



ATLANTIC
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PAPER**

27

**Historical Power Relations and changes in the
Atlantic: a two centuries overview**

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies the most important political turning points in the Atlantic history from the end of the 18th century until the present day. Based on a chronological approach, we have selected a series of historical events that affected the Atlantic area and changed its power relations in the last two centuries. With this analysis, we are able to identify the points of contact, interaction and differentiation between the various shores that bring together the Atlantic area, concluding that, despite some periods of greater detachment, the Atlantic may become a larger political, economic and security community.

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1. Introduction

This paper attempts to identify the most important political turning points in the Atlantic history from the end of the 18th century until the present day. We believe that with this analysis, we shall be able to ascertain the points of contact, interaction and differentiation between the various shores that bring together the Atlantic basin, as well as to discern a continuum in its evolution.

Based on a chronological approach, we have chosen several historical events that affected the Atlantic area and changed its power relations in the last two hundred years. We will begin our analysis with the American and French revolutions, which altered, in the long term, the balance of power in the Atlantic. From then onwards and until the end of the 19th century, the United States of America (USA) increased their dominance over the Western Hemisphere and, after the Spanish-American war of 1898, no other European power would become, again, an American power. On the other hand, the ideals of the French Revolution were paramount in the political and social transformations that it brought about in Europe, as well as decisive for the evolution of post-colonial Latin America. At the same time, in Africa, the European powers expanded their areas of influence and began a colonization process that lasted until the second half of the 20th century.

Subsequently we shall examine the main events of the 20th century, notably World War I, and the impact that the Wilsonian principles have had in the relations between Europe, the United States and other regions of the Atlantic. The American intervention in World War II had a very different nature: the US would no longer abandon its interests across the Atlantic, and Washington progressively became a European power. However, despite the formation of a strong defensive alliance in the North Atlantic area, the Cold War was an East-West clash, and the Southern Atlantic, though not the central region of this dispute, was deeply influenced by the ideological competition between the two great superpowers. Finally, the impact of the decolonization process in Africa and the democratization of Latin America, in the last decades of the Cold War, would contribute, as well, for a greater homogeneity between the four margins of the Atlantic.

In the post-Cold War, and particularly in the post-9/11 period, the Atlantic has faced new challenges, namely with the emergence of China and the rise of the Pacific. Additionally, the South Atlantic region has also become more influential and the focus of international attention. Not only has Brazil become an emergent economy, but also the security issues in Western Africa have demanded a more integrated action by the powers of the Atlantic.

2. The late 18th Century: Revolutions with a global impact

The new approach to Atlantic studies developed in mid-20th century was a product of the political developments in the North Atlantic area since World War II.¹ In fact, the complex intellectual geopolitics of the pre-Cold War decades resulted in three major streams in the Atlantic Studies. In the *White Atlantic*, the focus of the major works is on the Imperial dimension of the Atlantic, namely the colonizers' point of view. However, this perspective reaches beyond the imperial period and it was followed by what Donna Gabaccia calls the "legacy of NATO", that is, "a growing and

¹ Alison Games (2006), "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111:3, pp. 741-757, 743.

interdisciplinary literature focused on examining transatlantic exchanges among intellectuals of the North Atlantic in the 19th and 20th century”.² As far as the *Black Atlantic* is concerned its central dynamics are the consequences of slave trade and anti-slavery resistance. Nevertheless, the end of slavery did not put an end to this approach. To a certain extent it was strengthened by the anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements of the second post-war era. Finally, the *Red Atlantic* trend focus both on a colonial and revolutionary era between late-18th century and 19th century and also in the migration movement from the late 19th century and the early 20th century within the Atlantic.³

As far as the changes in the Atlantic balance of power in the last two centuries are concerned, it is difficult to pinpoint them without understanding that this region is a part of the wider world. Therefore, its evolution is interconnected with global developments. Even though the current idea is that the Atlantic is far from being an homogeneous region – even in the early times -, the concept of Atlantic developed by Jacques Pirenne identifying it as a “European sea”, controlled between the 16th and the 18th century by Portugal, Spain, England, France and the Netherlands, is still prevailing. In other words, most specialists recognize that, within the Atlantic region, there are concrete elements of globalization, people and commodities and technologies of transportation and communication. These elements stand as key in the formation of the Atlantic world. Undoubtedly, it was a region characterized not only by a strong interdependence within itself but also a very important pathway to other regions of the world.⁴

For the Atlantic studies scholars, the late 18th century is consensually acknowledged as a milestone regarding the end of the early modern period. Even though we must keep in mind that choosing end dates is a complex issue and that historical processes can be protracted in time, after 1750, the colonial, cultural and economic ties between Africa, Europe and the Americas began to gradually change, creating a new Atlantic world, if only from a geographical perspective. The American Revolution is, therefore, seen as an “opening salvo” for transformations in America that had repercussions in Europe and Africa during the long 19th century.⁵

In fact, if the American Revolution can be seen as a starting point for this transformation, we believe that the subsequent French Revolution (1789) signals the definitive benchmark as a moment of rupture.⁶ Indeed, when the Portuguese royal family fled to Brazil, in the imminence of a French invasion of the country, this eventually led to the declaration of independence of the most important colony of Portugal’s empire, in 1822. On the other hand, the role played by the *creoles* in the Spanish America led to the proclamation of republics in all Latin America. Between 1811 and 1830, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil all became independent states. As the almost immediate proclamation of republic in the former Spanish colonies of America shows, four

² Donna Gabaccia (2004), “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 2-4. On the NATO legacy, see for example, Marco Mariano (2010), *Defining the Atlantic Community. Culture, Intellectuals and policy in the mid-20th Century*. London, Routledge.

