



# ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

## 08 Perspectives from Germany

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### ABSTRACT

The twenty individuals from Germany interviewed for this project emphasized the critical importance of transatlantic relations for Europe. Despite its relative decline in power, the United States is still considered Europe's most important security and economic partner. The interviewees accordingly emphasized the need to conclude the current TTIP negotiations successfully. The emergence of a pan-Atlantic community on the other hand met more scepticism, as interviewees pointed towards the still existing lack of consolidated liberal democracies and resilient markets in Latin America and even more so in Africa. Moreover, they perceived a lack of common values and shared interests across the regions of the South Atlantic and the regions of the North Atlantic.

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## 08

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## 1. Introduction

During the second half of 2014, the author of this country report interviewed twenty German representatives of the German public sector, business community, civil society sector, academia, and the media about their perceptions of the Atlantic space. The interviews, which were conducted in a semi-structured manner, lasted anywhere between 30 and 75 minutes. Despite the diverse backgrounds of the interviewees, there was widespread agreement about some of the key topics raised in the interviews. The interviewees identified concentric circles of values, networks and institutions, and common interests in the Atlantic space. The transatlantic community thereby forms the core of the pan-Atlantic region. Europe and North America share numerous fundamental values, ranging from beliefs in the inviolability of political rights and individual freedoms, as expressed in the institutions of democracy and liberal markets, to Christian values such as justice and charity. Furthermore, Europe and North America share several mutual economic and security interests. This community of values and shared interests forms the foundation of a dense web of networks, regimes, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations that connect the societies, markets, and states across the North Atlantic. In turn, these institutions reinforce common values and a sense of shared interests. Most of the twenty representatives thereby expressed a strong desire that this web is further strengthened through the successful completion of the ongoing TTIP negotiations.

Moving from the core of the North Atlantic southwards, interviewees saw a decline in shared values and norms as well as common interests and institutions. While Latin America in general maintains relatively close ties to the United States (US) and, less so, to Europe, interviewees noted that the region of Latin America is not homogenous. Some countries have rapidly developed into prosperous economies and stable markets (notably, Brazil), whereas other countries are troubled by political and economic instabilities. This description of diverging developments is even more accurate for Africa, which few interviewees considered closely linked to the other Atlantic regions in terms of values, institutions, and interests. While almost all interviewees argued that the relative importance of Africa and Latin America in the Atlantic area has increased in comparison to North America and Europe, they also observed that it was primarily potentially negative spill-over effects that emerge from these regions such as illegal trade in arms, weapons, and human beings, health epidemics, terrorism, etc.

While these challenges could potentially steer the establishment of pan-Atlantic institutions that would shape the emergence of a pan-Atlantic community, very few interviewees considered the realization of a pan-Atlantic community likely. Most interviewees didn't see any powerful actors in the Atlantic that would move this project forward. The powerful and influential players in the Atlantic area – notably, the United States, the European Union (EU), France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, and South Africa – do not see many common interests that would motivate them to build a pan-Atlantic community. Many interviewees did not even see the need to build such a community, arguing that the Atlantic space is not a geographic space that overlaps with some of the core challenges the world faces today, which are either of truly global nature (e.g., climate change) or of regional or subregional nature such as desertification and access to potable water. The management of such scarce resources is considered critical, but could not effectively be done within a pan-Atlantic institutional framework.

## 2. The relative importance of the Atlantic region

### 2.1. Taking stock

Among the twenty interviewees, there was almost unanimous agreement that the importance of North America and Europe has declined relative to Latin America and Africa, but especially when compared to the emerging powers in Asia. Trying to explain this shift, several interviewees noticed that the US has been less and less willing to play the role of the world's policeman. As far as Europe is concerned, interviewees noted that the EU has been weakened by several crises (notably, the financial crisis) which have caused the EU to be more introspective and less assertive. Moreover, both Europe and North America have grappled with severe economic downturns.

Nevertheless, all interviewees agreed that transatlantic relations between Europe and North America remain critically important to Europe, even despite a reorientation of US foreign policy towards Asia. All interviewees also concurred that the US remains the most powerful player in the world. One interviewee even argued that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the emergence of a new Cold War in the wake of the Ukraine crisis might have already increased the importance of the US and Europe after a short period of relative decline in the past ten years.

