the Atlantic. China is seen as a potential threat to the sustainable and effective development of the region. In particular, experts question to what extent the massive amount of Chinese investments in the region, especially in Africa, could impact - positively or negatively - the development of the region. Most of the specialists stated their concerns in this regard.

Maritime security and navigation issues occupy a central role on Brazil's consideration regarding shared concerns across the region. In this regard, experts identified the treaty of the ZPCSA (which was inspired by the Treaty on the Law of the Sea) as a potential tool for fostering cooperation in the South Atlantic. On the other hand, the existing differences of policies regarding maritime security (in particular concerning militarisation and the use of force) on the part of the North could represent an obstacle for a more integrated Atlantic. There is a clear perception that NATO would like to expand its presence to the South Atlantic, which is extremely sensitive to Brazil.

Finally, in the case of Brazil, the Atlantic links are normally based on existing political and economic ties rather than purely on geography. Perhaps, rather than trying to forge a link based solely on the fact that countries share the same ocean, we should look for existing ties in the Atlantic basin, in particular the ones involving private entities, and ways to strengthen them.

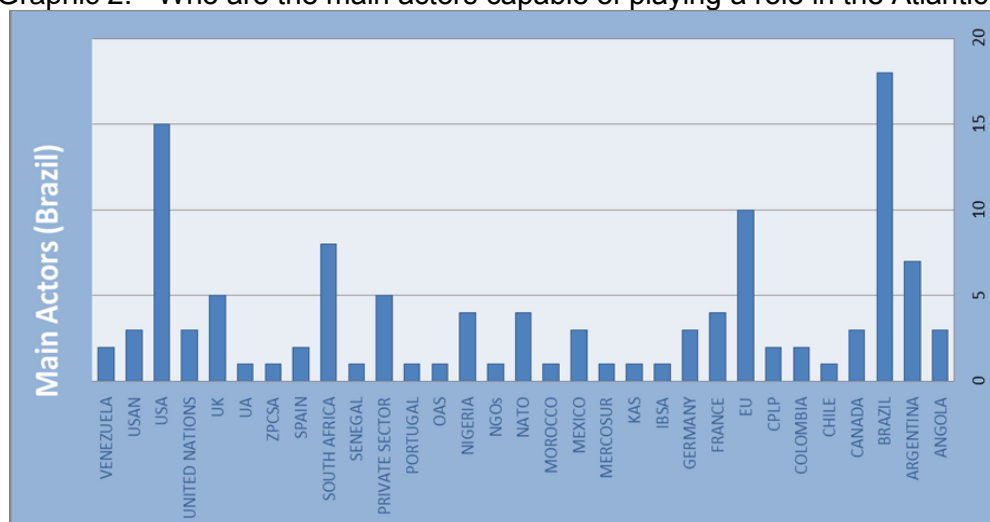
3.4. Regional actors and interregional initiatives

In Brazil, more than in Argentina, there is a clear change in the perception of north-south dependency, mostly motivated by the emergency of several southern countries (in particular the BRICS) on the global scene. The experts agree that there are common concerns involving the countries of the Atlantic basin and identify different responsibilities depending on whether reference is made to the north or south Atlantic.

Moreover a manifest concern regarding the unbalance among actors in the region was observed; "the chain has the strength of the weakest link", an interviewee stated. Many comment that if we are studying the future of the Atlantic space relations not only the actors capable of playing a positive role should be identified, but also the ones which need further social and economic support.

The main regional actors which were considered by Brazilian experts as capable of contributing to the development of the Atlantic basin are ranked in Graphic 2 below.

Graphic 2: “Who are the main actors capable of playing a role in the Atlantic?”



As it can be observed, Brazil and the US are the actors mentioned most often by the experts, followed by the EU and South Africa. One may conclude that, to Brazilian experts, the North-South dependency has changed, given that there are an equal number of key players in both hemispheres mentioned as capable of playing a role in the Atlantic basin. There is a perception of areas of influence in which Brazil and South Africa play a role as key actors in the South Atlantic while the EU and US retain their influence in the North Atlantic. This perspective was consistent among the interviewees.

It is believed that the main actors in the region have similar goals, sustainable development, prosperous relations and political stability in the region. However, each of them has different interests and its own agenda, which most of the time conflicts to other countries' interests. The ongoing Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations between EU and US, is an important example which characterizes this view. It is believed that the TTIP do not contribute to the development of a pan-Atlantic space. In fact, the TTIP negotiation is considered to undermine the regional agenda and to be a threat to the very development of South Atlantic countries – in so far that the south would be excluded. Furthermore, the TTIP, if concluded, could negatively affect EU relations with the remainder of countries in the wider Atlantic space.

When compared to other emerging regional spaces, such as the Asia-Pacific region, Brazilian experts note that the “wide Atlantic” is far from being a reality. The Asia-Pacific is perceived as a result of the technological revolution (with a strong educational base) and of the construction of global value chains interconnecting its productive sectors. This scenario is far to be applicable to the Atlantic. In fact, interviewees pointed out to the emergence of the South Atlantic and the persistence of the north-south split.

3.4.1 The Role of EU

Views over the EU role in South America largely differ among the experts. Some saw the EU as a crucial regional partner, who plays a major role not only in economic terms but also in promoting democratic values and the respect for Human Rights. Others believed that the role of EU as a single political and economic actor (as opposed to the role of its Member countries individually) has little relevance in the region. Spain and Portugal are historically linked with South American countries. Recently, Germany and France have been very active, not only with direct investments but also developing cooperation initiatives in fields such as sustainable development, nuclear energy and defence technologies, as well as education and academic exchange programmes. These experts are somewhat sceptical about the EU's

capacity to unify its policies, in particular with regard to foreign policy and defence strategy, which explain the view that individual countries are more influential than the EU itself.

The desirability of an increased “presence” of the EU in the region is also divided. While some were of the idea of the EU being more influential in the region is not well received, there are those who believe that the EU influence could be beneficial if the EU rethought its approach vis-à-vis South America (as well as South Atlantic) emerging powers. They pointed out that the EU could begin by investing more strongly in technology transfer and democracy promotion in particular in less developed countries. Increased financial support to the development of sustainable energy technologies was also largely mentioned. Furthering trade relations, investing in maritime transport and on a submarine cable network were also mentioned as important initiatives for the EU to advance its standing in the region. In short, Brazilian experts consider EU’s role as an investor in the region’s development the best means for a positive influence.

Finally, it is expected from the EU to play a mediator role with the north in cooperation’s initiatives. In this regard, the increasing scarcity of natural resources is seen as a potential security issue in the region, with political and economic repercussions. An active role of the EU is expected, should this threat materialise.

