



ATLANTIC FUTURE

SCIENTIFIC PAPER

09

Fragile States: Challenges and Opportunities for Atlantic Relations

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ABSTRACT

Concerns over the impact of fragile states in human security, stability and development at national as well as regional and international levels are generally shared by actors across the Atlantic regions, but differences in the understanding of fragility and in approaches to fragile states are affecting dialogue and wider cooperation across the Atlantic. The changing geopolitical context in the Atlantic basin and globally is redefining power relations and questioning dominant policy approaches. This is creating new political space and opportunities for Southern Atlantic actors to develop their own institutional frameworks for South-South dialogue and cooperation, distinct from Northern dominated political, economic and security structures, and allow them to develop autonomous options to address common fragility trends, 'among equals'. The geopolitical reality of the Atlantic basin is however far more complex. It extends beyond the Atlantic regions and develops in parallel tracks of competition and cooperation along North-South and South-South asymmetries and convergence. Shared interest and concerns over the impact of fragility and in specific fragile contexts provide an opportunity to test whether and how Atlantic diversity can generate new momentum and more effective approaches to address fragility in the Atlantic space.

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1. What is a ‘fragile state’?

While the concept of fragile states may mean different things to different people, and fragile states may be fragile in different ways and in varying degrees, there is general concern over the short and long-term impact of fragility on human security and on prospects for peace, security and development at national, regional and international level. Events like the collapse of the State and enduring conflict in Somalia, the 1994 genocide in Rwanda or the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region, amongst others, served as illustrations of the need for a renewed focus on restoring the State – a capable, responsible and responsive State – as the guarantor of development and security. As the threats and fears of the Cold War faded, attention shifted to the perceived humanitarian and security risks posed by fragile states, including becoming havens for terrorists and transnational organized crime networks, spurring waves of migrants, undermining global efforts to control environmental threats and disease (e.g. European Council 2003, US 2002, USAID 2005). Especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the perceived causal links between fragile states and terrorism, statebuilding and peacebuilding agendas dominated both development and security narratives, albeit not without some controversy and dilemmas notably after the experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya¹.

Box 1 - What is a “Fragile State”?

There is no single definition or shared understanding of what is a ‘fragile state’, or what makes some states drag behind on development and be more prone to social and armed conflict. There is, however, a general understanding within the international community (including by some of the states labelled fragile) that fragile states are often characterised by extreme poverty, poor governance, and/or lack of capacity or commitment to provide for the state’s core functions and responsibilities, i.e.: maintaining security and providing for the rule of law and justice, basic social services, public resource management, economic development, mediate societal conflicts. There is also a wide acknowledgement that fragility is an evolving condition or characteristics that can take different forms and degrees, shaped by each specific context. Fragility is also not necessarily generalised across a state (it may affect only part of the territory or of the State institutions) nor is it a permanent condition. The concept is therefore subject to interpretation and partly informed by each donor experiences, areas of engagement and/or priorities². Fragile states definitions have evolved over time and continue to be refined as research and different actors’ experiences and analysis feed into the discussion.

Earlier **definitions of fragile states** focused on the social contract and on States’ capacity or willingness to deliver:

Fragility refers to weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken due to the State’s incapacity or unwillingness to deal with

¹ Some analysts see the focus on fragile states a distraction from a more objective analysis on the real sources of risks to international security (Mazarr 2014), and/or consider the statebuilding agenda a gross under estimation of the complexities of such a political endeavour that international actors tend to treat with apolitical approaches (Kahler 2008; Weinstein 2005). Paris and Sisk, in their analysis of the contradictions and dilemmas of merging peacebuilding and statebuilding agendas, highlight those challenges (Paris and Sisk 2007, 2008).

² For an overview of the discussion on the flaws – but also opportunities – of the fragile states concept, see namely: Faria 2011a; Putzel 2010.

its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities regarding service delivery, management of resources, rule of law, equitable access to power, security and safety of the populace and protection and promotion of citizens' rights and freedoms. (EC 2007)

States unable to meet their population's expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political process. (OECD 2008)

More recent definitions emphasise the link between institutional weakness, social cohesion and the risk of conflict, or put the emphasis on positive action for peacebuilding and statebuilding as is the case of the definition adopted by the g7+ group of fragile states³:

A state of fragility can be understood as a period of time during nationhood when sustainable socio-economic development requires greater emphasis on complementary peacebuilding and statebuilding activities such as building inclusive political settlements, security, justice, jobs, good management of resources, and accountable and fair service delivery (...) Fragility thus implies that the consolidation of nationhood, and the safety, security and well being of the citizens are at risk of a relapse into crisis or violent conflict. This risk is gradually reduced as the institutions develop the necessary ability to cope with the type of threats they are exposed to [i.e. Resilience]. (g7+ 2013)

'Fragility' is not a category of states, but (...) a risk that is inherent in the development process itself. Countries that lack robust institutions, diversified economies and inclusive political systems are the most vulnerable. (AfDB 2014)

Fragility and fragile situations are periods when states or institutions lack the capacity, accountability or legitimacy to mediate between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to violence. (World Bank, WDR 2011)

Countries and territories experiencing armed conflict, emerging from armed conflict, or affected by acute political, social, and economic vulnerability, and susceptible to chronic forms of organized criminal violence. (UNDP 2012)

Fragile states suffer from political-identity fragmentation [that] when combined with weak (or dysfunctional) institutions [...] severely undermines the legitimacy of the state, leading to highly unstable political orders that are hard to reform. (Seth Kaplan 2014)

Fragile and conflict-affected countries are generally considered to be the poorest, least developed and most aid dependent countries in the world, accounting for 77 per cent of infant deaths, 65 per cent of the world's population lacking access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and 60 per cent of the world's undernourished (WB 2011). Yet compared to a decade ago, nearly half of these countries are now middle-income countries (see map 1 in section 4), thanks namely to mineral or oil exports. Although states like Nigeria or DRC are some of the fastest growing countries in Africa, they have some of the highest levels of poverty (respectively 68 and 87,7 per cent of population living on less than 1,25 USD a day). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014) estimates that one-third of the world's poor

³ The g7+ are a group of twenty countries in fragile and/or conflict-affected situations, which are sharing experiences, developing strategies, and advocating for more effective peacebuilding and statebuilding. They are the policy interface with their development partners and other stakeholders in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) and the New Deal process (see also footnote 10).

live in the 51 countries it classifies as fragile, a ratio that it says could be half by 2018.⁴ Notwithstanding that 38 per cent of the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) goes to fragile and conflict-affected states⁵, many of these countries won't achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets on time, and a few are likely to achieve none at all (World Bank 2013).

The United States (US) and the European Union (EU) are respectively the first and second largest aid contributors to fragile states⁶, but fiscal austerity, especially in the Eurozone, is hitting hard foreign policy budgets. In addition, the return of 'old' foreign policy concerns following Russia's annexation of Crimea, and uncertainty as to what may follow, may impact negatively on their political attention and resources to fragile states. For the first time, global aid to these countries fell by 2.4 per cent in 2011, and it is likely to continue shrinking, increasing the vulnerability of those populations most dependent on aid. What give populations in many fragile states some solace is the safety-net provided by remittances, although that too varies significantly from country to country.⁷ Arguments over 'how' assistance is provided ('smart aid') – rather than 'how much' aid is given – and 'value for money' thus regain momentum.

'Fragile states' is not necessarily synonymous of conflict, but many of the countries listed as fragile are conflict or post-conflict states, and more likely to relapse into conflict in the absence of social cohesion, and of timely and positive actions towards structural and institutional transformation (Collier 2007, WDR 2011). Others are affected by persistent instability, insecurity or social violence (e.g. high homicide rates, ethnic/religious strife). In either case, both security and development gains are harder to achieve and consolidate, further increasing these countries vulnerability to shocks (whether financial, natural disasters, social unrest, political instability or violent conflict).

The trajectories of some countries in the Atlantic basin⁸ are illustrative of the diverse causes and processes of descent into fragility and conflict. Others have been relatively successful in addressing potential sources of fragility and have consolidated their political and economic institutions to emerge as regional and international players. Given their different trajectories, do states across the wider Atlantic share, in the first place, a similar understanding on what is a fragile state, of what makes fragility and why is it important to address its causes and consequences?

