ATLANTIC FUTURE

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Atlantic countries' voting patterns on human rights and human security at the United Nations: the cases of Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Iran and Syria

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the voting patterns at the United Nations (UN) on human rights and human security helps identify points of convergence or divergence among the countries of the Atlantic basin with regard to values and approaches to international crises. This paper explores if such countries, or groups of countries within the Atlantic basin, share political concepts and values. Based on four case studies – Iran, Syria, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire – the paper assesses the similarities and differences regarding conflict resolution and responses to massive human rights violations. The first section reviews the current debate over the UN principle of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), notably in relation to the Brazilian concept of "Responsibility while Protecting" (RwP). It looks at the perceptions of Atlantic countries, groups and alliances on issues of national sovereignty, sanctions and military interventions authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC). The second section focuses on the initiatives and positions of Atlantic countries and regional organizations and their alignments at the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The section concentrates on their voting patterns concerning four cases in particular: two outside the Atlantic space (Syria and Iran) and two inside (Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire). These four countries have been selected because they represent different types of conflicts: Iran and Syria are international hotspots and suppose, albeit for very different reasons, potential threats for regional peace and global stability; Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire rank high on the list of fragile states and the international community has been highly engaged in crisis management and stabilization in these countries. Plus, all four cases have been on the UN agenda for many years and serious concerns with human rights violations in these countries motivated the former Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Council to assign a special rapporteur for each of them. A final section summarizes the main conclusions drawn from the analysis of the positions of key actors in the Atlantic basin on human rights, human security and humanitarian interventions, and their voting patterns at the UN. It then evaluates the limits and prospects for engagement and cooperation across the Atlantic based on shared values.

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1.   Introduction[1]

All countries of the Atlantic basin are, in principle, committed to respect human rights (Center for Transatlantic Relations 2014). Apart from national and international commitments, human rights are strongly anchored in the charters of regional organizations in Africa (African Union, AU; League of Arab States; and the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS), the Americas (Organization of American States, OAS; and the Union of South American Nations, UNASUR) and Europe (Council of Europe; and the European Union, EU). All include human rights declarations and democracy clauses.

That said, given the long history of colonialism and foreign interventions in the Southern Atlantic, the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is still dominant in large parts of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. This conventional interpretation of national sovereignty contrasts with the idea of a "responsible or conditioned sovereignty", originally defined by the UN Permanent Representative for South Sudan, Francis Madang Deng, as the "responsibility for good governance" and the "accountability to national constituencies and the international community" (Deng 1996). These principles were the precursors of the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P). Divergent views on national sovereignty across the Atlantic translate into different perceptions and interpretations of R2P and the use of force as a last resort, and this divide is still a source of important controversy.

Regarding the four cases – Iran, Syria, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire – considered in this paper, for instance, the voting patterns at the UN of three ALBA[2] countries (Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela) is clearly opposed to those of the North Atlantic EU-NAFTA bloc. These four countries have been selected because they represent different types of conflicts: Iran and Syria are international hotspots and suppose, albeit for very different reasons, potential threats for regional peace and global stability; Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire rank high on the list of fragile states and the international community has been highly engaged in crisis management and stabilization in these countries. Plus, all four cases have been on the UN agenda for many years and serious concerns with human rights violations in these countries motivated the former Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Council to assign a special rapporteur for each of them.

In the cases of Iran and Syria in particular, UN voting patterns do not reveal common grounds across the Atlantic for joint action on human rights and human security. In these two cases, shared values have not (yet) paved the way to joint positions or even similar interpretations of how to react to massive human rights violations.

For their part, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire are both fragile states affected by internal conflicts that have a limited impact beyond their borders. Here, since 2004 voting patterns of the Atlantic countries have coincided and there has been broad consensus over the continuation of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). France has been a key actor in both cases, the United States, Canada and Brazil have played a prominent role in Haiti, and African states

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[2] The ALBA group, launched in 1994 in opposition to the project of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), includes Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Venezuela and Saint Lucia.

and regional organizations have acted as a peace and mediation force in Côte d'Ivoire. The regionalization of mediation efforts is evident in both cases and indicates the complementary importance of local factors and visions to UN actions and interventions.

2.   Human security and R2P: competing paradigms

Recently the US and the EU have seen their positions and initiatives on human rights and human security (as well as in other international questions) challenged and their leadership questioned (Brantner and Gowan 2011). This trend is reflected in the increasingly prominent role of emerging and Southern powers in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) that replaced the former Human Rights Commission. Particularly Brazil, backed by South Africa and other South Atlantic partners, has assumed a more significant role in the debate on human rights, human security and peace-building. This leading position has been reinforced by the Brazilian leadership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, headed by former Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota, and Brazil's initiative to promote the concept of "Responsibility while Protecting" (RWP) as a complement (and implicit criticism) to the controversial R2P concept, originally promoted by Canada (Zahar 2005).[3]

Since Atlantic basin[4] countries make up half of the member states of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council (UNSC), as a bloc they could be a strong player at the UN system. Human rights and human security have been identified as shared concepts and major challenges (Center for Transatlantic Relations 2014). In principle, all Atlantic states share a commitment to respect human rights, have signed all relevant international human rights documents, and participated at the UN debates on human security, including two consensus resolutions.[5] Nonetheless, their positions and voting behaviors on controversial issues vary widely. In particular, Atlantic partners do not share the same interpretation of the concept of human security and of the (distinct but related) UN principle of R2P.

