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**Understanding the EU's Strategic Partnerships  
with Brazil, India and South Africa**

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Strategic alliances  
forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing  
and  
Social relationships as foreign policy tools of social power

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**DISSERTATION**

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## **Acronyms**

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries
AU	African Union
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India and China
BRICs	Brazil, Russia, India, China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
CAS	Comparative Area Studies
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
Ch.	Chapter(s)
DG	Directorate-General
EEAS/EAS	European External Action Service
EC	European Communities
EP	European Parliament
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum
IR	International Relations (Discipline)
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean countries
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs (India)
Mercosur	Mercado Común del Sur (span.)/Mercado Comum do Sul (port.)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Association
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TAS	Transnational Area Studies
TDCA	Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WTO	World Trade Organisation







## 1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has established bilateral strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa at a similar point in time, namely in the years between 2004 and 2007. Before the year 2003, the EU has maintained only three bilateral strategic partners (Canada, Japan and the US). With the beginning of the 2000s, the EU abruptly started to enlarge the 'group' of bilateral strategic partners beginning with China in 2003. Later, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and others joined the 'group' of the EU's bilateral strategic partners. Hence, the EU has in recent years increasingly established bilateral strategic partnerships in contrast to its 'traditional' biregional relations or biregional strategic partnerships with other regions or regional organisations. Against the background of the EU's tradition of biregional relations combined with only few bilateral strategic partners, the introduction of more and more bilateral strategic partnerships by the EU after the year 2003 appeared to be not only sudden but also unusual for the EU: Some authors consider these new bilateral relationships as a 'contradictory trend' (Edwards 2011: 57) '[...] between regionalism and differentiated bilateralism' (Edwards 2011: 57) on the part of the EU. The establishment of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships was not only met with surprise but also with wonder: what makes and entails a bilateral strategic partnership with the EU? How do the EU's strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments work and how do strategic partners interact? Why are particular bilateral partners chosen by the EU for a strategic partnership in spite of already maintaining biregional strategic partnerships representing the EU's favourite mode of interacting with other world regions? With respect to the latter question, a strong consensus emerged over time that the EU's bilateral strategic partnership after 2003 were established because of the respective partner-countries' economic rise and increasing political influence at the international level as well as because of their predominance in other world regions. However, researchers keep wondering about the essence, workings and commonalities among these bilateral strategic partnerships established by the EU after 2003.

The EU's strategic partnerships with bilateral partner countries, such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa, have received increasingly scholarly attention in recent years. Research on the EU has a strong focus on the EU; its institutions and working structures as well as its internal policy areas. In addition, scholars interested in the EU have also focused on the EU's so called 'near abroad' and 'neighbourhood' in terms of aspirant EU-member states and non-aspirant adjacent states to the EU's borders, for example in Eastern Europe or the Mediterranean (Edwards 2011: 50-54). Beyond these

European and bordering confines, the EU has been fostering its interregional relations with regions or regional organisations for a long time. Be it Asia, Africa or Latin America, the EU's relations to other 'non-European' world regions is well-known for its biregional approach: the EU has particularly nourished relations with regional groups or subgroups of states, often 'united' by an institutionalised and organisational framework. The EU's relations with the wider world are widely cast as a European attempt to export its own model of regional cooperation (Edwards 2011: 56-57; Fraser 2007: 215-216; K. Smith 2008: 79-83, 109).

During the same time period, namely the beginning of the new millennium, scholarly and public attention focused more and more on emerging markets and rising powers. The BRIC-buzzword, which denotes the economic rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China as emerging markets and was introduced by the investment bank Goldman Sachs in 2003 (Wilson/Purushothaman 2003), has ever since caught wide-spread attention publicly and in academia. For example, scholars interested in International Relations (IR) depicted these emerging markets as emerging powers against the background of the international system-structure and the international hierarchy of power: these emerging powers<sup>1</sup> are believed to be rising or at least aspiring to great power status in the coming years and decades. These several (aspiring) major and rising (regional) powers mostly display high growth rates as well as increasing economic and political weight. Moreover, Brazil, India and South Africa, which joined up in the IBSA-Dialogue Forum in 2003, caught increasing attention: scholars and practitioners alike widely cast these three countries as rising and regional powers located in South/Latin America, South/Asia and Southern/Africa and deemed them as being similar in terms of their domestic outlook, regional standing and foreign policy behaviour.

Moreover, coinciding with the end of the Cold War, scholarly attention with respect to the international system-structure has shifted from the supposed unipolarity and the dominance of the US' power at the beginning of the 1990s (Krauthammer 1991: 23; Algieri 2010: 18) to multipolarity: there is a widely shared expectation that the international system is turning towards multipolarity (e.g., Grant/Valasek 2007; Layne 2006)<sup>2</sup>. A multipolar system describes an international system with several poles, which denote great or major powers. As rising powers are believed to be turning into the next great powers, the topics of multipolarity and rising powers are interlinked. This interlinkage is commonly depicted as international systemic change and shifting power

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'rising power' and 'emerging power', as generally done, will be used synonymously in this study.

<sup>2</sup> Note that this is an expectation, which is however not based on a consensus as there are also other assumptions about the current or coming system (e.g., Narlikar 2013: 568).

hierarchies. This is the point where the EU re-enters the picture. With regard to the international power hierarchy and systemic change, some authors believe that the EU, in addition to other powers of the 'old "political" West' (Herd/Dunay 2010: 4), is in relative decline vis-à-vis emerging powers (e.g., Herd/Dunay 2010: 4; Narlikar 2013: 563) or challenged by emerging powers (M. Smith 2013: 653). In this context, there is a sense that Europe is one of the great powers internationally (Kagan 2008: 3) or that Europe or the EU will be one of the important 'poles/centres' of a multipolar world (Leonard 2007). Others experts are more cautious in this regard (Grevi 2009: 6, 9; see Ch. 4.2.2.1).

Furthermore, the rise of new powers within a multipolar system takes place against the background of accelerating globalisation processes. Thereby, the world and its actors are increasingly interdependent and jointly confronted by global challenges crossing national and regional boundaries. The increasing linkages between (state and non-state) actors, policies, issues, nations or regions and, therefore, the mutual dependence of various actors are circumventing the autonomy of states and their choices. Furthermore, nation's independence and their attempts at 'going it alone' are restricted in scope and efficacy in a multipolar, increasingly globalised, interdependent world confronted with transnational challenges.

Additionally, it has been observed that strategic partnerships are on the rise since the end of the Cold War (Nadkarni 2010: 45; Renard 2011: 7; Renard 2013b: 302). Thus, whereas alliances seem to be on halt, strategic partnerships have been propagating (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3).

Against this background, the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships (after 2003) are widely depicted as relations between Europe and rising and/or regional powers (e.g., Renard/Rogers 2011). Rising powers are seen as challenging other powers such as the US or European member states. Whereas these rising powers rise, the US or Europe, for example, are believed to lose in relative power (e.g., Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011; Renard/Biscop 2012b). However, even though a broad consensus can be identified in the literature (see Ch. 2) that the EU's strategic partnerships with bilateral countries (after 2003) are linked to rising and/or regional powers, multipolarity and interdependence, there are still several important research gaps (see Ch. 2): firstly, the relation between biregional and bilateral strategic partnerships is questioned. Secondly, even though there is a hunch as to why the strategic partnerships were formed with the respective countries, there is yet no consensus on the commonalities of the strategic partnerships. Hence, it is not understood if the strategic partnerships as foreign policy frameworks – despite the diversity of policy areas covered and partner-countries concerned – share similarities. In this context, more and more case studies of singular

strategic partnerships of the EU, have been investigated but a theory-led comparative perspective can still be enhanced to the end of systematically uncovering a potential common rationale of the EU's (bilateral) strategic partnerships (after 2003). What is more, there is still a specific lack of knowledge on the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa despite the fact that they are often deemed very similar countries with comparable foreign policies and interests.

Overall, it is still hardly understood as to what makes a bilateral strategic partnership a strategic partnership (established after the year 2003) on the part of the EU and particularly in the cases of Brazil, India and South Africa. Linked to this, it is poorly understood how the EU and its bilateral partner-countries interact as strategic partners. These questions link up to research gap(s) in the state of the art, to which the present study aims to contribute. In brief, the following two main research questions will guide the project's research endeavour:

- *What makes the EU's bilateral strategic partnership a strategic partnership in the respective cases of Brazil, India and South Africa and from a comparative perspective?*
- *How do the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa interact as strategic partners (respectively and in comparative perspective)?*

***The study argues that the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa are strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and social relationships, which are foreign policy tools of social power, particularly reward power (including positive incentives) and legitimate power (legitimate position power and legitimate authority).***

The main goal of this dissertation is to *understand* and *theorise*. Instead of providing a definition, this project will offer a conceptualisation in terms of a conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

This dissertation *understands* and conceptualises the three cases of the EU's strategic partnerships – EU-Brazil; EU-India and EU-South Africa – as strategic alliances and social relationships between an established/traditional (external) actor and emerging regional powers. Based on self-interest, the strategic alliances form part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Hence, strategic partners do both: cooperate and compete. Moreover, strategic partnerships are both status/condition and a process. The

process may also entail socialisation efforts by the partners in order to alleviate mutual understanding and, ultimately, policy adaptation. The strategic partners try to coordinate and ideally adapt their policies in various issue areas in order to (be able to) shape international politics. At the same time, the strategic partners compete for power and status. All agents try to engage their strategic partners at the bilateral, regional and international (global) levels, whereby the EU also tries to manage the rise of emerging regional powers. Whereas Brazil, India and South Africa try to increase power, the EU attempts to maintain power. Furthermore, their respective strategic partnerships are linked to demonstrating power in the context of prestige. Moreover, strategic partnerships imply a status recognition strategy followed by all agents. The strategic partners have the power to reward status and recognition. The structurally-grounded and socially-positioned power statuses of the study's agents inform their social status and social group membership within the international society of states. Drawing on this social status and social group membership, the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa possess reward power and legitimate power (potential) in terms of legitimate position power and legitimate authority. In this context, the EU builds on its legitimate power in socially constructing a social group of strategic partners. Thus, the EU follows a strategy of (social) labelling and branding.

By investigating the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, this research seeks to address several of the previously indicated research gaps and, thereby, contribute to knowledge at three junctures: *first* and most importantly, it aims to create and add to knowledge on the EU's strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools, which are usually taken 'for granted' or act as an empty signifier. The study, thereby, transcends the predominant single-country view of the EU's strategic partnerships. The *second* major research gap concerns the understanding of the EU's international actor-ness, the EU's power and its foreign policy tools when it comes to the EU's external relations reaching beyond its neighbourhood and beyond interregional relations. Thereby, the EU-centred view of the EU, namely limiting analysis to the EU's confines and its immediate 'neighbourhood', is transcended. Hence, this study represents an important contribution to research on the EU as a foreign policy actor in the 'wider' international system. *Thirdly*, the study expands the body of literature on regional and/or rising powers by looking at their interaction with external and established powers at the nexus of regional and international levels. Hence, this study does not only look at the EU's view but also analyses the view of the emerging powers on the strategic partnerships concerned.

The results from this study may be of interest to different communities. *Firstly*, the project's results on the EU's strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools may be fascinating to scholars working from an IR- and/or a European Studies perspective. IR-scholars may consider the EU's strategic partnerships as a case study for further investigating strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools and the underlying foreign policy strategies of the strategic partners at hand. This may be especially the case against the background of research on regional/ rising powers and their interaction with extra-regional or established powers. Yet, it may also inform research on strategic partnerships formed by other kinds of actors as strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments appear to have generally increased in importance. What is more, the present study combines an IR- with a cross-regional perspective, which could be stimulating for both IR-scholars as well as Area or country specialists. Moreover, experts on Brazilian, Indian or South African foreign policy may be interested in this specific facet of relations with the EU, particularly against the background of research focusing on the similarities of the IBSA-countries. Furthermore, experts working on the EU, particularly on its foreign policy and external relations with countries and regions beyond the 'near abroad', may want to dig into research on the EU's strategic partnerships. This is due to the fact that the latter have emerged as a foreign policy instrument frequently used by the EU for its relations with these bilateral partner-countries located in other world regions, which have traditionally been covered by the EU's biregional approach to external relations. *Secondly*, as the study incorporates an analytic eclectic approach, IR-researchers using a particular theoretical paradigm can find a theoretical building bloc to focus on – be it neoliberalism, neo-/realism or constructivism. *Thirdly*, the study builds bridges to international business and management as well as sociology. Particularly, the sociological perspective could be of interest to Social Constructivists due to their similarities in research perspectives and issues. *Fourthly*, as the study utilises a vast amount of qualitative expert-interviewing data material on three different strategic partnerships, its results may also be of interests to practitioners and foreign policy-makers from all strategic partners concerned. Thereby, the study provides conceptual understanding on and fruitful empirical insights from/for both sides of the 'strategic partnership'-coin; the EU as well as Brazil, India and South Africa respectively. Practitioners may want to look into 'their' cases of strategic partnerships or compare them to the other cases.

By *understanding* and *theorising* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, the project engages in middle-range theory-building (signifying empirically-rich theoretical knowledge). To this end, the study will build an abductively-

derived (non-causal, constitutive) conceptual model consisting of theoretical building blocks. This model will be based on a scientific realist meta-theoretical fundament, which serves to investigate the underlying dimensions of the strategic partnerships. Thereby, it will follow realist social theory and a morphogenetic approach, which sees agency and structure in a dual relationship. This dual view of the agency-structure-relationship is believed to be helpful in *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships. The realist social perspective will be incorporated into the conceptual model by using Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach of pre-existing structures and socially interacting agents. Archer's morphogenetic approach will be fruitfully combined with Goertz' (Goertz/Mahoney's) (yet non-causal) concept-building of a family resemblance model focusing on the basic and secondary levels. It is especially the secondary level, where the common rationale and similarities among the three cases of the EU's strategic partnerships are assumed to be found.

As a result, this study will not focus on the strategic partnerships as an outcome and investigate certain variables connected to this outcome in a positivist manner. Instead, it will engage in constitutive theorising by building a non-causal model. The abductive research strategy entails that the conceptual model is built on both deductive and inductive inferences. This has the benefit that the model will be theoretically derived and empirically embedded.

In order to make 'full' sense of the strategic partnerships against the background of a lack of pre-existing knowledge in terms of a theorisation of strategic partnerships, the study opts for holistic research and an exploratory research strategy. From this follows, that this dissertation chooses an analytic eclectic approach in 'filling' the morphogenetic scientific realist social theoretical model of the EU's strategic partnerships. In order not to blank out possibly relevant factors to the phenomenon's *understanding* from the outset, an analytic eclectic approach building on a combination of IR-paradigmatic theories appears to be wise. The project builds on (limited) neoliberal, neo-/realist and social constructivist modules. Furthermore, the study will be enriched by insights from international business and management as well as sociology. Both perspectives and their modules for the analytic eclectic model are deemed useful in the project's research endeavour in terms of a better *understanding* of the EU's strategic partnerships and the study's overall goal of creating new knowledge.

### *Two Research Steps*

There are essentially two research steps in this study, which will help with the study's research goal of *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. The abductive research strategy informs the project's research proceeding:

the *first step of the study* is to derive deductive inferences, while the *second step* concentrates on the inductive inferences. *Firstly*, the study will build an analytical model via a concept-template being based on the morphogenetic scientific realist social theoretical view. This concept-template will provide for a dual view of the agency-structure relationship, which is deemed helpful in *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships. This concept-template will be filled with deductive inferences and ends with a deductively-derived analytical model of the EU's strategic partnership with Brazil, India and South Africa. *Secondly*, this analytical model will be applied (not tested) to the three case studies on the respective strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa in the *second step of the dissertation*. Thereby, inductive inferences will be made. The individual results from the three case studies will be cross-compared in a subsequent step following a comparative perspective (not method) in order to achieve (limitedly) generalisable results. These cross-case-applicable inductive inferences and results will then be fused into the analytical model. This is the last step for finishing this project by arriving at a conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, which is believed to answer the two main guiding research questions.

#### *Outline of the Chapters*

In order to outline the structure of this dissertation, the study is divided into eight chapters.

- *Chapter One* is the present chapter providing the introduction to the study's research topic.
- *Chapters Two, Three and Four* are the 'preparatory chapters' of this dissertation in terms of a) revisiting the research topic in terms of research puzzle and research gap(s) (*Chapter Two*); b) grounding and delimiting the study in terms of meta-theory, the agency-structure-relationship, the study's levels as well as providing first delimitations of research perspectives and of strategic partnerships (*Chapter Three*); and c) indicating the mode and proceeding of middle-range theory-building blocks and concept-building as well as clarifying the study's assumptions about structure and agency (*Chapter Four*).
- *Chapter Five* contains the before mentioned *first step of the dissertation*: the deductive inferences for building an analytical model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.
- *Chapter Six* is an interposed chapter preparing for analysis in the *second step of the dissertation (inductive inferences)*. It elaborates on the study's overall

research design and methodological considerations. Furthermore, it provides guidance on foreign policy-making on the EU's strategic partnerships with a special emphasis on EU-foreign policy. Moreover, the modes of data selection, collection, analysis and interpretation will be indicated.

- *Chapter Seven* represents the *second step of the dissertation* providing for the inductive inferences from the three individual cases and the cross-case comparative perspective in terms of common patterns among the EU-Brazil, EU-India and EU-South Africa strategic partnerships.
- *Chapter Eight* concludes, assesses results and provides an outlook both in terms of implications for science and practice.

More specifically, after this introduction (*Chapter One*) to the study as a whole, I will revisit the previously briefly mentioned research strands being relevant to the strategic partnerships in *Chapter Two* on the *State of the Art*. I will concentrate on summarising and discussing the arguments according to five strands being interwoven in this study. Firstly, the EU's foreign-policy and power transcending its 'neighbourhood' and its biregional relations will be addressed. Secondly, I will elaborate on multipolarity, rising powers and (world) regions. Thirdly, the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships being the prime object of research interest to this study will be approached. Fourthly, the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa will be the focus of attention. Fifthly, it will be made mentioning of strategic partnerships from an IR-perspective and as a general non-EU social phenomenon in international politics. Thereby, I will be able to show the existing research gap(s), which my study intends to fill or to contribute to.

In *Chapter Three*, I will start with the *theoretical part* of my study. The theoretical part of the study is, overall, dedicated to the first part of the dissertation: the deductively-derived (theoretical) building of an analytical model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. Chapter 3.1 makes a start by addressing the study's meta-theoretical considerations and the agency-structure-relationship. In this context, scientific realism is used as a basis and Structuration theory will be transcended by turning to realist social theory. Furthermore, the study meta-theoretically combines in an analytic eclectic manner (limited) neoliberalism, neo-/realism and (social) constructivism. Moreover, I will delimit my study with respect to the perspective of European Studies and outline its contributions regarding particular research areas. Thereby, macro- and meso-levels including the structure and agency of the study will be designated and important delineations will be made. In this study the EU will be viewed as a traditional/established<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The terms 'traditional power' and 'established power' will be used interchangeably.

(extra-regional) power. Brazil, India and South Africa will be seen as emerging regional powers. Chapter 3.2 will provide first evidence on the EU's strategic partnership by considering the EU's European Security Strategy (ESS) as the major EU-document in the context of its foreign and security policy. Furthermore, strategic partnerships will be delimited from other common concepts in IR, such as balancing and bandwagoning. Thirdly, first building blocks to the concept of a strategic partnership will be considered by looking at the terms 'strategy' and 'partnership'.

*Chapter Four* is dedicated to developing the template for concept-building. To this end, Chapter 4.1 takes preliminary steps in introducing to middle-range theoretical building blocks and concept-building. It will further clarify the nature of the two main research questions ('what'? and 'how?'). Moreover, the basic model template will be introduced (Figure 2). It will go on by explaining why and how the conceptual template on the combination of Archer's morphogenetic approach and Goertz' multi-level and multi-dimensional family resemblance model will be based. Finally, it will arrive at the morphogenetic scientific realist social theoretical concept-template (Figure 3). Chapter 4.2 will clearly state the study's assumptions about structure and agency. These assumptions will be (later) filled into Figure 3.

*Chapter Five* is devoted to *understanding* the strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa as foreign policy tools deriving the deductive inferences for the first part of the dissertation. Chapter 5.1 will adapt the notion 'strategic alliance'. This is the first dimension of *understanding* strategic partnerships. To this end, the subchapter will first understand alliances' features of competition and cooperation. Next, it will revisit literature on (strategic) alliances in order to make out their basic features. As strategic alliances (between companies) are also known in international business and management, the study turns to this perspective in order to gain at best fresh insights on the phenomenon of strategic partnerships. This will introduce the strategy of cooperating while competing, whereby strategic alliances form part thereof. Against this background, I will try to make sense of actor's interests and strategies. There are two main dimensions to their interests: firstly, strategic alliance-partners are interested in policy coordination including cooperation and adaptation. This is the cooperative dimension of the strategic partnership as a strategic alliance. Secondly, the partners aim for power and (power-) status in terms of keeping or increasing as well as demonstrating power. This is the competitive element of the strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. To this end, they follow a range of strategies: the EU follows a management/ engagement strategy of emerging regional powers. Furthermore, it seeks status recognition as an international actor and partner (power status recognition strategy). Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers also follow a power

status recognition strategy but in terms of their reaching for more (particularly major) power and status. In addition, all strategic partners follow a power demonstration strategy in the context of prestige. In a conclusion, it will become clear that strategic alliances may also have a dimension of a social relationship among partners. This presents the connecting passage to Chapter 5.2, where strategic partnerships are *understood* as social relationships and foreign policy tools of social power. This constitutes the second dimension to the *understanding* of strategic partnerships. This subchapter introduces a pronounced sociological perspective in perceiving the international system as a social structure and an international society of socially interacting actors. Following this view, actors do not only have material capabilities or structural power but also social power. Social power builds on a diagonal view of power having a structural (material) basis but a social dimension as well. This social power is built on the social positioning/status of an actor within the international society of states. Socially-positioned actors form un- and intentionally social (sub-)groups. Strategic partnerships are then *understood* as social relationships representing a limitedly institutionalised form of social interaction. This social relationship is distinct from the basic social interaction of actors in the international society of states. The further attempt of *understanding* social relationships then introduces the concept of social power being a relational view of power. Yet, in difference to relational power, social power may be both power as a means and power as an end. This leads over to understanding social power as a means, which results in the import of the 'bases of power'-approach. Ultimately, Chapter 5.3 arrives at the deductively-derived analytical model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa via the insertion of the various theoretical building blocks from *Chapter 5* and the assumption from Chapter 4.2 (Figure 4).

*Chapter Six* represents the chapter on the study's *research design and methodology*. It prepares for analysis in *Chapter 7*. It consists of three sections. Chapter 6.1 outlines the study's general research design. After making preliminary meta-theoretical considerations, it will make mentioning of an overall exploratory, qualitative and interpretative design. Moreover, the meeting of an abductive model with qualitative data will be discussed. The study uses a case study method with a cross-case and cross-regional perspective (not method). As a result, the qualitative sampling in terms of the study's small-n sample against the background of the universe of cases and case selection considerations will be debated. As the study does not employ the comparative method, its rigid case selection criteria need not be met. However, the study will opt for an approximation to the strategy of selecting 'diverse cases': this is done in light of its attempt to arrive at a conceptual model, which could be possibly used in other cases of the EU's strategic partnerships. The foregoing notwithstanding, the choice of Brazil, India

and South Africa is also based on a cross-regional perspective, which is deemed to fruitfully contribute to a possibly more generalisable perspective of the EU's strategic partnerships. After having demonstrated the relevance of the cases, the analytical steps in undertaking the case studies will be outlined. This also needs reference to Foreign Policy Analysis. The subchapter ends with contouring the study's time frame (2003-December 2010) and a conclusion. Chapter 6.2 provides an overview of foreign policy-making from an EU-perspective and, particularly, against the background of the Treaty of Lisbon. Briefly, the foreign ministries in Brazil, India and South Africa are denoted. Chapter 6.3 foresees the elaboration on the proceeding and particularities of data selection and collection. Thereby, the extensive field research in terms of expert interviewing will be outlined. In a final step, the modes of data analysis and interpretation against the background of a Qualitative Content Analysis will be indicated and explained.

*Chapter Seven* constitutes the chapter where the *results of the empirical analysis* are provided. This is second part of the dissertation. The before developed analytical model will then be applied to the three cases as an analytical framework. This is where the reader can find the three case studies (EU-Brazil; EU-India and EU-South Africa) and the cross-case comparative perspective. Every case study will start by offering an overview of the respective strategic partnership. There, I will also make brief reference to the biregional relations and – if existent – biregional strategic partnerships. Every case study will be first analysed individually. The cross-case comparison will only take place in a subsequent step, which identifies common patterns among cases. Overall, this chapter will provide the cross-case-derived, inductive results for the conceptual model and theory-building. In a final step, the (cross-case) inductive findings will be fused into the analytical model and the deductive and inductive parts of the conceptual model will finally be 'merged' (Figure 5).

The final chapter – *Chapter Eight* – will contain the *conclusions* of the study. Firstly, I will revisit the main arguments and main results by drawing broader conclusions, partly against the background of the study's research goals, major assets and contributions to the field of research and the existing body of knowledge. On this basis, I will also indicate possible fruitful areas for future research. Secondly, the study's limitations will be assessed. Thirdly, the final chapter will briefly draw broader implications for practice.

## **2. State of the art**

In the introduction to this study I have made clear that my research interest lies in the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. In the first part of the chapter I will lead the reader to the research puzzle inherent to these strategic partnerships indicating my research interest in this particular topic. In the second part of this chapter I will elaborate on the state of the art regarding the EU's strategic partnership with Brazil, India and South Africa. By outlining the different research strands relevant to this topic I will be able to demonstrate the research gap(s) I intend to contribute to with this project.

### **2.1 The puzzle: The EU's bilateral strategic partnerships with 'rising powers'**

The EU has initially only nurtured bilateral strategic partnerships with the US, Canada and Japan. Besides, it has predominantly followed a biregional approach in its external relations beyond its own European confines, such as with the Latin American and Caribbean states (LAC) or with African countries as a group or subgroups. Yet, bilateral strategic partnerships appear to have increasingly become a very favourite instrument for the EU in the pursuit of its external relations. Almost from one day to the next, the EU 'suddenly' introduced one bilateral strategic partnership after the other. Its strategic partnerships with bilateral partners have been proliferating after the year 2003. By and by, the EU established strategic partnerships with China, India, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico and South Korea. This newer group of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships has been dubbed as 'rising' or 'regional powers', particularly against the background of buzzwords such as BRIC(S), IBSA and emerging markets<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships are widely cast as partnerships with rising or regional powers in the context of multipolarity, systemic change and the ascendance of emerging powers. Yet it is still not understood as to what bilateral strategic partnerships between the EU and individual countries or the group of strategic partners actually entail. However, it is not understood as to a) what makes a (bilateral) strategic partnership with the EU and these countries (individually and collectively) a strategic partnership; as well as b) how do strategic partners actually interact and which powers are at work between strategic partners.

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<sup>4</sup> I will elaborate on these 'buzzwords' in the course of this chapter.

In brief, strategic partnerships are, thus, increasingly used by the EU in the conduct of its foreign and external relations. However, there is hardly a theoretically-derived or conceptual understanding as to what a strategic partnership in foreign policy actually constitutes. What makes a (bilateral) strategic partnership a strategic partnership, particularly as a foreign policy instrument for the EU? What are the purposes of the strategic partnerships with these bilateral partners established after the year 2003? And how do the strategic partners – the EU and the (presumably) rising powers - interact as strategic partners?

This conglomerate of linked questions on the nature and workings of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships with rising powers (established after 2003) constitutes the present study's research puzzle. This research puzzle links up to various (somewhat isolated but actually interlinked) research strands, on which will be elaborated in the following subchapters. These research strands lead up to linked research gap(s), whereby the present study strives to contribute to the filling of this gap(s).

## **2.2 Approaching the research gap(s)**

In revisiting the literature on the EU's strategic partnerships, I will, firstly, make mentioning of the EU's foreign policy beyond its neighbourhood and Interregionalism. This is due to the fact that the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships have been debated in light of the EU's 'classic' biregional foreign policy approach. In this context, I will review the debate around the EU's power status and its foreign policy tools at hand. Secondly, I will revisit the literature strand on multipolarity, rising and regional powers as well as (world) regions. Thereby, I will assess in how far it accounts for the interaction between these regional or emerging powers and actors such as the EU. Thirdly, I will address the debates on the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships as a whole. This subchapter will show that the authors point to the special standing of the EU's strategic partners in particular world regions as well as at the global level. This argument links up with research in a different field, namely on so called regional (great or leading) and emerging powers known from subchapter 2.2.2. Fourthly, I will particularly make mentioning of the literature on the EU's (individual) strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa because these countries will be part of the case studies in the analytical part of my work. It is worth noting that with regards to point three and four, I will consider literature on both of the partners' perspectives on the respective strategic partnerships. It means that I will not only address authors analysing the EU-view but the view from the respective strategic partners as well. Last but not least, I will examine very general

accounts on strategic partnerships in International Relations (if existent). In a conclusion, I will summarise the various arguments and highlight where the research gap(s) emerge and where the present study aims to add to the research picture.

### **2.2.1 EU-foreign policy and power beyond its 'neighbourhood' and biregional relations**

Studies on EU foreign policy are very much dominated by analyses on EU-candidate countries as well as the EU's 'neighbourhood' or its 'near abroad'. Concepts such as the 'Europeanisation' (Sedelmeier 2011) of particular accession countries as well as new EU member states feature quite high in this context. When it comes to the EU's foreign policy beyond its neighbourhood, research in the academic field of 'European Studies' centres on the question of whether the EU constitutes an international actor as it is lacking a Joint Foreign and Security Policy (e.g., actorness vs. presence-discussion<sup>5</sup>); on internal procedures (e.g., agenda-setting function of EU-Member States or Council Presidencies<sup>6</sup>) and the role or nature of the EU's power (which is dominated by norm-based approaches: normative power, civilian power<sup>7</sup>), especially in its neighbourhood and at the international level. Furthermore, in the academic field of International Relations the EU has often been represented by its 'big' and influential Member States (Great Britain, France and Germany), whereas the EU as a whole has rather been neglected. Yet more recently, there is a sense that the EU could be positioned as one of

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<sup>5</sup> In brief, the analysis of the EU's external relations is complicated by the fact that the EU generally is no single homogeneous international actor (Schukraft 2007: 128; Maull 2005: 791-792). As Smith (2007: 439) puts it, the EU is to be regarded as '[...] first a (sub)system of international relations in itself, second a major element in the general processes of international relations, and finally an embryonic power in the international arena' (Smith 2007: 439; Hill/Smith 2005: 398). This puzzle is linked to the question whether the EU is to be perceived in terms of 'agency' or rather of a 'structure' (Hill 2003: 26-27; Cremer 2006: 53). It has resulted in an own thread of EU-research addressing the question of the EU's 'actorness' versus 'presence' analysing the EU's (international) actor capability (Hill 1993: 308-309). Whereas the first concept denotes an active actor capability and what the EU 'does', the latter concept rather refers to a more passive actor capability and what the EU 'is'. This is linked to the question whether the EU acts on its own as well as strategically frames policies or whether it only adapts, reacts on behalf of and drags behind its member states (Leonard 2007: 53-54). These concepts have been extended (by developing criteria) in order to assess the EU's '(external policy) impact' (Ginsberg 2001: 48) independently from its actorness or (being or having) power(s) or force(s) (Ginsberg 2001: 46-48; 52; Maull 2005: 778; Hill/Smith 2005: 402-404, 406). However, there is a growing common understanding that the EU is slowly emerging as an international actor employing increasingly cohesive and effective policies (Leonard 2007: 35; Smith 2007: 439).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Bunse (2009): 3.

<sup>7</sup> Several different terms and concepts have been introduced to describe the EU's (soft) power as well as its influence in and beyond its neighbourhood; for example, the EU's 'structural power' (Smith 2007: 441; Hill/Smith 2005: 404), 'external governance' (Smith 2007: 448; Schimmelpfennig/Sedelmeier 2004: 661; Lavenex 2004), 'civilian' or 'normative power' as well as 'norm exporter' (Smith 2007: 442, 450; Lavenex 2004: 684; Maull 2005: 779; Sjursen 2006), 'transformative power' (Leonard 2007: 36; Dannreuther 2006), 'magnetic power' (Lavenex 2004: 684) or the EU's 'gravitational pull' (Maull 2005: 782).

the great powers or (possible) 'poles' in the international (multipolar) system though still lacking a joint foreign policy (Leonard 2007; Grant/Valasek 2007; Grevi 2009<sup>8</sup>). Additionally, the EU has rather been favouring and advocating bi- or interregional relations in the past<sup>9</sup> (K. Smith 2008: 79-98), which are relations between two regions (Söderbaum/Stålgren 2010b: 4-5; 6). Consequently, the increase in (bilateral) strategic partnerships represents a shift in policy strategy away from the EU's preferred strategy of interregional relations to intensified relations with bilateral partners (K. Smith 2008: 83; Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 381). Against this background, the strategic partnerships, being established by the EU as a contested international actor, appear as an empirical puzzle.

The bottom line points to the missing links between (EU-) regional studies and the international level as well as its relations with non-EU 'regional powers' as bilateral 'partners'. Studies on the EU's wider international role suffer from a tendency towards a Eurocentric view. At the same time, although the EU is believed to be or to become one of the major poles in a (future multipolar) international system, there is a lack of understanding of how the EU as an international actor interacts with other countries and organisations beyond its neighbourhood and its interregional relations. Whereas the EU can use its 'hegemonic power' (Hyde-Price 2006: 226) regarding the EU-membership process (ibid., 226-227), the question is how the EU interacts as an international actor and a possible great power with other influential actors. Generally, there is a bias towards norm-based instruments in the context of the civilian and normative power-accounts. But does the EU only rely on soft power? As these new regional powers gain power and do not strive for EU-membership, the EU loses its relatively strong position of setting the conditions – the logic of conditionality (Schimmelpfennig/Sedelmeier 2004: 665) – of the relationship. So how does the EU deal with powerful actors which are beyond its main influence sphere, namely the European neighbourhood?

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<sup>8</sup> However, whether the EU or only singular EU-member states are to be seen as powers or poles is essentially contested. For example, whereas several authors posit that the EU is a pole in a multipolar world (Leonard 2007; Grant/Valasek 2007), Huntington has referred to the German-French axis in Europe as 'major regional powers' (Huntington 1999: 36). Moreover, Hill/Smith (2005: 394-5) point out that the EU cannot be considered to be a '(straightforward) pole' (394).

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of the EU's interregionalism and interregional relations see, for example, Edwards 2011: 56-57; Gratius 2008; Hettne 2010. Analyses in this context often concentrate on the export of the EU's (integration) model to other regions within the EU's interregional relations, which are conceptualised by 'Europeanisation', 'diffusion' or even 'spurred emulation' (see Börzel/Risse 2012a, b; Lenz 2012). See also, for example, Söderbaum/ Van Langenhove (2005) and the special issue on the EU's interregional relations in *Journal of European Integration*, 2005, 27, 3.

There are indeed contributions to the topic of the EU's relations with the so called Global South<sup>10</sup> (Söderbaum/Stålgren 2010c; Grimm 2010). However, these analyses predominantly focus on biregional relations and interregionalism (Söderbaum/Stålgren 2010c; Grimm 2010). Thus, there is a research gap in terms of understanding EU Foreign Policy and foreign policy instruments beyond its neighbourhood and beyond Interregionalism, particularly with regard to (rising) countries from the so called Global South. Again, the present study may contribute to filling this research gap by understanding the EU's strategic partnerships, which appear to be foreign policy tools being widely used beyond the neighbourhood and beyond interregionalism. It is, thereby, important to understand the relationship between interregionalism and bilateral strategic partnerships within the EU's foreign policy beyond its neighbourhood (Hettne 2010: 30-32).

In the next subchapter I will review the literature on multipolarity, rising and regional powers and (world) regions as the EU's (bilateral) strategic partnerships after 2003 are predominantly interpreted in the context of an emerging multipolar world-order/changing world order.