3.6. Conclusion

Brazil distinguishes itself as a leader in the Global South, being active in the diverse existing international initiatives, including the G-20 and the BRICS, and seeking membership in a number of exclusive decision making forums (UN Security Council, for example). Moreover, through its position as a member of important international organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Trade Organization Brazil, it attempts to occupy a key role in the South Atlantic region.

As a key player in South America and an emerging world power, Brazil’s foreign policy has generally been established on the principles of multilateralism, peaceful resolutions to international conflict, and non-intervention. Nevertheless, Brazil sees the “South Atlantic space” as an area on which it instinctively feels it shall exercise its influence.

In the last decade, Brazilian experts observe, South Atlantic countries went through of significant development, increasing the degree of effectiveness of their local, regional and national institutions. They recognized that more interregional initiatives have been taking place within the South American countries and that Brazil’s presence in Africa has broaden diplomatic links between the two continents.

Brazil identifies the Atlantic basin as a platform of opportunities for its political and economic development. However, Brazilian experts do not believe that a pan-Atlantic system of relations, one different from the North-North cooperation and North-South dependency, is emerging. Furthermore, the lack of political will and the asymmetries among the countries in the region - and the consequent multiple interests - partially explain why, in their view, a pan-Atlantic space is not likely in the foreseeable future.

Again, we underline the observed resistance to the concept of a wider Atlantic. In fact, Brazilian experts note that, on the South’s perspective, if a “system is emerging it is based on a few initiatives developed among South Atlantic actors. It should be noted, however, that, particularly in the private sector’s view, the development of trade relationships, the North Atlantic is considered equally important for the development of Brazil. Indeed, Brazilian experts consider the conclusion of the EU-MERCOSUL Agreement as an important way of projecting the two parties as key players in the region.

4. Venezuela⁶

4.1. Trends, changes and continuities

4.1.1. Economy and Finance

There seem to be two sets of opposite views in Venezuela; one which acknowledges the political crisis the country has been facing in the past years and its serious consequences on the economy, and another which believes Venezuela – as well as Central/South America - has in the past 20 years become independent from Northern influence. According to this second view, the capitalist economic models favoured by the US and EU have shown weaknesses, some going as far as saying the capitalist model has “collapsed”.

The political context is considered to lack sustainable and development objectives for the country and to promote an oil-dependent economy over the last decades. The oil prices drop in 2014 exacerbated the existing recession, increasing inflation. At the moment, the country is considered to be facing political and economic instability with serious impacts on the relations with public and private sectors of other countries.

Experts in Venezuela consider the *growth of trade and investment flows* and the *negotiation of trade agreements* as relevant for the development of further relations between the Atlantic basin economies (see figure 11 in the Annex section). However, considering Venezuela’s current political isolation, the *negotiation of new trade agreements* represents a challenge. On the other hand, *infrastructure and new transport routes* were not perceived as determinant to the development of the region.

In fact, several experts underlined that, although relevant, these four issues (which were included in the questionnaire) were not directly on their agenda and that, at the moment. They did not identify existing national or international forums effectively addressing these issues from a wider Atlantic perspective.

4.1.2. Security

Venezuela’s experts identified September 11 as the event which lifted Latin America’s relevance vis-à-vis the North, in particular the US, which turned its security concerns to the Middle East.

Drugs, weapons and humans illicit trafficking was identified as major concerns in the Atlantic security agenda (see figure 12 in the Annex section). In this regard, special concern with Central America is due, as well as Suriname and Venezuela itself. Experts stressed that instability in Venezuela is making the country increasingly propitious to these illegal activities, in particular drug traffic. An interesting view expressed by two specialists is that there should be negative propaganda with regard to drugs. Currently young people see the use of drugs as “cool”, which is an idea enforced by international cultural productions, such as movies, entering Venezuela.

The role of *fragile states* in illicit transnational activities is considered a national and regional threat. These illegal activities make national institutions weaker, impacting individual countries but also the region as a whole.

⁶ 18 interviews were held in Venezuela divided as follows: 5 economy and finance sector, 7 people and institution experts, 2 participants from the resources and environment and the remaining 4 from security.

The increasing presence of terrorist groups in Africa and the development of several illegal activities (piracy, diamonds and human trafficking, for example) places Africa at the core of security priorities for the Atlantic.

Finally, experts conclude that, although there is a clear political drive to strengthen relations between South America and Africa, in security terms, South America continues to be very dependent on the Northern hemisphere.

4.1.3. Resources and environment

The common perception amongst the experts is that the *transformation of the energy* scenario within the several sub-Atlantic regions has led to political and economic changes in the Atlantic basin. In this regard, North America has gained relative relevance due to the development of technology for the extraction of shale gas. On the other hand, the advent of deep-water oil exploration in Venezuela and Brazil and the discovery of large reserves have led to an increasing relevance of South America. The discovery of oil reserves in Africa also had a somewhat mitigating effect on a global scale. Nevertheless, energy exploration in the Americas over the next 10 years is expected to be more relevant, which is explained by the technological potential of the North and the natural resources found in the South.

Resource depletion was considered a very contentious issue by the interviewees, in particular due to its role in the development of the South. The transformation of the energy sector is very pertinent given the fact that many countries are currently seeking to invest in sustainable and efficient management of energy (see figure 13 in the Annex section).

There is a general perception that the mechanisms and policies used in South America are still very ineffective to address climate change causes and impacts. As a consequence, this issue is seen as an important topic for further cooperation initiatives in the region.

4.1.4. People and Institutions

The Venezuelan perspective is strongly dependent on the political developments in Venezuela over the last 20 years. Indeed, Hugo Chavez's election in 1998 is identified by all experts as a major shift in Venezuela's political orientation, which had consequences not only in national but also in international policies. Having said that, we underline that experts expressed very different understandings of the country's political, social and economic realities.

At an internal level, there have been very important social and political developments since Chavez got elected. At the international level, Chavez was able to project Venezuela by joining OPEC. Chavez's refusal to negotiate the FTAA was also mentioned as an important development for Venezuela's position on the international stage. Regionally, these experts identified that a group of progressive governments is emerging. These countries first look at their own challenges and opportunities and, based on their local and regional interest, look to redefine their position in the world. Besides, these countries, among which Venezuela, believed that the current international system is not capable of responding effectively to the emerging world challenges. Moreover, this group is critical of certain regional/international organizations, such as the United Nations Security Council, for lacking international representation, and the Organization of American States, which in their view support US influence in the region, not following the realisation of the objectives for which it was originally created.

The second perspective considers that Venezuelan foreign policy has suffered important negative developments in the last years, in a rupture of previous policy positions. Foreign

affairs services are considered corrupted and decadent, and the identification with the political ideology in force is a *sine qua non* condition to performing any diplomatic function.

