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**What does Neorealism
Imply for Transatlantic
Security Relations?**

1. INTRODUCTION

In International Relations, neorealism – also called “structural realism” – is regarded as one of the most important and corroborated theories that have passed the history of international politics.

Realist perspectives around the concepts of power, anarchy and distribution of capabilities had already gotten a foothold in the earliest forms of our society through figures such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes, who designed for the first time the “classical realism” theory by analysing the interaction between states, the characteristics of the international system, and finally, the security dilemma.

Starting from the “classical realism” conceived by these authors, the theory then evolved in the so-called “neoclassical realism” theory, sustained by scholars like Wohlforth and Schweller, and finally reached its sharpest and most well-defined version in the “neorealism” theory.

But, first of all, before starting to present the topic of neorealism and its application to transatlantic relations, it is necessary to define what a theory is and its characteristics related to the real world. “Theories are collection or sets of laws pertaining to a particular behaviour or phenomenon” (Waltz 1979, 2). Laws, indeed, must pass through procedures of observation in order to be verified and considered valid. And it’s precisely through theories that this can happen: they interpret these laws and give an explanation to them.

In this regard, the neorealism theory gives an interpretation of the condition of the international arena and states’ behavior (within international politics in terms of anarchy, power and a self-interests-based approach.

In particular, it accounts for transatlantic relations between the United States (US) and the European Continent (EU), starting from its theory of balance and of capabilities' distribution. But how does this theory apply to their relations? Which special contribution does it give with its predictions and explanations to the subject of transatlantic security relations?¹

This question will be inquired throughout this article by the main thinkers of neorealism Waltz, Mearsheimer, Walt, Gilpin and Layne.

Scholars as neoliberal institutionalists (Baldwin 1993; Keohane 1986 and 1989; Nye 1988) and neoclassical realists (Ratti 2006; Rose 1998) have criticized extensively the neorealist position and its compatibility with historical facts regarding the transatlantic relations and the evolution of NATO. In this context, this article aims at explaining how and why the neorealism theory still accounts more closely and accurately for the historical trajectory of EU-US relations compared to the other international relations theories. Concretely, it seeks to show the persistent validity of neorealism theory against the common view of international relations theories which considers it as an obsolete paradigm with a constantly diminishing explanatory power.

The article's structure proceeds as follows. In the 2nd section the article's state of the art will be introduced, along with the aims and objectives of this work. In the 3rd section, the core concepts and characteristics of neorealism will be explained, by focusing on its main hypotheses and on its origin from the theories of classical and neoclassical realism. Later, an analysis of the application of neorealism to transatlantic relations (4th section) will be conducted, by taking into consideration the evolution of NATO and EU-US relations in three main historical periods: after the Cold War (4.2-4.4 sections), during the Bosnian, Kosovo and Iraq wars (4.5 section), and finally during the latest 21st century developments characterized by a further fragmentation of the international system and the re-nationalization of Europe (4.6 section). Lastly, a criticism of the neorealist interpretation will be provided by relying on other optimal theo-

¹ In this article, with the term "transatlantic relationship" I mean the EU-US relations. Others could argue that transatlantic relations are broader than the one between these two continents, but most of the research and bibliography available (Cox 2003; Kagan 2002; Kaufman and Dorman 2011) uses this term to define the partnership between the United States and the European countries. As a result, in this paper, I will employ this term in this way.

ries like neoliberal institutionalism and neoclassical realism (5th section). The final part (6th section) provides a conclusion which summarizes the findings of the analysis in light of the neorealist theoretical framework provided.

2. STATE OF THE ART, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

Among scholars from neoliberal institutionalism (Baldwin 1993; Keohane 1986 and 1989; Nye 1988) and neoclassical realism (Ratti 2006; Rose 1998), there is the firm belief that neorealism failed to provide an adequate evaluation of transatlantic security relations' developments and NATO's evolution after the end of the Cold War. The reasons for these critics are manifold, depending on the theory chosen.

Neoliberal institutionalists in particular, focus mainly on the inability of neorealism to predict the future of NATO as a transatlantic alliance. In this regard, they claim that neorealists have underestimated the effect of international economic processes and institutions on states' behaviour (Nye 1988, 241). For this reason, they argue that the explanatory power of neorealism theory is hindered by the continuous existence of NATO as the prominent transatlantic security alliance and by the adjustment of its focus from the defense of Western Europe to the stabilization of the Continent as a whole (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 25).

Along with the neoliberal institutionalist account, neoclassical realists blame the neorealist thesis of overlooking the influence of domestic variables on foreign policy. Among several domestic variables, national interests constitute the cardinal factor and for this reason national governments employ institutions as a tool for the fulfilment of their national interests (Ratti 2006, 96). In this respect, neoclassical realists maintain that neorealism failed to see that NATO's evolution is mainly influenced by national interests of its member states, and not by the presence of a common threat, such as the Soviet Union (Ratti 2006, 98). Hence, since its establishment in 1949, the alliance provided a multilateral framework for the legitimisation and exercise of American power, camouflaged as a setting aimed at containing the Soviet Union, along with a tool ensuring that the European interest of protection from the Soviet threat was fulfilled.

Nevertheless, neorealism remains the primary theory in accounting for security affairs and transatlantic relations (Legro and Moravcsik 1999).

Compared to the other international relations theories, the predictions laid down by the neorealist paradigm accounts for most of the current transatlantic developments between the EU and US. Indeed, a more attentive analysis of the theory suggests that the latest neorealists (Layne 2003) already recognized that the main driving factor behind NATO's evolution have been the national interests (especially U.S. interests) and objectives of its member countries, and not the ability of the institution to influence effectively the historical events, as theorized by neoliberal institutionalists. Whilst NATO has not yet been dismantled, its ability to operate as an international regime which influences the preferences of member states is not unambiguous and it was questioned by neorealists in several occasions, such as during the U.S. conduct following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. This latest neorealist thinking additionally implies that the Soviet threat was not employed as a camouflage for American interests in dominating the European sphere of influence, as portrayed by neoclassical realists. Conversely, the Soviet common threat was visibly used as an additional advantage to preserve largely American and European preferences.