"Human security" was first introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Unlike traditional approaches to security that focused on the state, according to Mary Kaldor "human security" is "about the security of individuals and communities rather than the security of states" (Kaldor 2007: 183) and it builds on the link between human rights and human development. It includes a broad range of threats to people's security, such as political, economic, social and environmental risks or criminal networks that entail conflict and violence. Human security was also a response to the shift from inter-state to intra-state conflicts, caused by ethnic divisions, the unequal access to resources, authoritarian regimes, natural disasters or other domestic problems. Due to its broad scope, it remains a contested and controversial concept (Szabo de Carvalho and Correa 2007).

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[3] At the request of the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Canada assumed a prominent role in establishing and promoting the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), created in 2001 as a response to mass atrocities in Rwanda and Kosovo.

[4] In this case, the Atlantic countries include the EU, Canada, the United States, and the littoral countries in Africa and Latin America.

[5] According to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, UNGA resolution 64/291, approved on 16 July 2010, requested a report on human security by the Secretary General, and resolution 55/290 further developed the concept.

The people-centered approach inherent to the concept of human security has been further developed by the R2P principle, introduced in 2001 with the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty and included in the declaration of the 2005 World Summit. Its ultimate goal is to protect the population against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity by "taking collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council [...] on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations" (UNGA: 2005). It follows that if countries are not able to guarantee the security of their citizens by themselves, the international community should help them do so and, if that fails, it should intervene through a gradual approach including diplomatic means, sanctions and, as a last resort, the collective use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Therefore, in principle R2P can be used to legitimise, under specific circumstances, military operations conducted by the international community in a third country without the consent of the targeted state to prevent or to end massive abuses of human rights committed by the government or other forces (Bajoria and McMahon 2013).

Despite their firm adherence to the principle of national sovereignty, all South Atlantic states in Africa and Latin America have subscribed to the R2P principle as outlined in the 2005 World Summit Declaration (UNGA 2005), even though with some reservations. For example, through the Ezulwini Consensus, the African Union recommended to consult regional organizations in case of intra-state conflicts that require a UN intervention and warned that R2P should not "undermine the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states" (African Union 2005).

R2P served as the main argument to legitimize the military intervention in Libya in 2011, approved by the UNSC (with the abstention of Brazil, China, India, Russia and Germany). So far, this has been the most important test-case for the R2P concept, but also "one of the most controversial topics of our time" (Kardas 2013: 22). In the aftermath of UNSC resolution 1973 authorizing the Libya intervention, North Atlantic countries (Canada, the EU, the United States and Mexico) and the critical voices in the Southern Atlantic (Argentina, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, South Africa and other African states) led by Brazil disagreed over the instrumental use of R2P and human security to legitimize regime change (engendering the fall of former President Gaddafi).

Apart from Brazil's proactive stance and alliance with other BRICS (Russia, India, China and South Africa), the abstention of Germany generated a controversial debate within the EU and the North Atlantic alliance. While some accused Berlin of "abandon[ing] the Western consensus" (Neukirch 2011), others saw it as a reflection of Germany's long post-war tradition of peace and non-interventionism and domestic opposition (Brantner and Gowan 2011: 5), in line with its earlier decision not to participate in the Iraq war. It was also argued that (unlike many South Atlantic partners) Germany did share the aim of regime change, but not the use of military means to achieve it (Berenskoetter 2011).

There are clear differences between Brazil, on the one side, and the United States and the EU and its members states, on the other, regarding R2P. In November 2011, under President Dilma Rousseff, Brazil proposed the alternative "Responsibility while Protecting" (Responsibility while Protecting 2011), emphasizing the need to define clear criteria, norms and rules for humanitarian military interventions under R2P. The Brazilian proposal, introduced by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antônio Patriota, can be seen as a criticism of NATO's military operation in Libya that, from the perspective of the Government of Dilma Rousseff, exceeded the UNSC mandate by imposing a regime change through NATO bombings (Rodrigues 2012: 171, 175).

Brazil suggested strengthening the instruments of preventive diplomacy to avoid violent intra-state conflicts, defining a set of criteria for international military interventions and

creating a mechanism to assess the implementation of the UN mandate in cases of recourse to force (Welsh, Quinton-Brown and MacDiarmid 2013). The RwP concept raises questions such as how to define clear indicators for humanitarian interventions, how to improve the access to local sources of information, and how to define clear and legitimate objectives for a humanitarian intervention.

Few Atlantic countries supported the idea. Amongst them, South Africa showed some support for the RwP initiative (Herz, Mattos and Souza 2011) and the EU responded constructively to calls for transparency and accountability in the use of force. However, alike the United States and Canada, the Union showed skepticism towards the idea embedded in RwP of a strict chronological sequencing of the international response (from softer to harder means), as it believed that flexibility is required when dealing with crisis situations (Gratius and Grevi 2013). As German Ambassador Peter Wittig pointed out at the informal UN debate organized by Brazil in 2012, RwP "lacks a precisely defined concept of its own" (Benner 2013). In short, RwP was essentially designed to bring more checks on the United States and NATO when carrying out military operations under a UN mandate. Although RWP is still lacking an international consensus and concrete implementation proposals, the Brazilian initiative has contributed to the debate within and outside the Atlantic on the limits, criteria and results of military interventions under the umbrella of R2P. That said, due to the lukewarm reception and lack of internal follow-up, Brazil seems to have abandoned the initiative (Stuenkel 2013).