### **2.2.2 Multipolarity, rising/ regional powers and regions**

There is a widespread belief that the international system is (increasingly) characterised by a multipolar structure<sup>11</sup>. The emergence of a multipolar international system is closely connected to the rise of new powers with different names, such as e.g. regional (leading) powers, global powers or emerging powers<sup>12</sup> (e.g., Renard 2012a).

Yet importantly, these (newly) rising or emerging powers have led to an upsurge of concepts and definitions and country-groupings. Well-known is the acronym BRICs or BRICS (Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 380-385). Yet there is no universally accepted definition of these 'regional (great) powers' resulting in slightly different naming, grouping

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<sup>10</sup> The 'Global South' comprises from an EU-perspective the 'non-European' and 'non-Western' world regions and countries located particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Söderbaum/Stålgren 2010a: vii).

<sup>11</sup> However, these are widely assumptions or predictions. Furthermore, there are also other beliefs or assumptions concerning the structure of the current or the coming world order (Renard 2012a: 42; Narlikar 2013: 568).

<sup>12</sup> Generally, the terms 'rise' and 'emergence' indicate that a country displays considerable growth rates and an increase in economic power. The notion 'emerging nation' also signifies that a country is considered to be economically dynamic, especially in comparison to so called developing countries and their stage of development. However, these so called emerging nations often still encounter certain socio-economic challenges and limited competitiveness in contrast to so called industrialised countries. Roughly, so called emerging nations are seen to be on their way to become industrialised economies.

of countries and conceptual underpinning such as regional powers ('Regionalmächte') or regionally-preponderant powers ('regionale Vormächte') (both in Czempiel 1993; translated by NH); 'pivotal states' (Chase/Hill/Kennedy 1996, 1998); 'major regional powers' (Huntington 1999); new regional powers ('(neue) regionale Führungsmächte' or 'regionale Ordnungsmacht') (Nolte 2006: 9; Nolte 2006: 25)<sup>13</sup> and 'regional powers' (Nolte 2011: 56; Nolte 2007); as well as '(regional) anchor country' (Stamm 2004) amongst others. The phenomenon and the concept of a 'regional power' is, therefore, highly debated and contested.

However, there is somewhat of a consensus that these countries are more or less predominant and influential within their 'region' (which is again delimited differently in the various conceptual accounts) as well as increasingly powerful and leading at the international level. Therefore, various authors have analysed the foreign policy behaviour of these regional powers at a regional level, such as vis-à-vis regional neighbours<sup>14</sup>, and at the international level, e.g., with respect to international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) or multilateral initiatives. In the case of Brazil, India and South Africa, for instance, the EU-documents on the strategic partnerships stress their respective special standing as well as describe their positions as crucial for influencing their respective regions and the international system: Brazil, India and South Africa are seen as 'regional powers' and/or 'global players' (e.g., Commission/EC (B) 2007; Commission/EC (I) 2004; Press Release/EU (SA) 2006; see Ch. 7.1; 7.2; 7.3). This also refers to studies in which Brazil, India and South Africa are singled out as emerging (economic) powers as well as so called regional powers of the South. Their (economic) rising (including the emergence of other regional powers such as China or Russia) is believed to be changing the power hierarchies in the international system and resulting in a multipolar world with regional power poles.

Furthermore, research on these rising powers cuts across various related research camps. For example, researchers working on rising powers also often touch upon the question of how to define a region in international politics (Godehardt/Nabers 2011). There is no universal definition of a '(world) region' in International Relations (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 149). They can also be perceived in functional terms or in constructivist terms (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 149). Hence, regions can be cast from different perspectives such as geographic boundaries of regions; regional integration or cooperation efforts; common regional identities or common security challenges of

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<sup>13</sup> Regionale Führungsmächte/Regionalmächte (Nolte 2006) will be henceforth called (new) regional powers.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Østerud 1992: 12; Schirm 2005: 110-111 or Nolte 2006: 28.

regions (Godehardt/Nabers 2011a: 241; Godehardt 2012). Yet, Siedschlag et al. (2007: 149) believe that all of these conceptualisations have in common that for a region a formal organisation is not a *sine qua non*.

However, there appears to be a lack of understanding of how rising or regional powers from the Global South and somewhat established powers from the Global North or West interact against the background of systemic change and power struggles. In this context and against the background of research on regional and rising powers, Nolte (2012: 51) mentions future research should focus on integrating extra-regional actors into the analysis of regional order and regional power relations. The present study may be considered to be a step into this direction.

The latter observation leads over to the next subchapter in elaborating in more detail on the EU's strategic partnerships in general, which are partly perceived as an interaction between a 'power' from the Global North and rising powers from the Global South.

### **2.2.3 The EU's bilateral strategic partnerships**

Vitaly, there is no exact official definition of a strategic partnership shared with the EU (Schmidt A. 2010: 3; Grevi 2011: 2). Nonetheless, strategic partnerships are often related to the EU's European Security Strategy (ESS) (Reiterer 2013: 76). Yet research on the (bilateral) EU's bilateral strategic partnerships<sup>15</sup> as a group is rather of comparably recent nature. For a long time, it has been characterised by single-country studies. Only later and particularly after the year 2008, attempts have been made in grouping together various (selected) case studies of the EU's strategic partnerships enabling a cross-case analysis (see Bendiek/Kramer 2009b; Husar/Maihold/Mair 2010; Grevi/de Vasconcelos 2008; Sautenet 2012). This has been a starting point for discovering commonalities among the strategic partnerships. Thereby, studies of undertaking more extensive comparisons between the EU's strategic partnerships or overarching assessments

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<sup>15</sup> In the following I will predominantly concentrate on the literature review of the EU's *bilateral* strategic partnerships. However, biregional and bilateral strategic partnerships have in common that they are limitedly *understood* in terms of their essential nature (Maihold 2009: 193; Bendiek/Kramer 2009a: 216). This is why the paragraphs on the very nature of strategic partnerships at times include references to scholarly pieces looking at both biregional and bilateral strategic partnerships. Yet when it comes to the present study's research goal, it is indeed the conceptualization and *understanding* of bilateral strategic partnerships, which are of primary and 'only' interest here. For an overview of the various biregional, bilateral and 'organisational' strategic partnerships formalised by the EU see, for example, Sautenet (2012: 124).

thereof have gained pace (Renard 2011; Grevi/Kandhekar 2011; Gratius 2011b: 3; Smith M. 2013).

In 2012, ten bilateral strategic partners of the EU were identified: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the US (Grevi 2012: 8). Indeed, there are somewhat two groups identified among the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships: as Grevi puts it, 'relations with large emerging powers were all upgraded between 2003 and 2007' (2012: 8). This grouping includes Brazil, India and South Africa amongst others. Thus, there are the bilateral strategic partnerships established before 2003 (US, Canada and Japan) and after 2003 (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and South Korea).

Similarly to pursuing its biregional relations, the EU's strategic partnerships are identified to be basically serving its foreign policy goals (Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 21). Strategic partnerships are, thereby, 'comprehensive by definition' (Grevi 2009: 147) as they generally cover a wide range of policies and issues (Grevi 2009: 147). It is important to note that there is no (formalised or absolute) list of strategic partners, even though there are indications in EU-documents, such as the European Security Strategy (ESS) (Sautenet 2012: 133-134). Linked to this, there are no guidelines indicating qualification criteria for becoming the EU's strategic partner (Gratius 2011b: 1).

Nevertheless, the EU's strategic partnerships are predominantly linked to and analysed in the context of rising and regional powers as well as the emergence of a multipolar system (e.g., Renard/Rogers 2011; Youngs 2010: 31; Taylor 2010: 148; Renard/Biscop 2012b: xv). These emerging powers are believed to be rising in terms of economic and political power, whereby they challenge powers such as the US or Europe, which are, as a result, considered to be declining (Gratius/John de Souza 2010: 129; Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 380-381; Renard/Biscop 2012b: xv; Renard 2011: 3). There is no universal agreement on the members of this 'group' of rising powers, yet the 'usual suspects' are most of the time countries such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, South Korea and Russia to a certain extent (e.g., Renard/Rogers 2011: 2; Allen 2013: 573). Furthermore, there is no agreement on what exactly qualifies a country to become the EU's strategic partner, apart from being a somewhat rising power (Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 29; Grevi 2012: 9; Renard 2009: 39). Renard argues that the EU has chosen its strategic partners accidentally (Renard 2011: III). Overall, scholars criticise that the concept of a strategic partnerships remains vague in the EU-documents – be it biregional or bilateral strategic partnerships (Bendiek/Kramer 2009c: 8; Sautenet 2012: 125).

In addition to systemic change, (bilateral) strategic partnerships are understood in the context of 'levels', namely global/international and inter-/regional levels in addition to the bilateral level of strategic partners' cooperation. As a prelude, there is somewhat of an implicit consensus that strategic partnerships are not merely about bilateral cooperation among the two partners but also concern cooperation at other levels (Renard 2011: 5). In this context, rising powers are, firstly, not only seen as competitors in the context of systemic change and relative power, they are also seen as (potential) cooperation partners for the EU with respect to the global level in terms of global governance structures and international regimes (Husar/Maihold 2010; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 21; Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 460). Thus, there is a sense that strategic partnerships are driven by the aim to collaborate with rising powers (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 459-460; Islam 2009: 7). This felt need to cooperate is even enhanced by the feeling that these influential powers may be turning to other partners: strategic partnerships are then understood as a tool to avoid this 'turning away' (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 471; Maihold 2009: 197). In this context, some authors believe that strategic partnerships are supposed to be building blocks to (effective) multilateralism at the international and global levels (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 473; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 21; Maihold 2009: 190; Grevi 2011: 2) and a mode of accommodating for or 'multilateralising multipolarity' (de Vasconcelos 2008; Maihold 2010a: 152). At the same time, there are also voices stating that a strategic partnership as bilateral cooperation is at odds with the EU's proclaimed goal of striving for (effective) multilateralism (De Vasconcelos 2010: 66), particularly as the views on multilateralism differ among partners (Gratius 2011a: 1). In brief, according to these authors, the EU's strategic partnerships are geared at the global and international levels. Strategic partnerships, thereby, are a reaction by international actors to their balancing act between interdependence and the struggle for power (Youngs 2010: 31; Grevi 2008: 150, 162, 171). In this context, researchers have investigated how the EU may or will be (re-)acting in a multipolar system as well as to the rising of regional powers (Grant/Barysch 2008; Grant/Vasalek 2007). Moreover, authors have focused on how the strategic partners perceive each other in terms of mutual perceptions (Fioramonti 2012; Fioramonti/Olivier 2007; Lucarelli 2007; Poletti 2007; Peruzzi et. al. 2007; Fioramonti 2007; Ortega 2004)<sup>16</sup>.

Secondly, there are authors, who believe that this envisioned cooperation is or should be particularly geared at the regional level in terms of the regional powers' respective regions (Maihold 2009; Grevi 2008: 163). In this view, it is the countries'

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<sup>16</sup> See also the special issue in *Perspectives (Review of International Affairs)*, 2012, 20, 2.

regional role, which is crucial to the format of the (bilateral) strategic partnership (van Oedenaren/Tiersky 2010: 71; Fröhlich 2008: 199, 217; Gratius 2008: 27). There are also indications that bilateral strategic partnerships have also been established due to limited regionalism in other world regions and the stumbling interregional relations (Youngs 2010: 31; Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 389; Hess 2009, 2012, 2013; Renard/Biscop 2012 a: 196-197). However, some scholars state that a bilateral strategic partnership undermines or even contradicts a simultaneous biregional strategic partnership in the sense of an 'either-or'-decision (Gratius 2009: 43; Maihold 2009: 191, 197; de Vasconcelos 2010: 66; Renard 2011: 2). As a consequence, it is sometimes presumed that biregional relations will be or already have been substituted with the bilateral strategic partnerships (Gratius 2009: 42; Renard 2012b: 4). Renard (2013a: 371) even argues that biregional frameworks should be supplanted by a bilateral strategic partnership, if necessary (Renard 2013a: 371). Others implicitly or openly declare of not getting to grips with the relation between biregional and bilateral strategic partnerships (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 461; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 31; Bendiek/Kramer 2009 a: 217; Söderbaum/Stålgren 2010b: 3). In this context, the cases of Brazil/Latin America (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 462-463; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 3; Maihold 2009: 196-197, 208) and India/ (South) Asia (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 463; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 31) are mentioned. Surprisingly, the discussion of the relationship between bilateralism and biregionalism is somewhat missing in the South African/ African case. Others argue more pragmatically in stating that the bilateral strategic partners have 'outgrown' the biregional frameworks in terms of size, including the cases of Brazil, India and South Africa (Gratius 2011b: 4). Yet in brief, bilateral strategic partnerships seem to display a link to the regional level of the respective regional powers. In my own account, I have argued that 'the EU has looked for like-minded and presumably powerful countries within a region that are capable of influencing their respective regional neighbours and pushing the regional agenda in a direction favourable for the EU' (Hess 2012: 4)<sup>17</sup>.

Thirdly, and what is more, there are also voices stating that the strategic partnerships are geared towards all three levels – global/international and regional – in addition to the bilateral relations (Hess 2009; 2010; 2012; 2013; Renard/Rogers 2011: 4; Maihold 2009; Grevi 2012: 20; Renard 2011: 6).

When leaving levels aside, the nature of the EU's strategic partnerships is contested as well: There is no agreement on their nature; not even in normative terms. Normatively, some authors believe that a strategic partnership needs to be based on

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<sup>17</sup> For more elaboration on 'the bilateral-biregional link' see Hess 2012: 4; 4-5.

both interests and values mutually shared among the partners in order to qualify as a strategic partnership (Grevi 2008: 159). Sometimes, the value-dimension of a strategic partnership is considered to be the 'strategic' feature of a strategic partnership with the EU (Gratius 2009: 38). Others argue that the shared-values-dimension is not necessary and that strategic partnerships are geared towards joint interests and objectives (Renard 2013b: 303; Lazarou 2011: 4). What is more, there are also scholarly pieces adopting a more normative view in terms of proposing ways of how to reform the strategic partnerships in the context of providing policy-advice to practitioners (Renard/Rogers 2011; Renard 2011: 1; Renard 2012b; Grevi 2011: 1). Additionally, I have underlined that a strategic partnership does not entail 'automatic convergence in terms of norms or interests' (Hess 2009: 6).

Strikingly, there are many authors, who (seem to) indicate that the so called strategic partnerships are not more than political rhetoric (Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 389; Renard/Biscop 2012a: 196), particularly against the background of the EU's extensive usage of the word 'strategy' (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 455-456, 462; Bendiek/Kramer 2009 a: 213; Renard 2011: iv). For example, Islam (2009: 4) views the EU's strategic partnerships as '[...] one of its important public relations tools' (Islam 2009: 4): they '[...] are more about style and process than content and substance' (Islam 2009: 4). What is more, Renard/Biscop (2012a: 196) even suggest that strategic partnerships are not in the least strategic for a variety of reasons (also Renard 2011: 5). Similarly, some experts argue that the establishment of a strategic partnership does not seem to have introduced any (or only limited) major changes to previously maintained relations (Bendiek/Kramer 2010a: 458; Bendiek/Kramer 2010b: 27; Bendiek/Kramer 2009a: 214; Renard 2011: 28). Strategic partnerships would then be nothing more than old wine in new bottles. Similarly, the fact that very diverse countries have been grouped together as strategic partners is seen as non-strategic action by the EU (Grevi 2008: 146). Sometimes, however, the strategic partnerships are perceived to be driven merely by (particular) EU-member states, being interested in prioritised relations with a country of a region (Bendiek/Kramer 2009c: 10; Maihold 2009: 192; Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 391). As a result, the EU's strategic partnership would not be about the EU at all. Above all, some authors call for developing the present strategic partnerships into 'true strategic partnerships' (Renard/Biscop 2012a: 197) by being more strategic in foreign policy (Renard/Biscop 2012a: 197) and by focusing on partners being crucial in terms of global governance (Renard 2011: 5). Others call for 'real' strategic partnerships (Khandekar 2012b: 6). Yet it does always not become clear where the difference lies between a strategic partnership and a real one (Khandekar 2013: 1).

There are limited attempts at conceptualising strategic partnerships. When scholars are trying to get to grips with the characteristics and the rationale of strategic partnerships, the latter are often linked to notions such as ‘alliance-building’ (Youngs 2010: 31; Gratius 2009: 42; Struye de Swielande 2012: 7). Yet another approach by Renard/Rogers (2011), for example, draws a distinction between strategic partnerships and alliances. In contrast to realist IR-theory, they understand alliances as comprising more than only military dimensions. They argue that alliances ‘[...] rely on shared interests and common values, and geared against external forces’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3). They particularly concern the global level and global interests of the alliance partners (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3). In contrast to alliances, Renard/Rogers state that strategic partnerships are not automatically based on joint values but dedicated to ‘common purpose(s)’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3). In this reading, strategic partnerships are an alternative to alliances; comparably more ‘flexible’ and less constraining on the strategic partners (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3). Ultimately, Renard/Rogers (2011: 4) define a strategic partnership ‘[...] as the instrumentalisation of a bilateral relationship to achieve broader ends (regional or global)’. They believe that the partnership is only strategic when it displays a ‘comprehensive’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4) policy-coverage and – linkage. Furthermore, it would need to be ‘reciprocal’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4) and to have a ‘strong pragmatic political dimension’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4) entailing a common vision among the strategic partners of common goals (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4). At the same time, a *strategic* partnership need not be based on shared values but needs to be ‘oriented towards the long-term’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4). Additionally, it need not be harmonious at all times but needs to cover and attempt to effectively address not only bilateral issues but regional and global challenges as well (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4). The coverage of levels in terms of bilateral, regional and global levels is, thereby, the essential feature (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4). Crucially, it is important to note that Renard/Rogers (2011: 4), firstly, are obviously influenced by the EU’s strategic partnerships in defining a strategic partnership in general. Secondly, and at the same time, they define an ideal-type strategic partnership in terms of how a strategic partnership *should* ideally look like in order to make a partnership strategic (ibid). It is not an account of how the EU’s strategic partnerships can generally be characterised.

Other researchers believe that, for example, believes that the EU-strategic partnership represent forms of ‘balancing’ (Struye de Swielande 2012: 7). For example, the EU’s strategic partnership with China and Brazil, respectively, are seen as examples of ‘soft balancing’ against the United States (Casarini 2009; Gratius 2012: 13). At the

same time, strategic partnerships are also compared with 'bandwagoning', namely that the EU bandwagons with rising powers (Gratius 2012: 8, 13).

Sometimes the strategic partnership is cast in terms of a 'marriage' between the partners (Shambaugh 2010: 99; Khandekar 2011).

Nadkarni offers quite a detailed but somewhat formalistic definition of strategic partnerships (Nadkarni 2010: 48-49; Renard 2013b: 303). Grevi, for example, sees strategic partnerships as "contractual' arrangements' (2012: 8). He further explains that the strategic partnerships' '[...] purpose is to match deepening economic ties with the codification of bilateral relations on a much broader set of issues, reflecting the extent and ambition of the relationships' (Grevi 2012: 9). Grevi ultimately states that 'real-life strategic partnerships are multi-purpose ones, pursuing *both [sic]* bilateral and multilateral objectives and shifting focus across these and other dimensions of the relationship in a fairly pragmatic way' (Grevi 2012: 12).

Reiterer (2013: 87) views strategic partnerships as instruments geared towards furthering the European interests by focusing on partners, who are willing to partner in the first place and who can act as a multiplying force in their respective regions or web of relations.

Renard (2011: 6), in trying to understand strategic partnerships, focuses predominantly on its strategic nature or rather on the dimensions, which are necessary for making it 'strategic'. Basically, its strategic orientation flows from comprehensiveness, reciprocity, empathy, long-term time frame and from a horizon beyond bilateralism involving both regional and global levels (Renard 2011: 6; Gratius 2011b: 2).

However, I think that it does not suffice to understand what makes a strategic partnership strategic (Renard 2013b: 303). I believe that the focus on its strategic nature inhibits an understanding of what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership in the first place. Furthermore, I do not think that a strategic partnership is a 'meaningless *concept'* (sic; Renard 2013b: 304) even though its meaning may not be straightforwardly obvious. Indeed, I think that *understanding* the whatsoever concept of the EU's strategic partnerships can help with making (better) usage of them as foreign policy instruments and avoid undue criticism thereof. My own account of strategic partnerships, which is reflected in my scholarly pieces (Hess 2013, 2012, 2010, 2009), can be summarised as follows: the EU's strategic partnerships are, in the first place, a '[...] declaration of interest in cooperating more closely: the starting point of a process that ideally results in joint political action' (Hess 2012: 3). Moreover, the EU's strategic partners are '[...] important partners in bilateral, regional, and especially international (global) affairs [...]' (Hess 2012: 3) due to their '[...] significant political power and influence [...]' (Hess 2012: 3) building on their economic power (Hess 2012: 1) These partners may play important

roles at the regional and international levels in this context and against the background of a globalised, interdependent, multipolar and “multipower” world’ (Hess 2012: 7; see also Hess 2012: 1, 3-4, 7). Thus, ‘[...] the EU’s strategic partners have been chosen because they are positioned at the nexus of regional and global politics’ (Hess 2012: 4). Moreover, I have indicated elements of status recognition/acknowledgement of both the emerging powers’ status and the EU’s status playing a role with respect to the strategic partnerships and international profile-building (Hess 2012: 1, 5; Hess 2013). Additionally, I have depicted strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing (Hess 2012: 1). They are crucial foreign policy tools for addressing global challenges and designing global governance and international cooperation, in general (Hess 2012: 1), and for crafting a ‘[...] network of interest coalitions with several partners [...]’ (Hess 2012: 7). This study will build on and refine these arguments via conceptualising the EU’s strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

Overall, it shows that various arguments concerning the EU’s strategic partnerships point at the emerging or regional power status of the respective strategic partner countries. Thus, the present project links up to research strands regarding the phenomenon roughly circumscribed with ‘new leading powers’<sup>18</sup> (Husar/Maihold/Mair 2009; Husar/Maihold/Mair 2010) or ‘regional powers’ (Nolte 2011: 56). Within these research strands these powers are identified as rising (or returning) to (new) influence within global and international politics (Husar/Maihold 2009: 7) or as being decisive to political processes in particular world regions (Nolte 2011: 50, 56). There are numerous terms and concepts for defining or conceptualising these powers such as rising/emerging powers, regional powers, pivotal states, anchor countries but to name a few (Husar/Maihold 2009). These powers are identified as (potentially) important cooperation partners for countries such as Germany or the EU. Related studies have assessed the cooperation potential between these countries and, for example, Germany (Husar/Maihold 2009; Mair/Niedermeier 2009) or the EU (Husar/Maihold/Mair 2010)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> New leading powers are described as ‘secondary powers’ or ‘intermediate states’ (Husar/Maihold 2009: 9) to the great powers within the international system and the corresponding international hierarchy (Husar/Maihold 2009: 9). However, there are different interpretations of their international roles (Husar/Maihold 2009: 9-10). Crucially, their power is circumscribed to certain policy areas and is yet not used in a hegemonic manner (Husar/Maihold 2009: 12). Husar/Maihold (2009) follow a role-theoretical approach (2009: 11), which is yet not applied in this research project.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Husar/Maihold (2009) assess that a country coming into question for a strategic partnership should display a certain foreign policy capacity in comparison to a high (interest) convergence in multiple policy areas (Husar/Maihold 2009: 20). This foreign policy capacity is described with a capable diplomatic apparatus; a capacity to include civil society; a capability to form coalitions and to design strategies; the availability of a foreign policy strategy; and a reference plane regarding the strategic will to shape on various levels and in multiple areas (Husar/Maihold 2009: 20). However, the authors do not further explain as to where their propositions on a country’s suitability for becoming a strategic partner are derived from.

Therefore, it seems almost natural that the discussion on the EU's strategic partnerships is linked to research on rising or regional powers (Husar/Maihold 2009: 20). Apart from that, I think that it proves indeed worthwhile to first understand strategic partnerships before we can actually prescribe a country's strategic partnership-eligibility or capability.

Indeed, characteristics of the EU's strategic partnerships as such are mostly only found implicitly in the scholarly pieces<sup>20</sup>. Often, authors mention that the establishment of a strategic partnerships means an 'upgrade' to a 'new level' of relations (Kundani/Parello-Plesner 2012: 1; van Oedenaren 2010: 31; Schmidt 2010: 2; Gratius 2011b: 1; Reiterer 2013: 84). However, it is also indicated that this up-levelling is 'symbolical' and 'rhetorical' (Renard 2011: 11). Strategic partnerships are also often described as 'special relationships' (Kundnani/Parello-Plesner 2012). A dimension of 'exclusivity' (Maihold 2009: 194) of relations can be read from scholarly pieces as well (Maihold 2009: 194). Or there are hints at an author's hunch that the establishment of a strategic partnership may be '[...] befitting [...a country's; NH] status as a major power' and corresponding to an 'equality' in power status (van Oedenaren/Tiersky 2010: 71; 90). Similarly, a strategic partnership is perceived to indicate relations 'at eye-level' (Gratius 2009: 39). However, it is seldom explained why strategic partnerships constitute an upgrading or a special relationship, albeit the fact that those strategic partners are indeed a limited group of countries. Similarly, there is hardly elaboration on why or rather how a strategic partnership somewhat corresponds to an international or major power-status (van Oedenaren/Tiersky 2010: 71; 90). Strategic partnerships being considered to be special due to their limited number probably explains why some scholars speak of '[...] the status of 'strategic partner' [...]' (Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 389). Predominantly, scholars state that this 'status' has been 'granted' (Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 389) by the EU to the respective countries (Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 389). Interestingly, Maihold (2009: 194) has explained that the term 'strategic partnership' is borrowed from business fields, where there are also known as 'strategic alliances' (Maihold 2009: 194). Maihold then briefly explains the concept of a strategic alliance and establishes a brief definition of a strategic partnership's characteristics, which is limitedly informed by a business perspective (Maihold 2009: 194-195). He also applies this brief definition of a strategic partnership's characteristics to the EU-LAC-strategic partnership (Maihold 2009: 195), Unfortunately, it appears that these insights from business were not further followed or used in the literature for making sense of strategic partnerships. However, it is an interesting perspective of viewing strategic partnerships in economic terms. This view will also be used in the present study of *understanding* strategic

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<sup>20</sup> However, there is somewhat of a consensus that strategic partnerships are more than only about trade (De Vasconcelos 2010: 74; Renard 2012b: 2).

partnerships by elaborating more on the concept of a strategic partnership/alliance as it is known in business and management and making it usable for conceptualising strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools.

In brief, research on strategic partnerships is indeed multi-faceted: there are researchers, who deal with the relations between the EU and a particular strategic partner. Predominantly, their research perspectives involve that they of a) deal with specific policy areas and treat the 'strategic partnership' as a framework (e.g., Gratius 2011a); b) deal with the bilateral relations, whereby the strategic partnership is treated as one aspect in addition to others (e.g., Casarini 2010); c) only mention the strategic partnership at the side-lines or not at all (e.g., Andreosso-O'Callaghan 2010; Jaffrelot 2006); or d) do not attempt to define or conceptualise a (biregional/bilateral) strategic partnership but take it as a 'given' (e.g., Gratius 2009: 36, 37, 38; Pelinka 2010). Meanwhile, it appears that scholars have left the question of what a strategic partnership essentially makes aside and focus, more pragmatically, on the results of summit meetings (Lazarou 2013; Helly 2012; Khandekar 2012a) or on possible convergences in various policy areas between the EU and its strategic partners (Grevi/Renard 2012a; Grevi/Renard 2012b; Grevi 2013; Gratius 2011a; Gratius/Grevi 2013).

Thus, the majority of the strategic partnerships' accounts have mostly common that they deal with the respective strategic partnerships in one way or the other. However, there are hardly any attempts at defining or *understanding* strategic partnership as a social phenomenon systematically or in a theory-led way. An indication of the non-definition of strategic partnerships is often present when the term is put into inverted commas<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless, as indicated before, there have over time been attempts at conceptualising or at least adumbrating the EU's strategic partnerships in a more detailed and thorough way (Reiterer 2013: 76-79). Thereby, my own account (Hess 2009; 2010; 2012; 2013), which will be further developed in this project, is also an example for doing so<sup>22</sup>. Suffice it to say with respect to the present study that I have argued in the context of the regional level that strategic partnerships serve the (extra-regional) recognition of the regional powers' role and standing within their regions and as a spokesperson for the region (Hess 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013; Maihold 2010a: 153, 154).

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Casarini (2009); Husar/Maihold (2009: 20); Kundnani/Parello-Plesner (2012) or Hurrell (2006).

<sup>22</sup> I will not elaborate on my own accounts in their entirety because the present study has a slightly different focus in comparison to my previously published pieces. However, for an overview of my own account and various dimensions of the EU's strategic partnerships, see in particular Hess 2012 in addition to Hess 2009; Hess 2010 and Hess 2013. Nevertheless, my own pieces of scholarly work can indeed be found at times in this study, which is indicated accordingly.

Similarly, strategic partnerships also serve to acknowledge emerging powers' new role at the global and international levels in the context of their rising (Hess 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013). These arguments are important building blocks for the present study.

Summing up, the concept of a strategic partnership is contested or 'ill-defined' (Renard 2012b: 2). Furthermore, for a quite long period of time, there were no attempts at investigating the 'group' of the EU's strategic partners. Even though the single case-studies offer rich empirical analyses of singular strategic partnerships, they suffer from a lack of comparative perspective as well as theoretical or conceptual underpinning. Additionally, a comparative perspective of the EU's strategic partnerships has for long been neglected. At the same time, the comparative attempts have later looked at a group of single cases with a (limited) comparative perspective<sup>23</sup>. This is probably also admittedly due to the fact that there was hardly an overview by the EU itself on its strategic partners. Later, attempts at a comparative perspective did include all cases of the EU's strategic partners but lacked case-specifics (e.g., Renard/Rogers 2011). What is more, it does not always become clear whether the scholarly work draws on a predominantly Brussels-based view, which would then, unfortunately, be devoid of further evidence from the strategic partner-countries.

#### **2.2.4 The EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa**

Significantly, there is a considerable dominance of a research thread on the EU-China-strategic partnership within the literature of the EU's strategic partnerships<sup>24</sup>. Even though there are contributions on the strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa (respectively and collectively as IBSA-alliance<sup>25</sup>), they are still limited (Gratius/John de Souza 2010). This holds particularly true for the EU-South Africa-strategic partnership. Thus, there still is a lack of knowledge on the strategic partnerships with these three countries and even more so from a conceptual point of view<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The sample of cases did not necessarily reflect the entire 'universe' of cases, meaning all of the EU's strategic partnerships at a given point in time (de Vasconcelos 2010; Grevi/de Vasconcelos 2008).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Shambaugh 2010; Casarini 2009, 2006; Berkofsky 2006; Kundnani/Parello-Plesner 2012.

<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that there are 'only' bilateral strategic partnerships with the individual countries in place. There is no EU-IBSA-strategic partnership at present. It is yet the IBSA-alliance, which has spurred studies comparing the three countries and their strategic partnerships with the EU (Gratius/John de Souza 2010; Gratius 2008). For more information on IBSA as such, see, e.g., John de Souza 2008 or Costa Vaz 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Note that I will not review the entire literature and, thus, knowledge on (potential) synergies of cooperation between strategic partnerships with respect to particular policy areas as this is not the project's

Over time, the number of publications on the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership and cooperation areas has risen (Gratius/González 2012; Otero-Iglesias 2012; Lazarou 2013; Gratius/Grevi 2013; Hess 2009). There are different accounts of this strategic partnership. With regard to Brazil, Maihold argues that it has been the Brazilian side suggesting a strategic partnership to the EU (Maihold 2009: 196). Moreover, Gratius thinks that Brazil and EU are ‘bandwagoning’ by establishing their strategic partnership (Gratius 2012: 8). Clearly, there is a strong focus on Brazil’s regional and global importance, when scholars explain the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership (Gratius 2009: 39; de Vasconcelos 2010: 75). Brazil is described as ‘regional power with global ambitions’ (Zilla 2009) or as a ‘middle power’ (Soares de Lima 2008: 11). Brazil’s ‘leading regional power’ (Renard/Rogers 2011: 8) is also sometimes reflected in the context of strategic partnership with the EU: for example, Renard/Rogers (2011: 8) believe that the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership ‘[...] would be less globally-focused and more concerned with regional or functional aspects of policy’. In this context, Brazil is somewhat chosen ‘[...] as the ‘representative’ of Latin America [...]’ (de Vasconcelos 2010: 75) being a helpful partner in and for Latin America (de Vasconcelos 2010: 75). However, there are also authors stating that the strategic partnership is due to the consideration that Brazil has become a ‘global strategic player’ (Youngs 2010: 33; de Vasconcelos 2010: 75). Gratius stipulates that the EU has reacted to Brazil’s ‘global engagement’ (Gratius 2009: 36) in the context of Brazil being a representative of the Global South within the WTO; its role in the United Nations and strive for a permanent seat in the UN-Security Council (Gratius 2009: 36). Thus, from this reading, it is the cooperation at the global level, which makes cooperation with Brazil as a crucial partner from/in South America interesting for the EU (Maihold 2009: 197). Moreover, Brazil was perceived to be turning away from the EU towards new partners at the time of the strategic partnership’s establishment (Maihold 2009: 197). Therefore, the EU is deemed to have wanted to set a ‘signal’ (Maihold 2009: 198) in favour of Brazil against the background of ‘competing’ vis-à-vis Venezuela for regional leadership (Maihold 2009: 198, 205). The bilateral strategic partnership was also a European attempt to accelerate integration efforts with Mercosur<sup>27</sup> (Maihold 2009: 198). Furthermore, the EU-Brazil-strategic framework is believed to ‘regulate interdependence’ (Valladão 2008b: 35) in the world (Valladão 2008b: 35).

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focus. These (possible) cooperation areas can, however, be found in the cited literature on the respective strategic partnerships. In this subchapter I will limit myself to outline those contributions, which make mentioning of the ‘conceptual nature’ of a particular strategic partnership. I will, thereby, review the main reasons for the establishment of the respective strategic partnerships stated by the respective authors.

<sup>27</sup> Mercosur stands for Mercado Común del Sur (span.) or Mercado Comum do Sul (port.).

When it comes to Brazilian interests, Maihold thinks that a bilateral strategic partnerships also helps Brazil to pursue relations with the EU more independently from the LAC-region (Maihold 2009: 200). Moreover, the strategic partnership with the EU underlines Brazilian ambitions for the international level in terms of being internationally 'present' (Maihold 2009: 201).

Similarly to strategic partnerships in general, secondary literature often compares the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership to an 'alliance' (Garcia 2008: 49).

Literature on the EU-India-strategic partnership and its covered policy areas has also gained in numbers (Wagner 2012; Boillot 2012; Pelinka 2010; Islam 2009: 7; Hess 2013; Jaffrelot 2006; Khandekar 2013; Bava 2008a). Often, authors compare the EU-India-relationship to a(n) (unhappy) marriage (Khandekar 2011). I myself have denounced the idea of a marriage in this regard (Hess 2013: 198).

India is defined as 'leading power' (Wagner 2009b); a 'great power' (Renard/Rogers 2011: 8) but also as an 'emerging power' (Sahni 2008: 8) and 'regional power' (Sahni 2008: 9). In the context of the EU-India-strategic partnership, '[...] the focus would frequently concern the highest level of politics and economics on a consistent global or extended-regional level [...]' (Renard/Rogers 2011: 8). The strategic partnership with India is also seen as a reaction to the Indian 'rise' (Youngs 2010: 32). Indeed, the establishment of the EU-India-strategic partnership is indeed closely associated with 'India's growing aspirations' (Bava 2008b: 107). It is considered to be a move away from development cooperation to political partnership (Youngs 2010: 32), providing a 'broad basis' (Wagner 2009a: 115) for EU-India-relations (Wagner 2009a: 115). Moreover, it is supposed to be a "major power dialogue" (Allen 2013: 571). Furthermore, it can be related to the fact that the European side has realised the role, which India plays in Asia (Youngs 2010: 33). At the same time, Jain (2008: 21) argues that the trade and business dimensions are the most important drivers of the EU-India-strategic partnership. Additionally, de Vasconcelos notes that the EU-India-strategic partnership proves helpful at the 'symbolic level' (de Vasconcelos 2010: 72) in terms of the '[...] mutual acknowledgement of the parties' status as fully-fledged global actors'. The EU-India-strategic partnership is associated with certain 'specialness' (Wagner 2008: 87) and an 'upgrade' (Bava 2008b: 105). Furthermore, it is also put into context with '[...] a new, more political dimension' (Bava 2008b: 105). Pelinka states that 'there is no alliance in the formal sense between India and the EU [...yet; NH] enough common interests to permit increasing co-operation and a relationship designed as friendship' (Pelinka 2010: 209). Lisbonne-de Vergeron describes the EU-India-strategic partnership as '[...] shallow by any standards' (2006: xi-xii). My own account of the EU-India-

strategic partnership locates its importance for both partners in the context of the bilateral, regional and international (global) levels, particularly due to India's importance in this respect (Hess 2013: 196-198).

