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Published in J. Baccaria & L. Tarragona (eds.), Atlantic Future: Shaping a New Hemisphere for the 21st Century Afica, Europe and the Americas, CIDOB, Barcelona, March 2016.

"Systemic Threats" and "Pathological Risks": An Atlantic Answer to Contemporary Security Issues

Alfredo G. A. Valladão

No man is an island. Neither is a Basin. Security challenges, as many other aspects of human life, are more and more globalized. Distant events can have dire consequences, direct or indirect, for people living very faraway. Atlantic Basin security issues cannot be assessed without considering its situation on the global map of security problems. Particularly vis-à-vis the present most confrontational mega-regions: Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

In order to avoid a too broad a definition of "security" encompassing every dysfunctional aspect of human relations, a distinction should be made between matters that could involve the use of force and other so-called "new" security questions – health, trade, environment, poverty, social inequality, immigration, tornados and most issues – but not all – that come under the label of "Human Security". Certainly, if not well managed, these new dimensions can stir up tensions leading to security threats, even serious ones. But they are not security problems per se. "Securitizing" every problem brings up two paradoxes. If everything is perceived as "security", nothing is security: threats lose their specificity, ranking becomes fuzzy, which breed apathy and irresponsibility. The other pitfall is the temptation to use force to treat every man-made problem – and even every natural catastrophes –, which in turn can encourage reckless attitudes and bring about dangerous self-fulfilling prophecies.

Therefore, it's probably more reasonable to stick with a narrower definition of security and defence (S&D): issues that imply using instruments

of coercion, be armed forces, the police, or even civilian and political tools – sanctions, embargos, diplomatic boycotts… On that matter, a distinction can be made between "systemic threats" and "pathological risks". The first are deep challenges that could presumably destroy the core foundations of the global rules that actually guarantee a more or less predictable world order. The second are aggressive social illnesses that derive from the very functioning, or dysfunctions and hiccups of the world order itself.

The "liberal order" great divide

The fact is that we live now in a networked planet, everyday more interdependent and interconnected. Each country, region or local group is engaged in this common world but has its own plights. Security situations can be highly diverse. In the Atlantic space, Europeans don't have the same perceptions, and don't have to face the same menaces as, say, Latin Americans, Africans or North Americans. Geography matters, as well as political cultures and economic and social vulnerabilities. However, all together they are extremely dependent on the smooth functioning of today's globalized economy and social interactions. What has been called the "liberal order" constitutes the main engine that boosted the "emergence" of many new "powers"[1]. One just has to consult the final documents of the ten G-20 meetings – which gather 80% of the world's GDP. They are truly a comprehensive catechism of the official articles of faith on the liberal rules of the game[2]. All dutifully signed by the representatives of each member country – along with the seventy years-old UN Charter, of course. Yet, nobody denies that global interactions go far beyond what national governments can control or influence.

At the beginning of this new century, the Atlantic societies and the international community as a whole have to face a new great divide. On one side, those who opt to defend the foundations of a global liberal order based on universal values and rules. That doesn't mean a Pollyannic satisfaction with this common framework as each of its supporters has its own ideas about how to improve it, and do criticize many aspects and consequences of its implementation. On the other side, those who yearn for a return of traditional nation-states' geopolitical power plays. A world made of zones of influence around the most powerful players, where international laws are just temporary arrangements subject to balance of power logics. Vladimir Putin's vision is the best current example of this 20th century nostalgia, while the Chinese leadership is still trying to play both cards simultaneously.

On one hand, political systems that thrive in open societies – competitive political representations that promote free movement of people, ideas, goods, capital, information or innovations. On the other, political systems that, in order to survive, require closed societies under an authoritarian control. With the former, there is a chance of keeping a more or less prosperous and free integrated global polity… with lots of inequalities and double standards. With the later, the world would surely end up more fragmented,

1 Alfredo G. A. Valladão, "BRICS: Path Openers or Reluctant Followers?", Madariaga College of Europe Foundation, Brussels, June 2012. http://www.madariaga.org/images/madariagapapers/2012-jul-12%20-%20valladao%20paper%20globalisation.pdf

2 cf. G-20 Leaders Declarations, https://g20.org/about-g20/past-summits/

oppressive, poor and dangerous … with even deeper inequalities and "multi" standards. Many nuances do exist in between those two choices, but in our interdependent world system, when the going gets really tough, everyone is compelled to take sides. Today, almost all security problems stem from the frictions that arise from these two contradictory Weltanschauung.

