



ATLANTIC FUTURE

SCIENTIFIC PAPER

35

Political, social and cultural trends in the Atlantic

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ABSTRACT

In political, social and cultural terms, the Atlantic space is a puzzle. Cooperation in the Atlantic Basin will probably take place *'à la carte'*, rather than on the basis of a clear all-encompassing institutional design. Democracy is the prevalent form of government across the Atlantic, but with major regional variations and a predominance of hybrid or authoritarian regimes in Africa. Socio-economic challenges also differ considerably among Atlantic countries. Social inequalities within countries have been growing larger in recent years in both advanced and developing countries. Demography will be a critical factor for the future of the Atlantic, with Africa being the only region where high population growth rates are expected and Europe being the fastest ageing region. Beyond states, the influence of multinational companies, NGOs, social networks, sub-national entities (cities, regions) and migrant communities over government decisions and within multilateral organisations and fora is set to grow. Therefore, future convergence in the Atlantic Basin cannot be planned top-down, but needs to encompass and build on the perspectives and priorities of societal actors, from the bottom up.

The first draft of this Scientific Paper was presented at the ATLANTIC FUTURE Seminar in Lisboa, 24 April 2015.

ATLANTIC FUTURE – Towards an Atlantic area? Mapping trends, perspectives and interregional dynamics between Europe, Africa and the Americas, is a project financed by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme European Commission Project Number: 320091.



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35

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Democracy and political values: a fragmented picture	4
3. The development gap and demographic trends	9
4. Cultural trends.....	14
5. Conclusions and prospects	17
References.....	19

1. Introduction

Despite some shared political values, current data and trends show that Atlantic countries are far from representing a common political, social and cultural space. Narratives and trends for the next ten years do not point to one single but to different scenarios.

In institutional terms, the wider Atlantic is divided into a highly connected North and a South with much looser political and economic links. The Atlantic comprises four main regional spaces, and includes a series of inter-regional and bilateral relationships. Some institutional frameworks draw on shared cultural or historical roots such as the Commonwealth, which grew out of the British Empire; the Lusophone community led by Brazil and Portugal; the Ibero-American group promoted by Spain; and the Francophonie under French leadership. These communities overlap with inter-regional associations – for example, the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-CELAC) and EU-African Union –; bilateral strategic partnerships;¹ the Organisation for American States (OAS)-driven inter-American system; and the deep transatlantic bonds between Europe and the United States (US).

The four Atlantic regions face both separate and common political challenges. Latin America has to deal with populist leaderships and some regimes that undermine democracy and human rights, while political polarisation is a prominent trend in the US. Following the economic and political crisis, populism and nationalism are also on the rise in Europe, threatening the quality of democracies in various countries. Citizens' empowerment by social networks and political mobilisation positively affects the transparency, participation and efficiency of democracies across the Atlantic Basin. But, when associated with social malaise and lack of trust in government, bottom-up mobilisation also runs the risk of fostering the rise of extreme right or extreme left-wing leaders and parties. These challenges contrast with an Atlantic Africa, which struggles with both state- and democracy-building.

From a social perspective, there is a large gap between a highly developed North Atlantic, a middle-income Latin America with unequal income distribution and developing Africa. Poverty reduction in Africa has been much slower than in Latin America. Even in South Africa, a large economy and middle-income country, extreme levels of inequality greatly limit development and political stability. Demographic growth in Africa and Latin America will be a major driver of change in the Atlantic Basin.

In the cultural sphere, a broad spectrum of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural identities challenges the hypothesis of a values-driven, culturally close community of Atlantic partners. There are, however, some commonalities facilitated by the prevalence of four shared languages and the absence of major cultural conflicts. Again, Atlantic Africa presents distinct features, with religious, ethnic and tribal tensions still present in post-conflict or conflict-affected societies such as Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and other states.

Based on recent data and trends, this paper analyses the prospects for further political, social and cultural convergence in the Atlantic Basin. Political prospects are strongly

¹ The EU has established 10 strategic partnerships, 5 of them with Atlantic countries (Brazil, Canada, Mexico, South Africa and the United States). Brazil has 17 strategic partners worldwide (among them the EU and 9 European countries, Angola, South Africa, Argentina and Venezuela), while the United States is engaged with its close strategic partners Canada and Mexico, as well as several European allies (Costa Vaz 2014; Hamilton 2015).

influenced by the nature of domestic political regimes, the evolution of the middle classes, alternative political models, populism and state fragility. Social prospects depend on human development and poverty, development cooperation, demography and migration. Languages and linguistic communities, identities, values and religion are key factors in the cultural domain.

By reviewing major political, social and cultural trends within and between the four regions of the Atlantic, this paper aims to identify convergences and divergences in the medium term. It finds that in all three areas, there are more similarities between Europe and the Americas than among all four Atlantic regions. In particular, the political, social and cultural differences between Atlantic Africa and the rest of the Atlantic Basin are unlikely to narrow over the next decade.

2. Democracy and political values: a fragmented picture

Shared political values and the lack of inter-state conflicts constitute a major strength of the Atlantic Basin. In a scenario of competing powers and regions, broad consensus over democracy, human rights and the rule of law is a comparative advantage to facilitate cooperation between Atlantic state- and non-state actors. Nonetheless, there is still a large gap between principles, norms and values on the one side, and political practices, on the other. The political situation in the four regions varies considerably.