³ Donna Gabaccia (2004), “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 5. For further readings, please see David Armitage (2002), “Three concepts of Atlantic History”. In *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by David Armitage and M. J. Braddick, New York: Macmillan, pp. 11-30.

⁴ Jacques Pirenne (1948). *Les Grands Courants de l’Histoire Universelle III. Des traités de la Westphalie à la Révolution française*. Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconnière, p. 265.

⁵ Donna Gabaccia (2004), “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 8.

⁶ John Thornton (2012), *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250-1820*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 471-479.

decades after the American and French Revolutions, the former would not be possible without the latter.⁷

The impact of the American and French revolutions in South America is two-fold. On the one hand, most of the newly independent republics adopted the political and institutional system of the US (division of powers, strong federalism, phrasing of the constitutional texts), albeit always “adapted to local and social conditions”. However, ideologically, the egalitarian principle of the French revolution prevailed, reflected on the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* that inspired the republican leaders in South America.⁸ As Donna Gabaccia puts it, in the wake of anti-colonial and republican evolutions, ideologies of nation-building also attempted to rewrite Atlantic cultural connections. The United States initially pronounced its intention to build a new and American civilization independent of Europe’s, while Latin American nations more often promised to perfect European Civilization in a new environment.⁹

The independence of America from the British Crown and the end of the Portuguese and Spanish empires marked the division between the Old and New World. In 1823, the United States declared the Monroe Doctrine, consolidating the Western hemisphere’s autonomy and trying to prevent any attempt of restoration of European dominance in that region.¹⁰ In the following decades, the separation between Americas and Europe was further established as part of the international *status quo*, assured by an informal alliance between the United States and Great Britain.¹¹ In fact, the *Great Rapprochement* experienced in the US-British relations in the final years of the 19th century allowed for a convergence of interests between these two powers. The role of the US as the power responsible for American security was gradually recognized and, after the Spanish loss of Cuba, the European possessions in the Western hemisphere became residual.

However, despite the end of the formal political European dominance over the Americas, the reality is that, in terms of economic exchanges, free and unfree migratory tendencies and the circulation of ideas, the Atlantic was, during the whole 19th century, a highly interdependent area. Indeed, notwithstanding its formal independence, the American republics were dependent, until the early 20th century, “of European capital, European commerce and European influence”. There was, in fact, a sense of community between the two shores of the Atlantic, in particular between Latin America and the European powers.¹²

⁷ John C. Chasteen (2008), *Americanos. Latin America’s Struggle for Independence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3; J. H. Elliott (2006). *The Atlantic World. Britain and Spain in America (1492-1830)*, pp. 369-402. New Haven: Yale University Press. Emilia Viotti da Costa (1999). *Da Monarquia à República*. São Paulo: UNESP. Leslie Bethell, editor (1989). *Brazil: Empire to Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸ Wim Klooster (2009), *Revolutions in the Atlantic World. A Comparative History*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 172-174.

⁹ Donna Gabaccia (2004), “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 8.

¹⁰ Daniel Marcos (2014), “Doutrina Monroe”. In Nuno Canas Mendes, Francisco Pereira Coutinho (coord.), *Enciclopédia das Relações Internacionais*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, pp. 168-170.

¹¹ Hans Morgenthau (1958). “Alliances” in Hans Morgenthau (1962). *The Restoration of American Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 176-178.

¹² Emma Rothschild (2013), “Late Atlantic History”, in N. Canny and P. Morgan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World. 1450-1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 634-648

3. Economic Transformation in the Atlantic during the “long” 19th century

The nationalist revolutions in America and Europe had consequences, and not only from a political and ideological point of view. Economically, the long 19th century brought enormous transformations related to the fast-paced industrialization. The change in the British mercantile policies in the late 18th century, and the independence of the American European colonies were marked by a contradictory relation between the Americas and Europe. In North America, decolonization meant the imposition of trade tariffs with Britain, in order to substitute the former colonial trade with new national industries. On the other hand, in South America, free trade with the British was a motivational factor in rebellions against Spain, as it was in the process of Brazil's independence from the Portuguese Crown. In the early days of the South Atlantic Republics, British, French, Dutch and German investments were welcomed with enthusiasm by the new elites. And yet, even though the Haitian Revolution had contributed to the abolition of slave trade in Great Britain and in the United States – since it fostered the development of campaigns to abolish slavery with a enormous impact on the Southern states of the US – as well as supported the emergence of a black nationalism with an impact on calls for emancipated African slaves to return to Africa, the traditional economic institutions of the early Atlantic (slave trade, slavery and tropic plantations) did not immediately disappear.¹³

Technology and communications, the development of the modern capital and economic system, new migrations, cultural exchanges and the end of the slave trade and slavery itself caused the Atlantic to change drastically over the 19th century, in terms of both transcontinental and transnational connections. The transition, around the 1850s, from sail to steam, brought about an increase in mass migrations from Europe to the Americas, which by the end of the 19th century were connected by a particularly dense and secure transatlantic network of high-speed communications. Between 1820 and 1920, the world experienced an explosive population growth that led to migratory waves of European citizens to America (Canada, the US and Latin America countries). For instance, since their independence, the United States began an immigration policy characterized by the Open Door. With only three million people mainly from English ascendancy occupying a very extensive territory, there were no political or social forces against free immigration. On the other hand, the Open Door policy, with no restriction to any nationalities or creed, helped to reinforce one of the main ideas of the American Revolution: the construction of a free and democratic nation.¹⁴ The population of the United States rocketed between the years that followed the Napoleonic wars and the approval of restrictive migratory policies in the early 1920s. With the beginning of World War I, the racist and xenophobic trends grew in the United States, promoting the establishment of strong limitations to immigration. Nevertheless, the growth of industrial production, with USA becoming the main supplier of a destroyed Europe, postponed once more the establishment of wider restrictions. However, in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson's veto was not enough to prevent the establishment of a literacy test for new immigrants. This was the last step towards the implementation of a quota system based on the immigrants' nationality. The pressure from organizations such as the *American Federation of Labor*, the *American League* or the *Immigration and Restriction League* led to the approval of the Emergency Restriction Act in 1921. This law regulated the number of immigrants allowed to enter in the USA, based on their nationality. For the first time in the history of US immigration

¹³ Donna Gabaccia (2004), “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 9.