The downgrading of the China threat

During the first decade of the 21st century, only two "systemic threats" were considered top priorities for those most engaged in preserving the global liberal order: a latent unruly China rise and chaos in the Middle East. The Atlantic was not a calm lake, but its many security issues – most of them deriving from criminal activities – were not seen as directly threatening the fabric of the basic global rules.

The southern part of the Atlantic Basin lost its strategic importance since at least the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. But no country in this part of the world could threaten, or even have a meaningful influence on the big powers' geopolitical games of the 19th and 20th centuries. Sometimes, particularly in colonial Africa, a region could become a localized theatre of conflicts between European imperial powers or, later on, a circumscribed battlefield of the Cold War. But, as international state actors in their own right, they couldn't pose any significant threat to the successive world "orders" of the last hundred-fifty years.

The North Atlantic instead, was at the core of the main ideological confrontations of the 20th century between liberal democracies and totalitarian regimes – WWII and the bipolar nuclear stalemate between the West and the Soviet Union. However, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the USSR, the northern part of the Atlantic was deemed a peaceful and prosperous region, where governments could ripe the "dividends of peace". So much so, that some could even theorize the "end of history": "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government"[3]. Even the wake-up call given by the Balkan wars in the 1990s and its human rights tragedies, was relatively swiftly managed – thanks to the US intervention… – and fast forgotten. Except for the spillovers of transnational criminality, the Atlantic looked like vanishing from the security radars.

For China instead, the narrative was all about the prospect that the leadership in Beijing could be tempted to take advantage of a seemingly never-ending economic success to build disproportionate and modern military capabilities, which would be used to assert its hegemony and domination over the Asia-Pacific region. The main concern was that China's "peaceful rise" could metamorphose into an "old-fashioned" expansionist power, at least in its own self-defined local "sphere of influence". Such an evolution would certainly feed growing tensions with the neighbors, increasing the risks of open armed conflicts – the dangerous naval incidents in the South China Sea are a case in point. A commandeering China would threaten the performance of

[3] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", **The National Interest,** Summer 1989, Washington DC

the Asia-Pacific interlocked economies, threatening one of the main engines of global economy growth. A rising China playing by the established rules is good news for the present global order. The bad news would be an arrogant China bullying its neighbors and playing havoc with the Asia-Pacific integrated economies.

This uncertainty about China's path was at the heart of the now famous 2012 Obama's "pivot to Asia"[4], a sort of rebalancing from the American traditional Atlantic priorities. The idea was to strengthen the US military and economic presence in the region in order to encourage China to abide the tenets of the global liberal order by upping the ante to possible aggressive military behavior and, at the same time, reassuring the neighboring countries against any serious Chinese expansionist threat. As former US president Lyndon B. Johnson once joked about FBI's J. Edgar Hoover: "better have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside the tent pissing in"[5]. This more affirmative American engagement and deterrence posture, which is clearly welcomed by Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and many South East Asian states, was supposed to complement the routine mission of US deployments in the region, which is to guarantee an essential "common good" for the world economy: freedom of navigation and overflight in international waters of South and East China seas, and discouraging armed conflict between local powers.

But nearing the end of President Obama's mandate, the situation has clearly evolved. Yes, China is no doubt trying to build an overwhelming regional military force, and has also been undertaking a few hazardous actions against its neighbors. Nevertheless, the "Middle Empire's" economic success is slowing down dramatically. The rest of the world is already speculating about "soft" or "hard" landings. The Chinese Communist Party leadership is signaling a much greater concern about domestic stability, but there is still a danger that the government could seek antidotes in nationalistic campaigns that could end up in foreign adventures – even unwanted ones. Miscalculations do happen. The difference now, is that this potential threat to the global order would come from a position of weakness and retreat, not one of strength and expansion.

Still risky, but more manageable. Specially if there is time to build alternative economic circuits for Asia-Pacific growth that partly bypass China's centrality. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a significant example. Hence, the "pivot to Asia" looks less urgent and didn't really materialize. Instead of prioritizing a permanent power build-up in the region, the US is in a position to go back to its more traditional pattern of a strong "anchor of regional security" and counterbalancing power. "A stabilizing force (…) that has allowed all the Asian miracles to occur over the last 70 years", in the words of US Defence Secretary, Ashton Carter[6]. This is more "business as usual" than "new strategy".