Political regimes and human rights

According to Freedom House (2015), the Atlantic Basin includes 62 democracies,² 7 authoritarian regimes (6 of them in Africa) and 12 hybrid regimes. Trends are highly heterogeneous:

- In the Americas, 68% of the countries are democracies, 29% are considered partly free or hybrid and only Cuba is seen as an autocratic regime. Social inequality and high levels of drug-related violence and crime are likely to remain significant challenges for democracy and human rights, particularly in Central America, Mexico and Venezuela (Amnesty International 2014: 15). Shifting the political balance between authoritarianism and democracy in hybrid regimes by strengthening human rights, the separation of powers and democratic institution building is a major challenge for the future. The OAS, as the oldest and strongest regional institution, should play a key role in this task, but the US leadership crisis in the Americas and in the institution (Maihold 2015) constitutes a major obstacle. Successful democracy promotion in Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela, but also in 'partly free' countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico or Nicaragua will depend on a new inter-American consensus between Latin America and the United States, beyond the OAS and the Democratic Charter launched by Washington (Freedom House 2015). Without a new inter-American commitment to democracy and human rights, striking the sensitive balance between non-interference in domestic affairs and support to political reform, democratisation prospects in non-democracies or the consolidation of fragile democracies remain uncertain.

² Freedom House's Freedom in the World Index ranks countries from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. Countries between 1 and 3 are considered democracies, 6-7 authoritarian regimes and the rest hybrid regimes in the grey zone between democracy and autocracies.

- Today, most European states are democracies (88%) while the remaining 12% is considered hybrid or partly free. That said, the EU is surrounded by authoritarian governments including Russia and Belarus to the East or hybrid regimes like Morocco to the South. Promoting democracy in the troubled areas surrounding the EU requires a wide-ranging long-term commitment on the part of the EU. However, a robust neighbourhood policy will also require greater financial resources and a consolidated EU foreign policy; both of which are uncertain and depend in large part on renewed economic growth. EU enlargement is the most successful means of promoting democracy (Schimmelfennig/Scholtz 2008: 188), but the inclusion of new member states complicates internal consensus-building. Finding the right balance between democracy promotion through enlargement³ and the need for deeper integration will rank high on the EU agenda until 2025.
- The Atlantic coast of Africa is the least democratic area within the Atlantic region. According to Freedom House (2015), only 20% of states are democracies, compared to 43% autocracies and 37% hybrid regimes. As we have seen in the Arab revolutions (Youngs 2014), the overthrow of an authoritarian regime does not automatically prompt a transition to liberal democracy. In fact, the opposite could occur: 'The [African] region has experienced 8 years of democratic backsliding leaving sub-Saharan Africa with the same levels of freedom as in 2001' (Freedom House 2015). Human rights abuses and violent conflicts are likely to continue to thwart democracy and peace in Atlantic Africa. The rise of the radical Islamist group Boko Haram, responsible for large-scale human rights violations and violence, has destabilised large parts of Nigeria. Ghana, Namibia and South Africa are stable democracies, while other countries such as Benin, Senegal, Sao Tomé and Príncipe and Togo have made substantial progress in safeguarding civil liberties and other democratic rights.
- Although democracy is the predominant form of government across the Atlantic Basin today, the picture in 2025 may look different. Continued high population growth in Africa – expected to reach 1.6 billion people in the next ten years (NIC 2012) – associated to state fragility and political instability in many countries could increase the number of citizens of the Atlantic Basin living in non-democratic countries. Diminishing this risk will require a concerted effort by the EU, the US, Latin American and African partners to promote and preserve democracy. At the same time, the strong economic growth forecast for Africa and, to a lesser extent, Latin America over the next decade should expand the middle class and foster social networks that empower citizens, potentially having a positive impact on democracy and human rights. Thus, together democracy promotion and economic growth could strengthen the shared democratic values throughout the Atlantic Basin.

Democracy and the middle classes

In 2009, around 66% of the world's middle class lived in the Atlantic space: 36% in Europe, 18% in North America, 10% in Latin America and 2% in Africa. If estimations are correct,⁴ the Atlantic space's share of the world's middle class will fall by 2030 owing to the growing economic strength of Asia, which is also home to the world's two most populous nations, China and India. By 2030, Asia is forecast to be home to two-thirds of the world's middle class (Kharas & Gertz 2010). By then, it is expected that only 14% of the global middle class will live in Europe, 7% in North America, 6% in Latin America and a constant 2% in Africa (Kharas & Gertz 2010). While its size might

³ Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey are candidate countries.

⁴ There is a broad range of definitions of 'middle class'. This explains the considerable variation among some of the figures and estimations provided here.

decline in Europe and North America, the middle class is expected to double in Latin America and more than triple in Africa (from 32 to 103 million).

In many Atlantic countries, discontent with 'politics as usual' has increased in recent years. Civic activism and protest movements have given voice to the frustration of citizens with often-corrupt elites that capture state resources while public services are poor and fiscal pressures high. In all four Atlantic regions, powerful social movements and networks tend to demand more and better public services, and transparency and participatory democracy. For example, the recent waves of political protests in Brazil revealed the power of the new middle class and its disillusion with the political system (Gratius & Segre 2014). An expanding middle class constitutes a push factor for improving a state's democratic quality, but a declining middle class as evidenced in Southern Europe could lead to the emergence of populist leaders when traditional democratic cannot meet demands for jobs, better welfare and transparency.

The new middle class in the emerging Atlantic is demanding greater democratic rights. In Africa, 'The middle class is better educated, better informed and has greater awareness of human rights' (AfDB 2011). A growing middle class is positive for democracy, but its expansion could also lead to rising poverty levels due to demographic pressures across Africa (NIC 2012).

In the South Atlantic and particularly in Latin America, citizens' demands might enhance the quality of democratic institutions, improve health and education levels and increase participatory mechanisms. In Brazil, street protests in recent years showed the need for a new and more efficient state model.⁵ In emerging countries, social protests and political mobilisations tend to focus on domestic problems. Partly because of this, in Brazil, in contrast to the previous Lula government (2003-2011), President Dilma Rousseff has been less committed to regional and global leadership and this trend is likely to continue (Gratius & Segre 2014).