As far as Latin American and Africa are concerned, most interviewees argued that it would be difficult to treat either of these two regions as homogenous units. While some countries have notably risen in importance – (e.g., Brazil in Latin America and South Africa in Africa) – other countries have stagnated or even fallen further behind (e.g., some Central American countries and most African countries). Yet despite this uneven picture, most interviewees agreed that at least Africa has become relatively more important – for both good and bad reasons. On one hand, some interviewees applauded the economic rise of South Africa and a few other African countries (e.g., Nigeria and Botswana), which highlight the continent's tremendous potentials. On the other hand, the same and other interviewees noted the many negative headlines that keep Africa on the radar of German policy-makers such as Ebola and the rise of the Islamic State.

In short, regions can rise in importance simply because negative developments might draw outside attention because they (could) spill over to other regions. Africa is a case in point. Regarding Latin America, several interviewees noted equally diverging developments. On one hand, Brazil has been the rising star (though some interviewees argue that it might have already reached its zenith). On the other hand, fragile states, governance problems, drug cartels, and the growing gap between rich and poor especially in Central America overshadow the otherwise positive developments in this region of the Atlantic. These negative developments have already spilled over to North America, forcing it to cope with the illegal trade in drugs, weapons, and human beings.

### 2.2. Future developments

The majority of interviewees assumed that Africa's importance would further increase in coming decades. Yet again, some emphasized the negative developments such as increasing security concerns and migration from Africa to Europe; whereas others pointed towards the tremendous growth potentials of Africa (commodity markets, energy and coastal resources, etc.). It might be that governance problems hold Africa back for a couple of decades, but in the long run Africa will take advantage of its economic potentials. Only two interviewees (a manager in a civil society association and a media analyst of international affairs) argued that Africa will continue to stagnate, but no interviewee projected a decline of Africa's importance in the Atlantic region.

Many interviewees were also cautiously optimistic about Latin America. Here, caution stems from concerns about future developments in Brazil and the ability of Latin American countries to cooperate more closely with each other and with North America. Cautious optimism also prevails concerning Europe and North America. While interviewees acknowledged the severity of the crises Europe currently faces, there was also hope that Europe will emerge from these crises even stronger. A representative of a business association especially stressed the importance of TTIP for Europe. On the other hand, a leading member of the federal parliament was somewhat gloomy about the future of Europe, pointing towards the accumulation of too many crises in a relatively short time (e.g., financial crisis and Ukraine). Concerning North America, interviewees focused on the US. While it was assumed that the US would remain Europe's most important strategic partner and one of the most powerful military powers in the world, there were also some doubts about the course that the US would take in its foreign policy (internationalist or isolationist).

To conclude, most interviewees saw Africa gaining in relative importance, for good or bad reasons. Latin America might also become more important, but more due to positive economic developments. Concerning North America and Europe, opinions were divided. It would therefore be safe to assume that *relatively* speaking, Africa and Latin America become more, and North American and Europe less important in the Atlantic space. Most interviewees stressed the rise of Asia, however. They assumed that Asia would outpace every Atlantic region in the foreseeable future. One Africa expert also remarked that China heavily invested in Africa's growth markets, raising concerns that Europe might miss an opportunity on this continent.

### 3. Thematic areas

#### 3.1. Economy and finance

All four interviewees who focused on the area of economy and finance considered growth of trade and investment inflows most important. The question is how to achieve this growth. A manager of a company hoped that new free trade agreements, especially in TTIP, would help his company to increase exports to the US. Focusing on Latin America and Africa, the representative of a business association stressed the importance of new transport routes and infrastructures. According to this interviewee, the lack of reliable transport routes and infrastructures has slowed down economic growth in these regions. The same interviewee further argued that we also needed to look at how economic policies are formulated and implemented. If the rest of Latin America followed the examples of Venezuela and Argentina, economic growth would stall and investment flows would dry up.