There is considerable lack of knowledge on the EU-South Africa strategic partnership, which has often been somewhat left out of the research picture when considering some of the comparative studies (Grevi/Vasconcelos 2008; De Vasconcelos 2010). Nonetheless, the number of literature on the EU-South Africa strategic partnership and associated areas of/for cooperation is steadily rising (Oberthür/Groen 2012; Hess 2010; Helly 2012).

In the literature, South Africa is identified as a 'civilian power' (Erdmann 2009), a 'regional power' (Grevi 2012: 7; Helly 2012: 1); a 'hegemon' (Chevallier 2008: 25) and also an 'emerging power internationally' (Oberthür/Groen 2012: 45). It is also described as being part of the '[...] regionally-based emerging powers [...]' (Kornegay 2008: 14).

Some scholars argue that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership is only focused on development matters (Gratius 2011b: 3). Yet, Helly notes that their relations have moved '[...] from a development-focused relationship to a more diverse and equal cooperation' (Helly 2012: 1). In a similar account, Chevallier notes that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership has led to a relationship '[...] of mutual accountability, which extends well beyond development assistance' (Chevallier 2008: 24). Other experts view the importance of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership against the background of South Africa's relative predominance on the African continent. Similarly to Brazil, the South African 'leading regional power' (Renard/Rogers 2011: 8) is also mentioned in the context of the strategic partnership with the EU. In this reading, the EU-South Africa-strategic partnership '[...] would be less globally-focused and more concerned with regional or functional aspects of policy' (Renard/Rogers (2011: 8). This corresponds with Grimm's hunch (2009), who notes that South Africa has probably been chosen as a strategic partner by the EU because it has a special standing within African institutions such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to a limited extent the African Union (AU) and in the context of peacekeeping (Grimm 2009: 63). However, Grimm also indicates that South Africa is economically superior, yet its political leading power is not accepted as it fights with regional rivalries (Grimm 2006: 63). South Africa's importance as a strategic partner is indeed often seen as being limited to the regional level (Renard 2011: 23) and based on its economic predominance on the African continent (Oberthür/Groen 2012: 45), which is different to predominant assessments of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil and India. As Helly has put it, South Africa's '[...] regional dimensions make it particularly relevant for the European Union and South

African policies in Africa' (Helly 2012: 1)<sup>28</sup>. South Africa is indeed treated by the Europeans (and the US) as the strategically most important partner in Africa. In this context, Erdmann posits that South Africa is hustled into the role of a (key) pivotal state, an anchor country and a North-South-bridge-builder. This hustle and role-subscription for South Africa also applies to the strategic partnership with the EU (2009: 108).

The EU, on the other hand, is interesting to South Africa [...] as an ally in supporting South Africa's regional, pan-African and global ambitions' (Helly 2012: 2). This assessment is closer to my own account of EU-South Africa relations. It posits that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership is, similarly to the strategic partnerships with Brazil and India, geared at the bilateral, regional (interregional) and international levels from the perspective of both partners (Hess 2012: 4; Hess 2010: 190-194, 195-196).

But is there a common rationale to these three strategic partnerships, in particular? As mentioned before, analyses, which are centred on the EU's strategic partnerships, are linked to research on rising and/or regional powers. This also widely applies to the Brazilian, Indian and South African cases of strategic partnerships with the EU. For example, Gratius/John de Souza (2010: 130) state in the context of the strategic partnerships that the three countries' [...] increasing regional and global weight [that] the EU is paying more attention to India, Brazil and South Africa'. However, apart from this statement, their analysis on the respective strategic partnerships centres on similarities and differences in policy areas or foreign policy values and/or interests (Gratius/John de Souza 2010). Interestingly, Young notes that 'as the EU's offers of strategic partnerships proliferate, all these principal emerging powers complain that their value is debased' (Young 2010: 33). Thereby, he also refers to Brazil, India and South Africa (amongst others) (Youngs 2010: 32-34). Brazil, India and South Africa as a group are also seen as 'new leading powers' (Mildner/Husar 2009), particularly with respect to particular policy areas such as world trade (Mildner/Husar 2009). Yet again, as it holds true for the strategic partnerships in general, there is no systematic or theory-led investigation of a possibly common rationale of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa despite the identification of the rising/regional powers' emergence.

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<sup>28</sup> Erdmann (2009: 108) mentions with regard to the EU-South Africa-strategic partnership that South African diplomats try to avoid an impression amongst its neighbours that it is privileged by the Europeans in contrast to other African countries. South African diplomats find it hard to counter the accusation that it follows a national 'Sonderweg' (Erdmann 2009: 108) (special path). As a result, South Africa is turned into an 'agent' of non-African interests, which South Africa again tries to prevent at all costs (Erdmann 2009: 108). Chevallier (2008: 26) explains that 'South Africa thus finds itself in the uncomfortable position of having to deal with the tension between 'us and them' – North vs. South – whilst prioritising the African agenda above all'.

To conclude, to the author's knowledge, there is no systematic or theory-led approach as to understand these three strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa. Thus, there is no systematic or theory-led *understanding* to these three specific strategic partnerships, even though Brazil, India and South Africa and their foreign policies are often compared due to their presumed commonalities in domestic, foreign policies and international standing<sup>29</sup>. This may constitute yet another crucial dimension of the research gap, which the present investigation could 'fill-up' in terms of the Brazilian, Indian and South African dis-/similarities in foreign policy relations with the EU.

Last but not least, as the study is interested in *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships as *foreign policy tools in international politics*, it seems wise to take a glimpse at IR-accounts of strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments used in international politics.

### **2.2.5 Strategic partnerships in IR-theory and in general**

Firstly, none of the 'grand' theories of International Relations has addressed strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools or a form of relations between states. Thus, there is no account from the perspective of the classical bodies of theory – be it Realism, Liberalism or Social Constructivism and the like – which would either *explain* or *understand* strategic partnerships as social or political phenomena. Thus, there are no arguments on strategic partnerships from a 'grand' theory-view, which could be of value at this stage of the study. Even though there is no explicit mentioning of strategic partnerships by 'grand' theories of International Relations, I will yet check whether there are (implicit) contributions by their approaches to world politics. Therefore, I will assess the possible indirect contributions from classical (meta-) theories in detail in Ch. 3.2.2 as a prelude to the development of the study's own conceptual approach to the theorising of strategic partnerships. Thereby, I will delimitate strategic partnerships.

Nevertheless, there have been observers stating in a more general assessment that strategic partnerships are on the rise since the end of the Cold War (Nadkarni 2010: 45; Renard 2011: 7; Renard 2013b: 302). Furthermore, Renard/Rogers (2011: 3) mention that whereas the establishment of alliances has halted, strategic partnerships have been 'blossoming' (Renard/Rogers 2011: 3) in the same time period. According to

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<sup>29</sup> However, there are also voices stating that these three countries are actually rather different regarding (some of) the above mentioned dimensions (Gratius/John de Souza 2010: 130).

the authors, this is due to the fact that strategic partnerships provide '[...] a less confrontational and more constructive vision for a new global order [...]'<sup>30</sup>.

In the last subchapter on the *state of the art*, I will now put together the research puzzle and the pieces of the research gap(s).

### **2.3 Conclusion: Puzzle and Research Gap(s)**

To sum up, the literature review reflects that it is widely assumed that the rising of new powers is leading to power shifts in the international system and will eventually affect the EU-Member States and the EU as a whole. Analyses on the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships are strongly influenced by and linked to the topic of rising and declining powers against the background of systemic change and presumed multipolarity.

Specific research on the strategic partnerships between the EU and 'rising' and/or 'regional powers' has only developed rather recently but has gained pace and relevance in the last years (Grevi/de Vasconcelos 2008; Grevi/Khandekar 2011; Scott 2007; Bendiek/Kramer 2009b; Gratius 2011b; Renard 2011/2013; Sautenet 2012). Yet, the strategic partnerships have predominantly been analysed empirically and/or as single country-studies lacking a theoretically informed research (apart from the before mentioned research projects on how the EU is perceived among key non-EU countries) and/or a comparative perspective.

Thus, research on the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships after 2003 started as a predominantly policy-centred view on singular strategic partnerships which the EU has introduced over the years. A comparative perspective to several of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships only evolved slowly over time as more and more of them were established over the years. These various studies have started to open up an important field of research on strategic partnerships in foreign policy, especially with regard to the EU. Single-country-study-research has uncovered vast empirical details about the respective strategic partnerships. These perspectives are indeed important and relevant, particularly with regard to a policy-related view. Possible cooperation areas for the strategic partners as well as ways how to enhance their very cooperation have been proposed. The studies with a comparative perspective are, additionally, an important step to uncover the commonalities among the various strategic partnerships established

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<sup>30</sup> However, Renard/Rogers (2011: 3-4) also argue that strategic partnerships' '[...] inherent flexibility and ambiguity limit at the same time their potential impact'. However, they do not further elaborate on why their potential impact is limited.

by the EU. Especially the latter studies are an important building block for my work here. Yet, research on strategic partnerships still lack knowledge, especially on the cases of EU-Brazil-, EU-India- and EU-South Africa-strategic partnerships.

Crucially, there is no all-encompassing definition or conceptualisation of the EU's strategic partnerships up to now – neither in the policy documents nor in academic research. As Renard (2013b: 302) has put it quite figuratively, '[...] most of the literature on strategic partnerships is a mere recycling of the existing literature, and there is therefore a profound lack of understanding of strategic partnerships as a foreign policy instrument or as a strategy'. This is the most crucial research gap, where my research will contribute to: by *theorising* and *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, knowledge will be enhanced by the study's results with regard to various questions: first, what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership (rationale)? Secondly, how do they work and how do strategic partners interact?

Thereby, the door to further research, especially enabling comparative perspectives, on strategic partnerships – both in general and with regards to either the EU or the strategic partners – will be further opened. I agree with Whitman in assessing with respect to the strategic partnerships that 'all bilateral relations are marked by variations in duration, nature and depth' (Whitman 2010: 28; Grevi 2012: 9). But the question remains: do the EU's strategic partnerships have a common rationale? What makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership in the EU's context? The present study is guided by the premise that even though '[...] *not all strategic partnerships are identical [...]*' and '[...] *not all strategic partnerships are equal [...]*' (sic; both Renard 2013b: 305), there may still be a common rationale to the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships (after 2003) 'underneath the surface'. However, this presumption cannot be entirely tested in this study but needs to be left for further research. Nevertheless, the present study is guided by the attempt to conceptualise the EU's strategic partnership with a model, which could be potentially applied in further research in order to retrieve more generalising knowledge on the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships after 2003 as a whole.

Overall, the present study will combine various research strands and contribute to filling gaps accordingly. It will particularly provide an investigation of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships (after 2003) and analyses of three single cases in-depth. The cross-case comparative perspective is believed to enable a more general account of the

EU's bilateral strategic partnerships after 2003. The study's results may be used in the future for making sense of strategic partnerships formed by other countries or possibly in International Relations, in general.

### **3. Grounding and Delimiting the Study**

The chapter on *Grounding and Delimiting the Study* has two main parts. The first part addresses meta-theory, the agency-structure-relationship, (overarching) delineations and levels. The second part provides first evidence on as well as delimitations and potential building blocks of strategic partnerships. These two main parts are important pre-steps to the theorising and *understanding* of the (EU's) strategic partnerships.

#### **3.1 Meta-Theory, Agency-Structure-Relationship, Delineations and Levels**

This chapter addresses the philosophy of science underlying my research, the meta-theoretical foundations as well as the macro- and meso-levels of the study. This is done in order to clearly outline the bases of this research project. Firstly, I will be addressing the philosophical and meta-theoretical foundations of my work, which are scientific realism (and structuration theory). They signify the study's positioning within the agency-structure debate. As Wendt (1992: 425) has put it, 'philosophies of science are not theories of international relations'. However, a researcher has to clearly define the philosophical starting points of his/her work. Building on scientific realism, this dissertation will refrain from analysing the EU's strategic partnerships as an 'event'. Instead, this project seeks to investigate the underlying structures and powers at the strategic partnerships' underlying level in order to understand what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership and how strategic partners interact. To this end, I will particularly focus on the strategic partners and their interaction.

The positioning of my research within the structure-agency-debate will make clear which premises I make and 'where' my research starts from. This is not an end in itself: This step is a crucial precondition before a researcher can begin with his/her (theoretical and empirical) work. It not only constitutes the meta-theoretical 'underpinning' of this project but tells the reader about the ontological<sup>31</sup> bases of this research and the epistemological implications for the study. Thus, a positioning within the structure-agency-debate builds the fundament as well as effects implications for the study's ontology, epistemology, its (meta-)theoretical starting point, the levels of analysis, its research design and its methodology. Secondly, I will refer to the meta-theoretical foundations of my study. I will state why and how I choose an analytic eclectic approach in combining 'modules' from specific paradigms. I will intertwine approaches to a 'fusion' of neoliberalism, neo-/realism and constructivism. Moreover, I will introduce insights from

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<sup>31</sup> Ontology means the most basic premises about the world and how it works (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 129).

business and management literature as well as sociology. Thirdly, I will outline the boundaries of my study with respect to several broad research strands within International Relations as well as within Political and Social Sciences. Thereby, the (envisaged) contributions and delimitations of my study to these various research strands will become evident. Fourthly, after having demonstrated that International Relations as a subdiscipline forms the basis of my study, I will specify the structure(s) and agency in my work by addressing the 'macro'- and 'meso'-levels in my analysis.

### 3.1.1 The Agency-Structure-Debate and Meta-Theoretical Foundations

Every research project needs to position itself within the agency-structure-debate in order to clarify the premises and foundational bases of the research. This is due to the fact that every formulated explanation to a (social or political) phenomenon points to an implicit *understanding* of structure and agency (Hay 1995: 192). As a social scientist, one needs to ask oneself several questions. For example, are actors autonomous agents who completely control the surrounding in which their action is being taken? Or are agents completely dependent on the context of their setting which they cannot influence by any means? These questions are important because they inform the formulation of the hypotheses of a study. As a result, it is crucial to denominate the underlying set of assumptions or beliefs of how structure and agency are related in our own research on a social phenomenon (Hay 1995: 189, 205; Wendt 1987: 337).

Hay (1995) identifies four positions (see Figure 1) in the so called structure-agency debate, which differ on firstly, whether they follow an 'insider' (agency centred) or an 'outsider' (structure-centred) account; and secondly, whether they hold a simple or a dialectical view of the structure-agency relationship (Hay 1995: 192-3)<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> There are various ways to denominate the different approaches within the agency-structure-debate which also leads to confusion over terms. For example, Wendt (1987) criticises the 'simple view' of structure and agency (Hay's 1995 terminology) within neorealism as well as world system theory in International Relations. Whereas neorealism as an individualist approach keeps agency 'primitive', world system theory as a structuralist approach keeps structure 'primitive' ('primitive', thereby, means keeping the unit 'fixed and unproblematic') (Wendt 1987: 348). Instead, he proposes to adopt a so called 'structurationist' perspective, which sees both structure and agency interrelated in order to avoid either the agency-bias or structure-bias. However, he does not clearly differentiate as he both refers to structuration theory as well as scientific or critical realism at the same time. Other authors again have a different denomination for these metatheoretical approaches. For example, Hix (1994) calls the 'simple views' (Hay 1995) of the agency-structure-relation 'agency-primitive' and 'structure-primitive' approaches. Ultimately, there is congruence between Hay (1995) and Hix (1994) and only a difference in terms: Hix, similarly to Hay, also outlines four 'types' of approaches to the study of politics. Firstly, Hix also refers to 'structure-active' and 'structure-neutral' theories within the structure-biased group. The 'structure-active' theories believe in structures determining agency (thereby equalling Hay's 'structuralism') whereas the 'structure-neutral' theories reckon that structure and agency are interdependent (thereby equalling Hay's critical realist/strategic-relational approach). Secondly, Hix (1994) refers to 'agency-primitive group theories' and 'agency-primitive rational actor theories': He does not elaborate on the latter; however, I would assume that they

**Figure 1: Positions in the structure-agency debate**

	'Insider' account (agency-centred)	'Outsider' account (structure-centred)
Simple view of structure- agency	Intentionalism <sup>33</sup>	Structuralism <sup>34</sup>
Dialectical view of Structure-agency	Structuration theory	Critical realism – strategic-relational approach

Source: Hay (1995): 193

Here, I will not dwell in detail on the four individual positions as my study does not deal with the structure-agency-debate in particular. However, to make it clear, my research project is based upon a dialectical view of structure and agency. Thus, I will start from the premise that structure and agency are interrelated and I will follow the middle way with respect to the questions stated before. Consequently, I take neither agents nor structure as given or prefixed entities. Instead, both impact on one another: they are interrelated, co-determining and mutually constitutive. Agents are not believed to be completely autonomous from the structure, which represents the environment for their

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equal Hay's (1995) 'intentionalism' and 'structuration theory'. In brief, it shows that there is a wide agreement on four approaches to do social or political science research, which is based on four related but different ontologies in social theory. As researchers, it is important to be aware of these paradigms for our own research as well as other studies. These meta-theoretical foundations inform the premises for research as well as the ontologies and epistemologies of studies. In order to avoid confusion, I will be using Hay's (1995) terminology.

<sup>33</sup> As a first 'insider' account, intentionalism posits that structures are being determined by intentional action. Explanations to a political phenomenon are derived from the actors and their intentions, motivations and self-understanding. Intentionalism is dominant, for example, among rational choice or public choice theorists stressing the selfishness of individuals working towards maximising utility, being strategic calculators and intentional actors. However, this understanding has been criticized for its non-relational conception of rationality as both context and rational action are believed to be interdependent (Hay 1995: 195-6).

<sup>34</sup> Intentionalism's counterpart following a monocausal perspective of the structure-agency relationship is structuralism. Following this understanding, actors simply 'bear' the working of "unobservable social and political structures" (Hay 1995: 193). Structure is believed to constrain and, above all, determine agency. Strategies, motivations and actions of agents are seen as consequences of determining structures. As a result, structures are determinant and relatively autonomous systems. Structuralism has been subject to a high number of critiques which, e.g., highlight the underestimation of individual activity (Hay 1995: 193-5).

actions. However, agency is not entirely dependent on structure. The same holds true for structure in a dialectical perspective: structure is neither entirely independent from agency nor is it determining agency. Instead, it is a middle way: agency and structure are interlinked and mutually interdependent. In brief, as Hay (1995: 199-200; 205) has put it, society is not only constituted by the sums of structure and agency but by their interaction. I strongly agree with this position. Structure and agency are more than the sum of their parts as they are two sides of the coin.

As I will be using a dialectical view of the structure-agency-relationship, I will briefly introduce its counterparts, namely structuration theory and the critical realist/strategic relational approach.

Firstly, structuration theory presents a dialectical view of the structure-agency relationship. Predominantly, Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration tries to dissolve the dualism of structure and agency. Giddens strives for a duality and refers to the image of two sides of a coin disapproving of artificially demarcating structure and agency as 'insider' accounts do. Giddens introduces two perspectives of his approach: firstly, structuration highlights the relatedness, interdependence and co-determination of social structure and agency. Secondly, this approach also underlines the duality of structure meaning that social structure determines human action and vice versa. By overcoming the division line, which is often perceived as a rigid separation, structuration theory has been influencing many theoretical approaches (Hay 1995: 198; Wendt 1987: 339). At the same time, it has also been critiqued for only transferring the dualism by slightly modifying the definition of notions instead of adhering to analytical precision (Hay 1995: 198). Still, the fact that structuration theory has acknowledged the need to transcend the dualism of structure and agency proves nevertheless to be worthwhile (Hay 1995: 197-9).

Secondly, the critical realist – strategic-relational approach is the second ('outsider') account (structure-centred) assuming a dialectical view of structure and agency (Hay 1995: 193). It is widely based upon the work by the critical realist Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1979, and 1986) and on the related strategic-relational approach by Bob Jessop (1990). Similarly to Giddens, Bhaskar (1979: 43) acknowledges a duality of structure and agency by stating that society is both condition and outcome of human agency. Additionally, Jessop (1990: 129) states in his strategic-relational approach that the state's form determines a hierarchy of strategies and that the state is located in a strategic terrain characterised by dialectical processes of structures and strategies. Consequently, the structures in a system are strategically selective (Hay 1995: 199). It becomes clear that the critical realism – strategic relational approach also overcomes the

dualism of structure and agency: although structure and agency are theoretically separate, they are completely interwoven in practice. Yet in contrast to structuration theory, this view accentuates structure: though structure does not directly determine outcomes but conditions agency and, therefore, defines the range of potential strategies possibly being deployed by agents. Thus, structure is strategically selective by enabling and constraining action. But it does not directly determine one particular action. Similarly, agency is contextualised meaning that agency is being contextualised within the structural context in which it takes place. To sum up, by following a critical realist – strategic-relational approach, human agency is related to preconstituted, highly structured settings (Hay 1995: 199-200; Dessler 1989: 452, 466).

A dialectical view of the agency-structure-relationships overcomes one limitation of its counterpart (the monolithic view), namely the latter's inability to 'explain' certain actions or structures. This is due to the fact that they start their analysis from 'fixed' ('primitive'), ontologically reduced and reified entities (Wendt 1987: 340; 349). Instead, taking into account a reciprocation of agency and structure allows for showing the 'properties' of units and system and their co-constitutive nature. The boundaries between the insider and outsider-accounts of the dialectical view yet appear rather fluent. However, at the same time my study leans towards the – in Hay's (1995) terminology – 'insider'-account and, therefore, structuration theory. Before I turn to structuration theory in particular, I will shortly describe its general philosophical basis – namely, scientific realism.

### **3.1.1.1 Scientific realism as a basis**

The philosophical roots of structuration theory lie in scientific realism<sup>35</sup>. It reflects an attempt to [...] combine a natural science approach with an interpretative one' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 6). Thus, it actually tries to combine 'explaining' and 'understanding' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 6-7). In contrast to empiricism, scientific realism allows for including 'unobservable generative structures' (Wendt 1987: 350) without compromising 'scientific' ontology (Wendt 1987: 350). Scientific realism presumes 'that the world exists independently of human beings, that mature scientific theories typically refer to

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<sup>35</sup> Scientific realism again refers to philosophical realism as one philosophy of science. It is different from both empiricism and post-positivism, for example (Wendt 1999: 47). But crucially, scientific realism is not equal to (IR-)constructivism (Carlsnaes 1992: 248). As Rivas (2010: 210) has put it, realism 'means an acceptance of the existence of a reality regardless of human observation or knowledge of it'. Thus, my study starts from the ontological presupposition of realism that social reality is enduring and not 'only' re-/produced by social interaction (the latter being Constructionism) (Abbott 2004: 46). For more information on scientific realism see, for example, Wight (2006).

this world, and that they do so even when the objects of science are unobservable' (Wendt 1999: 47).

Note that scientific realism does not work at the same level as common theories of International Relations, such as Realism<sup>36</sup> or Neorealism, but that it rather constitutes a 'philosophical underpinning' and 'a philosophy of and for science' (Wight/Joseph 2010: 2) in general. Thus, scientific realism could be underpinning other scientific disciplines as well – it is not restricted to the social sciences or, let alone, International Relations (Wight/Joseph 2010: 3). Furthermore, some theories of International Relations are not per se compatible with scientific realism. However, scientific realism does not predetermine the theories for a study (Wight/Joseph 2010: 2, 3). Additionally, scientific realism is a 'non-positivist' approach (Wight/Joseph 2010: 2; Bhaskar 2008: 12).

There is, thus, a difference between empirical realists and scientific realists (Bhaskar 2008: 15, 26). At this point, I will not review the entire debate between empiricism and scientific realism because this is not the main focus of the study. Suffice it to say, that both accounts differ in the basics of ontology, epistemology and the grounds of research customs. As Wendt explains, there are two major issues of contention between the 'camps'. Empiricists prefer to research only events and entities, which are 'real' and 'observable' (Wendt 1989: 351-352). Scientific realists, by contrast, grant scientifically legitimate ontological status also to 'unobservables', if they have observable effects or are evidentially 'manipulable' by agents. Theories in this 'tradition' offer explanations to social phenomena by demonstrating how they are produced by an underlying aspect (Dessler 1989: 445). For example, the generation and flow of electricity is explained by pointing to protons and neutrons. They are (the combination of) underlying entities which make a set or a process (electricity) but which we cannot see.

As S. Smith (1996: 25) has put it, scientific realism is 'interested in uncovering the structures and things of the world that make science possible'. Thus, according to scientific realism, there is a 'world outside of experience' (S. Smith 1996: 25). Scientific realism works at three levels (Jessop 2010: 187). The real level denotes the mechanisms underlying an event; the actual level constitutes the event and the empirical level is what we experience in the world (S. Smith 1996: 26). Thus, instead of analysing

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<sup>36</sup> This is the Realism as known in IR. Realism is often depicted as the 'orthodoxy and the classical tradition about international relations' (Buzan 1996: 47) and is contrasted with other paradigms such as e.g. liberalism/pluralism/functionalist/Kantianism, EnglishSchool/Grotianism or Marxism/socialism (Buzan 1996: 47, 55; Hollis/Smith 1990: 10-11). However, Buzan mentions that the boundaries between the paradigms are blurred. However, they differ on what constitutes the 'centre of [their; NH] attention' (Buzan 1996: 47; 55).

the strategic partnerships as an 'event' (the actual level), I will analyse their underlying structures and powers of strategic partners (the real level). Put differently, instead of focusing on the empirical 'object' (strategic partnerships), I investigate 'its' subjects – the interacting agents – in order to gain knowledge on strategic partnerships. Thereby, my analysis focuses particularly on the 'real' level (powers of strategic partners) in order to *understand* the 'actual' level (strategic partnerships) (Jessop 2010: 187; S. Smith 1996: 25). From an epistemological point of view, scientific realists allow for abduction due to their ontological understanding.

At this stage it is vital to understand that I will not seek to answer a 'why'-question in terms of a causal account. Generally, a scientific realist approach seeks answering 'why'-questions, which again necessitates answers to 'how'- and 'what'-questions (Wendt 1987: 354, 363). However, I will outpicture the 'why'-dimension. The study will make certain assumptions about structure and agency in the first place and then concentrate on addressing the 'what'- and 'how'-questions, which is perfectly in line with its research interest. Thus, in order to *understand* and theorise the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, I will analyse how they interact and what actually makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership. Thereby, I am particularly investigating the powers of the strategic partners within their interaction. Yet again, I have to reiterate that even though the study engages in identifying underlying forces, it will do so in a non-causal way.

Even though scientific realism in the social sciences is often equated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (e.g., Bhaskar 2008; Kurki 2010: 129; S. Smith 1996: 25), it is important to note that he is not the only representative of this philosophy within the social sciences (Wight/Joseph 2010: 3). There are also scientific realists, who tend to 'favour' an 'insider's account while still following the duality of structure and agency. These are called 'structurationists', mostly based on the work by Anthony Giddens and his structuration theory. As my work also leans towards structuration theory, I will now outline its main characteristics in order to further highlight the starting point of my study.

Before doing so, it is yet crucial to reiterate that the study takes scientific realism only as a basis and starting point. I will not engage in establishing causal mechanisms and it will not engage in positivist research.

### **3.1.1.2 A starting point: Structuration theory**

My research also builds on Structuration theory. Whereas scientific realism (roughly) denotes here that I also include 'unobservables' in my research, structuration theory amongst others implies that I follow a dialectical view of structure and agency. As mentioned in Ch 3.1.1, structuration theory is one form of this dialectical view, which leans towards an 'insider'-account and thus accentuates agency within my social ontology. I will first outline Structuration theory's accentuation of agency within its dialectical view of the agency-structure-relationship before turning to the criticism of its conflation of structure and agency.

#### ***3.1.1.2.1 Accentuation of agency within strategic partnerships***

The accentuation of agency is due to the fact that the social phenomenon in my study – the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa – is (intentionally) established by actors and not by structures. Put differently, strategic partnerships are intentionally intro-/produced by agents. It is this very 'intention', which is not acknowledged by critical realists in the tradition of Roy Bhaskar. As a result, the present project leans towards accentuating agency within the dialectical view of the agency-structure-relationship.

It is important to keep in mind that 'structuration theory by itself cannot generate specific theoretical claims about international relations' (Wendt 1987: 369). It rather implies the form of explanation for agent's actions. By this, it prescribes certain epistemological and methodological parameters for going about theorising and doing the analysis. 'Structurationists' cannot offer direct *understanding* to social phenomena in international relations (Wendt 1987: 369). Structuration theory should rather be seen as my study's philosophical fundament, which reflects the starting point of how a researcher sees and analyses the world (ontology, epistemology), and for the means (theory, research design, methodology) to an end (research results; *understanding*). In brief, Structuration theory is the broad philosophical 'strand' underlying my research as a starting point.

Structuration theory is more about the analysis than about the material of the social world itself. It reflects how we think about the social world (Wendt 1987: 355). Structuration theory is predominantly Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens

1984)<sup>37</sup>. However, there are several structuration theorists. Structuration theorists or 'structurationists' (Wendt 1987: 356) have in common that they believe in the 'equal' ontological standing of both agency and structure. (Potentially unobservable) social structures generate agency. Agency again is characterised by (human) intentions and motivation. Thereby, social structures are intrinsically tied to time and space<sup>38</sup>, which consequently needs to be kept in mind in both theoretical and social studies (Wendt 1987: 356).

The mentioning of the international system-structure as background for actor's choices reflects that I view strategic partnerships and its strategic partners as structurally grounded. In this context, it is important to note that structures do not prescribe one particular strategy but rather a range of strategies serving the interests of a structurally embedded actor. Therefore, in my study I will not start from the supposition that structures are strictly strategically selective. Thus, structure is indeed enabling and constraining action. But agents are somewhat autonomous and have more leeway in choosing their strategies (which are nevertheless not irrespective of the system-structure). System-structures, in this sense, can rather offer 'incentive structures' for particular action which actors choose in a deliberative way.

To sum up, the subchapter has demonstrated that the study adopts a dialectical view of the agency-structure-relationship in *understanding* strategic partnership. Thereby, by analysing strategic partnerships, I accentuate agency within the dialectic view of structure and agency. At the same time, strategic partnerships are introduced by agents against the background of the nature of the international system-structure. In brief, strategic partnerships are socially and structurally grounded.

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<sup>37</sup> The term 'structuration' refers to 'the structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure' (Giddens 1984: 376).

<sup>38</sup> 'Time' and 'space' point to the fact that a researcher must take into account the historical and geographical context of the social structures (Wendt 1987: 356). In my study, I admittedly analyse strategic partnerships against a certain background. Thereby, I do take into account certain features of the structure in which strategic partnerships occur. However, in line with Giddens' theory of structuration from the 1970s<sup>38</sup>, my study escapes the 'one-sided determinism of structuralist explanations' (Yalvaç 2010: 175). Thus, I think that the establishment of a strategic partnership is potentially possible in several system-structures. Indeed, there are certain system-structures which might favour the coming into existence or the likelihood of strategic partnerships in comparison to other system-structures. Yet this shows that the deliberate choice of agents<sup>38</sup> seems more important for whether strategic partnerships are introduced or not. Therefore, the key to 'understanding' strategic partnerships as social phenomena is to 'understand' the interaction of agents. Similarly to Dessler (1989: 462), who speaks of alliances, I see strategic partnerships as 'products of intentional action'. But as agency is not determined by structure in my account, so neither are strategic partnerships as products by agents. Strategic partnerships are, thus, no automatic consequence of the system-structure. Actors, in this sense, are the initiators of strategic partnerships. They 'determine' strategic partnerships against the background of the respective system-structure as they intentionally initiate them.

### 3.1.1.2.2 Conflating agency and structure?

A dialectical view of the agency-structure-relationship is confronted with criticism of conflating the two dimensions<sup>39</sup>. As the title of this subchapter suggests the present project takes Structuration theory only as a starting point in order to highlight the accentuation of agency within the dialectical perspective of the agency-structure-relationship<sup>40</sup>. But the question now rises as to how to combine an interlinked view of agency and structure without conflating the two dimensions?

The study will assume a 'true' dialectical (dual) view of structure and agency by according causal properties to both agency and structure. Thus, structures do provide crucial structural and social context for actor's behaviour and choices. Structures are the 'deeper social context' (Wight/Joseph 2010: 21). Structural context, which is independent from agency but nevertheless co-constitutive: the components of the international system-structure represent the social and structural context, in which actors are situated and embedded and which is highly relevant for their choices, behaviour and their capacity for (intentional) social transformation. By only looking at the properties of agents and individual interaction detached from social context, we will not be able to *understand* strategic partnerships. In this sense, a certain *understanding* of the structural and social context can help to *understand* agents' actions.

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<sup>39</sup> This is a criticism, which has been levelled against Giddens and Wendt in IR. First, according to Rivas, Giddens conflates agency and structure by arguing that 'structures are entirely dependent on the understandings and practices of the agents who instantiate them (...)' (Rivas 2010: 204). Secondly, Wendt's accounts (e.g., 1987, 1992, 1999) are not beyond dispute (Copeland 2006). For example, Wendt has been criticised for not actually adhering to a duality of agency and structure but to conflate the two or unjustifiably favouring one side of the (agency-structure-) medal (Wight/Joseph 2010: 19-20; Diez et. al. 2010: 214). Furthermore, Wight (2006: 17) criticises Wendt (1999) for presenting scientific realism as a 'via media' (Wendt 1999: 40) and for his declaration to be following positivism (Wendt 1999: 39-40). Yet scientific realism is not a 'compromise' or 'middle-ground' position between positivism and interpretivism (Rivas 2010: 203). Instead, both positivism and scientific realism are philosophies of science, which differ regarding their ontology (Wight 2006: 17, 19). In this study I will often make reference to Giddens and Wendt. This is due to the fact that they are highly influential to the scientific realist and 'structurationist' perspectives. However, the study will transcend Wendt's 'middle-ground'-approach and Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory and his approach of 'instantiation'. Thus, their accounts will only be starting or reference points for the study's conceptual model and the investigation of strategic partnerships.

<sup>40</sup> Giddens (1984) follows a 'particular' agency-centred approach as he especially stresses psychological and biological factors (individual human behaviour). To my mind, sociological aspects receive somewhat too little attention: even though he refers to sociology, sociologists and social structures, the interaction of an agent in a 'society' does not widely feature in his theory. This is where, I think, the study's 'true' dialectical view of agency and structure, which makes reference to structurally and socially grounded agents, will be of major benefit. I will come back to my transcending of Giddens' approach in Ch 5.1.2.1.

The study's developed conceptual model will allow for including the structural and social context of agency. Thus, my analysis includes the duality of agency and structure without conflating it via the study's careful combination of analytic eclectic modules in the concept-building. Over all, I will be able to *understand*, which underlying factors generated the behaviour by agents. By looking underneath the phenomenon, my analysis is based on a 'social ontology based on underlying social relations' (Wight/Joseph 2010: 24), which allows for (intentional) social transformation by agents.

After having outlined the starting point of my study – namely, Structuration Theory à la Giddens – I will now explain how I intend to transcend Giddens' approach. Following Realist Social Theory will enable me to transcend Giddens' view of structure while still being able to accentuate agency. The study's realist social theoretical approach will also have implications on how I proceed with the building of my conceptual model of strategic partnerships (see Chapter 4.1.3).