Therefore, NATO undoubtedly serves the objectives and interests of member countries: when there is a threat, transatlantic partners will employ NATO to negotiate and cooperate; when the threat ceases to be detrimental, they will keep looking at finding the best tools to enhance their relative gains by avoiding alliances and favouring unilateral action (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 8). Notably, this focus on national interests and relative gains considerations lies at the foundation of all the truthful predictions of neorealism: the changes of the international system into a multipolar setting, the conflicts derived from the disagreements on the Bosnian, Kosovo and Iraq wars, and lastly, the current developments with Trump's American presidency and the steady renationalization of European countries.

For these reasons aforementioned, this article's special contribution lies in the corroboration of the neorealist paradigm as currently the most accurate and valid account for the explanation of transatlantic historical patterns. Whilst few initial attempts to apply neorealist predictions to transatlantic relations developments have been made (Hellmann and Wolf 1993), a comprehensive framework of this applicability from the post-cold war era to the current 21st century events is still missing. Through a historical analysis of the transatlantic partnership between the EU and US, this article will show how the historical happenings are more faithfully explained so far by the neorealist account compared to neoliberal institutionalist and neoclassical realist narratives.

3. THE NEOREALISM THEORY AND ITS MAKING

Neorealism constitutes a theory of international politics. As all the theories, its function is to sketch a pattern in this complex mix of events in order to analyse it. It explains whether there is any relationship between events occurring in the international arena. As Waltz says in one of his main works, "Theories indicate what is connected with what and how the connection is made. They convey a sense of how things work, of how they hang together, of what the structure of a realm of inquiry may be" (Waltz 1979, 12). The product of theories is usually an explanation of a previous event and/or a prediction for a scenario that could occur in the future. By relying on its explanations and predictions, it's possible to judge and evaluate the significance of a theory.

Naturally, these rules apply to neorealism and, since the latter constitutes a theory of international politics, it operates by attempting to explain the outcomes of state interactions and to predict the following passages. It first analyses the different existent international systems and it attempts to predict their robustness and longevity, as in the case of the Cold War bipolar system; furtherly it seeks to understand how the international system influences the interaction of the individual units and vice versa, as in the case of the relations between the NATO members within an assumed anarchical system.

Until now, the functions of a theory and how this relates to the neorealism theory have been defined. But what is precisely neorealism? From where did it originate and what are its main assumptions?

Neorealism was not originated suddenly from a simple bunch of assumptions or a couple of ideas. The development of its theoretical framework already started with the so-called "classical realism" initiated by Thucydides and his analysis on the relations between Sparta and Athens (which resembles the ones between US and EU), continued with the Machiavelli's conceptualization of state and Hobbes' Leviathan, and finally pushed ahead by authors such as Carr and Morgenthau (Brown 2009, 262). According to this approach, it is indeed human nature or the urge to influence and pursue self-interests which determines conflicts and war among the international actors and affects more broadly the international system. In this respect, Morgenthau in *Politics among Nations*, claims that politics is dominated by specific laws which originate from human nature (Morgenthau 1993, 2).

Later, this classical realism gave rise to the neoclassical realist approach,

which was promoted by scholars such as Rose, Wohlforth and Schweller. This theory establishes its basis on the combination of classical- and neo- realism. On one hand, it certainly considers human nature as a variable that could affect the international system; on the other, it holds that relative material power capabilities drive and determine the purpose and the intention of any state's policy (Rose 1998, 146). Moreover, they furtherly assert that it's not the relative total amount of material resources, but rather the perception of relative power capability, which is how political leaders and elites show up within the international system, that shapes foreign policy choices (Rose 1998, 147).

Nevertheless, neorealism was born primarily upon the distinction from the classical realism of Morgenthau, based on the corrupted human nature which leads to conflict. Hence, Mearsheimer in his work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, clarifies this main difference by highlighting the two different perspectives of the two theories. According to Morgenthau, states attempt to reach the power due to their natural desire for power itself; for Waltz, instead, it's not a desire of power which leads states to aim at influencing and controlling, but rather it is the way in which the international system is structured that obliges states to enhance their power capability (Mearsheimer 2001, 15). Indeed, states are forced to compete in pursuing power if they want to survive. As a result, on one hand classical realists consider power as an ultimate aim in itself. On the other hand, neorealists regard it as a mean in order to reach their final goal, that is their survival and security.

Therefore, the whole theory of structural realism rests upon the concept of power. As Mearsheimer claims, "power is the currency of international politics" (Mearsheimer 2010, 72). Great powers consider their economic, strategic and military power capability in relation to the one of the others. Neorealists don't take in consideration the differences about culture or society among states, because in the end, whatever will be the characteristics of domestic policy of any state, all the great powers would have the same incentives to attack or either defend themselves in order to enhance their possibility of endurance (*ibidem*). In this regard, for a nation it is not only important to acquire a certain amount of power, but it's also essential to prevent others to acquire more power and influence in the international scenario (Mearsheimer 1994, 12). The power capability of a state can be mainly measured according to the material assets and the other socio-economic factors it owns. Material capability, indeed, constitutes the most essential determinant of international politics.

Within the structural realist theory, Mearsheimer has identified five main

assumptions that characterize and describe how this doctrine conceptualizes the international system (Mearsheimer 2010, 73).

The first assumption holds that states represent the major actors within international politics, and they intervene and work under a condition of anarchy. The international system is indeed depicted as a “jungle”, with a conflictual nature and a tendency towards regarding sovereignty as inherent in states (Mearsheimer 1994, 10). In an anarchical system, cooperation among states is usually hard and demanding, due to a general mistrust and prudence the international actors have towards each other. Since there is no central authority in the international context which could provide defence and security or either oblige states to conform to international agreements, states are more willing to renege on their alliances or coalitions (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 7). Therefore, as Gilpin claims, in this international realm “anarchy is the rule; order, justice, and morality are the exceptions” (Gilpin 1984, 290).

The second assumption asserts that all the states within the international system usually own some military capability (Mearsheimer 2010, 73). Having military capability means that nations are able to attack or defend themselves from other actors. Naturally, not all the states have the same military capability; the latter varies according to several shifts or changes in the international scenario.

