



## POLICY REPORT

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### Elements for an EU's pan-Atlantic agenda: building an Atlantic community

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#### ABSTRACT

The Atlantic space – comprising the four regions along the Atlantic Ocean, namely North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Europe and Africa – is not a region defined by natural borders. Nevertheless, it can be conceptualized as a large geo-strategic space that is characterized by common features and challenges, from which it is possible to derive a number of linked-up dynamics and emerging trends. The Atlantic space is particularly relevant for the European Union (EU) and can be regarded both as an arena for its international projection and a test bed for its global governance agenda, particularly in regard to the adoption of the EU Global Strategy. This paper sketches out some elements for an EU's pan-Atlantic agenda: it focuses on both policy priorities that the EU should set and implement in an Atlantic dimension – in the four sectors of economy and finances, security, energy and environment, and people and institutions – and the type of engagement that the EU should develop with Atlantic partners in order to establish effective structures of governance.

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# ATLANTIC FUTURE POLICY REPORT

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## 1. Introduction

The Atlantic space – comprising the four regions along the Atlantic Ocean, namely North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Europe and Africa – is not a region defined by natural borders. Nevertheless, it can be conceptualized as a large geo-strategic space in which countries and communities interact according to security, economic, social, cultural and environmental dynamics that, one way or the other, affect all. The first key assumption of the ATLANTIC FUTURE project was that this geo-strategic space, which remains highly differentiated internally, is characterized by common features and challenges, from which it is possible to derive a number of linked-up dynamics and emerging trends. The second key assumption of the project was that the Atlantic space is particularly relevant for the European Union (EU) and can be regarded both as an arena for its international projection and a test bed for its global governance agenda.

In line with these assumptions, the main objective of the project was to identify the shaping actors and factors in the Atlantic space with a view to suggesting possible scenarios, analyzing policy implications and making recommendations for the EU's external action. In this paper, we sketch out some elements for an EU's pan-Atlantic agenda, which takes the diverging elements and the centrifugal forces in the Atlantic space into account, but builds on the shared features and the converging drivers that emerged from our study.

Our recommendations focus on both policy priorities that the EU should set and implement in an Atlantic dimension – in the four sectors of economy and finances, security, energy and environment, and people and institutions – and the type of engagement that the EU should develop with Atlantic partners in order to establish effective structures of governance. We also factor in the comparison with other spaces and the role played by external actors that are increasingly relevant for the Atlantic, notably China and other Asian countries. Finally, we understand the Atlantic space not only as the sum of a number regions and countries, but also as a system of communities and non-governmental stakeholders that cannot be excluded from an effective pan-Atlantic agenda.

## 2. Towards an EU Global Strategy. Why the Atlantic matters

In the last two decades, the EU has been confronted with a rapidly changing international environment. In order to face the new challenges and tackle the new opportunities deriving from it, the EU is currently rethinking its stance and actions at the global level. An EU Global Strategy will be presented by the High Representative (HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in June 2016, with the objective “to steer EU external action in an increasingly connected, contested and complex world” (EEAS 2015b). According to the HR, the effectiveness of the EU's response “hinges on the European Union's ability to make choices and prioritize areas where it can and wants to make a difference” (EEAS 2015b). The Atlantic space can assume a relevance in the attempt of the EU to reframe itself as a global actor. This implies an agreement on three fundamental assumptions: (1) the Atlantic space as a whole can serve the EU's interests as much as the traditional EU-US alliance; (2) the Atlantic space as a whole is conceivable as a distinctive area compared to other regions in the world; and (3) the Atlantic space is not only relevant *per se*, but also as a test bed for global governance. None of these assumptions can be taken for granted and all of

them are challenged by a number of competition, fragmentation and centrifugal trends. However, some of the main results of the ATLANTIC FUTURE project are clearly pointing out the scope for “a cohesive and meaningful Atlantic space” that can become a real “laboratory of globalization” (Ayuso and Viilup 2015: 3 and 5).