¹⁴ Lemay, Michael (1987). *From Open Door to Dutch Door: An analysis of US Immigration policy since 1820*. Westport: Praeger.

policy, a law limited the entrance of immigrants. According to this act, immigration from a certain country was limited to 3% of foreign-born persons of each nationality living in the United States in 1910.¹⁵

Much of this movement was a response to the European capital movement generated after the European industrial revolution. In fact, European capital was crucial to the development of the early railroad network in the Americas, in countries such as the US, Canada, the Caribbean and Latin America in general. The export of capitals around the Atlantic allowed the development of free trade policies, especially with Great Britain, promoting the development of maritime trade routes from Europe to the Americas. In other words, the European industrial revolution, followed by the industrial development in Northern America, contributed to the expansion of an import-export oriented economy between the North and South Atlantic. Around 65 million Europeans crossed the Atlantic, contributing (as manpower and as consumers) to the creation of industrial infrastructures such as factories, railroads, cities, roads, etc. and assuring the maintenance of many sugar, coffee or banana plantations after the end of slavery.¹⁶

The migratory and economic transfers between these regions also had impact in terms of cultural exchanges. For instance, for many Latin American countries, the European capitals and, especially, Paris, became the most significant cultural centers. In the North, the English-speaking North Atlantic triangle rendered the connections between the US, Canada and Great Britain considerably close. In scientific terms, the influence of French positivism and Darwinism in the Americas were also particularly noticed. Nevertheless, these interactions were not only centered on a North-North or North-South relation. After many centuries of slave trade, a migratory movement from below and from outside the Atlantic followed the abolition of slavery. Chinese and Indian immigrants arrived in the US, Latin America and the Caribbean in order to sustain the plantation system after the abolition.¹⁷

In essence, in the end of the 19th century, and thanks to the fact that railroads now crossed the territory, the political map of America was defined (in 1890, the US Bureau of Census declared the frontier closed after Western Expansion). From then and beyond, no European power would again become an American power, which was further confirmed with the Spanish defeat in the war of 1898. The political unity of the Atlantic, as it was known until then, had ceased to exist, even though economic, social and cultural interdependence prevailed.

3.1. Unfree migration: Slavery and the new role of Africa

It is unquestionable that the empires and the economies of the early Atlantic were built upon the slave trade that connected Africa, Europe and the Americas. By the late 18th century, around 2.5 million black slaves were working on plantations complexes that produced valuable commodities such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, cacao, indigo and cotton in the Americas and Africa. Nevertheless, it was the age of revolutions in the late 18th century and early 19th century that promoted the reevaluation of slavery and the anti-slavery movement. This is due to both ideological and political issues – religious reasons and the impact of the Enlightenment, as well as the slave rebellion in Santo

¹⁵ Gimpel, James, Edwards, James (1999). *The congressional politics of immigration reform*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 94.

¹⁶ Donna Gabaccia (2004), "A Long Atlantic in a Wider World", *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 10-11.

¹⁷ Donna Gabaccia (2004), "A Long Atlantic in a Wider World", *Atlantic Studies*, 1:1, pp. 1-27, 13-14.

Domingo after the French Revolution. This was a long process that started with the prohibition of slave trade by the 1830s, and only came to an end in the second half of the 19th century, with the emancipation of slaves in the United States between 1863 and 1865, Cuba in 1886 and Brazil in 1888. Still, the end of slavery in the Americas did not entail the end of slavery and forced labor in Africa – which was enforced by the imperial scramble for Africa in the late 19th century. In the Americas, if the collapse of slavery meant freedom for the Africans and the African-Americans, it certainly did not put an end to racial discrimination. In other words, “freedom, however, did not often bring full independence, prosperity, justice or civil rights. In their different national homes, the former slaves and their progeny were generally desperately poor and occupied the bottom rung of society’s ladder”.¹⁸

At the same time, in the Atlantic Africa, the second half of the 19th Century witnessed a new moment of the European imperial expansion. Triggered by the industrial revolution and a direct consequence of the growing competition between the European powers, this scramble for Africa changed the type of colonialism developed until then. In search for new markets and with a sense of superiority granted by controlling new technology and supported by the new scientific developments, the Europeans started a process of penetration and occupation of territories inside this continent. With the end of the slave trade, Africa quickly became the centre of dispute between the European powers, not yet recovered from their colonial losses in the Western hemisphere, in a process that established much of the current frontiers that separate most of the African countries.¹⁹

Indeed, European imperialism in Africa was mainly an ideological project. The ideals of benevolence and the call of duty, the belief in European racial superiority and the martial impulse were important components of the “scramble for Africa”, even though contemporary historiography tends to put them in perspective. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 completely changed the political and economic map of Africa, dividing the continent. Nevertheless, resistance from local forces as well as criticisms and humanitarian reservations from many Europeans followed the process of European imperial modernization.²⁰

4. The 20th Century: The road to closer interconnection

The First World War opened a period of transition in the Atlantic area. In 1917, the US intervention was crucial in deciding the war in favor of France and Britain, but the support of the American democracy to the European allies did not reverse the separation between the two shores of the Atlantic. French Prime Minister Georges Clémenceau aimed to create an alliance between the United States, Great Britain and France, but US President Woodrow Wilson decided instead to promote the League of Nations. His objective was to arrange international relations in a whole new way, based on a notion of international community that mirrored the North-American constitutional model. However, the Senate inhibited the US participation in Wilson’s project and despite Brazil’s temporary membership (the country had followed the North-American intervention in the European war), the absence of the main American power in the

¹⁸ Thomas Benjamin (2009), *The Atlantic World. Europeans, Africans, Indians and their Shared History, 1400-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 615-617.