However, as the third assumption asserts, states don't know precisely the intentions and the ambitions of the other great powers. This variable makes the relations between states more uncertain and unsure. For this reason, states operate as “defensive positionalists” who attempt to hinder a decrease in their capabilities (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 8). States care about absolute as well as relative gains: they indeed have to worry not only about the fact that the other great powers could try to escape from alliances, but also that their allies could take more benefits and advantages than themselves (Mearsheimer 1994, 9). This perspective undermines the role of international institutions. Certainly, the latter can reduce the incentive to cheat or withdraw; however, their role seems insufficient to prevent the states to do so. Indeed, relative gains constitute the independent variable for great powers: relative gains of a state inhibit cooperation and erode the efficacy of institutions (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 8). As a result, this relative distribution of capabilities helps to establish how the states conceptualize their interests, rather than to estimate the goals and intentions of the other powers.

The fourth assumption defines what is the most important aim of nations. States are worried mostly about their own survival. They attempt to

maintain a certain independence from other states' military and economic capability and seek to keep a certain liberty within domestic politics. The key to a state's survival is, again, its power compared to the one of the other states (Waltz 2001, 211). The last and fifth assumption goes hand in hand with the fourth one: realists assert that states are rational actors and, as their primary goal is their survival, they will act strategically and in the best way in order to increase the probability of their longevity. Moreover, the type of the international system in which these great powers operate is a "self-help system".² This primarily implies that, in a world where the scarce quantity of resources available leads nations to fight for the distribution of these resources, each nation looks after and provide for itself (Waltz 1993, 59). It cannot rely on the help of others for its survival; the other powers represent a potential threat, and in case of attack, there is no authority to appeal to for help.

This is the logic that drives states to take decisions to enhance their power and their likelihood of survival.

However, before starting to outline how this structural realist theory applies in concrete to the transatlantic security relations, we first need to make a brief distinction between two different types of neorealism: offensive, supported by John Mearsheimer and defensive, sustained instead by Kenneth Waltz (Mearsheimer 2010, 72). Offensive realists claim that states aim at maximizing their power in relation to others to ensure their survival. And the best way to maximize their power is to pursue hegemony. On the contrary, Waltz claims that trying to maximize their power and material capabilities is imprudent: this attempt to achieve such great power could lead to disadvantageous consequences due to a punishment from the system itself. He instead suggests that states are stimulated by the anarchical system to keep their policies inhibited and moderate in order to accomplish security (Mearsheimer 2010, 72).

This distinction is important to understand how different perspectives on the same historical facts that have shaped the transatlantic relations, give different explanations and interpretations.

² This term "self-help system" was used for the first time by Kenneth Waltz, who employed it to indicate the fact that, in an anarchical international system as the one provided, an ally of today could become an enemy of tomorrow. Indeed, there is no guarantee of protection by any state within the system. For the use of this term, see Waltz (1979).

However, the aim here is not to analyse the different thoughts within neorealism, but rather apply them to the fundamental steps which led EU-US relations to be as we know them nowadays. Moreover, the predictions advanced by neorealism around transatlantic relations are numerous and multifaceted; therefore, I take into consideration only those predictions that the predominant literature has discussed and considers as the most salient.

4. NEOREALISM WITHIN THE TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY RELATIONS

4.1. *The evolution of NATO*

In an anarchical system, security is indeed the pivotal goal of states. The latter compare themselves and their general capability with the one of the other great powers (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 6). The fear rests upon the fact that stronger states would try to control weaker states. As a consequence, weaker states try to ally themselves with other weak states to monitor the power of the stronger ones. Defensive alliances are, therefore, a way to ensure security against the state enemies (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 10). And it's only the presence of a common threat that can truly encourage states to enter an alliance. Indeed, without a common adversary there is no warranty that the alliance will continue to exist (*ibidem*).

But how does this theory apply to transatlantic security relations? What does it say about the intersection of European and U.S. interests? As most social theories, neorealism cannot run controlled experiments that ultimately lead to some accurate predictions. Therefore, Waltz suggests that a good social science theory should give a valid explanation of phenomena rather than a prediction (Waltz 1979, 39). Indeed, predictions are rare, since determining the weight of different causal variables does not represent an easy task to fulfil. Nevertheless, predictions also help scientists to check the accuracy of their theories and to improve their explanatory power (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 6). In this regard, neorealists agree on undertaking new tests in order to prove the validity of their hypotheses and assumptions. And they focus on making these inquiries on actual and real relations between states, regions and continents. In particular, neorealists maintain that, due to the absence of a common threat such as the Soviet Union, the partnership between Europe and the United States is going to collapse. In this case, as Hellman and Wolf assert, "NATO is a good test for neorealism" (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 4). Hence, neorealists account for transatlantic relations precisely from the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) and its evolution after the end of the Cold War, in order to predict the destiny of EU-US relations according to the present condition.

As an alliance is primarily an agreement made by different states for security aims, the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) represents and constitutes the most evident example of how the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the United States developed. Founded in 1949 with the Washington Treaty, it seeks to secure peace in Europe, ensure freedom and security of its members, and promote cooperation among them in political and military terms (NATO 2017). It relies on the main idea of collective defence, where an attack against one ally is considered as an attack to all the other allies.

For a long period of time, several scholars have regarded NATO as one of the most successful military alliances in modern history. Hence, it was able to survive at the Soviet threat collapse, to ensure peace to a continent devastated from the war, and finally to create an international scenario where European political and economic integration could flourish (Walt 1998, 5). At the time it was founded, it had four main reasons d'être:³ it was an organization designed to provide a collective defence, it exercised a role of internal pacifier, it was founded on transatlantic principles and values, and finally it was responsible for the European cooperation in security and military terms (Van Ham 2001, 395).

4.2. NATO at the end of the Cold War and its effects on EU-US relations

However, at the end of the Cold War, NATO's utility and function as an organization started to be not so straightforward and unambiguous as before. Once the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist and the Soviet Union disappeared as a threat, the importance and significance of NATO started crumbling. The disappearance of the "common threat" of Soviet Union which in the past permitted the unification and share of EU and U.S. interests, now doesn't hold anymore and it seems to put NATO in a corner.

Neorealists such as Waltz, Jervis and Mearsheimer explain the reasons for an eventual collapse of NATO and its relative consequences.

³ The first three basic needs of NATO were already explained in Michael Cox's article as "to keep Russian out, the Germans down and the Americans in". See Cox (2003, especially p. 524).