In Europe and North America, middle class discontent in the face of falling real incomes and a shrinking welfare state have fostered popular protests. Unlike in Greece or Spain, in the United States, popular protests and the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement did not lead to the development of 'left-wing populism' or a 'progressive counter-narrative' (Fukuyama 2012). Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential elections can be largely attributed to the electoral preferences of a shrinking middle class – from 61% in 1971 to 49% in 2011 – that lost around 5% of its income following the financial crisis (Pew Research Center 2012). According to a Pew Research Center survey, 34% of the American middle class identified with Obama and the Democratic Party and 25% with the Republican Party, while the rest declared themselves as independents (Pew Research Center 2012: 56).

In Europe, the region with the largest middle class in the world – 36% in 2009 –, social mobilisation began in the wake of the financial crisis and the imposition of austerity measures in Southern Europe. European citizens' demands – jobs, welfare and transparency – are similar to those of protesters in Brazil and elsewhere. However, unlike in emerging Atlantic powers, in EU member states the middle class has tended to shrink as a result of growing unemployment, higher tax burdens and fewer social transfers and public services (Dallinger 2013). This has been the case in Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK), where the middle class represents less than 50%, compared to over 60% in Nordic countries (Bigot 2012). This general

⁵ According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, in 2014 Brazil dropped to the post 69 (out of 175 states), a la par with Italy and Senegal.

downward trend (which actually began in the early 1980s) is expected to continue in Europe in the next decades, while an upward trend is expected in Africa, Latin America and Asia (Kharas & Gertz 2010).

Competing political models

While state fragility and social crises threaten democracy in some Atlantic regions, competing political models as such are unlikely to represent a credible alternative to liberal democracy and a market economy within the Atlantic Basin, at least under a scenario of rising globalisation (NIC 2012). Although China's path of state capitalism competes with market-based liberalism, the main difference is neither socialism nor another left-wing alternative, but its authoritarian character (Fukuyama 2013). Joseph Nye noted that, in terms of soft power, neither China nor India 'ranks high on the various indices of potential soft-power resources that are possessed by the US, Europe and Japan' (Nye 2005).

In the Atlantic, the Bolivarian Alternative in the Americas (ALBA), dominated by the Cuba-Venezuela axis, represents an alternative ideological alliance to neoliberal capitalism and US-hegemony. But its future is uncertain, since Cuba re-established diplomatic relations with its historic enemy the US and Venezuela has been affected by a severe political and economic crisis under the government of Nicolás Maduro. In ten years, the Castro brothers will no longer be in power in Cuba. In Venezuela, the continuity of the Bolivarian Revolution is threatened by economic mismanagement, corruption, political repression and a strong opposition. Without the ideological Cuba-Venezuela alliance, ALBA might not survive as an alternative South-South coalition.

Populism and populist leaders

The existence of these types of leaders in the grey zone between democracy and authoritarianism (Panizza 2005) poses a risk to democracy in Africa, Latin America and the EU. Populist regimes in Latin America – Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela – tend to divide their own societies and the continent into followers and enemies, and take an antagonistic stance towards the US or European 'imperialism' and 'neo-liberal' economic policies. The success of populist leaders in Latin America is closely linked to social inequality and their promise to include the marginalised and empower them against the former elites (Freidenberg 2007). In Africa, populist political leaders and parties dominate in several countries, including in South Africa under President Jacob Zuma.⁶

In some EU member states, the financial crisis has turned into a political crisis. Despite major differences, populist left-wing parties like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain, and right-wing ones such as the National Front in France, AfD and Pegida in Germany, UKIP in the UK or the Finns Party (formerly True Finns) in Finland, share the purpose of challenging traditional political parties and their narratives. These new parties attract the new urban poor by promising a better future and denouncing 'the corrupt elites' (Mudde 2015). European populist leaders and parties can profit from the struggle of traditional political parties to preserve the European welfare model in the context of rapidly progressing economic globalisation. Some of these movements hold significant risks, however, in particular when the anti-system discourse is based on nationalism or identity politics. Anti-EU and/or anti-migration populist parties have a fair chance of coming to power if the North-South polarisation between and within EU member states

⁶ According to *The Economist*, 'Jacob Zuma's government is drifting between populism and liberalism' (The Economist 2014).

continues without the prospect of a credible integration project. A 'Grexit' would further undermine confidence in Southern European countries and could prompt a spill-back or regression of integration in the Eurozone. In 2017, pushed by anti-integration forces, the UK government plans to hold a referendum on its EU membership, which could set a precedent. Despite its current economic strains, a strong and united EU, as the alternative to a fragmented Europe (Torreblanca 2011), is a major factor for preserving democracy in Europe and pursuing closer cooperation between Atlantic partners over the long term.

By strengthening national identities, weakening democratic institutions and polarising societies (Panizza 2005), the rise of populism threatens further cooperation and integration between Atlantic countries and regions. This phenomenon is ever more likely in moments of economic crisis and in fragile states with weak democratic institutions, a large urban poor and corrupt elites.

Fragile states and non-state actors

The Atlantic Basin needs strong, democratic and efficient states that are capable of providing good governance, security and public services to citizens at home, and negotiating regional, inter-regional and global cooperation agendas abroad. Within the Atlantic Basin, there is agreement on neither the term nor the definition of state fragility. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the South Atlantic begin to question a 'fragile state' paradigm that has been closely related to a Northern-Western security and development agenda (Faria 2014).

Within the Atlantic, state fragility is a challenge for Africa (and for the EU as the region's main donor), while it also represents a problem in Latin America. In 2014, only Haiti was given high alert status (Fund for Peace 2014). But there is a growing risk of fragility in Guatemala and in Honduras – which in 2012 had a 64.5% poverty rate (World Bank 2013) and one of the highest homicide rates in the world. Another alarming case is Venezuela, where political conflict is latent and levels of violence are record-high, surpassing post-conflict states like Iraq. According to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (OVV 2015), in 2014 Venezuela had the second-highest crime rate in the world. Rising levels of violence, combined with an impunity level of above 90%, overcrowded prisons and endemic police corruption (Amnesty International 2014) constitute an explosive mix of state fragility.

