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Atlantic Multilateralism and Prospects for Pan-Atlantic Institutions: An Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the evolution of Atlantic multilateralism from an historical perspective from the modern era up to the present. It argues that, despite the continuing vitality of Atlantic multilateralism, pan-Atlantic institutions remain an elusive quest and Atlanticism may not be the most promising vision for bringing together a plurality of Atlantic basin countries which display a diversity of foreign policy and normative orientations. The Atlantic basin will remain a lead world laboratory for multilateral initiatives and tools, but mainly at the sub-regional level. In some functional areas such as maritime security, Atlantic-wide regimes could emerge over time.

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1. Introduction: Setting the Historical Question

Throughout the modern era, the "Atlantic area" – a political rather than a well-defined geographical notion – has served as a gigantic laboratory for international multilateral cooperation. The birthplace of the nation state in the 17th century, from the mid-20th century onwards Europe has led the most ambitious multilateral effort to revisit and circumscribe national sovereignty: the European integration project leading to the European Union. On the American continent, the United States' experiment with federalism and the Republican tradition have importantly contributed to the emergence and mainstreaming of "internationalism" as a foreign policy stance. The idea that law can serve as the basis of international order and that world governance can be the product of institutionalized multilateral cooperation owes a lot to American influences (Janis 2010). It was the U.S. which during the first half of the 20th century advocated more than any other country the creation of "universalistic" multilateral organizations, from the League of Nations after World War I to the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions in the 1940s. These were seen as the pillars of a new type of world order endowed with constitutional features typical of domestic regimes. In these seminal efforts, the U.S. enjoyed a broad support from "sister" American republics (Ninkovich 1999; Smith 2012). A plurality of Latin American states felt part of a diverse yet common American Republican tradition. Similarly to the U.S., they saw in international law an instrument to protect their recently acquired independence.

Despite being the cradle – indeed the world's leader – for multilateral initiatives, the Atlantic area has never seen the emergence of Atlantic-wide institutions. The Atlantic countries' involvement in multilateral initiatives at the regional and global levels has not been crowned by attempts to setting up pan-Atlantic frameworks for cooperation. This interestingly stands in contrast with the Asia-Pacific region. Multilateralism took roots much later in that area of the world. Pacific regional politics remains to date strictly subordinated to national politics and is marked by high levels of inter-state competition. Notwithstanding this and other factors, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has come to include most Pacific Rim countries, providing for a useful forum for addressing basin-wide issues. In the Atlantic area, regionalisms of different nature and scope have instead prevailed, from "security communities" covering only the North Atlantic such as NATO (Deutsch 1957), to quasi-federative experiments like the European Union, to less far-reaching projects at the sub-continental level such as MERCOSUR in South America or ECOWAS in West Africa. Regional initiatives have been complemented by the creation of fora at the continental level, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, the African Union (AU) in Africa, and the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Americas. At the global level, Atlantic-based countries have been proactive but often un-coordinated players in the UN context (Gratius 2014). More recently, they have played a prominent yet not necessarily coherent role within settings such as the G-20.

The absence of a "pan-Atlantic multilateralism" has many causes, but the historical roots of this outcome can be at least partly explained by taking into consideration geopolitical developments, power transitions, and ideological alignments. The Atlantic basin, comprising both the North and the South and neighbouring regions, carried some geopolitical coherence in the age of the great discoveries and colonial empires, in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Whatever multilateral coordination on Atlantic issues was sought back then, it was achieved through international conferences occasionally convened in Europe on colonial affairs. In the following centuries, however, the Atlantic area gradually and steadily lost its coherence. This happened conterminously with the transformation of colonial possessions from the peripheries of Europe to centres of activity and interest in their own right. Different trajectories were taken by American and African dependencies, the former gaining independence much earlier and developing

economically and politically much faster. A second major division pitted the "New World" against "the Old Continent". In the eyes of (North) Americans, developments in the New World ceased to be transatlantic projections of European dynamics. An American civilization and an American international system were being born. Newly formed American Republics developed characteristic political systems and a distinct body of law, signally contributing to the development of an American tradition of international law (Loveman 2010).

A sense of common destiny and separation from Europe led to diplomatic initiatives such as the Monroe Declaration of 1823, which drew a dividing line not only between the international systems of Europe and the Americas, but also between their international identities. The evolution of the Monroe Declaration into a "doctrine" was accompanied by the cultivation of distinctive cultural and political orientations, such as (pan) "Americanism" (Gonzalez 2011; Whitaker 1954). Divisions occurred, however, when Latin American nations, which had initially harboured a sentiment of solidarity towards the U.S., denounced the growing imperialistic impulses of their Northern neighbour (Carnegie 1899). In the background, until the late 19th century, the Atlantic area stood as a fault line rather than a bridge, even if the ocean continued to play a critical role for communications and trade.

While creating divisions within the American continent, the rise of the U.S. to world power at the turn of the century opened the window of opportunity for a partial rapprochement with Europe, in turn preparing the ground for a full-blown hegemonic transition after World War II. By 1945, the U.S. had replaced the British Empire as the lead Atlantic power, and was set to become the new international leader (Krabbendam and Thompson 2012; Powaski 1991). In this long and far from linear process, some of the cultural and ideological differences between the two continents and cultures were now downplayed, or at least recast, to emphasize the founding elements of a common "Western civilization". Transatlantic solidarity was first activated in a prominent way to counter the threat of a German domination of the European continent both during the First and Second World Wars. Transatlantic cooperation was made permanent and institutionalized only during the Cold War era when a geopolitical competition between the two new superpowers, the U.S. and USSR, merged with an ideological confrontation between alternative socio-economic models and political projects: the market-based (North) Atlantic "free world" and the communist Soviet bloc.

Never attaining levels of economic development comparable to those of their North American counterparts, former European colonies in Latin America and the African South Atlantic followed a trajectory of their own while being dragged in varying degrees into the "Global Cold War" (Westad 2005). Latin American and African states sought affiliations with either the Western or Soviet blocs, often in an opportunistic way or, on the contrary, by yielding to external pressure. They also participated in initiatives such as the "Non-Aligned Movement", which was intended to advance "Third-World" priorities and ambitions. Many countries of the South Atlantic came to share elements of a worldview underpinned by a strong anti-imperialistic stance. Witness the travails of delayed industrialization the most dynamic of them started cultivating a common identity of "developing economies". While these connections supported regional multilateral experiments, sometimes modelled after European integration, the foreign policies of South Atlantic and other developing countries remained focused on traditional international principles such as sovereignty, non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states, and territorial integrity. This largely reflected a defensive attitude. From a Southern perspective, the foundations of a more equitable and balanced relationship with the (North) Atlantic world could not but include the respect for national independence and national sovereignty.

Against this backdrop, whether these divides rooted in history will ever be overcome, seems to be once again a function of geopolitics (here broadly defined as the interplay between international politics and space), power transitions (that is, long-term changes in the distribution and hierarchy of international power), and ideology (the self-representation of interests and societal values). On the one hand, it is undeniable that a "re-balancing" is taking place between the North and South Atlantic, as Latin American as well as African economies in varying degrees narrow their long-standing developmental gap with their wealthier Northern counterparts. On the other hand, this process is unfolding unevenly and at significantly different paces from context to context. What is more, no single, let alone defining hegemonic transition – that is, one capable of unseating the U.S. as the preponderant Atlantic power – is in sight. The ongoing re-balancing is, rather, taking place in the context of an increasingly interdependent and "globalized" Atlantic area which is at once and the same time more interdependent and multipolar. Extra-regional actors, starting with China, already occupy an important position in economic terms in the Atlantic area, together with other so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa). As a matter of fact, the rise of the BRICS, only two of which are (South) Atlantic countries, well illustrates the larger transformation of the international system. As power shifts occur all around the world the Western- (North Atlantic) cantered order of the 21st century has come under question but the features and hierarchies of an alternative order are not clearly visible. In this changing context, if the Atlantic area were to re-gain some geopolitical coherence after centuries of divisions and disparities it would be as an open "global region". Its internal dynamics could be hardly disentangled from those of the rest of the world (Bergsten 1997; Kuhnhardt 2010).