⁴ Success in reducing extreme poverty in non-fragile states mean poverty levels in these countries is going down at a much faster rate than in fragile states. It is estimated that the total number of people in the world living on less than 1.25 USD a day is of 1,4 billion, of which some 400 million people live in fragile states (World Bank 2013).

⁵ Aid distribution across fragile states is, however, very uneven, with a small number of them receiving almost half of that aid: 26 billion USD, out of the 53,4 billion USD in total ODA to fragile states in 2011, went to Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Kenya, West Bank and Gaza, Iraq (OECD 2014).

⁶ In 2011, the US and the EU (institutions and member states) contributed, respectively, 13 and 10 billion USD to fragile states and economies (OECD 2014). For the EU this represents 48 per cent of its total disbursed aid.

⁷ Remittances have been increasing steadily and represent now as much as twice the total aid going to fragile states, although the worst off countries are often those who tend to have lower remittances.

⁸ The Atlantic basin or Atlantic rim includes those countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean, direct coastline countries in the Caribbean, the 28 member states of the European Union and Switzerland.

2. Understanding ‘Fragility’ from the perspective of Southern actors

Wide concern over the causes and impact of fragile states has prompted an international debate and the acknowledgement of the need for collaborative efforts across security and development actors, and beyond borders (e.g. Zoellick 2008, European Council 2003). Southern actors, however, have been reluctant to engage in this debate because of the pejorative perceptions associated with the fragile states terminology and of important differences in the understanding of the causes and manifestations of fragility. They consider the notion of fragile states reflects primarily the views of international donor and security communities, and fails to take into account country/regional specificities, historical trajectories of state formation, diverse political models of societal organisation and degrees of institutionalisation.

There is also another fundamental reason for the little appeal – except for some the potential to attract attention and more funding – that the fragile states discussion has in many Southern countries: the underlying concern that the labelling may be used to argue for regime change, and legitimise external military interventions or other violations of State’s sovereignty. The endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) based on principles of humanitarian intervention by the United Nations (UN), and its misuse by members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to justify the Iraq war campaign in 2003 (among other arguments), has further heightened concerns over the political (mis)use of the concept⁹.

Many prefer therefore to focus on ‘resilience’ – at the positive end of the fragility spectrum – and stress the need for positive action rather the negative connotations associated with the fragile states terminology, as illustrated by the definition used by the g7+ (in box 1). Despite the criticism, the fragile states terminology is now commonly used to refer to very diverse situations in nature and degree, contributing to greater confusion about what is it that we’re talking about. At the same time as the fragile states concept and related processes are being refined, the terminology is also used to refer, for instance, to the impact of the economic and financial meltdown, namely in Europe. To some extent this use of the terminology confirms the argument by critics of the fragile states concept that fragility is inherent to states and their permanent processes of ‘construction’ or adjustment as context and societies evolve.

For the African Development Bank (AfDB), fragility is in fact a risk inherent in the development processes itself (not a category of states). Fragility comes about where pressures (e.g. growing populations, increased urbanisation, youth unemployment, inequality and social exclusion, climate change, new natural resource finds or resource scarcity) become too great for countries to manage within the political and institutional process, creating a risk that conflict spills over into violence. The AfDB estimates fragility will appear across Africa in different places and forms, at national or local level, including in countries not currently classified as fragile. Given the magnitude of the social and economic changes underway in Africa, it stresses “the need to employ a ‘fragility lens’ to the development process across Africa, building the capacity to detect, prevent and respond to conflict wherever it emerges” (AfDB 2014, p. 9).

⁹ Limitations to the principle of state sovereignty are now more likely to be justified on humanitarian grounds, but military intervention is only one aspect of the R2P under the obligation to react. The R2P doctrine stresses primarily the obligation to prevent, alongside the obligation to react and to rebuild. Its application has however been partial or selective, as per the political will, interests and capacities of the main international powers (Evans 2008).

What makes a state fragile is therefore not whether it is able to avoid crisis – crisis can indeed trigger positive change to correct what is not working or needs to be adapted –, but rather how they manage and pass through crisis periods. As Seth Kaplan argues, “understanding why some countries pass through their crisis quickly, while others seem stuck in them forever is key to differentiating between resilient and fragile states” (Kaplan 2014, p.52).

3. Building consensus over approaches to fragile states?

Are the distinct experiences of Atlantic countries in dealing with such pressures feeding into Atlantic dialogues on how to address fragility, and promote human and international security in the Atlantic rim and beyond?

Initiatives like the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (IDPS 2011)¹⁰ or the debate towards a Post-2015 Development Agenda in the UN provide a platform for Southern actors – emerging economies and fragile states alike – to voice their views and priorities for statebuilding and peacebuilding alongside international donors¹¹. The New Deal, in particular, puts a strong focus on the leading role of fragile states in processes of transition out of fragility and on the importance of mutual trust between societies, the state and international partners in order to achieve results. It is thus a shared commitment to correct the trajectories of national and international efforts for peacebuilding and statebuilding: fragile states’ governments commit to be responsible and responsive to their own societies, and donors commit to respect and support national priorities in that process¹².

These initiatives thus allow also advocating for reforms in the way the international community engages in fragile or conflict-affected states. International donors are often criticized for their tendency to work in ‘silos’ and take technical approaches to highly political processes in complex contexts, avert risk, and prioritise support and interventions according to their own interests and capacities or experience rather than on the basis of nationally agreed priorities in what many developing countries see as seeking to impose ‘remedies’. The four-decade long “war on drugs” promoted by the United States to fight drug production and trade in Latin America, is seen as one of those policies imposed from outside. Its failure is encouraging authorities, former leaders and civil society to promote a debate on comprehensive (beyond-security) alternative approaches with lower social cost. This ‘new’ drug policy debate is influencing drugs policy not just in Latin America, but also globally (Carvalho 2014)¹³.

¹⁰ The “[New Deal for engagement in fragile states](#)” was endorsed at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in November 2011 by a group of international donors and organizations and the g7+ group of fragile countries. The New Deal sets out five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals to guide priorities and engagements in fragile states: legitimate politics, justice, security, economic foundations, and revenues and services.

¹¹ See for instance the initiative *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals*, a network of think tanks from Africa, Latin America and South Asia: <http://www.southernvoice-postmdg.org>

¹² For a southern and fragile state perspective on the New Deal and the role of the g7+, see namely Mayar 2014, and others’ views in the g7+ website: <http://www.g7plus.org>

¹³ The Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy and the Global Commission on Drug Policy have been instrumental to break the taboo and debate alternative approaches to combating the drugs problem and recognising the failure of hard-line drug policy approaches. Their recommendations emphasize a paradigm shift from repressive approaches to more preventive interventions that focus on harm reduction and citizen security. It has encouraged governments in Latin America to experiment on

Notwithstanding the recognition of inter-linkages between policy areas and the importance of politics, international actors' aid and security interventions in such contexts are still to a large extent a sum of fragmented 'technical' actions with no clear political strategy or direction.¹⁴

The challenge for initiatives like the New Deal or the post-MDG Development Agenda is to get a significant buy-in and greater involvement and commitment from the diplomatic, security and business actors (international and local) on the one hand, and from emerging economies on the other hand. These initiatives, which were born out of the development and 'aid effectiveness' fora and agendas and are led by the aid communities (both in the donor and recipient countries), tend to be perceived as a 'donor thing'. Generally, many non-traditional 'donors' – who don't tend to see themselves as 'donors' (partly because they still receive aid) and are sceptical about the donor discourse – are still marginally involved in these initiatives, by choice. For instance, Brazil, Chile, China or Korea take part in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), but are not signatories of the New Deal, an offspring of the IDPS. That does not prevent them from engaging in New Deal specific country dialogue and processes – that's in fact where the New Deal principles and goals can be translated into concrete strategies and action and where they may see more reasons to engage. Yet, while some of those emerging powers are important external actors for instance in Somalia (one of the New Deal pilots), their participation in the Somalia New Deal Compact that defines peacebuilding and statebuilding for the country (including Somaliland and Puntland regions) remains marginal at best.

This is not because emerging powers operate outside international frameworks for peace and development, or because they diverge on the basic principles and goals of peacebuilding and statebuilding. However, but they do not see the current international architecture as fully representing their interests and norms, and do not see it receptive to different approaches – often to problems they too have experienced or are also debating with. They see as problematic that initiatives like the New Deal are informed by a fragile states categorisation or indexation and are led according to OECD benchmarks (Richmond and Tellidis 2013).