State fragility poses a major challenge to Atlantic Africa in particular. Intra-state conflicts, sometimes spilling over borders, are latent in countries like Angola or Nigeria characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality, dependent on natural resources, with growing demographic pressures and large youth bulges. Despite registering in 2014 a high economic growth of 7.4% (and having positive growth forecasts), countries in West Africa are highly vulnerable to several drivers of fragility. State-building in West Africa, home to large reserves of energy and other important natural resources, is of strategic importance for the rest of Atlantic countries. Poverty and inequality are expected to rise in countries like Nigeria. Ethnic and religious conflicts are likely to endure. Corruption and poor governance are entrenched, undermining the state's capacity to respond to the multiple challenges ahead (Castillejo 2014). This trend contrasts with significant progress in a few Atlantic states such as Ghana, Senegal, Namibia or South Africa.

According to the National Intelligence Council, by 2030 few of the fragile countries 'at risk' will have been removed from this list, while others might be included. Small improvements are expected for Haiti (expected to rank 14th in 2030, compared to 9th in

2014). Meanwhile, Nigeria, ranking 17th in 2014 (Fund for Peace 2014), is expected to be the 9th most fragile country in the world (NIC 2012: 19).

The overall political picture is highly heterogeneous: democratic regimes dominate in the EU and the Americas, whereas a majority of the countries in Atlantic Africa are considered either non-democratic or hybrid regimes. Compared to significant but so far contained challenges to democracy in Europe and the Americas, developments in Africa will be critical for the convergence of the Atlantic around shared political values and their implementation.

3. The development gap and demographic trends

The Atlantic Basin is extremely unequal in terms of poverty levels, human development and gender balance. The (sometimes very) large differences in living standards between the North and South Atlantic will not be bridged in the foreseeable future. The United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI)⁷ divides Atlantic countries into four major groups: 1) very highly developed (US, Canada and the EU); 2) highly development (Argentina); 3) middle level of development (most of Latin America and the Caribbean); and 4) low development levels (most African states).

Human development

Within the Atlantic, in terms of human development and per capita income, the EU, Canada and the US are the best performers, followed by Argentina, Cuba and Uruguay. The worst include Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and the DRC. In Africa, in 2013 the best performers – South Africa (position 118 out of 187), Cape Verde (123) and Namibia (127), Morocco (129) – rank at similar levels as Latin America's worst three (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua). Moreover, there is not only a large development gap between the North and South Atlantic, but also between Latin America and Atlantic Africa and within each region.

Despite the economic and financial crisis, European countries continue to top the human development index.⁸ The Netherlands and the Nordic countries are the best performers in terms of human development, equality and gender parity. However, income disparities have increased between and within EU member states. In 2013, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Portugal and Spain were the most unequal EU member states, with a Gini coefficient (Eurostat 2014) of between 33 and 35 (compared to 22.2 in Norway).⁹ Moreover, in 2013 around 20% of the population in Greece, Portugal and Spain lived below the threshold of 60% of the average income in the EU, and unemployment was double the EU average of 11% (Eurostat 2014). Reducing income disparities will depend on redistributive policies at the national level, but also on further progress towards a social Europe and a return to higher economic growth rates in the EU.

⁷ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), created in 1990, measures education and per capita income indicators. Since 2010, a new method, based on life expectancy, education and income is used.

⁸ In 2013, all EU member states were included in the first category of very highly developed countries.

⁹ A Gini coefficient of 100 corresponds to maximum inequality while 0 represents full equality.

In North America, the US and Canada are likely to continue to be among the best performers worldwide in terms of human development and gender parity. Since 2008, they have ranked among the first ten – in the HDI 2014, the US ranked 5th and Canada 8th. Nonetheless, social disparities continue to grow in the United States. According to the Gini Index (UNDP 2013), in 2013 inequality in the US reached the same level as Uruguay (41.1), and the US was more than ten points behind the EU average of 30 and worse than Morocco and Senegal.

Poverty and MDGs

Development gaps within the Americas are evident: US per capita income is 4.3 times higher than Brazil's, while Nicaragua's per capita income is seven times lower than Brazil's (Sedemund 2014). Latin America achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing extreme poverty by half: in 2015, only 4.9% (or 30 million) of the world's extreme poor¹⁰ live in the region. According to the 2013 Gender-related Development Index, Argentina and Venezuela were the region's best performers in terms of male/female income and education equality. Guatemala made substantial progress in primary school completion with a 92% rate in 2011 (World Bank 2013). These advances contrast with extremely unequal wealth distribution in most countries. Although Brazil will meet nearly all of the MDGs, including halving extreme poverty,¹¹ (5.4% of the total population in 2012), it is still the third most unequal country in the region (Gini Index 52.7 in 2012). With high levels of inequality and extreme poverty rates of 10.4% and 14.2% respectively, Colombia's and Mexico's social performance is worse than Brazil's, and little progress has been registered in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua (the least developed countries of the region). Urban poverty and public security¹² will be the main development challenges for the region. In 2030, the vast majority of Latin Americans – including an estimated 74 million additional citizens by that time – will live in the cities. The percentage of the urban poor living in slums (25% of the urban population) is expected to increase without major public investment in basic infrastructure, housing, education and health (World Bank 2013: Regional Report Latin America).

In Atlantic Africa, Morocco has a middle ranking in the HDI, between Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Morocco has made spectacular progress in primary school completion, from 55% in 1990 to 99% in 2013 (World Bank 2013). However, most Sub-Saharan African countries have not met the MDGs (World Bank 2013). In 2013, 42% of the Sub-Saharan Africa population still lived with less than \$1.25 per day, 75% of them in rural areas (World Bank 2013). Congo, Liberia, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe have above 60% poverty rates (\$2 per day, according to the World Bank definition). Life expectancy of 38 years in Sierra Leone is the lowest in the world and maternal mortality rate reaches 1,100 per 100,000 births (compared to 14 in Uruguay, for example). However, Cape Verde, Ghana and South Africa have made substantial progress towards reaching the MDGs (World Bank 2013). Ghana (the first Sub-Saharan African country to meet the MDG of halving extreme poverty) and Cape Verde (the African country with the highest life expectancy) are therefore better placed to achieve democratic and social progress than most of their neighbours.