Beyond the debate on RwP, parts of the Southern Atlantic still do not feel comfortable with the broader idea of "conditioned sovereignty" (Garrigues 2007: 156) – or sovereignty being qualified by the principle of responsibility – and stress the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. Some governments see humanitarian interventions under R2P as a pretext for imposing Western human rights and democratic norms, and they suspect that it might be a "Trojan horse for Western intervention" (Pace 2012: 16), particularly in non-democratic countries.

3. UN voting patterns on human rights and human security

Based on the general assessment of the respective positions regarding the R2P and RwP, this section analyzes the behavior of North and South Atlantic countries in different UN bodies (the UNSC, the UNGA and the UNHRC) concerning the protection of human rights and intervention in international conflicts. The main questions addressed are whether common values translate into similar voting patterns or whether voting alignments depend on ideological proximity or belong to different Atlantic sub-regions, and what is the role of regional organizations when it comes to intra-state conflict resolution.

3.1. Divergent views on crises outside the Atlantic: the cases of Iran and Syria

The voting patterns of Atlantic countries at the UN on the human rights situation in Iran and Syria, and on coercive measures related to the controversial Iranian nuclear programme confirm a high degree of convergence between traditional North Atlantic partners such as EU member states, Canada and the United States, as well as Mexico. In the South Atlantic, the picture is more diverse. Particularly in Latin America, there

are three constant (and ideologically anti-imperialist) "veto-players": Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. These ALBA countries act as an alliance and regularly oppose the condemnation of human rights violations in Iran, Syria, and other states with a difficult human rights record. Most of the rest of ALBA members tend to abstain and so there is no common voting pattern within the group. Latin America and the Caribbean are thus divided between the anti-hegemonic alliance of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, the "abstainers" (Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago) and those who tend to "bandwagon" with the North Atlantic (Argentina, Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama and St. Lucia). The rest shift between support and abstention.

UN voting behavior in African Atlantic countries also offers a rather mixed picture. The largest club are the "abstainers" (between 15 and 20 countries), while the group of "bandwagoners" are a clear minority (including Cape Verde, Liberia and, particularly, Senegal, which have been supportive of all UNGA resolutions on Iran and Syria). It is notable that since 2006, when seven countries – Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, South Africa and Togo – voted against UNGA resolution 176 concerning human rights in Iran, no African Atlantic country has voted against critical human rights resolutions on Iran or Syria.

A general difference between the North and large parts of the South Atlantic is the view on bilateral and multilateral sanctions. Canada, the EU and the United States have imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions against Syria. No other Atlantic partner, including Mexico, has unilaterally approved coercive measures against Iran or Syria. In the case of Iran, apart from bilateral sanctions by the US and Europe (but not Mexico), since 2006 the UN has imposed by several resolutions a series of coercive measures. Some sanctions have been temporarily suspended as part of a nuclear deal signed in 2013 with President Rouhani. Most African and Caribbean countries – particularly the three aforementioned ALBA countries, and Brazil and South Africa as part of the BRICS group – oppose sanctions and tend to abstain on UN resolutions on coercive measures.

3.1.1. The Atlantic divide on Syria

The conflict between the opposition and the Syrian government triggered a bloody civil war. In Syria By April 2014, approximately 150,000 Syrians (a third of them civilians) had died in the conflict that has already forced 9 million people to leave their homes and/or cross the border to fragile neighboring countries such as Jordan or Lebanon. Amongst other things, the escalation of the Syrian civil war can be attributed to gridlock at the UNSC concerning the imposition of any type of collective coercive measures against the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

While the option of a military strike against the Syrian regime to protect the civilian population against brutal repression has been discussed at the UNSC and contemplated in Washington, Paris and London, notably in response to the use of chemical weapons by the regime, various factors have deterred action. For one, the intervention in Libya and its aftermath have led to much skepticism in the international community (as well as in France, the UK and the US) towards further military action in a civil war context. For another, Russia and China, which abstained in the case of Libya but which back the Assad regime, openly opposed at the UN the use of force in Syria. Plus, it was not clear that in the case of Syria air strikes alone would be enough to change the balance of power on the ground, given the considerable differences between the Libyan and Syrian scenarios.

Besides, neither the violent conflict between the government of Bashar al-Assad and the opposition nor the political and geopolitical situation in Syria can be compared to that of Libya. The Assad regime counts on the support of the military and part of the population, the opposition remains fragmented and/or is living in exile and the regime has strong international allies, among them China, Iran and Russia (Mikail 2013).

The UNSC and the League of Arab States have assumed a prominent role in seeking to bring an end to the Syrian civil war. In 2012, the UNSC and the League of Arab States agreed on sending a Special Envoy to Syria – Kofi Annan, who developed a six-point peace plan – and pushed for the convening of an international peace conference in Geneva (Geneva I), even though results were not very successful. Annan's successor, Lakhdar Brahimi, appointed in August 2012, has organized another peace conference, Geneva II. The first two rounds of negotiations took place on January and February 2014 in Montreux and Geneva, and a third one was planned, but it is unclear if or when this would take place since Brahimi resigned as UN special envoy in May 2014.

Since 2011, the UNSC has unanimously approved four resolutions on Syria, which represented the minimum common denominator between the five permanent and the ten elected Council members. In 2012, the UNSC agreed on a mission to Syria. Based on Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan, UNSC resolution 2042, approved on 14 April 2012, authorized the deployment of 300 unarmed military observers to verify the cessation of violence in the country. On 21 April 2012, UNSC resolution 2043 established a 90 days UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), whose mandate ended four months later without any progress on the six-point plan and "no political space that would allow for meaningful political dialogue" (UN Security Council 2012). At that time, the ten Atlantic countries that were part of the UNSC (France, the UK and the US as permanent members; and Colombia, Germany, Guatemala, Morocco, Portugal, South Africa and Togo as non-permanent members) approved both resolutions without controversies. Some North and South Atlantic countries played an important part in UNSMIS: 19 of 42 participating countries were from the Atlantic basin[6] (the mission was headed by a Norwegian military officer), although it is worth noting that Brazil was the only country from the Americas.