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm (1989), *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, New York: Vintage Books, pp. 56-83.

²⁰ Brendan Simms (2013), *Europe. The Struggle for Supremacy. 1453 to the Present*. London, Allen Lane, pp. 257-258

League of Nations was deeply felt and contributed to the quick discredit of the new intergovernmental organization.²¹

Nevertheless, what was probably the most remarkable consequence of Wilson's proposals was felt at the imperial dimension, both in Asia and in Africa. The President's references to self-determination sparked the beginning of the decolonization movement throughout the colonial empires, something that would only be profoundly felt in the second half of the 20th century, but that was born in the aftermath of the World War I. Precisely because of this dimension, Woodrow Wilson's project was always regarded by the European colonial powers, in particular Great Britain and France (the two most important victorious allies) with suspicion. These countries were unwilling to discuss their colonial empires and policies during the peace talks – except for those related directly to the former German and Ottoman territories outside Europe.²²

Therefore, what could have been an opportunity for overcoming the separation of the Atlantic – through the construction of a community bound by the League of Nations – was only another missed opportunity, either due to the United States' absence from the League or the unwillingness of the European powers to follow Wilson's principles regarding the idea of self-determination. Nonetheless, Woodrow Wilson's objective clearly shows that the United States were prepared to cross the Atlantic and become closer to the European powers, trying to influence them, thus reversing the traditional flow in the Atlantic, when the main influences were from Europe to the Americas.²³

But the interdependence between the Americas and Europe was most poignantly shown in the dramatic effects of the Great Depression. The different stages of the Great Depression are well known, since that *Black Tuesday* in the New York Stock Exchange, in October 1929, and until the collapse of the Vienna's *Kreditanstalt* in May 1931, as well as their consequences. The fragility of the financial and economic systems that connected Europe and the United States, which were particularly interdependent since the end of the World War I, had grave consequences. As Mary Nolan puts it, "the depression destroyed the institutions, ideas, and networks that had structured transatlantic relations". The immediate response to the crisis was a global rush to protectionism and the concentration on what was considered to be the national interest, despite how narrow its definition was. Instantaneously, the Euro-American disputes around issues such as reparations and war debts, the gold standard, and protectionism eventually "reshaped the transatlantic and global flows of goods, capital, and people".²⁴

4.1. The Cold War in the Atlantic

²¹ Erez Manela (2007), *The Wilsonian Moment. Self Determination and the International origins of the Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 25. Ernest May, Richard Rosecrance, Zara Steiner (2010), *History and Neorealims*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1-7.

²² Erez Manela (2007), *The Wilsonian Moment. Self Determination and the International origins of the Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 25.

²³ John Thompson (2010), "Wilsonianism: the dynamics of a conflicted concept", *International Affairs*, 86:1, 27-48.

²⁴ Mary Nolan (2012), *The transatlantic century: Europe and America, 1890–2010*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 104.

World War II and the Cold War led to a *rapprochement* between the various shores of the Atlantic. The Anglo-American war coalition, defined in the Atlantic Charter in mid-August 1941, persisted after the victory against Nazism and was later enlarged with the Washington Treaty and the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949.²⁵ The Atlantic Pact marked the assumption of the United States as responsible for the unity of the Western democracies and the institutionalization of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization confirmed that Washington was now a European power.²⁶ Separately, but simultaneously, the Rio de Janeiro Treaty consolidated collective security in the Western hemisphere. The United States became, at the same time, sponsors for the Western unity and the Atlantic division.²⁷

NATO brought together the United States and Canada to the United Kingdom and France, both of which were already associated with Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg in the Western Union Organization, and to Portugal, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Italy. Spain, one of the historical Atlantic powers, was left outside the transatlantic community, only becoming a signatory of the Washington Treaty after its democratization in the 1980s.²⁸

During the Cold War, NATO was able to survive to the successive crises and to the end of colonial empires. The North Atlantic Treaty and the allied stepping stones in Iceland, Greenland, Spitzberg or the Azores were decisive in assuring European security from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and South Atlantic. Western preponderance in the Atlantic was only disturbed sporadically during the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) or the Cuban and Soviet intervention in Angola (mid-1970s). However, the Soviet Union, as in fact imperial Germany in the 19th century, was never able to seriously threaten the Western European democracies', characterized by their maritime interests.

But it was not only on the security and political level that World War II had great consequences in terms of the Atlantic evolution. After the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) and NATO, the US policy in the initial post-war period tried to build a financial and economic system of agencies and agreements, following the Bretton Woods conference in July 1944. With the inter-war period seen as the main root of the European crisis that ended up in the Second World War, in Bretton Woods the states began to build a new monetary system in which currencies were convertible and nations could benefit mutually from the increase of trade. The objective was to create an alternative to the financial system prevailing in the pre-war decades, less rigid than the gold standard, and increasingly reliable and more mutually sustaining than a floating-rate currency regime. Following these conversations, the International Monetary Fund was set up – “to facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade” – and an international trading organization was proposed. In 1947, the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (later it became the World Trade Organization) took shape, in order to promote agreement on “tariffs and other concessions for contracting partners, as well as codes for trade practices and procedures and procedures for handling breaches and disputes”.²⁹

²⁵ Brendan Sims (2013), *Europe. The Struggle for Supremacy, 1453 to the Present*, London: Allen Lane, p. 370.