Emerging powers have been more engaged in the post-MDGs Agenda, partly also because set in the framework of the United Nations. Brazil, for instance, has been very vocal and active in pushing for recognition of sustainability challenges (the theme of the Rio+20 Summit hosted by Brazil in 2012) within the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Rio+20 outcome document, and the Rio Principles are very explicit of the importance of freedom, peace and security and called for "special attention" for countries suffering from insecurity and violence. Yet, Brazil (like China or India) is reticent about the inclusion of peace and security into the post-2015 agenda partly because of questions pertaining to whether and how peace can be measured, partly for political caution to avoid the 'securitization' of development and international intrusion into countries' sovereign affairs (Saferworld 2014). Many development (and humanitarian) actors in Europe and North America too are also

alternative and more balanced approaches to drug policies that are also more tailored to their countries' local realities and needs (Carvalho 2014).

¹⁴ Recent evaluations and studies for the European Commission (EC) also highlight the disconnect between policy and implementation in EU external action. See namely the studies for the EC on Security and Development in fragile contexts (HTSPE 2008; Faria et al. 2013); the 2011 evaluations on Justice and Security Sector Reform (ADE 2011a) and on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (ADE 2011b), or the 2008 DEVCO studies on Fragility (Soges 2008). Other donors face similar criticism as multiple OECD reports on fragile states have systematically pointed out, despite progress in seeking more integrated and coherent approaches to engaging in fragile states.

unconvinced still about the benefits of bringing together the security and development agendas, fearing a deviation of long-term development funding to short-term strategic and political objectives¹⁵.

An opportunity to work across differences between traditional and emerging development actors may be the creation of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)¹⁶. The GPEDC is a new global dialogue forum on development agreed to in 2011 in Busan, South Korea, during the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which involves 161 governments, including key emerging economies such as India, China, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Indonesia and Turkey. Participation in these global dialogue and partnerships initiatives is clearly increasing, but whether this will lead to effective changes in global cooperation for development and stability is yet to be seen.

In the Atlantic space these differences of perception and interest tend to follow the asymmetry between North and South, but the picture is far more complex. Alignment or divergences between regions, states and actors within the Atlantic space are subtler than the headlines make it appear, and apply also within regions and states. There are common concerns and shared interests that cut across the North-South asymmetries, as there are asymmetries within Atlantic regions and within States.

The Joint EU-Africa Strategy roadmap for 2014-2017 adopted in the Fourth EU-Africa Summit in Brussels (in April 2014) provides an indication of that commonality of interests and concerns, many of which are also shared by other states across the Atlantic with whom there are bilateral, and/or cross-regional cooperation activities in these areas. Security – understood both security of the state and human security¹⁷ –, development, trade and investments that can spur job creation, economic diversification and growth, are clearly of shared interest. Africa is not only a major commodity supplier, but also a potentially huge market and the second fastest growing region in the world, attracting worldwide interest and investment. Moving on those objectives, includes addressing internal as well external or global factors in working towards managing and resolving violent conflict; addressing the root causes as well as magnifiers of conflict, including trade and proliferation of small arms, the plundering of natural and mineral resources, exclusion, human rights violations, poor governance and rising inequalities; migration and mobility; terrorism and transnational crime, including illicit financial flows; the impact of climate change; and consolidating peace, democracy¹⁸ and the rule of law in countries emerging from conflict.

¹⁵ “Securitisation of (development) aid” refers to the subordination of aid to security interests of international donors in detriment of effective needs of local populations. For a discussion on the securitisation of aid, see for instance Saferworld 2011.

¹⁶ Based on the Paris Declaration principles for aid effectiveness (ownership, alignment, harmonization, mutual accountability, and results), the Global partnership met for the first time at high level in Mexico in April 2014.

¹⁷ Human Security is defined as the right to live in freedom and dignity – “freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s own behalf” (Commission on Human Security 2003). It’s distinct from traditional state-centric notions of security, as it puts the focus on vulnerable people, on protection, as well as on empowerment. It’s an inclusive concept that transcends law and order or national defence to encompass all political, economic and social issues that guarantee freedom from fear and from want.

¹⁸ A recent survey of the Afrobarometer found that demand for democracy is rising in Africa: 71 per cent say they want democracy, although only 46 per cent rejects any form of autocratic rule. Only 43 per cent consider their country a democracy or are satisfied with the way democracy works (Bratton and Houessou 2014).

There is in fact no shortage of common interests, but how the different parties see it translating into action has been on various occasions source of dissent and bitter exchanges, as for instance in the case of the intervention in Libya. On the opposite, the intervention in Mali drew general support from African partners and regional organisations. There is furthermore a large consensus that effective responses to fragility involve primarily and fundamentally endogenous processes. External actors have therefore a limited role in such processes, but their actions can support or hinder internal processes and influence societal and state-society dynamics. Failing to understand the uniqueness of each country context, what makes change happen and/or failing to translate knowledge about those realities and processes into coherent political strategies and well targeted aid, economic and security programs and interventions is partly what explains the shortcomings of external action in addressing fragility. Most often externally supported programmes and interventions fail to identify, understand and/or build on local actors and (formal and/or informal) institutional frameworks that could have the potential to enable change.

An overview of various indexes attempting to measure fragility illustrates how disparate is the situation of states and regions across the Atlantic, and the numerous and varied nature of the challenges to stability and development in the Atlantic area.

4. Mapping fragile states and fragility trends in the Atlantic space

Trying to make sense of the various lists and indexes of state fragility is a daunting task. Various quantitative and qualitative models and indexes seek to identify, measure and monitor fragility or even predict state trajectories. The result is a variety of lists with diverse – and sometimes puzzling – rankings of fragile states: countries facing different challenges in very diverse contexts may not be far apart in their score (e.g. Uganda and North Korea); countries that were not considered especially at risk (e.g. Libya or Syria) are now in deep turmoil; countries that for years appeared to be at the brink of collapse (e.g. North Korea) have proven resilient to change¹⁹.

These measurements are general and meant to allow global comparisons, but they have drawn criticism because too focused on State capacity and institutions (easier to measure). They are less focused on state-society relations, which are more qualitative in nature and deeply rooted in history, culture and endogenous formal and informal forms of organisation that global indicators are unlikely to capture. Because fragility indexes are so State-centred, they tend to be an analysis of ‘what is missing’ or ‘what doesn’t work’. They therefore fail to assess social cohesion or ‘what actually exists or works’ in terms of societal organisation and inter-group dynamics within a state, and/or across states (Kraushaar and Lambach 2009; Kaplan 2014). As a result, fragility indexes fail to capture country specificities and/or the diversity of situations within a country, where for instance only a small part of the territory may be affected by conflict, rooted in specific local factors and dynamics. They are therefore of little help to inform country specific interventions.

Despite its many flaws and weaknesses, listings of fragile states can nonetheless be helpful tools. Scrolling down through indicators in the Global Peace Index for instance, and viewing the variation over the last decade, gives some indication of the nature of the challenges in a given state and how it compares to others. When combined with qualitative country specific indicators and context analysis, this may provide useful

¹⁹ For an overview and analysis of indexes measuring fragility and an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, validity and practical use, see namely Fabra and Ziaja 2009, or Gutiérrez 2009.

insight into how States perform; which areas of state weakness are most likely to lead to violence and how those weaknesses relate to societal and/or state-society dynamics; which areas of State activity have contributed to 'state resilience' and whether/how they have leveraged societal forms of organisation. As a general tool, fragile states indexes highlight countries and/or point to issues that deserve greater international attention; allow their monitoring over time and, to some extent, comparison between countries, identifying similarities and differences.

4.1. 'Comparing fragility' across the Southern Atlantic space

There is thus no single list of fragile states, but some lists combine various indexes and rankings as is the case of the list in the 2014 Fragile States Report published by the OECD, which comprises fifty-one fragile states and economies²⁰ (OECD 2014). Twelve of these states (nearly a quarter) are in the Atlantic area and all, but Haiti, are in Africa. These are however not a heterogeneous group. Most are some of the world poorest and most aid dependent states, but five of them are middle-income countries and include the two bigger oil producers in Africa (Nigeria and Angola). The list includes also mineral rich countries – Sierra Leone, DRC and Guinea – that are, however, low-income and aid dependent (see map 1).