### **3.1.1.3 Transcending Structuration theory: Realist Social theory**

Realist Social Theory is based on scientific realism (Pawson/Tilley 1997: 56). In my view, there is a potential for realist social theory to be used fruitfully in empirical research. I think that realist social theory can also benefit research in International Relations by its alternative (dual) view of the agency-structure-relationship<sup>41</sup>. It is where a more sociological view – accounting for the relationship between agents and their social relations – can be brought into the picture when dealing with the agency-structure-debate (Carter/New 2004: 3). Giddens structurationist perspective, which only sees social structure as being 'virtual' and somewhat dependent on agents ('instantiated' by agents), can be transcended by a realist social view (Carter/New 2004: 4-5). This realist social view of agency and structure has been highly influenced by scholars such as Margaret Archer and others. A realist social view of the structure-agency-relationship is dialectical but rather called 'dual' and, thereby, grants both agency and structure causal properties.

The difference between Realist social theory and Giddens' Structuration theory lies in the varying conception of social structures (Carter/New 2004: 5)<sup>42</sup>. Following

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<sup>41</sup> For example, Carlsnaes has also proposed to follow scientific realism and particularly Archer's morphogenetic approach in overcoming the agency-structure-problem with regard to Foreign Policy Analysis (Carlsnaes 1992).

<sup>42</sup> Even though Carter/New (2004) elaborate on the realist social approach with respect to human agency, I will in the following adapt their arguments on individuals by applying them to agents, in general.

Realist Social theory, a crucial property of a social structure is its '*anteriority*' (sic; Carter/New 2004: 5) vis-à-vis agency. Furthermore, social structures, which involve enabling and constraining as well as de- and motivating action amongst their causal properties, are 'relatively enduring' (Carter/New 2004: 5, 12; Archer 1995: 50). Agents, according to the realist social account, have various causal properties, such as '[...] self-consciousness, reflexivity, intentionality, cognition and emotionality [...]' (Carter/New 2004: 5) amongst others. They also pursue interests (Carter/New 2004: 5). Moreover, Carter/New (2004: 5) mention the key power of agents is '[...] the power to maintain or modify the world [...]' (Carter/New 2004: 5). Agents have the power of choice and, thus, to decide. As Carter/New put it, '[...] the effects of structures are mediated by agency: in social life, nothing happens without the activation of the causal powers of people' (Carter/New 2004: 14). This is in line with the accentuation of agency in my study. Additionally, by depicting agency and structure as both irreducible to one another, the realist social theoretical approach transcends both the structurationist as well as more structural views of the agency-structure-relationship (Carter/New 2004: 5-6). In brief, the realist social view works with a '[...] dynamic conception of the interplay over time between interpretative, purposive agents and a structural domain defined in terms of both constraining and enabling properties' (Carlsnaes 1992: 245).

As the study is dedicated to *understanding* instead of *explaining*<sup>43</sup>, it will build a realist social theoretically-inspired conceptual model of *understanding*. I will make assumptions about pre-existing structures, which are the structural and social context for agents, their choices and their interactions. Hence, the international system-structure in my case is to be seen as the context for enabling/constraining/de-/motivating actions. Furthermore, I will look at the structural and social powers of the agents, which underly their interaction and interrelationship.

I will be following Margaret S. Archer's morphogenetic approach to realist social theory (1995), which I will outline in Ch. 4.1.3.2 in the context of building my conceptual model. Suffice it to say here, that morphogenesis is '[...] an approach to social theory, which is realist in its ontology and which supplements realism by making 'analytical dualism' explicit and demonstrating its methodological utility in practical social analysis' (Archer 1995: 76). Thus, the morphogenetic model allows for an analytical dualism of structure and agency<sup>44</sup>, follows a realist ontology and its of practical use when it comes

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<sup>43</sup> It is yet crucial in this context that even though the study will follow a realist social theoretical model, it will refrain from positivism. Thus, the study will engage in investigating the social sphere but in a non-positivist mode.

<sup>44</sup> Archer (1995: 87) does not dismiss the co-constitutiveness of structure and agency altogether but she rejects the representation of their bonding as contact adhesion such that structure and agency are

to methodology and the analysis itself. This dual analytical perspective will help with the understanding of strategic partnerships and taking both agency and structure into account.

#### **3.1.1.4 Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter I have first outlined the philosophical base of my study, namely scientific realism. Secondly, I have particularly introduced Giddens' structurationist approach as the starting point for my agency-highlighting study. However, in a third step I have made clear that I will transcend Structuration theory. This will be of significance especially when it comes to the conceptualisation of structure(s) (see Chapter 5.1.2.1). As mentioned before, I will follow Realist Social theory, which is based on scientific realism, in my study. It perfectly matches the accentuation of agency in my study, while simultaneously adhering to a dual view of the agency-structure-relationship. Both aspects will help with building an analytical model *understanding* and investigating the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

In the following chapter, I will first address the analytic eclectic combination of 'modules' from different meta-theories in an intermediary step. This combination is the building block of how I understand agency and structure in this study. Furthermore, I will elaborate on the study's introduction of an interdisciplinary perspective. Moreover, the study will delimitate its research focus from the perspective of certain research areas. Afterwards, I will outline my view of agency and structure in a more concrete manner with respect to the agents I and II in my study, namely the EU as well as Brazil, India and South Africa.

#### **3.1.2 Analytic Eclecticism: IR-paradigms and social science disciplines**

Besides the meta-theoretical basis of my work, scientific realism, I will now turn to the theoretical starting point of my research. Note that I will not review the entire (vast) body of neither the liberal, the realist nor the social constructivist school in International Relations<sup>45</sup> because this is not the primary focus of my study. Yet, I will outline the

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effectively defined in terms of one another'. This is where she favours her analytical dualism instead of Giddens dualism of structure and agency (Archer 1995: 133).

<sup>45</sup> It may be a commonplace but for the sake of being precise and of avoiding confusion: whereas International Relations (written in capital letters) denotes the theories and schools of thought dealing with international politics and relations among/between states, international relations (small letters) simply refers to world politics and related phenomena as such.

fundamental guidelines of each of the schools in order to make clear that neither of the 'grand' theories in International Relations<sup>46</sup> is sufficient on their own in terms of *understanding* of strategic partnerships. Thus, this 'testing' is not an end in itself. But this 'check' is quite important as it proves that I have closely 'tested' existing theories, whether they can *explain* or *understand* strategic partnerships. Importantly, none of the three grand theories genuinely addresses strategic partnerships between states or state-like entities. Yet all three will offer modules informing the analytic eclectic approach to building a conceptual model of strategic partnerships. By referring to the 'grand' theories of International Relations, I will make particular reference to the approaches' convictions of international cooperation because 'strategic partnerships' are presumably a form of cooperation. Furthermore, I will build on insights referring to alliance-building<sup>47</sup> and competition<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, I will draw on concepts of social interaction.

First, I will highlight the liberal school as it is known for addressing international cooperation and interdependence among states in the anarchical system. The liberal approaches on interdependence will be of significance to my sketching of the structural context of the agents, who establish strategic partnerships.

Secondly, I will turn to the realist 'camp' of scholars on International Relations. The neorealist school of thought is the second predominant body I will draw on in my work and it constitutes the study's point of departure. Thereby, the realist school of thought has approaches, on which I will build on, even though it is limited in explanatory power when it comes to strategic partnerships.

Thirdly, this is the point, where I will introduce Social Constructivism. It will be the third body of thought, which I will add to the neoliberal and neo-/realist point of departures. Social constructivist approaches will be of specific relevance in *understanding* of strategic partnerships in terms of how strategic partners (may) interact. Moreover, it is particularly well-equipped in corresponding to the meta-theoretical positioning of my study, which conceives of agency and structure as co-constitutive.

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<sup>46</sup> Of course, there are more than these three 'classical' or 'grand' theories in International Relations, which are paradigmatically dominant (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 25). Additionally, one could mention the theory bodies of a) Feminism and Gender; b) Marxism and Critical Theory; and c) Postmodernism and Poststructuralism (Diez et al. 2011). However, there are considered to be of limited relevance, when it comes to the strategic partnerships as a social or political phenomenon. Strategic partnerships are neither about 'gender', neither about the role of national or global capitalism nor class relations; neither about the role of language nor political discourse in the first place (Diez et al. 2011: 51-57; 135-144; 166-172). This is why I will not further elaborate on these theory concepts.

<sup>47</sup> This is due to the fact that strategic partnerships are often compared to alliances as the chapter on *state of the art* (Ch. 2) has demonstrated. Alliances can, of course, also be framed as a form of cooperation against the background of the balance of power (Keohane 1984: 7).

<sup>48</sup> My work is (amongst others) based on realism, which rather stresses the aspect of 'competition' and 'conflict' in international relations via its focus on power politics. Thereby, I combine the factors of competition located in human nature (à la Morgenthau's realism in IR) and in structures (à la neorealism) (Buzan 1996: 51).

In brief, I will combine and analytically 'eclect' all three 'grand theories' by 'fusioning' approaches to a perspective of '(Limited Neoliberal –Neo-/Realist – Social Constructivism'. It shows that only the fusion of approaches will help to fully grasp the social phenomenon of strategic partnerships.

### **3.1.2.1 Classical Liberalism and Neoliberalism**

Let us first turn to the Liberal and Neoliberal school of thought in International Relations because it is known for highlighting international cooperation among states in the international system<sup>49</sup>. Liberalism, in general, is a school of thought in International Relations, which should not be confused with liberal economic understandings and it also should not be equated with Andrew Moravcsik's work often termed as 'new liberalism'<sup>50</sup> or the liberal (democratic) peace thesis (Diez et al. 2011: 130<sup>51</sup>). Liberalism, which represents a rational account, can be subdivided in two subgroups: Classical Liberalism (or 'Idealism') and Neoliberalism (or 'Liberal Institutionalism') (Diez et al. 2011: 130-133).

First, Classical Liberalism, which emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, postulated that in order to prevent war, nation-states should refrain from aggressively pursuing power and influence. Instead, they should be 'controlled' by the introduction of international law and international institutions (Diez et al. 2011: 130-131). This already hints at the 'cooperative nature' of the liberal approach to international relations. As Diez et al. (2011: 131) put it, the formation of international institutions would increase the 'interdependence' (Diez et al. 2011: 131) between states. Thereby, war seems less likely as international institutions open up the prospect for negotiating and mediating (Diez et al. 2011: 131). Being 'idealist', Classical Liberalism is led by normative belief: its scholars believe that all nations share a common interest in peace. The realist school of thought, which is pictured as the theoretical counter piece of Liberalism, criticises Liberalism on that account. Liberals, such as David Mitrany, have transcended the normative approach

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Keohane 1984; For more information on (international) cooperation see, e.g., Axelrod 1997 or Stein 1990.

<sup>50</sup> In his 'liberal' approach Moravcsik investigates processes of negotiating between interest groups in the domestic context in the process of formulation of foreign policy preferences (Diez et al. 2011: 130; see Moravcsik 1993)

<sup>51</sup> In the following I will be often referring to Diez et al., who provide a very sound overview of IR-theories, and their work, which is very suitable for this introductory chapter in terms of the study's theoretical basis. However, the following chapters will demonstrate that the study builds on a multiplicity of sources, which allows for a stronger diversification.

by instead focusing on the how international institutions come into place (Diez et al. 2011: 131).

Secondly, Neoliberalism gained in relevance in importance in the 1970s due to an observable rise in number and significance of international institutions puzzling ‘the neorealist hypothesis of cooperation among states as being very unlikely under the conditions of anarchy<sup>52</sup>’ (Diez et al. 2011: 131). For example, Robert O. Keohane believed that the growing quantity of international institutions<sup>53</sup>, international organisations and international regimes<sup>54</sup> proved that the neorealist assumptions about the implications of international anarchy were wrong (Diez et al. 2011: 131-132). Even though neoliberal theory sides with neorealism in being rationalist and, thus, accepts that actors are egoistic and rational, neoliberal scholars derived different results from this presumption (Diez et al. 2011: 132; 133). Neoliberals believe that the prospects for (possible) international cooperation are far greater than neorealists assume. Whereas neorealists only expect international cooperation if there is a hegemon, who protects, supports and ensures the application of norms and rules, neoliberals point to the mutual interdependence among states (Diez et al. 2011: 132). For example, Keohane and Nye (1977) already pointed to the social and economic connections among states in the 1970s (Keohane/Nye 2012; Diez et al. 2011: 132). In their book on ‘Power and Interdependence’ (Keohane/Nye 2012), the authors dealt with the effects of complex interdependence in international politics (ibid., 20-24). They defined international interdependence as ‘[...] situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries’ (Keohane/Nye 2012: 7; Diez et al. 2011: 132; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 29). Interdependence includes more than ‘interconnectiveness’ as it implicates that there may be mutual costs of transnational interactions (Keohane/Nye 2012: 8). Due to this mutual interdependence, international actors lose their autonomy and they may be more ‘sensitive’ and more ‘vulnerable’ (Keohane/Nye 2012: 10-16). Military capabilities become less significant and the enticements for international cooperation grow (Diez et al. 2011: 132). In contrast to neorealists, neoliberals believe in absolute gains: as states share common interests, international cooperation becomes

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<sup>52</sup> Anarchy can be defined as a situation where ‘there is no superior power within a system that would be able to enforce rules’ (Diez et al. 2011: 1). It does not signify ‘chaos’ but simply points to the fact that there is no formal overarching authority (Hollis/Smith 1990: 7; Wight 1995: 100-104). Due to lack of an overarching authority, the anarchy of the international system is the point of departure for describing international politics as ‘power politics’ (Wight 1995: 102).

<sup>53</sup> International institutions are defined by Keohane as ‘persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity and shape expectations’ (quoted from Diez et al. 2011: 131).

<sup>54</sup> I will define international regimes, when I specifically address the liberal approach on international regimes in a few moments.

likely<sup>55</sup> even without a hegemon (Diez et al. 2011: 132; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 29). International institutions can act as facilitators for international cooperation, which help to enforce rules and make cooperation more durable (Diez et al. 2011: 132-133). However, neoliberalism has been criticised for not well-explaining the preferences of states (Diez et al. 2011: 133).

In its empirical application neoliberalism is often applied to particular international institutions and regimes (Diez et al. 2011: 133). However, referring to this dissertation's topic, strategic partnerships can neither be understood as international institutions nor international regimes. I would add that they do not equal an international organisation because they have neither a permanent organ nor institutions. Strategic partnerships cannot be regarded as a set of rules prescribing behaviour, constraining activity or shaping expectations and thus, are no international institution (Keohane 1989: 3). Nor are they international regimes defined as 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations'<sup>56</sup> (Krasner 1983: 2; Keohane 1984: 8, 57-63). Furthermore, international regimes, which are built on principles and norms, mostly deal with one particular international challenge 'in a given issue-area' (Krasner 1983: 1; Young 1989). International regimes are said to facilitate cooperation (Diez et al. 2011: 117). However, strategic partnerships deal with more than one specific international problem and are not necessarily built on principles and norms. Thus, the strategic partnerships are a form of international cooperation between states but they cannot be considered as this particular form of international cooperation among states, namely international regimes. In fact, strategic partnerships share with international regimes the function of (possibly) facilitating cooperation between the partners. Yet it seems to me that strategic partnerships constitute less a social institution<sup>57</sup>, e.g. international regimes (Diez et al. 2011: 118; Haas 1983: 26; Keohane 1984: 57), but rather a social relationship between two entities. I will revisit the latter point when I address the social constructivist perspective.

However, the neoliberal approach on mutual interdependence seems fruitful to *understanding* the context-structure of strategic partnerships. Even though neoliberals believe in an anarchical international system, they also think that it is characterised by interdependence (Diez et al. 2011: 2). The study sides with these assumptions. Due to

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<sup>55</sup> However, Keohane makes clear that this is no automatism as due to the missing international authority in the anarchical system, there is no guaranteed implementation of rules (Diez et al. 2011: 132).

<sup>56</sup> This is a 'consensus definition' (Diez et al. 2011: 115) of international regimes offered by Stephen Krasner (1983: 2).

<sup>57</sup> Young defines social institutions as 'identifiable practices consisting of recognized roles linked by clusters of rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles' (Young 1989: 5). They are '[...] governing the activities of the members of international society' (Young 1989: 6).

processes of globalisation, digitalisation paired with the blurring of policy areas and the common confrontation with global challenges requiring joint solutions, the mutual interdependence of states is assumed to play an important (structural) role for the establishment of strategic partnerships. As a result, some dimensions of *neoliberal* perspective seem to be helpful. Hence, a (limited) neoliberal (not classical liberal) view of interdependence will be one of the analytic eclectic modules for this study. Additionally, I do agree with the neorealist critique that Neoliberalism does downplay the significance of power, relative gains and 'ranking' of powers (Diez et al. 2011: 134). The neoliberal approach on 'interdependence' and the study's 'limited neoliberal' view will inform certain assumptions about the international system-structure, which are believed to be relevant to understanding of actor's choices and behaviour with respect to the strategic partnerships (see Ch. 4.2.1).

### **3.1.2.2 Realism and Neorealism**

I will now turn to the realist school of International Relations, which is also based on a rational account, and I will discuss in how far this approach is capable of explaining strategic partnerships in world politics.

Realism, in general, emerged as a response to the (until then) dominant school of liberal ('idealist') tradition of viewing world politics. Realists criticised Liberalists to overemphasize human and state capacities and overlooking the most fundamental feature in international relations, namely power. Instead, Realist thinkers stress that states are mostly interested in securing their national security and survival situated in an anarchical self-help system (Diez et al. 2011: 179)<sup>58</sup>. In order to serve this single most important interest, states continuously seek to maximise power (Diez et al. 2011: 179).

The classical realists, such as Hans J. Morgenthau (see, e.g., Morgenthau/Thompson 1985; Rohde 2004), build on an anthropological view of world politics, in which humans (and consequently states) are depicted as rational, egoistic and constant power-maximisers (Diez et al. 2011: 180). States, just as humans in society, work to fulfil their interests against the interests of other states. Interests are conceptualised in terms of power (Diez et al. 2011: 180). In this view, international politics is the constant struggle for power, whereby political power is a 'means' to the state's 'ends' (goals) (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 31): 'power is always the immediate aim' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 31).

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<sup>58</sup> Anarchy should be understood as a 'general condition' of the international system instead of a system-structure (Waltz 2008: 79). It does not equal chaos.

The neorealists (or structural realists) (Diez et al. 2011: 180) also stress 'power' as an essential concept for understanding international relations. However, they follow a more structural view of world politics in contrast to the agency-centred and anthropologically-based perspective of Classical Realists. Neorealists underline the importance of the lack of a central authority in the international system and of the relative dissemination of power among states for the rivalry between states. They point, therefore, to 'structural causes' for explaining world politics (Diez et al. 2011: 180). For example, Kenneth Waltz (1979), who is one major proponent of Neorealism, states that world politics are not predominantly shaped by actor's motivations but rather by 'political structure', in which actors are 'embedded' (Diez et al. 2011: 180). 'Ordering principles' regarding the 'state of hierarchy', which are either 'authority' or 'subordination', underlie these political structures (Diez et al. 2011: 180). Waltz further sees the international system as anarchical and as a 'self-help-system' (Waltz 2008: 42). Differences between the system-units (states) can only be grasped by comparing their respective capabilities. This again demonstrates the neorealists' structural view: neorealist researchers analyse how the (international) system-structure affects its interacting agents – in terms of its (here anarchic) ordering principle and the dissemination of capabilities among (especially major) agent-units (Diez et al. 2011: 180-181; Waltz 2008: 74). The structural view feeds into the neorealists' desire to 'rank' states in terms of their capabilities (Waltz 1979: 131) and thereby, to identify the 'great powers' in the international system. By counting the number of great powers, they determine the polarity – meaning the quantity of great powers – in the international system (Diez et al. 2011: 181). In this reading, the (national) security-sensitive states particularly care about the international power distribution among states and the 'relative gains' (Diez et al. 2011: 181) of their competitors (Diez et al. 2011: 181). In a 'Waltzian' understanding, states, who mistrust their competitors, try to increase their capabilities and (military) power in order to secure their survival (Diez et al. 2011: 181). When a competitor becomes more powerful, it is perceived as a threat. Against the background of the 'balance of power'<sup>59</sup> neorealists believe that states can choose two options of 'balancing' against the great power: internal or external balancing (Diez et al. 2011: 181). By balancing internally, states increase their own military

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<sup>59</sup> The balance of power-concept was introduced to International Relations by classical realist Hans J. Morgenthau (Diez et al. 2011: 6). It widely depicts the distribution of power within a system-structure, where ,it refers to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality' (Morgenthau/Thomson 1983: 187). It may also denote ,a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs'; as 'an actual state of affairs'; as 'an approximately equal distribution of power' or 'as any distribution of power' (Morgenthau/Thomson 1983: 187). Furthermore, the concept of balance of power postulates that states' fundamental motivation is survival in the anarchical self-help-system; other various goals of states are additional or come on top of survival (Waltz 2008: 137). For more information on the balance of power see, for example, Wight 1995: 168-185; Fossum 2005 and Little 2007.

capabilities or by growing economically in order to gain a relative advantage (Diez et al. 2011: 181, 183). By balancing externally, states form 'strategic alliances' in order to 'jointly balance against the great power [...]' (Diez et al. 2011: 181). As 'balancing' is structurally determined in neorealism, neorealists believe in an automatism in this respect. States will always try to correct the perceived imbalance of power by balancing against the great power and because of the systemic anarchical forces (Diez et al. 2011: 181). Consequently, structural accounts of the international system at a specific point in time are highly relevant or rather necessary for neorealist explanations of world politics (Diez et al. 2011: 181). In addition to balancing, (neorealist) Stephen M. Walt did not believe in the automatism of balancing based on structural causes. He introduced 'bandwagoning' (Diez et al. 2011: 185), the antonym to balancing. Weaker states would thus rather refrain from direct balancing but instead side with the hegemon due to their profiting in terms of protection or other benefits. However, a majority of neorealists share doubts regarding bandwagoning. They believe that it is implausible as states risk losing in relative power by bandwagoning (Diez et al. 2011: 183). Neorealism can be also further subdivided into the defensive neorealism à la Waltz and offensive neorealism figured by John J. Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer 2001; Diez et al. 2011: 181). The main difference between the two consists in the amount of power states aim for. Waltz believes that states would not want to strive to become the world's superpower or hegemon as this position makes them also more vulnerable to external balancing efforts. States do not have 'an innate lust for power' (Waltz 2008: 59; Waltz 1979: 127). Mearsheimer, on the contrary, believes that states do try to acquire as much power as possible because it is the best solution to permanently ensure national survival. Offensive realists discount the automatism of counterbalancing efforts because they think that these attempts are seldomly successful and that the world's hegemon is in any case in a more powerful position (Diez et al. 2011: 182; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 28).

This leads us now to the third 'strand' of the realist camp: Neoclassical Realism. As Diez et al. (2011: 182) claim, neoclassical realism is somewhat of an 'intermediate approach' (Diez et al. 2011: 182) within the realist body of thought on international relations. Diez et al. (2011:182) here refer to Gideon Rose or Randall L. Schweller. They do not dismiss the significance of structures on world politics but they propose to pay attention to the 'individual' or 'domestic' levels as well (Diez et al. 2011: 182; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 28). They stress factors, which can also be found in Classical Realism, such as the perceptions of heads of states or the motivations underlying agent's behaviour, including emotions or identities (Diez et al. 2011: 182; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 28). These factors represent 'intervening variables' (Diez et al. 2011: 182) between the international power distribution as the independent variable and the national

foreign policies as the dependent variables (Diez et al. 2011: 182). Thereby, neoclassical realism builds bridges to constructivism and liberalism (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 28).

Every theoretical framework is criticised and this is also true for Realism. In addition to 'general' criticism about realist approaches to international relations<sup>60</sup>, I would like to draw attention to Alexander Wendt's fundamental criticism of realism (Wendt 1999): he disbelieves that the anarchical state system inevitably results in the power 'play' within the international system described by realists. In his account, by contrast, structure is socially constructed by actors and their (inter-)actions. Structure is not independent according to this view but can be changed and modified by actors (Wendt 1992; Diez et al. 2011: 186).

Yet with respect to Realism and what is particularly significant to 'strategic partnerships', it is the incapacity of realism to adequately explain (forms of) international cooperation (Diez et al. 2011: 186). As a result, I have introduced the (limited) neoliberal module helping to understand why strategic partners presumably cooperate against the background of interdependence.

My approach will favour neither classical realist nor neorealist theory but rather follows a middle-way between an anthropological view à la Classical Realism and a structural account à la Neorealism. This is not due to indecision on my side but due to the fact that both realist and neorealist offer important insights to strategic partnerships. They will inform elements of both structure and agency in the concept-building of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. Furthermore, this combination is consistent with my goal of structurally grounding actors and of viewing strategic partnerships as both power as a means and serving power as an end.

In a next step, I will now turn to the social constructivist body of thought on international relations, which fruitfully allows for the co-constitutive nature of agency and structure.

### **3.1.2.3 (Social) Constructivism**

Let us now turn to social constructivism in looking for an *understanding* of strategic partnerships. In contrast to neoliberalism and neorealism, which are rationalist approaches following the logic of consequentiality, social constructivism is a reflectivist approach adhering to the logic of appropriateness (Diez et al. 2011: 183, 133, 209; 211;

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<sup>60</sup> These are, for example, the deficient definition of power and its delimitation to interests in Morgenthau's account; neorealism's failure to explain certain major events and its predictive limits (Diez et al. 2011: 185-186)

Wendt 1999: 33-35). These different logics are often seen as incommensurable. In this subchapter I will limit myself to elaborating on Social Constructivism. The following subchapter will yet demonstrate how these logics can indeed be combined.

Strongly influenced by Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, social constructivism's roots can be found in the social theories by Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. It is important to note that it is not congruent with scientific realism but rather closely linked to (philosophic tradition of) idealism<sup>61</sup> (Bowring 2010: 103; Yalvaç 2010: 167). Significant to the social constructivist perspective is their belief that the international system is not fixed or given but instead socially constructed. (Intersubjective) Structures offer the context for agents' action but they are only preserved by that very action (Diez et al. 2011: 210; Yalvaç 2010: 173). Basically, social constructivists think that agency and structure are mutually constitutive. This belief is rooted in Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration. As a consequence, structures can indeed be changed by the action behaviour of agents. Even though the anarchical nature of the international system proclaimed by the 'neo'-'neo'-camps of neoliberalism and neorealism, the system structure can thus be shaped by agents according to Social Constructivism (Diez et al. 2011: 210).

Moreover, whereas neoliberals and neorealists debate on whether international institutions are dependent on absolute or relative gains of involved actors in order to materialise, social constructivists instead think that the effects of norms and institutions do not depend on the serving of actor's self-interests. In this reading, actors do not simply follow rules in a functionalist logic but they rather adhere to them because of expectations and established international norms. This is the logic of appropriateness underlying social constructivism (Diez et al. 2011: 211). According to Diez et al. (2011: 211), international institutions are understood as 'stable patterns of behaviour' in social constructivism. There are actions, which are reiterated over time. In this context, social

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<sup>61</sup> There is idealism in IR and idealism in social theory (idealist social theory) (Wendt 1999: 24). Idealism in social theory is not normative and it tries to be 'just as realistic as materialism' (Wendt 1999: 24) in social theory (Wendt 1999: 24-25). Idealism again is closer to an interpretative approach (Hollis/Smith 1990: 11), which is why the study can conveniently combine the scientific approach with an interpretative approach. Furthermore, according to idealism, social structures are no less real than material structures' (Wendt 1999: 24). Moreover, idealism does not neglect factors such as actor's power or interests, '[...] but rather that their meaning and effects depend on actors' ideas' (Wendt 1999: 24-25). However, as my study will build on realist social theory instead of idealist social theory, there is indeed a difference in the understanding of the international society-structure: whereas idealist social theory stresses ideational factors in contrast to material forces (Wendt 1999: 25), the realist social view adopted in this study incorporates both material and social (ideational) factors. Thereby, in contrast to Wendt, the study will not look at cultural factors (Wendt 1999: 42). As a preview to Ch. 5.2, let me mention here that I will look at social structure in considering both material and immaterial (in terms of genuinely social and intersubjective rather than ideational) factors and constitutive (non-causal) rather than causal relationships (Wendt 1999: 25).

constructivists have been criticised for conflating institutions and norms (Diez et al. 2011: 211). Nevertheless, social constructivists have significantly made researchers aware for socialising effects of institutions on their members. Institutions and their members are, therefore, mutually shaped (Diez et al. 2011: 210-211; Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 30). Social constructivists also deal with categories such as 'culture' or 'identity' in understanding world politics (Diez et al. 2011: 212). However, these categories are of less relevance for this study, which is why I will not dwell on this field<sup>62</sup>. However, what matters in this respect is the fact that Social Constructivism opened the door to previously ignored factors for the formation of interests, such as e.g. culture, identity, norms and institutions. In this way, the concept of interests was scrutinised in a sense that interests were no longer given but rather needed to be 'understood' as dependent variables. Researchers thus looked for factors effecting or affecting interests (Diez et al. 2011: 212). Social Constructivism is particularly relevant for research aiming at 'understanding' social phenomena (Diez et al. 2011: 213) and is, therefore, highly relevant for the research goals of the present study. In any case, Social Constructivism may demonstrate openness to the neorealist stress of international anarchy as well as the liberal ideas about potential cooperation (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 28).

Social Constructivism has been criticised for its somewhat vagueness and inconsistency, which is surely rooted in its dialectical view of structure and agency. I believe that this dialectical perspective is, however, one of the major advantages of the constructivist approach. At the same time social constructivists have been accused of favouring one side of the agency-structure-medal against the background of their own claims on their dialectical perspective (Diez et al. 2011: 214). I would agree with Diez et al. (2011: 214) in being more moderate in this respect as a dialectical view of structure and agency is difficult to handle as a multitude of factors come into play. Being a 'middle ground' (Fierke 2007) theoretical way between rationalist and poststructuralist IR-accounts (Fierke 2007) inevitably implies that there compromises to be made. Yet, I do believe in the added value of this view for especially *understanding* phenomena. Thus, this not a sufficient ground for dismissing social constructivist approaches. Following a social constructivist approach, strategic partnerships would then be socially constructed. Along the lines of the dialectical view of structure and agency within constructivism

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<sup>62</sup> Whereas constructivists deal with ideational structures in terms of identities, shared ideas and culture (Wendt 1999:1, 42; Copeland), I will rather stress the importance of social structures in terms of social interaction, social relations and social groups. Whereas ideational structures are immaterial, social structures can also account for a material view as materialism and scientific realism are connected (to a certain extent) (Guzzini/Leander 2006: 78-79). Thus, the study adopts a view that social structures include both material and immaterial (social rather than ideational) factors. Thus, in contrast to Wendt (1999: 1), social structure here is more than 'only' shared ideas. See on the relevance of categories such as identity or culture within constructivism, e.g., Checkel 1998; Steele 2008; Wendt 1999.

(Wight/Joseph 2010: 19), answers to nature of strategic partnerships would probably need to be found at the structural as well as the individual level. I will come back to this point in the next subchapter. Nevertheless, the questions of how these strategic partnerships are socially constructed remains for the time being.

Critics might argue that I, on the one hand, combine neoliberalism and neorealism, which as rationalist approaches widely use rational-choice theory, and, on the other hand, social constructivism being relativist (Clunan 2000: 87). It is true that both neoliberalism and neorealism depict an agent as egoistic as well as self-benefit- and power-maximisers. This stands in stark contrast with social constructivism, which believes in actors who are rooted in a particular social structure. As a result, actors ensue 'norms' and 'rules' which they find 'legitimate' and 'rightful' (Diez et al. 2011: 182, 183). In rationalism (neorealism and neoliberalism), actors undertake rational calculations based on priorities, which precede their action. Their actions are 'caused' by the (anarchical) system-structure. (Diez et al. 2011: 183). In contrast, in social constructivism, social phenomena are produced by factors such as perceptions, ideas and norms as well as social interaction. Meaning is created by actors and their actions (Clunan 2000: 88-93).

After having outlined the characteristics of Social Constructivism, the following subchapter on analytic eclecticism will outline that it is indeed possible to combine different paradigms.

#### **3.1.2.4 Mounting Limited Neoliberalism, Neo-/Realism and Constructivism**

As Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 8) put it, 'different paradigms adopt different strategies for limiting the domain of analysis, identifying research puzzles, interpreting empirical observations, and specifying relevant causal mechanisms'. Somewhat legitimately, by adopting one research paradigm particular factors or dimensions of reality are left out of the research picture for reasons of conceptual simplification. The adoption of certain assumptions, models or methods seem to be given privilege over how to best understand empirical facts (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 8; 1-2). The investigation of a multifaceted social phenomenon, thereby, appears simplified or rather restrictive. As I am particularly interested in *understanding* strategic partnerships holistically, this mode of research proceeding – following (only) one research paradigm – appears to me specifically limiting for the project's research endeavour. How can I as a researcher in this situation ensure that I have not blackboxed factors or variables, which are

nevertheless crucial to the understanding of strategic partnerships? In this respect, analytic eclecticism seems particularly valuable for my research project.

Analytic Eclecticism allows for moving beyond the paradigms of 'grand theories'. By transcending the separatist tendencies from 'paradigm wars' (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 9), analytic eclecticism chooses to combine elements from different research paradigms in a fruitful way. The result is a combined argument to empirical and theoretical challenges. Thereby, researchers also aim to overcome the somewhat artificial but however real distinction line, which has grown between academia and scholars on the one hand and more public debates and practitioners on the other (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 9). This is also significant to my work as my research topic is presumed to be of high interest to both the scholarly and public policy/practitioners' world. Thus, I aim to produce results, which are not only of high value to academia but also to practitioners. I will revisit this motivation of my study to be scholarly as well as policy-relevant, when I address the study's case selection (see Ch. 6).

So what then is (alternative) analytic eclecticism? An eclectic approach has been coined and defined by Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 10; italics by the authors) as '*any approach that seeks to extricate, translate, and selectively integrate analytical elements – concepts, logics, mechanisms, and interpretations – of theories or narratives that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance*'. It is an approach, which investigates the variety and interconnections of mechanisms situated in usually separate theoretical bodies. What is more, analytic eclecticism discovers in which way and under what conditions these mechanisms are connected in order to affect outcomes (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 10). As Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 2) have stressed, this approach is '[...] about making intellectually and practically useful connections among clusters of analyses that are substantively related but normally formulated in separate paradigms'. Furthermore, due to its more inclusive- and extensiveness in comparison to singular research paradigms, analytic eclecticism may increase the likeability of uncovering '[...] more useful theoretical and empirical insights' (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 11; 2; 3). This is particularly relevant to my study, which aims at theory-building blocks by 'uncovering' the underlying factors in theorising strategic partnerships.

It is important to note that the two authors do not propose to replace the research paradigms by instead analytic eclecticism. It is rather motivated to stress the 'practical relevance' and the 'connections among' paradigms and thereby illuminating more fruitfully social phenomena (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 3). It should be used in a 'necessary'

complementary (however, not synthesizing) fashion building on paradigm-bound research (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 11; 17; 23). This precludes the researcher from studying a social phenomena in a predisposed paradigm-dictated way – implicating a particular research tradition with corresponding concepts and methods – which is due to the meta-theoretical positioning of the respective paradigm (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 4; 8; 12). Yet social phenomena cannot be artificially segmented according to research paradigms or traditions. In my view, this equally applies to the analysis of social phenomena, particularly when the researcher is interested in *understanding*, which I am<sup>63</sup>. It needs, however, to be kept in mind that by using analytic eclecticism, theories and concepts are not simply ‘lumped together’ in order to make research easy for the arguably undetermined scholar. It is not an ‘anything-goes’-approach (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 16). Instead, scholars have to be bold in being open-minded to various ‘perceptions’, which can be quite challenging for a researcher. They are somewhat ‘forced’ to accommodate different paradigms as they cannot ‘hide’ behind their meta-theoretical masks in studying a social phenomenon (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 16). Additionally, analytic eclecticism does not prescribe neither a particular method nor a mixed-methods design (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 18). As Sil/Katzenstein (2010:17) put it, analytic eclecticism does not deal with the ‘multiplicity of methods’ but enables a research perspective on the ‘[...] multiplicity of connections between different mechanisms and logics normally analysed in isolation in separate research traditions’ (Sil/Katzenstein 2010:17).