²⁶ Geir Lundestad (2005), *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From “Empire” by invitation to transatlantic drift*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 27-35, Tony Judt (2005), *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press.

²⁷ Lawrence Kaplan (2007), *NATO 1948. The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

²⁸ Carlos Gaspar (2012). *O futuro da comunidade transatlântica*. Lisboa: Cadernos do IDN.

²⁹ Tony Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 107-108.

Bretton Woods caused deep changes in the global financial system, with consequences for the Atlantic basin. For the first time, there were unprecedented levels of external interference in national practices, while currencies became convertible to each other in order to foster international trade. At the same time, the dollar assumed the role of leading currency in trade terms. For these reasons, “the post-war Bretton Woods system did not come about all at once”. The Soviet Union stood outside of this system and even countries like the United Kingdom and France only joined during the 1950s. It collapsed in the early 1970s, with the US Dollar abandonment of the international monetary system erected in Bretton Woods, giving birth to a liberalized floating-rate system that in a few years would contribute to the devaluation of national currencies and to the increase of non-fuel commodities. This situation worsened as a consequence of the two oil shocks of the 1970s, which introduced another element of uncertainty in the prosperous economies of the Western World. The growing competition from the newly industrialized countries of Asia, together with currency fluctuations and rising commodities, added to the stagnation of the developed economies of Europe and North America and led to increased unemployment rates in these countries.³⁰ These developments led to a profound change on the global and the Atlantic wealth distribution. Competition was the new motto in commercial terms, and this was accelerated with the end of the Cold War.

4.2. Cold War in the South

The strategic competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was concentrated around the East-West axis. In this dispute, the South Atlantic was of little relevance for the international balance of power during the Cold War.³¹ However, the post-Second World War, and especially the 1956 Suez *débâcle*, confirmed the relative decline of Western Europe, including France and the United Kingdom. There were two consequences to this decline. In Europe, we assisted to the acceleration of the European integration process, based on the reinforced Bonn-Paris axis, strongly supported by both Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations in Washington.³²

In Africa, on the other hand, it allowed the emergence of an independent fourth shore of the Atlantic. The so-called Euro-African unity was dissolved in a succession of independences that defined the end of the European overseas empires, as well as the projects of building a “third force” as an alternative to the United States and Soviet Union. In ten years, independent states replaced the former colonies in Africa and, in its Atlantic front, added to Morocco, Liberia and South Africa a set of new states, immediately recognized as member-states by the United Nations. The political map of the African Atlantic was completed after the independence of Cape Verde, S. Tome and Principe, Guinea-Bissau and Angola, in 1974-1975, and, already after the end of Cold War, Namibia. At the end of this process, the political map of the Atlantic was finally defined, as we know it today.

At the same time, during the 1960s, the United States, the Soviet Union and also China saw the newly independent Third World countries as stages where their dispute

³⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 107-108 and 453-456.

³¹ As Ian Lesser puts it “the Cold War strongly reinforced this North Atlantic axis. (...) The Non-Aligned Movement notwithstanding, the importance of actors in the «global south», where they mattered at all, was largely derivative of priorities and competitions centered elsewhere”. Ian Lesser (2010), *Southern Atlanticism. Geopolitics and strategy for the other half of the Atlantic Rim*, Brussels: German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels Forum Paper Series.

³² George-Henri Soutou (1996), *L'Alliance Incertaine. Les Rapports Politic-Strategiques Franco-Allemands, 1954-1996*. Paris: Fayard, pp. 58-123.

was to be fought. Despite the post-colonial Third World leaders' insistence on following a non-aligned path, they were part of this ideological conflict, which was fought between different development models. Thus, Cold War competition was magnified in the post-colonial regions of Asia and Africa, mainly because it overemphasized the local conflicts, which had much more to do with regional explanations than with ideological differences.³³

In Latin America, on the other hand, the Cold War did not change the main character of its relations with the United States. In fact, in Latin America, "the Cold War projection of US power was based on its existing strategic and economic predominance" which existed since the early 20th century. Institutionally, the foundations for assuring the US control in Latin America were developed in the late-1940s, with the signature of the Rio Treaty/Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (1947) and the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS), in the next year. From the diplomatic and intelligence point of view, the objective was now to fight communism, and Washington officials "expected a particularly high degree of conformity to US policy preferences".³⁴

However, the victorious Cuban Revolution of 1959 definitely set a turning point in the United States strategy for Latin America. The ideological element became a key factor in any intervention from Washington, overwhelming any other foreign policy goals the US might have concerning that region.³⁵ The different solutions found included an intense engagement of the US, either through direct military intervention or by encouraging the countries' armed forces to stage a coup (as for instance in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Chile). On the other hand, there was always local resistance, as the oppositions sought to distance from the influence of the United States. Therefore, there was a constant and strong instability in the region throughout the Cold War, particularly in the 1980s.³⁶

5. The End of Cold War and the post-9/11 world

The end of the Cold War opened the way to new possibilities for the Atlantic basin. Together, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the decolonization of Africa, the democratization of Latin America and of some areas of Southern Africa, and the emergence of major regional powers opened the way for a new moment in the inter-Atlantic relations.³⁷

³³ Michael Latham (2010), "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 2*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 279-280.

³⁴ John H. Coatsworth (2010), "The Cold War in Central America, 1977-1991" in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 3*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 203-204

³⁵ Jorge Dominguez (1999), "US-Latin American Relations during Cold War and its Aftermath", In *The United States and Latin America. The New Agenda*, edited by Victor Bulmer-Thomas and James Dunkerley, London, Institute of Latin America Studies, pp. 34-35.