The perception of these interviewees is that Venezuela relations with the countries of Central America have significantly increased at the political and economic level, as a result of an "oil diplomacy" context, in other words, the relations of Venezuela are relations of dependence on this commodity. The commercial agreements signed between Central American countries and Venezuela are described as part of this game of interests. With Brazil there is an economic and ideological connection (especially during the Lula government), which has grown stronger in recent years. The political investment of Venezuelan representation in Africa since the 80s is characterized as irrelevant in geopolitical and economic terms.

These experts consider that there has been significant and consistent disrespect of democratic values and human rights over the last 20 years. Many experts described how national democratic institutions are being undermined. They also mentioned limitations to people's freedoms and that the national political system is becoming more authoritarian and corrupted.

Interestingly, the *state of democracy* was frequently mentioned by experts from both groups, (see figure 14 in the Annex section). Several experts mentioned that the democratic institutions in several South American countries – Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil were the most cited - are deteriorating. One expert stated that "[t]hese parties come to power through democratic elections and gradually start using authoritarian policies, limiting freedom of speech and increasing the number of political prisoners." Several experts highlighted the link of the deterioration of human rights, in particular freedom of expression, and migration patterns. While Venezuela had always been on the receiving end of migrants, especially from Europe, an outward trend has been observed in the past years, which disturbing numbers of high educated young Venezuelans leaving the country. Private sector groups, which high investment capacities, are also exiting the country.

On the other hand, the other group's concerns with democracy and democratic representation refer to international decision making bodies and how developing countries are not adequately represented therein.

4.2. Convergence and divergence in norms and values

Opinions regarding the existence of convergent norms and values in the Atlantic are much divided in Venezuela. One group described important common cultural values between, for example, Portugal and Brazil, Spain and Argentina. Venezuela is thought to share values and norms with Portugal and Spain. On the other hand, there are those who believed that North America has always had a deep cultural and linguistic connection with England, which resulted in a special transatlantic Anglo-Saxon relation. Overall, experts considered that there is less communality of values with the African continent than between the other sub-regions.

Despite Venezuela's current reality, democracy is still seen as the most representative shared value within the wide Atlantic region. There is a general recognition of values such as solidarity, cooperation and peaceful resolution of disputes. In spite that, there is the perception of a new South America emerging, with its own internal identity and values.

In this regard, we may be observing the emergence of a "Southern identity", a growing political ideology which emphasises political and cultural links between southern countries and claim ownership toward regional natural resources. It defends that Southern countries work together on the social and economic challenges, through a unique regional perspective, and without external actors', that is the North's, influence.

On the basis of the above, one may conclude that, in Venezuela's perception, although some shared norms and values exist, currently the ideological North–South division is stronger and more relevant than the convergences identified.

4.3. Prospective cooperation scenarios

Considering the diverse development stages of each country, as well as the lack of political will among the different Atlantic actors, the prospect of cooperation in the Atlantic is, from Venezuela point of view, very difficult. However, experts recognised that some steps are being taken to mitigate the north-south divide in the Atlantic and promote different interregional dialogs. Such EU Regional programmes for Latin America under EU's development policy and several triangular cooperation's initiatives involving countries from South America, Europe and Africa.

According to the same perspective the Atlantic is considered as a distinguished space on the global context which may have a contribution to make to global governance. Experts believed that policies of the main Atlantic actors challenges the democratic deficit and setbacks in terms of human rights observed in countries such as Venezuela and Cuba could have international positive impacts. The same applies to security interregional cooperation initiatives to tackle common problems such as transnational crime or environmental policies regarding climate change impacts. Moreover in terms of energy interregional initiatives and common experiences, such as the cooperation between Norway and Brazil in the oil sector – could have a very important outcome, representing a good example to more regions not only within the Atlantic but in different regions of the world.

Like Brazilian experts, the Venezuelans consider that language and cultural identity represent important drivers for more regional cooperation. This is specially the case for small and medium corporations in the Atlantic. Over the last decades, there has been a certain complementarity between diverse Atlantic regions in terms of migration and private investments as a result of economic, social and political crises. The relationship between Portugal and Venezuela is a good example, mentioned by an expert working in the private sector, who defended that language and cultural links between the Atlantic may represent an important driver for further cooperation in the region.

Prospective cooperation scenarios are also considered to potentially limit the influence of external actors in the region, such as China. This is especially true when considering that the long-term political and economic impacts of Chinese influence in the Atlantic regions is already increasingly inspiring resistance, according to diverse experts working in different fields.

However, we have also identified several barriers to closer relations between the Atlantic sub-regions. The lack of political will to materialize trade agreements, such as the case of the on-going negotiations between Mercosur and EU, and the lack of economic capacity in several South American countries to support further cooperation initiatives in Africa, constitute important barriers for a construction of a wider Atlantic spectrum of relations. This is particularly true in the case of Venezuela, given its isolation in the international stage due to its ideological choices. The existence of a strong political divergence has a direct impact on the relations between internal stakeholders and external actors in the public and private sector. "We are in Mercosur and we are not", as one expert stated, trying to illustrate not only the need to strengthen the political discourse with concrete commercial partnerships, but also how political discourse often prevents the development of more fruitful negotiations.

From an academic perspective, reaching key partners for cooperation and preserving these relations represents one of the key difficulties to further cooperation. In Venezuela's case the relations of cooperation are difficult to build and even when formed, they tend to fail. The

national government has often failed with its responsibilities; as a consequence restoring confidence with external partners is difficult.

The interviewees perceived important limitations imposed by trade regulations which deter countries from trading more. Moreover, at a diplomatic level Venezuela used to have important relations with European countries and historical links with several other world regions. One diplomat comments that this political conflict with several old “friends” represents a major obstacle to the country development.

There are, for instance, concerns over EU policy favouring agreements with democratic countries, which exclude from the offset certain Atlantic countries from further cooperation, as is the case of Venezuela at the moment.

Most prospects of cooperation scenarios in the Atlantic, from a Venezuelan perspective, are dependent on limitations placed by the Venezuelan government itself, at both the private and public sector levels. In spite of the potential of regional complementarity, there is a feeling of economic and political isolation, when compared to other Atlantic sub regions. As one interviewee stated, “I think we do not feel ‘Atlantic’ [enough]”.

4.4. Regional actors and interregional initiatives

The overall perspective regarding cooperation and governance in the Atlantic is very complex and strongly linked to the political regional experience of South American countries. This is especially true to Venezuela which at the current stage is strongly dependent on South American and Central American countries ideological support.