First of all, the Atlantic space can be instrumental to the EU’s projection in the international environment beyond the traditional North Atlantic partnership with the US. The Europeans and the Americans remain important partners in a number of crucial sectors ranging from commerce (together the EU and the US account for one-third of world trade) to security (mostly through NATO but also through EU-US institutional links and US bilateral relations with individual EU member states). They “are closer to one another than either is to any other major international actor”, but “in a world of more diffuse power, greater interdependence and intensified global competition, the North Atlantic partnership, while still indispensable, is now insufficient” (Hamilton 2015b: 3). This is even more true if we consider the domestic challenges – economic, institutional, political, social – that both the US and the EU, especially since the 2008-9 recession, had to face and their reduced ability to attain effective governance (Alcaro 2014: 5-6). Therefore, the EU is more likely to reposition itself effectively for the 21<sup>st</sup> century if it works together with the US to engage other actors in the Atlantic space as responsible stakeholders in institutions and networks (Hamilton 2015b: 3). This assumption seems in line with intentions recently stated by HR Federica Mogherini (2015): “when we speak of strong Transatlantic relations, we don’t only refer to the North Atlantic, but also to the South.”

Moreover, the Atlantic space retains a *raison d’être* as a distinctive arena for EU external action in two main dimensions. The first dimension concerns the fact that countries and peoples in the Atlantic space are confronted with a series of common challenges, particularly in the security, environmental and energy fields, which could be addressed more effectively in a cooperative and inclusive manner. The second dimension refers to a tendential convergence towards common values and norms, even if the differences in political institutions and cultural backgrounds make it difficult to talk about a shared Atlantic identity (Ayuso and Viilup 2015: 13), which increases the scope and potential of pan-Atlantic coordination. These commonalities, which are connected with demographic patterns, historical human mobility and shared languages in the region, concern peoples’ views on democratic governance (requests for increased political accountability), perception of human rights (claims for improvements on human rights’ indicators) and political affiliation (overwhelming Left-Center) (Ayuso and Viilup 2015: 14-15). In addition, there is a widespread commitment to achieve greater efficiency of the markets: research shows that trade liberalization commitments undertaken within the Atlantic space are driven by the aim of achieving convergence on trade rules and institutions between RTAs and WTO agreements (Hamilton 2015b: 3).

Finally, the Atlantic space is not only relevant *per se*, but also as “a unit of analysis to map and understand broader, global issues” (Ayuso and Viilup 2015: 3). Some of the main challenges and trends observed in the Atlantic area are global in nature and it is possible to find correspondences between them and similar dynamics in other regions. For example, the various models of democratic practice that punctuate the Atlantic space can be relevant to broader global debates about effective and responsive governance (Hamilton 2015b: 3). Therefore, the Atlantic space could develop into a test bed for exploring alternative (interregional, networked) modes of governance between developed and emerging countries at the global level and for experimenting a renewed activism of the EU in their promotion (Hamilton 2015b: 3).

The converging trends seen above are insufficient to make the pan-Atlantic community anything else than an embryonic project. Diverging trends also characterize the area, including *competition* – for instance between the North and South Atlantic, with countries from the latter often eager to propose alternatives to governance practices put forward by North Atlantic players; *fragmentation*, exacerbated by disparities in the levels of development in different regions and countries in the Atlantic space; and *centrifugal drivers*, triggered by competing alliances and partnerships extending beyond the Atlantic space. The challenge for the EU therefore is twofold: (1) to identify strategic objectives and policy priorities to advance its own pan-Atlantic agenda; and (2) to promote schemes of governance that can curb and recompose diverging trends in the Atlantic area.

### **3. Building a pan-Atlantic agenda: setting the EU's strategic objectives and policy priorities**

The Atlantic space offers an opportunity for greater collaboration between state and non-state actors (from within and outside the Atlantic space). The EU, as one of the key actors of this space, should contribute by promoting rules and practices through innovative and inclusive approaches. Said that, many of the emerging trends presented in this project are global in nature and these EU objectives should be framed in a global strategy.

