

## Article

# An atlantic rim partnership

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Accepted 26 April, 2009

**The end of the cold war and its hot war proxies, has loosened up such trading and security blocs as the OECD and NATO, but without always creating the new alliances necessary to meet the challenges of the new century. One particular challenge is that of finding a partnership with the new democracies of Africa, independent of the European aid conventions which grouped together all former colonies, however repressive their regimes. A new beginning might be made with an Atlantic Rim partnership, drawing on the trading experience of the pacific rim and Indian ocean rim alliances, but now also based on shared democratic and even religious and cultural, ideals.**

**Key words:** Atlantic rim, democracy, slaves.

## INTRODUCTION

Indeed, with the bicentenaries in 2007 and 2008 of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade by Britain and the US, there is also a moral challenge to assist those countries whose human resources were pillaged by the western democracies and whose descendants in both hemispheres were too often left in economic, social and political stagnation.

For over 3 centuries, from the early 1500s to the mid 1800s, the Atlantic Rim constituted the world's most important trading bloc, with metals and textiles going to Atlantic Africa, human cargoes being transported to the plantations of the Atlantic Americas - 15 million slaves alive, 3 million dead and sugar, rice, coffee, tobacco and cotton coming to Atlantic Europe.

For a critical period in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the Atlantic also formed the oceanic lifeline of European democracy, with many troops coming from North America and also from Brazil and South Africa, the West Indies and the African colonies, to fight for Europe's freedom.

To date the NATO focus has been on central and Eastern Europe, to make up for our standing by during the soviet repressions in 1956 of Hungary, 1968 of Czechoslovakia, and 1981 of Poland. There is a good case for extending such security to Ukraine, with its 2,000,000 diaspora in North America and by 2012, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the worst genocidal famine in human history, when 6,000,000 Ukrainians were starved or beaten to death by the soviets between September 1932 and April 1933.

It is however doubtful how soon a North Atlantic alliance should be extended to the Caucasus, to Georgia,

which broke the olympic truce on 7/8 August 2008 with its attack on South Ossetia, the opening day of the Beijing olympics, even if the attack was less repressive than the treatment of the South Ossetians and Abkhazians by the Georgians Stalin and Beria in the 1930s or led to less ethnic movements than those provoked by the first post-soviet Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the early 1990s.

In any event, the alliance's debt should not be forgotten toward those who, between 1939 and 1945, volunteered to fight for European freedom, despite their having a much poorer educational base on which to reconstruct their postwar, postcolonial world.

The whole rich North Atlantic should now develop a free trade area with the new democracies of Africa and with the black and aboriginal peoples of the Americas and offer security arrangements, such as partnership-for-peace programs, to help protect their freedoms. In the last few years we have seen how fragile have been would be democracies in the Congo and Gambia, in Haiti and Venezuela. Too often our reaction, where not one of indifference, has been of an adhoc curative nature, rather than a long term constructive approach. The situation became particularly tragic in the 1990s in Sierra Leone, created as a slave rehabilitation state and in Liberia, founded as an independent republic in 1847.

The first country to abolish the Atlantic slave trade was Denmark, by decree on 16 May 1792 and fully effective by 16 May 1802. Britain, after transporting 2.8 million blacks, abolished the slave trade on 25 March 1807. Yet in 1816, 1823 and 1831 the British still savagely repressed