In 2013 and 2014, two additional documents were approved. Resolution 2118, adopted on 27 September 2013, denounced the use of chemical weapons which was considered as a "threat to international peace and security" and – following a deal between Russia and United States – called for their immediate destruction under international control by July 2014. Resolution 2139, adopted on 22 February 2014, demanded the increase and unrestricted access of humanitarian aid to Syria and condemned terrorist acts. While the former resolution was supported by Argentina, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Togo, France, the UK and the US, the latter was backed by six Atlantic countries (Argentina, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria and the three aforementioned UNSC permanent members).

The situation in Syria has also been of high concern to the UNGA. In 2011-2013, it approved six resolutions (five of them with votes and one by consensus) on the civil war and human rights situation, most of them harshly critical of the Syrian government. UN voting patterns of the Atlantic countries varied: while Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela voted against all the five resolutions where a vote was taken, there was a

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[6] Seven African countries (Benin, Ghana, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo), Brazil and 11 European states (Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland) participated in UNSMIS.

balance among African and other Latin American countries between "abstainers" and supporters, while the North Atlantic partners Canada, Mexico, the EU member states and the United States favored all resolutions.

UNGA resolution 67/262, approved on 16 May 2013, was particularly critical of the Syrian government and, consequently, the most controversial: 48 Atlantic countries voted in favor, 25 abstained and the usual three ALBA countries voted against it. Only seven African countries (among them Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Morocco, and Senegal) and nine Latin American and Caribbean countries (Colombia and some Central American and Caribbean states) supported the resolution. In Africa, Angola and Namibia abstained from all five resolutions.

Diverse voting records on Syria at the UNGA, and the failed attempts to approve sanctions or military intervention at the UNSC illustrate the lack of an Atlantic consensus. Whereas the North Atlantic community favored UN sanctions against Assad, the three ALBA countries, Brazil and South Africa firmly reject coercive and military means against the Syrian government (on 19 July 2012, Brazil and South Africa abstained from a resolution threatening sanctions, which was not adopted in the end). While Brazil and South Africa identify with the BRICS traditional argument of (unconditioned) national sovereignty, anti-US sentiments and ideological differences are the main reasons for the Cuba and Venezuela led the ALBA bloc's support for the Assad regime.

Syria also ranks high on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council, which in 2011 established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and appointed a special envoy – the experienced Brazilian UN official Paulo Pinheiro – to the country to verify on the ground claims of human rights violations and crimes against humanity. In his statement on 17 June 2014, Pinheiro affirmed that "violence has reached an unprecedented level" and could extend to the entire region. He also confirmed the view of Lakhdar Brahimi that Syria could become a "failed state" and stated that the international community is "complicit in this" (Brahimi 2014).

North-South divisions over the Syria issue are also due to growing South-South diplomatic links. For example, Brazil and Venezuela have an observer status at the League of Arab States, and Brasilia initiated the Arab-South American Summits that are held since 2005 between the League of Arab States and UNASUR. At their third summit in Lima, the leaders of both sides reaffirmed "their commitment to Syria´s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and a "peaceful solution of the conflict" (Lima Declaration 2012).

Moreover, the ALBA group has close relations with the Syrian government. Since they are considered friends of the Syrian government, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela were invited to observe the Syrian presidential elections on 3 June 2014, which reconfirmed Assad as president. Particularly Cuba and Venezuela have close economic and political relations with the Syrian regime and, for domestic reasons, coincide with its view that it is "fighting against terrorism" at home.

3.1.2. Diverging views on Iran

After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Iran and the United States cut diplomatic ties and relations have been tense ever since. In 1995, Washington imposed a trade embargo on Iran. Tehran's inclusion in US President George W. Bush' "axis of evil" in the aftermath of the 9/11 and the confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme – the country is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – further worsened relations during the period of the "war against terror".

Like the US, the EU adopted a series of sanctions including trade and financial restrictions. An oil-embargo was imposed in 2012. According to some experts (Esfandiari 2013: 7), sanctions on Iran "were the most ambitious and comprehensive ever agreed on by the EU". Parallel to sanctions, in the last ten years, the so-called P5+1 (France, the UK, China, Russia and the United States, plus Germany), under the chairmanship of the EU High Representative for foreign and security policy, have engaged in diplomatic efforts with the Iranian government with the aim of suspending all uranium enrichment and reprocessing related activities.

During the two presidencies of Mahmud Ahmadineyad (2005-2013) in Iran, relations with the West deteriorated even furthered, while cooperation with other Southern nations improved. Ahmadineyad's anti-imperialist and anti-Western discourse was backed by some Atlantic countries like Venezuela (Fürtig and Gratius 2010). During this period, Iran strengthened its political alliances with some African Atlantic states (Gambia, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal) (The Economist 2010), Brazil and some ALBA countries (Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela). The Non-Aligned Movement – chaired by Iran between 2012 and 2015 – and the G-77 have also been common platforms for cooperation and dialogue between Iran and South Atlantic partners in Africa and Latin America. Iran's search for Southern allies in Latin America has had an impact on Brazil's voting behavior at the UN, provoking a divide with other Atlantic partners.