In this respect, Latin America (whose countries, apart from Haiti, generally do not figure in the top 50 of fragile states lists) is way ahead of Africa, especially in what regards poverty levels²¹, growth and development (with many countries in the region now qualifying as middle-income), and its democratic experience that started in the 1980s. With a growing middle class, Latin America is less about aid and more about trade and economic opportunities, the quality of democracy and of the services provided by the State. Nonetheless, similarly as in many African states, many citizens in Latin America lack a sense of 'ownership of the State', which they claim is still dominated by forms of "internal colonialism", perpetuating structural political and economic inequalities as under the colonial period.

There is increasing pressure throughout Latin America on state institutions to be more inclusive, meet demands of the citizens for more quality services, address corruption, violence, drug trafficking and organized crime (Guzmán León and Sáenz Breckenridge 2013; Zovatto and Herrera 2012). The latter are a particularly acute problem in Latin America, which has some of the highest rates of homicide and violent crime in the world²². Much of that violence is linked to drug cartels' and organized crime interests and resources that are increasingly corrupting and permeating economic and political institutions well beyond their countries of origin. For instance, in Guinea-Bissau (as in Mali), political instability does not have its roots in the drug trade, but while analysis

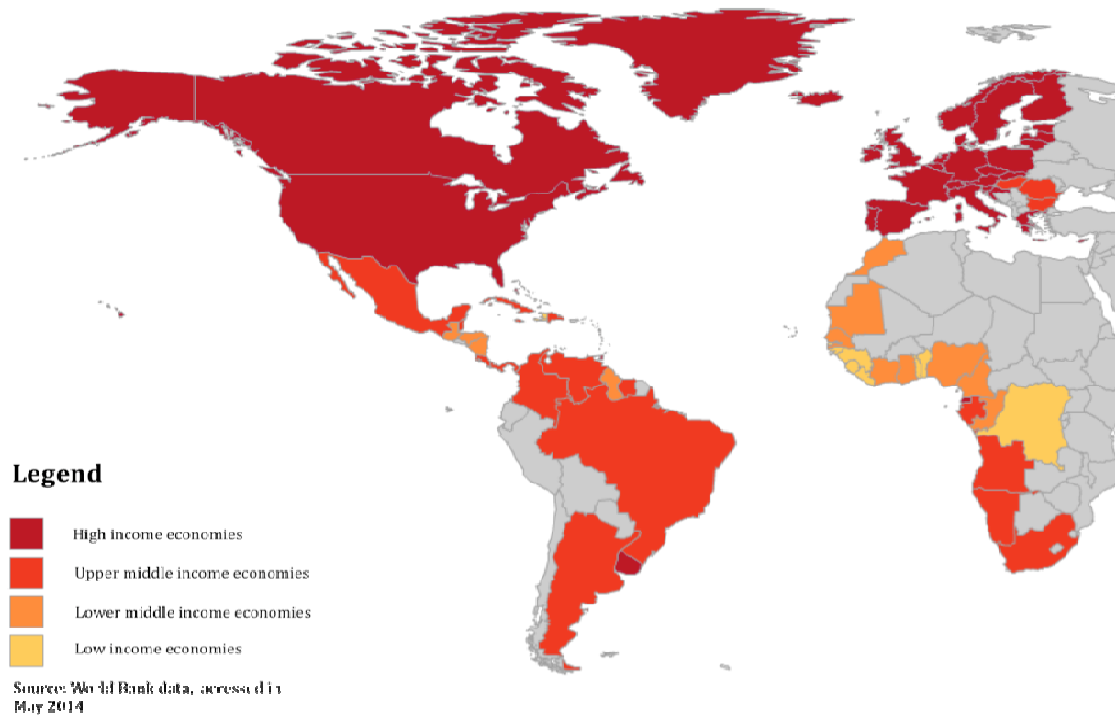
²⁰ The OECD list combines the harmonised list of fragile situations published by the World Bank, African Development Bank and Asian Development Bank with the countries that score above 90 in the Failed States Index.

²¹ Although poverty is still a reality in many American states, Latin American and Caribbean countries reduced their poverty levels by more than half (to 5,5 per cent in 2010 from 12 per cent in 1990), mostly over the last decade. Brazil accounts for the most significant decrease (down from 17 per cent in 1990 to 6,1 per cent in 2010). In comparison, despite a decrease of 8 percentage points over the same period, 48,5 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africans still live below the poverty line.

²² Central America is dubbed the most dangerous region in the world. In Honduras, El Salvador y Guatemala homicide rates were respectively 91.6, 69.2 and 38.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011 (UNODC data) – as high as during the civil conflicts in the 80s. Perceptions of insecurity (violence and criminality in society) are equally high (or higher) in Central and South America as in many African-Atlantic countries (Global Peace index).

differ on the importance of the country as a hub for drug distribution to world markets (and Europe in particular), the extent to which drugs' money has created 'incentives' for systematically disrupting positive change in one of the poorest countries in the world should not be underestimated²³. Their reach and network makes then a truly global challenge that no country alone can effectively address.

Map 1 – Fragility, violence and countries at risk of humanitarian crisis in the Atlantic basin



Note: Map kindly elaborated by Laura Schusser (GMF) as per the indicators selected by the author.

²³ In Guinea-Bissau, soldiers and politicians have been drawing revenue from the cocaine trafficking. Fuelled by the drug interests, kidnappings, killings, military coups, and other violations of the rule of law are a recurrent problem and a main source of instability. In a statement before the UNSC on 19 April 2012, shortly after the coup led by the Chief of Staff of the armed forces (Lieutenant General Antonio Indjai), the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau stated that the reason for the 2012 coup was to allow Indjai to “undermine the ongoing process of reform and assure his continuing collaboration with organized crime and drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau” (UNODC 2013b)

* Fragile states (OECD, 2014)		Intensity or level of violence in the conflict:		Level of risk of humanitarian crisis:	
Level of societal violence: Very high homicide rate (> 30) High homicide rate (15-30) Intentional homicides, interpersonal violence, violent conflicts over land resources, inter-gang violence over turf control, and predatory violence and killing by armed groups unrelated to armed conflict (UNGODC, 2013).		War Limited war Violent crisis Measured as per the weapons and personnel involved in the conflict and its consequences in terms of number of casualties, level of destruction, and number of refugees or internally displaced people. Where a country is marked with this symbol, it does not mean that the whole country is affected by violent conflict; in nearly all cases it affects a part of the country (Conflict Barometer, 2013).		Very high risk (> 5.4) High risk (4.4 to 5.4) Average risk (3.4 to 4.4) The concept of risk includes three dimensions: hazards & exposure to natural and human-induced hazards, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity (EU InfoRM Risk Index, 2013).	

Angola	*			Cote d'Ivoire	*			Guyana			Saint Lucia				
Antigua and Barbuda				Cuba				Haiti	*			Saint Vincent and the Grenadines			
Argentina				Cyprus				Honduras				Sao Tome and Principe			
Bahamas				Dominica				Jamaica				Senegal	*		
Belize				Dominican Republic				Liberia	*			Sierra Leone			
Benin				Equatorial Guinea				Mauritania	*			South Africa			
Brazil				Gabon				Mexico				Suriname			
Cameroon	*			Gambia				Morocco				Togo			
Canada				Ghana				Namibia				Trinidad and Tobago			
Cape Verde				Greece				Nicaragua				United Kingdom			
Colombia				Grenada				Nigeria	*			United States			
Congo, Republic	*			Guatemala				Panama				Venezuela			
Congo, Dem. Rep.	*			Guinea	*			Romania							
Costa Rica				Guinea-Bissau	*			Saint Kitts and Nevis							

As the table in map 1 illustrates, few of the twelve states identified as fragile in the OECD list are actually affected by violent conflict at present (with the exception of DRC and Nigeria). Most are either post-conflict (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire), post-disaster (e.g. Haiti) and/or suffer from chronic political instability (e.g. Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania), institutional fragility or social fragmentation that hampers economic and social recovery. In the Saharan belt, conflict and instability in Libya created a power vacuum and an abundance of arms and combatants that, combined with local grievances and radicalised national and international armed groups, has fuelled conflict and political crisis in Northern Mali, and could destabilise other countries in the region. Similarly, there are great concerns that the radical Nigerian Islamic group Boko Haram, which is responsible for kidnappings and extreme violence in North-eastern Nigeria and whose fighters are known to have trained with AQMI (*Al-Qaeda au Maghreb Islamique*, an Al Qaeda affiliate radical Islamist group in the Maghreb region) that provides also financial support to Boko Haram, could expand its activities into neighbouring countries and contribute to an increase in violence, radicalisation, and expansion of international terrorist and criminal networks in Africa.