In the economic and trade area, the strategic objectives of the EU are equality, development and free trade. Fighting inequality is among the priorities for the EU because of its implication on social cohesion, economic efficiency, and political stability. New models of development cooperation are necessary to foster greater prosperity, in light of the increasing role of actors from the South in the Atlantic space and at the global level. Free trade should be an inclusive process and the EU should play an important role in supporting multi-level agreements in the Atlantic aimed at creating new space for free trade without generating insurmountable North-South divisions.

On security, the main shared challenges in the Atlantic are illicit trafficking, piracy, with particular attention to the Gulf of Guinea, and the protection of critical energy infrastructures.

In the area of energy and environment, addressing climate change through carbon emissions reductions, more intensive use of renewables, and environmental protection, is an absolute priority and a consensus about it is growing globally. At the same time, sustainable agricultural production and consumption and sustainable fishing are issues to be targeted in an Atlantic dimension.

Concerning peoples and institutions, social resilience in the Atlantic should be promoted through two main actions: supporting institution building anchored to human rights and democratic participation, and involving non-state actors in the elaboration of inclusive common agendas in the Atlantic space.

The ATLANTIC FUTURE project identified key initiatives and policy priorities to be undertaken by the EU in the above-mentioned four thematic areas.

### 3.1. Economy and trade

The policy priorities to be undertaken by the EU on economy and trade in the Atlantic space are equality, development, and free trade.

As well explained by Hamilton, “the OECD, IMF and World Bank all agree that income equality correlates positively with economic growth. Inequality not only implies a slower rate of poverty reduction, but by itself hampers long-term growth because it reduces social mobility, contributes to financial crises, weakens demand and prolongs recession. Growing inequality within and between countries will continue as a pressing problem for the Atlantic world, damaging social cohesion, economic efficiency, and political stability” (Hamilton 2015a: 17). Reducing the main imbalances and building up a solid middle class is imperative if there is to be more sustained cooperation and convergence between Atlantic partners.

Development assistance (by states and NGOs) and migration flows can play a critical role in this direction. Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by the EU and the US as the world’s largest donors can help reduce North-South Atlantic social asymmetries. Economic migration through remittances and transnational double engagement in the country of origin and of destination can also help to reduce economic differences among Atlantic countries. In fact, many migrants are socially and economically committed to both their country of origin and their country of residence, especially Africans working in the EU (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008).

Economic growth is therefore closely tied to development cooperation. The landscape for development cooperation has changed and new development patterns are needed. Countries that were once economically poor, like China, Brazil, India, and Turkey, have become economic powers and have started their own foreign aid programs throughout the Atlantic. South-South development cooperation is estimated to have already reached a significant slice of the overall development cooperation. Most Southern donors concentrate their aid programs on their region, but others, for instance China and Brazil, focus on external areas, in particular Africa (Hamilton 2015a). Brazil in particular has become increasingly active in providing development aid and economic investment in Africa, particularly in tropical agriculture, and this may be a trend of the coming years.

Regarding new patterns, South-South cooperation is unlikely to replace the traditional North-South patterns in the Atlantic and the EU should continue to play a leading role by elaborating more innovative approaches. For instance, triangular cooperation derived from a combination of South-South and North-South cooperation schemes could create coalitions around the pursuit of shared development goals, thus fostering cooperation between new and old donors. At the same time, more balanced relations between actors from the North and the South may be a step in the right direction. Southern NGOs, for instance, should be supported in taking a leadership position in development projects and not just implement them by playing the role of the “local partners”.

The EU should also challenge the Atlantic paradox of “stuffed and starved,” where there is an increased frequency of obesity and hunger. Obesity and hunger are global challenges that exist in both developed and developing countries in the North and in the South. Strengthening South-South cooperation in the Atlantic has also the potential to act as a counterweight to traditional Northern heavyweights in the global agricultural sector. Western industrial methods of agriculture have spread globally, yet with the

obesity epidemic on the rise, the effects of that system are playing out (i.e., rising health care costs), which could in turn exert pressure for food systems and cultures to change (Tedsen et al. 2015).