Beyond unilateral sanctions, through three resolutions - 1737 of 2006, 1747 of 2007, and 1803 of 2008 - the UNSC approved restrictive measures against Iran to convince Tehran to halt its nuclear program. At that time, all the Atlantic countries represented in the UNSC[7] voted in favor of all three resolutions. Consensus broke down in 2010, when Brazil, under the Presidency of Lula da Silva, voted against resolution 1929 proposing new sanctions on Iran.

Retrospectively, Brazil's decision to vote against the resolution (see graph 5 in Annex II) can be considered as a principled opposition against sanctions – qualified as counter-productive by former Minister Celso Amorim (Spektor 2010) –, the result of closer relations with Iran and the rejection by the United States of a Brazilian-Turkish initiative to reach a deal with Tehran. Under the Lula administration (2003-2011), Brasilia and Tehran established high-level consultations and intensified energy cooperation. There were mutual presidential visits in 2009 and 2010. On 17 May 2010, Brazil and Turkey reached a deal with Iran which envisaged sending 1.2 tonnes of low-enriched uranium to Turkey, under monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in return for enriched isotopes to be used in a medical nuclear reactor (Brazil, Iran and Turkey 2010).

Former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, called Brazil and Turkey "international ingénues" (Dombey 2010) and the US government criticized the "amorphous timeline of the agreement" and reiterated the need to stop the production of 20 per cent enriched uranium in Iran (Borger 2010). At the same time, the United States promoted UNSC resolution 1929 with new sanctions against Iran, which was opposed by Brazil. The EU reacted cautiously: High Representative Catherine Ashton called the deal "a move in the right direction", but not an ultimate response, and the then British Foreign Minister, Wiliam Hague, warned that it could be an Iranian delaying tactic (Borger

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[7] Argentina (2006), Congo (2006/2007), Costa Rica (2008/2009), Denmark (2006), Ghana (2006/2007), Greece (2006), Slovakia (2006/(2007), Belgium (2007/2008), Italy (2007/2008), Panama (2007/2008), South Africa (2007/2008) and the three permanent Atlantic members of the UNSC.

2010). Finally, France's and the UK's support for UNSC resolution 1929 consolidated the North Atlantic consensus (including Mexico) against the Brazilian veto. Austria, Gabon and Nigeria – at that time non-permanent members of the UNSC – also voted in favor of new sanctions under resolution 1929.

After a decade of confrontation, mutual recriminations and sanctions, 2013 saw a relative improvement in the relations between Iran, the US and Europe. The cautious diplomatic engagement of the Obama administration and the election of President Hassan Rouhani in 2013, a "prudent moderate" committed to preventing further tensions with the United States and to reinvigorating relations with European states (Javad Zarif 2014), opened a new space for dialogue. A first interim deal was reached in November 2013, when the P5+1 and Iran agreed on a six-month plan gradually to roll back Iran's nuclear program in exchange of sanctions relief by the EU and the US. In February 2014, further progress towards a formal agreement was made at a summit held in Vienna.

According to US President Obama, "if Iran seizes this opportunity, the Iranian people will benefit from rejoining the international community, and we can begin to chip away at the mistrust between our two nations. This would provide Iran with a dignified path to forge a new beginning with the wider world based on mutual respect" (Obama 2013). Recent progress and the commitment to dialogue, cooperation and moderation on behalf of the Rouhani government (Javad Zarif 2014) could contribute to thawing relations between Iran and the West.

However, serious concern remains over Iran's poor human rights record. Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran has been a constant issue on the agenda of the UNGA, UNHRC and the UNSC. For many years, the international community has been criticizing the country's human rights situation. International human rights organizations regularly denounce the application of the death penalty – 540 executions in 2012 (Human Rights Watch 2014) –, political discrimination and exclusion, censorship, violation of women's and minority rights or illegal detentions of journalists and human rights activists (Human Rights Watch 2013). The Iranian government continues to deny access to the UN special rapporteur on Iran mandated to monitor the human rights situation on the ground.

As in the case of Syria, UNSC debates and voting patterns on Iran have reflected the lack of a common position across the Atlantic basin. The same applies to voting records on the eight UNGA resolutions on the human rights situation in Iran (2004-2013). As in the case of Syria, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela oppose any criticism of the Iranian government, Brazil tends to abstain, and several African countries (South Africa, Gambia, Guinea, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo) voted against the 2004 and 2005 resolutions, while the North Atlantic partners backed them.

The situation changed in 2011 and 2012, when only the three ALBA countries voted against UNGA resolutions 175 and 182 on Iran's human rights situation. This indicates a degree of convergence, evident in resolutions 175 and 182, in which 48 and 49 countries, respectively, from the Atlantic basin voted in favor – a larger number compared to previous years.

The anti-West or anti-imperialist card still mobilizes some African and Latin American countries, whether they are hostile or distant to Washington and Brussels for ideological reasons (ALBA countries) or as part of their global power strategies of soft-balancing (such as Brazil and South Africa). In order to overcome these differences and translate the shared value discourse (Centre for Transatlantic Relations 2014) into convergence at UN level on controversial issues such as Iran and Syria, long-term engagement and a degree of mutual approximation of respective positions between

Northern and Southern Atlantic states will be required. But there is still a long way to go before this becomes a reality.

3.2. Problems in the Atlantic: similar UN positions on Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire

In contrast to Syria and, at least until recently, Iran, UN voting records on Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire have pointed towards a convergence of views on how to address human rights and human security in these two highly fragile states.[8] In both cases, all UNGA resolutions were adopted by consensus. However, debates at the UNSC have proved more controversial, especially in terms of imposing sanctions and deploying peacekeeping operations.

Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire are both affected by widespread violence, a low level of human development,[9] high dependence on primary exports (natural resources such as agricultural products), weak state institutions, permanent conflicts between adverse political groups and instable governance structures. Both share a close but tense relationship with their former colonial power France, long-lasting post-independence regimes,[10] and have suffered several military coups and violent political conflicts.

3.2.1. UN engagement in Haiti: the increasing role of Brazil and UNASUR

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the international community has been heavily engaged in Haiti, following the military coup in 1991 of General Cédras against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the political crisis that ensued. So far, two long-term UN missions have been set up, first with the purpose of "assist[ing] in modernizing the armed forces of Haiti and establishing a new police force", and then to reconstruct the country: a UN Human Rights Mission UNMIH (1993-1996) under American military command, and the UN Stabilization Mission MINUSTAH (2004-present) under Brazilian military command. As a result, Haiti's aid dependence today is extreme: NGOs finance 70 per cent of the country's healthcare and 85 per cent of the education system (Centre for Global Development 2012).

International engagement in Haiti can be divided into two periods: 1991-2004 and 2004-2014. Following the military coup against President Aristide and his reinstatement in a controversial US-led military operation under UNSC mandate in 1994, former colonial power France and the US (together with Spain and Canada) were the most engaged foreign actors and the main donors until 2004.

Since 2004, when it assumed the military command of the MINUSTAH, Brazil has become another key player and donor in Haiti (Hirst 2011). Since then, the Haiti crisis has been increasingly regionalized with the involvement of other Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay have contributed to

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[8] According to the 2013 List of Failed States, elaborated by the Fund for Peace, Haiti ranks 8th and Côte d'Ivoire 12th out of 178 countries. See http: fp.stateindexorg/rankings

[9] Haiti ranked 161th and Côte d'Ivoire 168th in the 2013 UN Human Development Index.

[10] Felix Houphouët-Boigny governed Côte d'Ivoire for more than 30 years (1960-1993) since the country's independence. The dictatorship of François Duvalier (Papa Doc) in Haiti lasted from 1957-1986.

MINUSTAH and provided development assistance). The Dominican Republic, Cuba and the United States (for security reasons and in order to contain migration), together with France (for historic reasons), also have a strong interest in stabilizing the situation in Haiti. Currently, MINUSTAH leadership is exclusively integrated by Atlantic countries: Brazil, the Netherlands, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. Moreover, 19 Atlantic countries participate in the mission. In this sense, MINUSTAH could be considered an "Atlantic mission".

Between 1991 and 2014, all but three of the 29 UNGA and UNSC resolutions on Haiti were approved unanimously. With the exception of Brazil, Atlantic countries' voting patterns on Haiti have mostly coincided. In 1994, Brazil abstained from UNSC resolution 940 to authorize for the first time in the Americas a military operation under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to reinstate Aristide; from UNSC resolution 948 to lift the sanctions imposed on the Haitian government; and from resolution 964 to extend the mandate of the UNMIH. At the time, Brazilian President Itamar Franco opposed the UN resolutions on the grounds of non-interference in internal affairs, and arguing that the situation in Haiti did not pose a threat to global peace and security, thereby ruling out military interventions under Chapter VII (Souza Neto 2010).

In 2004, Brazil backed the launch of MINUSTAH, although the Brazilian government stated its preference for a mission under Chapter VI instead of Chapter VII, which required consent by the host country. Nonetheless, since 2004 Brazil has assumed the military command of MINUSTAH and has become Haiti's most important Latin American partner and a key provider of development assistance and security. According to the Brazilian national development agency ABC, since 2004 Brazil has carried out 15 projects in different sectors (agriculture, health, infrastructure, social development and nutrition) in Haiti. From a Brazilian perspective, engagement in Haiti represents a building block in the country's strategy to boost its international profile and achieve a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. It is also a test-case for Brazil's larger engagement at UN peace missions, given that it's past commitment to UN civilian and military missions has been rather limited and for long concentrated on Portuguese-speaking countries (Santos and Almeida Cravo 2014).

In Haiti, Brazil closely cooperates with other Latin American countries through their participation in MINUSTAH and development assistance to Haiti. Argentina and Chile are the most committed Latin American partners with the country's reconstruction (Hirst 2011). Cooperation among South American countries has also led to the engagement of UNASUR in Haiti. Common projects,[11] several debates on the country's stabilization and the Declaration of Solidarity with Haiti, approved in 2010 in the aftermath of the earthquake, evidence UNASUR's increasing involvement in regional conflicts.

Over time, the initial mandate of MINUSTAH has been expanded, from focusing on security and human rights to contributing to the task of improving governance structures and development levels, reducing human rights violations and impunity, dealing with health crises (such as the outbreak of a cholera epidemic) and dealing natural disaster like the earthquake in 2010.[12] However, MINUSTAH is being

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[11] In 2010, following the earthquake, UNASUR agreed with the Haitian government an action plan for Haiti on agriculture, food security, prevention of natural disaster and public infrastructure. To monitor the projects, the political-technical Secretariat UNASUR-Haiti was created.

[12] The current mandate of MINUSTAH includes five complex tasks: facilitate the political dialogue and the electoral process; institutional support and reinforcement of the capacities of the state; maintain public security; support the reform of the police and the justice and penitential systems; and improve the human rights situation.

increasingly questioned by the local population. Protests "against the foreign occupation" have been frequent. Opposition against foreigners increases at a time when prospects of replacing dependence on foreign actors and aid with local resources and institutions remain low (Sánchez 2011).