A long time Latin America media analyst noticed that too much emphasis was currently put on free trade agreements. First, these trade agreements lead to socioeconomic hardship in Latin America and Africa. Free trade is often not fair trade. Second, international financial flows were even more disruptive, undermining sustainable and socially just development in the global South. Yet no effective institutions have been put in place to regulate these financial flows and other social issues such as child labour (see also: Rodrik 2012).

The interviewees pointed towards several institutions that were in place to foster economic and financial cooperation across the Atlantic. These formal intergovernmental institutions usually have a global scope such as the IMF and the WTO; the G 20 and the G 7. In addition, regular meetings between government representatives include just countries of the Atlantic space such as various EU-Latin

America summits. In addition to government meetings, various conferences and working groups connect the industrial associations in Europe and Latin America.

### **3.2. Security**

Seven of the twenty interviewees expressed their interest in the security aspects of the Atlantic space. As far as the identification of severe threats is concerned, the interviewees pointed out that threats varied from region to region. One interviewee also argued that not everything that the public considered a pressing security concern is actually one (e.g., terrorism). Finally, several interviewees added other security concerns to the list.

Fragile states were frequently considered the most important security issue, especially in Africa. A political scientist and an official of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs even called it the root cause of many other security challenges (e.g., terrorism and illicit trafficking). However, other interviewees rejected such a unidirectional argument, arguing that security challenges interacted and that multi-causality created a more complex picture. Illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons, and human beings was also considered an important security challenge, but more so for Latin America than for other Atlantic regions. As far as terrorism is concerned, a journalist pointed out that the general public deemed this an important security concern. Yet the interviewee further argued that perception does not match reality. Illegal trafficking would be much more important. Finally, maritime security was rarely mentioned as a top security concern.

The interviewees would like to see additional security threats mentioned. For instance, the head of a department in German ministry argued that poverty (in Africa) leads to fragile states and bad governance. Health risks (epidemics) and natural disasters were also mentioned as important security concerns as they easily spill over to other regions. Radicalization and especially the rise of Islamic extremism should also be added to the list of security challenges. Finally, a journalist argued that we should look beyond the illegal trafficking of human beings and consider the vast South-North migration as a new security threat that cannot be dealt with via traditional security measures.

As far as forums are concerned in which these security issues are addressed, interviewees mentioned the “usual suspects” of international organizations such as United Nations, NATO, World Bank, IMF, EU, G7, etc. Somewhat surprisingly, the interviewees frequently also mentioned think tanks that provide arenas for research and discussions such as the RAND Corporation, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, and the Munich Security Conference. However, according to one journalist, there is no effective institution in place to deal with what he considers the most important security challenge – that is, migration.

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

Five interviewees responded to questions concerning the role of people and institutions in the Atlantic space. No clear ranking has emerged from the interviews. The interviewees did not agree on priorities and, more importantly, they pointed out that challenges varied in importance from region to region. To start, the challenge of democratization and democratic consolidation was mentioned as a priority by four of the five interviewees. The fragility of nascent democratic institutions and continuing existence of non-democratic regimes in Africa and Latin America was prevalent. Yet one interviewee remarked that democracy and human rights were also under pressure in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in Europe due to the war on terrorism. As two interviewees argued though, democracy has lost its appeal. The West was now more concerned about the stability of states, be they democratic or not, than about

democracy. Nascent democracies were considered unstable by governments in Europe and North America, potentially harbouring terrorists and pirates. Western democracy promotion has become a contested policy. The democratic-autocratic divide has therefore ceased to shape international relations. Only in the case of gross human rights violations, such as genocide, do Western states unite and react against rights violators, which are primarily located in Africa (and Asia).

Migration was also mentioned as an important challenge. The interviewees considered migration flows from Africa to Europe and from Latin America to North America as a pressing problem with the potential to spark conflicts within and between countries. Migration is also a challenge that has been poorly addressed by international institutions. As a university professor argued, the severity of the issue was not matched in any significant way by the institutionalization of international cooperation to address this challenge. In contrast, diplomatic exchanges were a topic that not one of the interviewees deemed important.

Finally, some interviewees emphasized that the fragility of states was not just a problem in Africa, but also in Latin America and that it was not just a security challenge, but also a challenge for the protection of human rights and the consolidation of democratic rule. After all - no state, no democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996). And even though states are sometimes perpetrators of egregious human rights violations, it is also true that without strong states human rights are always in peril. Functioning state institutions are therefore necessary conditions for democracy and human rights protection.