Concerns over terrorism and terrorist activity in Africa (especially in the Maghreb and in the Horn regions) have since long existed, but are clearly in higher order as thousands of local independent militant groups have sprung up in loosely governed, lawless or war-torn territories across the Middle East and Africa. Although most are driven by local agendas, they have a shared admiration or affinity for Al Qaeda's type of militancy and can form alliances, support each other (financially, with training, fighters or weapons), and merge or dissolve into each other (Kirkpatrick and Schmitt 2014). Other alliances of convenience, led by less puritanical interests linked to lucrative illicit trade and criminal networks across the Atlantic, are of no lesser concern. They have played a prominent role and fomented the instability, unrest and violence that climaxed in 2012 in Mali (Briscoe 2014).

In Latin America, organized crime interests and resources are creating a ‘economy of violence’ that is threatening states governability and the region’s social, political and economic advances of recent years. This reflects in increased political instability²⁴ and militarisation of the state, lack of adequate channels for inclusion, incapacity of political institutions and the judiciary to ensure the rule of law. Armed violence is affecting livelihoods, undermining development as well as physical, human and social capital, increasing social fragmentation and eroding citizen support for democracy who are calling for changes in the political system. An International IDEA policy note (2103, p.5) refers that “alternative models of democracy are emerging: (a) conventional representative democracies with a few participatory instruments (Chile); (b) participatory democracies with weakened representative institutions (Ecuador, Venezuela); and (c) countries where participation is combined with ways to strengthen representation (Brazil), or have created new combinations of forms of participation and representation (Bolivia)”. At the same time, although unconstitutional power changes are no longer as common as in the past, there is a worrying trend to make constitutional reforms that allow consecutive Presidential re-election, and even indefinite re-election (in Venezuela and Nicaragua).

4.2. Main Fragility Trends across the Atlantic

Although states in the Americas do not appear in the rankings of fragile states – with the exception of Haiti – some of the drivers of fragility affecting states in Africa and elsewhere are clearly present (and a few even stronger) in some Central American states, as well as in parts of South America and the Caribbean. Those fragility drivers include economic exclusion and some of the highest levels of inequitable income distribution, violence, drug-trafficking and organised crime, societal fragmentation, institutional weakness and political instability²⁵.

The Conflict Barometer 2013 found that in the wider Atlantic regions the incidence of conflict (from non violent and low intensity conflicts to wars) is still high: 97 conflicts in Africa, 63 in Europe and 54 in the Americas in 2013. Most conflicts are now internal and very few are actually wars. In the Atlantic regions, conflicts are motivated mainly by a combination of political/economic system and national power struggles, or sub-national predominance and control or access to resources (e.g. land, water, mineral rights, oil, coca/drugs trade, cattle). The motivating factors and the stakeholders involved seem to partly influence the recourse to violence in addressing these conflicts (see box 2), and are a relevant indicator about governance challenges in the wider Atlantic space.

Box 2 – Main factors behind violent conflicts in the Atlantic regions

- Violence is associated with the majority of conflicts related to *national power* in the Americas: 6 out of 7 cases, compared to 6 out of 9 in Europe and 22 out of 32 in sub-Saharan Africa.

²⁴ The coup d'état of Honduras in 2009, a coup d'état attempt denounced in September 2010 in Ecuador and the controversial removal from office of President Lugo by the Paraguayan Congress are illustrations of the fragility of the political system and institutions.

²⁵ Almost all Latin American states (with the exception of Cuba) are democratic electoral regimes, even if the degree of conformity to the rule of law and human rights principles varies across the region. Although it does not signal a return to autocracies, the coup d'état of Honduras in 2009, a coup d'état attempt denounced in September 2010 in Ecuador, and the controversial removal from office of President Lugo by the Paraguayan Congress are illustrations of weaknesses of the democratic system and institutions.

- In Sub-Saharan Africa the overall number of conflicts related to national power is significantly higher than elsewhere in the Atlantic basin and the second most important cause of violence in Africa.
- The first most important cause of violence in Africa is *subnational predominance*, reflecting the politics of exclusion (political, social or economic) with recourse to violence in 29 of those conflicts (of which 6 wars), compared to 13 in the Americas and 2 in Europe.
- In the Americas, almost half of all conflicts are at least partly related to issues of *resources*, with resort to violence in 80 per cent of them, compared to 61 per cent in Africa and 25 per cent in Europe.

Source: Conflict Barometer 2013.

Drugs and the availability of arms take a very significant part in the violence associated with resource-related conflicts in the Americas, particularly in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, but also in Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras. Drug cartels or organised crime in general, and the corruption and insecurity associated with it are also strongly present and growing in fragile and less fragile states across Africa, a continent at the crossroads of the cocaine route from Latin America and the heroin route from Asia. West Africa is at risk of becoming an epicentre for drug trafficking, and the Gulf of Guinea is the new hub for maritime piracy. Colombian and Mexican cartels are known to be present especially in West Africa (e.g. Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Nigeria), and having political and military elites of some of these countries in their payroll²⁶. Nigerian cartels and criminal networks are growing stronger and bolder in the illegal trade and distribution of drugs to Europe and North America, and in piracy attacks (e.g. hijacks for ransom, oil theft) in and off the Gulf of Guinea. There are concerns that Boko Haram and other terrorist organisations in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa may be also involved – a reminder of the interconnectedness of the Atlantic space with other regions as local and global actors and agendas intertwine.

Partly linked is also the issue of illicit financial outflows stemming from crime, corruption, tax evasion, and other illicit activity. Globally, these represent much more than the aid going to developing countries, and most importantly they are lost opportunities for investment and growth, development and statebuilding. As a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Sub-Saharan Africa suffered the biggest loss of capital, with illicit outflows from the region averaging 5.7 per cent of GDP annually (against 4 per cent globally), while the bigger losses in the Atlantic area were suffered by some of the fastest growing economies: Mexico and Brazil in the Americas, Nigeria and South Africa in Africa (Global Financial Integrity 2013)²⁷.

Both Latin America and Africa are fast growing regions thanks namely to capital inflows and high prices for commodity exports as demand from emerging markets (including their own) has steadily increased. Natural resources exploitation (e.g. hydrocarbons, minerals, land, other commodities) account for a significant share of their growth, but all too frequently this has also come with increased tensions and conflicts over exploitation rights, the social and environmental impact of such deals, or unfulfilled

²⁶ In Guinea, during the regime of the late dictator Lansana Conté, the entire government ended up on the traffickers' payroll.

²⁷ Mexico is estimated to have lost 467 billion USD over the last decade in illicit financial outflows and Brazil 192.69 billion. Trailing not too far behind are Nigeria and South Africa with 142.27 and 100.73 billion USD respectively (Global Financial Integrity 2013).

expectations over redistribution of wealth. Even in countries that have lifted millions of citizens out of poverty during the last decade like Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, South Africa, or others, these tensions are still high. In DRC, Guatemala, Guinea, Nigeria, and others where gains from natural resource have not reached the majority of the population, the potential for social conflicts and the risk of further exacerbating governability problems is even higher.

5. Challenges and Opportunities for Atlantic Cooperation to Address Fragility

In light of what are the perceived common challenges and interests, various bilateral, regional as well as multilateral initiatives involving both Northern and Southern Atlantic actors seek to promote and coordinate joint efforts in addressing some of the identified drivers of fragility. While there is general agreement on the potential for collaborative efforts, there is no shortage of challenges linked namely to the multiplicity of internal and external actors involved (each with its objectives, priorities or interests and approach), limited human resource or expertise, financial constraints, different organisational cultures, absence of a clear leadership or reluctant to be coordinated by others, and lacking a shared vision of what to achieve, how and by which means.

Coordinated efforts and joint action are made even more challenging in fragile states, where the institutional weakness or lack of legitimacy of the state means there is no reliable country leadership to guide external assistance and activities in support of national interests and priorities, to ensure ownership of externally supported plans, and to arbitrate between partners' own priorities or interests and fragmented activities. Country leadership is also by no means a guarantee that there is an interest or capacity from local actors to pursue coherent, inclusive and comprehensive approaches; or that external actors will effectively align their support to national plans when there is such leadership. Beyond issues of capacity, there is a fundamental question of trust between actors. Building trust is a lengthy process. It requires clarity and transparency of interests (from all parties, from political to technical actors), an open dialogue, realism as to what can be achieved, and a long-term commitment.