Still, how does one recognise an analytic eclectic approach? As Sil/Katzenstein (2010) point out, three characteristics to this approach can be identified. These three ‘markers’ (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 19) reflect a) the mode of how problems are acknowledged; b) how the compound multidimensionality of these problems are causally explained for; and c) the scope of the researcher’s ‘pragmatic’<sup>64</sup> dedication to real-life

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<sup>63</sup> A challenge to analytic eclecticism is the ‘incommensurability thesis’ (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 14), which stipulates that you cannot combine theories having different meta-theoretical foundations (Barkin 2010). However, I will follow Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 14-16), who devitalise this argument by pointing to the fact that a) the danger of incommensurability does loom if a researcher tries to assess theories by using ‘objective’ criteria derived from different research traditions. Yet this challenge is minor when scholars engage in combining terms of different theories as theories are not mutually exclusive but capable of being integrated. Furthermore, the incommensurability thesis is of a smaller hazard when b) ‘empirical referents’, which are the ‘[...] means for adjusting and integrating features of theories originally embedded in different paradigms’ (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 15). The researcher thus focuses on indicators on a higher level of abstraction and their operationalisation by different research paradigms in the specific empirical surroundings. This ‘translation’ of terms allows for blending the possibly different meta-theoretical foundations of the analytical elements (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 15).

<sup>64</sup> As the name suggests, pragmatism in International Relations refers to a view that different perspectives can be combined for the sake of generating new knowledge (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 45). Thus, instead of adhering to meta-theoretical differences, a pragmatic perspective prefers to focus on open-minded approach to (innovatively) explain and understand social phenomena (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 47). For an extended elaboration on ‘pragmatism’, in general, see Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 43-48 and the commonalities between pragmatism and analytic eclecticism see Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 47.

phenomena. My study fulfils the 'requirements' of these three markers: First, my research is exploratory and allows for dealing with the complexity of a social phenomenon by transcending paradigm-bound research. Secondly, I will establish a middle-range theory, which shows the multifaceted interaction among various dimensions going beyond paradigmatic delimitations (however, in a non-causal manner). And thirdly, my study's results are of 'pragmatic' interest, relevance and usefulness to both scholars and practitioners (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 19-23).

Additionally, an analytic eclectic approach perfectly corresponds to the meta-theoretical positioning of my study in scientific realism and structuration theory because it also cuts across the agency-structure delimitations (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 21; 37). In fact, analytic eclecticism does not prioritise either agency or structure. Moreover, analytic eclecticism also transcends the dividing line between material and ideational divides<sup>65</sup> (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 21, 37). The latter will be of relevance to both the meta-theoretical aspects 'fused' in my analytic eclectic approach as well as the power 'bases' in my conceptual model (see Ch. 5).

In brief, by employing analytic eclecticism, I need to filter and at the same time 'fusion' to a certain extent particular analytical parts of different theories, thereby transcending the boundaries of various paradigms. In this way, I 'create' knowledge on complex social phenomena which is both relevant to scholarly research and public policy interest by establishing a pragmatic middle-range theoretical and causal model.

This is not the point as to review the entire bodies of paradigmatic schools in IR. Here, I will focus on core concepts from the paradigms, which appear to be or effectively will be important to understanding and theorising strategic partnerships. This will again demonstrate why it indeed makes sense to transcend paradigms.

So let me then recall from the previous chapters which 'modules' from the three grand theories I intend to 'fuse' in the meta-theoretical fundament (based on Scientific realism and, particularly, Realist social theory) building the basis for my study and the study's middle-range theory of strategic partnerships.

First, from the neoliberal IR-School, the concepts of mutual interdependence and cooperation are crucial. For example, Neoliberalism and its Mutual Interdependence Theory are known for their endeavours to explain for the institutionalisation of international cooperation and to analyse the implications of interdependence

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<sup>65</sup> This is where the difference in focus between a constructivist approach and the project's own – more sociological approach becomes clear: constructivists deal with ideational structures in terms of identities and shared ideas (Copeland). The study here will focus on the importance of social structures in terms of social interaction, social relations, social status and social groups, which are social factors somewhat located between the material (body) and ideational (mind).

(Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 8). Crucially, interdependence scholars, such as Keohane/Nye (1977), never claimed power politics were refuted: 'politics was conceived on a continuum between power politics and complex interdependence' (Guzzini/Leander 2006: 87; Keohane/Nye 2012). This is the limited neoliberal module of the study's analytic eclectic approach.

Secondly, the neo-/realist IR-paradigm offers crucial concepts, such as (relative) power, power-maximising actors, (ranks of) international hierarchy, patterns of alliance-building and, particularly, strategic alliances. For example, as alluded to before, Neo-/Realism are known for one of its focuses on strategic alliance-building (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 8).

Thirdly, Constructivism is the IR-School reflecting the study's meta-theoretical positioning most when it comes to the dual view on the agent-structure-relationship (co-constitution of structure and agency). Crucially, the constructivist module reflects the study's rationale that agents can shape the anarchical system-structure (Wendt 1992: 395; Diez et al. 2011: 3). Moreover, 'constructivism is grounded in a logic of the social' (Barkin 2010: 64) and offers concepts such as social structure (Barkin 2010: 64), which will be particularly important to the project here. Yet, whereas constructivism primarily deals with ideational structures and factors in terms of ideas or norms, the study will rather focus on a sociologically-inspired view in terms of social interaction, social relations, social status and social groups. These social factors comprise somewhat both material and immaterial dimensions. This is where the study transcends the constructivist module of its analytic eclectic approach.

Both neoliberal and the neo-/realist IR-paradigms are crucial when conceptualising strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing in an anarchical and interdependent world confronted with common challenges. By this, they link up to the knowledge of business and management insights on strategic partnerships, which will be part of the interdisciplinary perspective introduced within this project. Constructivism is close to sociology (Checkel 1998: 325; Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 70). Thereby, it also offers a connecting passage, namely to the sociological perspective, included in this study. It depicts strategic partnerships as social relationships, where (bases of) social powers are at work

To sum up, analytic eclecticism accounts for both the dialectical (dual) relationships of agency and structure as well as the ideational and material dimensions of structural contexts (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 37). Thereby, analytic eclecticism stresses two packages of factors:

[...] first, the manner in which external environments shape actors' understandings of their interests, the constraints and opportunities they face, and their capabilities; and second, the manner in which environments are reproduced or transformed as a result of those actors' varying preferences and capacities' (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 37).

By adapting the latter to my research, it shows how I 'mould' the modules from Limited Neoliberalism, Neo-/Realism and Constructivism into one analytic eclectic research picture: Complex, mutual interdependence as well as the anarchical system including the struggle for power-maximization in terms of the international power hierarchy constitute the *external environment* and underpin the *actors'* perceptions of their interests, constraints and opportunities. *Strategic partnerships*, thereby, are examples of how actors, who, first, follow the strategy of cooperating while competing. Secondly, strategic partners also interact in a specific form of social relationship (trying to) re-shape their environment. In this way, by using the analytic eclectic approach I can again account for the dual view of relation between agents and structures. Furthermore, I can integrate the material as well as social bases of actor's behaviour<sup>66</sup> and interaction, which will be enabled by my analytical model developed in Ch. 5.

### **3.1.2.5 Adding an Interdisciplinary View: International Business and Sociology**

Analytic eclecticism may not only overcome the gaps between the meta-theories of International Relations. In fact, it may also serve to cut across the boundaries of social science disciplines<sup>67</sup> (Sil 2000b: 1, 20). I believe that the division of disciplines may sometimes hinder the innovation of knowledge and gaining an understanding of the whole picture. A 'division of labor [sic] between disciplines' (Sil 2000b: 2) is generally helpful in focusing research and in adding to the efficiency in generating new and/or specialised knowledge (Sil 2000b: 2-3, 13). Yet I agree with Sil's elaboration in this regard (Sil 2000b: 2) that too strict boundaries between disciplines may at times outpicture relevant factors and, thereby, impede the production of new knowledge. Thus, the present study will follow Sil's rationale (2000b: 2) in integrating and complementing modules from varying disciplines if this adds to (new) knowledge. As a result, the

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<sup>66</sup> As mentioned before, instead of dealing with ideational factors in terms of ideas or culture, the present study stresses the relevance of (im-/material) social factors deduced from social structures in terms of social interaction, social relations, social status and social groups.

<sup>67</sup> Actually, the social sciences comprise the disciplines of political sciences, business, economics and sociology amongst others (Gerring 2012: 2). Hence, the interdisciplinary perspective builds on a common 'roof' of the social sciences 'house'.

boundaries among disciplines should rather be fluid: disciplines should not compete but rather relate to and learn from each other where applicable. I strongly believe that the understanding of empirically-based social phenomena may not always adhere to the 'boundaries' of neither meta-theory nor disciplines.

Hence, at a later stage in this study I will transcend the boundaries of International Relations and Political Science by also including an economic perspective in terms of International Business as well as insights from sociological theory<sup>68</sup> and sociological concepts. This widening of my study to the inclusion of a limited interdisciplinary perspective is perfectly in line with an analytic eclectic approach as well (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 36-37). As Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 37) have put it, analytic eclecticism is more of a 'general strategy for developing complex problem-focused arguments that cut across and draw creatively from, artificially segmented bodies of scholarship'. The eventual outlook of this analytic eclectic strategy is reliant on the 'relevant intellectual context' (Sil/Katzenstein 2010: 37). The interdisciplinary perspective will be introduced in the conceptual model-building when I approach strategic partnerships as a policy concept in Ch. 4 and 5.

### **3.1.2.6. Concluding Remarks**

This subchapter demonstrates that the present study does not only combine more than one theory from IR: it is even informed by concepts and knowledge from economics or rather international business as well as sociology. Hence, even though the main unit in this study is still the state and state-line entities like the EU, I will borrow from international business' knowledge on enterprises' business as well as sociological insight on interaction (social relationships) and social group behaviour. This will be specifically

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<sup>68</sup> Constructivism is often viewed as the 'sociological turn in International Relations (IR) theory' (Guzzini 2004: 209; Clunan 2000: 88). Actually, sociology has influenced and increasingly influences the IR-subdiscipline as a whole (Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 70-74). Nevertheless, constructivism '[...] is heavily indebted to Sociology' (Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 74), especially in the context of agency-structure-debate (Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 73-74). Yet I do not equate constructivism and sociology. In fact, it means that I will introduce sociological theory or sociological concepts, which are not necessarily constructivist in an IR-sense. Adding a sociological perspective is no end in itself. As sociology as a science generally aims to understand social action (Kurse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 104), it will offer a helpful view to my study as I depict strategic partnerships as social relationships amongst others. However, constructivism and sociology do share similarities: both believe in social construction of reality and that international politics are not only characterised by rational actors and material system-structures but by 'social forces' (Clunan 2000: 87) as well (Clunan 2000: 87). Therefore, the constructivist and sociological modules in my analytic eclectic model are probably closer to each other in comparison to the neo-/realist and neoliberal modules. As Clunan (2000: 87) has explained, many constructivists in IR borrow from sociology. However, she also mentions that constructivism has not 'systematically imported sociological approaches (...)' (Clunan 2000: 87).

relevant when it comes to, firstly, understanding the strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Secondly, it will be significant when strategic partnerships are also understood as social relationships among social actors and social groups. As a result, the analytic eclectic approach of this study is not only IR-centred but inspired by international business and sociology as well. Again, this approach is no end in itself but rather a fruitful combination serving the understanding of strategic partnerships.

After having understood the study's various dimensions of using analytical eclecticism, I will now turn to the delimitations and contributions of my work.

### **3.1.3 Contributions and Delineations**

It is important to denote clearly the contribution as well as delimitations of my study from a (meta-)theoretical perspective. In the chapter on the state of the art (see Ch. 2), I have already hinted at various research approaches the study could possibly contribute to. However, I have there rather focused on dimensions of research contents and topics, which are linked to the political phenomenon of strategic partnerships. In this chapter I will instead particularly concentrate on the level of meta-theory and theoretical approaches. Thereby, I can outline clearly to which meta-theoretical and theoretical research 'strands' and 'schools' I aim to contribute to. It is my goal to thereby avoid undue expectations to this study and, thus, unnecessary confusion. This is of crucial significance as my study intertwines various research topics. Thus, even though my study may ultimately contribute to various research 'strands', I nevertheless work from one specific research perspective, which is International Relations. This is important to note in order to understand the fundament of my theoretical and conceptual model and the overall research perspective of the project.

#### **3.1.3.1 From the perspective of 'European Studies'**

Almost traditionally, when researchers deal with the EU or EU-topics, they analyse the EU against the background of EU-integration theories or approaches on EU-governance. This is due to the fact that researchers have been and still are fascinated by the special case of EU-integration and how or rather why it actually could take place. Why would nation-states agree to lose in autonomy by giving up sovereignty and ceding it to the EC/EU? (Realist) Approaches in the discipline of International Relations seemed to be increasingly unable to cope with this phenomenon as EU-integration was deepened. In

order to thoroughly understand and explain the 'EU'-phenomenon, analyses at first concentrated on 'European' integration<sup>69</sup>, thereby drawing on 'pre-theories' of integration<sup>70</sup>. As Hix (1994) has explained, the EU (previously the European Communities or EC)<sup>71</sup> has originally been analysed along the lines of international integration theories which were or are still applied to the example of the EU. In this context, they were dubbed 'European' integration theories even though there are 'general' integration theories. This is probably also due to the fact that the EU is a welcome and fruitful example of analysing European integration (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 2). The 'discipline' of 'European studies', which almost naturally emerged over time since the inception of the EC/EU, slowly 'peeled away' from the discipline of International Relations and were also influenced by other disciplines and new approaches (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: xiv). Theories and analyses largely focused on viewing the EU as a singular phenomenon instead of one example of an international organisation or regime (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 10-11). Furthermore, researchers tried to come to terms whether the EU is either an example of a supranational organisation or of intergovernmental cooperation between sovereign and autonomous nation-states. In this context, integration theories aimed to predict which forces – intergovernmental or supranational – drove the integration process<sup>72</sup>. New institutionalist approaches were added to the research analyses (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 4-5). Later, models or 'theories' were developed, which were specifically dedicated to the EU-phenomenon. The EU was less seen as an example of international (or regional) integration but rather as a 'sui generis'-phenomenon (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 12). In this context, theories of (EU-)integration and EU-governance or Comparative Approaches, which rather focused on how the EU as a political system or as a multi-level

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<sup>69</sup> 'European' integration is basically a form of international integration. There is no consensus definition of (international or regional) integration (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 7; Siedschlag et al. 2007: 149) as definitions are influenced by the theoretical mind-set on integration of the researcher. Donald Puchala has outlined the challenge of defining integration (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 9). I will follow Puchala's definition of international integration as 'a set of processes of that produce and sustain a Concordance System at the international level' (Puchala 1971: 277). Puchala, thereby, defines a 'Concordance System' as an '[...] international system wherein actors find it possible consistently to harmonize their interests, compromise their differences and reap mutual rewards from their interactions' (ibid). Thereby, I believe that integration can be both process and condition.

<sup>70</sup> Eilstrup-Sangiovanni (2006: 1) mentions in this regard (normatively-based) federalism, functionalism and transactionalism.

<sup>71</sup> The European Communities, which were founded as separate organisations in the 1950s, were later summarised with the Treaty of Rome. The Treaty of Maastricht (1993) then consolidated the EC under the umbrella of the European Union (EU). As the history of the EU is not the focus of the present study, I will not elaborate in detail on the evolution of the EU and its structure. For a historical overview on the development of the EU please check, for example, Wallace/Wallace/Pollack 2005; Archer 2008.

<sup>72</sup> In this regard, Ernst B. Haas' neofunctionalism, Stanley Hoffman's intergovernmentalism or Andrew Moravcsik's Liberal Intergovernmentalism should be mentioned (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 89-104; 105-116; 134-159; 264-303; Wallace/Wallace/Pollack 2005: 15-19; Moravcsik 1993).

actor works, were developed or adapted (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 4-5). As Hix (1994) has explained, theories of international politics hardly help with explaining the EU's international working mechanisms. Thus, studies rather 'took the EU for granted' and concentrated on analysing the day-to-day functioning of the EU (-institutions) and its interplay with the EU-member states and/or non-state actors, e.g. interest groups<sup>73</sup>. 'EC-politics' (Hix: 1994) largely dealt and still deals with the actors and mechanisms of the EU-policy-making. This constitutes a rather internally- or EU-focused view. Additionally, constructivist and critical approaches investigated how identities or interests were 'affected' or 'constructed' by the EU in terms of learning or socialisation processes (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 4-5). Furthermore, 'Europeanisation' approaches also focused now on how the EU or the process of EU-integration 'affected' its member states or accession countries and national policies<sup>74</sup>. Thus, these are research perspectives analysing how EU-integration feeds back into its (potential/ future) member states. Additionally, as the EU has over time tried to export its own model of regional integration to other regions, the EU has also been studied from the perspective of 'regionalism' assessing in how far other world regions were influenced by the EU-'model'<sup>75</sup>. Linked to this, comparison has been made between various regions under the framework of comparative regionalism<sup>76</sup>. Here, it is assessed amongst others in how far the EU-model has been transferred to or adapted in other world regions (Farrell 2009). Over time, criticism has been levelled against those approaches which portrayed the EU as the ultimate goal of regional integration and against which every other world region should be measured. Against this background, the approach of 'New Regionalism' emerged which starts off with a criticism of Eurocentric views of the 'Old Regionalism' and tries to develop 'alternative' views or theories/approaches of regionalism or regionalisation (Rosamond 2006: 457-458)<sup>77</sup>. Thus, when dealing with regional integration, one could frame studies either from an IR-perspective, from an Area Studies view or the (New) Regionalism agenda in addition to more EU-centred approaches.

In brief, a multitude of theories and approaches to the EU per se, EU-integration and EU-policy-making were developed over time. Yet this multitude of theories and concepts

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<sup>73</sup> In this context, one could mention the 'new governance'-agenda and multi-level governance approaches (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006: 327-377; Pollack 2005: 39-41).

<sup>74</sup> Studies investigating 'Europeanisation' are, for example, Sedelmeier 2011; Wong/Hill 2011; Wong 2011.

<sup>75</sup> For example, approaches of Europeanisation and 'Diffusion' or even so called 'emulation', were combined to assess the influence of the EU's 'model' of regional cooperation and integration in other world regions (e.g., Börzel/Risse 2012a, 2012b; Lenz 2012).

<sup>76</sup> On Comparative Regional Integration see, for example, Choi/Caporaso 2006. On Regionalism and Comparative Regionalism see, e.g., Börzel 2013.

<sup>77</sup> However, there are also attempts to bridge the cleavage or at least communication between scholars on regional integration working from either the perspective of New Regionalism or EU-studies (e.g., Warleigh-Lack/Rosamond 2010).

does not need to be outlined here in their entirety because they are of limited relevance to this study<sup>78</sup>.

In my study I am not trying to explain EU-integration as such. I will take the strategic partnerships as 'given', meaning that I will not try to explain their coming into being from an EU-perspective – be it European institutions or EU-member states. Instead, the EU-institutions and EU-member states form part of one of the 'agents' in my study – the EU (as a whole). I will elaborate on this somewhat 'conglomerated' actor in Ch. 3.1.4.1. Thus, theories of international or 'European' integration or EU-governance are of limited help or relevance for this study<sup>79</sup>.

Above all, strategic partnerships cannot (yet) be declared formal political integration. Strategic partnerships are from a legal point of view not a form of integration in terms of a 'communitarised' (supranationalised) field of policy, such as, e.g., the EU's trade policy. Strategic partnerships are, hence, not (entirely) supranationalised<sup>80</sup>. They are predominantly a part of a (foreign policy) coordination as they form part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Overall, there are various and different ways to analyse the EU such as from disciplines of International Relations, integration theories, Comparative Politics or 'European Studies' (see, e.g., Hix 1994; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006). I will not further elaborate on these different perspectives of the EU. They are all of importance and relevance when analysing the EU as a multi-level and multi-actor phenomenon. However, let me recall that I am not trying to explain the coming into place of EU-strategic partnerships in terms of integration. Thus, it is important to note that I will approach the EU from an IR- perspective. This view is seen as the most fruitful when it comes to the research focus of the present study. The next step will consider the study's connections in terms of an IR-perspective and a Cross-Regional Comparative Perspective.

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<sup>78</sup> For a further overview and explanation of 'EU'-integration theories as well as various concepts and explanatory models on the EU's, integration, functioning, policy-making or (multi-level) governance see, for example, Algieri 2010: 15; Bieling/Lerch 2006; Holzinger et al. 2005; Wiener/Diez 2009; Wallace/Wallace/Pollack 2005.

<sup>79</sup> For a comprehensive overview of various integration theories and EU-governance approaches please see Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Supranationalisation, as understood by Haas (1958: 9), refers to '[...] activities, organisations and loyalties transcending the existing nations'. In his work he equates 'supranational' with 'central' and 'federal' and uses these terms synonymously though he admits that the word 'supranational' is the most appropriate for describing the phenomenon (Haas 1958: 9). In EU-studies, supranationalisation is equated with the EU-'level' and the EU-institutions. If a policy-field is 'supranationalised', it means that it has been 'communitarised' meaning that the EU-institutions, predominantly the EU-Commission, are responsible for policy-initiation and decision-making.

### 3.1.3.2 IR involving a (modified) Cross-Regional Comparative Perspective

As the previous subchapter has demonstrated, this study approaches the EU from an IR-perspective. But further delimitations are necessary. Even though the present study cuts across various different research perspectives, it does pursue a very distinct research view. Indeed, the study's results may be of interest to different research communities ranging from IR, European Studies<sup>81</sup> as well as Country or Area Specialists of the four world regions concerned (namely, Europe, Latin America, South Asia and Africa)<sup>82</sup>. Yet it is crucial to be clear on the study's research perspective in order to avoid confusion regarding the project's primary aims and contributions. Importantly, the study's focus also has implications for the research design, which will be shown in Ch. 6.

When a project's results are interesting for different research communities or, what is more, even attempts to possibly appeal to different research communities, the danger of unfulfilling possibly diverse expectations may loom. As a consequence, (unjustified) criticism may be levelled due to misunderstandings in the first place. Thus, this subchapter engages in important delimitations of the study as a whole in order to pre-empt certain expectations and to preferably prevent potential (ultimately baseless) criticism.

Let me start by reiterating that this study starts out from an IR-perspective. The view of IR is, thus, the predominant subdiscipline followed here. Moreover, the project works via deductive and inductive research approaches, which are combined in an abductive manner. This is no end in itself but an attempt to retrieve better results when theorising and understanding strategic partnerships in foreign policy. In other words, I will work from existing, more general IR-theory while at the same time analysing three individual cases. Thus, I am not only interested in the three singular cases but in their commonalities as well. As I am interested in theory-building blocks, I will opt for cases involving three countries from different world regions. Thus, to a certain extent I do take the cases' regional context into account in addition to a more general IR-perspective. Intuitively, my hunch is that results from different world regions may be more generalisable, particularly in the context of IR inherently crossing world regions, in

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<sup>81</sup> For more information on the linkages between IR and EU studies or Comparative Politics and EU studies see, for example, Warleigh 2006.

<sup>82</sup> To be precise, European Studies or EU studies also form an (often interdisciplinary) area studies approach, namely on the area of Europe (Warleigh 2006: 34).

contrast to results from only one area. I will further elaborate on this matter in Ch. 6 in the context of the research design.

Yet the latter word – ‘area’ – may raise attention by scholars engaged in Comparative Area Studies (CAS) or Transnational Area Studies (TAS). Yet the present study does not analyse (world) regions or areas in that sense. It deals with countries, which are, indeed, located in different world regions. Thereby, the study does recognise the distinctiveness of the regional (analytical) level (on which I will elaborate on in the following subchapter), yet the region or area is not the prime research target. It nevertheless represents important context for the study. Thus, I do have (limited) area expertise and contextual knowledge with regard to the three cases, which is of benefit when analysing the case studies. Moreover, the study’s results may actually be interesting to various area specialists. Nevertheless and for the reasons stated above, the study does not primarily engage in the analysis of geographical areas, such as in ‘area studies’<sup>83</sup> (Berg-Schlosser 2012; Acharya 2006; Basedau/Köllner 2007); or comparative politics within, between or across regions/areas, namely ‘comparative area studies’<sup>84</sup> (Berg-Schlosser 2012; Ahram 2011; Basedau/Köllner 2007) or ‘(cross-regional) contextualised comparison’ (Sil no date; Sil 2013); or in comparing regions or regionalism from an IR-perspective, which refers to transnational area studies (Acharya 2012; Acharya 2006<sup>85</sup>)<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Area Studies roughly denotes a research approach on a geographically more or less demarcated world region, often with an interdisciplinary view (see Acharya 2006: 2; Basedau/Köllner 2007: 5-6).

<sup>84</sup> Comparative Area Studies (CAS) are the ‘cousin’ of Area Studies (Basedau/Köllner 2007). As Ahram (2011: 69) has put it, CAS is a ‘rubric that maintains the importance of regional knowledge while contributing to general theory building using inductive intra-regional, cross-regional, inter-regional comparison’.

<sup>85</sup> Acharya differentiates between ‘disciplinary area studies’ and ‘transnational area studies’ (Acharya 2006: 1), when elaborating on the trends in the synthesis of IR and Area Studies. The word ‘discipline’, thereby, denotes the (sub-)discipline of IR and theoretically-grounded social sciences approaches to it (Acharya 2006: 1). Disciplinary area studies includes ‘regionally-oriented disciplinarians’ and ‘discipline-oriented regionalists’ (Acharya 2006: 1): the former group denotes so called disciplinarians studying regional phenomena (often) in a comparative way. The latter group includes area scholars who use theoretical concepts and the like in their analyses (Acharya 2006: 1, 16). Transnational area studies, by contrast, focus on analysing phenomena by starting out from the effects of globalisation on policy issues and globalisation-affected communities across world regions (Acharya 2006: 1-2, 14-15, 16).

<sup>86</sup> This study is, in fact, closer to transnational area studies than comparative area studies as its research starting point is IR and not Comparative Politics. However, transnational area studies need not be theoretically guided (Acharya 2006: 16). Thus, one might conclude that the study is closest to disciplinary area studies (Acharya 2006) as the study’s approach starts with an IR-perspective. Moreover, even though the study’s author makes use of a limited area knowledge, the project may only possibly contribute to an area studies view in an implicit way. Yet interestingly, Acharya (2012) has advised to follow an abductive research approach when combining IR and Area Studies (which makes transnational area studies). Applied to the present study, it offers a confirmation of the benefits in combining deductive and inductive inferences in this study being close to transnational area studies and disciplinary area studies in terms of research approach and, thus, methodology.

Even though I generally do acknowledge the benefit of combining these research perspectives, namely disciplinary perspectives such as IR and (Comparative) Area Studies, I only implicitly combine an IR-perspective with a CAS-view. In CAS, a cross-regional comparison means to compare 'entities from different geographic areas' (Ahram 2011: 81). Yet even though I do follow an IR-view with a cross-regional perspective, I am not primarily investigating the countries located within different world regions. Thus, I am not analysing factors (variables) or social phenomena in one or more areas. Instead, I am analysing relations of countries from different world regions with the EU. As a result, I am looking at a phenomenon 'linking' countries from different world regions. However, I do thereby take different regional contexts into account within case analysis and interpretation building my (limited) area knowledge. Thus, doing research on emerging regional powers does not 'only' acknowledge the distinctiveness of the regional level (see next chapter) but integrates into the selection and analysis of cases (see Ch. 6).

Critics may say that IR automatically exhibits a supra-regional research perspective because of the level of analysis. Yet this is not necessarily the case as research in IR may only involve, e.g., the foreign policy of countries located within one world region or it concerns international politics working at the global level but still not affecting more than one world region.

Overall, this leaves me with an IR-approach with a (modified) cross-regional perspective, means that the researcher ensures that the analysis includes cases from different world regions. The modification of CAS' cross-regional perspective can be explained by the fact that I indeed work with area knowledge from several regions but comparative method is not the prime focus in this study (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 6-7). However, the cross-regional perspective informs the study's research design (see Ch. 6) and, thereby, adds to the scope and relevance of the study's results. In any case, I will make use of my (limited) 'area-based knowledge' (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 6) on Europe and the EU, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Area-based knowledge denotes knowledge about an area, which is at the same time used to study phenomena exceeding one particular area (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 6). This area-based knowledge as well as CAS can be helpful to inform more general theoretical ideas, particularly when these are originally from Europe and North America (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 9); thus, being only from one area.

### **3.1.3.3 The significance of the regional level**

As briefly mentioned in the previous subchapter, I will neither start from nor dedicate my work to a research perspective of regionalism. Even though I highlight globalisation and interdependence processes, I nevertheless see the relevance, fruitfulness and analytic leverage in (analytically) separating the regional and international levels. Thus, the present study does believe in the distinctiveness of the regional level even though it does not primarily do research at the regional level. Moreover, this project is to a certain extent regionally contextualised as its author does possess a certain degree of area study knowledge with respect to all four regions concerned (Africa, Europe, South/Asia and Latin/South America).

I will elaborate on the significance of (world) regions and regionalisation in Ch. 4.2.1.2 in the context of my presuppositions about the international system-structure. Moreover, the importance of the regional level is also reflected in the fact that the agents II in my study, namely Brazil, India and South Africa are understood as emerging *regional* powers in my work. Overall, it shows that I attach importance to the regional level in my research.

In brief, in terms of delimiting my work, I will not engage in research discussions, which can be grouped under the heading of a regional perspective. Hence, even though I do acknowledge the distinctiveness of the regional level<sup>87</sup>, I will not attempt to define or conceptualise neither regional (leading) powers; regional order nor regions. It is rather an important background to my study and part of my analytical lens in this study. I will take certain definitions of regions or regional powers as given; i.e. I will not try to explain them. Regions are in this study both geographically-determined entities as well as analytical levels. The views of the concerned actors in this study largely determine the regions as 'analytical categories' in this study. Thus, regions are somewhat geographical in this study (e.g. reflected in my case selection from different geographical world regions) but also 'theoretically-grounded analytical categories' (Ahram 2011: 69). These analytic categories are 'grounded in historical processes that cluster spatial, temporal, and institutional contexts between and above the country-level unit' (Ahram 2011: 70). These various clusters contribute to a view by certain countries to share commonalities, which again making countries in a region somewhat move together. Interaction among these regionally-clustered countries is then more likely (Ahram 2011: 72). Against the

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<sup>87</sup> For studies on the significance of regions as units of analysis; the regional level and regional orders, particularly also in terms of regional and international security or peace, please see Buzan/Waever 2008 and Katzenstein 2005; Acharya 2007; Acharya 2006: 13; Ahram 2011: 70-72; Miller 2005; Lake/Morgan 1997; Godehardt/Nabers 2011b; Lemke 2002; Cartori/Spiegel 1970; Thompson 1973; Hurrell 2007; or the special issue in the Review of International Studies (2009; Vol. 35, S1) on 'regions' and the like.

background of this view of a region, countries may form part of several regions as regions may indeed be overlapping (Ahram 2011: 72).

After having acknowledged the distinctiveness of the regional level, I will now turn to the levels of the present project in terms of structure and agency.

### **3.1.4 The Macro- and Meso-Levels: The international system and its actors**

In this subchapter I will address the macro- and meso-levels as well as agents of my research. Thereby, I will clarify the 'structure' and 'agency' in work against the background of the study's realist social theoretical approach and of an International Relations perspective. The discussion of structure and agency mirrors how my research enables and allows for a dual view of structure and agency in my analysis. However, in this subchapter I will limit myself to 'only' clearly defining the structure and agency of my study. The more detailed characteristics of structure and agency will follow in Ch. 4.2.2, when I start to build my analytic and conceptual model.

The study will follow both a systemic as well as a social (sociological) understanding of agency and structure(s). I will come back to this point later in Ch. 5. From this view of structures follows (amongst others) that I will deal with both a macro- as well as meso-level in my study. For the time being, I will in the subsequent chapter only elaborate on the macro-level of this study, which is the international system-structure.

#### **3.1.4.1 The international system-structure as the macro-level**

The definition of structure is relational meaning that it is dependent on the particular perspective in a research project (Hay 1995: 200). In my research, the macro-level-structure equals the international system. The predominant actors in the international system are states characterising the structure of the international system. In order to contextualise agency, we need to understand the features of the international system. As mentioned before, I do not believe that agency is strictly conditioned or enabled by structure. Structure may favour certain actions over others. But action is more dependent on the choice of agents on which actions or strategies they choose against the background of a certain system-structure.

By describing the ‘macro’-level I will outline the premises from neo-/realist and neo-/liberal meta-theory, on which my work builds on, in Ch 4.2.1. There, along the lines of this rationale, I will delineate the (analytic eclectically derived) characteristics of the international system-structure – the macro-level of my study – in order to contextualise and socially ground agency.

### **3.1.4.2 The Agents**

Before I turn to the theorising of the strategic partnerships as strategic alliances and as a form of social relationship between actors, I first will clearly define the ‘agents’ in my study. The ‘agency’ in my study involves the EU as a (state-resembling) meso-level-actor and the (state) actors Brazil, India and South Africa. The power of these actor-agents will be the topic later in Ch. 4.2.2.

I will first address the EU as the Agent I in my study. I will explain the term ‘meso-level-actor’ by revisiting the agency-structure debate and the level-of-analysis-‘problem’ with respect to the EU. In this context, I will position my work and clarify that I will ‘approach’ the EU predominantly from an International Relations perspective in this study. In a second step I will briefly refer to the Agents II of my study – Brazil, India and South Africa.

#### **3.1.4.2.1 Agent I: Structure or Agency? The EU as a Meso-Level-Actor**

In this subchapter I will elaborate on three interrelated debates: 1) the international actorness of the EU; 2) the EU as an agency or structure and 3) the ‘level-of analysis’-problem<sup>88</sup> of the EU. All three debates ultimately deal with the same question but from different angles or framings: they centre on the question if the EU, lacking a Joint Foreign and Security Policy, can be regarded and ultimately analysed as an international and foreign policy actor. Hence, it needs to be asked whether the EU is a (foreign policy) agent or rather a structure, which serves the EU-member states? Put differently, when analysing EU-foreign policy, do we as researchers look at the EU-member states or at

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<sup>88</sup> The level-of-analysis-problem concerns the differentiation between systems and units and the question of whether units are to be explained by looking at the system or vice versa (Hollis/Smith 1990: 7). Does a researcher need to look at the internal constitutiveness of a unit in order to explain a social phenomenon (Hollis/Smith 1990: 7)? Crucially, there may not only be ‘layers’ of units (Hollis/Smith 1990: 8). But there is also the question arising as whether to explain from the top or the bottom of the layers (Hollis/Smith 1990: 8-9). For example, looking at the EU in international politics is a case in point regarding the level-of analysis-problem: is EU foreign policy behaviour to be explained by looking at the international system, at the EU or the EU-Member States? Thus, which is the level to look at as a researcher?

the EU-institutions at EU-level (unit(s) of analysis)? In due course, is there a thing such as European foreign policy?

In the following I will answer these interrelated debates in a combined way: first, I will mention the overlaps between EU foreign policy and EU external relations. Secondly, this overlap between the EU's foreign policy and its external relations at large leads over to the debate around the EU's international actor-ness. I will explain why I (can) perceive the EU as an international actor. Thirdly, I will outline with respect to the level-of-analysis-problem with respect to the EU's foreign policy that I will depict the EU as a meso-level-actor comprising several sub-actors. Along the way, I will link all debates to the strategic partnerships.

Firstly, before I will elaborate on the challenge of the agency-structure-debate and the EU's (contested) actorness and the linked level-of-analysis-problem with respect to the EU, let me first state a clear positioning of how I perceive strategic partnerships regarding foreign policy and external relations. Essentially, strategic partnerships are both<sup>89</sup>. Strictly speaking, the EU's strategic partnerships form part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)<sup>90</sup>. Yet in terms of the multiple policies and issues covered by them, they effectively cut across a multitude of policy and issue areas. Actually, the picture is yet even more complicated as there is a multitude of actors and institutions located at national member-state as well as EU-level involved. Hence, the strategic partnerships also involve the EU's external relations in a wider sense. In brief, strategic partnerships are both foreign policy and external relations.

Hence, the question remains if the EU is an agent and a foreign policy actor in its own right. Only referring to the EU's external relations ultimately bypasses the essence

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<sup>89</sup> A strategic partnership has, crucially, no genuine legal status: as Sautenet explains, it has a '[...] pre-legal function [sic] – i.e. it sets the stage for a new framework' (Sautenet 2012: 127). Strategic partnerships are thus rather a common roof for existing and new policies and tools. However, I will also call them 'tools' as they are used as tools in foreign policy; thus, foreign policy tools.