Since there is no more common threat which jeopardizes states in the international scenario, and differences in the organization of security start emerging among NATO members, neorealists claim that NATO will have a short time of existence and eventually, in a gradual way, it will dissolve (Mearsheimer 1990, 5). They assert that states enter into an alliance only after having calculated and compared the costs and the benefits of being allied; in this calculation their priority are the effects that this alliance will ultimately have on the security of the state (Jervis 1978, 171). These costs and benefits depend on the distribution of capabilities of the states and on their disagreements and conflicts with other enemies (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 11). Therefore, “when the capabilities of its adversary decline, the cohesion of an alliance declines as well” (*ibidem*). In the case of NATO, since the Soviet threat was declining, the utility of the alliance diminished as the allies no longer needed to depend on the protection from one another to safeguard themselves (Ratti 2006, 83). As a result, the principles and the values on which NATO was founded are not anymore valid, since its credibility has vanished.

Therefore, in order to counter-balance, NATO tried to adopt a new strategy for the changed post-cold war context, and it revised its principles, values and procedures by intertwining new cooperation agreements with non-member countries, by promoting enlargement to previous Soviet states and by attempting to establish a possible coexistence with Russia (Ratti 2006, 81). At that time indeed, a clear and transparent ultimate aim of NATO was still lacking, and it was necessary to define it sharply. Some had defined the Atlantic Alliance as a “problem-solving community”, others like a “transatlantic bargain” and others again like an entity that is “helping manage ethnic and national conflicts” and “extending the scope of security cooperation to the new democracies of Europe” (Walt 1998, 7).

Looking at the condition of the North Atlantic Alliance in the post-cold war era, neorealists assert that this transatlantic partnership between Europe and the United States is now at a crossroads. Indeed, a big shift in material capabilities of the international actors have ultimately led to a shift of their interests and objectives: Western countries and the United States are no longer threatened by the Soviet Union and they have no interest in

balancing it because its material capabilities are decreasing. Consequentially, the United States has no longer incentives to be the peacekeeper of the European Continent, since the threat that was imperilling the U.S. power has dissolved.

Given that, in order to understand how this transatlantic partnership will develop, it's necessary to consider the security problems and the constraints these two continents had to face after the Cold War and the future of NATO as an international organization.

4.3. Developments of Transatlantic relations after the Cold War

According to Stephen Walt's thought and many other neorealists, after the Cold War the international system was characterized by two fundamental developments that would have affected the nature of this transatlantic partnership: a return to multipolarity and a transformation in the security program and agenda (Walt 1998, 12).

4.3.1. A return to multipolarity

The glue that held NATO together for more than 40 years now has disappeared due to the collapse of the USSR power (Mearsheimer 1990, 52). The bipolar structure that characterized Europe from the end of World War II now has been replaced by a multipolar system. Indeed, the order and peace spread out widely in Europe after the war, has come to an end. But the reasons why the peace in Europe lasted for such a wide period from 1945 on, are attributed, according to the neorealist view, to three main conditions: the existence of a bipolar system and an equal distribution of power between the United States and the Soviet Union, a rough military equality between them, and finally the control by both the superpowers of a large arsenal⁴, including mainly nuclear weapons (Mearsheimer 1990, 6). The result has been a marriage of convenience: in the presence of the Soviet threat, Europe was militarily weak and needed U.S. protection (Simoni 2008, 60).

Consequentially, according to Walt, a change in the number of interna-

⁴In this article, I will not explain in detail these three conditions that led to peace and stability since they are not essential to understand the logic argumentation I am making. However, to know more about it, see Mearsheimer (1990, especially pp. 6-13).

tional actors had led to a change in the problems states identify, in the goals they try to achieve and finally in the means they use to reach them (Walt 1998, 13). The outcome would be the following: The United States would keep winning the economic primacy over any other major player. They would be regarded as the first among the great powers economically and militarily (Bergsten 1990). Hence, only a deep and complete unification of European countries or a sudden growth in the Chinese economy could truly undermine the U.S. power (Walt 1998, 13).

Anyhow, this return to multipolarity had profound consequences specifically for the future of transatlantic relations. In the past, a combination of forces and events made the intersection between U.S. and European interests possible, such as the Soviet power, its geographical position close to Europe, its goal to spread the revolution and its threatening military force (Walt 1998, 15). So, both the continents had incentives to set apart their differences in culture, tradition and strategic orientation, in order to balance against this sheer power. However, the disappearance of this threat has deleted the “overriding security interest”⁵ they had in common; as a result, even if other common aims were shared between these two major powers, the latter were not remarkable and prominent as the one of containing the Soviet threat (Waltz 2000, 19). Therefore, European countries now don’t depend and don’t need to be protected by the US; on the other side, the United States has no incentive to promote European security and stability. Hence, throughout history it often happened that the U.S. presence has been constant in Europe only in so far as a great power was threatening to become the regional hegemon within Europe; however, as soon as this threat disappeared, the United States was also gone (Walt 1998, 15). This is a clear explanation of how the European and U.S. interests are determined by the presence of a threat that could harm the material capabilities of the other major players. Therefore, taking on the neorealist view, these transatlantic relations constitute a dynamic process, where both Europe and the United States build and re-build their bond according to the rise of any threat that could harm their security and economy (Simoni 2008, 15).

⁵This term “overriding security common interest” was used several times by Walt in his works, such as in *The Precarious Partnership* (1998) and in *The Origin of Alliances* (1987) to define the balance against the Soviet threat as a common aim for both Europe and the United States. I indeed use it here to define the USSR power.

Hence, in the presence of a threat, we will have the intersection of EU and U.S. interests; otherwise, the United States would not interfere in the European security agenda.

This logic had effects not only on the transatlantic partnership in general, but also on the structure of NATO. Indeed, within the North Atlantic Alliance, neorealists expected a decline in the military as well as the economic integration between its members, since they would be less willing to take on cooperation projects and they would try to be as independent as possible from the other NATO members (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 18). Therefore, the overall expected outcome would be an increase of conflicts within Europe, a declining congruence of interests between Europe and the US and a more challenging and difficult cohesion and strength within the alliance.