5.1. South-South Cooperation: great potential, but how different?

Given their historic and human ties and state trajectories, are Southern Atlantic states and actors best placed to understand endogenous processes of change in their neighbourhoods and across the Atlantic? How has this translated in their approaches to fragile states in their regions and across the Atlantic?

Compared to European and North American states, Southern states in the Atlantic rim and beyond are recent democracies, and share some similarities in their development experiences and trajectories of state formation, not least that nearly all have experienced colonial rule, even though statebuilding processes across Latin America, the Caribbean or Africa have distinct features. History and cultural affinities (e.g. the slave trade, colonial domination, language, large African diaspora) are often mentioned to explain, for instance, Brazil's surge in political and economic cooperation with Lusophone countries (with whom Brazil shares membership at the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries-CPLP), but also with other African states, especially as of the 90s when Brazil's political and economic situation stabilised and the country went into a growth path (World Bank and IPEA 2011, Alves 2013). Similar historical, cultural and linguistic ties exist between most Caribbean and African states, and are in

many ways stronger than the affinities between Caribbean and Latin American countries²⁸.

As important as historic, cultural or linguistic affinities may be, they are hardly the determinant factor behind cooperation logics and strategies. Politics and strategic economic interests are the main drivers, but these similarities or affinities have nonetheless facilitated South-South relations in the Atlantic. They allow namely the relationship to develop on a basis of 'a partnership of equals', not clouded by shadows of past dominance or current dependency. In principle, this gives Southern actors a comparative advantage to address issues of economic and political governance that are of critical importance to emerging powers and fragile states alike, and as International IDEA (2013) suggests, it could potentially lead to the promotion of a "South-South pro-democracy agenda".

So far, the support of emerging powers to structural transformation in fragile states appears somewhat tentative and fragmented. There are examples of engagement or activities that could lay the ground for positive change, but the variety of actors involved and of initiatives promoted are often not guided by a clear integrated political, economic and security strategy, and lack coordination and/or resources (Alves 2013) – a criticism that is applicable to traditional donors as well. South Africa, for instance, has engaged and played a critical role in several mediation and conflict resolution operations in Africa. Brazilian peacekeepers in Haiti are seen as playing a positive role through their joined-up security and development approach, while the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio is addressing poverty and violence through community approaches using their experience in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. In Guinea-Bissau, Brazil was supporting security sector reform and the country's National Operational Plan to combat drugs and crime²⁹, but halted this cooperation following yet another military coup in Guinea-Bissau in 2012.

As the Guinea-Bissau case illustrates, emerging or developed nations face basically the same contextual constraints when operating in political unstable and fragile contexts. Reconciling the needs of human and state security, the promotion of democracy, safeguarding their own commercial and political interests, while respecting state sovereignty and sticking to non-interventionist policies is clearly a challenge to emerging powers in the Atlantic basin as their engagement and interests in their regions and across the Atlantic increases. IDS research shows in fact that rising powers' economic engagement with countries in sub-Saharan Africa is not substantially different from that of OECD countries in relation to sector and country allocations of aid, trade and foreign direct investment (Cirera 2013), or in relation to the business interests that drive the desire to invest in 'donor forgotten' development sectors like agriculture³⁰.

²⁸ The majority of Caribbean states became independent also around the same period as most African states, nearly 150 years after the independences of Latin American states. With the exception of Cuba, the Caribbean states are part of the ACP Group (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific) created in 1975 with the aim of coordinating cooperation and negotiations with the European Union, with whom there is a long standing partnership agreement centred on aid, trade and political dialogue that will be up for renewal (or not) in 2020, when the Cotonou agreement expires.

²⁹ In partnership with UNODC, Brazil supported the building of a Training Centre for Security Forces to improve law enforcement capacity and to counter narcotics and organized crime. The aim, in the long-term, was to develop it into a Regional Training Academy for Portuguese speaking countries in Africa.

³⁰ Some analysts argue that, just like Western agribusiness, emerging powers investment in the agricultural sector in Africa is driven by a major focus on creating new markets for agricultural technology and inputs, and it does not reflect in the development of new enterprises on the ground (Amanor 2014).

South-South cooperation also has distinctive features as per the emerging powers involved. There are significant differences in capacity, interests and approach between for instance the Gulf states with their 'Islamic finance' model, China's enormous financial means and capacity to engage in mega-projects, and the more technical assistance type of cooperation of the IBSA countries (India, Brazil, South Africa) or of others like Mexico, South Korea or Turkey. Although the connection between stability and development underpins much of the engagement of rising powers in fragile contexts, South-South cooperation does not offer an alternative ideology or model for peacebuilding and statebuilding, nor does it appear to be yet a really distinctive framework for cooperation (Richmond and Tellidis 2013).

South-South cooperation has, however, been a positive addition to international relations in the Atlantic and globally. It has undoubtedly been a game changer, especially for Africa. Emerging economies own experiences, knowledge, technology and readiness to invest in rural development, food security, climate change, natural disaster reconstruction, infrastructure or education is making a difference in developing countries, including in fragile states. Especially attractive for partner countries are their non-interventionist approach preferring to stay out of country politics, their non-imposition attitude and alignment with the country interests (when compatible with their own interests), and the fact that their cooperation models often involve technology transfer³¹. Their presence and competition has created a more level playing field, opened new economic and trade opportunities, and new policy space for Southern Atlantic countries to 'pick and choose' their partnerships, increase their bargaining power in external relations and indeed take control over their countries and regions. As Rampa and Bilal (2011) convey in their analysis, many Africans believe that the involvement of rising powers in the continent should also lead to an engagement of traditional donors in Africa on new terms that recognise Africa's aspirations and take into account Africa's increasingly complex role in global relations.

South-South cooperation has also been expanding into the security domain, especially as important oil reserves and other mineral resources in the Southern Atlantic maritime continental shelves are being discovered, along with growing commercial interests and importance of transatlantic trade routes. Securitisation of the maritime space is thus of high strategic and economic priority, and the subject of enhanced cooperation within and across the Southern Atlantic regions (Aguilar 2013). Brazil in particular has been rapidly expanding both its own defence capabilities and defence cooperation initiatives with countries of the Southern Atlantic rim. The latter has focused mainly on the development of naval forces through training and education; the provision of equipment including the supply of vessels; sharing of information, scientific knowledge and experiences; the joint development of defence capabilities like the short-range air-to-air missile with South Africa; the mapping out of continental shelves in the Southern Atlantic; and on joint naval exercises (e.g. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, between IBSA countries and with Argentina).

South-South multilateral frameworks like IBSA, the BRICS³², CPLP, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, which includes the South American Council of Defence), the newly created Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) or the

³¹ A successful example, considered a model of South-South cooperation, is for instance the [Cotton-4 project](#) by the Brazilian development Agency involving the transfer of Brazilian technology to increase sustainability of the cotton farming and profitability in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, contributing also to food security. Nine Brazilian cotton varieties developed over the years by EMBRAPA (*Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*) were tested in these countries with positive results.

³² The BRICS is an association of five major emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). All are developing or newly industrialised countries.

Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS)³³ – an earlier Brazilian initiative that Brazil, with Angola, are now trying to revive – are increasingly important instruments in the foreign policy of emerging powers and developing countries alike in the Southern Atlantic. They allow Southern actors to cooperate and explore autonomous options to address common problems of their regions, promote stability and development in the Southern Atlantic area, and limit the interference of Northern Atlantic influences (Aguilar 2013, Kornegay 2013). As the economic and strategic importance of this Atlantic area increases, so does the potential for tensions and competition as states in this Atlantic area assert their sovereignty over their maritime space, like some analysis warn it could happen (Abdenur and Souza Neto 2013). There is therefore a case to consolidate Southern Atlantic multilateral frameworks, but this may also mean to do away with institutional mushrooming and fragmentation in the Southern Atlantic.