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

Four interviewees focused on resources and the environment. Three of the four interviewees considered resource depletion a pressing issue. Since resources encompass not just natural resources (oil, gas, etc.) but also (fresh) water, forests, arable land, and fish stocks, the management of these resources is of critical importance. In this regard, said the manager of an NGO association, governance of the oceans should be a priority. Moreover, the management of rapidly depleting freshwater sources and arable land due to desertification should also be on the priority list, according to the representative of an international environmental NGO. Climate change is thereby a critical intervening variable. The more severe climate change becomes, the harder it will be to manage these resources. Climate change adaptation should therefore be considered an integral part of resource management.

The transformation of the energy sector is however not considered a top priority. As the representative of a large German utility argued, in the rapidly industrializing countries a transition to a renewable energy system is currently unrealistic, given the immediate need for cheap and reliable energy sources. In the industrialized world, on the other hand, the path towards carbon-free energy systems is already laid, according to a representative of an international environmental NGO. To him, land and fresh water scarcity is a more pressing issue than energy scarcity.

As far as related forums are concerned, none of the interviewees could identify international forums that focus just on the Atlantic for issues related to the environment and resources. Yet the interviewees did not regret this lack of Atlantic forums, arguing that these problems are either of a more local/regional (e.g., management of regional ecosystems) or truly global nature (e.g., climate change). According to the representative of an international environmental NGO, the Atlantic is simply not a useful geographic area to address the issues of climate change adaptation and resource management. The representative further argued that the key drivers of

change emerge at the national and subnational levels of large countries. International institutions become only relevant when they can accelerate these processes of change at the national and subnational levels. For climate change, the relevant global forum is the UNFCCC. For energy, the relevant international forums are the World Energy Council and the International Energy Agency.

## 4. Concepts, trends, and projections

### 4.1. Principles, norms, and values

Most interviewees agreed that at least on the face of it, some fundamental values are shared across the Atlantic. Democracy, human rights (especially individual rights), economic freedom and free markets, common business practices, but also fundamental Christian values (e.g., the focus on individualism) are most often mentioned and highlighted when talking about values that set the Atlantic space apart from Asian and Muslim countries. Yet interviewees also pointed out that values were not equally shared across the Atlantic. It is therefore helpful to think about concentric circles. In the inner circle, we find Europe and North America, forming a strong community of shared values. Latin America is situated in the next circle in which many, but not all Latin American countries share common values especially with the United States and southern European countries. Finally, Africa is situated somewhat outside as only the Christian countries in Africa share at least some values (e.g., human rights) with the countries of the other three regions. Some interviewees explained the density of shared values by pointing to colonial history (e.g., the spread of Christianity from Europe to the other three Atlantic regions) and migration patterns. This history and migration flows have tightly linked Europe and North America as well as Latin America to (southern) Europe and, more recently, to North America. Colonial history and the slave trade also link Africa to North America and Europe, but much less so.

There were also more critical voices among the interviewees. One interviewee argued that some truly universal values exist and even though they are not strongly shared, they connect communities around the world in ways that it would be difficult to distinguish an Atlantic community of values that is set apart from the rest of the world. On the opposite end, another interviewee mused whether we even have a strong community of shared values just among European societies. The European elites certainly share a strong belief in neoliberal economic values, which sets them apart from the general public. Yet among the general public, the only value that this interviewee can identify is xenophobia – a negative norm that stands in the way of building communities across borders, but no less a norm.

Several interviewees also questioned the extent to which Europe and North America share common values. While the canon of values appears strong, below the surface significant differences appear. For instance, the protection of life is a fundamental value in Europe, but not so much in the United States (death penalty, vast military engagements abroad). Related to this issue is the legitimacy of the use of force. Whereas Europeans find the use of force in general illegitimate, Americans are less concerned and find the use of force by the state at home and abroad often necessary.

Whereas Europeans strongly believe in the right to privacy and the protection of personal data, Americans are much less concerned about who has access to their personal data and how much access private companies and state institutions have.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that these interviews were conducted shortly after the NSA affair which highlighted these differences in values.