¹⁰ The World Bank defines 'extreme poor' those living with less than \$1.25 per day.

¹¹ According to the definition provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), extreme poverty refers to a situation where a household's income is not sufficient to cover the basic food basket, and all income is destined towards such an end.

¹² With the exception of Chile, Cuba, Uruguay and Surinam, Latin American countries top the world's average murder rate. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2012, with 85 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, Honduras homicide rate was more than three times that of South Africa (25 per 100,000).

The two African countries with the lowest poverty rates – South Africa and Namibia – are also the most unequal countries in the Atlantic Basin. South Africa has a rather mixed record: according to the World Health Organization, it is a middle income country, but with a poverty rate of 45.5%, extreme unequal income distribution, the world's highest HIV-AIDS rate and a low life expectancy of 61 years in 2012 (World Health Organisation 2014). Unlike Latin America, rural-urban disparities in Atlantic Africa are huge. This might change as urbanisation continues to grow over the next 10-20 years, when half of the African population, 10% more than today, is forecast to live in cities (AfDB 2012: 7). Demographic pressures, weak states, poor governance and high levels of conflict reduce the likelihood of major social progress in most West African countries, despite high economic growth expectations (NIC 2012; Gros & Aldici 2013). In Africa, the youth bulge, an important cause of conflict in fragile states if not adequately managed, will continue to grow over the next 20 years (NIC 2012). Given that today 26% of the Sub-Saharan extreme poor live in Nigeria, this percentage could increase substantially if demographic growth projections are correct and the state becomes more fragile.

Reducing the many imbalances reviewed in this section 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 United States as the world's largest donors can help reduce North-South Atlantic social asymmetries. Economic migration also tends to reduce these differences by boosting fertility rates in industrialised countries and contributing to development (through remittances and closer ties with the countries of origin) in South Atlantic countries.

Aid flows and donors

Over the 2000s, ODA flows¹³ have grown slowly compared to other sources of development such as tax revenues – the average global tax ratio increased from 23% in 2010 to 29% in 2011 (Sedemund 2014) –, remittances¹⁴ or foreign direct investment (FDI). Given that by 2030 most of the world's poor are anticipated to live in middle-income countries, loans from international and regional banks could begin to replace national ODA flows (Birdsall 2014).

In terms of individual donors, the period 2010-2011 saw a decline in the assistance provided by the United States, Canada, Italy and Spain, compared to a substantial increase in the funds from the European Commission and higher contributions from France, Germany and the UK (OECD 2014: 24).

Low growth prospects in the EU, an aging population and the need to finance retirement for the elderly and other social services at home could reduce EU ODA. Economic growth projections for the EU, while improving compared to crisis years, are sobering: the European Commission expects a 1.5% growth for 2015 and recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts for 2016 estimate a growth rate of 2%. According to the OECD, economic growth in the US until 2025/2030 is expected to be above 3% (PwC 2013). Only the Nordic countries and the UK – which achieved the 0.7% of GNP target in 2013– remain highly committed to ODA.

¹³ Compared to other sources of development funding, ODA experienced a relatively modest growth from \$78.7 billion in 2000 to \$128.5 billion in 2010 (Greenhill & Prizzon 2012: 9).

¹⁴ Immigrants' remittances more than tripled, from \$79 billion in 2000 to \$325 billion in 2010 (Greenhill & Prizzon 2012: 8).

Recently, new donors like Brazil, Colombia, Mexico or South Africa have emerged, and others could appear, but additional financial commitments will depend on their economic situation and global role. Brazil, Colombia and Mexico's internal crisis and their own development gaps could reduce their global commitments. In institutional terms, 'former Southern donors' could join existing donor organisations like the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) (as has been the case of Colombia and Mexico) or create alternative structures like the New Development Bank (NDB) of the BRICS group based in Shanghai, China. If successful, the China-led NDB could become an important development partner for South Atlantic countries, and represent an alternative to or work alongside the World Bank where the US plays a leading role.

Apart from the BRICS bank, however, South-South cooperation is unlikely to replace the traditional group of North Atlantic donors; aid flows from emerging donors (like Brazil or South Africa, for example) are expected to remain low compared to those of traditional ones (Sedemund 2014). Triangular cooperation could grow further, fostering cooperation between new and old donors. It would also contribute to closer cooperation and the creation of networks between Northern and Southern NGOs. It is, however, highly unlikely that the emergence of a more balanced relationship between non-state actors from the North and the South in the short-term will decrease the predominant influence of 'Western' NGOs in the discourse and practice of development cooperation (Adele & Fioramonti 2014).

Migration and demography as game-changers

Demographic change and migration are both a problem and a solution. Demography is a key indicator of future dynamics in the Atlantic Basin. It will be an important factor in terms of economic growth, social progress or decline, and migration flows.

Migration, for example, could compensate for Europe's demographic disadvantage, but at the same time, it is considered troublesome in times of high unemployment and low growth rates. Around 3.2% of the world's population are international migrants, most of them from Asia. The global financial crisis did not alter the traditional South-North migratory flows: six out of every ten international migrants reside in developed countries. The EU holds the world's largest stock of international migrants (72 million)¹⁵, followed by Asia (71 million), and North America (53 million) (excluding Mexico).¹⁶ Migration has also increased in Africa, although on a smaller scale. In South Africa, for example, the number of immigrants increased by 4.5% in 2013.