[4] Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century", Foreign Policy, October 11, 2011, Washington DC http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/

[5] Quoted in The New York Times, October 31, 1971.

[6] Geoff Dyer, "US warns China against flexing its maritime muscles", Financial Times, November 5, 2015.

This new downgrading of China however, is not always good news for many Atlantic players, particularly on the southern part of the ocean. If Beijing's military buildup is less a threat to the liberal order in which China thrives, its economic underperformance is having dire consequences to all commodity exporters. Chinese market has become, by far, the world's biggest consumer of basic primary products, which are the main source of revenue for Africans and South Americans alike. A less gluttonous China spells dramatic trouble to South Atlantic economies and it is already having strong negative impacts on these countries' social policies successes of the last fifteen years. And that can have unsavory consequences for the region's security situation.

Middle East: managing the mess

Middle East stability, particularly after the 9/11 terrorists attacks in New York and Washington, was considered the second big systemic threat. As a matter of fact, the menace had two names: oil and the risk of a regional nuclear arms race. Since the second half of the 20th century, Middle Eastern oil – particularly production from the Gulf – is the energy life-blood of the world economy. A serious disruption of hydrocarbons production and transport in the region would have dire consequences for mature, emerging and poor countries alike. Keeping the oil flowing is crucial for the global economy's survival. And this flow's ultimate security guarantor, like it or not, is the US.

However, new developments in the energy field are deeply affecting this Middle East central role: the American shale gas revolution, the reducing costs of renewable sources, the spectacular progress in energy savings and efficiency, the rise of "Atlantic oil" production[7]. Last but not least: the new "digital economy" and its ongoing industrial revolution, much less energy-hungry. The Gulf oil variable in the world energy equation is still paramount, but is becoming less "systemic" than before. As for the nuclear issue, the parlous threat was an Iranian nuclear weapons breakout, which would launch a regional nuclear arms race. And that, in turn, would threaten security and political stability well beyond the region itself. The Iran nuclear deal framework, signed in April 2015, has postponed the day of reckoning on this mater of contention.

More predictability in managing the oil-and-nukes problem is bringing about a progressive downgrading of the Middle East from a "systemic" threat to the global liberal order – that had to be squarely faced and defeated – to the status of a more "pathological risk", that has to be monitored and contained. This risk is of two types: Islamic terrorism with its spillover to adjacent regions (Europe, Africa, South Asia, Southern Russia…), and an eventual rise of a regional hegemon hostile to the global order. As the dominant power in the region, the United States seems to settle for more traditional local power balancing. The Obama administration, besides trying to contain Daech – at least in its territorial ambitions in Iraq and Syria[8] – with a combination

[7] Paul Isbell, "Atlantic Energy and the Changing Global Energy Flow Map", **Atlantic Future Scientific Paper**, Atlantic Future Project 2015, http://www.atlanticfuture.eu/files/338-ATLANTIC%20FUTURE_17_Energy.pdf

[8] Barak Obama, "Interview with George Stephanopoulos", **ABC News**, November 12, 2015.

of aerial strikes and support to local militias, is taking a more hands-off attitude: let all the local belligerents (states and non-state entities) exhaust themselves in fighting each other, while providing that no single power prevails against the others. A strategy that wants to avoid putting "boots on the ground" – a central tenet of the current US Executive apparatus – and bets that after exhaustion, some form of a balanced cease-fire and power equilibrium would have room to emerge. This course of action is even more evident after the Russian intervention in Syria, where Moscow could well get bogged down and become just another local military player. "Keep managing the mess" and circumscribing all eventual fall-outs looks increasingly as the US favored strategy in dealing with this relatively downgraded Middle-East threat.

Yet, the Paris 11/13 terrorist attacks, claimed by "Islamic State" group (Daesh), has show once again that what looks less "systemic" for some is much more so for others. For the US Atlantic European allies, the terrorist threat can rip the whole fabric of Europe's integration process. Should the EU begin to fragment, that would not only seriously hamper any pan-Atlantic security perspective, but also any Atlantic economic cooperation and integration. As a matter of fact, it could become a menace to the whole global order. Thus, the old Atlantic "cape of Asia" would have the dubious privilege of being the first region in the 21st century facing the metamorphosis of a pathological risk (terrorism) into a systemic trial.