A new "Atlantic geopolitics", moreover, needs to hinge upon a political geography of sorts and rely on some unifying theme or trend. The North Atlantic post-WWII order was brought together by fear of German and Russian single-handed domination of the European continent. It was also cemented by the vision of market capitalism and the open economy as key factors for development and peace. The democratic element and the embracement of "liberalism" versus communism provided additional glue for the "West" after WWII. As an idea and an ideology, "Atlanticism" became one of the convenient ways to capture and combine a unique mix of power-oriented and value-based considerations (Mariano 2010). Against this backdrop, one should not certainly dismiss the fact that democracy has become the preferred political regime of most Atlantic countries, North and South. One should also not underestimate the degree of alignment of Atlantic-based states when it comes to the fundamental norms of the international order, from human rights to the principle of free trade. Unlike in the North Atlantic area, however, the nature of the domestic regime is not generally seen by Latin America and Africa as an ordering principle for international relations. Nor are common democratic aspirations, let alone the acceptance of the tenets of economic liberalism, leading for now to the emergence of a re-founded, expanded notion of (pan) Atlanticism. Different democratic experiences, many of which incomplete or still fragile, and different levels of integration into the world economy, better describe the current political reality of the Atlantic world. Pluralism, rather than convergence, seems to be the overarching theme.

In this context, similarities of culture and common historical legacies have not emerged as the possible glue that could bring Atlantic basin countries closer together now that the difficult legacy of the colonial era may be perceived as less vivid and burdensome. Whereas language, religion, and broad societal practices certainly offer elements of a shared Atlantic identity, the international weight that these commonalities currently carry is rather limited. As developing economies in the South Atlantic and other regions grow richer and gain confidence, South-South dialogue is being emphasized over North-South vectors of engagement. As a matter of fact, next to continued competition

along a North-South axis, divisive trends are if anything becoming more visible even within the "Global South", creating new polarizations and a complex mosaic of relations (Thomas-Slayter 2003).

Indeed, a key question for the future of multilateralism in the Atlantic seems to be whether the narrowing development gap between the North and the South will be in itself enough of a lever to bring about an alignment of worldviews and a convergence of political orientations. This question similarly applies to other regions of the world. It is, therefore, a global question, not an Atlantic one.

A plausible scenario is one in which a plurality of orientations, identities, and international trajectories will continue to exist side by side, with ongoing power shifts possibly leading to further diversification. To the extent that a convergence of views could take place, for instance around the democratic element, this may lead to greater coordination among Atlantic countries at the global rather than mere Atlantic-basin level. With the exception for policy initiatives focused on specific functional priorities, such as for instance a more coordinated management of Atlantic natural resources, or the protection of vital sea lanes and Atlantic costs, pan-Atlantic institutions may remain an elusive quest. This constitutes a challenge for Atlanticism, but not for multilateralism as such. The latter will most likely continue to develop in multiple forms across the Atlantic area's main sub-regions. Indeed, the complexity and open-endedness characterizing the transformation of multilateralism in the 21st century only reinforces the need to focus on the Atlantic area: the birthplace of multilateralism and the region of the world in which some of its most innovative instruments could still be created.

2. Early Multilateral Experiences across the Atlantic

The origins of multilateralism lie with the modern European state system as it emerged from the Westphalia peace treaties following the religious civil wars of the 16th and 17th centuries (Anderson 1998; Galli 2010). Multilateralism through concerts of powers and other forms of coordination was a response given to the dilemma which has been at the roots of the modern international system from its inception: how to reconcile sovereignty (that is, the absence of any higher authority than the state itself) with the reality of a plurality of states competing for a geographically and resource-limited space. A defining and distinctive feature of the European state system was precisely the presence of a plurality of states, constitutionally similar and comparable in size. This plurality distinguished the modern European state system from previous European orders and from other parts of the world in which vast empires dominated the political landscape. Diversity has been a key feature of Europe's self-representation of a peninsular continent neighbouring large threatening entities in the "East".

The European state system was, in turn, at the centre of a larger web of relations which developed around the "discoveries" of newly exploitable lands and the establishment of colonial empires. It was during the era of colonization and exploitation of non-European societies that the Atlantic area acquired some coherence as the projection of European power in the African and American continents (Bailyn 2005). Other areas of the world, from Asia to Australasia, also came under European domination. A key difference, however, was that the Atlantic area was progressively brought under the full and exclusive control of European powers with no major local society or culture being capable of offering a meaningful or lasting resistance. Until at least the 18th century, by when some of the European colonies had gained independence, in the eyes of Europeans the Atlantic area was largely a product of the exportation overseas of European civilization (Hattingois-Forner 2013). Coherence of the Atlantic space, from a European perspective, was reinforced by developments such as the trade and

exploitation of African slaves. The transatlantic slave trade triangle between Europe, Africa and the Americas was, alas, one of the first manifestations of the interconnectedness of the Atlantic (Ledent and Cuder-Dominguez 2012). While it linked the Atlantic to Europe, slave business also created the first south-south exchange, a legacy that still plays a role in the national memory of countries like Brazil, which hosts the largest black population outside of Africa (Araujo et al. 2013).

The growing connectedness of the imperial Atlantic was not synonymous, however, with homogeneity. Indeed, various divides were to emerge during the colonial and early post-colonial era. These carried important implications for the evolution of Atlantic multilateralism. Notably, while European culture was being exported, European states kept looking at Atlantic dependencies as a space where the conventions which had been developed in the European continent to discipline conflict – the "ius in bello" – did not fully apply (Galli 2006). Whereas Europe emerged (or aimed to emerge) as the space of ritualized relations among sovereign entities abiding by common codes of conduct, the Atlantic area remained for a long time the area of indiscriminate warfare. Several European conflicts were actually fought overseas, respecting this double standard, including episodes of the Napoleonic wars. Until the separation of the American continent from the European one was proclaimed by U.S. President James Monroe in 1823, the whole Atlantic area was part of European contests, not the place for transatlantic cooperation, let alone multilateral peace (Tucker and Hendrickson 2002). The same U.S. revolutionary War of Independence started as a confrontation between the thirteen colonies and Britain and then escalated in a European conflict involving France and the Netherlands. The conflict that followed in 1812 was part of a larger European confrontation triggered by the loss of the balance of power in Europe following Napoleon's attempt to establish a continental empire. The American Civil War of 1860-65 also had an Atlantic dimension as the British Empire opportunistically supported the Confederacy against the Union (Fleche 2012).

With the development of the Monroe Doctrine, the Western segment of the Atlantic area called itself out of European conflicts. The Doctrine, which was later recognized by the British Empire and other European powers, affirmed various principles, among which were the rejection of any further colonization of the American continent and the right of American states to manage continental affairs on their own terms (May, 1975). Albeit European empires remained in the American continent for still quite some time, the Doctrine conveyed the ambition to end America's existence as a transatlantic dependency (Alvarez 1924). With the principle of "America to the Americans", however, (Pan) Americanism, rather than Atlanticism, gained currency in American politics and discourse. Newly independent American colonies emphasized the Atlantic as a new divide between an old and corrupt European and a new American civilization, overcoming other geographical divides such as the demarcation between Portuguese and Spanish imperial American domains dating back to the 15th century. The Republican constitutions of American states, which made them so unique in international perspective vis a vis monarchical Europe and imperial Asia, had an impact on political thought, culture, law, as well as international affairs (Ninkovich 2009). The first attempts to coordinate international efforts among American states was in the name of Pan-American republicanism, an orientation initially shared by South American leaders such as Simon Bolivar of Venezuela, whose name was later to be associated with the rejection of North American "imperialism" (Lockey 1970; Oliveira 1980).