<sup>90</sup> The EU, which was predominantly the European Economic Community (EC) before, was founded with the Treaty of Maastricht (1993). Since the Treaty of Maastricht the EU's structure is often conceived in terms of the so called three pillars. In addition to the economic sector (the EC) (pillar I), two more so called pillars were added: pillar II, which represents the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and pillar III, which referred to the cooperation areas in justice and home affairs (Peters/Wagner 2005: 244, 266). The pillars thus involve different policy areas and decision-making structures. Pillar I of the EU widely refers to the European Community and the (supranational) 'community method'. As a consequence, pillar I is often called as the supranationalised or communitarised pillar. Pillar II and the EU's CFSP, however, have been predominantly been characterized by intergovernmental decision-making and unanimity (Peters/Wagner 2005: 246). For a further overview of the EU's antecessors see, e.g., Wallace/Wallace/Pollack 2005: 4-5. The Treaty of Lisbon, which conferred legal personality to the EU, has fused the three pillars (Hill/Smith 2011b: 6). However, Hill/Smith (2011b: 6) point out that '[...] there are still important differences between the supranational aspects of the Union's functioning and the intergovernmental dimensions, which is still dominant in foreign and security policy'.

of the agency-structure-debate. It does not satisfactorily end the discussion on whether the EU constitutes an agent or a structure (for underlying actors such as its member states), when researchers try to draw the line at the putative confines of policy-areas. Let us first understand the actor-nature of the EU before we more specifically address the level-of-analysis question.

Secondly, whether the EU can be considered an 'actor' (or agent as understood with respect to the agent-structure-debate) is highly debated. As Holden has put it, 'although there is a growing acceptance that the EU is an actor worthy of study, it is necessary to clarify in precisely what sense this is the case' (2009: 7). And even more strikingly, 'the question of actorhood is of importance because it alludes to the EU's aspiration to become what in international relations jargon is called a *power*' (sic; Toje 2008: 9). This essential question brings us back to the agency-structure-debate but with a specific focus on the EU.

Intuitively, I would say that the EU is both agent and structure when it comes to the foreign policy/external relations of Europe. This is due to the fact that agency and structure with respect to the EU is ontologically and conceptually interdependent. Yet, even though structure and agency share equal ontological status (following my scientific realist social theoretical approach), they are 'ontologically distinct entities' (Wendt 1987: 360).

Clearly, the EU has both features of a state as well as of an international organisation. In addition, and in contrast to a majority of international or regional organisations (as well as international regimes), the EU has supranational characteristics and decision-making organs. It shows that the EU is somewhere 'in between', especially compared to other regional organisations in the international system. As the EU is neither a fully-fledged state nor an international organisation, scholars of International Relations have been quite quick in dismissing the EU's actor-nature. Instead, researchers have preferred to speak of the EU as an international or foreign policy actor '*sui generis*' (see, e.g., Fraser 2007: xiv). This is particularly true when it comes to the EU's foreign policy and its external relations. Overall, the analysis of the EU's external relations and its foreign policy is complicated by the fact that the EU generally is no single homogeneous international actor (Schukraft 2007: 128; Maull 2005: 791-792). As Smith (2007: 439) puts it, the EU as such already is to be regarded as '[...] first a (sub)system of international relations in itself, second a major element in the general processes of international relations, and finally an embryonic power in the international arena' (Smith 2007: 439; Hill/Smith 2005: 398).

However, when leaving ontology aside, there are many approaches to and definitions of what constitutes an actor or actorness in International Relations (Holden 2009: 7-8; Bretherton/Vogler 2008: 12-36). I will not further elaborate on these definitions here as this is not the study's prime focus.<sup>91</sup> However, there is somewhat a growing common understanding that the EU is slowly emerging as an international actor employing increasingly cohesive and effective policies (Leonard 2007: 35; Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2006: 25).

Crucially, in this study the EU will be approached from an International Relations perspective. Thus, I will treat the EU as an international agent and actor in its own right<sup>92</sup>. To this end, I will follow Christopher Hill's conception of foreign policy (2003a), which also enables to treat the EU as an independent actor in its own right. He defines foreign policy as the '[...] sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations' (Hill 2003a: 3). This definition of foreign policy as comprising external relations, is also somewhat adopted by other authors (Fraser 2007: xiv). Hill particularly mentions that the term 'independent actor' involves the EU. The notion 'sum' hints at the fact that there may several 'elements' of that foreign policy (Hill 2003a: 3). This definition of foreign policy can be enlarged by Hill's conception of 'collective coping' to a view of foreign policy involving external relations. 'Collective coping' signifies an actor's engagement with the international environment, which does not only involve the actions by diplomats and foreign ministries but rather '[...] the broad sweep of official activity' (Hill 2003b: 239). Thus, diplomats and foreign ministries 'have no exclusive competence in the area, but neither are they becoming redundant' (Hill 2003b: 254)<sup>93</sup>. These two definitions of foreign policy offered by Hill (2003a, 2003b), hence, may be fruitfully combined in order to denote the composited nature of the EU('s foreign policy) in terms of actors and external relations (Algieri 2010: 27-28). Moreover, Hill's definitions also correspond well to the strategic partnerships, which comprise both genuine foreign policy and the broad range of foreign policy. Crucially, strategic

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<sup>91</sup> As the study does not work with role theory, I will disregard the literature on the international or global roles of the EU. Please see in this regard, for example, Bretherton/Vogler 2008: 37-61; Elgström/Smith 2006; or Orbie 2008.

<sup>92</sup> For more elaboration with respect to the EU's 'actorness' and various aspects thereof see, for example, Krotz 2009 or Wunderlich 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Even though Hill (2003b: 254) mentions this with respect to the 'two-way flow between domestic society and international relations, I believe that this dynamic also takes place due to the blurring of previously internal and external policies. This blurring also diminishes the exclusive competence of diplomats in the policy areas of foreign policy/external relations. Hill (2003b) hints at this circumstance later in his article by highlighting that 'foreign policy is no longer seen as a discrete area, sealed off from 'normal' politics (...)' (Hill 2003b: 254). Furthermore, he states that 'new' policy issues '(...) all have an inside/outside, domestic/foreign dimension (...)' (Hill 2003b: 254-255).

partnerships are not only a foreign policy tool but also a roof for the scope of external relations pertaining to strategic partnerships.

Let me add at this point that critics might object by pointing to (perception) studies that the countries do not perceive the EU as a partner or international actor but instead prefer dealing with individual EU-member states. However, I believe that this does not inhibit the chosen research perspective of this study, namely dealing with the EU as an 'international actor entity'. Brazil, India and South Africa actually 'treat' the EU as an international actor and partner by the very establishment of the respective strategic partnerships with the EU. The strategic partnerships as political agreements demonstrate that foreign countries do have 'inter-state' relations with the EU, which go beyond trade relations and include a political dimension. Thus, the EU is perceived and treated as an international partner (almost) in the same way as other international actors are approached for bilateral trade and political relations. The main difference lies, in my view, in the multi-level and multi-arena nature of dealing with the EU: partners of the EU are obliged to accommodate for policy areas with single, shared or 'supranational' competences. This makes dealing with the EU and its sui-generis-decision- and policymaking features complicated. But it does not imply that the EU can be disregarded as an international actor or possible international partner for third countries or organisations. Thus, the fact that these countries still foster bilateral relations with individual EU-member states or the supposition that they actually prefer dealing with nation-states in comparison to the *sui-generis*-actor EU is perfectly in line with this study. Not only the EU but a multitude of international actors have relations with nation-states as well as with international or regional organisations on top of that. To sum up, I can treat the EU as an entity and as one side to the strategic partnerships next to Brazil, India and South Africa in this study

Overall, I will be analysing 'European Foreign Policy' despite the fact that there is no 'Joint Foreign and Security Policy' by the EU in place<sup>94</sup>. The International Relations-view of the EU enables this perspective. At the same time, the EU's strategic partnerships stems from the EU's foreign policy-pillar but involves the vast range of the EU's external relations. Hence, it is both EU-institutions and EU-member states involved in the decision- and foreign policy-making of EU Foreign Policy (including its external

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<sup>94</sup> It is important to note that in my analysis I will not dwell on normative positions on if a joint European foreign policy should be put in place or whether it should be preferred in contrast to national foreign policies or not. This may only be sketched in the outlook of this research project and will be indicated there. In this sense, I will actually take the European foreign policy during the time period analysed 'as a given' and will not judge upon it on normative terms.

relations). But which levels or which actors do I as a researcher need to look at then when striving to understand the EU's strategic partnerships? In trying to answer this question I can now turn to the third topic of this subchapter: the level-of-analysis-problem when analysing the EU's foreign policy and external relations.

After having demonstrated that the EU can indeed and will be treated as an international actor and a partner for other international actors, we are still left with the question of who actually constitutes the EU as an actor. Hence, I will now, thirdly, address the level-of-analysis-problem with respect to the EU's foreign policy. Generally, the EU is indeed a multi-level system involving several levels according to policy areas, such as the subnational, national, European (supranational and intergovernmental) as well as international levels. This also widely applies to the EU's foreign policy (Algieri 2010: 30, 33). So where then is the *level* of EU foreign policy/external relations? This question is connected to the question of identifying the relevant actors in terms of the EU's Foreign Policy. Put differently, the question of the level-of-analysis-problem is inextricably linked to the developments in the field of the EU's foreign policy and external relations (Mi. Smith 1996). Hence, even if it is assumed that the EU is an international actor, the identification of the relevant actors reveals that we still need to clarify whether the EU is an actor or rather a structure for its EU-Member states?

By doing research on EU foreign policy or on the EU as an international actor, one essentially poses the 'level-of-analysis'-question. It is true that Europe's foreign policy is characterised by multiple levels and multiple arenas involving different actors such as nation-states (EU member states) or organs of the European Union such as the European Commission<sup>95</sup>. Indeed, the EU is a 'multi-level actor with overlapping and integrated tools and strategies' (Giessmann 2010: 260), particularly in the context of EU-foreign policy. When doing research on EU foreign policy, it is at first unclear on which

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<sup>95</sup> Historically, the EU has only had a foreign policy since 1993. Even though there has been foreign policy 'coordination' on EU-level since the 1970s, it was only with the Treaty of Maastricht and the establishment of the EU and its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that an EU-foreign and defence policy was really perceived. Before, the EU's external engagement has been largely limited to its so called external relations. Originally, the EU's external relations were only characterized by economic matters. Over time, developmental and environmental matters were added to the spectrum of the EU's external relations. Later, the range of the EU's external relations was extended by including foreign and defence policy issues by the establishment of the EU's CFSP. Yet the political aspects of the EU's external relations were hardly communitarised in the beginning of the EU's CFSP. Over time, the EU's external relations (including its foreign policy) grew in complexity due to the involved different institutional decision-making and policy-making patterns as well as shifting involvement of actors (Peters/Wagner 2005: 266-267). To date, there is no (entirely supranationalised) Joint Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. However, it shows that the separation between the EU's so called external relations and foreign policy is not clear-cut but rather overlapping (K. Smith 2008: 3). Thus, as Algieri has explained, the EU's CFSP is closely connected to the EU's foreign policy. Yet the EU's foreign policy cannot be exclusively limited to the EU's CFSP (Algieri 2010: 26). This equally applies to the strategic partnerships.

'level' to focus on. Is it the level of (national) EU-member states or is it the (supranational) EU-level or is it both levels? The researcher does not only deal with 'levels' but also needs to clarify on which actors to focus on. Can we actually speak and eventually analyse *EU foreign policy*? Hence, can we perceive the EU as an international actor pursuing its foreign policy vis-à-vis the international environment?

The study builds on theories of interdependence (Hix 1994) in order to account for the multiple levels and arena of EU-foreign policy/external relations regarding the EU's multi-level actorness and strategic *partnership*. This will be done by referring to Puchala (1971), who views 'international integration' as a 'Concordance System' (Puchala 1971: 277). Thus, Puchala views '[...] *integration [...] as a set of processes that produce and sustain a Concordance System at the international level [sic]*' (Puchala 1971: 277). As mentioned before, Puchala, thereby, defines a 'Concordance System' as an '[...] international system wherein actors find it possible consistently to harmonize their interests, compromise their differences and reap mutual rewards from their interactions' (Puchala 1971: 277). Thereby, I believe that integration can be both process and condition. In a 'Concordance System', Puchala convincingly argues, there are 'four organisational arenas' (Puchala 1971: 278), namely the 'subnational', the 'national', the 'transnational' and the 'supranational' (Puchala 1971: 278). The actors located on these levels are more or less autonomous, which varies according to the issue. All actors are interdependent and interactive within and between arenas. Furthermore, there is 'no prevailing or established hierarchy or superordination-subordination relationship among the different kinds of actors [...]' (Puchala: 1971: 278)<sup>96</sup>. Yet crucial features of a Concordance System are also 'a highly institutionalized system' and rather 'bureaucratic' structures (Puchala 1971: 279) and actors' interaction is characterised by 'political conflict' (Puchala 1971: 279) but within cooperative patterns and '*bargaining [...]* toward the achievement of convergent or collective ends [...]' [sic] (Puchala 1971: 280; 279-280). I believe that Puchala's concept of a Concordance System is very much suitable of capturing the EU as a system being an international system while at the same time being different from it (Puchala 1971: 283).

By defining the EU as a Concordance System (signifying 'European' international integration), this perspective allows for analysing different actors being 'part of the

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<sup>96</sup> At first, Puchala's elaboration on the non-hierarchy of actors appears inconsistent with the EU's multi-level actorness: Puchala (1971: 277) points out that states still are the 'major component units of the [Concordance; NH] system' and their governments stay crucial actors in this system (Puchala 1971: 277). However, even this remark corresponds to focus of this study as the strategic partnerships, being part of the EU foreign policy, are largely dominated by intergovernmental processes and, therefore, states/EU-member states.

whole'. Consequently, in my study the EU is constituted by all 'sub-actors' of the European Union, namely all state actors as well as institutions of the EU<sup>97</sup>. Particularly, when it comes to the EU's foreign policy, I believe it makes sense to view the EU as a Concordance System with overlapping arenas of the (here) national and supranational arenas (in contrast to clearly demarcated levels<sup>98</sup>). As a result, I view the EU as a meso-level (-concordance) actor. It is meso-level because it is not an international organisation such as the United Nations<sup>99</sup>.

To sum up, by drawing on Hill and Puchala's 'Concordance' System (1971), this study can deal with the EU as an international actor as well as an international entity being constitutive of several parts of the whole, namely its 'sub-actors'. The sub-actors (and their sub-structures) make the composite meso-level-actor EU. In this context, I agree with Algieri (2010: 33) stating that levels are rather to be seen as an 'ordering criterion' (Algieri 2010: 33), which serves to locate the actors within a social interaction. Yet this locating of actors on a level does not suffice for analysing the behaviour of agents in the context of the EU's foreign policy (Algieri 2010: 33). Hence, it is the interaction of agents located on different levels – thus, the sub-actors of the meso-level actor EU – that can offer a full (research) picture. As a result, identifying levels of actor may be a first step to an analysis. But the levels should not be used as strict dividing lines as this may inhibit the understanding of strategic partnerships in my view. This is again an advantage of my conception of the EU as a meso-level actor.

At this stage it is important to note that strategic partnerships as foreign policy/external roofs and foreign policy tools between interacting agents are primarily an elite-driven process. Hence, I will exclude the societal and subnational level from my analysis as it is less important to my investigation. This will also inform the choice of my 'experts' for the interviewing (see Ch. 6). This leaves me with the supranational level of

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<sup>97</sup> Civil society and non-state actors are, however, of less relevance to the study as the strategic partnerships are a predominantly elite-driven process on 'state' or EU-institutional level. Where applicable and fruitful with respect to the desired research insights, I will refer or sometimes even elaborate on the 'sub-actors within the EU-actor', which thus widely applies to EU-member states and EU-institutions. A possible elaboration on the EU's 'sub-actors' could prove useful, for example, in order to better understand particular stages of the EU policy-making process which are agenda setting, policy formulation, policy decision and policy implementation. However, as the analysis of the EU's 'sub-actors' of the strategic partnership is not the major focus of this study, reference to them will only be done at times and rather cursory. Especially, I will only refer to these 'sub-actors' or 'sub-structures' as '(separate) parts of the whole' but not as independent actors of the strategic partnership.

<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, in this study I will still often speak of 'levels' in order to differentiate between the national and supranational (EU-)levels for the sake of avoiding misunderstandings.

<sup>99</sup> This view is similar to Smith's perspective of the EU as a '(sub)system of international relations in itself' (Smith 2007: 439; 440). Indeed, Puchala remarks that a Concordance System is '[...] basically an international system' (Puchala 1971: 278), even though it is very complex due to its various interlinked arenas and actors (Puchala 1971: 278).

the EU as an 'international subsystem' (Algieri 2010: 33) (involving the European Council, Council of the European Union, European Parliament and European Commission) as well as the national level (including the governments of EU-member states and national parliaments to a certain extent) (Algieri 2010: 33). I will further elaborate on the most significant actors in the context of the EU's CFSP and its external relations in Ch. 6.2, when I outline the main 'sub-actor' and 'sub-structures' of the composite meso-level-actor EU in greater detail.

After having outlined the agency of the EU (as a meso-level actor), I will now turn to the Agents II of my study.

#### **3.1.4.2.2 Agents II: Brazil, India and South Africa**

Here, let me briefly say that in denoting Brazil, India and South Africa as the Agents II of my study, I will be dealing with the level of the state. This is due to the fact that I am approaching the agents of my study from an International Relations and Foreign Policy perspective, which primarily deals with states and the official level. As mentioned before, strategic partnerships in foreign policy are mainly driven by the executive and official levels. Thus, I will factor out the societal level of these countries as this is of less relevance to my study on strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools. Again, this view has also informed the choice of interview partners. It is important to note that their trilateral initiative, the IBSA Dialogue Forum<sup>100</sup> is not at the centre of this research project and is, thus, no agent of this study.

#### **3.1.4.2.3 The characteristics of agents**

The present study's view of agents is similar to the perspective of structures being both material and social. Due to the study's analytic eclectic fundament agents are both rational (realism and liberalism) and reflective (constructivism) (Andreatta 2011: 27; 36). Furthermore, the following view is dominant in this study: '(...) social and material environments both socialise and constrain individuals and enable them to take actions intelligible to others, including actions that intentionally change social norms and material circumstances' (George/Bennett 2005: 129). Thus, agents are socially and structurally

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<sup>100</sup> IBSA stands for India, Brazil and South Africa. The Dialogue Forum was established in 2003. It is geared towards deepening relations amongst each other and to strengthen the international negotiation position of the Global South (Zilla 2009: 55). For more information on IBSA see, for example, Vieira/Alden 2011 or Taylor 2009.

grounded. Thereby, the study can 'contextualise'<sup>101</sup> (Abbott 2004: 47) the actors of this study and consequently, the strategic partnerships. Strategic partnerships are, thus, products of intentional action being structurally and socially grounded. I will come back to this matter in Ch. 5.

### **3.1.4.3. Concluding remarks**

This subchapter has outlined the structure, agencies and levels of this study: the international system-structure is the overarching structure. Agent I of this study is constituted by the EU as a meso-level actor representing a Concordance system. Agents II are Brazil, India and South Africa.

In the next chapter the study turns to first evidence, important delimitations and building blocks of strategic partnerships. In addition to the chapter on the state of the art (Ch. 2), this will demonstrate that there is generally a lack of understanding regarding strategic partnerships in international politics and as foreign policy tools.

## **3.2 First Evidence, Delimitations and Building blocks**

In this chapter the strategic partnerships will be approached from different angles. Firstly, it will be looked for evidence on the central characteristics of strategic partnerships from the (empirical) policy documents. Secondly, I will assess IR-literature by looking for guiding knowledge on strategic partnerships in foreign policy. Thirdly, the terms 'strategy' and 'partnership' will be briefly assessed in their meaning for the foreign policy tool of strategic partnerships. This chapter serves to find helpful evidence on strategic partnerships in foreign policy; delimitate them from other notions known in international politics and identify helpful building blocks for *understanding*.

### **3.2.1 Empirical evidence from the European Security Strategy (ESS)**

In this subchapter I will consider vital policy documents from the EU-side regarding their mentioning and conceptualisation of strategic partnerships. These are the European Security Strategy and the Report on its implementation. The reason that I particularly draw on European documents lies in the fact that the strategic partnerships are usually proposed by the EU-side and are, thus, a primarily European initiative. Thereofre, it

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<sup>101</sup> By contextualising, social phenomena acquire meaning by putting them into the context where they came into being (Abbott 2004: 47).

seems wise to seek evidence from the EU-documents in approaching the strategic partnerships. Furthermore, the chapter on the state of the art has indicated that the EU's strategic partnerships are often put into context with the ESS.

### **3.2.1.1 The European Security Strategy (ESS) (2003)**

The EU's European Security Strategy<sup>102</sup> (ESS) (December 2003) (Council/EU 2003) offered the EU a strategic guidance framework for the first time. It was designed by the then High Representative Javier Solana on the basis of a mandate by the EU Heads of State. The ESS has a clear security policy focus but is nevertheless relevant for EU foreign policy as a whole due to its strategic Outlook (Algieri 2010: 114, 115). In 2007 the European Council gave the High Representative Javier Solana the task to revisit the ESS' implementation together with the EU-Commission and the EU-member states within a year. Where necessary, the ESS should be revised or modified (Algieri 2010: 118-119). The resulting report<sup>103</sup> on the ESS was adopted in December 2008 by the EU Heads of State. Even though the ESS' implementation was seen as 'work in progress' (Council/EU 2008: 2), the ESS was nonetheless found to remain widely valid (Algieri 2010: 119; Council/EU 2008: 3).

What matters for the present study is the fact that the ESS also mentions the strategic partnerships in a more or less overview. Moreover, I will be mentioning this policy document quite often in the course of this study, not only due to its outlining of the concept of effective multilateralism (see below).

The European Security Strategy (Council/EU: 2003) identified the EU's security interests, predominantly describes a Post-Cold War world characterized by globalisation, interdependence and global challenges. Against of the background of the following observation that 'no single country is able to tackle today's complex problems on its own' (Council/EU 2003: 1) the objective of "effective multilateralism"<sup>104</sup> is developed:

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<sup>102</sup> On the origins of the ESS please see Algieri (2010: 113-114). A more detailed elaboration on the contents of the ESS please see Algieri (2010: 115-117) and Biscop 2013.

<sup>103</sup> For more details on the report of the ESS' implementation please see Algieri (2010: 118-121) and Biscop (2013: 40).

<sup>104</sup> The EU has committed itself to strive for the goal of 'effective multilateralism'. It represents a major guideline for the EU regarding its foreign-, security- and defence-policy (Algieri 2010: 131). Multilateralism, thereby, denotes to act according to beforehand negotiated rules for international interaction and politics. For more information on (effective) multilateralism, see, for example, Algieri (2010: 131-133).

“In a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective”. (Council/EU 2003: 9).

This statement is further elaborated by referring to examples of multilateral cooperation and priorities such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the North Atlantic Treaty Association (NATO). Continuing with the ‘policy implications for Europe’ (Chapter III. in the ESS), four main goals have been identified: the EU has to be ‘more active’, ‘more coherent’ and ‘more capable’ as well as it needs to ‘work with others’ (Council/EU 2003: 11). These four dimensions are crucial in order for the EU ‘[...] to make a contribution that matches our [the EU’s; NH] potential [...]’ (ibid). This brings us back to the EU’s own perception of its global player potential, which can be read from between the lines of the ESS. Therefore, one can conclude that as the EU strives for a global player potential, it has to achieve its four self-declared ends.

The fourth goal “working with others” is the most significant goal with respect to the EU’s strategic partnerships. As explained by the EU in the text, there ‘[...] are few if any problems we can deal with on our own. [...] We need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organisations and through **partnerships with key actors**’ (Council/EU 2003: 13; emphasis added). Consequently, the EU regards multi- and bilateralism as complementary. The transatlantic relationship with the US is particularly highlighted in the text. The (other) strategic partnerships are mentioned at the end of the ESS’ policy document. Explicitly mentioned in the ESS are Japan, Canada, China and India (Council/EU 2003: 14). In this respect, the ESS refers to the specific aim of particularly building ‘[...] strategic partnerships, with Japan, China, Canada and India as well as those who share our goals and values, and are prepared to act in their support’ (Council/EU 2003: 14).

Overall, it appears that one can read from the ESS’ policy document that the strategic partnerships are conceptualised as building blocks to the ESS’ described rationale of the EU’s goal of effective multilateralism. Yet the ESS also shows that there is no precise definition of what a strategic partnerships actually is or entails. They are instead mentioned in a rather rudimentary (non-definitory and vague) manner. Moreover, it is an open listing of the strategic partners signifying that there could be more strategic

partnerships be established after the ESS had been published. In fact, it seems as if this is what happened in practice.

Furthermore, there is a mixed mentioning of bilateral strategic partnerships: on the one hand, there are the strategic partnerships with partners such as the US (enjoying a special mentioning within the text), Japan and Canada, which were established before the year 2003. On the other hand, there are the rather 'new' strategic partners such as China and India (the latter not even having formally established the strategic partnership at the time).

Overall, the ESS' reader is left alone with several questions, namely 1) what exactly is a strategic partnership?; 2) how do strategic partnerships work exactly?; 3) what qualifies a country to become the EU's strategic partner?; 4) how many strategic partners are existent?; and 5) what is the strategic partners' interest in having strategic partnerships?. These are the various dimensions of the non-definition of a strategic partnership.

Nevertheless, the fact that strategic partnerships are mentioned in this major policy document points to the importance of this 'instrument' as well as to their relevance for the strategic positioning of the EU in the world.

### **3.2.2.2 The Report on the ESS' Implementation (2008)**

The High Representative Javier Solana was later asked to draft a report on the implementation of the ESS, which was indeed published at the end of the year 2008 (Algieri 2010: 118-119). It also mentions the strategic partnerships. Hence, I will investigate now if this report may shed some light on a possible definition of a strategic partnership.

The revisiting report simply stated that it '[...] does not replace the ESS, but reinforces it' (Council/ EU 2008: 3). The discourse of both documents, the ESS and the 2008 Report, are comparable. Whereas the ESS rather appears to be a 'declaration of intent', the Report seems to be indeed an account of what the EU has been doing to implement the ESS with an excessive enumeration and description of various policies and measures. With reference to the strategic partners, the Report's Chapter on 'Partnerships for Effective Multilateralism' (Council/EU 2008: 11) states:

'We have substantially expanded our relationship with China. Ties to Canada and Japan are close and longstanding. Russia remains an important partner on global issues. There is still room to do more in our relationship with India. Relations with other partners, including Brazil, South Africa and, within Europe, Norway and Switzerland, have grown in significance since 2003'.

This passage shows that neither a definitive list of strategic partners nor a definition of a strategic partnership was introduced in 2008. However, Russia, Brazil, South Africa and (within Europe) Norway and Switzerland were added as 'important' (though not explicitly as strategic) bilateral partners. The only explicit strategic partnership mentioned in the report is the one with NATO (Council/EU 2008: 2).

However, subsuming the ESS and the Report, we can sum up that in 2008 the EU considered the US, China, India, Japan, Canada as well as Russia, Brazil and South Africa as 'important bilateral partners'.

Overall, the report of the ESS' implementation does reiterate the importance of the 'partnerships' for effective multilateralism (Algieri 2010: 120; Council/EU 2008: 11). Yet as late as 2008, even the report on the ESS' implementation is rather unsatisfactory when wishing for clear guidance on the strategic partnerships. Strategic partners and non-strategic partners are grouped together there, namely China, Canada, Japan, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa as well as Norway and Switzerland (Council/EU 2008: 11). Yet importantly, it should be mentioned that this vagueness is a general feature of the ESS' implementation report (Algieri 2010: 123) and does not only apply to the strategic partnerships.

### **3.2.2 Delimiting Strategic Partnerships**

There is no all-encompassing, universally agreed definition of a (political) strategic partnership – neither in political life nor in the scholarly world. Interestingly, the majority of scholars analyse relations between actors against the background of a strategic partnerships often making normative judgments. This is often done without stating in the beginning how they would actually define strategic partnerships. It seems to be as if authors often take strategic partnerships as a 'given' and believe that everyone knows what it constitutes and what it exactly entails. This is obviously not the case. Yet there are feeds and 'approaches' on which a definition of a strategic partnership can be built on. I will compile the various approaches in order to make sense of a strategic

partnership, which will be of help in understanding the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

I will now first revisit the literature and the 'classical' meta-theories in order to find explanations to the social/political phenomenon of strategic partnerships. Following from the chapter on the state of the art, I will take on some of the stipulations about the nature of the EU's strategic partnerships made by some authors (see Ch. 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 in particular). Thereby, I will show that strategic partnerships are no neorealist (military) alliances (including hard, soft or regional balancing); no bandwagoning and no grand strategy. In addition, I have already established in Ch. 3.1.2.1 that strategic partnerships are neither international regimes nor organisations. There are two important points to be made in this regard: firstly, I am aware of the fact that alliances, balancing and bandwagoning and grand strategies vary in nature: whereas alliances are institutions, balancing and bandwagoning are foreign policy behaviour. Moreover, a grand strategy is a foreign policy strategy. However, I will simply pick up these notions, which have (amongst others) been indicated by experts (see Ch. 2), even though they are very different categories: this will serve to scrutinize if the comparison of strategic partnerships with balancing, for example, bears serious examination. Secondly, I do not rule out that strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments may actually *be part of* a state's more overarching strategy or policy to balance or bandwagon another state. Nonetheless, the following subchapters will help to differentiate between the different notions and concepts, such as alliances and strategic partnerships. Furthermore, they will demonstrate that existing concepts, such as bandwagoning, do not suffice to fully *understand* strategic partnerships *per se* as foreign policy tools, even though they may be cast as forming part of a broader balancing, bandwagoning or grand strategy.

Hence, the following subchapters serve to delimitate strategic partnerships from more well-known IR-concepts before the study turns to its own attempt of conceptualising strategic partnerships in Ch. 5.

### **3.2.2.1 No military alliances**

First of all, it is important to note that strategic partnerships do not feature at all in 'classical' realist literature. Yet the literature on strategic partnerships sometimes refers to them as alliances or 'strategic alliances', as the Chapter on the State of the Art has shown. However, the authors seldom elaborate what they mean by denoting strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. Their usage of the term seems to be almost an empty

signifier. Thus, we need to investigate if strategic partnerships are military alliances. Thus, I will revisit the literature on (strategic) military alliances in order to delimitate strategic partnerships from (military) alliances.

What is an alliance? Alliances in international relations are widely understood as military alliances (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985; Snyder 1997; Oswald 2006: 52-53; Menon 2003) or as '[...] formal (or informal) commitment for security cooperation between two or more states, intended to augment each member's power, security, and/or influence' (Walt 2009: 86). They are usually formed by two allies for the sake of jointly increasing and agglomerating military power and capabilities or transferring military technology for the sake of counter-balancing a hegemonic power in the international system (Casarini 2009: 87). Thus, alliances imply that there is a dedication of the alliance partners to support each other against 'some external actor(s)' (Walt 2009: 86). Thereby, alliances are, according to Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 198, 201-213), one 'method' of the balancing process or one crucial way of establishing the balance of power. Hence, alliances are a '[...] necessary function of the balance of power operating within a multiple-state system' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 201; Schroeder 1976: 227). Nations competing in this system can choose whether to a) increase their own power; b) add power of other nations to their own capabilities; or c) circumvent that their competitors add power by other nations to their capabilities. Choices b and c are patterns of alliance-building (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 201). By combining the alliance partners' capabilities, states join forces to further their interests, particularly in the security realm (Walt 2009: 88-89). But alliances can also serve to avoid aggression among the members of an alliance by forming a security community. It is a way '[...] to give structure to internal relations' (Oswald 2006: 52). This would constitute an internal alliance. As a result, one can conclude that alliances are a 'cooperative endeavor, in that their members concert their resources in the pursuit of some common goal' (Snyder 1997: 1). Thus, alliances actually are also quite cooperative because they represent cooperation, which is 'institutionalized' and 'formalized' (Stein 1990: 4; 151). To sum up, alliances can be defined as '*formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership* (sic; Snyder 1997: 4).

Thus essentially, (internal and external) alliances are about military capabilities and security relationships between actors geared against another actor or containing aggression amongst each others. However, strategic partnerships are no military

alliances as they are not primarily about joint or common military capabilities. Thus, strategic partnerships are no (military) alliances (Renard 2013b: 303).

Yet later in this project, I will adapt insights on strategic alliances to the phenomenon of strategic partnerships in Ch. 5. Thereby, I will concede that they are a form of strategic alliance but in a non-military and, therefore, limited non-Realist understanding.

After we have now understood that strategic partnerships are no military alliances in a realist sense, I will now evaluate whether they represent a form of (hard or soft) balancing). Hence, even though strategic partnerships are no alliances, which are closely linked to balancing (Walt 1987: 17-19), they may have similar effects in terms of balancing or bandwagoning as alliances are connected to balancing or bandwagoning behaviour (Snyder 1997: 2). Furthermore, some authors investigate strategic partnerships in the light of the concepts of balancing or bandwagoning. According to realists, alliances may lead either in '[...] counterbalancing (finding security in alliances against stronger powers) or [...] "bandwagoning" [sic] (finding security in allegiance to stronger powers)' (Oswald 2006: 52).

### **3.2.2.2 No (external) soft balancing**

In the previous subchapter I have demonstrated that strategic partnerships are no military alliances. In this subchapter I will assess whether strategic partnerships could be a form of balancing.

After the end of the Cold War and the bipolar international system, researchers have asked themselves at the beginning of the 1990s whether the emergence of new great powers would trigger (hard or soft) balancing efforts against the remaining superpower US (Casarini 2009: 87). However, no major balancing efforts, neither 'external balancing' in terms of alliances nor 'hard internal balancing' by aggregating military capabilities of the US competitors (Casarini 2009: 87), took place. Researchers, thus, increasingly focused on explanations for the absent balancing or wondered if hard balancing would be replaced by a more 'gentle', namely soft, balancing (Casarini 2009: 87). Thus, internal or external hard balancing relates to either military alliances or capabilities (Casarini 2009: 87). But we have already seen that strategic partnerships are no military alliances and not about hard power in the first place. As a result, strategic partnerships are no (internal or external) hard balancing, which would involve hard power

in the first place (Layne 2006). But what about more 'subtle' forms of balancing? I will now elaborate further on balancing in order to investigate whether strategic partnerships reflect this form of balancing.

Thus, one could wonder whether strategic partnerships may constitute a form of (external) soft balancing. For example, Wagner (2009b: 74) believes that India's establishing of strategic partnerships with various actors since the 1990s represent a form of soft balancing. But what is 'balancing' exactly? Waltz states that a self-help-system encourages balancing on the side of units (Waltz 2008: 186). 'Balancing is a strategy for survival, a way of attempting to maintain a state's autonomous way of life' (Waltz 2008: 222). It is a retributive strategy: if power is highly concentrated with one power within the international system, other states will try to team up in order to agglomerate power and, thus, balance power again. This is due to the weaker states' fear that the more powerful, 'hegemonic' actor may otherwise dominate them (Casarini 2009: 87; Layne 2006: 28). Balancing can be defined as

'the creation or aggregation of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition' (Schweller 2004: 166).

Balancing in a multipolar world, thereby, is quite challenging as an actor has to compare itself with several others and has to assess the quality of numerous coalitions (Waltz 2008: 187).

Whereas hard balancing denotes hard power, which involves military power; transfer of military technology to allies; or forming military alliances; soft balancing is more subtle (Casarini 2009: 87). Soft balancing, according to Casarini (2009: 87-88), is characterized by a non-military dimension, such as diplomacy, international institutions or international law (Layne 2006: 8). These non-military instruments serve to restrain the hegemonic power. Soft balancing also includes actions, which aim at narrowing the gap between the superior state and the inferior states in terms of economic and technological capacities (Casarini 2009: 88). This matches Walt's assessment, who ranges soft balancing on a continuum (Walt 2009: 101)<sup>105</sup> which is, in contrast to hard balancing,

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<sup>105</sup> Even though Walt's article (2009) particularly deals with alliances in a unipolar system, one can adapt these strategies to any system-structure if one keeps in mind that the likeability of certain strategies probably change.

less opposed to a unipole but at the same time not supportive of the unipole. Thus, hard balancing is geared towards to change the basic distribution (balance) of power within the international system, whereas soft balancing takes the balance of power as 'given' and rather tries to optimize better outcomes (Walt 2009: 104). Thus, soft balancing is more about joining 'diplomatic assets' (Walt 2009: 104).