The come back of an Atlantic "systemic threat": Europe

If the challenges posed by the chaos in the Middle East and the rise of China have become relatively less weighty, another very dangerous "systemic threat" has been growing in the last few years: the prospect of Europe's unraveling. Alongside the US, Europe is the other main pillar of the "liberal global order". Without Europe there is no order based on open societies, and economic, individual and political freedoms. On one hand, the Old Continent is still grappling with the deep post-2008 economic crisis. On the other hand, it is confronted to a knot of internal centrifugal forces: secessionist and Quebec-style sovereignist movements (Catalonia, Scotland Flanders…), anti-integration temptations (Grexit and Brexit), and nationalistic, anti-European and xenophobic parties gathering more steam from the sudden large inflows of refugees and immigrants, and the surge of terrorist threats.

More ominous, Europe clearly wasn't ready to cope with an old and recurrent issue: the reappearance of a Russian threat. Less than three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the European Union, built on the principle of deep integration and power sharing between member countries, has to face Vladimir Putin's drive to foment political divisions between EU members in order to rebuild a Russian Easter European "zone of influence" resurrecting the expedient of "buffer states". The use of gas deliveries to intimidate the European states most dependent on Russian production, the establishment of Moscow dominated separatist "grey" rebel territories carved out neighboring countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova…) and the military annexation of Crimea, constitute direct and serious threats to international rule of law, reminiscent of the Cold War. No doubt, the EU institutional decision-making process

is achingly cumbersome, but much stronger and resilient than its critics admit: the European response to Russia's offensive has been rather assertive. But no doubt also, that the European integration process is in the middle of something looking more and more like a "perfect storm". And thousands of desperate refugees and immigrants trying to cross the EU borders every day, and the now permanent alerts about terrorist attacks after the Paris November shootings, makes the situation even more perilous. If anything is a "systemic" challenge, this is it.

Seen from the North Atlantic western seashore, the unavoidable "pivot" looks every day more like a "pivot to Europe" all over again – if reluctantly. The assessment of the Russian threat or of Near East Islamic terrorist spillovers into Northern Africa and the Sahel (Boko Haram or the deadly puzzle of Libyan militias) is being looked at mainly through the lenses of their impact on Europe's stability. Russia – and its inherent economic and demographic weaknesses – is not yet seen as a systemic threat per se, but one that has to be circumscribed and contained in order to protect the European construct – the same logic being applied to the whole mist of Islamic terrorists groups. For the time being, these two types of menaces can still be categorized as "pathological risks": they are more a consequence of European growing internal vulnerabilities and tensions, and political plodding, than proper "foreign" threats.

Actually, the "pivot to Europe" is already happening, slowly and in a quite thoughtful way: revitalization of NATO with a new rapid reaction force; a network of command centers, as well as forward prepositioning and maneuvers in Eastern Europe nearer the Russian borders; promotion of TTIP (Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) to lock-in the interdependence of North Atlantic economies and regulatory processes; intensification of bombing campaigns against Daesh in Syria and Iraq, as well as the upgrading of support and arms deliveries to Syrian anti-regime opposition groups; reinforcement of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM, head-quartered in Stuttgart) and deployment of drones and small contingents of Special Forces to monitor and help in the fight against Boko Haram and other jihadist groups that threaten European interests and security, and are partly responsible for the new wave of migrants to the North; encouragement and support for European energy independence vis-à-vis Russian gas… This accumulation of very diverse initiatives do create a pattern of much more American involvement in the Old Continent, reversing nearly two decades of something akin to benign neglect. But this time around the US – particularly under the Obama administration – will not do all the heavy lifting for the Europeans. The old Cold War transatlantic mantra of "burden-sharing" will come back with a vengeance.

A born-again Atlantic Alliance

As a matter of fact, with threats and risks gathering inside and at its external borders, Europe can no longer stave off a serious debate about its "hard power", and how to use it. For now, only France and Britain have some significant force projection capabilities and the will to act. However that is not enough to confront the new security challenges and to assuage Washington's calls for partaking the load. Nowhere is this

question more sensitive to handle than in Germany. How will this debate play out with German public opinion? Can Germany move from a "pacifist" frame of mind country to a military power? And still avoid ripen into a bully? How will other EU member states react to a more affirmative German military power, knowing that Germany is already – and by far – the central and stronger economic player in the Union? Ask the Greeks, Hungarians and even much bigger neighbors…. But Germany is not alone. All the other member States, big and small, are now compelled to take a hard look at how to contribute – and with what means – to the continent's security. Benign neglect is out; nobody can keep dodging its responsibilities.