The American states' interest in international law, a field of study still at an incipient stage, was motivated by different reasons (Janis 2004). One was certainly the willingness to anchor their new existence as independent entities to solid grounds. A second idea gained currency, however, according to which the same checks and balances that characterized societies in which the rule of law was respected could be

applied to relations among states as members of an "international society" (Thompson 2008). Of course, these aspirations were not always consistently fulfilled. The American continent remained a place of international competition after the Monroe Doctrine. Many American states, moreover, never developed into fully democratic, international-law abiding entities. Under the banner of Americanism, the U.S. leaned towards an imperialistic agenda towards the end of the 19th century, acquiring extra continental territories like Puerto Rico and Cuba (Sexton 2011) and expanding its reach on the continent through the annexation of "free" territory and large swaths of land previously controlled by other states. By 1905, the so-called Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine offered an imperialistic re-interpretation of Americanism. The U.S. was now endowed with the right to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign American republics in the name of continental peace. President Woodrow Wilson himself adhered to this policy before his name became associated with the WWI vision of "making the world safe for democracy" (Aguilar 1968; Ninkovich, 2001; Sexton 2011). It is of little consolation that America looked at these interventions in its Latin American "backyard" as legitimate "policing".

Despite these tensions and contradictions, the American continent nonetheless witnessed among the first attempts to overcome the problems created by national sovereignty by re-casting the principle in a democratic context. While Europe was still divided and mired in recurrent conflicts, the American experience with federation and Republicanism represented the most ambitious efforts to limit inter-state competition. To the unstable, war-prone European balance of power was opposed the "unity in diversity" principle of the American Union ("*e pluribus unum*"): a union of, by, and for the people (Wood 2011). Violent developments such as the American Civil War only reinforced this logic. The fear that war could become endemic in the Western hemisphere, and the spectre of a "Balkanization" of America, underpinned efforts to approach creatively the question of sovereignty, not by overcoming it, but by re-founding it (Ely 2009). The logic remained people's sovereignty through the state rather than state sovereignty. A major difference between multilateral traditions in America and in Europe, therefore, is that the former aspired to attain international peace by linking sovereignty to the democratic element but, in so doing, it stopped short of overcoming the principle of sovereignty itself. For its part, Europe developed international law and multilateral instruments firmly based on the principle of national sovereignty but ultimately attained peace in the 20th century after the two global wars had discredited nationalism, forcing to limit nation states through European unification. These different historical trajectories still account for different interpretations of multilateralism across the Atlantic.

While these differences played out, a process of rapprochement between (North) America and Europe was in the meantime taking place, driven by geopolitical developments and a power transition. The rise of the United States as an industrialized nation at the end of the 19th century was the last episode of a centuries-old migration of the centre of economic power westward, from the Mediterranean basin to the Atlantic area. For a long time, America's ascent had a limited political impact. The acquisition of elements of an empire, especially after the "Little Splendid War" with Spain of 1898, were seen my many as preluding an Europeanization of America (Hilfrich 2012). In the early 20st century, a still reluctant American power emerged as the *de facto* new international hegemon. Awareness of this power shift was crystallized during the two world wars when U.S. elites finally concluded that America's safety and future prosperity depended on larger international conditions, signally a European balance which was incompatible with the domination of the European continent by any single power. That is the reason why Germany's aims under both Wilhelminian and Nazi rule was seen as hostile not only to European peace, but to American security as well (Mahan 1898; Spykman 1942).

America's intervention into WWI and WWII on the side of Great Britain and other European powers not only helped mitigate the cultural and political differences that had been emphasized as the basis of separate transatlantic identities. It also contributed to new important developments for multilateralism. Indeed, during WWI, two conceptions of multilateralism emerged and partly mixed, creating strands that remain relevant until today. A first one was the idea that a certain type of "Atlantic order" had to be preserved not only by upholding international law and limiting conflict but by protecting the politically plural nature of the Atlantic area. The vision of a community of liberal democratic nations uniting against authoritarian or totalitarian powers was at the core of the early Atlanticist tradition, which emphasized pluralism as a defining feature of the Atlantic space. Notions of an "Atlantic system" that America and other "sea powers" had a responsibility to protect against the domination of Eurasian empires date back to at least the late 19th century. The writings of naval strategist Alfred T. Mahan as well as the reflections of public intellectuals such as historian Henry Adams (Mahan 1898; Adams 1907) are revealing in this respect. The term "Atlantic community", which gained currency only during the Cold War, was coined as early as 1917, well before the advent of the bipolar world. American journalist and public philosopher Walter Lippmann, a future authority in U.S. foreign policy thinking, is credited with having brought the concept to pubic fruition (Lippmann 1943). From the beginning, therefore, Atlanticism described a political rather than physical geography of the Atlantic.

Together with this vision of multilateralism, a second one matured around the same period. "Universalistic multilateralism" built on experiences that were not American or Anglo-Saxon, but larger. The idea that nation states would benefit from growing coordination and that international law could discipline relationships among sovereign entities had attracted ever larger constituencies in Europe and around the world. Arms control conferences and international tribunals for settlements gained some traction between the 19th and 20th centuries, as was the case with the Hague Peace conferences in 1899 and 1907 (Robinson 1936). Before the tragedy of WWI, some world leaders, starting with U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, revived ideas about a "world government" or a "world federation", notions on which European thinkers had worked for decades (Cooper 2008 and 2009). This conception of multilateralism was inseparable from the aspiration to ritualize, civilize, and domesticate relations among states which had accompanied both the European and American traditions. Unlike for the Atlanticist multilateral approach, however, the emphasis was put on the notion of inclusiveness, no so much like-mindedness, and on global rather than regional conditions of order (Lippmann 1944). While aspirations behind this view were broadly democratic – in the sense that many dreamed of a future "parliament of mankind" – what was envisaged was a world concert bringing all states around the same table. The "equality of states" rather than democracy or liberalism was the overarching principle.

This insistence on more traditional elements of international law and multilateralism is evidenced by the fact that President Wilson's certainly visionary and transformative project of a League of Nations was accompanied by an emphasis on national self-determination. Before backtracking from the project altogether, the U.S. government championed the fragmentation of Europe in a multitude of independent national entities that would replace European empires. In other words, the type of multilateralism that prevailed with the establishment of the League of Nations was ambitious in that it tried to outlaw war and liquidate European empires. Unlike the Atlanticist experiments that followed, and differently from European integration after WWII, the constituency of this universalistic plans remained the "world of nations" rather than the "community of democracies". The idea which prevailed was not to establish a constitutional international order, but more simply to manage state sovereignty. An even greater realism characterized the later project of the United Nations. Founded between 1944

and 1945, the United Nations Organization saw both the creation of a General Assembly representing a sort of global parliament and the establishment of a Security Council. The latter was in all respects a "concert" of the most powerful nations. The five permanent members of this world's cabinet enjoyed veto power. The centre of international decision-making was therefore a multilateral structure which fully abode by, instead of trying to revisit or transcend the principle of national sovereignty (Kennedy 2006).

With its unprecedented surge in the use and diffusion of multilateral instruments, the twentieth century was cut across by this tension between inclusive and exclusive forms of multilateralism. While Asia started developing modern state structures as well as its first multilateral projects, the Atlantic saw the most significant and consequential attempts to move beyond international anarchy, including through the establishment of "supranational" institutions. Attritions as well as synergies between different conceptions and rationales for multilateralism became particularly manifest during the Cold War era when states invested significant resources in international cooperation in order to avoid the apocalyptic scenario of a nuclear war. Atlanticism but also other conceptions of multilateralism, such as "thirdworldism", were developed during this period.

3. Post-War Multilateralisms: the (North) Atlantic Order and Its Opponents

The second post-war order mirrored the new fragile international power balance. It prevented the outbreak of another conflict on a global scale but it did not decisively settle outstanding issues among major powers, starting with the future of Europe. The international system remained fundamentally divided along geopolitical, economic, and ideological fault lines. Multilateralism both reflected this reality and helped channel tensions away from international conflict. Universalistic institutions in particular, starting with the United Nations, almost immediately showed their shortcomings (Gaddis 1972). Although documents such as the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights put forward lofty blueprints, major powers disagreed on basic issues such as the role of the state in the economy and the relationship between the individual and the state. As a matter of fact, the two new post-European superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, soon came to the realization that they shared little beyond the defeat of Nazi Germany and the Axis powers. The UN Security Council, which with its five permanent members had been established to temper the egalitarianism of the General Assembly, was paralyzed from the beginning, as the two superpowers repeatedly used their veto power.