**Table 1.** Inland countries dependent on Atlantic outlets.

<b>NATO Democracies</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>CL</b>	<b>African Democracies</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>CL</b>	<b>Caricom Democracies</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>CL</b>
Belgium	1	1	Benin	2	2	Antigua and Barbuda	2	2
Canada	1	1	*Botswana	2	2	Bahamas	1	1
Denmark	1	1	Cape Verde	1	1	Barbados	1	1
France	1	1	*Central African Rep	5	4	Belize	1	2
Germany	1	1	Ghana	1	2	Dominica	1	1
Iceland	1	1	Guinea Bissau	3	4	Grenada	1	2
Italy	1	1	Madagascar	3	3	Guyana	2	2
Luxembourg	1	1	*Mali	2	2	Jamaica	2	3
Netherlands	1	1	Mozambique	3	4	St Kitts Nevis	1	1
Aruba	1	2	Namibia	2	2	Saint Lucia	1	1
Neths Antilles	2	1	*Niger	3	3	St Vincent	2	1
Norway	1	1	Nigeria	4	4	Suriname	2	2
Portugal	1	1	Sao Tome and Principe	2	2	Trinidad and Tobago	3	2
Spain	1	1	Senegal	2	3			
United Kingdom	1	1	South Africa	1	2			
Anguilla	2	1				<b>OAS Atlantic Democracies</b>		
Bermuda	1	1	<b>Other AU Atlantic Members</b>			Argentina	2	2
Br Virgin Islands	1	1				Brazil	2	2
Caymans	2	1	Angola	6	5	Colombia	3	3
Falklands	2	1	*Burkina Faso	5	3	Costa Rica	1	1
Montserrat	1	1	Cameroon	6	6	Dominican Republic	2	2
St Helena	2	1	Congo Brazzaville	5	5	Guatemala	4	4
Turks and Caicos	1	1	Congo Dem Rep	6	6	Haiti	7	6
United States	1	1	Cote d'Ivoire	6	6	Honduras	3	3
Puerto Rico	1	2	Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Mexico	2	2
			Gabon	6	4	Nicaragua	3	3
Other EU Atlantic			Gambia	5	4	Panama	1	2
			Guinea	6	5	*Paraguay	3	3
Ireland	1	1	Liberia	4	4	Uruguay	1	1
Sweden	1	1	Mauritania	6	4	Venezuela	4	4
			Morocco	5	4			
			Sierra Leone	4	3	Other Slave Recipients		
			Togo	6	5	Cuba	7	7

repressed their fellow Christians seeking freedom from slavery, in Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica. And with the current concern for child labour, it was the British who put slave girls to work at age of 6.

Slavery itself was abolished throughout the British empire in 1838, but the movement continued for at least another 50 years, till Brazil, the recipient of 4.2 million Africans, abolished slavery in 1888. But the involvement of most of the great European powers is evidenced by the fact that Dutch, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese (though no longer Danish and Swedish) are all official languages on the Atlantic coasts of both Africa and the Americas.

Slaves were also traded from non-Atlantic East Africa, by Arabs and Persians - Uganda was created as a British protectorate in order to stop the slave trade - so perhaps

a new partnership should be extended to all African democracies.

Several Atlantic cities, from Nantes to Liverpool, Bristol to Charleston, have held exhibitions or created museums dedicated to an erstwhile prosperity based on the slave trade and there is even a movement for black reparations. In June 1997 the US President pondered publicly on making an apology for slavery, but offered no restitution comparable to the \$20 000 per person paid to all Japanese Americans sent to concentration camps during world war II, or the \$60 billion paid by Germany to compensate for the nazi holocaust.

In the 30 June 1997 issue of time magazine, it was calculated by Jack .E. White, the grandson of a slave, that the 244 years of unpaid labour between 1619 and 1863 by 10 million slaves, at 25 cents a day, doubled for pain

and suffering, would come to \$444 billion which, compounded at 3% interest over the 134 years since emancipation, would amount to some \$24, 000, 000, 000, 000! In the 1830s, of course, it was the slave-owners who received £20 million compensation from the British parliament, not the slaves.

In recent years, as long as African dictators bought golden bedsteads or crowned themselves emperor and as long as an apartheid South Africa tracked the soviet navy, we could postpone our moral debt to the African people. But just as, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, abolition went hand in hand with the extension of the franchise within a country, so now, with the beginnings of democracy in Africa, we will realize that political rights and civil liberties are interdependent with the prosperity and security of all free peoples. Also, Africans are now articulating their own responsibility for the slave trade, as in the 2000 epic film *Andangaman*, by Ivory coast director roger Gnoan M'Bala.

Here I have drawn up a list of some 84 states and territories which, when democracies, would be eligible to become members or associate members of an Atlantic Rim democratic and economic partnership (Table 1).

### **Possible members of an Atlantic Rim partnership**

As rated for Political Rights (PR) and Civil Liberties (CL) in 2005 - 2006 by Freedom House of New York. Where 1 represents the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest.

Because of its potential size, the partnership could have as its nucleus a new group of 5, comprising the most populous Atlantic democracies or democratic groupings, namely Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, the United States and the European Union, supported by a rotating council of 2 or 3 members from each of Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and Latin America. More immediately, we