Moreover, this declining congruence of interests between Europe and America would have the effect of worsening the credibility not only between the two continents, but also within the alliance itself. If before the U.S. interest in keeping peace within Europe was a “first-order” concern, now instead represents a “second-order” concern (Walt 1998, 17). Indeed, during the Cold War, the Soviet threat and its offensive military forces in Europe were regarded as dangerous for the safety and integrity of the United States; now instead the possible re-emergence of conflicts within Europe in security terms is certainly unpleasant for the US, but it doesn't represent such a vital threat to the American security.

Another important effect can be derived from the presence of a multipolar system: the geographical boundaries for the alliance are more unclear and blurred. During the Cold War, where bipolarity characterized the international system, the iron curtain defined sharply the division within Europe between the East, represented by the Soviet bloc states, and the West. In the post-cold war era, it's not clear which are the boundaries of the alliance and what the latter should comprehend or include (Walt 1998, 19). In particular, a clear example of this alliance's erosion is whether NATO's expansion should be implemented or not. Certainly, NATO's expansion could prevent or reduce the likelihood of conflicts in Eastern Europe, promote European and U.S. interests and assure that no great power would once again acquire its sphere of influence over other players (Clinton 1995, 27). Indeed, the Clinton administration firmly asserted that NATO could become the instrument through which the principle of democracy could be spread out in the post-cold war era,

mainly in the communist countries of Eurasia (Mandelbaum 1995). By contrast, neorealists resolutely object that a possible enlargement of the alliance could lead to an improvement of the relations between NATO and Russia. First of all, NATO's enlargement towards the previous Soviet bloc states could lead to a new Cold War within Europe, draw new divisions in Europe and could strangle some Russian inclination towards democracy and liberalization (Ratti 2006, 84). Furthermore, neorealists state that an expansion of the alliance could threaten the existence and the role of other international institutions, mainly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) more broadly. The coexistence of all these organizations seems not feasible for realists (Waltz 2000, 23). Moreover, in order to be part of NATO, the new members would need to increase their spending in defence and security; this would permit more integration within the alliance.

Enlargement would also make the possibility to reach decisions and resolutions more complicated: as the number of members increases, the difficulty to take unanimous decisions increases as well (Reiter 2001, 51). As a result, NATO's enlargement would alienate some of its members, weaken its cohesion and eventually bring the alliance to its demise.

Finally, the inclusion of potential members within NATO does not anymore depend on whether they share the same common threats of the other members, but rather on whether they comply to certain social, political and economic criteria. By contrast, the criteria adopted for the exclusion or the inclusion of member countries are not so clear and strictly defined: indeed, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic got the possibility of starting the negotiations, but to Romania and Ukraine the access was initially denied (Walt 1998, 19). This is a clear sign of the multipolarity effect: the latter indeed brings to disorder and a lack of systemic clarity.

Multipolarity also brings to a wider range of options. The intimidating action of the Soviet Union didn't give many alternatives to NATO's members when they had to deal with other states. Indeed, the action of European NATO members was constrained and restricted as they wanted to preserve the integrity of NATO and they feared to lose U.S. defence and protection (*ibidem*). However, the range of possibilities became wider and broader.

A first proof of this increase in the freedom to operate was given by the German reunification, which was clearly opposed by Great Britain (UK) and France because of a possible renewed danger of German expansion (Van

Evera 1999, 187). Indeed, German latitude started to be wider, due to the collapse of the threat of the Soviet Union.

Another important evidence of this latitude expansion was the German attitude towards the trade with Iran: with the disagreement of the United States, Germany attempted to maintain détente and constructive engagement with Iran (Lane 1995, 77). Both Germany and the United States had established to accomplish the same objectives in Asia: prevent Iran to produce further nuclear weapons and sustain terrorism. However, the means they used were different: the US adopted a policy of diplomatic isolation to suffocate its economy; Germany with Europe instead applied a policy of favour engagement, also called by Bonn “critical dialogue”, which relied on a trade and investment relationship.

For this reason, if during the Cold War both US and Europe shared as a common goal the containment of the Soviets, notwithstanding the different ways of trading with the Soviet Union, in the post-Cold War era there was no common enemy that ties Europe and America together. Therefore, the strategy adopted by both the Continents was again the one of opportunism: indeed, the United States under President Bush administration has tried to exploit the German relationship with Iran to make the release of the last American hostages in Lebanon possible (Lane 1995, 79).

4.3.2. The transformation in the security agenda

As the Soviet danger has disappeared, now the Alliance must face several other security threats. The absence of only one common enemy for all as before with the Soviet Union, makes the possibility of a shared and collective response from all the NATO's members more unlikely. So, what are the new threats? And how, according to neorealists, is better to address them?

One first threat would be political instability: the collapse of the Soviet Union has left uncertainty in the international scenario. Indeed, this political instability would bring threats that are not suited for collective action by a security organization such as NATO. Moreover, the absence of a common shared threat would lead to an inequality of perception of the other threats: these new threats will not affect all the members in the same way, therefore it will be more difficult to convince the other members not interested about the urgency of the danger and the necessity of a counter-balance (Walt 1998, 27). Evidence for this problem has been found in the Bosnian War: several discussions were made whether NATO should intervene or not in the conflict and whether its troops should be kept there. In particular, the

support for intervention suddenly dropped due to U.S. consideration of the risk to be not worth it (Sobel 1998, 255).

A second significant threat would be the out-of-area-problems, that is the security dangers outside Europe. Certainly, with the Gulf War in 1992, NATO proved to be truly effective in its mandate and in the ability to organize a unanimous military response in regions outside the European sphere of influence and its boundaries (Walt 1998, 28). Nevertheless, these missions and actions in extra-regional areas are not a symbol or a valid argumentation for the longevity of this transatlantic partnership. Indeed, it's even more convenient to cooperate and take on initiatives outside the NATO region without the help of NATO's organization (Ratti 2006, 84). Hence, its members are free to discuss with each other about the action in out-of-area disputes. As a result, these out-of-area threats do not guarantee to bond NATO, and neither EU-US relations, together.