The difficulties experienced by universalistic bodies in which Western leaders such as U.S. President Franklyn Delano Roosevelt had invested so much political capital, led to a rethink of "internationalism" (Woolner, Kimball, and Reynolds, 2008; Patrick 2009). In the Atlantic area, the disappointment with universalism was followed by a re-appreciation of other forms of allegiances that were more limited in scope but not necessarily exclusive in their ultimate membership. Indeed, Atlantic multilateralism and Atlanticism gained traction during the early Cold War era not so much as inward-looking regional projects, but as strategies that like-minded Western countries could use to federate a Western community as the basis of a future liberal world order (Ikenberry 2001).

The Atlantic connections which the U.S. had established during WWII by fighting on the side of the anti-German Allied coalition were made permanent by the institutionalization

of defensive commitments through the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, then the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of 1950. The first peace-time binding defensive pact the U.S. had ever been part of after the alliance with France following Independence, NATO was conceived and presented by the majority of actors involved in its creation not as a traditional military alliance, but as a community of states following common principles and sharing a single democratic destiny (Kaplan 1984). Meant to keep the Soviet Union in check in Europe, and Germany down, NATO also embodied the aspiration of moving towards a "community of power" that had also inspired President Woodrow Wilson's vision of a League of Nations. The metaphor that was often used by the most fervent advocates of this idea was that of an "expanding nucleus": a regional core of a larger liberal world order (Streit 1949).

The Atlantic community was novel and contradictory at the same time. On the one hand, it had elements of novelty because it was brought together by a political, rather than a physical, geography. National interests were defined in broad terms to include values and a vision of society. As a matter of fact, both the Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact continued power politics by other means as they reflected the great twentieth-century confrontation between competing socio-economic systems and concurrent views of the place of men in society. On the other hand, the Atlantic community contradicted itself in so many ways that sceptics and opponents had a fairly easy task in exposing its questionable foundations. The democratic element which was debatable as not only did the new Atlantic community include countries such as Italy which had just fought on the side of the Axis, but also nations like Portugal which were to remain under dictatorial rule for most of the Cold War era. To justify Portugal's inclusion, which clearly had to do with the strategic relevance of the Azores islands, the argument was made that the country was an authoritarian state supported by the Portuguese people rather than an oppressive totalitarian system like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. To complicate things further, several of the Atlantic community members still ran colonies at the time of NATO's creation and were highly deficient in their international as well as domestic application of the democratic principle. While under the influence of the U.S. the Alliance tried to steer away from colonial affairs, France obtained clauses in the North Atlantic Treaty which provided for the inclusion of Algeria in the domain of defence obligations.

Indeed, the question of the Atlantic community in the beholders' eyes is not an unimportant one to understand multilateralist contentions in the Atlantic area. Seen by its members as a way to maintain conditions for a "world safe for democracy" at a time when the international system was divided in two camps, Atlanticism was dismissed by its detractors as at best a cover for traditional power politics aims (Mastny 2002). From a Soviet Union's perspective, the Atlantic Alliance, which by 1955 included West Germany, was a the Trojan Horse the United States had used to encroach on the European continent, becoming itself a European power and preventing a solution to the German question. The decision of Western countries to institutionalize NATO rather than demilitarize or neutralize Europe, was seen in Moscow as reinforcing the need to solidify Soviet influence by building an Eastern bloc against the emerging Western one.

The Atlantic Alliance was also seen negatively in other areas of the Atlantic. Latin American countries which had strongly supported the creation of the UN were left at the periphery of the Cold War, relying on regional pacts such as the one established by the Rio Treaty. Created in 1947 before the Atlantic Alliance, the Rio pact never developed into something as far-reaching as NATO (Parkinson 1974). Moreover, the feeling of betrayal of universalistic multilateralism was soon to be overcome by the deeper concerns about U.S. interference in the context of the Cold War (Grow 2008). U.S. direct involvement in Latin American politics, and notably the U.S. government support to local dictators during the second post-war era, undermined the link which

had been presented as distinctive and inherent between American internationalism and democracy. This stance rekindled fears of U.S. imperialism that had been there at least from President Theodore Roosevelt's times as the idea of pan-Americanism declined. Anti-imperialist sentiments accompanied the foreign policies of Latin American countries. Many of them aimed at cultivating ties with the Soviet bloc and were attracted by the nexus between socialist ideology and developmental aspirations. Countries such as Cuba after the 1959 revolution led this movement of American countries against U.S. imperialism (Gleijeses 2002). For them the Atlantic Community and NATO were nothing more than tools used to perpetuate Western capitalist hegemony (Rosen, 2008; Boron 2012).

Socialist or third wordlist sentiments also cut across Atlantic Africa in its variety of contexts. Indeed, the second half of the twentieth century was understood and experienced by African countries mainly through the prism of de-colonization. Independence involved the emancipation from the power structures as well as the ideologies of Africa's European colonial powers. Free of the colonial baggage that burdened European actors, the Soviet Union was seen as a more trustworthy interlocutor. This remained largely true despite the apparent Soviet self-interest in pursuing closer ties with the African continent. The closeness of even traditionally anti-colonial actors such as the United States to regimes such as apartheid-era South Africa, limited the appeal of the West among African nationalist leaders. It contributed instead to a negative reputation for Western Cold War politics and Western-made ideologies such as Atlanticism (Muehlenbeck 2012). African leaders had placed hopes in the United Nations Charter at its creation as a way for African states to gain a say in international affairs. Independence leaders in the second post-war era often made reference to documents such as the Atlantic Charter, which FDR and Winston Churchill had proclaimed in 1941, to expose Western ambivalence towards the goals of full de-colonization and national self-determination (Rakove 2013). Together with other trends, these postures reinforced a developing countries identity, which displayed an inherent tension with Western identity.

A further key element of post-WWII multilateralism was European integration. It is beyond the scope of the present analysis to delve into the rationales and drivers of European unification as it was pursued after the Treaty of Rome of 1957. Suffice it to say that what was born with strong American support and with references to the American experience of federalism, soon developed into something unique: not so much a European federation, but an open-ended hybrid project at once aiming at overcoming national sovereignty and "rescuing the nation state" (Milward 1992; Lundestad 2005). Culturally, European integration represented a reaffirmation of Europe's distinctiveness. Geopolitically, in a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain, integration helped protect Western interests during the Cold War as well as it allowed European states to re-gain some independent standing between the two superpowers. Especially in the 1960s, by when most (Western) European countries had recovered from the war, the European communities were seen as a way for Europe to regain control over its own economic and political destiny. Europeanism was increasingly seen as different and potentially concurrent with Atlanticism (Calleo 1970).

Even in the eyes of many Western Europeans, NATO was seen as an instrument of U.S. hegemony rather than a community of democracies. Atlanticism was dismissed in many quarters as the ideology justifying America's continuing controlling presence in Europe, and disparaged as an obstacle to a peaceful conclusion to the bipolar competition on the European continent. Especially in the French case, Europeanism was strictly linked to the vision of a world order that could be multipolar, featuring a Europe united from the (European) Atlantic to the Urals (Bozo 2001). This stance certainly did not lead Western European countries to dismantle Atlantic institutions,

although France did leave the military command of NATO between 1965 and 2009. However, the idea that Europe's multilateralism should propound a balanced international order drawing on the distinctively European experiment with the limitation of sovereignty simmered. These aspirations still underpin European visions of a multipolar world today.