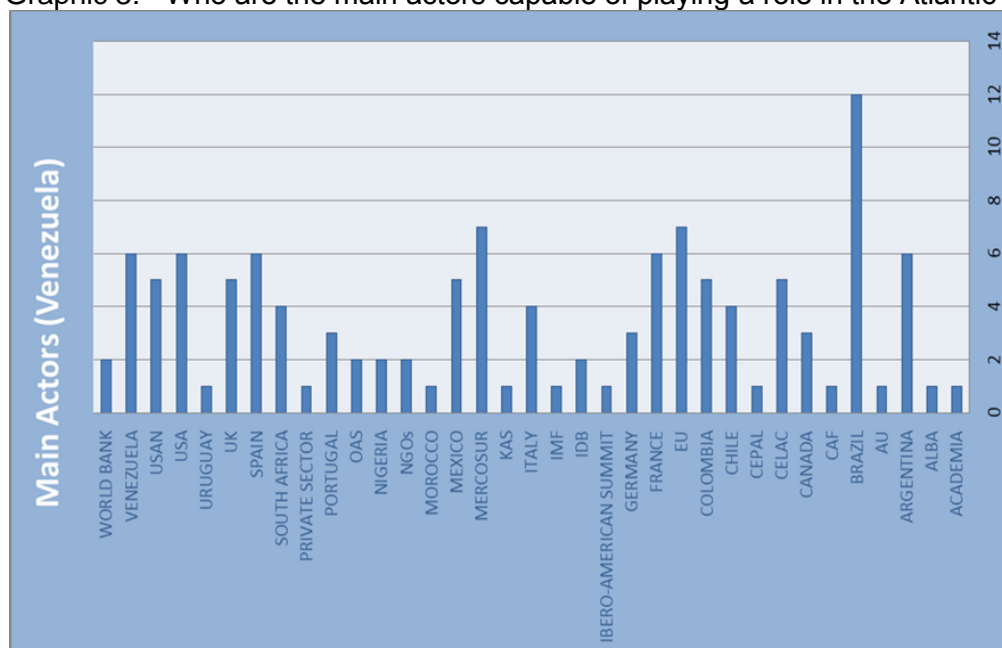
The creation of interregional initiatives such as CELAC, ALBA and MERCOSUR is considered to have contributed to a more equal system of institutional relations in the Atlantic, which used to be traditionally linked to north driven regional international forums.

This perspective is also reflected on the Venezuelan perception of the main actors capable of playing a role in the region. As may be observed in the following Graphic 3, the main actors considered capable of playing a role in the Atlantic are Brazil, Mercosur and EU.

The prospect of further interregional initiatives with a wider Atlantic spectrum is considered unlikely. Several of the interviewees believe that South America and Africa are not strategic priorities for North America and Europe. Moreover, the northern Atlantic link represents an obstacle to the formation of regional relations in various areas, but mostly regarding trade negotiations. “The political instability in Latin America and Africa has often contributed to a separation of wider Atlantic relations.” The different stages of economic development of each country in the region and the values associated to each currency are considered to prevent more cooperation. Moreover, they are associated with distinct free trade networks; it would be difficult to harmonize trade agreements for such an extended number of countries.

When looking at interregional initiatives such as the on-going developments on the Asia Pacific context, they are not realistic when applied to the Atlantic basin. The level of integration within this grouping is considered possible due to a tolerance of regimes which may lack respect for basic values such as human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Graphic 3: “Who are the main actors capable of playing a role in the Atlantic?”



We conclude that although for Venezuela the main actors in the Atlantic could have convergent interests and share concerns over regional threats and challenges, this cooperation is mostly dependent of the sub-regional agendas, which often do not converge.

4.4.1 The Role of EU

Venezuelan experts believed that EU's influence represents an important counterweight to the North American presence in Latin America. Indeed, since the Second World War, Europe helped to preserve the balance of power in the region, promoting peaceful international relations and developing several cooperation initiatives in several South American countries. Moreover, the political, economic and ideological plurality found within Europe constitutes an important contribution to the overall international relations. The capacity of EU to articulate different interests and ideologies is considered an example to be followed in cooperation initiatives in other parts of the globe.

Albeit several challenges such as the on-going economic crises, the EU has not lost relative relevance to South America. Greater EU influence in South America is actually largely perceived as a positive development. However, experts note that greater influence would require deeper understanding of regional dynamics as well as the main problems and interests of Central and South America.

Experts see resources and environmental as an important field for further cooperation in the future. Some suggested that EU-Latin America forums to discuss a common agenda regarding energy issues. This agenda should aim to promote diversification in the use of energy sources, and foster more cooperation between net exporters and importers of energy. Projects in this field could be funded by EU private sector and NGOs.

Finally, in terms of trade links, Venezuelans see the EU-Mercosur trade agreement as a way of Europe and South America becoming more interlinked and increasing relevance in the region. For Venezuela it is also seen as a tool for economic development.

4.5. Conclusions

Venezuela is going through a period of strong political unrest with important social, economic and diplomatic implications. Projects such as the present “Atlantic Future” are considered an opportunity to convey the increasing loss of fundamental freedoms in Venezuela and the internal (political, social and economic) reality.

The general perspective of Venezuela is to a large extent a direct consequence of the country’s internal political situation. We observe that the main concerns identified are mostly related with internal social, economic and political issues.

Mostly a pan-Atlantic space or Atlantic rim is not considered, to be taking shape. The interviewee’s mention that this concept has been encouraged by policy makers and academics, and that more research regarding this thematic field has been funded by diverse institutions in Europe and US; however, there is no evidence of this regional construction.

Looking at the interaction between the four Atlantic regions, Africa is often described as politically and economically outside of the Atlantic relations. Moreover, differences between countries considered in within the Atlantic basin are associated with distinct free trade networks; it is believed that it would be impossible to harmonize trade agreements for such an extended number of countries.

Experts believe that the Pan-Atlantic space could be a positive and desirable construction for the region development, a forum for further dialog in Atlantic space - which at first could be strategically focused on a few themes and could expand its scope over the time. The different regional actors should work on potential new regional alliances and even on new relations of cooperation with Asia, which could be interesting, considering the presence of China in the region.

However, there are on-going initiatives taking place in the Atlantic, such as the negotiations over TTIP, which are considered to have a contrary impact to the pan-Atlantic logic mentioned.

Experts see current trade agreements to reflect Northern interests and logic of development. The TTIP, for instance is expected to contribute to the existing lack of political cooperation, “it would be an Atlantic space with exclusions”.

In short, the Venezuelan perspective is that, given the divergence of interests within the Atlantic basin, we are more likely to continue on seeing the emergence of bilateral agreements in diverse fields rather than a regional pan-Atlantic logic of relations becoming the main strategic thinking for the entire region.

5. Final Remarks

The concept explored by the project, the Atlantic as a single space, was not immediate apparent to several of the experts interviewed. The “Atlantic” was often perceived to refer to the South Atlantic region.