This debate has become even more urgent due to the escalation of bloody terrorists threats inside EU territory. Europeans cannot settle anymore for simply "containing" the jihadist territorial expansionism in the Middle East and its ideological inroads in Africa – implicitly delegating this task to France or Britain… and to the US Armed Forces. Scattered surveillance of radicalized European followers will not be enough either. When a pathological risk is in fact rapidly upgrading to an indirect strategic threat, "destroying" it takes precedence over "containment"[9]. Much better coordination of European police forces and intelligence services, decisive improvements of common control instruments and procedures, and stronger links with US security agencies, are inevitable in order to confront ingrown and transnational jihadism. This means, like it or not, a step further for European integration and sharing of sovereignty, at a moment when nationalist anti-European political movements are on the rise. But the alternative is grim: a lasting re-erection of national borders and the demise of the 1985 Schengen Agreement, which guarantees the free movement of persons inside a borderless Europe. Such a throw back would simply demolish one of the two main pillars of the European integration process – the other being the Euro, which is still threatened by the seven years old global economic crisis. Paradoxically, the whole argument about Europe's S&D responsibilities, ineludible for the sake of EU cohesiveness and security, could become the last straw that breaks the European construct.

Nolens volens, we are in for a much bigger and taxing US presence in the Old Continent. Washington cannot ignore that a European continent in turmoil would dangerously unravel the world's main institutions, rules and values. The once creaky North Atlantic Alliance is fast becoming again the central instrument for tackling the defence of the liberal order in the region. NATO's Trident Juncture exercise, held in November 2015, was its biggest war games since 2002, and was also meant to send a clear message to Moscow. Yet, we are still very far from a new Cold War: the bipolar world crumbled with the Berlin Wall. Paradoxically, Russia's military intervention in Syria has facilitated the possibility of Western/Russian ad hoc cooperation – including each side's regional allies – against the "Islamic State" group. This improbable rapprochement was sanctioned by a surprising unanimous vote of the UN Security Council calling Member States to take "all necessary measures" in order to "eradicate" Daesh's "safe havens" in Syria and Iraq, and calling the Islamic terrorist group

[9] President François Hollande, Speech at the Congress in Versailles, November 16, 2015

"a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security"[10]. But after the military annexation of Crimea by Russia, to guarantee North Atlantic security against conventional, "hybrid" or "new" threats has become a sine qua non condition – once again – for managing the global order's economic and security challenges.

Confronting Atlantic "pathological risks"

Apart from a re-emerging "systemic threat" in its northern shores, the Atlantic – North, Central and South – will also play a crucial role on tackling the "pathologic risks" arising from the functioning and dysfunctions of this same liberal global order: terrorism, transnational criminality (drugs and arms trafficking, piracy, immigrant smuggling…), and soaring urban violence[11]. And, sometimes, lingering local out-of-date border disputes, internal strife, and the chaos of "failed" or "fragile" states[12]. These forms of security problems can seldom be "solved", let alone "defeated". The nearly half-century-old "War on Drugs" bears witness to this harsh reality. For the time being, they can only be "managed" – at least until the present transition to a new economic, social and political model induced by the digital revolution is well advanced[13]. In the long term, only much more progress towards sustainable economic growth, better governance and accountable government, less inequality (social and regional) and efficient implementation of the rule of law can downgrade these risks to residual hazards. On the short and medium term, the central question is how to "contain" them.

Security containment measures have been implemented either by intermittent military interventions and/or strong police action and intelligence cooperation. The best recent examples are France's "Serval" operation in Mali; the bombing sorties against the "Islamic State" group in Syria and Iraq; small contingents of Special Forces deployed against Boko Haram or embedded with Syrian militias; naval interdiction against piracy out of the Somali Coast or the Gulf of Guinea; dissuasive traditional naval exercises (PANAMAX in the Caribbean, UNITAS in the South Atlantic, US/Europe/Africa "Saharan Express" in the North Africa coast…); UN peacekeeping operations (MINUSTAH in Haiti, MONUSCO in D. R. Congo, MINUSMA in Mali…); the highly successful cooperation between Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania military and police forces against immigrant smugglers rings, Plan Merida against drug traffickers in Central America… In fact, the Atlantic Basin has seen a growing buildup of discreet pluri- or bilateral common responses to transnational criminal networks