While these changes were underway in Europe, the U.S. followed a different trajectory altogether. Although at times recognizing the growing multipolarity of the international system – President Richard Nixon made reference to a "pentagon of powers" already in the early 1970s – during the Cold War the United States grew increasingly uncomfortable with international institutions which had come under the influence of non-Western actors (Melanson 1991). The debate is open about whether the change in U.S. views of multilateralism was mainly due to a perceived sense of relative decline or, on the contrary, to a premonition of pre-eminence in light of the growing difficulties of the Soviet bloc. The trend, however, was one of increasing distrust for universalistic institutions that the U.S. itself had created, from the UN General Assembly where Washington often found itself outweighed by non-Western or anti-Western majorities, to systems such as the Gold Standard that had been established as part of the Bretton Woods regime in 1944. The Gold Standard was unilaterally dismantled by the U.S. in the 1970s (Karnst and Mingst 1992). Unilateralism, bilateralism, and reliance on smaller fora became America's preferred policy.

This posture was confronted with radical changes in the international system in the 1990s. Talk of an American decline which had been widespread until 1988-89 suddenly ended with the defeat of the Soviet Union (Fukuyama 1992). The fading of a bipolar structure of power was seen as finally opening the way to both re-launch global multilateral institutions. George W. H. Bush talked about a "new world order" on the occasion of the US-led UN mission against Sadam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (Bose and Perrotti 2002). As the American strategy moved from "containment" to "enlargement", NATO and the European Union took on new members from the former Soviet bloc, promising a Europe finally "whole and free" as a key component of a new liberal global order. Globalization, a term which gained currency in the 1990s, seemed to complement this trend. More and more countries opened up to the global economy adopting the economic principles and sharing the political aspirations of what during the Cold War era had been known as the "Free World" (Nye 1990). Talk of a "Washington consensus" and of U.S.-led globalization became widespread during the Clinton presidency.

This new global hegemonic phase, however, was immediately followed by the rise of unilateral temptations in the U.S. At the very least, the "unipolar moment" justified a more flexible and selective approach to multilateralism (Huntington 1996; Krauthammer 2004). This more assertive U.S. approach engendered strong negative reactions in other areas of the Atlantic and around the world, leading states or groups of states to embrace the goal of balancing an "unbound" American power. Europe further united through a process of both "deepening" and "enlargement", with the aim to "completing" the European project but also with the ambition to give birth to a new centre of international power. The vision of a multipolar order was shared by developing countries in the South Atlantic, Africa, and Asia. Multilateralism was less and less seen as a tool, but an end in itself (Fehl 2012; Telò and Ponjeart 2013). While solidarity with the U.S. was never fundamentally questioned, even at the height of the "transatlantic crisis" over the Iraq War in 2002-2003, Europeans cultivated their own aspiration of a "civilian", "post-modern" power rejecting power politics and practicing multilateralism. This stance generated interest and attracted support from developing countries in the South Atlantic and elsewhere which had already looked at Europe as a model for

integration and regional cooperation (Tocci 2008; Telò 2013; Bouchard, Peterson, Tocci, 2013).

4. Atlantic Multilateralism Today: Emerging Economies, Interdependence, and the Decline of the Western Order

Intra-Western discussions about strategies and instruments of cooperation, which had dominated the early 2000s, have given way in recent years to a debate about the very future of the Western order. A growing number believes that the West is in a "strategic retreat" and that any relevant discussion of multilateralism should start with the acknowledgment of the power shifts that are accompanying the emergence of a "post-Western" world (Kupchan 2002; Zakaria 2008; Serfaty 2012).

Although "decline" may not be the appropriate concept to capture what is happening, a wide consensus exists around three broad notions, each of which bears on the future of Atlantic multilateralism. First, the distribution of wealth is changing with a gradual rebalancing in favour of developing countries. At the global level, a long-term shift of the centre of economic activity towards the Asia-Pacific region is in the making. Although the West and the U.S. in particular remain preponderant militarily, the redistribution of economic wealth is already having an impact on international influence. The vision of a "uni-multipolar" world, as proposed in the 1990s by political scientist Samuel Huntington, may have soon to be revised (Huntington 1999). Second, global governance needs radical reform to take into account the redistribution of international power. The configuration of major institutions, starting with the UN Security Council among whose permanent members neither India and nor any African countries are included whereas Europe has two seats, no longer reflects the power balances of today's international system. Multilateralism is sometimes seen as a way to accompany this change although current multilateral structures are also very much part of the representation problem that has to be addressed. Third, there is recognition that the international system may become an arena of intensified competition about norms, not just power (Transatlantic Academy, 2014). In other words, it is possible, although not inevitable, that mainly Western-rooted notions of international order and principles of international law will be contested by the new players (Kupchan 2012). This recognition partly tempers the trust in the future ability of multilateral arrangements to smooth out power transitions.

From an Atlantic-Western perspective, it therefore becomes imperative to assess the unity and coherence of emerging actors and the extent to which they can be made "stakeholders" of a system that they did not create but which may still serve their interests (Peterson, Tocci, and Alcaro, 2012). A second outstanding question is whether phenomena such as interdependence and globalization, which are the undercurrents of the new global geopolitics, have truly changed the nature of international competition or have instead more limitedly altered the incentive structure of international behavior (Keohane and Nye, c2012).

These fundamental questions have for now received very different answers, ranging from those who have argued that power shifts will inevitably lead to the dismantlement of the old Atlantic-cantered order with no alternative structure in sight to replace it – "no one's world" (Kupchan 2012) – to those who have rebutted that most emerging economies are ultimately looking for access and status in the existing system (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010). Others again, especially from the U.S. side, have contended that the continuation of the international liberal order is inseparable from U.S. power. U.S. hegemony should therefore be preserved for the global common

goods it continues to provide, from the protection of vital channels of transportation and communication to the sponsorship of principles such as free trade, free market, and democracy (Kagan 2012). For their part, Europeans have kept elaborating on visions of multipolarity which had already been advanced during the Cold War. They have underscored the need for a more equal dialogue with emerging countries, including on international norms. Emphasis has often been put on international law as the basis of order, rather than liberalism (European Parliament 2012). Unlike in the U.S, multipolarity has not been generally seen in European debates as incompatible with the preservation of a liberal international order.

Power shifts have also led to new perspectives on multilateralism. Many, especially in Europe but also in the developing world, have made the case that the combination of interdependence and multipolarity makes now multilateralism a matter of necessity. European official documents have propounded concepts such as "effective multilateralism" to convey the notion of a multilateralism that focuses on pragmatic objectives which are attainable in the emerging multipolar distribution of power (European Union 2003-2008). This line of thinking has been accompanied by attempts to further define and specify how Europe, and more broadly the West, should deal with globalization. Concepts such as "inter-polarity" have tried to capture the essence of the multipolarity/multilateral nexus in a context of economic interdependence (Grevi 2009; Jokela 2011).

By making reference to the hegemonic stability theory, others have by contrast argued that only power imbalances may allow multilateral cooperation to work. These perspectives have pointed out that multipolarity has historically been associated with international instability. Even as nation states now preside over more open economies and liberal societies than was the case during the heydays of power politics in the 19th century (Murray and Brown 2012), current power shifts may nonetheless increase the likelihood of military conflict. This could be even more likely if international competition were to increasingly take place outside a framework of shared norms.

As these debates continue, two realities have become increasingly manifest to subscribers to either view: First, the growing difficulties of multilateral institutions, especially universalistic ones, to reach consensus and in some cases simply perform their fundamental statutory functions; Second, and no less important, the proliferation of new informal, or only partly institutionalized, fora for international cooperation. The crisis of global multilateral institutions is evidenced not only by the failure to reform the UN Security Council despite decades of debate about the need to restructure it, but also by the ineffectiveness of global functional regimes. From the unsuccessful Doha Round for trade liberalization, to the limited results of climate change negotiations, global decision-making processes have encountered formidable obstacles (Newman 2007; Krause and Ronzitti 2012). Meanwhile, UN actions on security-related questions have continued to fall behind the curve. To take only two of the most recent cases, the UNSC coalesced around the principle of the "Responsibility to Protect" in Libya in 2011 but significant divisions prevented the same body from authorizing an intervention in the still ongoing Syrian civil war.