Finally, the possibility of re-nationalization of some European countries represents a real threat to the stability and peace of Europe. The question would be whether European countries will continue to use a collective approach to defend themselves from the threats, or whether they will decide to act independently (Walt 1998, 30). Most neorealists expect a re-nationalization of the European members: the latter indeed will be less willing to coordinate their defence and security policies, and this would lead to a further and further incompatibility between each other objectives and projects (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 17). Until now, however, NATO seems to be the best institution through which it's possible to counter-balance this phenomenon. Nevertheless, as Waltz declared, the years of NATO are counted (Waltz 1993, 76). Hence, "without a clear and present threat, neither European politicians nor U.S. taxpayers are likely to support a large U.S. military presence in Europe" (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 18). NATO, indeed, continues to be the pivotal organization which regulates the daily communication between America and Europe mainly at the governmental levels. Therefore, if NATO collapses, the communication between the United States and Europe will be heavily weakened, as it will rely on international organizations of secondary importance. Since the major threat has dissolved, the interests to keep the alliance alive will be considerably downsized.

4.4. U.S. interests on Europe: beyond the absence of a common threat

Nevertheless, this neorealist view doesn't fit with the facts: NATO continues to exist and to be effective, as the two rounds of expansion undertaken by the organization suggest. As a result, the reason behind its existence and longevity cannot be related, at least not only, to the absence of a common threat. Indeed, if it was the case, after 1991, U.S. troops should have been withdrawn from the European Continent. In this regard, there are several and different perspectives on the question of the transatlantic partnership's future.

According to the neorealist Christopher Layne, the real reason why NATO will eventually dissolve is not the collapse of the Soviet Union, that is the disappearance of a common threat. The reason behind the fact that NATO still exists is due to the economic, strategic and hegemonic interests the United States has in intertwining relations with Europe (Layne 2003, 19). At that time indeed, NATO was defined as a military as well as a political organization aimed at ensuring a collective defence and a condition of peace within Europe (Layne 2003, 21). However, the Alliance was mainly a strategic way to maintain the American control over the policies of the European states in military and political terms (Waltz 2000, 20). Hence, one of the American objectives after the Cold War was precisely the one to establish its hegemony over Europe, by keeping NATO alive.

However, what the United States was fearing the most was a politically unified and nationalized Europe. Indeed, only a unified Europe could really threaten the immense power of the United States. Evidence of this strategy is given by facts: America supported Europe in its projects of a Common Market, a European Defence Community and a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), but it attempted to prevent the possibility of a political unification of Europe (Layne 2003, 22). It favoured an economic integration but prevented a political one. In this regard, the Bush and Clinton administration contribute to demonstrate the U.S. will to keep dominating the European states (Waltz 2000, 21). As a result, the United States tried to impede Europe to acquire advanced military capabilities that could counter-balance the U.S. power or either avoid U.S. involvement in Europe. However, after the Cold War, Europe started to outline its own community based on a Single Market, on a single currency and on a single identity. Indeed, NATO's organization started to decline in importance, because overcome by the formation of a European community.

As Waltz assert, for the United States and their power “a united Europe would be troublesome” (Waltz 1979, 202).

Therefore, some of the neorealists’ predictions turned out to be right. The explanation of Christopher Layne is indeed self-explanatory: the still existing alliance of NATO is due to U.S. interests, – in the way Morgenthau defines them –, which were already well pictured by the neorealist approach. As a result, it seems that the complementarity between the two continents is not part of a long-term objective or pre-defined strategy, but rather a question of coincidence and shared short-term goals. Indeed, as soon as these shared interests give out, the entire transatlantic relations will fail as a consequence. It’s no longer needed to keep them alive. As long as the United States will have interests in Europe, their relations will still be consistent but always following the path of opposition between one another: the “New Europe” (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania) with America against the “Old Europe” (France and Germany) (Layne 2003, 25). This explanation for the events and behaviours of both Europe and US is grounded based on this rift between the two continents, that is due to a non-complementarity of goals and of the organizations of European Self-Defence Policy as well as NATO. However, not all realists firmly assert that the political unification of Europe is likely or is going to happen. Hence, Waltz claims that this European Community (EC) cannot go further than what it has achieved:

“Economic unity is not easily achieved, but the final decision to form a single, effective political entity that controls foreign and military policies as well as economic ones is the most difficult, made more so because the number of states the EC comprises has now grown to twelve, and an additional four have candidate status” (Waltz 1993, 70).

The reason behind this thinking is that there are some states such as France and Britain that will never finally surrender their sovereignty, and that only a qualified majority can make possible the approval of common foreign and defence policies. Moreover, a continuous inclusion of potential members to the EC certainly creates obstacles to the consistency and the strength of a unified Europe.

45. The Bosnian, Kosovo, and Iraq Wars

As it was shown in the former paragraphs, the neorealist approach considers possible a continuance of the transatlantic relations between Europe and the

US only providing that a new common threat rises or that U.S. interests over Europe are maintained. Neorealists base this reasoning on their expectations about the international system's future condition: indeed, multipolarity and the transformation of the security agenda could permanently alter the EU-US relations.

A first evidence of these neorealist predictions about the features of the international system is the Bosnian War. On one hand, certainly, NATO established itself as the peacekeeper of the conflict, by giving part of its military forces to the UN and by offering to control the no-fly zone previously established by the latter (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 25). By contrast, since the main common threat of the Soviet Union was gradually dissolving, the Bosnian episode was paradoxically a (forced) proof of the United States to demonstrate their loyalty to their Western allies (Walt 1998, 18). Nevertheless, this attitude led to jeopardise their partnership by enhancing domestic resentments and initiatives. Moreover, after President Clinton's assertion that the US would be in favour of a policy of "lift and strike" against the Serbs, the United States completely diverted from the plan and started outlining different approaches towards the conflict together with their partners: France, Russia, Spain and United Kingdom (Harland 2017, 15). As a result, the responses to this crisis in Yugoslavia were not well coordinated: there were contradictions between UN forces and different opinions on how to proceed between Germany and the other European states. The Bosnian War was indeed one proof of the dilution of the EU-US relations, which were undermined by the European desire to keep U.S. involvement in the Continent at all costs on one side, and if kept, the risk of giving the US a subordinate and almost vain role, on the other.⁶

These military and political lessons learnt during the Bosnian conflict were applied in Kosovo almost four years later (Bennett 1999, 13). Indeed, on one hand, the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 shows how NATO constitutes, first, the main anchor when dealing with ethical and moral issues, such as the ones to promote democracy and protect human rights and freedom.

⁶ Paradoxically, doubts about the U.S. loyalty from the European members of the Alliance have increased the U.S. power and influence, because the risk of a U.S. withdrawal has prompted Europeans to give more and more concessions to the United States in order to keep them within Europe. For this paradox, see Walt (1998, especially p. 18).