³⁶ John H. Coatsworth (2010), "The Cold War in Central America, 1977-1991" in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 3*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁷ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003), *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also Gabrielle Lynch and Gordon Crawford (2011) "Democratization in Africa 1990-2010: an assessment". *Democratization*, 18: 2, pp. 275-310 and Whitehead, Lawrence (2001), *The International Dimensions of Democratization. Europe and the Americas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Despite the North Atlantic loss of its central position in international politics and South Atlantic minor strategic relevance, the so-called third wave of democratization³⁸ created a new homogeneity in the interaction between United States, Brazil and Latin America, in the relations between Americas and Europe, and even in the relationship between US, European Union, Brazil and South Africa. Additionally, the end of the bipolar conflict brought increasing relevance to the regional interactions, which became the “crucible source of legitimacy, leadership and soft power” in the South Atlantic. We have assisted to the rising of the regional powers, which have been encouraged to “take responsibility while responding to regional crisis”. Indeed, the regional powers are now seen as fundamental elements of world governance, from security to international economics – as it is clearly visible through the growing international attention given to them, through the invitation to attend the most relevant international meetings (G8 and World Economic forum meetings, for example).³⁹ Accordingly, the recognition of common interests in international and regional security issues, the increase of economic exchanges between all parties and the growing relevance of the political and cultural links in international relations confirm an intensification of the strategic interactions in the broad Atlantic area. These changes, frequently isolated from one another, still need to be politically and institutionally translated, in order to reinvent the lost Atlantic unity, under the auspices of liberty, security and free trade.

5.1. A new global order: the rise of the East

Ever since the end of the Cold War, the East has witnessed the emergence of the powers of the Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁰ The end of the bipolar conflict changed the international dynamics, allowing more room for the emergence of the regionalization tendencies that took the place of the bipolar division. The emergence of the Indo-Pacific has altered the outlook on Asia, previously focused in the Far East and Southeast Asia. In the recent years, we have witnessed the impressive rise of three competing powers that are changing the dynamics of security in the region - China, India and Japan⁴¹.

In a first stage, this process has evolved through the swift emergence of China, which was able to organize the region’s strategic, economic and political space. A variety of factors concurred to this process, among them the USA’s strategic contraction in the immediate Post-Cold War period and the weakening of Russia after the Soviet Union dissolution. Towards the end of the 20th century, China progressively established itself as the region’s main commercial partner, and the Asian financial crisis of 1997 consolidated the process of regional convergence. This process was accompanied by the bolstering of the existent international organizations (ASEAN and APEC) and the creation of others such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in an initiative by the Chinese foreign policy intended to show their partners the cooperating spirit of Beijing.⁴²

Despite the rhetoric, the tension between Beijing and Tokyo could not be mitigated. For twenty years, financial crises and economic stagnation had hindered the

³⁸ Samuel Huntington (1991), *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Londres, University of Oklahoma Press.

³⁹ Vieira, Marco Antonio and Chris Alden (2011), “India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA): South-South Cooperation and the Paradox of regional leadership”, *Global Governance*, 17, 507-528.

⁴⁰ Medcalf, Rory (2013), “The Indo-Pacific: What’s in a name?”.

⁴¹ Buzan, Barry, “Asia: a geopolitical reconfiguration”.

⁴² Gaspar, Carlos (2013), “A China e a transformação da Ásia”[China and the transformation of Asia], p.11.

rise of Japan as the main Asian power of the Post-Cold War. Yet the increase of economic interdependence with China was unable to temper the blatant tension between the two countries, clearly historical in its origin but which the growth of China's military capacity, on the one hand, and the constant tensions stemming from maritime disputes over the South China Sea, on the other, failed to erase. In this dynamic, the alliance between Washington and Tokyo remains vital to Japanese interests.⁴³

At the same time, in a more subtle yet not less effective way, we have witnessed the emergence of India as the third greatest economy in Asia, behind China and Japan. The democratic political regime in this country, which brings Delhi closer to Washington in the face of China's growth in military and economic capacities, renders them potential partners in the new global order. An instance of that was the nuclear deal with the USA (Indo-US nuclear deal) in 2006, which paved the way to the acknowledgement of India as a great power. Simultaneously, the Indian foreign policy came to regard the strengthening of relations with Southern Asia as the first step towards avoiding the potential siege that cooperation between China and Pakistan might entail. Such has been carried out through the progressive development of India's military capacity, particularly in what concerns the navy.⁴⁴

Having this in mind, the US is facing added difficulties in their attempt to keep the balances of power in the region. If, on the one hand, they remain the chief military power of the Indo-Pacific, still they are faced with the increasing military capacity of China in the Pacific, and with the ever greater difficulty of deepening their understanding with India – the most prominent common denominator between these countries, besides their democratic regimes, is not so much their shared values and interests as their fear concerning the increase of Chinese power. In this sense, Washington finds itself face to face with the need to encourage its relations with regional allies (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Philippines) in such a way as to lessen the costs of military commitment in the region. Should this commitment withdraw, it would result in the creation of a void in power that could but further the recent competition between the regional powers of the Indo-Pacific space.⁴⁵

5.2. The evolution of the Atlantic space in the New Global Order

Despite the current changes taking place in the global international order, the evolution of the Atlantic is still somehow dependent on the US predominance over the Atlantic region. In fact, Washington keeps a military and economic advantage over the greatest share of its allies and potential adversaries. It is undeniable that, in recent years, the US has exhibited certain internal and external vulnerabilities and weaknesses.⁴⁶ Internally, the economic problems that sprang from the Lehman Brothers crisis and the prolonged two-front war effort (Afghanistan and Iraq) uncovered the budgetary problem that had been dragging on since 2002. As a result of the excessive budget deficit, Washington decided on the exponential growth in external debt as a way to avoid financial problems that were worsened by the North American cycle of external intervention. The need to compromise, at the internal level, to cope with financial difficulties, laid bare to the international community the malfunctions of the North American political system, practically unable to achieve internal consensus in

⁴³ Yahuda, Michael (2011). *The International Politics of Asia-Pacific*. London: Routledge.