Not only was the definition of “Atlantic” questioned, but also the use of the term “Latin America”. They expressed that while externally Latin America is a widely understood concept, internally there is a common perception that countries do not share one identity. Thus, the use of such concept was not well received in none of the three countries. Similar resistance was found when the term “fragile states” was mentioned during the interviews. Such discomfort shows that perhaps the EU should in the future consider more careful some nuanced Southern perceptions of the concepts explored on its cooperation approach.

Some convergent points in the three countries analysed can be extracted from the interviews:

First, a general resistance to US influence may be observed. Certain US policies were criticised throughout the three countries; the US refusal to sign certain international treaties (the non-ratification of the UNCLOS, for example), and the defence of human rights as an exception to - some say, a justification to breach - the non-interference principle were some of the points mentioned.

Second, regarding relations with Africa, experts from the three countries largely pointed out to the general lack of knowledge and understanding of African private and public institutions. Africa is mostly perceived as a developing region with political, social and economic challenges which are even more severe than South America's. Africa was also remembered for its natural resources potential and security threats.

Third, a convergence over the role of the EU in the region was also noticed. On the one hand the EU role is considered relevant due to its role as a foreign investor and an example of democratic institution. On the other hand several perceived that the existing investments and cooperation initiatives are carried out by European countries individually, not as EU.

Forth, experts from these countries mostly agree that an agreement between Mercosur and the EU would be beneficial for the development of the Atlantic region.

Fifth, all countries agree that further EU initiatives in the region should take into better account the interests, challenges and perspectives of southern countries. Rather than looking at ways to increase its influence in the South, the EU should promote the development of a more balanced and cooperative alliance, not limited to the interest of some European countries or industries.

Finally, experts from the three countries mentioned an extremely relevant external actor which, in their view, must be added to the equation: China. Interestingly, China provokes mixed feeling on experts throughout the three countries. Chinese investments are perceived as a significant factor on the economic development of certain southern countries (now considered emerging economies). But, at the same time, careful reservations on Chinese presence in the region and concerns linked to the uncertainties of such presence were expressed. For some, China potentially represents a threat to the sustainable development of the region.

There is a tendency towards a greater political and economic appreciation of the Atlantic basin as a platform of opportunities for better management of shared resources. Many considered that the Atlantic, according to the logic of complementarity, could be advantageous to the overall development, especially in areas such as security, environment and resources. Europe, South America and Africa, for instance, have all very different

demographic characteristics and different natural features. Moreover they are all in different stages of technological development. This should be perceived as an opportunity for regionally integrated development across the Atlantic basin. Through consolidated strategies it would be possible to transfer a surplus from one region to another to enhance overall development.

However, a new pan-Atlantic system of relations is not considered to be emerging in the Atlantic space beyond the traditional North Atlantic alliance and North-South dependency.

Having said that, a new development trend should be mentioned here, as an increasing South-South political, economic and cultural link seems to be emerging. In the past years, several initiatives involving South America and Africa can be observed. At a diplomatic level, Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina have been investing in representations in African countries. One can also observe the development of business links between the two sub-regions, with African countries in the receiving end of investments (which most of the times also involve governmental action through, for example, public financing).

Nevertheless, experts across the three countries consider the EU's contribution to this pan-Atlantic dynamic to be positive (although some, in particular from Brazil and Argentina, are very sceptical about the potential benefits of such dynamic). The EU is seen as a potential mediator and an actor able to somewhat balance US power as well as Chinese presence in South America and Africa.

The general perspective is that, in coming years, the development of Atlantic relations will not change considerably and all the interviewees anticipated closer South Atlantic links while expected the North-South divide to remain intact.

6. Annex

The annex section gives quantitative information taken from the interviews reports. First we give information regarding the interviewee's description, regarding their field of expertise and professional sector. Moreover we provide information concerning the ranked challenges and changes of each sector.

In total, over the three countries surveyed, there were 59 interviewees.

Argentina:

	Economy and Finance	People and Institutions	Resources and Environment	Security
Academia	0	0	2	2
Journalist	0	0	1	1
NGO	2	0	2	0
Private sector	2	0	1	0
Public sector	3	2	2	1
Total:	7	2	8	4

Brazil:

	Economy and Finance	People and Institutions	Resources and Environment	Security
Academia	2	1	0	2
Journalist	1	1	0	0
NGO	0	1	1	0
Private sector	2	0	2	0
Public sector	3	2	1	1
Total:	8	5	4	3

Venezuela:

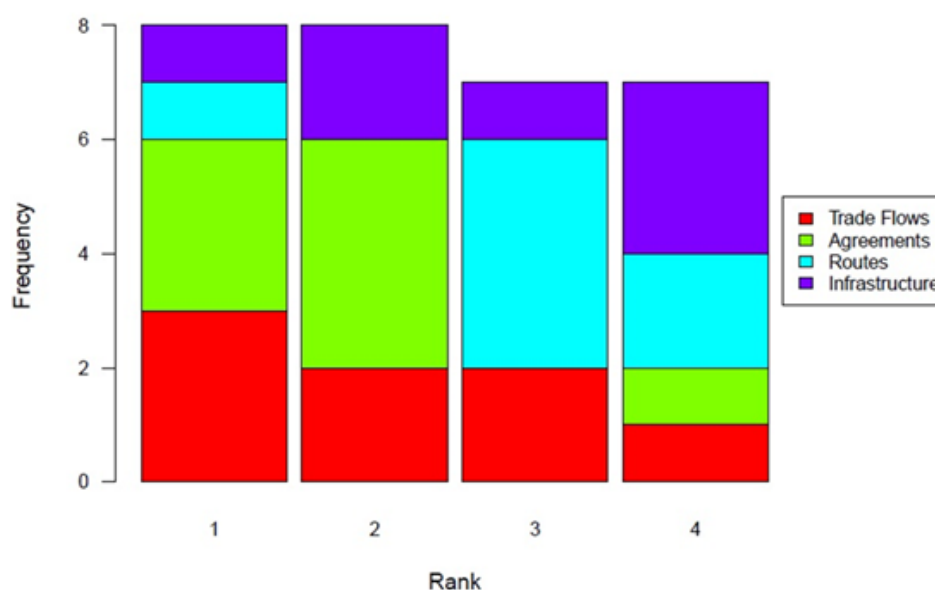
	Economy and Finance	People and Institutions	Resources and Environment	Security
Academia	1	4	1	2
Journalist	0	2	0	0
NGO	0	0	1	1
Private sector	3	0	0	0
Public sector	1	1	0	1