For its part, the proliferation of new fora has tried to compensate for the inadequate functioning of long-standing universalistic institutions. Some of the new instruments have been promoted by the same Western countries, such as the evolution of the G-7/G-8 to the G-20. The idea behind this multilateral initiative is to address the question of effectiveness by concentrating on the principle of inclusiveness, but one tempered by considerations of economic relevance. Results for now have failed to meet expectations. Political investment in these fora, which had significantly increased in the years following the 2008-2009 financial crisis, has significantly diminished. Divisions on

issues of both substance and purpose have emerged within the heterogeneous group (Truman 2012).

Other fora, such as the BRICS, or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, have instead come to symbolize the developing countries' determination to create their own groupings and alliances (albeit the BRICS was initially a Western construct). Although these initiatives have contested the Western-centric order, they have not created strong institutional structures, let alone created new orders (Beausang 2012). The creation in 2014 of a BRICS development bank has raised concerns in some quarters that this may mark the beginning of a pragmatic and alternative world agenda. The current uncertainty as to the bank's actual resources and the highly uneven pledges of prospective funders prevent from drawing any conclusion as to the sustainability and the strategic impact of this initiative.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the "West" against the "Rest" narrative increasingly captures only one of the many dynamics at play, and does it in a misleading way. Indeed, this narrative grossly overestimates the coherence of non-Western groupings as well as the level of unity within the developed world.

If the main divide was one between acquiescent and revisionist emerging powers, then Western strategy could be straightforward: co-opting the like-minded and coercing or containing the others. This would ensure the continuation of the Western-led order despite changes in the world's distribution of power. As a matter of fact, since the end of the Cold War proposals have multiplied on how to further strengthen and enlarge the Atlantic core beyond the perimeters of NATO and EU enlargements. Mainly developed in the U.S. context, initiatives have included creating a "Global NATO" opened to membership to other democracies, such as Australia and New Zealand, or South Korea (Szabo 2012). Others proposals have supported the establishment of a "Concert of Democracies" (Princeton National Security Project 2007). While a Community of Democracy now exists, with a limited mandate, as a UN grouping, a "League of Democracies" engendered a lively debate in the 2000s (Alessandri, 2008). Groups such as the D-10 (Democracies- 10) have also been explored (Gordon and Jain 2013; Tharoor 2013). "Co-optation" has also taken place through economic governance institutions, such as through China's and Russia's membership in the WTO and in the creation of the G-20, as previously noted.

These attempts, however, have for now borne little results not only because they have generally provoked guarded reactions in the developing world but because in the meantime other divides have emerged. Intra-Western divisions have become more pronounced, surviving the years of transatlantic crisis which had marked the early 2000s. Political polarization in the U.S., which increasingly invests foreign policy issues, and the political-institutional crisis of the EU, both have highlighted new challenges to the Western order from within. One aspect is of course the economic impact of the growing "dysfunction" of democratic systems. The other is the strategic impact. The question in the U.S. case, however, seems to be not so much about purpose – all perspectives tend to agree about the benefits of continued U.S. leadership –, but about the convulsions of American nationalism. The whole history of American internationalism, and more in particular the history of America's multilateral engagement from universalism to Atlanticism, was linked to America's ascent. It was America's international rise that contained opposite impulses towards hemispherism and isolationism and made acceptable the reformulation of U.S. identity around notions larger than the national community. American nationalism in an era of strategic uncertainty is at once more exposed and more contested (Quinn, 2011).

In Europe's case, the European multilateral order itself is in danger (Krastev and Leonard 2010). While the EU is not being dismantled, it is not clear whether trends

towards more integration imposed by the necessities of the crisis will be accepted by main actors, will be supported by the European peoples, and will ever be extended beyond the Eurozone core. Widespread anti-Brussels feelings among the European peoples; the re-emergence of a North-South divide within the Union; the absence of strong and accepted leadership at the European level; the continuing enlargement fatigue; the transformation of what were until recently seen as the European peripheries into arenas where local and extra regional actors engage in competition for influence; all these questions not only challenge the EU-centric approach which had been at the roots of the EU external action over the past decades, but may also weaken the notion of a common European destiny. The notion of a common destiny had been first cemented by the World Wars to be then reinterpreted as almost an imperative in the more multipolar and globalized world of the 21st century. Although the end of the EU is not a likely prospect, the crisis of integration as the preferred way for intra-European multilateralism may be already underway.

Against this backdrop, recent initiatives such as the EU-U.S. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), launched in 2013, are seen as a way to strengthen what is left of the Atlantic community at a time of strategic uncertainty (Hamilton 2013). If successfully implemented, a new trade and investment liberalization project covering the whole North Atlantic would not only help spur much needed economic growth, but also reaffirm transatlantic leadership in the critical areas of standards and regulations. For the time being, however, the challenge is to keep protectionist impulses at bay among negotiating partners, including those such as Germany that were initially on the strongly supportive side (Sparding 2014). As initial optimism about the prospects of a deal have rapidly faded, plans such as using TTIP as a way to revitalize global liberalization efforts look increasingly ambitious.

If the developed world is cut across by growing centrifugal forces, the "Rest" is no less coherent and united. A third divide is indeed becoming more manifest next to the previous two. Divisions are cutting across the "developing world", a notion that makes less and less sense as its counterpart – the developed world – no longer adequately captures power realities and socio-economic trends. Developing countries seem to be on the whole interested in re-balancing relations with more established actors. Strategies, orientations, and of course sheer weight, however, significantly differ (Sharma 2012).

One key division pits China – the largest developing country but also an established power when it comes to its standing in global multilateral institutions – against all the others. Other divisions build on historical competitions such as between India and Pakistan in Asia or Brazil and Mexico in the Latin American continent. In Africa, despite relatively recent evolutions towards some form of continentalism, as testified by the creation of the African Union in 2001, national rivalries are growing, despite the narrative about Africa's upcoming economic takeoff (Haberson and Rothchild 2013). South Africa's long-standing ambition to build a dominant role for itself – which rests on the ability to generate alone a half of sub-Saharan African GDP – clashes with competing efforts by other emerging actors such as Nigeria. Initiatives such as the New Partnership for Development, launched in 2001, have suffered from this intra-African competition. South Africa's bid to a permanent seat in the UNSC has not been supported by other African countries, from the Maghreb to the South. South Africa's participation in the BRICS may give it further visibility and leverage at the global level but may also reinforce concerns about its hegemonic aims (White 2004). Indeed, despite notions such as the "Global South", the new international reality is displaying a growing differentiation within the developing camp. This only seems to complement centrifugal forces that have emerged inside the developed world (Dietz 2011). In this

fluid context, geometries of international cooperation are becoming markedly less predictable.

5. The Lack of Pan-Atlantic Institutions: Power, Ideology, Systemic Factors

Thinking in terms of a "wider Atlantic" area today is necessary but it is also insufficient. On the one hand, the Atlantic is indeed to be understood in its cross-regional connections and interdependencies, which are increasing in volume and significance. This applies to a range of key areas, from migratory flows to trade, from energy markets to organized criminal networks (Lesser 2008; 2014). On the other hand, there seems to be little specific about the Atlantic, let alone the "pan-Atlantic". In a world in which geography has not disappeared but has rapidly become global due the transportation and communications revolutions, what in other historical eras may have been identified as the Atlantic area is now at most a chapter of processes and events that transcend its borders. As definitions of local and of distance are both challenged by the realities of interdependence, physical spaces that are constitutively connected with others, such as the world's seas, tend to further soften their already fluid identity. As a matter of fact, there are no physical borders today that make the Atlantic a truly separate entity, let alone a self-centred space. At best, therefore, the (wider) Atlantic area can be discussed today as a "global open region" (Hamilton and Volker, 2011; Alessandri et al., 2012): a focus area for trends and experiences that are in varying degrees common to other regions of the world. In this context multilateralism is no exception.

As it was argued in previous sections, multilateralism is one among many ways of international interaction. Geopolitical realities, power balances, and ideological and normative considerations deeply affect its development. As in the past, multilateralism is flourishing in the Atlantic. Current power transitions and ideological stances, however, are as much a driver for emerging multilateral experiences in the Atlantic area as they are also the reason why Pan Atlanticism is still nowhere in sight despite the rich experience of Atlantic multilateralism over the past two centuries. Indeed, the current vitality of Atlantic multilateralism seems to rest in its diversity, not in any pattern of convergence.