While South-South cooperation has a positive impact in Africa, in a few cases it was also source of tensions and conflict due to a lack of sensitivity to the African socio-cultural reality, environmental impact, poor standards of labour conditions, limited impact in the local economy beyond job creation, and little consideration given to the local interests (often not well represented by the national actors). Some less developed countries see emerging powers as “empires-in-the-making” that seek to promote only their interests at the expense of the poorest and weakest states, leaving them feeling equally marginalised as when dealing with Northern actors (Richmond and Tellidis 2013). In some instances South-South cooperation has also come with competing economic and political agendas, as different actors seek to assert regional ‘spheres of influence’ or assert control over ill-delimited exclusive economic zones, and hence additional challenges for regional and international cooperation. There is also concern about regressive tendencies regarding democratic standards and enforcement of democratic principles and of human rights in Latin America as in Africa. One example is the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali or in Guinea-Bissau, where ECOWAS was perceived to be sanctioning unconstitutional changes of government, and/or serving the interests of certain states in the region, by engaging with their unconstitutional leaders following the military coups. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, CPLP (like the UN and the African Union) and ECOWAS supported different options to tackle the crisis following the 2012 coup, which in part may have been driven also by considerations over regional influence, and the suspicion of Nigeria and West African Francophone countries about Angola’s presence and influence in the deposed government of Carlos Gomes Júnior.

For rising powers like Brazil or South Africa, their engagement in south-south multilateral frameworks like IBSA or the BRICS is also driven by a shared – and often competing – ambition for a greater role and influence in regional and global affairs (Carmody 2013). Most importantly, they share the criticism of the ‘western dominated’ global order and are united in the call for a reform of global governance and financial institutions towards a more inclusive system. What brings together South Africa and Brazil in IBSA or the BRICS is at the core of the North-South divide in the Atlantic space. This also reflects at times in divergences over interventions (e.g. in Libya), sanctions (e.g. on the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe) or approaches to the fight against drugs. But shared concerns over fragile states can also potentially provide for an

³³ ZOPACAS, established in October 1986, includes Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in the South American side, and 21 countries of the west coast of Africa. It is a forum for cooperation on a variety of issues of common concern that range from the eradication of poverty, to the fight against piracy and organised crime, the prevention of conflict, peacebuilding, to cooperation on scientific, environmental and marine issues (Kornegay 2013).

opportunity to build bridges across that divide and promote Atlantic cooperation. There is in fact no shortage of common interests.

5.2. Wider Atlantic Cooperation: overcoming the weight of the past, building trust?

The greatest challenge to creating a wider transatlantic space of dialogue and cooperation is building trust. Fifty years on since the end of European colonial rule in Africa and the Caribbean, history still casts a shadow, especially in EU-Africa relations, notwithstanding the fact that EU-Africa dialogue, cooperation and economic relations have never before got so much attention. In the Americas, overriding US economic and strategic interests led to past interventions or interference in Central and Southern American states, and to policy approaches that many in Latin America question the impact and effectiveness, as is for instance the case of the on-going US-led strategy of the 'war on drugs'. These legacies and the political grievances of South Atlantic countries with regard to policies and practices of states in the North, the economic or trade dependence, and donor-recipient relationship still enshrined in policies and mentalities will continue to influence relations in the Atlantic. But the current overall regional and global context is fundamentally different from the past decades. The economic and financial crisis in the North and rising economies in the South have been an instrumental factor to accelerate the tendency towards a rebalancing of power relations in the Atlantic basin and beyond. This brings increased competition, but also a bigger potential for cooperation that is, to some extent, being tested in trilateral cooperation initiatives.

Opportunities from trilateral cooperation

Trilateral cooperation involving Northern and Southern Atlantic actors – often including also non-Atlantic third parties like China or India – allows both traditional donors and rising economies in the South to capitalise on respective expertise and added-value to advance mutual interests, and to cooperate on matters of shared concern. Although there have been a number of trilateral cooperation initiatives in different policy areas, especially involving Africa, Northern and Southern actors alike have embraced opportunities for joint cooperation with some caution. Emerging economies in general have expressed interest in pragmatic, case-by-case, technical cooperation, but most remain doubtful and especially sensitive to any attempt by traditional donors to use triangular cooperation to impose a process or a political objective upon their way of doing business with Africa. However, some have been more open to talk about engagement than others³⁴. In Africa, where greater coherence and coordination among major partner countries and donors is not always welcome, there is skepticism on attempts by traditional donors to initiate triangular dialogue. In Europe and North America, states have engaged in triangular cooperation in different degrees. In the EU, for instance, some seem more keen on pursuing triangular cooperation and dialogue than others, at least on a sectoral or project basis (Rampa and Bilal 2011). Other EU member states, namely those with lesser financial capacity and whose tradition of development cooperation is based on technical assistance, are more sceptical of

³⁴ Brazil, for instance, has been engaged in trilateral cooperation for some years now and is taking on new areas of engagement. Besides its role in peacekeeping (e.g. in Haiti) or in military and police or reform (e.g. Namibia, Guinea-Bissau), at the Sixth EU-Brazil Summit in 2013, Brazil and the EU agreed to support electoral processes in the Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) through trilateral initiatives with the PALOP and the EU (the main funder), and develop action plans, programmes and joint activities to promote the notion of citizenship and electoral participation in the these countries (Elena Lazarou 2013).

trilateral initiatives, especially in those areas where Southern actors bring a similar expertise to the ones they offer.

Beyond issues of technical expertise or added-value, trilateral cooperation initiatives can potentially allow to bridge differences in how Atlantic actors operate in difficult contexts. They can provide opportunities for dialogue on engagement in such contexts, building on the sharing of past experiences and learning from past mistakes, and sharing of information and perspectives on what works, what doesn't and why. A number of trilateral cooperation initiatives have focused on peace and security in fragile states (e.g. Brazil with Canada and Haiti, Brazil with UNODC and Guinea-Bissau), many of them concerning countries in Africa. UNODC, for instance, has a number of programmes financed by the EC, Canada, the US or other EU member states, in which national and regional authorities from Northern and Southern regions in the Atlantic rim are engaged (see box 2). Emerging economies are obviously interested in greater stability in Africa, where they have important business and economic interests and are increasingly engaged in political dialogue, mediation and security cooperation. Not least, their ambition for recognition as global players creates additional incentives to cooperate with more 'traditional' actors towards peacebuilding and statebuilding³⁵, including for the strengthening of laws and regulatory frameworks in these fragile contexts to ensure that foreign support and investment occurs in a safe, legally certain and sustainable way (Rampa and Bilal 2011, Elena Lazarou 2013).

Box 2 - UNODC initiatives promoting transatlantic cooperation in the Atlantic basin to counter illicit trafficking

In the context of transatlantic cooperation and on the basis of shared responsibility among countries of origin, transit and destination of illicit traffic, UNODC has been implementing programmes with the aim of forging dialogue and cooperation among Latin America, West Africa and Europe to address transatlantic trafficking routes:

- **The Project on Law Enforcement and Intelligence Cooperation against Cocaine Trafficking from Latin America to West Africa** fostered trans-regional intelligence coordination and information sharing amongst several countries in West Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Bilateral agreements were signed to facilitate joint investigations and rapid exchange of operational information between law enforcement agencies to promote intelligence-led investigations for intercepting drugs in participating countries.
- **The AIRCOP Communication programme**, implemented jointly with Interpol and the World Customs Organization (WCO), is a multi-agency, anti-trafficking initiative which strengthens detection, interdiction and investigative capacities of participating airports in twenty-four countries that are either the source or transit for illicit trade in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The overall objective is to disrupt the illegal networks that are disseminating drugs and other illicit products through strengthened and more effective cooperation and intelligence exchange among airports in the three continents.

³⁵ For instance, Brazil and the EU have recently established a formal dialogue on matters pertaining to international peace and security, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

▪ The **Global Container Control Programme**, implemented jointly with WCO, assists governments in Latin America and West Africa to establish effective controls over their maritime ports and the movement of sea containers. The aim is to prevent traffickers and other organized crime syndicates from using freight containers for drug trafficking and other illicit activities. Through the programme, inter-agency (customs and police) Joint Port Control Units are established, trained and equipped in selected ports in several countries in the Southern Atlantic, but also in Asia (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan) given the global nature of illicit networks. The programme also facilitates cooperation and information sharing between law-enforcement agencies regionally and internationally, and strengthens capacities for post-seizure investigations.

Source: UNODC website

Two major areas of common interest across the Atlantic that could generate substantial positive (direct and indirect) impact in fragile contexts and beyond are: (i) natural resources governance; and (ii) comprehensive approaches to address the enabling factors and the social, political and security impact of illegal trade and organised crime.