3.2.2. Atlantic consensus at the UN: France and Africa's mediation in Côte d'Ivoire

In the case of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, all UNSC, UNGA and UNHRC resolutions were adopted by consensus. Bilaterally and within the UN framework, the former colonial power France, a group of African states and regional organizations (ECOWAS and the AU) assumed a prominent role in managing successive electoral crises and reconstructing the country (Yabi 2012). The level of engagement of the United States, Latin America and other EU member states was comparatively low.

Political instability in Côte d'Ivoire broke out in 1993, when the death of the country's founding leader and long-term President Félix Houphouët-Boigny caused a violent struggle for power between different political leaders, and a conflict between nationals and immigrants on electoral participation and civil rights. In 1999, a military coup led by General Robert Guëi and the disqualification of today's President and former Prime Minister Alassane Outtara at the elections of 1995 and 2000 (Laurent Gbagbo won in the latter against Robert Guëi) – led to the first Ivorian civil war that formally ended in 2004.

The country was split into the rebel-dominated North (Forces Nouvelles), headed by Guillaume Soro, and the government-controlled South. Several attempts at national reconciliation through the signing of several peace agreements between the different power groups, promoted by ECOWAS – particularly Ghana, Nigeria and Togo – the AU under the leadership of South Africa, together with France and the United Nations, could not resolve the deep-rooted political conflict and the de facto separation of the country.

The second "Ivorian war" began in 2010, when Alassane Outtara won the national elections against his adversary and long-term President Laurent Gbagbo (2000-2011), "whom many European diplomats had expected to win" (Brantner and Gowan 2011: 2). Outtara's victory, recognized by the Independent Electoral Commission, was not accepted by Gbagbo, who proclaimed himself as the legitimate president. After several months of violent confrontations between the two political groups and the imposition of sanctions on his supporters by the UNSC (resolutions 1980 and 1975 were unanimously adopted in 2011 after the initial opposition of Russia and South Africa) (Brantner, Gowan 2011: 2), Gbagbo was finally arrested by Outtara's militia, with the support of France and other Western powers. On 11 April 2011, Alassane Outtara assumed the country's presidency.

Since 2002, the Ivorian conflict has been constantly on the UNSC agenda, with the approval of over 30 resolutions to monitor the ceasefire and the peace agreements, and to protect the North-South borderline through the deployment of first MINUCI and then the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire UNOCI). In May 2003, the UNSC passed resolution 1429 setting up MINUCI to monitor the implementation of a peace agreement signed by different political parties and armed groups. It complemented the ECOWAS peacekeeping force and French troops (Dadson 2008).

Nine Atlantic partners[13] participated in the first civil-military mission MINUCI that ended in 2004 and was replaced by UNOCI, a military mission including at its maximum strength more than 9,000 security and police forces. Like MINUSTAH in Haiti, UNOCI, set up by UNSC resolution 1528, has been in Haiti for over a decade, and its mandate has been extended and modified every year since its original approval in 2004. Ten years later, now nineteen Atlantic countries contribute to the mission, most of them African nations and three Latin American partners (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay).[14] In 2013, the UNSC decided gradually to reduce UNOCI and in 2014, it eased parts of the arms-embargo and lifted the export ban on Ivorian diamonds.

According to some (Dadson 2008; von Lassow 2011), international mediation and UN control of the North-South borderline did not help to overcome differences, but instead further contributed to the division of the country. From the perspective of the UNSC, the international community's long-term engagement was considered a necessary step to prevent violence and monitor the implementation of the several peace accords and agreements between rival groups. Respect for Alassane Outara's electoral victory and the imposition of UNSC sanctions was considered "a success for the UN and the EU's strategy of undermining Gbagbo" (Brantner and Gowan 2011: 3).

4.   Conclusions

According to the positions and voting behaviors at the UN regarding the four cases reviewed in this paper, voting coincidence on the protection of human rights and the approval of peacekeeping operations has been high regarding the fragile states of Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire, where the geopolitical and economic interests of most Atlantic countries are relatively limited. In both case studies, Atlantic countries even agreed on the imposition of sanctions. Therefore, it can concluded that there is great potential for conflict resolution in non-strategic, small countries inside the Atlantic that do not pose security threats to the basin.

The cases of Iran and Syria reflect the opposite: the absence of a common approach in the Atlantic basin to respond to concrete cases of large-scale human rights violations and threats to global and human security, including regarding the approval of sanctions and military interventions under R2P. Divergent views on R2P and human security expose the need for a deeper debate in the Atlantic space on how to promote common values at the international stage and common criteria for legitimate military interventions under the umbrella of the United Nations.

When analyzing UN voting patterns on human rights and human security, there is no evidence of an alliance among the Atlantic countries, but rather a trend towards a North-South divide. It is possible to identify four clear groups. First, a "sovereignist" and ideological group, made up of the three ALBA countries Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela that reject any type of foreign intervention in domestic affairs. Second, the four North Atlantic partners Canada, EU member states, Mexico and the United States that usually vote in favor. Third, Brazil and South Africa that stand somewhere in

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[13] Austria, Brazil, Gambia, Ireland, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Senegal and Uruguay.

[14] The Atlantic countries that send military personnel are Brazil, France, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Ireland, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Spain, Togo, and Uruguay. And police personnel are Argentina, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, and Uruguay.

between both positions. And fourth, the rest of the Atlantic which oscillates according to their alliances and interests.