Moreover, whereas most Europeans think of freedom as the freedom *from* something (e.g., freedom from state oppression), Americans think of freedom as the freedom to do something. Furthermore, whereas Americans stress individual rights and responsibilities, Europeans rely more on the state to guard against potential harm to individual welfare and promote personal advancement. In other words, whereas Americans hold on to the liberal belief in the state as a night watchman, Europeans (to various degrees) embrace welfare state capitalism. Differences in social and economic norms across regions are also palpable when looking at labour rights. Whereas Europeans protect worker's right to strike and organize, this right has been under attack in the US for a long time.

Looking at the differences in beliefs between the southern and northern regions of the Atlantic, a professor of International Relations pointed out that state sovereignty is a contested norm between these regions. Whereas Europeans and, to a lesser degree, Americans are willing to transfer sovereignty towards international organizations to strengthen the governance of global commons such as the environment as well as human rights; Latin Americans and Africans are more sceptical and less willing to compromise their newly gained sovereignty. Likewise, whereas the rule of law is strongly embedded in (northern) Europe and the United States, the rule of law is strong only in a selected few countries of Latin America (e.g., Chile) and barely in Africa. Moreover, the commodification of nature is considered problematic in the Northern hemisphere, whereas the protection of nature is considered a luxury among the developing countries of the global South.

At a more general level, the classical Western norms and institutions, democracy and free markets, have lost their benchmark character. Latin America and Africa look towards China and consider authoritarianism and state-led economic growth suitable alternatives to the Western model.

Concluding this section with a word of wisdom, one interviewee rightly cautioned that we should not confuse values with the translation of values into actual institutions and policies. For instance, whereas functioning democratic institutions are rare in Africa, the lack of democracy in this region should not lead us to the erroneous conclusion that Africans do not value political liberties. It would therefore make sense to consider cross-regional value surveys [e.g., the World Values Survey (WVS 2015)].

#### **4.2. Cooperation and interests in the Atlantic**

At a general level, the interviewees identified differences in values and priorities as obstacles to cooperation. In addition to the value differences mentioned above, some interviewees pointed towards the difficult balance between security concerns and civil liberties that Europeans and Americans strike in different ways, with the Americans emphasizing security and the Europeans individual freedom. These differences have caused a loss of trust among the transatlantic partners, which in turn has made the road towards TTIP a rocky one as the public in Europe rallies against a project they consider being forced upon them by the US. As will be summarized further below, most interviewees argued that a failure of the TTIP negotiations might create a serious backlash for transatlantic relations.

In addition, two interviewees argued that Europe's internal divisions and current weakness might discourage the US from developing stronger ties across the Atlantic, assuming that the US wants a strong partner. Furthermore, with all regions of the Atlantic looking towards Asia, there might be an unwillingness to invest in the Atlantic community, overcoming existing roadblocks towards further cooperation. Among these roadblocks are the numerous non-tariff barriers that retard trade across the Atlantic as well as cumbersome bureaucracies, red tape, and outright corruption that are still

prevalent in many African and some Latin American countries. Weak property protection in these countries was also mentioned as an obstacle to investment flows from Europe and North America towards Latin America and Africa. As a representative of a German business association further argued, it would be easier to strengthen trade and investment links across the Atlantic if intra-regional integration proceeded faster. Namely, the slow progress of the Mercosur negotiations has stalled Latin America's economic development and prevented the region from developing stronger ties with the other Atlantic regions.

Despite these obstacles to cooperation, interviewees also saw convergent interests and similar concerns in the Atlantic space. The convergence of interests thereby seems to be driven by external threats and challenges. The rise of Asia – primarily, China and India – is considered an external catalyser that induces societies in the Atlantic space to develop and focus on common interests. As one interviewee stated, if we did not set the standards, China would do it for us. From a European perspective, it is also clear that in this multipolar world, Europe is too weak to build a strong pole on its own. It depends on the US. At the same time, as far as cooperation among democracies is concerned, the US also needs Europe to stem the rise of authoritarian powers in the world. The US and Europe are therefore mutually dependent, said a head of a unit in a German ministry.