Total:	5	7	2	4
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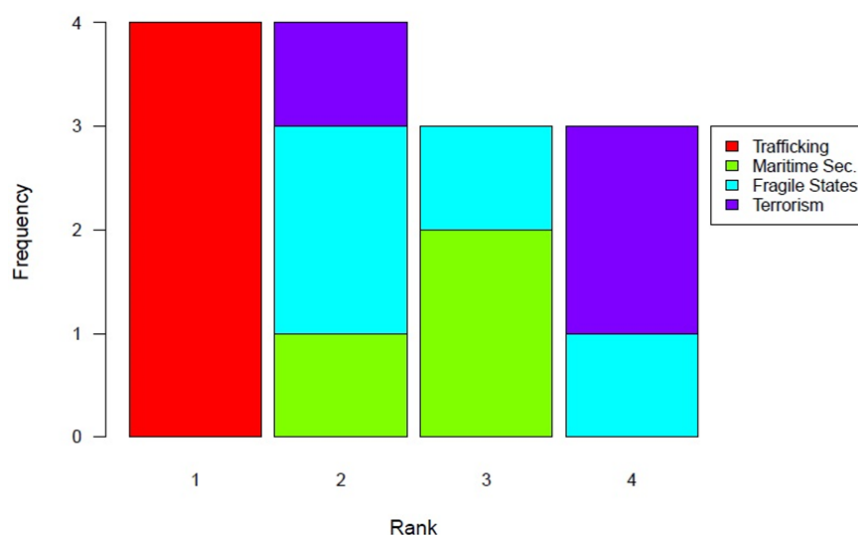
All answered the same questionnaire, except for the first section which was adapted according to the thematic areas of the project to match the expertise of the respondents. They were asked to rank from “more relevant” for the transformation of these regions to “less relevant” the main changes or challenges selected to each one of their specific field.

6.1. Argentina

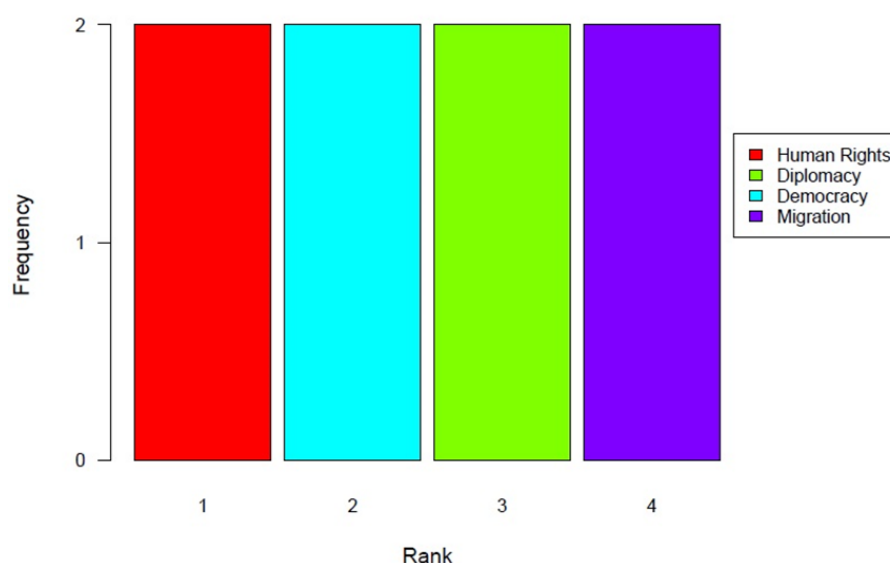
Figure 1 shows the results of the quantitative information extracted from the reports of Argentinean experts from Economy and Finance sector. The issue transformation of the energy sector was slightly predominant as the most relevant issue raised, followed by the impacts of the climate change. Resource depletion, although never appearing as the most relevant issue, was the most cited issue in second order of relevance.



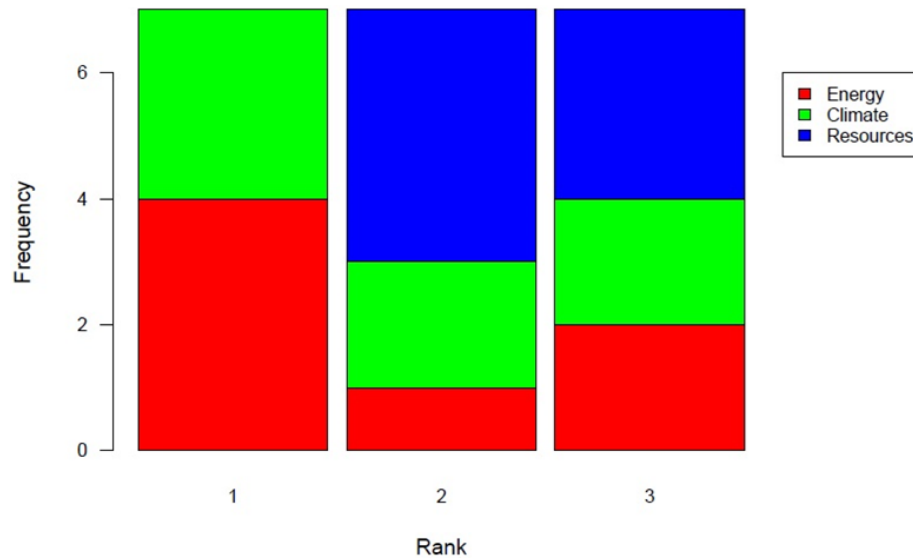
In **Figure 2** there is an emphatic concern with the issue of “illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans” which was unanimously chosen as the most important security regional challenge in the Atlantic. The most cited issues in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th order of relevance were “fragile states”, linked to the fragility of several south Atlantic countries, “maritime security” and “terrorism” respectively.



In **figure 3** it should be noted that there are only two experts within this sector in Argentina. Both participants put the issues in the same order, with primary importance given to 'respect for human rights', followed by 'diplomatic exchanges', 'state of democracy' and lastly 'migration trends'.



In **figure 4** according to the information taken from the interviews, the issue transformation of the energy sector was slightly predominant as the most relevant issue raised, followed by the impacts of the climate change. Resource depletion, although never appearing as the most relevant issue, was the most cited issue in second order of relevance.



6.2. Brazil

Figure 5 “Growth of trade and investment flows” is undoubtedly the most relevant issue cited. The “negotiation of new free trade agreements” and the “construction of new infrastructure” issues are equally placed as the second most relevant. The most cited in the 3rd, and 4th order of relevance were the “construction of new infrastructure”, and “new transport routes” respectively.