According to Hamilton (2015a), the EU should challenge the cleavage that opposes many Southern countries to free-trade agreements (FTAs) with the US and Europe particularly as they affect trade in agriculture. FTAs are felt by many developing countries to be unfairly advantageous to the US and the EU and contributing to a North-South divide. For example, NAFTA is perceived to have had a negative impact on Mexico's agriculture, as cheap, subsidized corn from the US flooded Mexican markets, effectively pricing out domestic producers. Brazil, in cooperation with South Africa and India, has taken a lead in representing the interests of developing countries on the international stage, including in the WTO and the UN, thereby providing a Southern counterweight to traditional US and EU leadership in the sector. Thus, the Atlantic remains an important arena for both cooperation and contention.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is an ambitious agreement and may boost cooperation in the Northern Atlantic. The EU should support the accord because it can reinforce the EU as rule maker and significantly reinforce its economy. According to Alcaro (2015: 14), "while opponents to TTIP have legitimate concerns and sometimes compelling arguments, they often fail to recognize that TTIP could be negotiated in a way that mitigates potential social costs while bringing benefits to the wider public. Moreover, the geopolitical rationale for TTIP is as compelling as that of TPP."<sup>1</sup> For instance, "Regulatory convergence would bring down production and testing costs, which in turn would result in lower consumer prices. Companies would be able to better allocate resources, thus freeing up more money for investment and consumption. TTIP would give US and EU firms longer-term guarantees that they would continue to have access to cutting-edge technology and sustainable jobs, thanks to continued investment flows" (Alcaro 2015: 14). However, it is also a divisive issue, for instance in relation to the inclusions of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) and the impact on National Health Systems in the US, EU and third countries. In addition, the agreement should have inclusive mechanisms by which third countries can align or accede to the TTIP once negotiated (Hamilton 2015b).

### **3.2. Security**

The main security challenges to be addressed by the EU with Atlantic partners are illicit trafficking (of drugs, arms and humans,) money laundering, piracy, and the protection of critical energy infrastructures.

Atlantic cooperation would be a unique opportunity to fight trafficking among the four regions by targeting places of origin, route and destination. According to Lété (2015: 7), "the convergence of trafficking, transnational organized crime and terrorism in the Atlantic space is a direct threat to the prosperity and security of both northern and southern Atlantic countries. If this phenomenon has succeeded to thrive it is principally due to the lack of efficient multilateral governance initiatives between Europe, Africa and the Americas".

At the same time, trafficking is clearly interconnected with terrorist groups and criminal organizations. As Roberto Saviano (2015) well explained recently "there is no such thing as a terrorist group whose routes for moving weapons, soldiers and money are

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<sup>1</sup> The Trans-Pacific Partnership, the economic agreement between the US and a number of Pacific Rim countries.

not shared with criminal organizations that have already secured those routes for drug trafficking”.

The EU is deeply affected by these traffics and should renew effort to curb them, including by linking its policies to an interregional dimension of cooperation. An existing example of this is the EU Cocaine Route Program which seeks to strengthen cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean to fight against organized crime and money laundering, and seeks to establish gradual links with West Africa. Another example is the European Development Fund which boosts the EU’s cooperation with Caribbean countries in the field of crime prevention and security. Strengthening these programs and activate new ones is crucial for the EU to fight trafficking and to defend its society and economy.

The EU jointly with the US should dialogue and establish concrete cooperation between North and South Atlantic through Africa’s and South America’s regional institutions. Organizations like the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Organization of American States (OAS) are interesting because they serve as fora for political coordination and consultation, and in different occasions have been able to prevent and solve conflicts in the region (Lété 2015).

At the same time, free and secured shipping lanes are essential for peace and prosperity in the Atlantic space. Piracy is the biggest threat against open and secure maritime transportation routes in the Atlantic Ocean, and in particular the situation in West-Africa affects directly the EU (Lété 2015). The EU should work with the United Nations and such regional organizations as ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) to strengthen cooperation and to coordinate efforts.

Piracy is linked also to energy security and to the protection of critical energy infrastructure. The Gulf of Guinea has recorded the majority of attacks against offshore platforms in the world. On the other side of the Atlantic, rebel groups and criminal organizations have targeted energy infrastructures in Mexico and Colombia (Lété 2015). Improved cooperation on maritime security should therefore be at the centre of an EU Atlantic agenda.