⁴⁴ Buzan, Barry, "Asia: a geopolitical reconfiguration", p. 4.

⁴⁵ Gaspar, Carlos (2013), "A China e a transformação da Ásia", pp. 19-20.

⁴⁶ Simon Serfaty (2011), "Moving into a Post-Western World", *The Washington Quarterly*, 34:2, p. 9.

order to face those responsibilities. Externally, the rise of a number of new economic powers, particularly in Asia (Japan, China and India), revealed a shift in the distribution of economic power that might echo the decline of the West in international politics.⁴⁷ Still, as we shall see further ahead, this has not hampered the strengthening of cooperation ties within the Atlantic area.

Contrarily to what is the case in Asia, the North Atlantic is based on a political, military and economic community bound by common values, interests and goals. Defined by Karl Deutsch in 1957 as a “pluralistic security community”, the Euro-Atlantic space followed the course, after 1945, towards the integration of the transatlantic political actors. By integration we mean the acquisition, within a territorial unit, of a ‘sense of community’ – the belief, held by the actors’, that the resolution of the problems should be carried out preferably with no recourse to force and by the institutionalization of political processes – which leads to the creation of institutions and strong and widespread practices that ensure the peaceful resolution of problems within that community.⁴⁸ Key to the shaping of Karl Deutsch’s thought is the community of Western democracies gathered around NATO.

After the end of the Cold War, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett retrieved these concepts, stressing the dynamics of values, identities, interests and multi-faceted interplay. Above all, however, Adler and Barnett point out that the security communities, after reaching a certain measure of maturity, acquire as an intrinsic feature the tendency to create relations that result in collective security arrangements.⁴⁹

In this sense, the maintenance of the US global influence cannot ignore Washington’s traditional allies, namely its Atlantic partners: Europe, Latin America and Africa. Even if only as an opposition to what is happening in the East, the transatlantic pivot remains vital for US role in the new global order. Additionally, the emergence of the new Asian powers is growing outside Asia. These countries’ economic diplomacy, along with their need for natural resources to sustain their industrial production, is leading to the rising influence of China and India not only in Europe – as the purchase of sovereign debt from the Eurozone countries shows – but also in Africa and Latin America (Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, South Africa, Brazil and Venezuela).⁵⁰ In fact, the South Atlantic has had a growing strategic relevance in terms of natural resources, both at the energetic level and in terms of food supplies (fish and agriculture).

In this sense, the South Atlantic has emerged as an area of economic prosperity and a very important region in terms of energy production, especially countries such as Brazil, Nigeria or Angola, which in turn have grown in terms of their international relevance. The establishment of new patterns of international alignment followed this economic development, characterized by a diversification of the South-South relations,

⁴⁷ Art, Robert (2012), “Selective Engagement in the Era of Austerity”, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁸ Deutsch, Karl (1957). *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area*. Princeton : Princeton University Press. Deutsch differentiates between amalgamated (resulting from a fusion) security communities and pluralistic security communities. Unlike the first kind, implying the loss of sovereignty of several political units in order to form a wider entity, the second favours the maintenance of independent governments. Deutsch mentions that the one of the strengths of the constitution of pluralistic security communities is the smaller risk of rupture and separation, comparing to communities resulting from a fusion. However, their practicality is somewhat limited, inasmuch as their capacity for decision is dependent on negotiation between the various units that compose them – this may be seen as an advantage when the decision regards the use of nuclear weapons.

⁴⁹ Adler, Emanuel; Michael Barnett (1998). *Security Communities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

⁵⁰ Simon Serfaty (2011), “Moving into a Post-Western World”, p. 11.

over the traditional North-South linkages – with Brazil being a pioneer in such diversification. In particular, we assist the growing cooperation at the military and naval level between Brazil and South Africa, which have opposed the expansion of NATO to the South Atlantic.

This evolution will bring security challenges to the Atlantic. Issues such as organized crime and drug trafficking networks that reach Europe through Latin America and Africa; religious extremism that spreads through Africa's fragile states; the increasing smuggling of carbon gas in the Gulf of Guinea region; the environmental threats in Africa and Latin America, the growing pressure for nuclear proliferation in countries such as Brazil, reinforce the necessity for a increasing stronger cooperation between the different shores of the Atlantic. This can only be possible if the Atlantic partners understand that changes in the security patterns will threaten the *global commons* which bring together the international order, on the one hand, and that this strengthening cannot be made exclusively through the traditional multilateral cooperation organizations, on the other. Nonetheless, developing isolated strategies of cooperation between the South-South partners will also create a centrifugal dynamic on a historically, economically developing homogeneous region. This will only favor the Asian emerging powers interests in the region.⁵¹

This leads us to a second concept, crucial to the characterization of the Euro-Atlantic space: the dynamics of collective security. Collective security implies a formal long-term commitment between states with the purpose of protecting their security interests. The notion is centered in an eminently internal dynamic – the members of a certain group gather around a set of values, ideas and norms with the purpose of ensuring the defense of their security interests, by force whenever necessary⁵².