[10] UN Security Council, Resolution 2249, United Nations, November 20, 2015. http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12132.doc.htm

[11] Mark R. Jacobson & Max Daurora, "Significant Trends in Illicit Trafficking: A Macro View of the Problem and Potential Means to Address It", Atlantic Forum Scientific Paper n° 8, September 29, 2014. http://www.atlanticfuture.eu/files/326-ATLANTIC%20FUTURE_08_Transnational%20threats.pdf

[12] Fernanda Faria, "Fragile States: Challenges and Opportunities for Atlantic Relations", Atlantic Forum Scientific Paper n° 9, October 9, 2014. http://www.atlanticfuture.eu/files/327-ATLANTIC%20FUTURE_09_Fragiles%20states.compressed.pdf

[13] Alfredo G. A. Valladão Masters of the Algorithms – The Geopolitics of the New Digital Economy from Ford to Google", German Marshall Fund of the United States & OCP Policy Center, Brussels, May 2014. http://www.gmfus.org/publications/masters-algorithms-geopolitics-new-digital-economy-ford-google

and cooperation on internal conflicts prevention[14], as well as an uptick in the domestic use of military forces in a constabulary role alongside traditional police deployments against urban or local violence.

Pathological risks are widespread throughout Latin America and Western Africa. But the transnational crime and terrorist activities also encompass and threaten North America and Europe. South and North Atlantic riparian governments cannot afford to procrastinate. A better organized security cooperation involving the whole Basin[15] is becoming a prerequisite to avoid that pathological risks turn into systemic threats. The potential pitfall stemming from a lack of common resolve is that it would certainly provoke unilateral interventions by big powers that possess the capabilities and the political will to do so – which would shatter prospects for the necessary consensual approaches to deal with these problems. But in any case, Southern and Middle Atlantic states and societies will also have to cope with the fall-out of surging systemic threats in the Northern Atlantic.

Building pan-Atlantic security

During the Cold War, many African and Latin American territories were reduced to the condition of battlegrounds of the East-West arm-wrestling – most of the time with the complicity of local protagonists. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall, and the worldwide adoption of market economy principles and of the basic tenets of the liberal order, opened huge opportunities for the region to pursue strong economic growth and more open societies in a less constrained environment. Many Atlantic states in the region could benefit from the boom of the "happy globalization" years at the beginning of the new century. Latinos and Africans – each according to its own assets and drawbacks – made great strides towards more economic success, social justice and open political systems. But the imbalances inherent in this rush to prosperity could not but also worsen domestic security challenges. Disorderly urbanization and widespread connectivity are key ingredients for growth and modernization, but they create as well big opportunities for criminal networks. Yet, these pathological risks could be more or less contained into a national or regional ambit, sometimes with the support and cooperation of North Atlantic governments and peacekeeping UN forces. West Africa and Central Africa, in particular, had to rely on these North Atlantic links in order to confront transnational crime, terrorism, piracy and, at times, internal political or ethnic clashes.

This Atlantic relatively fragile security-balancing act will certainly struggle to adjust to the huge impact of a new systemic threat centered on the Northern part of the Basin. Latin American and African authorities will be summoned, by their much more

[14] John Kotsopoulos, "The Atlantic as a new security area? Current engagements and prospects for security cooperation between Africa and its Atlantic counterparts", Atlantic Future Scientific Paper n° 6, September 29, 2014. http://www.atlanticfuture.eu/contents/view/the-atlantic-as-a-new-security-area

[15] Inês de Sousa, "Maritime Territorial Delimitation and Maritime Security in the Atlantic", Atlantic Future Scientific Paper n° 7, September 29, 2014 http://www.atlanticfuture.eu/files/325-ATLANTIC%20FUTURE_07_Maritime%20Security%20in%20the%20Atlantic.pdf

powerful North Atlantic neighbors, to take sides and spend political, diplomatic and some "hard-power" capital to show their readiness to take their share of the burden in the "systemic" confrontation. And they will also be required to contain their domestic and regional security threats in a much more capable and collective manner. No doubt that Africa and Latin America's room for maneuver is already shrinking due to this new pan-Atlantic security emergency. The Southern Atlantic states are compelled to hasten the establishment of efficient regional security mechanisms and institutions if they want to keep some influence on the management of their own pathological risks. But, like it or not, such path will depend on the will and capabilities of the region's most powerful players.