### **3.3. Energy and environment**

The Atlantic space is a single ecoregion. The environmental challenges faced by countries in the Atlantic space are manifold and mutually reinforcing. Wider Atlantic cooperation should focus on renewables and measures to mitigate climate change, which could then influence countries in the Asia-Pacific and along the Indian Ocean.

Climate change is one of the main global challenges. Immediate action must be taken to hasten the transition to renewables and to improve energy efficiency, particularly in emerging economies with large populations and large energy needs in order to mitigate temperature increases. The EU 2030 Energy Strategy has set a binding target that 27% of all energy will come from renewable sources by 2030 (EU Commission 2015). After the COP 21 agreement in Paris, the EU should continue in this direction and share good practices on renewables and on energy efficiency with the US and other Atlantic partners in order to implement and monitor the deal. Countries within the Atlantic space possess significant natural potential that could be exploited to help meet energy demands (Tedsen et al. 2015). For example, the Atlantic Council’s Global Energy Center promotes cooperation between the EU and the US in order to share

technologies and strengthen transatlantic cooperation. The United Nations Africa-EU Energy Partnership aims to build 15,000 MW of hydro, wind, and solar energy capacity and to improve energy efficiency in all sectors, beginning with electricity by 2020 (UNDESA 2015). Support for renewables must also be framed in such a way that aligns with both successful governance and international competition.

Cooperation between national and sub-national authorities within the countries that occupy the Atlantic space is crucial to promoting renewables and reducing dependency on fossil fuels and the EU should support the inclusion of sub-national actors in the decision-making process in this field. Grassroots organizations within the Atlantic have the potential to engage with corporate interests and fight disparities within the WTO and the EU should design strategies to better involve transnational organizations and networks. One example is “La Via Campesina”, an international peasants’ movement which brings together millions of local farmers, indigenous people, agricultural workers, and migrants to promote sustainable small-scale agricultural practices in direct opposition to corporate-based agricultural practices. The group is present in Africa, Europe, and the Americas as well as in Asia.

Another priority for the EU is overfishing. Most major fishing areas within the Atlantic have been overexploited. Most illegal fishing is carried out in the territorial waters of developing countries and this is exacerbating inequality and mechanisms of exploitation. Industrialized commercial fleets often have formidable political power, through associations, and frequently lobby to raise fishing quotas and continue distortional subsidies (Tedsen et al. 2015). The EU should support intergovernmental bodies for fisheries at the global level, in particular within the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the FAO. The EU should also endorse quota systems as outlined by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). At the same time, the EU should fight illegal fishing, firstly of its member states. Technology can help in hampering the overexploitation of fisheries and bringing an end to illegal fishing (i.e., through new satellite monitoring and “big data” capabilities).

### **3.4. People and institutions**

There is still a large gap in the Atlantic area between principles, norms and values on the one side, and political practices on the other, and the political situation in the four regions varies considerably (Gratius 2015). According to Freedom House (2015), the Atlantic Basin<sup>2</sup> includes 62 democracies, 7 authoritarian regimes (6 of them in Africa) and 12 hybrid regimes. The Atlantic coast of Africa is the least democratic area within the Atlantic region.

Social resilience is a priority for the EU and it can be promoted through institution building and a significant involvement of non-state actors in decision-making processes. The EU should support institution building anchored to human rights and democratic participation through mutual cooperation and conditionality in particular in Africa. Economic policies conducted by the EU with Western African countries should be consistent with this framework.

Concerning the second aspect, as mentioned above in the economic sector, the EU should also pay increasing attention to different non-state actors (multinational companies, NGOs, social networks, local organizations, and migrant communities) involving them permanently through regular consultations in the elaboration of common and inclusive agendas in the Atlantic space through a bottom-up approach.

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<sup>2</sup> It includes the African countries only on the Atlantic rim and it does not include Eastern Europe.

