

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

(IN)SECURITY AND (IN)EQUALITY IN THE ATLANTIC

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The Atlantic is a central area for the setting of global trends and a critical one for international dynamics at various levels. Over the past decade, researchers on both sides of the Atlantic have discussed the setbacks and steps forward in the relations between states, civil societies, and international state and non-state actors in the Atlantic. The three continents that surround the Atlantic – the Americas, Europe and Africa – play different roles and functions in the international system, as well as having different characteristics concerning economic and social development, democratic consolidation, political and social structures and their cultural and identity standards.

These are the key themes and the subject of analysis of the Jean Monnet Atlantic Network 2.0. The Jean Monnet Atlantic Network 2.0 brings together research centres¹ located on the three continents around the Atlantic and has been developing its work for more than five years. Its chief goal has been to promote the theoretical debate fuelled by the viewpoints of the researchers belonging to the centres that compose the network, in three core areas: economic and commercial flows; energy and sustainability; and security and inequalities.

The launch of the network took place within a fast-changing international context due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022 and the war in Ukraine, which broke on 24 February 2022. These events, and those unleashed by them, which made the world a different place, stressed beyond any lingering doubt the relevance of the Atlantic and the various dynamics at play in the area.

The articles published in this issue of *R:I* are the offspring of the research, reflection and discussion carried out within the framework of the seminars held under the auspices of the Jean Monnet Atlantic Network 2.0, and their purpose is to delve into some of the current and most pertinent themes in the study of international relations within the Atlantic framework.

This issue aims, in particular, at contributing to a broad discussion of the concept of security taking into account the interactions between the North and South Atlantic and within each space. The COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand, and the war in Ukraine,

on the other, have highlighted the interdependence and connection that bind states and people around the world, posing complex challenges to states.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown clearly that security is not only about the State, the action of the military – namely the use of force –, but also about the people, the use of knowledge, namely knowledge about the virus and the vaccines. This dynamic has also been reflected in the high flow of refugees and displaced persons caused by the war in Ukraine, which has demanded from the international community structured and rapid responses. However, this war brings Europe back to an understanding of security in its classic sense – military and economic capabilities as a sign of power and strength capable of undermining the foundations of the international order and altering the balance of power of the international system. After the war in Ukraine, the architecture of transatlantic security will surely be different.

In this conjuncture, the dossier opens with reflections on the two main events that mark the early years of the 20s of the 21st century, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine – events that permeate the analyses carried out in the remaining articles.

The war in Ukraine is analysed by Patricia Daehnhardt, who suggests that this event, having transformed the post-Cold War order, ‘may become the prelude to the first war of the ongoing power transition between the United States and China’. The author examines the role of NATO, the EU-US relationship and the EU in its response to the war to explain how one can at once speak of the collapse of the European security order and the revitalisation of the transatlantic security community. The China element is also added to the analysis, given the competition with the US and how this might also have implications for the transatlantic community.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular the so-called ‘vaccine diplomacy’ is the focus of the chapter penned by Eduard Soller and Marixe Ruiz. The authors analyse the strategies of the vaccine-producing and receiving Atlantic countries based on an evaluation of the process that transformed health into a topic out of the ‘diplomatic toolbox’ and the evolution of the concept of geopolitics which came to incorporate the dimension of the pandemic, health and vaccines, in particular. The research highlighted strategies of cooperation and regional competition that already characterise that area, as well as normative and symbolic factors, and also material ones, as defining drivers of the strategies adopted by the countries.


Migration has been also a dimension impacted by the pandemic, both in terms of the constraints imposed on the mobility of populations and in relation to migrants, in particular those with an irregular status, refugees or asylum-seekers. Focusing on the case of European countries, Teresa Rodrigues’s article examines the vulnerabilities imposed on migrants, highlighting the different wills and capacities at play to deal with the health problem and to implement comprehensive measures that are able to fit the different profiles of minority communities.

Continuing on the topic of human security, the article penned by Bruno P. Carvalho, Mariana Esteves and Susana Peralta analyses the Portuguese case. The authors discuss the relationship between inequalities and human security using data produced by representative surveys. While admitting that Portugal is one of the safest countries in the world, the authors were able to verify that low-income female populations, both the eldest and youngest age groups, often feel insecure. A notion of insecurity deriving from a multidimensional approach to the concept of security incorporating in it the indicators related to income, food, housing and health.

With the same context and drawing on original empirical material, Eva Garcia Chueca's article addresses the social protests that have erupted in some of the Atlantic countries during the pandemic. Seeking to understand the relationship between such protests and inequalities, especially in cities, the article concludes that the correlation between the two is unclear, since there is also no homogeneity among the countries in which the largest number of demonstrations occurred in 2020. The author therefore suggests other explanatory factors for the protests in countries such as the United States, Mexico, and France.

Mark Aspinwall's article scrutinises the environmental rule of law in Latin America, deemed a rather fragile political area. Aspinwall endeavours, on the one hand, to identify the factors that account for the weaknesses of the environmental rule of law and how Latin American countries have allayed the problem, and, on the other hand, to assess their consequences, first of all in migratory flows. In his article, the author explores the role of expert non-governmental organisations in the development of initiatives among the most affected populations and suggests that the empowerment of civil society, and not only the State, is crucial for the successful management of this problem.

The following article delves into the case of Brazil. As is well known, in the last four years, respect for the environment and the preservation of the Amazon are practices that have been absent in the policies of the Brazilian government, one of the reasons why there has been a growing international discrediting of Brazil. Based on this reality, Joana Castro Pereira analyses the Amazon policies implemented during the government of Jair Bolsonaro, acknowledging their 'anti-environmental and anti-indigenous' nature, policies which contributed to the undoing of Brazil's environmental governance. The author discusses those policies to highlight the need to adopt a 'transformative change' in the management of the Amazon that enables the Amazon to perform its international role without calling into question its sovereignty.

With the context of the war in Ukraine and in particular the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that the plurality of articles published in this issue of R:I may contribute to an knowledgeable discussion on the security dynamics that mark the Atlantic area in the 21st century while sparking further development of some of the themes here addressed, from transatlantic security to migration, climate security, interdependence and inequalities. 

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¹ The network is composed of six research centres: Belgium (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Brazil (Fundação Getúlio Vargas – International Intelligence Unit), Mexico (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas), Morocco (Policy Center for the New South), Portugal (Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais da Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) and Spain (CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs).

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