In Europe, projections foresee a 'smaller, older and multicultural' population. In 2030, the EU will be the oldest world region with an average age of 44.7 years and a total population of 488 million (Gros & Alcidi 2013: 6). Other studies (NIC 2012; PwC 2013) predict that the fertility rate (an average of 1.58 children in 2012) will remain low. International migrant flows to Europe could mitigate demographic trends there, particularly in Germany and Spain that have the fastest ageing populations. Despite the need for migration to bolster the workforce (EC 2008), maintain Europe's economic strength and reduce the dependency ratio, few political decisions have been taken to attract and further regulate labour mobility from the South. Short-term electoral calculations and xenophobia in Europe limit the prospects for a positive EU migration

¹⁵ Of 72 million international migrants entering the EU, Germany received 10 million, the UK 8 million, France 7 million and Spain 6 million.

¹⁶ The US received 46 million people and Canada 7 million.

policy, beyond the traditional emphasis on border security and the control of irregular immigrants.¹⁷

In the period 1990-2013, 45% of international migrants in Europe were born in Europe itself, 22% in Asia, 18% in Africa and 14% in Latin America (UN 2013). Turkey, Morocco, Albania, China, Ecuador and Colombia are among the top ten countries of origin of international migrants to the EU from outside Europe. The number of African migrants could increase in the years to come, in proportion to constant levels of population growth and political instability there. Moreover, according to Eurostat, until 2030, immigration from Asia, especially China, to Europe is likely to increase.

In the period 1990-2013, 57% of migrants to the US were born in Latin America (two thirds of them in Mexico), 35% in Asia and 6% in Africa (UN 2013). Mexico is the largest country of origin for migrants to the US. Since Mexican official demographic forecasts estimate a population growth of 11 million by 2025, emigration to the prosperous Northern neighbour is not expected to slow until 2040, when birth rates are predicted to decline (NIC 2012; Pew Research Center 2014; Gros & Alcidi 2013). Mexico is also a transit country for Central American migrants going to the US.

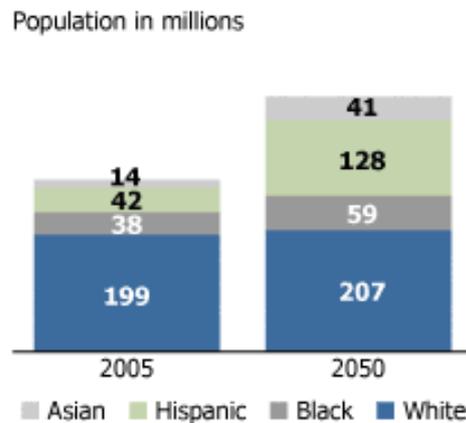
The African population continues to increase. If the trend towards a lower mortality rate continues,¹⁸ the region could have between 1.5-1.6 billion people in 2030 (similar to India) and over 2.4 billion in 2050, approximately 20% and 25% of the global population, respectively. With a population of 178.5 million in 2012, a median age of 17.8 years and a fertility rate of six children per woman, by 2030, Nigeria could have 240 million inhabitants, surpassing Brazil (217.5 million) (United Nations 2012). Although Latin America's population is set to rise over the coming decades, by 2050, like the United States and the EU, the region could face an 'aging problem' (NIC 2012). If these projections are accurate, demography will become a real game-changer in the Atlantic.

In the Americas, by 2025, the UN expects fertility rates of around 2.0 in Latin America and in the US. Hispanics will be the largest minority in the United States. The US demographic advantage in terms of working age population will last until 2030 (Gros & Alcidi 2013). Due to constant South-North migration flows, the future of the United States is closely linked to that of Latin America and the Caribbean. Changing demographic patterns could also alter US foreign policy priorities over time: Latin America and Asia may attract more attention, while the relevance of the EU, Africa, Israel and Russia could decline.

¹⁷ According to the European Commission, in 2014 irregular migration to the EU increased by 138% compared to the previous year. Around 276,113 people entered the EU without a permit.

¹⁸ According to the African Development Bank, life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to rise from 57 years in 2010 to 64 in 2030 (AfDB 2012: 3).

Figure 1: Population estimates for the United States (Passel & Cohn 2008)



In demographic terms, the Atlantic will undergo a profound change in the coming decades. In 2025-2030, the Atlantic Basin could have around 3 billion inhabitants, compared to Asia’s 4.5 billion. More than two billion ‘Atlantic citizens’ will live in Latin America and Africa, and 860,000 people in the North Atlantic. By 2050, around 25% of the global population will be in Africa, 55% in Asia (compared to 61% in 2010), 13% in the Americas and 7% in Europe (4% less than in 2010). If these projections are accurate, the broader Atlantic space would account for 45% of the world’s population (Kochhar 2014).

Figure 2: Population trends (millions)

Region/year	Africa	Latin America	North America	Europe	Asia
2015	1.166	616	355	742	4,300
2030	1.634	716	403	736	4.887
2050	2.393	781	446	709	5.100

Sources: Population and Vital Statistics Report. United Nations. New York: 2014; UN Population Division: World Population 2012; United Nations, World Population Prospects 2012 (<http://esa.un.org/wpp/unpp/p2k0data.asp>).

4. Cultural trends

According to Samuel Huntington, together with identities and values, ‘language and religion are the key elements of every culture’ (Huntington 1997: 81). Broadly defined ‘Western culture’ (Toynbee 1958; Huntington 1997: 96ff.), identified with Europe, Canada and the United States, has been traditionally predominant across the Atlantic. Although the primacy of North Atlantic values is contested within and outside the Basin (Huntington 1997: 103ff.), the common cultural heritage between Europe, the Americas and part of Atlantic Africa could also allow for the development of closer relations within the Atlantic space.

However, despite a common heritage, there are very significant cultural differences between the four shores of the Atlantic: ‘The countries within the Atlantic Basin are profoundly diverse in their political and cultural settings’ (Rodrigues Sanches 2014: 6). The high degree of diversity is a comparative advantage in terms of open, multicultural

societies, but it also entails potential conflicts and hinders the emergence of a collective identity between people living in the North and South Atlantic.