The Southern Atlantic most important and powerful protagonist is Brazil. There won't be efficient and strong security schemes in the region without Brazilian capacities and political will. But Brazil has always been traditionally inward looking and extremely mistrustful of any great power presence in the South Atlantic Basin[16]. The Falklands/Malvinas War, in 1982, was a wake-up call for the Brazilian authorities on Latin American defence vulnerabilities vis-à-vis strong military "Northern" powers. The fact that Washington sided with London, bypassing the "hemispheric" 1947 Rio Treaty commitments – which states that an attack against one member is considered an attack against the others – further increased this climate of distrust. These misgivings materialized four years latter with the Brazilian initiative that led to the creation, in 1986, of the ZOPACAS agreement (South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone), signed by all South Atlantic coastal states, establishing a regional nuclear-weapons-free zone with a clear intention of preventing the military presence of outside powers.

However, in the last few years, Brasilia has been redefining its security vision and priorities. For the first time, a "National Strategy of Defence" was published in 2008[17], and the country's armed forces have been collaborating with many regional and non-regional players, leading the UN peacekeeping troops in Haiti, participating in a naval coalition with North Atlantic forces to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, or promoting naval exercises with India and South Africa (IBSAMAR) in the framework of the trilateral IBSA Dialogue Forum. It has also developed, quietly, stronger intelligence cooperation with the US and some European powers for monitoring and fighting drugs and arms trafficking, as well as maintaining its presence in UNITAS and PANAMAX maneuvers.

The containment of pathological risks in the South Atlantic space, as well as the need to guarantee regional political and diplomatic cover when handling systemic threats, cannot be assured efficiently without diverse forms of pan-Atlantic security initiatives. The best way to have Brazil on board – as well as other important South Atlantic players – is to build these relationships on the basis of an evolving issue-by-issue cooperation, including the needed contribution of the many regional organizations on both

16 Alfredo G. A. Valladão, "Brazil – Defence without Threat" – **Multilateral Security Governance**, XI Conference of Forte de Copacabana – International Security: A European-South American Dialogue, Fundação Konrad Adenauer and CEBRI, Rio de Janeiro, 2014, pp. 147-156. http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_39113-1522-5-30.pdf?141010200746

17 Brazilian Ministry of Defence, **2008 National Strategy of Defence**, Brazil: Ministério da Defesa.

sides of the ocean (ECOWAS, SADC, AU, UNASUR, MERCOSUR…)[18]. The answer is clearly not an extension of NATO to the South, nor a "SATO", but a multilayered ad hoc Atlantic security cooperation network.

Who will do the "dirty job"?

Whatever its shape, an Atlantic security framework, designed as a mix of collaborative instruments for promoting and defending an open rules-based world, will have to face a very classical and old dilemma. Rules are powerless if they are not implemented. There is no law without police. Hence the crucial contention: who will take responsibility for enforcing international – or global – law? Who will do the police job? At the end of World War II, the "law" became the UN Charter, and the US Federal Administration was its guarantor of last resort against those trying to subvert this ideal of a universal rules-based international life. In spite of the ambiguity and tensions between defence of US national interests and of those of the so-called "international community".

Today, rules have proliferated, encompassing most aspects of human relations. And after the fall of the Communist bloc, most states and peoples in the planet adhered to the present universal creed. The rules-based organization of our globalized world is extremely more complex than seventy years ago. But, like it or not, the United States – or better, the US Executive power – still remain the ultimate guarantor of the core foundations of this global order – although more and more reluctantly. Presently, America can and will lead unwieldy arrays of allies and clients into taking a stand – including the use of force – when its direct national interests are threatened and when the foundations of the liberal global order are in danger[19]. Actually, for the US Executive apparatus, there are systemic challenges that have to be dealt with whatever the circumstances: threats to the global communication and information network, to space and underwater assets and to maritime sea-lanes and choke points, as well as local conflicts that could theraten directly the functioning of the global economy.