Starting with ideology, South Atlantic countries have not fully settled issues with their Northern counterparts. None of them seeks simply an "alignment" with the North no, for that matter, defines their identity mainly or even largely in "Western terms". In Latin America, sustained and broad-based economic development has led to greater international confidence. The rise of middle classes, among other things, has created pressures towards the opening of political systems. Democracy is fully part of the dominant discourse on political culture and identity. Even as experiences such as Chavismo in Venezuela are losing their appeal, however, opposition to (Northern) Western value systems continues to play a role in the region both at the level of politics and of socio-economic aspirations. Emphasis is still put on broad notions of "social justice", which are seen as supporting "equitable development". Capitalism has not brought (or is yet to bring) a widely-accepted free-market culture to countries in Central and South America, at least in the majority of them. In other words, democratization and development have not fed liberalism. Indeed, what the North Atlantic would have to offer, from experiences with free market to political liberalism, is still widely seen as a way to implement what remain, in essence, a Western agenda aimed at constraining the free choices of developing nations (Nilsson and Gustafsson 2012). A partial exception to this logic may be countries such as Colombia and Chile, mainly because

of their relatively recent decision to integrate into the global economy following a "Western", free-market approach. Mexico could also be cited as a promising example. Also thanks to its vast expat community in the U.S., Mexico has partly blurred its ideological differences with the West, and the country is economically an integral part of North America (O'Toole 2010). Mexico's economic development is certainly helping build a bridge between Latin and Anglo-Saxon socio-economic culture in the American continent. Mexico's inclusion in the NAFTA has helped with identity bonds, not just with business ties. Nonetheless ideological converge stops where power stops. Wealth and developmental differences remain too deep to allow for any synthesis.

Rather than the emergence of a new Latin American version of Atlanticism, some Latin American countries have developed their own (South) Atlantic identity (White, 2004). With its long Atlantic coastline and its ambition to play a growing strategic role, Brazil has sometimes presented the South Atlantic as a Brazilian *mare nostrum*, or a "Blue Amazon" (Valladao 2013). The very territorial approach of Brazil to the only sea it has access to, unlike bi-oceanic countries like Venezuela or Mexico, expresses fairly traditional national instincts towards defining the perimeters of national influence. This is increasingly important as Brazil's economic and political interests expand regionally (Sousa 2014). Especially in light of the discoveries of vast deep-oil resources under the sea bed of its Atlantic coasts, Brazil is defining its international profile in terms of resources control. Its role as future global energy player requires an Atlantic projection and therefore some Atlantic identity too (Isbell 2014). Brazil's economic growth may depend on the bridges it will build with Europe and the U.S. A re-affirmation of Brazilian national strength in the South Atlantic domain, however, is currently seen as better serving the latter goal rather than the embracement of Western-made Atlanticism. By contrast, some countries of the recently established Pacific Alliance, such as Chile, are said to have embraced some form of "Atlanticist" orientation in terms of foreign policy and economic priorities, despite lying on the Pacific side of Latin America and having a strong eastward projection. However, their main interest remains finding a mutually profitable relationship with emerging Asian economies, starting with China.

In the African continent, similar trends towards differentiation are also taking place, although with a time lag and on a smaller scale. The recent, yet still fragile, rise of the African economies has been accompanied by greater political stability compared to the early post-colonial phase. While poverty and exclusion remain major critical issues, emerging African middle classes are advancing more pressing demands for political accountability. In some countries, democracy has become more than a constitutional reference and elections are regularly held and do matter in the political process. These developments at the national level are in turn supporting attempts to strengthen mechanisms for regional coordination. This is happening mainly at the level of sub-regions (Chido 2013, UNCTAD 2013). In West Africa, ECOWAS has put itself on the African map largely thanks to Nigerian leadership and stake in its mission (Eze 2010). ECOWAS members intervened in local conflicts with peace building operations. In the process, they developed broad common principles, including non-acceptance of unrepresentative governments brought to power through unconstitutional processes (Seck 2013). In Southern Africa, South Africa has been the promoter of several cooperation initiatives aimed at creating a more integrated economic space. The African Union has also built on Africa's economic growth as a new continental bond between previously highly internationally dependent and internally divided nations. The real challenge for African multilateral institutions, however, seems to remain overcoming long-standing regional and continental differences and coping with the still overwhelming issue of poverty. In this context, effective multilateralism among African states on key local objectives seems to be a more pressing task than the exploration of new geometries of cooperation with non-African actors. Even within sub-regions, African countries often remain separated by barriers of infrastructure, bureaucracy,

protectionism, not to mention unsettled and sometimes violent ethnic and religious tensions, which continue to curtail their developmental potential (Fau-Nougaret 2012).

A growing common awareness of Africa's promising future is perhaps feeding a new "Africanism". Nigeria and South Africa are trying to engage each other in a more constructive way than in the past, despite their respective sub-regional hegemonic ambitions. East and West African countries are developing a common view of Africa's opportunity beyond the traditional disparities between the two regions. North African and sub-Saharan African countries have built bridges, downplaying the cultural and socio-economic differences that still exist between the Arab world and black Africa. All these processes are providing African countries with greater confidence when dealing with developed nations. None of these trends, however, is leading to an ideological convergence with the West, let alone to the emergence of an African Atlanticism. African countries are indeed fully aware that they operate in an increasingly interdependent global economy and that the African continent is one of the arenas of global competition. Attention is therefore concentrating on how to reap the benefits of the new focus on Africa. Diversification of relations seems to be the preferred course of action for the vast plurality of them.

This perception of being at the centre of a new international competition is also feeding new fears. Former South African President Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki talked of a "new scramble for Africa" to describe the contest between developed and developing nations, China on the top, to secure Africa's abundant raw materials (Xing 2013). In this context, foreign policies of African countries are swinging between the view that they can leverage external influences against each other to maximize local gains, and the idea that Africa has to come together to set its own priorities, becoming for the first time in history a pole of power in its own right (Schoeman 2011). Africa-centrism, a doctrine developed by many African states starting with Nigeria, may become a common denominator for a plurality of African states in a not too distant future. Atlanticism, either geographically determined or defined in reference to a neo-liberal model, does not stand out among emerging identities. The fact that major external actors, starting with China, do not distinguish between Eastern and Western and Indian Ocean and Atlantic Africa, does not help create a sense of Atlantic(ist) belonging among African states facing the Atlantic basin. As is the case for Latin America, greater prosperity and political stability may be feed a democratic culture, not necessarily liberalism.

When Atlantic connections have played a role in the South Atlantic, it has been mainly in the context of strengthening South-South cooperation. On the one hand, Brazil's growing engagement in the African continent has reached out beyond the Lusophone countries to include other African regions (World Bank 2011). Among Brazil's aims is sharing best practices with African counterparts, providing mutually beneficial political and economic support. From social policies such as the *Bolsa familia* to agriculture, an area in which Brazil can boast competitive knowhow in the fast evolving sector of agribusiness, Atlantic connections are being cultivated in the name of economic development, not liberalism. On the other hand, there are multilateral experiences such as IBSA, a grouping including two South Atlantic countries –South Africa and Brazil – together with India (Kurtz-Phelan, 2013). In this case, South Africa at best plays the role of connector between Asian India and Atlantic Brazil. The grouping was founded in 2003 before the BRIC(S) emerged. Democracy was and remains a common denominator of this new multilateral forum. References to democratic experiences for socio-economic development are significant in the (limited) cooperation track record of the grouping. The three countries, however, came together not so much because they shared a democratic identity, let alone because they wanted to build an Atlanticist club within the developing world. The most immediate interest was joining forces to face up

developing nations like China which largely remain status quo powers when it comes to global governance reform. China and Russia, both permanent members of the UN Security Council, have been revealingly hesitant about espousing any plan of global governance reform that would grant permanent UNSC seats to other non-Western actors.