Languages and linguistic communities

The Atlantic Basin includes four of the world's most important languages: English is widely spoken or understood in the entire Atlantic; French is one of the most important languages in Africa; Portuguese is spoken in Brazil and in some African countries; and Spanish is predominant in Latin America and increasingly spoken in the US. Nearly all Atlantic countries belong to one of the four linguistic and/or cultural communities: the Commonwealth, the Francophonie, Ibero-America and the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries (CPLP). Some have argued that 'organisations based upon shared language and history are relevant and have potential to create soft power through language and beyond' (Rodrigues Sanches 2014: 19). Nonetheless, despite some overlapping memberships (such as Brazil and Portugal's participation in the CPLP and Ibero-America), there are no formal connections between those communities.

Cultural identities

Cultural differences prevail in the EU, a project of 'diversity within unity' (Schlenker 2010). The strong attachment of European citizens to local and national identities explains the modest progress in formulating a common cultural policy beyond 'Europe's day' or Erasmus Mundus, among others. By 2025, increasing migration flows could further contribute to cultural diversity and religious fragmentation within Europe.

Increasing cultural diversity is also evident in North America. While Canada and the US have been traditionally more culturally closer to Europe, Mexico identifies more with Latin America. But these identities are shifting given the increasing interdependence between Mexico and the United States since the signature of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Massive flows of trade, investment, capital and people between both countries are 'Americanising' Mexico and 'Latin-Americanising' the United States. Spanish is already the second language in the United States, and citizens from Mexican and Cuban origin already represent powerful political groups with increasing influence on local, state and federal governments. The emergence of Ted Cruz or Marco Rubio, both of Cuban origin, as potential presidential contenders for the 2016 elections illustrates this.

Latin America has no collective cultural identity. It is a highly diverse sub-continent, divided into Afro-descendent communities, indigenous groups and people of European origin. Large countries such as Brazil will remain a melting pot by integrating the largest number of Afro-descendents in Latin America – followed by Cuba – as well as Asian and European immigrants. Concepts such as 'El Buenvivir' (living well) as an indigenous cosmic vision in Bolivia to reconcile human beings and nature are attempts to reconnect to pre-colonial roots. These new identities also have a strong influence in Latin American countries such as Guatemala that have sizeable indigenous populations. The trend to rediscover pre-colonial cultural roots sometimes represents a form of opposition to European civilisation.

According to some African authors (Udeani 2004: 44), 'cultural diversity is a central part of the African collective identity'. Similar to indigenous cosmo-visions in Latin America, the 'African Renaissance' intends to recover the pre-colonial past in terms of identities, traditions and cultural roots, as opposed to the imposition of European values. In North and West Africa, cultural identities, ethnic communities, religious and family traditions are highly diverse and sometimes a source of conflict within and between countries.

This is also due to the fact that cultural affinities or differences often do not correspond to national borders in Africa.

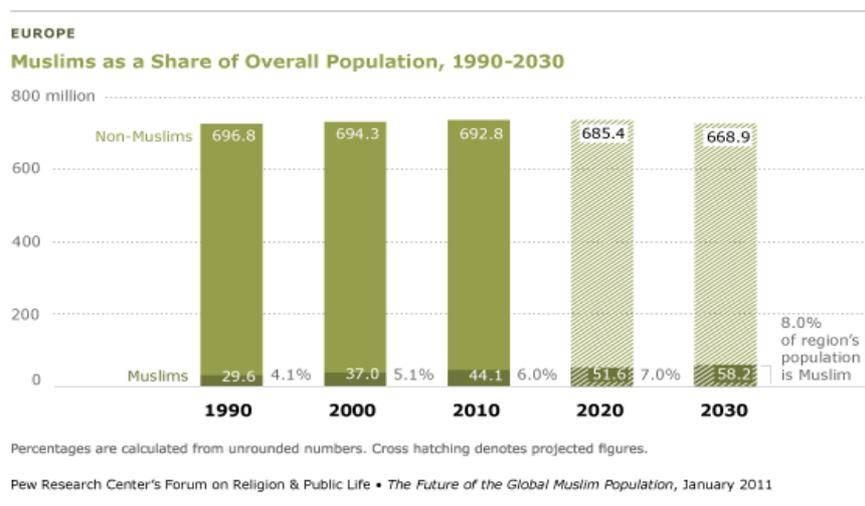
Religion

In 2010, 77.4% of North America’s population was Christian, while Muslims represented only 2.8% and Jews around 2%. Forecasts (Pew Research Center 2015) expect the percentage of Christians to decline to 66% by 2050. Meanwhile, the percentage of atheists or religious non-affiliated in North America is expected to increase from 17% in 2010 to 26%.

The picture in Europe is different. According to opinion polls carried out by Eurobarometer, in 2012, nearly half of EU citizens declared themselves to be atheists, almost three times the percentage in the United States. However, Europe shows great heterogeneity when it comes to the perceived importance of religion in people’s daily lives. The declining role of religion is evident in Sweden, where only 7.9% considers religion very important, in Spain (10.7%) and in Germany (13.1%). This perception contrasts, for example, with 50.5% of Romanians who highly value religion (World Value Surveys 2015, period 2010-2014). Alike in North America, in Europe Christians are the largest religious group accounting for 72% of believers, followed by Muslims and others.

Despite populist fears about the ‘Islamisation of Europe’, in 2010 Muslims made up only 6% of Europe’s total population (44 million) and are expected to account for 8% by 2030 (58 million) (Pew Research Center 2013). Projections for the United States point to a faster pace of growth of the Muslim community, although starting from a much smaller level. In short, ‘Muslims will remain relatively small minorities in Europe and the Americas, but they are expected to constitute a growing share of the total population in these regions’ (Pew Research Center 2011).