Subsequently, it also illustrates that NATO represents the main bond between America and Europe as it engages them in a defence and security partnership (Van Ham 2001, 395). On the other hand, however, the Kosovo War also helped the European members to understand that the US was not considering seriously the EU because of the absence of a clear and unified defence, and they were already shifting their focus from Europe. As a result, in 1999 EU members for the first time were prompted to create a separate but unified military force, with the name of "European Security and Defence Policy" (ESDP)⁷, that was independent of U.S. help and military forces (Kissinger 1999). This European defence was enhancing the possibility to bypass the NATO: it aimed at increasing European autonomy and diminish U.S. presence in the European Continent, but also at balancing against U.S. power (Dumani 2017, 118). Indeed, there was a significant overlap of strategic roles of peace-keeping and conflict management between the ESDP and NATO, and this was certainly threatening the role of NATO and enhancing the shift of US to Asian countries (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2015, 153).

Consequentially, the Kosovo War could be regarded as a watershed for this transatlantic partnership: from one point of view, NATO left its former definition of defensive coalition, and on the other, the Kosovo conflict posed a political dilemma to NATO about what type of state Kosovo should be, whether a NATO protectorate or an independent state (Kissinger 1999). It put NATO in crisis concerning the distinction between humanitarian and national interests, whether it has the duty to intervene because of a humanitarian or ethical reason, or because of a hidden interest of its members. Indeed, it seems necessary a reaffirmation of the centrality of the Atlantic Alliance, after having defined what are the threats to the order of the world, what are the risks the Alliance will be able to take on, and for what humanitarian reasons it will have the duty to intervene or project its military forces.

But the most important issue, which in some ways persists today, and is a clear and evident example of the divergence in policies and approaches between the Europeans and the Americans, is the Iraq War. Starting even before the Iraq conflict, this divergence of interests and strategies was already clear and

⁷ The ESDP was re-baptized as "Common Security and Defence Policy" (CSDP) with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. To know more about the contrast between ESDP/CSDP and the NATO, see Duke and Vanhoonacker (2015); Dover and Friis Kristensen (2013, 3rd ed., pp. 241-253).

transparent with the 1956 Suez crisis, the two Arab-Israeli Wars, and the Camp David Accords (Kaye 2004, 9). Indeed, after the end of the Cold War, these differences between the two Continents were highlighted by the controversies around the security of Israel and the Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, and around the Gulf area, with the containment of Iran and the sanctions to Iraq. The conflicts and divergencies over the Middle East indeed brought the EU and the US to a point of crisis. This divergence of interests and approaches was already visible with the Clinton administration, which in 1997 increased pressure on Baghdad and was contrasted by France and Great Britain's (UK) actions (Kagan 2002, 10). Moreover, the events of 9/11 changed radically the perspectives of both EU and US compared to the one of the previous Soviet threat. If the Soviet Union somehow unified the two continents of Europe and the United States, the Middle Eastern conflicts and the war against terrorism have started separating them (Kaye 2004, 11).

Nevertheless, the Iraq conflict started with President Bush's administration, which had to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism in Afghanistan and the figure of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The real reason to contrast and halt Iraq was the massive use of WMD; however, it was clear that without removing Saddam Hussein from Iraq's scenario, the conflict with Iraq would have never ended (Kaye 2004, 12). On the other side of the conflict, European members of NATO were not regarding the threat of terrorism as urgent as Americans were considering it. As a result, after the UN Security Council resolution about the Iraq disarmament and the non-compliance of the latter, the Bush administration took a decision in the interest of the United States: in 2003 it attacked Iraq in order to pursue Saddam Hussein without UN consent (Kaufman 2017, 258). This provoked a divide between the European members of NATO and the US. Since the US and the UK didn't find logical evidence for the real presence of a WMD threat or a real connection between the terrorist attacks and the Iraqi government, countries like Germany and France strongly opposed the establishment of any conflict in Iraq (Dumani 2017, 178). As a result, the division within the transatlantic relations started to be defined as a "double containment": the "Old Europe" (France and Germany, and possibly supported by Russia) attempted to slow down U.S. ambition for global hegemony, and the United States and its "New European" allies in central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, with the support of Great Britain) aimed during that phase at containing the power of France and Germany and their objective to

create a European cohesive and unified defence (Layne 2003, 11).

As a result, the Iraq War has revealed the intentions and the interests of the United States under the Bush Administration, which clearly were not there to protect or to be the guarantor of peace in Europe, but rather to keep establishing its hegemony in the European Continent. The Iraq War is therefore a turning point in transatlantic relations: despite the prediction that eventually through a UN resolution Great Britain and the United States would have gotten the permission to forcibly disarm Iraq, however in the end France and Germany “stuck to their guns” (Layne 2003, 13).

4.6. A neorealist perspective on EU-US current developments

Even after the end of the war, this drift between Europeans and Americans has been maintained. As the 21st century arrived, the military and economic growth of countries like India, China and Russia broke into the international system and boosted furtherly its fragmentation. As a consequence, the advent of new state and non-state actors in the global arena underscores even more heavily the U.S. decentralisation and its power loss, along with Europe’s relative decline (Simón 2017, 186).

Nevertheless, this appearance of new global actors in the game did not only signify a relative lessening of the U.S. great power and a transformation from a “Ptolemaic” to a “Copernican” world; it also brought about new U.S. interests in other developing corners of the world (Murray 2013, 2). Hence, after the Harmel Report of 1967, the attacks of 9/11, and the Obama’s stated “pivot to the Pacific”, the United States has indeed started to shift their focus from Europe to countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and China, undermining the relationship with Europe. Moreover, it appears that the new American President Donald Trump has adopted policies which suggest a more unilateral than multilateral approach. He indeed seems to follow the footsteps of the Bush administration. Trump’s support for the Russian President Putin, his questions about the relevance of NATO, and his conviction that America is supporting, at overstated levels, the European security and defence, are widening this rift of EU-US relations (Shapiro and Pardijs 2017). These circumstances are also further worsened by the withdrawal of the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, undermining a possible collaboration with European countries like France, the UK and Germany to dominate Iranian nuclear power.