Clearly, that is not enough. True, these broad US concerns are shared by a majority of countries in the world, and most of them are quite happy to let the Americans do the "dirty job" – even if they don't shout it from the rooftops. Nevertheless, most of today's threats, even if they don't have a systemic impact on the global liberal order, can have dangerous strategic consequences for single countries or regions. In general, they are symptoms of the global order ills. And these "pathological risks" for everybody can well become "systemic threats" to single countries or regions. For now and the foreseeable future, the US Executive power will not and cannot take care (or even take the lead) of facing all these categories of danger. The painful experiences in the Middle East are still very much in everybody's minds. Every time things get really rough, there is a clamor calling for sending Uncle Sam's cavalry. But today, all the king's horses and

[18] John Kotsopoulos, op. cit

[19] Alfredo Valladão, "Democratic Hegemony and American Hegemony", **Cambridge Review of International Affairs**, 19 (2), June 2006, pp. 243-60

all the king's men are getting weary of trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Presently, the best allies and clients can hope for is a helping hand in case one of these pathological risks looks like metamorphosing into a "systemic threat". "Leading from behind" is the conceptual framework championed by the Obama Administration. Which means that those who are already in the front line cannot but try to deal with the problem themselves – at least at first. Hence, each Atlantic Basin significant power or regional organizations (and not only the European Union) is compelled to take a much closer look at its own "hard power" capabilities, and political will, necessary for a legitimate use of force when needed. And to seriously consider the strengthening of its regional security alliances and cooperation, which can supplement each one's lack of means.

Is there any credible path for putting together a new global – and Atlantic – governance security structure that would take responsibility for managing the global liberal order? Which would provide for a predictable and legitimate collective decision-making process more inclusive and efficient than the present international institutions under the UN umbrella? Question marks that lead to a thornier one: what each society and government that needs to defend the global order is ready to put on the table? The saying goes that "those who are not at the table are on the menu…", but one forgets that those who are seated have also do buy the goods, do the cooking and wash the dishes.

Conclusion: "Values" and "Interests"

Pan-Atlantic security cooperation networks could become key contributors to a more collective global security governance. For the main reason that a broad consensus exists throughout the Atlantic Basin about the sharing of and the willingness to promote "common values". These "values", which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in the G-20 meetings' final documents, constitute the basic tenets of the global liberal order. Without some form of broad agreement on these political and ethical corner stones there is no possible cooperation in the security and defence fields. Values function as an essential compass for forging a common vision about key world challenges, and for defining and choosing a way forward.

However, the basic truth is that most putative members of a fledging Atlantic community do agree that they agree on "values", but they also agree that in many instances they disagree on how to implement those values. There are substantial differences and many diverse ways of ranking threatening events and situations. A diversity of perceptions that depend on geographical localization, historical and political cultures, size and available power tools, economic performances… In the realm of defence and security challenges, when violence is involved and one has to decide to use force and act effectively, it is "interests" and power plays that take precedence. Innumerable situations in the world are permanent affronts to our values, but the decision to do something about it is taken only when there is a feeling that an issue represents a direct threat to perceived interests. Nobody risks strong political and diplomatic backlashes or goes to war, putting lives of citizens and kin in danger, purely for "values".

No doubt, our sharing of fundamental values greatly facilitates the Atlantic dialogue on S&D. But that is clearly not enough for building meaningful Security and Defence cooperation agreements and engagements. An achievable Atlantic common security framework will have to go through many ad hoc bottom-up collaborative initiatives on specific issues where local shared interests are involved. And also many "variable geometry" diplomatic coalitions capable of taking at least a political stand against blatant "systemic threats"[20]. For the time being, this multidimensional conversation should avoid big institutional projects or any ambition of turning up a consensual "grand strategy". Accepting the fact that the geographic and geopolitical location of each member is paramount.

Most of the Atlantic states – and societies – do agree on the necessity of maintaining an open rules-based international order, but each one has its own priorities and its own understanding of its most important or threatening challenges. The way forward is to transform gradually these parallel visions into compatible perceptions, instead of endlessly repeating that we share values – which we already take for granted, much more than in other parts of the planet. Yes, important regions of the Atlantic Basin are unfortunately doomed to become dangerous menaces to the security of our global world in the next decades. But the Atlantic, North and South, can also become the main laboratory of world security governance, thanks to its unique and old historical experience of promoting international rule of law and building an array of regional cooperation mechanisms and institutions. Provided its regional players – particularly the most powerful – are able to combine respect for diversity and their traditional drive for a world order where peace is based on a willful acceptance of enforceable common rules. Renaissance astrologers were pleased to remind that Astra inclinant, non determinant. "Stars influence, they do not constrain".

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