Figure 3: Muslims as a share of overall population, 1990-2030



In Latin America, 90% of the population is Christian. Like in Europe, there is a large variation within the Americas with regard to the importance of religion for citizens. Religion is very important for 59% of Colombians, 51% of Brazilians and 40% of Americans, but only for 24% of Argentinians and 18% of Uruguayans (World Value Surveys 2015, period 2010-2014). By 2025, the balance between Catholics and

Protestants is likely to shift towards the latter. According to the Latinobarometro 2013, in the period 1995-2004, the number of Latin American Catholics declined by 13% (Mexico and the Dominican Republic constitute an exception). Particularly in Central America and Brazil, the traditional influence of the Catholic Church has declined and Protestants have gained affiliates. In 2010, over 50% of Guatemalans and 22% of Brazilians belonged to Protestant groups such as Pentecostalism (Pew Research Center 2013b). With 123 million, Brazil is still the country with the largest number of Catholics, but Protestant groups (originating from the US) will continue to gain adherents in the region. Thus, also in terms of religious identities, there might be an increasing convergence in the Americas.

Citizens in Africa are highly committed to religion: 91% of Ghanaians, 90% of Nigerians and 89% of Moroccans believe that religion plays a very important role in their lives (World Value Surveys 2015, period 2010-2014). The majority of the population of Atlantic Africa is Muslim or believes in indigenous religions, but Christianity is also very important. In 2010, about 24% of the world's Christians lived in Africa, and its share could increase to 38% by 2050 (Mascis 2015). In 2010, about 171 million or 16 per cent Catholics lived in Africa, compared to 39 per cent in Latin America (Pew Research Center 2013a). By 2050, Nigeria will still be the country with the sixth largest Christian population in the world. But, at the same time, 'in 20 years (...) more Muslims are likely to live in Nigeria than in Egypt' (Pew Research Center 2011).

The complexity of cultural trends, including issues of values, identities, language and religion, makes it exceedingly difficult to anticipate possible developments across the Atlantic. Some factors point to potential cultural convergence, such as the predominance of four major languages in the Atlantic, close cultural ties between Europe and the Americas, as well as the large size of minorities of Latin American origin in the US, Canada and Europe, and of African origin in the Americas and the EU. However, identities are fragmented within each region, perceptions differ across the Atlantic on social and family values, and increasing attention is paid in Latin America and Atlantic Africa to pre-colonial traditions and beliefs. These and other factors show that despite a shared cultural heritage and broadly common values, prospects for the emergence of a shared Atlantic identity are very uncertain over the medium term.

5. Conclusions and prospects

In political, social and cultural terms, the Atlantic space is a puzzle. Shared values contrast with distinct, and sometimes distant, identities. Some trends are common, such as sustained migration flows from the South to the North via Mexico toward the US and via the Mediterranean towards Europe, but implications vary from region to region and policies are mostly handled at the national level.

From a political standpoint, democracy is the prevalent form of government across the Atlantic, but with major regional variations. Liberal democracies are predominant in North America and Europe. Most countries in Central and South America are also democracies, but the majority of Atlantic Africa features hybrid or authoritarian regimes. Besides, there are concerns with the quality of democracy in various Atlantic countries from Europe to Latin America.

Demography will be a critical factor for the future of the Atlantic, with Africa being the only region where high population growth rates are projected and Europe being the fastest ageing region. This will pose challenges in terms of social balance, cohesion and economic growth in both regions, although for opposite reasons. It could lead to

growing tensions around sustained migration flows and the further rise of populism and xenophobia in Europe.

Social inequalities within countries have been growing larger in recent years in both advanced and developing countries. While middle classes are expanding in Latin America and to a lesser extent in Africa, they are shrinking or facing decreasing living standards in Europe and the US. Their growth in emerging countries and the developing world can contribute to the consolidation of democratic politics and of more inclusive economic systems, but their decline in advanced countries can result in political turbulence and the rise of parties on the extreme right or extreme left of the political spectrum.

Socio-economic challenges also differ considerably among Atlantic countries, with much of Atlantic Africa dealing with sheer poverty reduction, some emerging countries seeking to avoid the so-called middle-income trap (Brazil, Mexico, South Africa) and countries from the North Atlantic struggling to strike a balance between economic competitiveness and social cohesion, or between openness to globalisation and job protection at home.

These challenges relate to very different debates on the role of the state and public authorities across the Atlantic Basin. Building institutional capacity and legitimacy are key challenges and primary goals in large parts of Africa and Latin America. Other countries like Brazil debate the role of the state as a principal development agent with a strong presence in various economic sectors. Reforming welfare systems and public regulations to gain competitiveness in the face of both global competition and disgruntled middle classes are central to the political agendas in Europe and the US.

Some countries or organisations will likely play a leading role in the Atlantic: the EU as the most connected entity to all other Atlantic regions; the US as a global and regional power; Brazil as a bridge between Latin America, Africa and also Asia (BRICS/IBSA); Mexico and South Africa as bi-oceanic countries; Spain and Portugal due to their cultural and economic links to Latin America and Africa; France and the UK owing to their post-colonial ties and permanent seats on the UN Security Council; Morocco for its special role between North and West Africa and Europe; and Nigeria as by far the biggest player in Atlantic Africa by population.

Beyond states, it can be expected that in the future the influence of multinational companies, NGOs, social networks, sub-national entities (cities, regions) and migrant communities over government decisions and within multilateral organisations and fora will grow. This is also due to the fact that open societies and economic systems are widespread in the Atlantic, except in parts of Latin America and Africa. This is also the reason why future convergence around common agendas at Atlantic Basin level cannot be planned top-down, but needs to encompass and build on the perspectives and priorities of societal actors, from the bottom up.

From today's perspective, the emergence of an Atlantic community based on shared identities, ideas and interests in the political, social and cultural realms seems highly unlikely in the next ten years. Cooperation in the Atlantic Basin will probably take place 'à la carte' including different formats and geometries, rather than on the basis of a clear institutional design encompassing all or most of the countries in this space.

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