Two interviewees from the business community further stated that the Atlantic regions also share a common goal of overcoming regulatory obstacles to more economic cooperation. Moreover, good governance appears to be a rapidly diffusing norm. However, as a representative of an international environmental NGO argued, we should not think of regions as homogenous units with distinct interests. Rather, different groups in the same region have frequently divergent interests. Yet they might share these interests with comparable groups in other regions. The fault lines of conflict and cooperation do not lie between countries and regions but within and across individual societies.

On balance, slightly more interviewees expected more cooperation across the regions of the Atlantic than conflict. Common interests will drive this cooperation in economic growth and in countering the rise of Asia. Types of cooperation thereby include the traditional types of security cooperation across the Northern Atlantic and between the former colonial powers and their colonies as well as new types of cooperation between Africa and Latin America. One interviewee who foresaw more cooperation in the Atlantic space cautioned though that this increase of cooperation might spark conflict between the Atlantic space and outsiders such as Russia and China which might plausibly consider the emergence of a pan-Atlantic community a threat to their own interests.

A few interviewees were more sceptical. They expected more conflict than cooperation, seeing no political effort to emphasize shared interests across the Atlantic and act on them. Too much concern for national interests undermines an intensification of cooperation, even though these national interests do not even objectively exist.

The interviewees mentioned the US, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the EU as well as Brazil and South Africa as the main players who will likely promote cooperation in the Atlantic. As far as spoilers of cooperation are concerned, a couple of interviewees were concerned about anti-globalization and/or anti-TTIP groups as well as the media that would publicly oppose economic integration. Islamic groups that might cause political turmoil and economic havoc through terrorist attacks were mentioned as well.

### **4.3. Role of the EU**

The role of the EU in the Atlantic varies from region to region. The three African experts largely downplayed the role of the EU in this region. Although some EU member states – namely, France, the UK, and Germany – have significant influence on the political and economic developments in their former colonies and other countries, the EU as such seemed to be less relevant, except for promoting good governance in African countries. It also seemed to lose ground to China which heavily invests in African economies. The EU has also failed to help societies in North Africa to consolidate their nascent democracies in the wake of the Arab Spring.

As far as North America is concerned, the responses of the interviewees varied depending on the policy area. In the area of trade and economic cooperation, interviewees found the EU has a relevant role, being an economic powerhouse and the chief negotiator on the European side in the TTIP negotiations with the US. Moreover, due to its economic weight, the EU helps to diffuse European standards in North American markets. Yet other interviewees pointed out that in the foreign policy and security arena the EU were weak and lacked coherence. In this area, the US government also tends to contact the heads of government of the large member states first before then turning to the EU. The reason might be, said one interviewee, that the US still lacks a clear understanding about the inner working of the EU and its character as a political actor.

Like in Africa, the role of the EU in Latin America is less relevant than the role of the former colonial powers (Spain and Portugal). Moreover, its role seems to be in relative decline as China is expanding its economic ties with this region. Nevertheless, as the CEO of an environmental think tank argued, the role of the EU as a soft power in Latin America should not be underestimated. Latin America and Europe share many cultural affinities. Latin America also looks to European legislation which Latin American countries can easily incorporate into their own laws as the legislation is already translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Moreover, the model of welfare state capitalism that most EU member states embrace is more appealing to many Latin American societies than the neoliberal model of the US. Finally, even though the US market and increasingly the Chinese market are more important to Latin America than the European market, Latin America still considers the European economies important trading partners.

The interviewees agreed almost unanimously that the EU should play a stronger role in the Atlantic space. The role of the EU is generally seen in a positive light, for instance, in being an agenda and pace-setter in international climate change negotiations. However, how the EU could assume a stronger role is not entirely clear. Most interviewees agreed that the EU member states would have to realize their common interests and act on it. Individually, the member states would have little weight in world affairs. Only united could they shape international relations. Alas, according to most interviewees, the EU lacks a united voice in many key areas from the high politics area of foreign and security policy to the low politics area of environmental protection and good governance. Without this common voice and subsequent pooling of resources and sovereignty, so the interviewees argued, the EU is doomed to continue playing a subordinate role in the Atlantic, save for its economic ties to North America.