Another piece of evidence of the rift in EU-US relations is provided

by the current more inclusive approach of NATO. An organization born initially to ensure peace in the Euro-Atlantic area, now embraces a much wider area of countries (NATO 2008). Consequently, the presence of new incoming members to the organization resulted in a more diluted relationship between Europe and the US. It also led to further difficulties in organizing a unanimous response to global challenges (Kupchan 2009). The final output of this inclusive approach therefore was the following: a blurring of the original aims and principles of NATO along with an unstructured system of intervention and response.

In addition to this framework, the neorealist prediction concerning the re-nationalization of European countries seems to have now encountered substantial evidence: countries like Hungary with the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, France with the Front National (FN) President Marine Le Pen and lastly Italy with the former Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, have stirred up a sense of strong nationalism in the citizens and seemed, consequently, to initiate an action of detachment from European sentiment. This indifference towards the interests of a bigger Union led to a prioritization of the national security and defence interest, and the belief in the possibilities of competing in the global arena thanks to a sufficient strength in the national defence and military force.⁸

These three current developments witness the validity of neorealist predictions: several neorealists indeed predicted the rise of an international system fragmentation, characterized by the presence of new actors on the stage; they foresaw a transformation in the approach of NATO, featured by an unsystematic response approach and a revision of its aims and principles; and lastly they envisioned the re-nationalisation of European members' security policies.

5. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF NEOREALIST PREDICTIONS AND THE COMPARISON WITH OTHER OPTIMAS THEORIES

As this paper shows, neorealism predicts an expansion of this drift between Europe and the United States, due to an increasing divergence of interests, strategies and security aims.

⁸The re-nationalisation of European countries is a recent phenomenon that is developing currently within the whole Europe. The effect of this reawaken nationalism in countries such as France and Italy was tested in one of the quantitative research analyses that I have conducted personally as a result of the 2019 European elections (Marcellino 2019).

To illustrate the validity of this prediction, neorealism employs historical facts, such as the Bosnian, the Kosovo and the Iraq War, and defence policies and strategies implemented by both the Continents, such as the ESDP and “double containment”.

However, a strong disagreement on this neorealist prediction was shown by both neoclassical realists and neoliberal institutionalists. According to the latter, NATO is not a normal alliance, but rather it constitutes a highly institutionalized partnership. Therefore, given this definition of NATO as a military as well as an institutionalized alliance, neoliberal institutionalists predict that only a structural change in the European security and defence could make the NATO collapse (Hellmann and Wolf 1993, 20).

And this neoliberal prediction has found evidence: indeed, notwithstanding its diluted cohesion, NATO still exists and remains the main security organization within Europe, by playing the role of transatlantic link between Europe and America and their communications.

A second important critique is provided by neoclassical realists. NATO indeed, after the Cold War, has renewed its missions and security aims by trying to adapt itself to the continuously changing circumstances. By doing so, it acquired an even more prominent role as pacifier in territories outside the alliance, such as the Balkan area. Its durability, its improvements in establishing good relations with Russia, and in integrating and including the former Soviet bloc states within the alliance, have proven the shortcomings of the neorealist predictions and expectations (Ratti 2006, 85). Moreover, the divergences the EU and US had on the Yugoslavian conflict and the Bush administration’s decision to attack Iraq in 2003 are not a symbol or a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet threat. Hence, NATO’s members had their divergencies even during the Cold War, where strong disputes characterized the United States and France over the Middle East with the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 (*ibidem*). Furthermore, the opposition of Germany to any attack in Iraq was not due to the demise of the Soviet threat, but rather on a domestic costs and benefits calculation made in front of the possibility to start a war.

Nevertheless, these apparent little tiffs encountered during the wars in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq found substantial evidence and a boost in the following developments of the EU-US relations, due to the obstructionism of Trump and a change in U.S. security interests. Moreover, it’s also necessary to account for another central hypothesis of the neorealist

paradigm that turned out to be true: the different national interests of NATO members have proven to be more prominent and effective than the role of the Alliance in influencing and shaping the preferences and the security policies of the states.

Overall, it's possible to evaluate the neorealist theory as compatible with the historical trajectory: its predictions concerning the post-cold war era fragmentation of the international system, NATO's loss of cohesion, and the widening rift between the two Continents boosted by a diversion of U.S. interests towards Asia and Middle East territories and a re-nationalization of European countries seem, for now, to be sufficiently consistent with the path history has undertaken.

6. CONCLUSION

The neorealism theory mainly focuses on the distribution of power and material capability, which affects and influences the states' preferences. Only the presence of a common threat prompts states to cooperate and ally with each other. The entire theory of neorealism, indeed, relies on the essential hypothesis that, once the Soviet threat collapsed, the entire partnership between Europe and the United States would start crumbling. The diminished utility of NATO is nothing but the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequentially, the partnership of the EU and US was simply a marriage of convenience: on one side Europe needed protection from the Soviet threat, on the other, the United States couldn't allow the Soviet Union to become a regional hegemon and concurrently they aimed at maintaining their sphere of influence over Europe (Simoni 2008, 60). Once this overriding security interest has dissolved and no other interests in the respective areas of the globe are at the horizon, it's no longer needed to maintain this transatlantic partnership.

In this regard, neorealists provide evidence for these main predictions. They do so first by relying on the changes in the international system after the Cold War, such as multipolarity and the transformation of the security agenda, secondly on the conflicts derived from the disagreements on the Bosnian, Kosovo and Iraq issues, and lastly on the current developments originated from the coming of the American President Trump and the renationalization of European countries.

This constitutes the main special contribution that neorealists added to the earlier theories of international politics and for which it is possible to detect a compatibility with the historical events of EU-US relations.

Moreover, a further implication could be deduced from this neorealist approach: since the absence of a common threat or of shared interests will make the EU-US relations disappear, this transatlantic partnership does not seem part of a long-term objective or a pre-defined strategy, but rather a question of coincidence and shared short-term goals. Indeed, neorealists have illustrated how the United States remains within the European area only and solely to keep and maintain its hegemony over Europe. In this regard, further research will be necessary to investigate EU-US relations in light of the recent closer ties between countries previously under USSR's sphere of influence and the French-German axis.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings delighted by neoliberal institutionalists and neoclassical realists, neorealist predictions and hypotheses appear to be, for the time being, more coherent and consistent with the reality of the historical facts compared to other international politics' theories.

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