Harnessing the peacebuilding and statebuilding potential of natural resources

Across the Southern Atlantic area, many states are beginning to exploit their natural resources or discovering new resources that, if well managed, are their best chance to rise out of poverty and into economic and social development. There is, however, also the risk that plundering, poor governance and exclusionary practices linked to the natural resources richness aggravates fragility or even lead to conflict. International campaigns by local and international coalitions of state and non-state actors or by civil society organisations have put the extractive industries sector³⁶ in the spotlight, increasing scrutiny and pressure on companies and governments for greater transparency, accountability and social responsibility. Developed and emerging economies alike need to ensure that their private sector agents are compliant with international norms and regulations (e.g. on social responsibility, safety, environmental protection, transparency). Many companies from emerging economies have a poorer record in this regard, possibly also as a result of their recent internationalisation and lesser experience in adapting to higher standards and greater scrutiny.

The responsibility for decision-making and management of national resources lies with the national authorities, and these are accountable primarily to their own populations. However, Northern and Southern actors, including investors and political actors from non-Atlantic spaces, equally need to carefully consider the social and environmental impact of their activities, and address issues of transparency, redistribution and governance, if they are to contribute to political stability, growth and development, and

³⁶ Some of the most notorious campaigns and monitoring schemes on extractive industries include: the "Publish what you pay" campaign (on financial transparency in the extractive industries) by which companies should declare the amount of money being paid to governments for the rights to extract oil, gas, and other natural resources; the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global coalition of governments, companies and civil society to improve openness and accountable management of revenues from natural resources, allows citizens to access to know how much their government is receiving from their country's natural resources; the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), established in 2003 in South Africa, to prevent "conflict diamonds" – rough diamonds used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments – from entering the mainstream rough diamond market.

ultimately potentiate new markets. Countries in the Atlantic regions have different experiences, in different contexts, of governance of their natural resources. An open exchange about their own experiences, which governance systems and/or business models have had the best results in which context, what kind of accompanying policies have had a positive systemic impact, and which internal and external factors need to be taken into account are some of the issues that an inclusive 'Atlantic dialogue' could address. Such a dialogue should involve state and non-state actors alike: national governments, civil society, partner countries and private sector directly and indirectly involved in the exploitation of natural resources. More targeted country-level dialogues that factor in the specific political economy of the context, is however necessary to avoid 'one size fits all' kind of approaches and estranged policy prescriptions that don't speak to the country's reality and the local priorities.

Rebalancing approaches to security concerns

The fight against drugs trafficking, terrorism and piracy has been the focus of transatlantic cooperation for a number of years, but how effective have these activities been? Is there ownership of such efforts by Southern Atlantic actors? Questions over the effectiveness of the 'war on drugs' or counterterrorism efforts are increasingly evident, and there is mounting criticism that there seems to be no serious effort to systematically evaluate what works and what does not. Although the cooperation for instance through UNODC transatlantic programmes to counter illicit traffic and transnational networks has led to important illegal trade seizures in recent years, its gains can be quickly reversed by political turmoil and the absence of more structural transformation in the political and security governance structures of the partner countries, as shown by the 2012 coup in Guinea-Bissau. On the other hand, the success in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean has led to calls for similar action to be taken in the Gulf of Guinea, where piracy attacks have grown exponentially in the last years. Off the coast of Somalia, anti-piracy military operations having significantly curbed down not just the attacks on vessels and the number of hostages taken, but also the illegal fishing by foreign fishing fleets that had a negative impact on coastal populations in Somalia. It is acknowledged, however, that those gains need to be supported and sustained also by investments in economic infrastructure and business opportunities to revive the fishing industry in Somalia, while addressing the symbiotic relationship between piracy and business networks.

Perceptions over the threat posed by transnational networks (of terrorists, pirates, drugs or other illicit trade) can differ substantially within the Atlantic regions, as well as within states and between northern and southern actors, leading to different views about their priority and the approach to take. In the South, these activities are often portrayed as responding to the 'security interests of the North', failing to acknowledge the activities of these networks are increasingly affecting states in the South, amplifying local drivers of instability and insecurity, and in many ways having a greater impact there than in the North. The many competing priorities in fragile contexts mean there is often lesser interest and generally a lack of capacity, internally or at regional level, to address from within the root causes. The patronage system set up by these networks creates negative incentives for local actors to untangle and break the growing inter-linkages between political, military and illicit economic interests. Northern actors, on the other hand, tend to take a too narrow view and approach to the problem, seeing fragile states as the breeding ground for such problems and privileging security approaches. They often fail to acknowledge the impact of external factors, policies and actions (or for instance the market incentives created by the penalisation of drugs consumption), and fail to understand or address the socio-cultural, economic and political drivers that

make transnational criminal networks operate and embed more easily in certain contexts than in others.

Southern actors may therefore have different views on how to deal with these problems or how to link more ‘technical’ approaches on security and development to economic and political governance. On the other hand, they also need to come to terms with the shortcomings of their hands-off, non-interventionist, state-centred approach in poorly institutionalised and weak states. Especially in fragile contexts, states are themselves part of the problem or lack the legitimacy to mediate between different groups and interests in often fragmented societies. In those contexts, non-state actors and community-based or informal institutions may be more influential than the State itself. While this makes dialogue and cooperation between all relevant national and external actors even more challenging, it is even more critically needed – a difficulty shared by traditional donors and emerging powers alike.

Increasingly, actors in the Atlantic basin (North and South), converge in the assessment that these problems require comprehensive approaches that need to be grounded in the country’s specific reality and be owned by the local actors. This convergence offers opportunities to deepen dialogue and clarify how each actor sees comprehensive and contextualised approaches and country ownership being put into practice, and to exchange on their own experiences and lessons learned.

6. Conclusions

The Atlantic context is now fundamentally different. The economic crisis in the North Atlantic, rising economies in the South, South-South cooperation and the fast pace of globalisation have provided more options and created more political space for Southern actors to set their own strategies for development, governance and security. They have expanded their relations; are setting-up separate institutional frameworks for dialogue and cooperation in Latin America, in Africa and across the Southern Atlantic regions; and are experimenting different options to address their problems, which could possibly result in alternative models of political and economic governance.

This new ‘freedom to choose’ and the drive by Southern actors for the search of autonomous structures and options is a positive change that should be encouraged and given the space to mature. It clearly brings increased competition, but also a bigger potential for cooperation and a more open dialogue on which to re-found and rebalance North-South relations towards an effective partnership of equals in the Atlantic basin. Frank exchanges on the respective views and interests of Atlantic actors, and trying to view problems and solutions from a perspective that goes beyond the domestic context of both Northern and Southern Atlantic states and regions would do a great deal to clarify and bridge differences – a first step towards seeking effective Atlantic cooperation. It can potentially generate new ideas, alternative approaches and opportunities to reconcile local and global agendas for peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Shared concerns over fragile states and common challenges to working in these contexts provide many opportunities to engage across the Atlantic regions, while being realistic that North-South and South-South cooperation, whatever degree of convergence, will keep some of their distinctive features (Rampa and Bilal 2011). Without diminishing the importance of the convergence that is developing across the Atlantic on key economic, political and security issues for the future of an Atlantic dialogue and cooperation, there also needs to be realism on the challenges of translating this level of convergence into shared analysis, concerted strategies and coordinated action. This applies equally to North-South, regional or South-South relations. As the EU experience in the Sahel or in the Horn of Africa illustrates, getting

member states to agree on a shared EU strategy is a long negotiated process towards a minimal harmonisation of views and compromise. Once that has been achieved, translating agreement into practice can still be undermined by differences in views, interests and approaches of EU member states, and an insufficient involvement of local actors. Similar gaps have hindered EU-US cooperation in these contexts, despite the long-standing transatlantic alliance (Pirozzi 2014).

Atlantic dialogue and cooperation should not be seen either as seeking a 'one Atlantic approach' to fragile states in the Atlantic basin – that would be neither realistic nor desirable, and would ignore the multiple strategic interests and interdependencies of Atlantic actors with other geopolitical spaces beyond the Atlantic basin and regions. But shared interests and concerns over the impact of fragility and in specific fragile contexts provide a unique opportunity to see whether and how Atlantic diversity can generate new momentum and more effective approaches to address fragility trends in the Atlantic space. So far, there is scantily little to show, mainly because this is still largely untested ground.

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