In light of this, the relationship between IBSA and the BRICS has been an interesting and teaching one about new multilateral dynamics. The BRICS has emphasized a non-Western identity and a common commitment to challenge Western dominance in global multilateral institutions (Li Yang 2011). Projects such as the creation of an international development bank, which remain to date at an initial stage, clearly manifest the ambition of emerging powers to play their own game in global development. IBSA, for its part, has emphasized democratic ties to the extent that this has helped its members wage a contest taking place within the developing world itself. This has not led, however, to any significant effort to build alliances with Atlantic countries to isolate China or Russia. Neither has it brought to the development of a common liberal identity or an Atlanticist orientation among any of the IBSA members. The Atlantic dimension of these multilateral experiences has simply not been a defining one, at least for the moment.

The question of whether developing nations in the South Atlantic are embracing normative approaches that bring them closer to the foreign policy orientations of North Atlantic countries, therefore, currently seems to find a negative answer. This does not mean, however, that Atlantic multilateralism has no future. In fact, as Southern Atlantic economies grow stronger, there will be more incentives to engage with North Atlantic countries on a more equal footing. In other words, different identities could still lead to arrangements driven by considerations of power or interest. Multilateral instruments could be created to manage new power balances and avoid detrimental competitions as asymmetries between sub-regions narrow. Unlike in the North Atlantic, during the Cold War era, however, today's power dynamics are more complex and the rise of a new Atlantic multilateralism may be less linear and multifaceted as a result too.

One key difference between the current Atlantic context and former ones is that many power shifts are underway in the area at the same time, but no single hegemonic transition is in sight. This applies to both the political and economic domains. While South Atlantic countries are growing, and unevenly so, North Atlantic countries are altogether becoming less dominant but are not necessarily on an irremediably downward trajectory. While Europe's decline is nothing new and has been partly softened in recent decades by European economic integration, the U.S. continues to enjoy comparatively favorable conditions. Its distance from some of the most troubled regions of the world, good demographics, the coming to fruition of new sources of material power, including in the energy field, and no less importantly, the edge that American companies have in the technological and information revolutions, continue to provide the U.S. with significant prospects for growth even as other poles emerge in the world.

As a matter of fact, some of the more recent views advancing the vision of a "Wider Atlantic" are infused with a sense of enduring "American exceptionalism". The novelty is that other Latin American economies could be ready to join the U.S. to ensure American preponderance. The 21st century would be not so much another "American century", but "a century of the Americas" (Slaughter 2009). Either way, even accounting for growing challenges to U.S. dominance, no South Atlantic country seems to have the potential of creating the same asymmetries that the U.S. did when it emerged as a superpower after WWII.

A second element of difference with the 20th century and a second potential major obstacle to a new Atlanticist multilateralism is the absence of a common adversary. The Atlantic geopolitics of the 20th century was as much, if not more, about preventing new concentrations of power as building new centers of power. Attempts by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union to bring Europe under one regime, were a major triggering factor in bringing together an Atlantic community, together with the role played by American ascendancy. This same geopolitical rationale is missing in today's Atlantic area even as antagonistic tendencies are clearly on display. One way to define the new Atlantic would be to present it as "anti-China bloc". This is certainly one of the implicit ways in which the new Atlanticism is justified in Western discourse. The problem with this view is that it underplays the realities of interdependence. Interdependence has not only made the prospect of traditional war for territorial aggrandizement less appealing and likely, but has also blurred distinctions between regional and extra regional trends and actors. As a matter of fact, China is already an Atlantic actor, clearly so in economic terms in light of its presence in Africa but also the weight it has acquired in the North Atlantic economy. No one country in the Atlantic basin would be able to isolate or simply "contain" China, as was the case with the Soviet Union during the Cold War when levels of economic exchange were fairly limited. Engagement then becomes the almost unavoidable path (Alessandri et al. 2012). This applies to both Atlantic-based emerging economies as well as to the U.S. and Europe.

Although not impossible if China's aims were to become more aggressive, a balancing "Atlantic bloc" against China's influence is, therefore, not a particularly realistic or enticing prospect for Atlantic countries. In the South, China is seen as a critical engine for economic growth. In the North, China is viewed as a competitor but also a vital element for the stability of the world economy. From a multilateral perspective, what could emerge in the Atlantic area would be a regional dialogue open to China, or perhaps even an organization that similarly to the OSCE in Europe or APEC in the Asia-Pacific would try to bridge divides among different poles of economic and political power in the region. The problem with this development is that by placing the Atlantic in a global context such organizations could mitigate the relevance and distinctiveness of the Atlantic space as such. In other words, if the Atlantic area is dealt with as a "global region", the added value of building Atlantic-wide institutions may be limited.

The road ahead could rather be two-fold. New global multilateral instruments could be explored with a strong input from Atlantic actors. Experiences of Atlantic multilateralism building on the rich and lively history of Atlantic-based multilateral initiatives could contribute greatly to this. Secondly, multilateral dialogues could be initiated at the pan- or wider- Atlantic level to deal with strictly functional priorities affecting the Atlantic basin or large areas of it. For this second type of initiatives, existing multilateral instruments could offer a starting point. Although not particularly renowned, fora such as the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) has dealt for years with functional issues of growing policy relevance, such as maritime security or the fight against Atlantic-based transnational crime (Khanyile 1998). This forum is for now limited to the South Atlantic. Anti-Western undertones characterize even its more recent initiatives (Montevideo Declaration 2013). As functional issues such as illegal trade cannot be effectively contained at the sub-regional level, however Atlantic countries from both the South and the North could come to value pan-Atlantic cooperation as part of larger global efforts. Maritime transport and maritime security could be further promising areas for inter-Atlantic functional multilateral cooperation, building on efforts that have already taken place at the sub-regional level (Richardson et al. 2012). Atlantic African states, for instance, have worked on ways to coordinate on basin-related issues on which they have a common stake such as coastal security. Indeed, new conventions could be established among key players and more vulnerable

actors. In other words, functionally, regionalism in the Atlantic could have promising, but limited in scope, wider Atlantic incarnations.

When it comes to the global dimension, common cultural legacies and new power balances could highlight convergences between countries from the Atlantic area on a range of issues. Without leading to a new Atlanticism, these alignments could no less importantly offer a plural contribution to shared concerns. Principles such as the Western-inspired notion of a "responsibility to protect" (R2P) may already constitute a case of such (limited) convergence. South Atlantic countries have engaged in the debate that surrounds the development of this principle. In this context, Brazil has decided to put forward the notion of a "responsibility while protecting" (Brenner 2013). The latter is not meant to question the international community's responsibility to intervene in cases of blatant violations of human rights, but the focus is equally placed on the procedural and substantive requirements that need to be met in order for these interventions not to lead to other types of violations. Contributions such as these, seeking complementarity rather than antagonism, could highlight the value of a global dialogue on norms between developing and developed countries. This dialogue could have a particularly prominent Atlantic chapter.

6. Conclusions

Even as Atlantic-wide institutions may not be the product of the rebalanced Atlantic world of the 21st century, the Atlantic area may indeed prove to be able to remain a leading laboratory for multilateralism at the global level. The paper has focused on major turning points in Atlantic history over the past two centuries, reviewing key trends and developments both in the North and South Atlantic. It has showed that a North Atlantic order was established in the twentieth century when a set of geopolitical and normative factors came to converge. These incentives, the paper argues, are not present in the same combination and scale today. The new Atlantic geopolitics is currently dominated by pluralism rather than convergence. As emerging economies in the South Atlantic and other regions grow stronger, and as the West struggles with its own internal challenges, diversity, rather than unity, seems to be the leading theme. At the same time, the paper has showed that the Atlantic area has great potential to remain at the forefront of global and regional multilateral efforts. As members of a global region, Atlantic actors can play a critical role in promoting world governance, including by engaging in a global dialogue on norms. At the functional level, new common threats and opportunities around the Atlantic basin could lead to inter-regional multilateral initiatives focused on common but strictly defined priorities. Although a new (wider) Atlanticism may not be around the corner, Atlantic multilateralism will continue to generate solutions to many of the questions of our time.

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