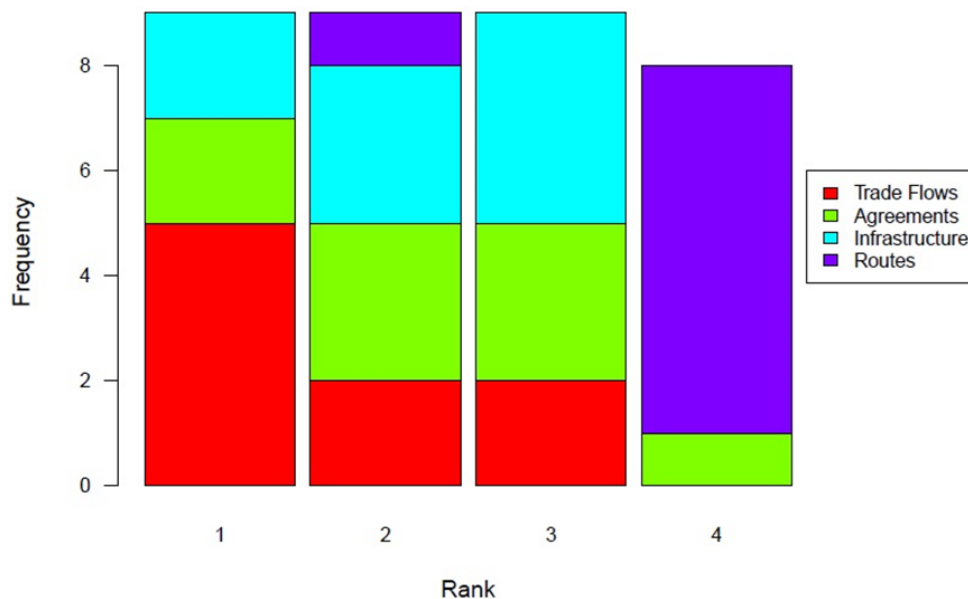


Figure 6 Once again the topic ‘illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans’ is the most relevant issue cited, ‘terrorism’ was the issue with the lowest rank of relevance by the interviewees. In addition, the most frequently cited in 2nd and 3rd order of relevance were “maritime security” and “fragile states”, respectively.

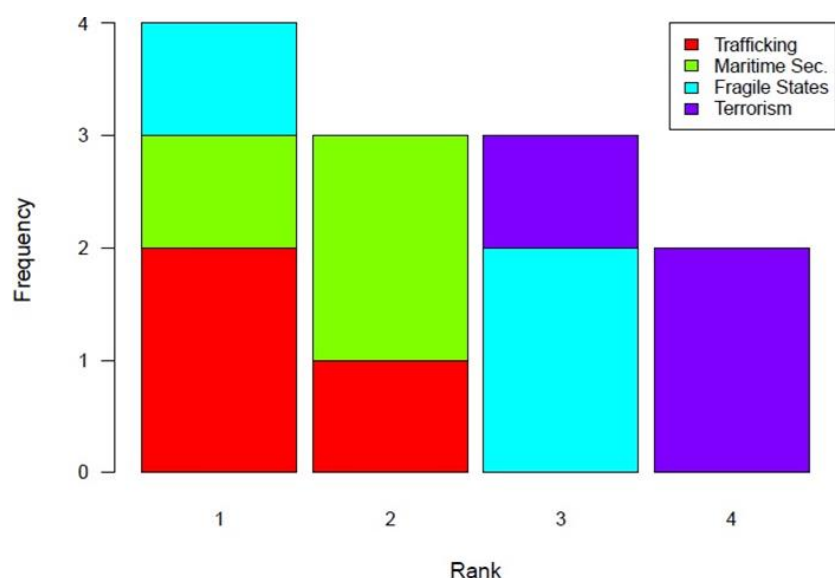
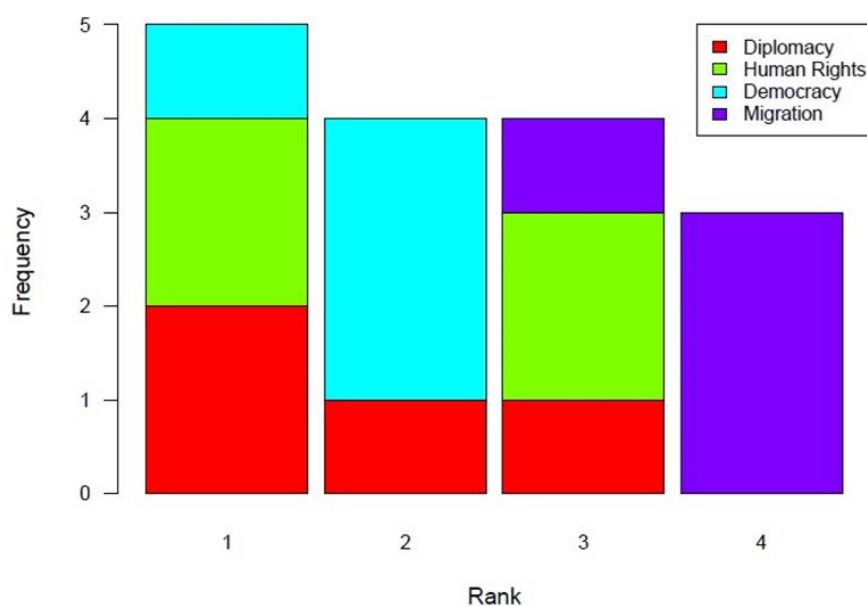
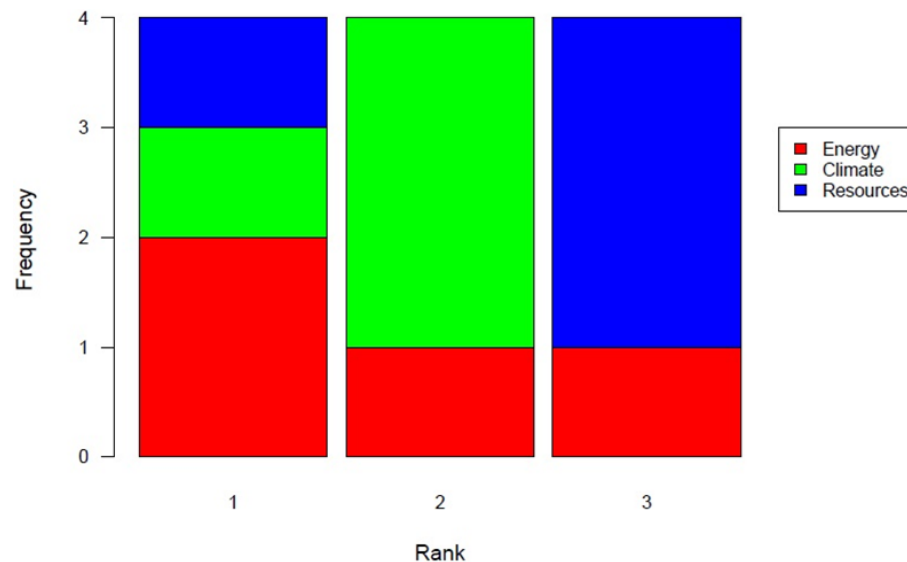


Figure 7 The issues that most frequently appeared in the first order of relevance are equally distributed between the “diplomatic exchanges” and “respect for human rights”, separated by two answers putting them as the most relevant. The “state of democracy” was also the most commented issue in the 2nd place in order of relevance according the interviewees. Additionally, “migration trends” was the least urgent issue, with four times appearing in the last place in order of relevance.