## 4. Tackling governance in the Atlantic space: a modular approach

The conundrum of converging and diverging factors in the Atlantic space rules out the possibility for the EU to elaborate a grand institutional design encompassing all or most of the countries and organizations in the Atlantic space. The area is more suited to become the locus of a multi-level governance that combines formal institutional architectures with more flexible tools of cooperation, which can take the form of hybrid regionalism, strategic partnerships or transnational networks. At the same time, the EU should support the development of Atlantic strategies for specific regions, for instance Western Africa, or on transversal issues such as trafficking, development cooperation and reform of global institutions. This multiple forms of governance should not rule out the possibility to engage with external powers that are assuming increasing relevance in the Atlantic space, in particular China, so as not to weaken thematic and transversal efforts of cooperation. Moreover, the EU should also look for a stronger cooperation with sub-national authorities and transnational actors that occupy the Atlantic space, including grassroots movements and language communities, on specific issue areas.

### 4.1. Fostering an Atlantic agenda for global governance

The dynamics of fragmentation that emerged in the Atlantic space seem to replicate a more general trend in the international community. A more effective system of governance needs to cope with contested rules and structures, which prevent the consensus building on many issues in the global agenda. The North-South divide is still a defining feature in power relations among actors at global level and proved to be one of the shaping factors in intra-Atlantic relations. Building on its commitment to promote effective multilateralism and the experience gained at the United Nations and other multilateral fora, the EU should devise forward looking strategies to better engaging South Atlantic countries with a view to endorse principles, rules and procedures established in the multilateral institutions (Ayuso and Viilup 2015). EU initiatives could be designed to address specific issues such as implementation and monitoring mechanisms for climate change in the post-COP 21 agreement and for development cooperation in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, or focus on coalition building on reform of global governance, primarily the IFIs and the United Nations system. The diplomatic resources within the European External Action Service could be mobilized both in multilateral endeavours and in national capitals to achieve this objective.

### 4.2. Promoting hybrid regionalism

An emerging trend in the Atlantic space is fragmented integration. Regional integration projects in the EU, LAC and Africa are increasingly affected by dynamics of fragmentation, which are linked to the crisis of the model of integration and the renationalization of policies as in the case of the EU, or to differentiated and overlapping integration schemes at sub-regional level as in the cases of LAC and Africa. Promoting regional integration can still be conceived and pursued by the EU as a means to develop cooperation mechanisms that contribute to global governance and the dissemination of values and norms (Ayuso and Viilup 2015). However, the economic and financial crisis forced the EU to change strategy for the promotion of regionalism from a “model by being” to a “model by doing”. Innovative actions should therefore be promoted by the EU to support integration projects in the Atlantic space, which should replace its conventional neo-liberal view of regional integration grounded on trade liberalization and macroeconomic convergence. The landscape of regional

integration projects in the Atlantic area is extremely diversified: some of them are regional institutions with a capacity for decision-making and agenda-setting (such as the African Union and the Africa Regional Inter-governmental Organizations), while others are umbrella for political coordination between member countries and external partners (such as CELAC). Against this background, a strategy of hybrid regionalism (Gratius 2015a) that differentiates among regional cooperation schemes in the Atlantic seems the most effective for the EU.

### **4.3. Reshaping inter-regional cooperation**

There are at least four separate inter-regional cooperation schemes in the Atlantic, and each of them shares common values and interests: EU-Africa, EU-LAC, the Inter-America system and EU-US Transatlantic axis (Gratius 2015a). A comprehensive design of multi-regional cooperation in the Atlantic is not suitable to manage the current reality of differentiation. At the same time, the EU needs to develop a coherent strategy towards different regions in order to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of its approach. This implies an effort to align policies towards regions, for example by merging policies towards the Caribbean and Latin America, and towards different sub-regions in the African continent. Triangular synergies can also be developed in specific issue areas, such as EU-LAC-US in the drugs related public security agenda or EU-Inter-America system on migration and mobility.