### **4.3. Regionalism and interregionalism in the Atlantic**

Across the North Atlantic, dense societal, economic, and political networks exist. These networks are institutionalized through a range of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. The interviewees frequently mentioned NATO and the

OSCE, but also several global organizations such as the various UN organizations, World Bank, WTO, etc. Somewhat surprisingly, interviewees also listed think tanks with offices on both sides of the Atlantic as important forums to set agendas for transatlantic cooperation such as the Atlantic Council, Atlantic Bridge, and the German Marshall Fund. Furthermore, for specific policy areas, various international NGOs were mentioned such as Greenpeace and the WWF for environmental politics as well as Transparency International, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International for good governance and human rights. Finally, concerning economic and financial relations, the interviewees stressed the importance of multinational corporations and the various national and regional development banks such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Brazilian Development Bank, and the German KfW.

Almost all interviewees considered TTIP critically important to strengthen the transatlantic relations. It would create an institutional pillar in addition to NATO, intensifying the economic ties between Europe and the United States. It is thereby important to mention that few interviewees thought that TTIP would generate considerable economic growth. TTIP is more valued for its symbolic value, a clear declaration of the willingness of Europeans and Americans to work closer together and counter the growing power of China.

Yet several interviewees were sceptical as to whether the TTIP negotiations can be successfully concluded, noticing widespread scepticism among the European public who fear that TTIP would lead to lower environmental and labour standards in Europe. One interviewee voiced concern that even if TTIP were passed, the downward pressure on standards would create a public outcry, which would make conflict more, and not less likely – contrary to what the TTIP supporters envision.

Interviewees also disagreed as to whether TTIP could have a magnet effect, drawing Latin America and Africa closer to the North Atlantic. As Latin America worries about TTIP, fearing that the US could turn its attention away from Latin America entirely, it might try to join TTIP. In doing so, it would neglect its own regional integration projects, such as Mercosur. The interviewees who saw this possibility would regret such a development. In general, it was considered unlikely that any African and only few Latin American countries (Mexico and Brazil) would be able to join TTIP in the foreseeable future.

It is therefore also feasible that economic and societal ties between Europe, Latin America, and Africa remain underdeveloped compared to the dense web of networks that connect Europe and North America. Here, the interviewees emphasized the importance of the various intergovernmental meetings such as the EU-Africa Summit and the EU-Brazil Summit. As far as individual players are concerned that could promote further cooperation in the Atlantic space, the interviewees mentioned first and foremost the US, followed by the large European countries (Germany, France, Spain, and the UK) as well as Brazil and, to a lesser degree, South Africa. The EU was also mentioned as an influential player in the Atlantic space, but not prominently.

#### ***4.4. Perceptions on the pan-Atlantic space***

There was widespread scepticism among the interviewees that a pan-Atlantic community could emerge in the foreseeable future. As a member of the policy planning staff of the German Foreign Ministry pointed out, the transatlantic community between Europe and North America is unique. It emerged out of special circumstances, the Cold War, and it stands on a strong foundation of shared values. In contrast, the four Atlantic regions differ in almost every regard when looking at socioeconomic and

political developments. There is also no pressing reason to build this community. Moreover, as other interviewees noticed, the idea of a pan-Atlantic community misses powerful supporters. Europeans are currently preoccupied with keeping their own house in order and to prevent Africans from coming to Europe, which does not bode well for forming a community. The US is looking more towards Asia than the Atlantic, save for TTIP. Brazil is invested in the BRIC group in which it assumes a leading role. Why would it jeopardize this cooperation for something in which it would play a subordinate role to the US which it mistrusts in the first place? Finally, South Africa is too busy dealing with its own problems and could not do much on its own anyhow.

Furthermore, the interviewees questioned whether the pan-Atlantic is a useful geographic space in which a community can and should be built. First, some of the most pressing problems today are either of truly global nature (e.g., climate change) or they are more regional specific (e.g., land use in Africa and Latin America). In the latter case, outside countries have to become involved, but would not exclusively be countries of the Atlantic space (e.g., China is needed to solve problems related to land use in Africa). Interviewees therefore asked for functional cooperation, instead of community building. Second, outside powers might consider the building of a pan-Atlantic community an exclusionary, if not aggressive act, accelerating the block-building tendency in the global arena.