Other researchers working on soft balancing believe that soft balancing rather serves affecting the superior power in the international system indirectly. Rather than gearing directly at the hegemon's capabilities, competitors would then try to influence the hegemon's intents. Robert A. Pape, for example, mentions that soft balancing does not concentrate on the superior's state present actions but rather tries to set a signal of (probable) resistance to the hegemon's future actions. The measure for soft balancing, thereby, is the degree to which more and more states team up in a (soft) counterbalancing coalition against the superior power (Casarini 2009: 88). According to Casarini (2009: 88), 'de facto soft balancing' can be understood as '[...] driven by a combination of economic interests, security concerns, domestic motives, and, occasionally, the desire to counterbalance the superior power'. This is a very broad definition, which would probably describe many things. For the time being, it could be applied to capture strategic partnerships. Even if strategic partnerships are a form of soft balancing, the definition is not very precise and difficult to be applied analytically.

What is more, I do not believe that strategic partnerships can be fully understood by 'framing' them as a form of (external) soft balancing. Balancing is directed at countering the hegemonic power, namely the US. When it comes to the rationale of strategic partnerships, some researchers believe that, for example, believes that the EU-strategic partnership with China is an example of 'soft balancing' against the United States<sup>106</sup>. For example, Casarini (2009) believes that in the case of the EU-China-strategic partnership the US is 'challenged' in its primacy by this 'techno-political linkage' Casarini (2009: 80; 81) of the two partners. This may sound plausible yet I believe that there is more to strategic partnerships. In addition, the US itself has established a so called strategic partnership, which then can hardly be understood as a balancing effort. At the same time, strategic partnerships are no balancing against the EU. To the contrary, there are most of the time introduced by the EU. This is probably why some scholars believe that strategic partnerships are a form of 'bandwagoning'. In the next chapter I will investigate whether strategic partnerships can be depicted as bandwagoning.

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<sup>106</sup> For more elaboration on the various forms of balancing see, for example, Casarini 2009 or Schweller 2004.

Yet most importantly, 'only' viewing strategic partnerships as balancing appears as a too limited view to me for fully grasping strategic partnerships as social phenomena. I believe that they are not necessarily established for the purpose of balancing *against* another actor. I believe that there is more to strategic partnerships than 'only' framing them as balancing. Hence, balancing may form part of the picture but it is probably not the main rationale of strategic partnerships. My hunch is that they are instead more about the concerned strategic partners and their possible cooperation areas than about balancing in the first place.

### **3.2.2.3 No bandwagoning**

Alliances may also result in bandwagoning, which denotes '[...] finding security in allegiance to stronger powers' (Oswald 2006: 52). Or as Schweller (1999: 10) has put it, 'bandwagoning refers to joining the stronger coalition, balancing means allying with the weaker side'. In this subchapter I will now investigate if strategic partnerships are a form of bandwagoning.

Bandwagoning somewhat represents a counterpart of balancing (Waltz 1979: 126). As Walt (1987: 17) has stated, '*balancing* is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat; *bandwagoning* refers to alignment with the source of danger' (sic). Bandwagoning also constitutes a nation's (potential) strategy for survival (Waltz 2008: 222). As Waltz has put it, bandwagoning 'may sometimes seem a less demanding and a more rewarding strategy than balancing, requiring less effort and extracting lower costs while promising concrete rewards' (Waltz 2008: 222). Waltz believes that limited resources for balancing against an opponent or limited 'room for maneuver' may incite a state '[...] to jump on the wagon [...]' (Waltz 2008: 222). Walt (2009: 101) ranges bandwagoning on his continuum of alliances as a strategy, which is more supportive (of a unipole) in the international system. In essence, bandwagoning represents a state's decision '[...] to align with the strongest or most threatening state it faces' (Walt 2009: 108). Stephen M. Walt (2009: 108) describes it, thereby, as a form of 'appeasement' as bandwagoning actors hope that they will be overlooked by the more powerful state. He associates bandwagoning behaviour with weak states (Walt 2009: 108). According to Walt, bandwagoning is rather rare as states make themselves quite vulnerable and give

away autonomy by putting their fate into the hands of their 'threat' (Walt 2009: 108). Basically, bandwagoning is an alignment brought about by fear (Walt 2009: 109)<sup>107</sup>.

Even though various authors postulated that strategic partnerships are a form of bandwagoning (Gratius 2012), I do not find this argument particularly convincing. Following this argument, one would need to picture either the EU or its strategic partners as a more powerful state. In the EU's case this may still be the case as the EU still is the biggest economic bloc in the world. But bandwagoning seems rather unlikely as the main motivation for a strategic partnership if one considers the EU's widely presumed relative decline for the coming years and decades. Or the researcher would need to believe that the EU is bandwagoning with its strategic partners being the more powerful partners. This is also rather unconvincing. They may be rising but in my view they have not (yet) overpowered the EU. To sum up, conceptualising strategic partnerships as bandwagoning appears limited in my view.

#### **3.2.2.4 No regional balancing**

As the present study particularly acknowledges the relevance of the regional level, I will also assess if strategic partnerships are a form of regional balancing.

Regional Balancing is a foreign policy strategy as well. It is the most supportive of a potential unipole and, thus, even more supportive of the unipole than bandwagoning. According to Walt, regional balancing is induced by a '[...] motivation for close ties with the dominant power' (Walt 2009: 111). In this case, the weaker state located in a specific regional context seeks support by a more powerful external actor. This behaviour is not bandwagoning, as one might assume, but a form of balancing and a 'defensive alliance' (Cederman 1997: 98). It is directed at an opponent in the regional context and is motivated by the wish for protection. This behaviour was quite common during the Cold War when states often sought 'support' in 'their' regions either from the US or the Soviet Union (Walt 2009: 111). I would add that in return, the superpowers most often have had a proxy in a particular region.

Thus, we have seen so far that the EU has established strategic partnerships with so called regional powers (of the South), which are also depicted as countries attempting

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<sup>107</sup> Schweller (1994) makes an interesting argument with respect to both Waltz and Walt by stating that bandwagoning may not simply be the antonym to balancing as they follow different motivations (Schweller 1994: 74, 106). However, as bandwagoning is not the study's prime focus, I will not further elaborate on Schweller's account.

a powerful or leading role within 'their' respective regions. Often, their dominant role in their region is, however, contested by its neighbours. Hence, one is tempted to picture strategic partnerships as regional balancing behaviour. In this reading, strategic partnerships would not be about the EU but rather about the regional context. Yet I believe that this particular rationale only applies to a certain extent to the strategic partnerships. It is only part of the whole picture of understanding strategic partnerships. I will come back to the regional context in the analysis of the case studies (Ch. 7).

### 3.2.2.5 No grand strategy

There is a sense in academic research that strategic partnerships are no grand strategy (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4), which is a position also reflecting my own intuition. Hence, it makes sense to review the literature on *grand* strategies in order to assess if this argument and my own intuition is justified.

What is a *grand* strategy? A country's national interests, which are figured through various factors (such as regions, topics, resources or values), translate into the country's *grand* strategy (Riemer 2004: 49, 57). A *grand* strategy is a strategic design, which overarches a country's national overall strategy (Riemer 2004: 44, 59-61). Hence, a *grand* strategy informs a country's overall national strategy: national overall strategies, in turn, are derived from the totality of means, areas and action of a state (Riemer 2004: 74; Farwick 2004: 7-8). In an ideal-case, the country deduces from its overall national strategy its national goals and corresponding means (Riemer 2004: 50; Rosecrance/Stein 1993: 12). A country's national overall strategy may translate into several, more delimited sub-strategies on specific policy areas or sectors (Riemer 2004: 49-50, 74, 76).

*Grand* strategies take into account present situations and 'chart a course' (Murray 2011: 1) of a country for the future (Murray 2011: 5; Hart 1991: 322). It provides guidance to policy-makers; however, they often do not necessarily adhere to *grand* strategies when making decisions or policies (Murray 2011: 4, 8). As Rosecrance/Stein (1993: 4) explain, 'in modern terms, grand strategy came to mean the adaptation of domestic and international resources to achieve security for a state'. *Grand* strategy, thereby, includes all, not only military resources (Rosecrance/Stein 1993: 4). What is more, Murray (2011: 1) stipulates that only 'great states' follow up *grand* strategies.

To sum up, a *grand* strategy is an overarching political and situational assessment of a state (strategic design) and charts a course for the future. *Grand* strategies, which are informed by a state's national interest, arch over a country's

national overall strategy. The latter may consist of sub-strategies and comprises a nation's full amount of goals, means and actions in various policy areas.

As a result, it shows that a *grand* strategy is rather broad (Riemer 2004: 60) and reflects more over-arching political conceptions (Riemer 2004: 60-61) than country-specific strategic partnerships. This is probably also why Hart describes a *grand* strategy as a 'higher strategy' (Hart 1991: 322). *Grand* strategies are, thus, more of a situational assessment of a political community's environment in terms of its (national) interests. Crucially, a *grand* strategy is formulated by a state on its own account. Indeed, it does take note of the respective state's environment and other actors. However, in contrast to strategic partnerships, a *grand* strategy does not 'link' two partners and it is not formulated in a joint effort.

Overall, the author's intuition appears to be legitimate: it can be stated that strategic partnerships are no *grand* strategies but rather part of a potential overall national strategy (if existent).

### **3.2.3 Building blocks: strategy and partnership**

As there is no universal definition of a strategic partnership, it appears reasonable to approach the notion in semantic building blocks: namely, considering the meaning of 'strategy' and 'partnership'. Hence, I will first approach both terms and crystalize a first working definition of a strategic partnership, which will be of help to the effectual turn to *understanding* and *theorising* strategic partnerships.

Firstly, the term strategy is almost used in an inflationary fashion (Farwick 2004: 7). But what constitutes a strategy?

The notion 'strategy' is derived from military strategy<sup>108</sup>. Originally, it denoted leading an army (Riemer 2004: 71-72). For example, B. H. Liddell Hart defines a strategy as '[...] the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy' (Hart 1991: 321). Strategy, thereby, is different from tactics: tactics represents an '[...] application of the strategy on a lower plane' (Hart 1991: 321; 324).

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<sup>108</sup> However, the notion 'strategy' is also used in other areas than military strategy or foreign policy. For example, strategy is also known in international business, where it denotes '[...] a planned set of actions that managers employ to make best use of the firm's resources and core competences to gain competitive advantage' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 138).

Nowadays, strategy is commonly not only associated with war and military troops but depicts more of a bridge between political goals and means (Riemer 2004: 27). Generally, strategies are geared towards shaping a certain order and may have normative elements (Riemer 2004: 78). The term strategy may be defined as the well-coordinated usage of all (power) means of a state geared towards the fulfilment of its own interests (Farwick 2004: 7). Similarly, Hart (1991: 322) notes a successful strategy is based '[...] on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the end and the means*' (sic).

Thus, if action is geared towards to a particular objective, intention or motivation produces *strategy* (Hay 1995: 190). *Strategy* can be defined as the '[...] selection of objectives and the search for the most appropriate means to achieve those objectives within a particular context at a particular moment in time' (Hay 1995: 190). Consequently, strategies can change. Moreover, it becomes clear that agency '[...] is the product of *strategy* and *intention*' (sic) (Hay 1995: 190): being capable of devising a strategy is a prerequisite of all action (Hay 1995: 190).

Hence, strategy is inextricably linked to an 'intentional agent' (Hay 1995: 190). At the same time, this intentional actor is a 'situated actor' (Hay 1995: 190): the actor is situated in a structured social context, which designates the playing field in which *strategic action* takes place. The structured social context prescribes the range of possible actions to be taken by the situated actor (Hay 1995: 190). Essentially, strategic action represents the '[...] fusion of strategy and intention informed by 'knowledge of structured context' (Hay 1995: 190). Thereby, strategic action means '[...] the dialectical interplay of intentional and knowledgeable, yet structurally-embedded actors and the preconstituted (structured) contexts they inhabit' (Hay 1995: 200-201). Although actions happen in structured settings, actors are (partially) capable of reforming these structures through their very actions, whether they are intentional or unintentional. Following a meta-theoretical understanding of scientific realism, the present study highlights the significance of the (intended and unintended) consequences of agency: strategic action effects and impacts on the structured contexts in which it is located (Hay 1995: 201)<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> Importantly, Hay's view of 'strategic action' (Hay 1995: 190) links up to the study's understanding of the agency-structure-relationship. However, as the study is not only based on scientific realism but also on a realist social theoretical view à la Archer's morphogenetic approach, the study's conceptualisation of strategic partnerships will start with the 'predated' structured social context of situated and intentional as well as reflexive agents reflecting on the structured social context. This predatedness of the structured social context is somewhat hinted at by Hay in mentioning the 'preconstitutedness' of the structured social context. Yet, thereby, Hay refers to a critical realist approach, which leans towards a structure-centred account: this is different to highlighting the mutual interlinkages between structure and agency as it can be found in Archer's account. Nonetheless, the consciousness and reflectiveness of agents can also be found in Hay's account in terms of the knowledgeability of agents regarding 'their' structured context (Hay 1995: 190).

These un-/intended consequences of agents' strategic action are '[...] dependent on [the; NH] structured context and [the; NH] choice of the strategy.

Following Hay's elaboration of strategic action and un-/intended consequences, strategic partnerships are based on situated actor's intention to act. Against the background of reflecting on their structured social context, agents decide for one strategic action, namely establishing a strategic partnership. This strategic action is based on the '[...] fusion of strategy and intention' (Hay 1995: 190). Strategic partnerships are, thereby, an intended consequence, 'dependent on structured context and choice of strategy'. In the subsequent conceptualisation of strategic partnerships, I will demonstrate that they indeed informed by agents' consciousness and 'reflectiveness' of the structured social context and based on their choice of the strategy of cooperating while competing within this structured social context.

The notion 'strategy' may also hint at 'strategic interests'<sup>110</sup> of states. Strategic interests are interests, which '[...] are largely derived from the structure of the international system and the alignments that form within it' (Snyder 1997: 23). These strategic interests are, thus, linked to the anarchical system, in which states share '[...] a strategic interest in preventing any potential adversary from gaining resources, especially at one's own expense of one's ally' (Snyder 1997: 23). Thus, strategic interests are very much 'future-oriented' and framed by policy-makers in that respect (Snyder 1997: 24). They may also emerge from alliances and alignments (Snyder 1997: 24). Strategic interests are also strongly influenced by the system-polarity. In a multipolar system, they are more fluid and less distinct and differ according to the 'pattern of alignment' (Snyder 1997: 26).

Secondly, after having approached the term 'strategy', we can now turn to the term 'partnership'. The notion 'partnership' is often used in foreign policy and by various foreign policy actors. This is also the case in the documents and speeches on the respective strategic partnerships. But what does the term 'partnership' imply? Intuitively, partners are ideally on the same footing in terms of positioning, rights and obligations (Maihold 2009: 193). Furthermore, there is a strong sense of reciprocity within a partnership (Renard/Rogers 2011: 4; Renard 2011: 18) and within the relation of a

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<sup>110</sup> Strategic interests can be differentiated from 'general interests' or 'particular interests'. 'General interests are interests in some general state of the system; particular interests are interests in specific objectives and usually with respect to specific other countries' (Snyder 1997: 26). Both may also be strategic '[...] but they are not generated by the system structure' (Snyder 1997: 26). In this context, Snyder (1997: 27) mentions that in a multipolar system, '[...] alliances based on common particular interests are longer-lasting, since such interests change much less frequently than the identities of general threats to the system' (Snyder 1997: 27).

strategic partnership, in particular (Sautenet 2012: 124). For example, Sautenet (2012: 124) indicates that the term partnership hints at [...] the necessity to build a long-term relationship based on reciprocity [...]'<sup>111</sup>. Hence, partnerships are associated with a long-term perspective (Grevi 2008: 158; Gratius 2011b: 2). Additionally, it may be presumed that strategic partners share an inclination to shape reality together (Maihold 2009: 193). Moreover, the notion of 'partnership' is often accompanied with a feeling that they are mutually beneficial for both partners (Islam 2009: 6; Gratius 2011b: 2).

Overall, it shows that the characteristics of 'strategy' and 'partnership' overlap to a certain extent. This is at times also acknowledged by authors: for example, Renard/Rogers (2011: 4) mention that a strategic partnership needs to be based on reciprocity as it otherwise would not even constitute a partnership in the first place.

### **3.2.4 Concluding Remarks**

In the previous subsections, I have established that strategic partnerships are no military alliances; no (regional, hard or soft) balancing; no bandwagoning; and no grand strategy. However, one can learn from these concepts in the attempt of conceptualising strategic partnerships as I have shown in the subchapters.

For example, balancing serves a state's goal of preserving its autonomy. Related to the issue of autonomy, (increased) interdependence reduces the autonomy of states in the international system. Thus, I would suppose that strategic partnerships are, thus, a reaction by international agents to wide-ranging international interdependence: as states cannot satisfactorily maintain their autonomy to their own ends (especially with respect to their most fundamental goal of survival in an anarchic, self-help system), they have to modify their foreign policy behaviour. And strategic partnerships are thus one occasion of this modification and change of foreign policy strategy.

Furthermore, I do believe that strategic partnerships are (non-military) strategic alliances and a form of international cooperation. These are the first building block, which will inform the study's understanding of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, as Ch. 5 will show.

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<sup>111</sup> However, he limits the 'partnership dimension' to the economic dimension of a strategic partnership (Sautenet 2012: 124).

After having delimited strategic partnerships as well as having gathered first evidence and condensed building blocks, the next chapter will outline the study's overarching rationale to understanding strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa.

#### 4. Understanding the Strategic Partnerships

This research project is 'phenomenon-driven (motivated by the desire to understand a particular event or set of events)' (Gerring 2011: 54). Hence, understanding strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools is the main motivation of this study. To this end, strategic partnerships will be theorised in terms of building theoretical blocs<sup>112</sup> inserted into a (non-causal) conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. As a consequence, I will not work from one pre-established theory and test it. Instead, I will engage in (middle range) theory-building (blocs) regarding strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools by building a concept. Crucially, this research project does not aim to explain the coming into being of strategic partnerships, but rather to make sense of them in terms of characteristics and the interests of the strategic partners concerned. Instead of *explaining* strategic partnerships, I aim at *understanding* the strategic partnerships.

But what do I mean by aiming at *understanding* and *theorising* 'strategic partnerships'? Let me first start with elaborating on *understanding*. There are two intellectual traditions in the social sciences, which can also be pictured as the 'insider's' or 'outsider's' stories (Hollis/Smith 1990: 1). Looking from the outside ('explaining') refers to adopting a view of a natural scientist. An inside perspective ('understanding'), by contrast, tries to make sense of events and their 'meaning' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 1). Crucially, both are 'fertile' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 1) grounds for investigating international relations (Hollis/Smith 1990: 1). I will opt for *understanding* because I will try to interpret the meaning of strategic partnerships.

*Understanding* lies in the tradition of Max Weber and his search for meaning ('Verstehen')<sup>113</sup>. This search for meaning is linked to a scientific interest for a science of the real ('Wirklichkeitswissenschaft') in contrast to a science establishing laws ('Gesetzeswissenschaft'). As Hollis/Smith (1990: 70) put it, 'one task of theory in International Relations is to find meaning in actions and events, which may elude all the

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<sup>112</sup> Hence, the study strives for *theory-building blocs* not an entire theory.

<sup>113</sup> In understanding strategic partnerships I will draw heavily on Max Weber's account of sociological understanding ('Verstehende Soziologie'; Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 75; Weber 2002: 4), which starts from the subjective meaning by an acting agent (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 77-78). Yet realism transcends Weber's approach by thinking of reality, which is beyond human observation; thereby, differentiating between knowledge of the so called 'transitive' and 'intransitive' spheres (Carter/New 2004: 2). I will not further elaborate on this at this stage as I have already explained realism and scientific realism in the beginning of this study. For further elaboration on this matter see Carter/New 2004: 2-3.

actors involved'. Crucially in this respect, '[...] the context of action cannot be divorced from the actors' understanding of the context' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 70).

Aiming for *understanding* is one legitimate mode of scientific interest (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 45-47). Sil (2000a: 156) even argues in the context of epistemology that the comparison of so called 'deep interpretations of similar phenomena in different contexts' are '*partial* [sic] explanations to an entirely reasonable "middle ground"' (Sil 2000a: 156; 163). Hence, deep interpretations imply an in-depth investigation of interrelations (Sil 2000a), which I think this study does with three in-depth case studies of the same phenomenon shared by countries from different contexts (see Ch. 6).

Secondly, and strongly linked to *understanding*, my research aims at (middle-range) *theorising* strategic partnerships. *Theorising* frequently entails 'dis-associating and re-associating' (Gerring 2012: 49). Thus, I will try to make sense of strategic partnerships in a theoretical but non-causal manner; hence, conceiving of strategic partnerships in theoretical terms and characteristics. Middle-range theories entail empirically-rich theoretical knowledge of the 'middle range' (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 62). Middle-range theories, which have been coined by Robert K. Merton<sup>114</sup> in the context of sociology (Merton 1996: 44-50; Wiswede 1985: 98), are smaller than theoretical paradigms such as IR-theories. They rather concentrate on 'specific subtypes of a general phenomenon (...)' (George/Bennett 2005: 64). They attempt to '[...] develop special theories applicable to limited conceptual ranges [...]' (Merton 1996: 48; Merton 1965: 9-10), which are, e.g. strategic partnerships. 'Middle-range' theory-building is limited in time and space (Berg-Schlosser 2012: 4). Instead of attempting *the* all-purpose theory, middle-range theories focus on '[...] developing special theories [...]' (Merton 1996: 45). They cover '[...] limited conceptual ranges [...]' (Merton 1996: 48). These middle-range, more specialised theories can then be building blocks for more general theories comprising several special theories (Merton 1996: 48). As Sil/Katzenstein (2010: 22) have put it, a middle-range theory is 'specifically constructed to shed light on specific sets of empirical phenomena; as such, they do not aspire to offer a general model or universal theory that can be readily adapted to investigate other kinds of phenomena'.

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<sup>114</sup> Merton (1996: 41; and Merton 1965: 5-6) defines middle-range theories as 'theories that lie between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behaviour, social organisation and social change'. Middle-range theory, which is linked to sociological theory, is particularly helpful in directing empirical investigation as they are less general than general theories of social systems but comparably closer to the data used in or for empirical analysis (Merton 1996: 41).

The EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, which are the present study's focus, constitute a subtype of strategic partnerships in general. Furthermore, strategic partnerships in general are again a subtype of foreign policy behaviour. As I have mentioned before, strategic partnerships are not directly covered by the 'grand' IR-theories. Hence, by engaging in middle-range theorising of strategic partnerships, this research project aims at '[...] filling in the theoretical vacuum left by these general paradigmatic models' (George/Bennett 2005: 64). Of course, the special focus on the EU's strategic partnerships cannot offer an all-encompassing theoretical account of strategic partnerships in IR in general. However, it may nevertheless constitute an important stepping stone into that direction.

By engaging in *theorising*, my study will transcend pure empirically-based descriptions of single-country studies. Describing details about singular cases of strategic partnerships may enhance information but not necessarily knowledge. I aim to do both: enhancing information, but even more importantly, enhancing knowledge. Thus, I will not start from a particular theory or rather theoretical framework on strategic partnerships in international relations – as there is none – but dedicate my study to middle-range-theory-building on strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools in international relations.

It is important to note that by theory-building I will not engage in the positivist strand of social research, which makes causal claims. Instead, the study uses an abductive<sup>115</sup> approach. Thereby, it is important to note that abductive reasoning is similarly theory-driven research just as hypothetico-deductive approaches are. The difference of the abductive reasoning to the hypothetico-deductive approach, thereby, lies in the structuring of theoretical pre-knowledge and the mode of its usage for theory-building (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 28). By developing a concept on the basis of deductive theoretical knowledge in the first place, I frame the theoretical lens for approaching the empirical data. This will be my sensitising concept<sup>116</sup> or analytical framework. The inductive part of the study then allows for the specification of the sensitising concept by directly 'approaching' the empirical field. The combination of deductive and inductive research results will then result in the abductive conclusions of this study adding up to a

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<sup>115</sup> Abductions constitute 'hypothetical conclusions' (Strübing 2008: 45). This fact corresponds well with the study's research goal of hypothesis-building by developing a conceptual model of strategic partnerships, which, thereby, contributes to theory-building.

<sup>116</sup> Strübing explains that sensitizing concepts help to ask tentative questions and generate research perspectives. They do not serve to derive hypotheses (Strübing 2008: 31) in the first place (Strübing 2008: 60).

conceptual model dedicated to theory-building blocks. Moreover, the abductive proceeding of my study foresees that my study is based on empirical facts but is not detached from my (theoretical) pre-knowledge as a researcher. As a consequence, the theoretically developed analytical model will indeed be applied to the three cases. At the same time, the analysis will be 'open' in this sense that it will also allow for data-originating, inductive inferences supplementing the ultimate theoretically-informed and empirically-enriched conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

#### **4.1 Middle-range theory-building blocks and concept-building**

In this chapter I will first address the nature of the study's overall research objective, namely to understand the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. Thereby, I will already refer to the study's research steps in terms of concept-building and the abductive research approach. Secondly, I will more generally address understanding and theorising as well as middle-range theories. Thirdly, I will elaborate on concept-building. Thereby, I will clearly outline the conceptual model will be built by combining the approaches of Archer and Goertz. It is important to note that I will only build the model on the basis of Archer's and Goertz' approaches but eventually build and use the concept in a non-causal fashion.

##### **4.1.1 What and How?**

As mentioned in the introduction and at the beginning of this chapter, this research project is geared towards *understanding* strategic partnerships. But what exactly does it mean to make sense of strategic partnerships in terms of a research question? Essentially, I pose two questions: 1) what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa? And 2) how do strategic partnerships work or rather how do strategic partners interact?.

Both questions will be answered by combination of deductive and inductive – hence, abductive – approaches (Gerring 2012: 15). Ultimately, by answering the 'what'- and 'how'-questions, the study ultimately contributes to the understanding of what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership (in the case of the EU). Thus, the study cuts across 'what' and 'how'-questions in an effort to *understand* strategic partnerships by bulding a conceptual model.

#### 4.1.2 Middle-range theory-building blocks

The present study engages in holistic research (Patzelt 2005: 21), which corresponds to its research goal of *understanding* strategic partnerships. In essence, I will not work with variables and I will not engage in positivist research approaches. By approaching the research object in a holistic way, I intend to avoid the segmentation of the research object along the lines of pre-determined theories, concepts or, let alone, variables (Patzelt 2005: 21). The study purposes to prevent the concealing of crucial factors or dimensions, which are essential to the understanding of strategic partnerships. Otherwise the project would risk distorting results by focusing on wrong factors or overlooking important dimensions (Patzelt 2005: 23). Instead, I opt for gearing my study towards holistic research contributing to theory-building blocks in *understanding* strategic partnerships.

In brief, the strategic partnerships are the outcome/phenomenon I aim to *understand*. Thereby, conceptual models are particularly helpful in *understanding* the real-world (Gerring 2012: 13). The study will develop a concept of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances and social relationships building on social power bases (and social influence).

It is crucial to note that as my study does not work with causal inference, the generated knowledge by this study will be of a non-causal and non-prescriptive but character (Gerring 2009: 71). Hence, the study will engage in constitutive theorising in contrast to causal theorising (Guzzini/Leander 2006). This is due to the (exploratory) study's goal of *understanding* (instead of explaining) and the building of a (non-causal) conceptual model of strategic partnerships based on theoretical building blocks.

What then does a researcher need to do in order to build a theory or engage in *theorising*? First, it is important to 'get from particularities to principles' which again explain 'order among particulars' (Boynton 1982: 39). Thereby, principles reduce complexity by subsuming phenomena under a certain 'form' of heading (Boynton 1982: 40). In this way, phenomena, which may seem quite distinct in the beginning, 'obtain' comparableness by giving them a 'structure' (Boynton 1982: 43). 'Structure' can be found by the in-depth studying of a small number of particulars instead of looking at a large number of particulars rather superficially (Boynton 1982: 49).

From Boynton's main points follows that in order to *theorise* strategic partnerships, I need to give this social phenomenon a 'structure' by an in-depth studying

of a limited number of the phenomenon's particulars. Thereby, I need to find the principles, which reduce variety and complexity and thus, 'create' commonalities.

The study's middle-range theory-building is specifically dedicated to enhancing knowledge. Crucially, a concept is an important stepping stone for theory-building as it develops theoretical propositions (Goertz 2006: 1). This is particularly true when it comes to qualitative research (Goertz 2006: 2). Even though concepts are connected to giving definitions, they are indeed different from definitions (Goertz 2006: 3-4). I will elaborate in more detail on concept-building in the following subchapter. Suffice it to say for now, that in *understanding* strategic partnerships, I will not define them but rather conceptualise (and, thereby, theorise) them in a non-causal fashion.

Next, I will explain how concepts for theory-building purposes may be built in the social sciences.

#### **4.1.3 The building of a conceptual model**

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, concept-building is a crucial building block, when a researcher aims for theory-building. Even more so, in realism, models are 'an essential feature of theories', which represent '[...] a relatively early stage in the process of theory-building' (Keat/Urry 1982: 36). Working from scientific realism, the researcher concentrates on describing the (often unobservable) structures and mechanisms underlying an event and their mode of generating a social phenomenon (Keat/Urry 1982: 32, 34). Hence, I need to particularly investigate the elements of the conceptual model, which represent the underlying dimensions, in order to understand strategic partnerships as a social phenomenon.

In order to build a conceptual model of strategic partnerships (object/phenomenon), I will study the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa in a theoretical and empirical way. Thereby, the abductive research strategy foresees the combination of deductive and inductive inference in my study. Hence, the deductive inferences serve to build an analytical framework, which will serve as analytical framework being applied to the cases generating inductive inference. It will guide the further model-building and the research process. Patzelt (2005: 32) states that a researcher should preferentially design a theoretical pre-model, which then guides the research process (such as data collection and analysis as well as the comparison of cases and the interpretation of results). This analytical framework constitutes most

basically a model of arrows and boxes demonstrating the (supposed) interrelation of variables and notions. In essence, it visualises the pre-model, which is then applied to the cases. This analytical framework (theoretical pre-model) is helpful in singling out the commonalities or differences between cases (Patzelt 2005: 32-33) in a systematic and comparative manner. Via the analysis of cases, this analytical model will be enriched by the inductively-generated results. By adding these inductive inferences to the analytical model, I will ultimately end up with the final conceptual model contributing to theory-building blocks.

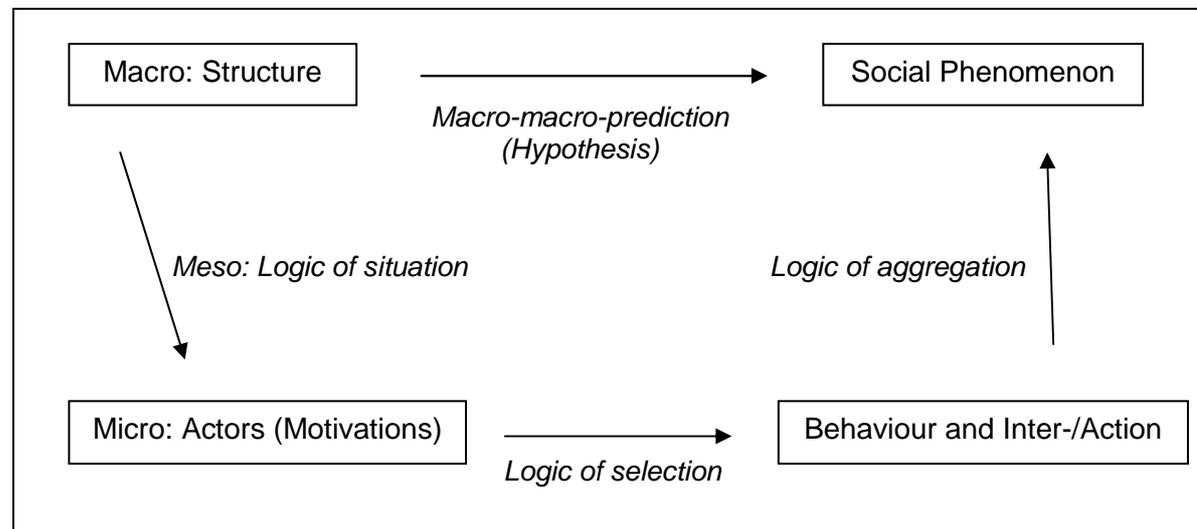
But what exactly does concept-building involve here in this study? As recommended I will start by developing a theoretically-derived analytical model, which will be based on Coleman's explanatory model in the social sciences. It depicts the levels and interrelations of macro-, meso-, and micro-levels (Berg-Schlusser 2012: 4; Plümper 2012: 38). This analytical model will act as my sensitising concept. Secondly, in further building my concept of strategic partnerships, I will combine Goertz' mode of concept-building with Archer's morphogenetic approach. In a first step, I will introduce Archer's morphogenetic approach reflecting the realist social theoretical fundament of the study. In a second step, I will outline how Goertz' advises the researcher to build multilevel and multidimensional (family resemblance) concepts. In this context, I will also outline how I can combine Goertz concept-building with my scientific realist perspective. Furthermore, I will explain and elaborate, why I will be using a two-level concept. In a third step, I will exactly outline how I intend to combine Goertz and Archer's propositions. The combination of the two 'approaches' has the benefit that my conceptualisation of strategic partnerships link structure and agency into a dual perspective and thereby, enhance the social phenomenon's understanding. It is vital to note that the model developed here is of non-causal nature. Thus, I will build on Archer's and Goertz' premises of concept-building but in a non-causal manner. Their approaches are considered to be helpful in delimitating levels but making connections between non-causal factors in making sense of the strategic partnerships within the concept-building endeavour.

#### **4.1.3.1 The analytical model**

The theoretically-derived model will be based on Coleman's social science model of explanation (1990). It constitutes of macro-, meso- and micro-levels and interrelations (Plümper 2012: 38; Berg-Schlusser 2012: 4). I think that the model is helpful in depicting

the various levels and particularly useful in denoting agency and structure in IR (see Fig. 2). Note that it will be used in a non-causal fashion.

**Figure 2: The basic model-template**



(Adapted from Plümper 2012: 38; Berg-Schlosser 2012: 4)

It shows that the model above predominantly explains a social phenomenon by exogenous structures<sup>117</sup>, which is a very functional view (Plümper 2012: 37). But the micro-logic is crucial as it constitutes the explanation for the influence of structure via individual motivations, options for actions, behaviour and interactions (Plümper 2012: 37). Coleman posits that a complete theory in social sciences also needs a micro-level view, which explains and accounts for the relation between structure and social phenomenon (Plümper 2012: 37-38). Put differently, both micro- and macro-levels are needed for a complete theory in social science: structure influences considerations and behaviour by actors. Their behaviour then generates a macro-level phenomenon (Plümper 2012: 38; Coleman 1991:1-29).

The asset of the model lies in the separation of levels, which makes interrelations as well as assumptions more clear (Berg-Schlosser 2012: 5). Moreover, the model helps to outline the micro-level and the interdependencies of agency and structure, which is often missing in the generation of theories (Plümper 2012: 40). Even though I am not keen to explain any kind of variance (Plümper 2012: 40), I still believe that this model

<sup>117</sup> Structures are also pictured as ‚social situation‘ or social context, where structure is coined by historical, regional, cultural contexts or the like. This social context sets the ‚objective‘ original condition and the scope for possible options for actions or ‚opportunity sets‘. Options for actions are perceived in a subjective manner by actors and translated into actual action, possibly aggregated at the meso-level by, e.g., associations (Berg-Schlosser 2012: 4-5). This is presumably a more sociological view of structure. I will come back to this later in Ch. 5.2.1.

can be helpful in starting to *understand* strategic partnerships including macro-, meso- and micro-levels. Furthermore, I believe that the adapted model will be able to link agency and structure, which is not only a challenge in social science theory in general (Plümper 2012) but in IR in particular.