### **4.4. Supporting new forms of governance with external stakeholders**

External actors, particularly China, have shown an increasing activism in the Atlantic space. China became the first trade partner of Brazil and accounts for about 30% of external trade of South Africa. The EU's stance towards the growing presence of this Asian champion in Africa and other regions of the Atlantic has oscillated between agnosticism and confrontation. This strategy has proved to increase distance and mutual distrust instead of promoting new frameworks of cooperation. It is now time to put increased efforts in engaging the Asian Hemisphere countries in Atlantic governance (Hamilton 2015b). This objective could be pursued by developing synergies between existing frameworks of cooperation, for example between TTIP (currently negotiated between EU and the US) and TPP (signed in October 2015 and involving US, Canada and some LAC countries, including Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru); between CELAC-EU Summits and CELAC-China Ministerial Dialogues, and between the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and Africa-China dialogue (Gratius 2015a).

### **4.5. Potentiating strategic partnerships**

The EU has established strategic partnerships with ten countries over the world, five of which are in the Atlantic area (Canada, United States, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa). However, there are a number of reservations on the concept and practice of strategic partnerships, being them ill-defined and overall ineffective in producing tangible results (Grevi 2012). Strategic partnerships should be potentiated with those countries that are crucial – in terms of dimensions and resources – for the achievement of EU objectives. In the Atlantic space, three countries seem to have these credentials: the United States, Brazil and South Africa. EU relations with these countries should be enhanced to give further impulse to pan-Atlantic (or not strictly bilateral) initiatives. In particular: (1) the EU should add a pan-Atlantic dimension to various cooperation initiatives with the US for fighting terrorism and illicit traffics, liberalizing commerce and contrasting environmental degradation, managing crises and resolving conflicts in the African continent; (2) the EU should establish a deeper and broader cooperation with Brazil in

fields such as economic, political and security dialogue, protection of the environment and fight against global warming, resource depletion and organized crime; (3) the EU should further exploit its strategic partnership with South Africa, which could become an anchor country for a more inclusive pan-Atlantic agenda on Africa, including reform of global governance institutions, with a focus on commerce, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and the environment. In this regard, the initiative of the High Representative would be crucial to relaunch these partnerships in a strategic pan-Atlantic framework.

#### **4.6. Elaborating soft power strategies**

Emerging trends in the Atlantic space have highlighted the spreading of crumbling societies and public contestation of existing models of governance. These tendencies will affect the EU's internal and external policies in the foreseeable future. As traditional approaches were not able to respond to claims of democracy and ensure the effective involvement of non-state actors, it is crucial for the EU to promote alternative forms of governance by reaching out societies across the full Atlantic space (Hamilton 2015b). The EU could identify and build on different constituencies in the Atlantic area, such as epistemic communities, by promoting transnational networks of knowledge-based experts in different areas; language communities, including English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, which provide a strong potential for more robust cooperation and links across the basin (Ayuso and Viilup 2015. 26); and interest communities, including NGOs and business actors.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although we cannot speak about the Atlantic as a fully fledged region with a shared identity, the ATLANTIC FUTURE project identified a number of common features and linked-up trends that make it a relevant space *per se* and in relation to the EU's global agenda. The EU could take advantage of this embryonic area and build on its converging dynamics to propose advanced policy initiatives and alternative forms of governance. As outlined in this paper, the EU remains a highly relevant actor for the other regions in the Atlantic and could further exploit its credentials to propose new ways of addressing challenges and stimulating cooperation in a pan-Atlantic framework. Some specific fields of intervention, such as the promotion of new models of development derived from a combination of South-South and North-South cooperation schemes or the fight against trafficking among the four regions by targeting places of origin, route and destination, clearly show the advantages of a pan-Atlantic approach. Others, namely the elaboration of joint strategies for the promotion of free trade or social resilience, present potentialities that should be tested by the EU. However, a pan-Atlantic agenda cannot be implemented without effective structures of governance, which are able to manage diverging trends in the area and build cohesive partnerships to address global issues from security to environment protection. Given the differentiation that characterizes regions in the Atlantic, the role of the EU as rule maker should be put forward through flexible tools, including hybrid regionalism, potentiated strategic partnerships and transnational networks. Relevant actors outside the Atlantic area, first of all China and other countries in the Asian Hemisphere should also be included in this design by combining existing frameworks of dialogue and cooperation with key stakeholders in the region.

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