Ever since the end of World War II, Europeans and North Americans witnessed their identities, institutions and interests becoming closer, which made it possible to reach consensus regarding global order. Issues such as the use of force, multilateralism and the need to cooperate in matters of security are envisaged by both shores of the Atlantic as fundamental, namely in terms of the need to fight transnational terrorist networks and to ensure cyber security and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. However, this does not imply the existence of a perfect harmony of interests. Matters such as defense 'burden-sharing' or the replacement of North American leadership in certain areas of the globe continue to create frictions in transatlantic relations, particularly in the North where there are already formal alliances.⁵³ Still, as Simon Serfaty claimed, "the United States and Europe remain the least dispensable bilateral relationship in the world". The main challenge for both sides of the North Atlantic is to keep the Euro-Atlantic community bound by a compatibility of interests, objectives and values.⁵⁴

The transatlantic crisis brought about by the North American invasion of Iraq led to one the worse moments in transatlantic relations since the end of the Cold War. The situation persisted until the end of George W. Bush's term of office. With the Obama administration the strongest tendency is the re-establishment of Euro-Atlantic convergence, even though Europe's concern regarding the shift of the North American

⁵¹ Lesser, Ian (2010), "Southern Atlanticism Geopolitics and strategy for the other half of the Atlantic rim".

⁵² Cohen, Richard (2001), "Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Stability", in Richard Cohen e Michael Mihalka *Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order*, The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, p. 12.

⁵³ Le Gloannec, Anne-Marie, Muniz, Manuel (2014), "Redefining Transatlantic Security Relationship".

⁵⁴ Idem, p. 16.

strategic interest to the Asia-Pacific. Nonetheless, there are three dynamics that seem to show North Atlantic willingness to increase convergence. In the first place, the likely conclusion of the TTIP may also promote the reinforcement of the transatlantic community.⁵⁵ This deal may signal the strengthening of the transatlantic partnership also from the strategic point of view, while at the same time reinforcing both blocks in other global regions. In other words, the TTIP may very well mean a ‘Transatlantic renaissance’.⁵⁶ This renewed transatlantic partnership can result in the mobilization of societies from both sides of the Atlantic, with the TTIP becoming a source for the restoration of Western leadership in the international order. Given the difficult economic recovery after the financial crisis of the last years, the TTIP may contribute decisively to the economic recovery both of the USA and the European Union, which will open a door for the political revitalization of the two blocks in such a way as to revitalize the positions of leadership lost in the simultaneous process of the economic crisis and the ascension of the rising economies (China, India, Brazil, etc.). It is crucial that the Atlantic liberal democracies remain “an anchor of the liberal values and practices”, allowing the West to face up to the rise of other regions in the global system.⁵⁷ At the same time, the TTIP strengthens the transatlantic community, adding to NATO the institutionalization of relations between the US and the EU.

Secondly, the invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated the limits of the enlargement to the East of NATO and the EU. Europe is now a more unsafe region than it was five years ago. The invasion of Crimea and the support given to separatist movements in Ukraine challenge the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 (protection of Ukrainian territorial security provided the dismantlement of their nuclear arsenal) and it is weakening the credibility of NATO and the EU, if the transatlantic partners fail to find a reasonable solution for their interests. Russian revisionism came to demonstrate that the security community of the North Atlantic and the need for and confirmation of collective security, in the framework of NATO, have never made so much sense.⁵⁸

Thirdly, the emergence of the ‘arc of crisis’, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, stresses the need for a Euro-Atlantic understanding concerning the fight against transnational terrorist movements. Despite both sides being reluctant as to the new military involvement in Syria and Iraq as a way to fight Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS), the Western hesitation created a void in power that is spreading to other regions of the Middle East. The solution adopted by the Western partners to deal with this matter will have a blatant impact at the regional level, which will reflect globally.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Niblett, Robert, et. al. (2014), *Collective Defence and Common Security: Twin Pillars of the Atlantic Alliance*, Chatham House, p. 5.

⁵⁶ V. Nuland, “Toward a Transatlantic Renaissance: Ensuring Our Shared Future”, 13 November 2013, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/nov/217560.htm>

⁵⁷ Charles Kupchan, “Parsing TTIP’s Geopolitical implications”, *Transatlantic Partnership Forum Working Paper Series*, <http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/publications/books/The%20Geopolitics%20of%20TTIP/TTIP%20geopolitics%20obook%20kupchan%20final.pdf> (consulted on 16.06.2014).

⁵⁸ Hamilton, Daniel (2014), “Transatlantic Challenges: Ukraine, TTIP and the struggle to be strategic”, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁹ Hamilton, Daniel (2014), “Transatlantic Challenges: Ukraine, TTIP and the struggle to be strategic”, p. 37.

Conclusion

The Atlantic is considered, even in the historical perspective, as an autonomous entity. In the last two centuries, despite the major changes it went through, this common identity still prevails. In fact, the American and French Revolution represent a cut within the evolution of the Atlantic from the political point of view. The independences of the European colonies and the establishment of republics in most Latin American countries during the first half of the 19th century further confirmed this rupture. However, from the economic, cultural and social perspective, the tendency was to a greater interdependency within the Atlantic basin. The World War II brought greater rapprochement between the four margins of the Atlantic. This was stronger in the North, because of NATO, but became generalized in the Atlantic basin due to the economic dynamics. After the third wave of democratizations, both in Latin America and Africa, this rapprochement became undeniable.

The post-Cold War and, even more, the post-9/11 developments led to a redefinition of the international order, with a diminishing global leadership of the United States, and simultaneous emergence of the Asia-Pacific region and of some individual economies in South Atlantic. In this period, the North Atlantic continues to benefit from the existence of a stable, stronger institutionalization of the transatlantic relations, whereas in the South, the emerging powers seem to adopt a strategy of greater autonomy, which may, in the long term, be beneficial to the Asian powers, eager to a greater penetration in the Atlantic. Since the end of World War II, the Euro-Atlantic security community was the method employed by democracies to assure peace and security in their midst. And cooperative security was the principle adopted by the security communities. Now, the experience of the North Atlantic democracies was merely the first step. Since the end of the Cold War, a number of other democracies are in a position to reinvent security communities within their own regional spaces. The Atlantic may become a larger political, economic and security community.

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