The four selected case studies confirmed a nearly 100 per cent voting coincidence among the North Atlantic partners and a clear counter-alliance integrated by Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Brazil and South Africa can also be singled out for their critical attitude towards military interventions motivated by human security considerations, their strong commitment to protect national sovereignty from outside interference and their increasing alignment with the other BRICS - Russia, India and China.

By heading MINUSTAH in Haiti, its participation in UNISMIS, its leadership of the Peacebuilding Commission and its engagement in Iran and Syria, Brazil has assumed a proactive, albeit not pro-North Atlantic, role in all UN bodies dealing with human rights and human security, including in the development dimension. Unlike Mexico or Senegal, instead of bandwagoning Brazil and South Africa tend to balance the North Atlantic group by abstaining or – as in the case of Brazil at the 2010 vote on new UN sanctions against Iran – voting against decisions at the UNSC.

A closer look at the UN missions in Syria, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire shows that European countries have been most active in UNISMIS, given that Syria is part of the EU's extended neighborhood. The United States has been absent from all three UN missions, although Washington played a key role in dealing with Iran and Syria and the crisis in Haiti. For historical reasons and as a permanent member of the UNSC, France has been the most active European country in terms of conflict resolution in Iran, Syria, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire, while the UK and Germany played a secondary or no role in the latter two. After France, Brazil, the United States and several Latin American countries were the most engaged in the reconstruction of Haiti and related UN debates, while African states and regional organizations took the lead in the mediation between the political forces and rebel groups in Côte d'Ivoire.

This confirms a trend towards the regionalization of conflict resolution, through the engagement of first the OAS and then UNASUR in Haiti, the African Union and ECOWAS in Côte d'Ivoire, and the League of Arab States in Syria. In all these cases, regional perceptions and mobilization were much more pronounced than any sense of belonging to an Atlantic grouping as a platform for diplomacy and crisis management.

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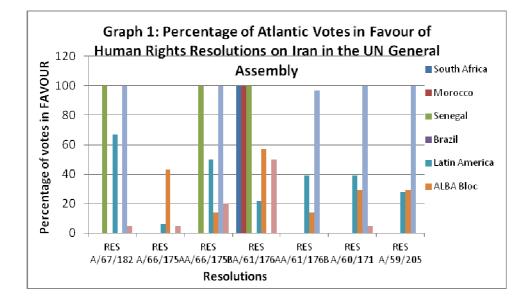
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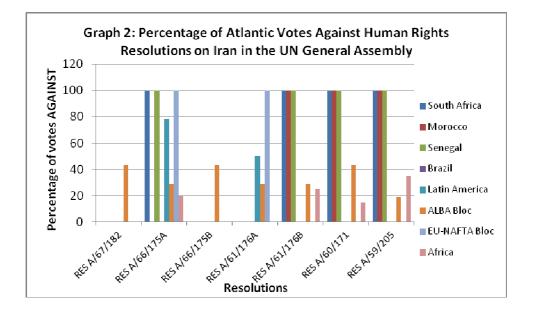
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6. Annexes

ANNEX I: Voting patterns on resolutions on Iran
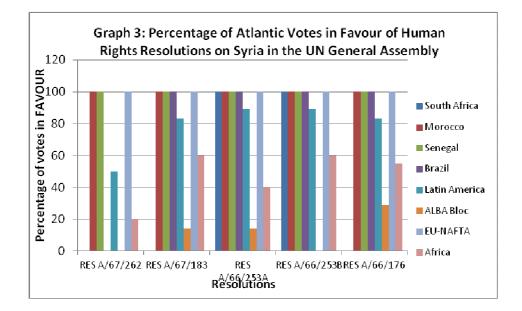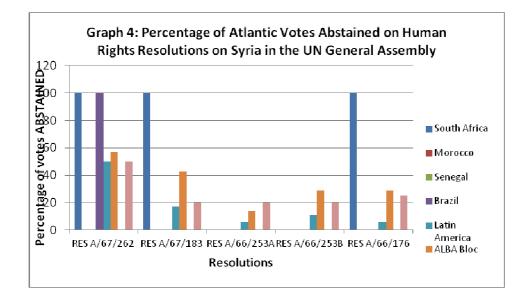

Graph 1: Percentage of Atlantic Votes in Favour of Human Rights Resolutions on Iran in the UN General Assembly

Graph 2: Percentage of Atlantic Votes Against Human Rights Resolutions on Iran in the UN General Assembly

ANNEX II: Voting patterns on resolutions on Syria

Graph 3: Percentage of Atlantic Votes in Favour of Human Rights Resolutions on Syria in the UN General Assembly

Graph 4: Percentage of Atlantic Votes Abstained on Human Rights Resolutions on Syria in the UN General Assembly

Graph 5: Percentage of Atlantic Votes Against the Human Rights Resolutions on Syria in the General Assembly

7. List of Abbreviations

ABC   Agencia Brasileira de Cooperacao

AU   African Union

BRICS   Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

ECOWAS   Economic Community of West African States

IAEA   International Atomic Energy Agency

MERCOSUR   Mercado Común del Sur

MINUCI   United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire

MINUSTAH   UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti

OAS   Organization of American States

NPT   Non-Proliferation Treaty

P5   Five Permanent members of the UNSC

R2P   Responsibility to Protect

RwP   Responsibility while Protecting

UK   United Kingdom

UNASUR   Unión de Naciones Suramericanas

UNGA   UN General Assembly

UNHRC   UN Human Rights Council

UNOCI   United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

UNSC   UN Security Council

USA   United States of America