This is not to say that cooperation across the Atlantic has not intensified. Interviewees pointed towards the intensification of the transatlantic relations in the wake of the TTIP negotiations, terrorist attacks, and Russia's more recent incursion into Ukraine. Moreover, relations between the US and many Latin American countries have significantly improved. Finally, ties between European and Latin American business leaders and societies have also been strengthened. As one Latin America expert argued, Latin America could move much closer to Europe and North America if it were able to overcome intra-regional rivalries and integrate its markets more closely. Implementing Mercosur would therefore be an important step in the right direction.

Yet Africa remains a blind spot. Some interviewees projected that if a pan-Atlantic community were to emerge, it would probably not include Africa. Africa is still too disunited and diverse and the developmental gap between Africa and the other pan-Atlantic regions remains still large.

The interviewees emphasized several necessary conditions for a pan-Atlantic community (probably, minus Africa) to emerge. First, the EU would have to become a more united and stronger actor. Second, TTIP has to be implemented to strengthen the transatlantic axis. Third, the US would have to continue on its path to mend relations with some of its strongest critics in Latin America (mainly, the left-wing populist governments). Finally, Latin America becomes a more integrated region. If these conditions were met, certain triggers and developments could propel the emergence of a pan-Atlantic community forward that might even include Africa. For instance, if authoritarianism would continue to spread in Asia, but democracy would firmly take hold in the Atlantic space; this political bifurcation could encourage the democratic regimes of the Atlantic space to work more closely together to counter the authoritarian challenge. Yet these are a lot of "ifs" – in general, the interviewees were sceptical that a pan-Atlantic community could emerge in the foreseeable future.

## 5. Missing links

A couple of interviewees argued that to assess the state of pan-Atlantic cooperation, we should take a closer look at the type of government (democratic or not), protection of human rights, and demographic developments. In Africa, only half of the countries are democratic. In Latin America, the majority of the countries have democratic regimes. Yet like in the African democracies (not to mention the dictatorships), the protection of human rights and good governance is often highly deficient. These democracies do not compare well with the consolidated liberal democracies of Europe and North America. How can a community be built across such diverse political regimes, the interviewees wondered.

Another interviewee pointed towards diverging demographic developments. While migration helps the US to remain a country with a relatively young population, the greying of European societies is undeniable. These demographic trends could possibly lead to different agenda settings, as the perception of problems might vary. In turn, the transatlantic community might experience upheaval.

A third interviewee considered the current attempts to deal with financial crises insufficient. He pointed out that these financial crises were causing a rift within and between societies. As elites are usually less affected by these crises, the general public has to shoulder most of the economic hardship. This unfair burden sharing in turn causes nationalist backlashes, which do not bode well for cross-border cooperation and integration (see the current problems in the EU). In general, throughout the interviews, the inability of the elites to convince the general public of their various integration projects (e.g., TTIP, Mercosur, and the Economic and Monetary Union) was considered a major obstacle to further cooperation across the Atlantic.

## 6. Conclusions

This country report concludes with the interviewees' perception of the EU and its potential role in the Atlantic space. Almost all interviewees agreed that the EU should assume a stronger role in the Atlantic, praising the positive role that the EU as a civilian power could play in this area. To some degree, looking at economic cooperation across the Atlantic, the EU already plays this role. However, some interviewees expressed worries that diverging interests in the wake of the economic and financial crises might keep the EU divided and weak. Yet a weak Europe would not be an attractive partner to any one of the three other Atlantic regions. Most importantly, the US might turn away from Europe if it were not able to strengthen its common foreign and security policy and overcome popular resistance to what the interviewees currently considered the most important transatlantic project, TTIP.

In short, all German interviewees would like to see the transatlantic relations to be strengthened, but feel that this could only be achieved if the EU emerged out of the current crises stronger and more united. To what degree such an enhanced role should be used to build a pan-Atlantic community is less clear. Few German interviewees considered this project realistic and desirable.

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