6.3. Venezuela

Figure 9 the topic “growth of trade and investment flows” is considered the most relevant issue raised by the project concerning the main changes in the Atlantic Basin. The issue *negotiation of new trade agreements* is also mentioned as a key driver for change in the region, especially for Venezuela. The “construction of new infrastructure” and “new transport routes” are usually considered secondary elements on the economic and financial development of the region.

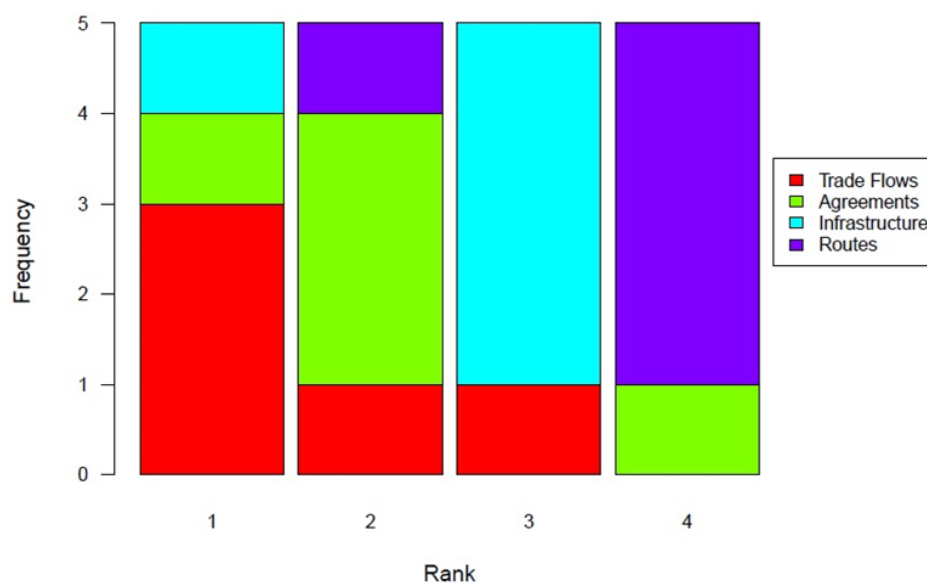


Figure 10 In common with other South American countries surveyed, the issue of “illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans” was the one most cited as of primary importance. In addition, “fragile states” was the most cited issue in both second and fourth order of relevance, with two answers each. The issues “maritime security” and “terrorism” were considered of lesser importance. Terrorism is not a main challenge for Latin America.

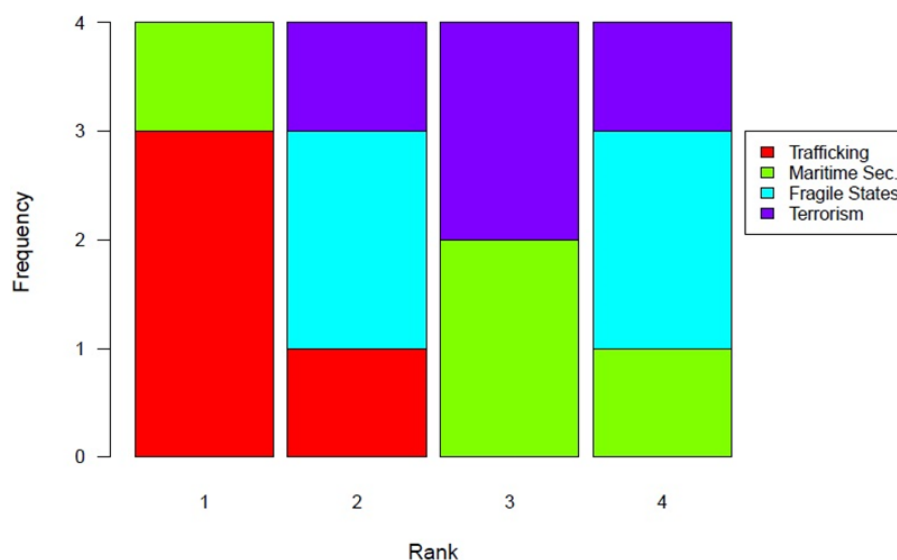


Figure 11 the “state of democracy” stands out as the issue considered most frequently by the interviewees as the most relevant. The issue “diplomatic exchanges” appeared in all the orders of relevance but never as the most cited issue in any level. As it follows, the most cited issues in the 2nd and the 3rd order of relevance, were “respect for human rights”, and “Migration trends”, respectively.

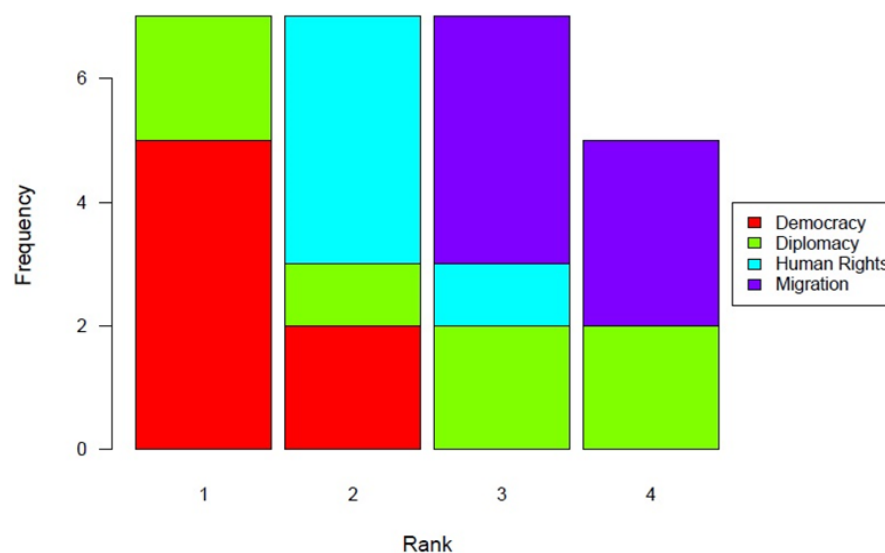


Figure 12 the low number of answers may affect the analysis, as there were only two participants in the sector, and particularly in this case *the issues transformation of the energy sector* and *resources depletion* varied between the most relevant and the less relevant issues for the two participants. Hence, in both answers *impact of climate change* was the second most relevant issue for the interviewees.