In the following I will first explain Archer's morphogenetic approach in realist social theory and its asset of allowing for a dual view of the agency-structure-debate. Her approach will inform the study's concept-building. Secondly, I will turn to Goertz' mode of concept-building. Both Archer's and Goertz' approaches will be merged into a morphogenetic realist social theoretical approach as a basis for the deductive-derived analytical model. Again, the concept will be of non-causal nature.

#### **4.1.3.2 Archer's morphogenetic approach in realist social theory**

By now, I have clarified that in order to understand strategic partnerships, I aim to investigate of what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership in the case(s) of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. This represents a combination of 'what'- and 'how'-questions, which will be addressed by concept-building contributing to theory-building blocks on strategic partnerships.

Thereby, the study aims to investigate the underlying level and dimensions of the strategic partnerships. This is the (scientific) realist social theoretical fundament of my study. It implies amongst others that I have to adhere to the irreducibility (meaning analytical separateness<sup>118</sup>) and 'non-conflation' of agency and structure (Archer 1995: 14, 15, 65-66; Carlsnaes 1992: 249). But how do I exactly add these premises to the building of my conceptual model?

In building my conceptual model, I will follow the guidelines of Margaret Archer's morphogenetic<sup>119</sup> model<sup>120</sup> (1984). The study will, thus, follow a view of a '*reciprocal interplay*' (sic; Carlsnaes 1992: 240) of agency and structure. Margaret Archer's morphogenetic model is a crucial innovation in realist qualitative empirical research

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<sup>118</sup> Archer, for example, contrasts Giddens' (conflated) dualism of structure and agency with her own analytical dualism (Archer 1995: 87, 133).

<sup>119</sup> Archer herself explains her 'adoption' of the term Morphogenesis by her goal 'to capture both the possibility of radical and unpredictable re-shaping (...), and the fact that the genesis of this re-shaping lies in the interplay between structure and agency – a process which can only be examined because of their temporal separability and an outcome which can only be explained by means of analytical dualism' (Archer 1995: 75). In short, morphogenesis denotes 'the process of social structuring; 'morpho' indicating shape, and 'genesis' signalling that the shaping is the product of social relations' (Archer 1995: 166).

<sup>120</sup> Note that I will use Archer's model without resorting to causality. I will, thus, adapt Archer's model in using it in a non-causal manner.

(Carter/New 2004: 17). Furthermore, her ontology is based on realist social theory (Carter/New 2004: 17; Wight 2006: 71). Archer succeeds in offering a tangible methodological frame for analysing the interplay and ‘analytical dualism’ (Carter/New 2004: 17) of structure and agency (Carter/New 2004: 17). The analytical dualism allows for a situating in time as well as the ‘[...] *structuring* of social systems [...]’ (sic; Carter/New 2004: 17; Archer 1995: 15-16).

Archer’s morphogenetic model builds on a particular view of the relationship between an individual and external social forces: from a morphological view, ‘structure is a set of social facts external to individuals’ (Wight 2006: 126). It constitutes the environment for agents’ action (Wight 2006: 126). Thereby, the (reflexive) individual ‘[...] lives in a social world that has different properties and powers from his own – ones which constrain (and enable) his actions. These are temporally prior to his conceiving of a course of action, relatively autonomous from how he takes them to be, but can (causally) influence the achievement of his plans by frustrating them or advancing them’ (quoted in Elder-Vass 2010: 112).

Archer’s view of the relation between an individual and external social forces informs her morphogenetic model, which can be used in the analysis. Following Archer’s there are three ‘cycles’ in building a (realist social) morphogenetic model (Carter/New 2004: 17).

- Cycle 1 denotes the ‘*structural conditioning*’ (sic) meaning the conditioning (but not determining) by ‘pre-existing structures’ (both Carter/New 2004: 17).
- Cycle 2 refers to the ‘*social interaction*’ (sic) (Carter/New 2004: 18), which stems from the interaction of agents aiming for the fulfillment of their interests (Carter/New 2004: 18).
- Cycle 3 represents the ‘*structural elaboration or modification*’ (sic) (Carter/New 2004: 18), which signifies ‘[...] a change in the relations between the parts of the social system’ (Carter/New 2004: 18)<sup>121</sup>.

The cycles demonstrate the before mentioned anteriority as well as posteriority of structure and agency over time (Carter/New 2004: 18). As a result, first there is structure; then there is action and, ultimately, there is a modification of social structure (Carter/New 2004: 18). However, these cycles do overlap to a certain extent (Archer 1995: 76). Carter/New (2004: 18) refer to Pawson and Tilley (1997: 46), who comment

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<sup>121</sup> Archer (1995: 91) mentions that the structural elaboration signifies ‘a largely unintended consequence’ (Archer 1995: 91). This is where I disagree. I believe that a structural elaboration can indeed be an intended consequence. This disagreement is rooted in the fact that Archer leans towards a structure-centred perspective, whereas I accentuate the agency-centred view.

on morphogenesis as '[...] differently resourced subjects making constrained choices amongst the range of opportunities provided'. Carter/New also mention that empirical analysis working along the morphogenetic approach, thus, refers to the question of '[...] *what works for whom in what circumstances*' (Pawson/Tilley 1997: 210), according to Pawson and Tilley (sic; Carter/New 2004: 18).

I will use the morphogenetic model in order to understand strategic partnerships in building my conceptual model. I believe that this model, which provides a dual view of the agency-structure-relationship, will be particularly helpful in this endeavour.

Strategic partnerships as a social phenomenon can be found in cycle 3, namely the structural modification of the parts of a social system. From this follows that for the purpose of my research interest and my study, I would need to address cycles 1 and 2 of Archer's morphogenetic model. As Cycle 1 predates cycle 2, I will start the building of my model by addressing the (conditioning) pre-existing structure. Thus, I will firstly outline the main characteristics of the international system-structure, which represents the (conditioning) pre-existing structure in my study. It will be external social structure and environment for actors and informing agents' action behaviour Secondly, I will investigate the social interaction of the 'strategic partners' trying to realise their interests. This proceeding demonstrates that or rather how I will be able to account for a true analytical dualism of agency and structure in 'understanding' strategic partnerships.

#### **4.1.3.3 Goertz' multilevel and multidimensional family resemblance concepts**

A concept is more than linking words together or to provide a definition. To the contrary, it entails '[...] a theoretical and empirical analysis of the object or phenomenon referred to by the word' (Goertz 2006: 4, 27). '*Concepts are about ontology*' (Goertz 2006: 27)<sup>122</sup> or 'are theories about ontology: they are theories about the fundamental constitutive elements of a phenomenon' (Goertz 2006: 5). Hence, I will follow Goertz' view of concepts, which is 'causal'<sup>123</sup>, ontological, and realist' (Goertz 2006: 5).

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<sup>122</sup> According to Goertz, this is the difference to Sartori's view of concepts, which is 'semantic' and 'definitional' (Goertz 2006: 27). Sartori (2009: 135), in contrast to Goertz, defines concepts as 'the basic unit of thinking'. Furthermore, '(...) we have a concept of A (or of A-ness) when we are able to distinguish A from whatever is not-A' (Sartori 2009: 135). Sartori's semantic understanding of concepts can be found, for example, in his article on 'guidelines for concept analysis' (Sartori 2009). I will, however, follow Goertz' view of concepts due to his ontological perspective of concepts, which I find more convincing and more 'usable' for the present study.

<sup>123</sup> Goertz' view of concepts is causal as a concept in this sense provides 'ontological attributes' which are crucial to 'causal hypotheses, explanations, and mechanisms' (Goertz 2006: 5). However, as mentioned in

Goertz view of concepts is 'multidimensional' and 'multilevel' (Goertz 2006: 6). It basically involves three main levels: the 'basic level', the 'secondary level' and the 'indicator/data level' (Goertz 2006: 6). For example, if a researcher attempted a concept of the 'EU', then this would be the basic level. It shows that the basic level often is a 'positive case'<sup>124</sup> of the phenomenon to be explained. The basic level is the most important of all levels from a theoretical point of view (Goertz 2006: 6, 30, 31). The secondary level represents, in my case, the (non-causal) constituent parts of the basic level. The secondary level plays a crucial part with respect to the 'ontological analysis' amongst others (Goertz 2006: 6). Using the EU-example, the secondary level in the concept of the EU could be the EU-member states or institutions, its regions etc. It shows that conceptualisation involves 'more than providing a definition: it is deciding what is important about an entity' (Goertz 2006: 27). Goertz' third level is the indicator/data level, which is where measurement takes place (Goertz/Mahoney 2006: 237). With respect to multidimensionality and multiple levels, concepts can have several levels, which again can have more than one dimension. Furthermore, dimensions differ at how substantial they are (Goertz 2006: 6). This shows that just as phenomena are complex, so are concepts, too.

Generally, Goertz (2006: 10) mentions that the theory itself is located at basic and secondary levels. The hypotheses of a concept about a phenomenon (basic level) are to be found at the secondary level (Goertz 2006: 28). It is actually at the secondary level, where the multidimensional and multi-level concept-building starts (Goertz 2006: 35). Thereby, the secondary level includes the powers (rooted) in the concept's ontology), which is also why the secondary level plays a key role for mechanisms (Goertz 2006: 28). As the strategic partners' powers and their interaction are the secondary levels in my concept, they are crucial to the *understanding* of the strategic partnerships.

Overall, Goertz view of concepts implies that I will follow a view of concepts which he calls the 'ontological-noncausal-view' (Goertz 2006: 15). In brief, a concept following

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the beginning the present study refrains from a causal investigation, which is why this dimension of Goertz' concept-building is of no relevance to the present study.

<sup>124</sup> Goertz (2006: 30-35) states that a conceptualisation benefits from clearly outlining what a 'negative' case would be. In my case this would be a non-strategic partnership. This is what I have done on Ch. 3.2.2 in elaborating what a strategic partnership is not or only to a certain extent (no military alliance etc.). However, in this sense a conceptualisation of strategic partnerships rather follows an 'either-or-logic' (a dichotomous concept in Goertz terms) and not so much of a continuum (Goertz 2006: 35). However, once there is a first conceptualisation of strategic partnerships as a foreign policy tool, I believe that it may be possible to build on my concept and then establish a continuum including gray zones. In addition, Goertz advises that the researcher should not be led by the 'empirical distribution of cases' in concept-building. Hence, this variety of cases would need to be explained – not presupposed – by the concept (2006: 35).

the ontological-noncausal view of concepts endeavors to ‘think about the nature of the phenomenon being conceptualised’ (Goertz 2006: 15). As a result, ‘the basic- and secondary-level dimensions are not causes but *constitute* what the phenomenon *is*’ (Goertz 2006: 15). This view of concepts perfectly corresponds with my research interest, which is dedicated to what a strategic partnership is and which factors are constitutive. Basically, this view of concepts is somewhat pragmatic but yet theoretical because the ‘secondary-level dimensions are really a *theory* about the *interrelationships* of the parts of the conceptual whole’ (Goertz 2006: 15). Thus, the secondary level is crucial to the goal of theory-building (Goertz 2006: 237).

In the following, I will elaborate on Goertz’ approach, where he indeed often makes reference to causality. Yet in the actual process of building the study’s concept I will exclude causality. Goertz’ view of concepts is ‘realist’ because the concept-building entails, on the one hand, an empirical investigation of the phenomenon (Goertz 2006: 5). In this understanding, a phenomenon entails crucial (causal) powers and related (causal) mechanisms, which are central to theories and transcend ‘pure’ semantics (Goertz 2006: 5). From this follows, that in conceptualising strategic partnerships, I need to investigate the powers and mechanisms of strategic partnerships. In addition, it shows that my scientific realist perspective – looking for powers and dimensions ‘underneath the surface’ of an actual event – corresponds well with Goertz’ view of concepts. I will elaborate more on this matter at the end of this subchapter before I outline how I intend to combine Goertz proposed way of building a concept and Archer’s morphogenetic approach to engage in (scientific) realist social theory.

Goertz proposes two different ‘structural principles’ for concept-building involving several levels and dimensions: either one follows the ‘necessary and sufficient view of concepts’ or the ‘“family resemblance” concept’ (Goertz 2006: 7). As I am not trying to establish lawlike regularities but to investigate the (common) underlying dimensions of the strategic partnerships, I will adopt the view of family resemblance concepts. Following this way of conceptualisation, the researcher does not look for necessary conditions but for similarities at the secondary level of the concept (Goertz 2006: 7). This also explains the name of this mode of concept-building: as Goertz (2006: 7) puts it, ‘all one needs is enough resemblance on secondary-level dimensions to be part of the family’. Thus, in my case I would need to establish if there are similarities (resemblance) at the secondary-level of my concept of strategic partnerships. Thereby, I will not limit myself to the strategic partners at an empirical level. **Instead, I will investigate if there is resemblance with respect to the powers underlying the EU’s respective**

**strategic partnership with Brazil, India and South Africa.** In essence, the logic of the family resemblance concepts implies, amongst others, that the lack of some characteristics can be 'substituted' (Goertz 2006: 12) by other characteristics. Hence, secondary level-dimension A may be substituted by secondary level-dimension B. This is a major difference to the necessary-sufficient-conceptual model-building. More generally, it is important to note that a family resemblance concepts implies two things: firstly, in order to become part of the family, one needs to possess a certain quantity of characteristics. Secondly, and somewhat contrary as to what one might think because of the terminology, the members of the family need not share a common characteristic (Goertz 2006: 102). In essence, there can be multiple and different ways to the phenomenon of a strategic partnership. Furthermore, it shows that the similarity in my concept does not necessarily have to lie with the strategic partners at the basic level but rather with the secondary-level and hence, the powers and interaction of the strategic partners.

It is crucial for the researcher engaging in concept-building to show the linkages between the levels, as their combination makes the very basic level of the concept (Goertz 2006: 7). Thus, I need to show how my secondary levels are connected to the basic level in order to understand the basic level, namely the strategic partnerships. Moreover, with respect to the linkages of the conceptual levels, I need to clarify how the dimensions of the secondary level are combined and structured in order to 'produce' the basic level (Goertz 2006: 11, 30). By answering these questions, a researcher points out the structure of his/her concept. Goertz (2006: 50) mentions that the two fundamental structuring principles within concepts are either 'OR' or 'AND'. Thus, the secondary level follows one of these structuring principles. As my concept is based on the structure of a family resemblance concept and adheres to the principle of substitutability of secondary level dimensions, my secondary level-dimensions follow the 'OR'-structuring principle (Goertz 2006: 60). I will come back to this point when I address the different dimensions of the concept's secondary level in Ch 5.

Yet it is important to note that when a researcher is looking for powers (and mechanisms) – which I (to a certain extent) do – the (third) indicator/data-level hardly plays a role<sup>125</sup>. The secondary level, in this case, is even more important (Goertz/Mahoney 2006: 237). Hence, in my conceptualisation of strategic partnerships I

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<sup>125</sup> As mentioned before, the third level (indicator and data) serves to measure. However, the study's model does not measure in a strict sense, which is also why this level will play no major role in the study's concept-building.

will only deal with the basic- and, even more so, with the secondary levels<sup>126</sup>. This is why I will now address two-level concepts in more detail, which are a modified form to the 'classical' three-level concepts.

As mentioned before, Goertz' mode of concept-building includes a realist analysis of phenomena. I have already hinted at the fact that I believe that I can 'enlarge' this realist mode of concept-building to a scientific realist mode of concept-building. Goertz' approach already allows for 'looking underneath the surface' by transcending the basic level. One could adapt Goertz' three levels to a scientific realist view: scientific realism also works at three levels: the real, the actual and the empirical levels. The empirical level equals Goertz' basic level. Goertz secondary and indicator/data level relate to the scientific realist levels of the real mechanisms and the actual (product of interaction among a plurality of mechanisms). Especially the secondary levels are crucial in this respect. Goertz mode of concept-building, thus, perfectly corresponds to a scientific realist view, where the essence of phenomenon lies with the underlying level of events – the powers, structures and mechanisms lying underneath events.

Applying Goertz/Mahoney's two-level model, the strategic partnerships are the basic level. The strategic partners (agents) are the basic level. Goertz/Mahoney (2006: 242) stress that secondary levels do not serve to operationalise the basic level. Furthermore, secondary levels are the very composite parts of the basic level (Goertz/Mahoney 2006: 242). The authors explain that the ontological relationship strongly relates to the 'underlying' features of a '[...] phenomenon to which the basic-level concept refers' (Goertz/Mahoney 2006: 243). Hence, regarding the strategic partnerships, it means that the powers of the strategic partners play a major role in *understanding* the strategic partnership. Put differently, the phenomenon at the basic level is understood by investigating the secondary-level variables (Goertz/Mahoney 2006: 245).

Overall, it is important to be aware that in the case of the strategic partnerships, the secondary level-variables play a central role *within* the underlying workings of the strategic partnerships. Basically, underlying dimensions of the strategic partnerships are to be found in the interaction of the strategic partners (basic level). Yet their corresponding (substitutable) secondary level-dimensions – here the strategic partners' powers – lie with the strategic partners in an ontological (non-causal) way.

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<sup>126</sup> Where necessary, I will in the following 'adapt' Goertz elaborations (2006) on multilevel concepts by limiting myself to the basic and secondary levels of my two-level concept. Thus, I will outpicture the (third) indicator/data level as it is of less relevance here.

After having outlined how Goertz' (and Mahoney's) mode of (two-level) concept-building works and having demonstrated that it corresponds well with the study's scientific realist view, I will now show that both Goertz' and Archer's approaches can be combined in a fruitful way.

#### **4.1.3.4 Building the (morphogenetic) scientific realist social theoretical concept**

After having elaborated on the essence of theory- and concept-building, I will now explain the mode of combining Goertz' mode of building an ontological-non-causal-realist family-resemblance model with Archer's morphogenetic approach following realist social theory. As mentioned before, Goertz advises to build concepts by combining multiple levels (in my case: basic and secondary levels) and dimensions. Archer proposes to follow a sociological approach (morphogenetic cycle-approach and analytical dualism) in order to link structure and agency by investigating pre-existing structures (structural conditioning); the social interaction (of actors) and structural elaboration (modifying structure and change of relations of structural parts). This is what I call the (morphogenetic) scientific realist social theoretical concept.

The basic level is constituted by the strategic partnerships, which is the social phenomenon I intend to conceptualise by understanding its underlying dimensions. At the same time, it represents Archer's third morphogenetic cycle (structural elaboration), which is the study's object to be 'understood'<sup>127</sup>. Based on Archer, I conceive of a strategic partnership as a social structure within the international system-structure as the macro-level social structure.

Coming back to Goertz and Goertz/Mahoney (2006), Goertz advises the researcher to contrast the positive with the negative case (Goertz 2006: 35) with respect to the basic level. This is what I have already done in Ch 3.2.2.

It is the secondary level, which is crucial for my concept-building, as this is where I will find the dimensions underlying strategic partnerships. Hence, the strategic partners' powers and their interaction represent the secondary level. This is the moment where I explicitly combine Goertz' and Archer's approaches. In order to explore the secondary

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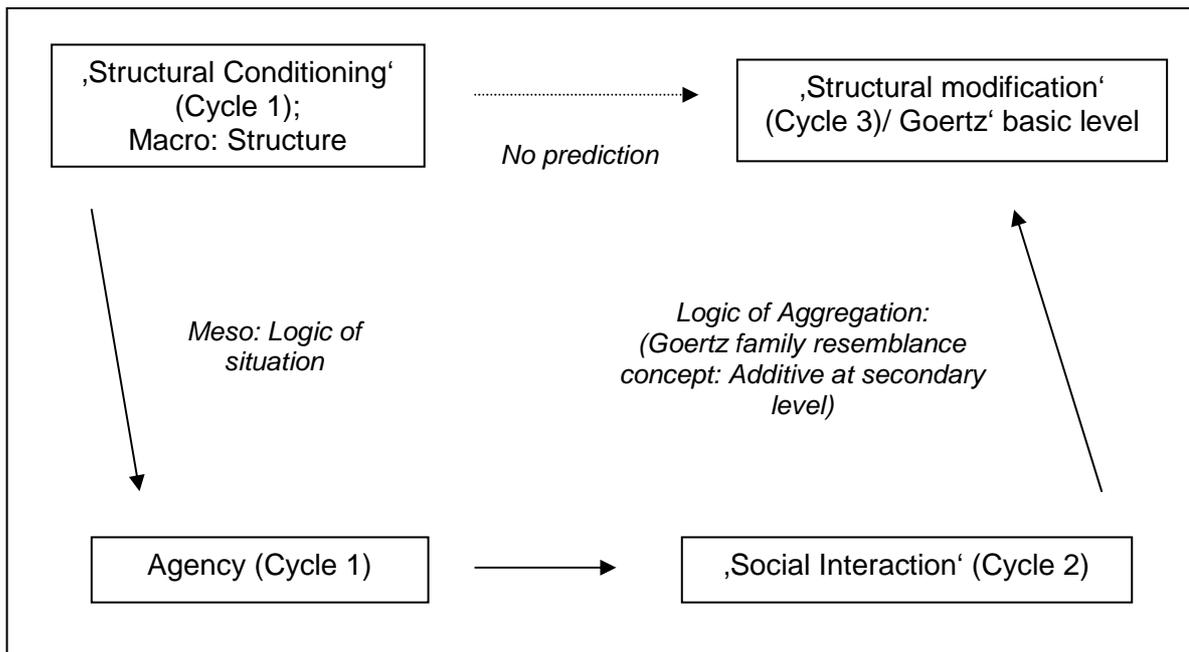
<sup>127</sup> Structural elaboration, according to Archer (1995: 168-169) is realised by social interaction which 'elaborates upon the composition of social structure(s) [...] by modifying current internal and necessary structured relationships and introducing new ones where morphogenesis is concerned'. Again, this is not the primary focus of my study as I do not investigate the effects of strategic partnerships.

level and its dimensions, I will follow Archer's first two cycles. Thus, I need to investigate the structural conditioning of the strategic partners (their structural conditioning) and their social interaction (Phase One of the morphogenetic cycle). Thereby, I can link structure and agency in my conceptualisation and understanding of strategic partnerships. I, thus, depict the international system-structure as the macro-level social structure, which has an '[...] influence' on social interaction (Archer 1995: 168). This influence, hence, also applies to the social structure of the strategic partnerships. I will, hence, focus on the before mentioned relationships among the strategic partners, their powers and their (social) interaction in order to *understand* strategic partnerships (Cycle two of Archer's morphogenetic approach).

I have demonstrated how I am able to combine Goertz' and Goertz/Mahoney's approach to social science concept-building with Archer's morphogenetic approach based on realist social theory. This is feasible both from a theoretical and practical point of view. I believe that the resulting morphogenetic realist social theoretical concept will be a fruitful way to the analysis and understanding of strategic partnerships.

I will now provide an overview of the analytical model based on Plümper, Berg-Schlosser, Archer and Goertz (Figure 3) before I will fill it up with the study's assumptions about structure and agency.

**Figure 3: Morphogenetic scientific realist social theoretical concept**



(Figure 2 adapted; based on Archer and Goertz)

Following the project's abductive research strategy, the deductively-developed theoretically-based analytical model (developed in Ch. 4.2 and 5, see 5.3) will be applied to the three cases in the study's analytical chapter (see Ch. 7): I will first analyse three single cases and then cross-compare them. Thereby, I will not only retrieve comparative results but also establish types of strategic partnerships.

#### 4.1.4 Conclusion

From these introductory remarks on *understanding* and *theorising*, the study follows an abductive research strategy of *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. To this end, it will build an abductively-derived (non-causal) conceptual (middle-range) model of strategic partnerships. This model is based on scientific realist social theory, which views agency and structure in a dual relationship. In order to accommodate for this view, the concept-building will follow Archer's morphogenetic approach. Furthermore, Archer's approach has been combined with Goertz' (Goertz/Mahoney's) (yet non-causal) concept-building of a family resemblance model focusing on the basic and secondary levels.

Archer's cycle 2 ('social interaction') is merged with Goertz' secondary level. Goertz' basic level and Archer's cycle 3 ('structural modification') is fused and

represents the strategic partnerships as an outcome. The strategic partnership as an outcome is the basic level and the underlying dimensions of the strategic partnerships constitute the secondary level. The analysis will particularly focus on this secondary level and investigate the (underlying) powers of the strategic partners and their interactions in order to make sense of the strategic partnerships. Crucially, the model does not serve to explain the coming into being of the strategic partnerships. By contrast, it will serve to *understand* the outcome in terms of what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership and how the strategic partners interact. This reflects its non-causal but constitutive nature.

Regarding the following analytical steps of building the analytical model on the basis of Goertz and Archer (see Ch. 4.1.3.4; Figure 3), the study follows two research steps reflecting the abductive research strategy in terms of deductive and inductive dimensions. The reader of this study recognises that the first dimension of the study's research interest lies in the theoretical and deductive part of the dissertation. It is the theory-building blocks inserted into a (middle-range) analytical model based on Figure 3. The first step of the dissertation is, therefore, to build an analytical framework (analytical concept) with deductive inferences informed by existing theory and conceptual approaches. Thereby, cycle 1 (structure and agency) (see Figure 3) will be filled by assumptions about structure and agency (see Ch. 4.2). Cycle 2 ('Social interaction'/Goertz secondary level) will be theorised in Ch. 5. Chapter 5.3 will arrive at the deductively-derived analytical model.

In a second step, the study's deductively-derived analytical model will be later enriched by the empirical part of the study generating inductive inferences. The analytical model will be applied as a sensitising analytical framework to three empirical analyses of EU-Brazil, EU-India and EU-South Africa relations (Ch. 7). Overall, this will lead up to the abductively formulated conceptual model after the cross-case analysis of cases.

In brief, the deductive formulation of the analytical concept will be complemented by its application to three empirical case studies in an exploratory way. Thus, later, the in-depth investigation of the three individual cases allows for potentially complementing the analytical concept with inductively-generated findings based on the comparison of the three cases. The second step may further hone the analytical framework, which could be tested in future research studies or cases. Moreover, it may uncover future research areas, exposed by the vast empirical data. This course of action is dedicated to overarching goal of contributing to theory (theory-building blocks).

In the following I will now elaborate on the study's assumptions about structure and agency as a first step to deductively build the analytical model based on Figure 3.

## **4.2 The Study's assumptions about structure and agency**

As I have outlined in the previous chapter on how I will build my conceptual model, I have to first approach the 'preexisting' structure (Archer's 'structural conditioning'), which is in my case the international system-structure. In a second step I will define the agents in my study, which are agent I, the EU as an established/traditional (external) actor, and agents II, which are the emerging regional powers. In a third step, I will address the agents' motivations following from my previous presuppositions about structure and agents.

By outlining the central features of structure and agency, I will in this subchapter limit myself to the 'systemic dimension' of structure and agency. It is in the later chapter on *theorising* strategic partnerships with a social power-approach, where I will address the 'social dimension' of structure (see Ch. 5). There I will explain what I mean by a social structure. Of course, both – systemic and social – dimensions of structure and agency are interlinked. I believe that both dimensions are important to *understanding* strategic partnerships as these two dimensions address the 'what'- as well as the 'how'-questions. Furthermore, the systemic and social dimensions of agency and structure reflect that I build on material and social (ideational) factors in analysing strategic partnerships. But the social dimension will come into play, when I specifically address the interaction of agents in my study.

### **4.2.1 Structure**

In this subchapter I will not be able to outline every single detail about structure. But this is neither desirable nor necessary. I will 'sketch' the most important conditions of the international system, which I regard as crucial to understand to structurally ground the study's agents. The presumptions made will be rooted in secondary literature, which will demonstrate that I have not arbitrarily chosen features being of convenience to me and my work. Quite the contrary, it will show that my research is not disoriented or isolated from topical research about the somewhat widely agreed-upon characteristics of the current international system. Additionally, it will display that the agents of my study are not detached from their ('real-life') 'environment'. Even more so, they are truly grounded

in their system-structure. This will be a basis for the assumptions made about the project's actors and their interest/s.

I believe that the most crucial features of the international system-structure for the understanding of the interacting actors – the strategic partners – are increasing globalisation and interdependence combined with global challenges and the blurring of internal and external policy spheres; the significance of (world) regions; multipolarity (systemic change) as well as the 'rise' of new (and regional) powers within the international hierarchy<sup>128</sup>.

It is important to note from the beginning that the order of the characteristics of the international system-structure is not guided by prioritizing any of these characteristics. At the same time, I do not claim that these features are all of the same importance. Suffice it to say, that all of these features are interlinked and of relevance to the *understanding* of (the interacting agents of) the strategic partnerships. As I am not trying to *explain* which factors contribute to the coming into being of strategic partnerships, but, instead, aim to understand strategic partnerships as social phenomena, it is not necessary to prioritize particular structural factors.

In brief, the following subchapters, thus, serve to 'structurally ground' ('structurally condition' in Archer's terms) the agents of my study. Thus, in this chapter I will limit myself to the systemic characteristics of the international system-structure. The social dimension of the 'structure' in my study will be addressed later in Ch. 5.2.

#### **4.2.1.1 Increasing globalisation and interdependence**

Globalisation<sup>129</sup> is somewhat a commonplace in our world today. Most of the time, it signifies the development and acceleration of global or worldwide dynamic processes leading up to the interconnection and interdependence of different (economic) sectors as well as cultures, norms or ecological areas of life (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 68, 69)<sup>130</sup>. Moreover, local, regional, national and international areas of/for action are more and more interrelated (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 69). Sometimes the term is also associated with the belief that the world of states turns into an international society or community

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<sup>128</sup> Apart from identifying these factors, which are presumed to be relevant for understanding strategic partnerships, I will not engage in any speculation about present or future world order. For an overview of scholars, who analyse or predict world order, see, for example, Herd/Dunay 2010; Hanse/Heurlin 2000.

<sup>129</sup> Globalisation may be defined as '[...] the widening set of interdependent relationships among people from different parts of a world that happens to be divided into nations' as well as '[...] the integration of world economies through the elimination of barriers to movements of goods, services, capital, technology, and people' (Daniels et al. 2013: 49).

<sup>130</sup> For more information on globalisation, see, e.g., Katzenstein 2005: 14-19.

(Siedschlag et al. 2007: 69). Furthermore, researchers also deal with the consequences of globalisation such as social, socio-economic or social-cultural implications (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 69). It appears, therefore, as no wonder that Anne-Marie Slaughter states that 'we live in a networked world' (2009).

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it already started to take place since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 69). Yet it has been the buzz-word of the 1990s. Since then, globalisation is said to be to even gain in pace and to increase even more the interdependence in the world of various (state as well as non-state) actors and a variety of policy and issue areas. This reciprocal interdependence also results in the blurring of boundaries between policy areas, which had been previously neatly separated in internal and external policy areas. This is no longer the case: formerly 'external' policies have an effect on 'internal' policies and the other way round. Almost every supposedly internal policy has an external dimension. Additionally, global or transnational 'challenges' diminish the borders of states. States are also in this sense losing in autonomy<sup>131</sup>. If a state wishes to effectively counter climate change in/for its country, it cannot do so on its own. Actions in states on one 'side' of the earth have an effect on the very state located at the other 'side' of the earth. Hence, globalisation is not an exclusively economic phenomenon but it has a political dimension to it as well. States are more 'dense' and interconnected and it appears as if, thus, there are more collective goods. One can deduce that there is an incentive for states to cooperate. Kenneth N. Waltz stated at the end of the 1990s that 'globalisation is shaped by markets, not by governments' (Waltz 2008: 232). However, governments increasingly try to indeed shape globalisation either due to normative considerations (wish/will to shape) or out of necessity (self-interest). Shaping thereby means finding/framing policy solutions or international political regulation and (bilateral, multilateral, inter-/regional, global etc.) cooperation. As Waltz (2008: 242) has put it, the more interdependent the system, the more surrogate for government is needed'. Yet as we all know there is no global government. Hence, global governance<sup>132</sup> aims to steer globalisation politically (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 72). Global governance is, thus, crucial

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<sup>131</sup> The topic of interdependence is quite significant from a liberal point of view as it levers out the realist argument that states are completely autonomous (Little 1996: 76). It also reflects the neo-/liberal module of my analytic eclectic approach.

<sup>132</sup> There is no universal definition of global governance. Yet it predominantly denotes the (common) goal to establish institutional means and rules for politically shaping globalisation. It also denotes a regular cooperation and problem-solving geared towards global challenges or transnational challenges by founding international institutions and international regimes. Hence, global governance is no global government but should rather be seen as a transnational regulatory system, whereby nations cooperate as well as pool their capacities, actions and competences (Siedschlag 2007: 72-73). For more information on global governance see, e.g., Siedschlag et al. 2007: 74)

as it attempts to shape globalisation within the anarchical order of states by establishing an international framework and instruments for action. This framework entails, for example, various international organisations, international regimes and cooperation fora. There, states are engaged in dialogue and, at best, cooperating. But dialogue and cooperation implies that you need partners, especially if policy solutions to global challenges and within international politics are to be found. Hence, I believe that strategic partnerships as foreign policy tool can also be depicted as a stepping stone to global governance.

If states are interdependent, then the probability of conflict in cases of disagreement rises (Waltz 2008: 152; Keohane 1984: 243). Even though Waltz did not believe in increasing interdependence in the 1970s, he stated that 'if the interdependence of nations is high and becoming higher, we must expect international difficulties to multiply' (Waltz 2008: 152). I believe that even though interdependence is not entirely new (Keohane/Nye 2012), interdependence is nowadays gaining pace due to the processes of accelerating globalisation and digitalization; (transnational) global challenges necessitating joint solutions or at least coordinated actions; as well as the blurring of internal and external policy spheres. Thus, international politics are becoming more complex due to this multifaceted interdependence. Thus, international actors are interdependent, too. These processes also softens Waltz' 'iron law', which says that 'high inequality among like units is low interdependence' (Waltz 2008: 152). In a presumably multipolar and also 'multipower' world (Hess 2012), states (capabilities) are more equal and thus, interdependence is also high in this respect. Furthermore, if states are more interdependent, particularly against the background of transnational and global challenges, the necessity for 'managing world affairs' increases (Waltz 1979: 209). Furthermore, he states that 'no one will deny that collective efforts are needed if common problems are to be solved or somehow managed' (Waltz 1979: 210). Collective efforts entail cooperation efforts, which entail adjustment of actor's policies (Keohane 1984: 243). As there is no central manager (i.e., global government) and as this will not change in essence in the foreseeable future, 'increased interdependence certainly leads to increased need for the management of collective affairs' (Waltz 1979: 210). Thus, there seems to be a high likeability or at least incentive for cooperation among interdependent actors and policy areas. Overall, this is an assumption, which will highly influence the 'logic of situation' (see Figures 2 and 3).

#### **4.2.1.2 Significance of world regions**

Globalisation is not only a global process but it also enhances regionalisation in the world (Katzenstein 2005: 1). Thereby, nation-states within a region attempt to encounter globalisation processes by cooperating and integrating regionally. Even though nation-states remain the fundamental pillars within the international system, they also orientate their action towards the regional level in addition to participating in global governance (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 70). However, globalisation may also make regions more 'porous' (Katzenstein 2005: 24). At the same time, scientists have also pointed to the fact that it is not only globalisation influencing the world and its regions: the world is at the same time also regionalised, whereby regions are crucial to understand world politics (Acharya 2007; Nolte 2010: 882). Moreover, increased globalisation processes do not rule out the significance and influence as well as the distinctiveness of regions and the regional level, particularly in the context of regions, regional powers and extra-regional powers (Acharya 2007: 651).

As mentioned in Ch. 3.1.3 on the delimitation of my study, I will neither attempt to define a 'region' or 'regional order' nor will I engage in studies on 'regional integration' or 'regionalisation'. However, I do believe in the significance and fruitfulness of analytically separating the global and regional levels. Hence, the study acknowledges the distinctiveness of the regional level as an analytical level in contributing to the understanding of social phenomena including the strategic partnerships. This point made will be of relevance in Ch. 4.2.2.2, when I define the agents II of my study as 'emerging regional powers'.

#### **4.2.1.3 Multipolarity and systemic change**

With the end of the Cold War, there has been a widely shared understanding that the international system developed into a unipolar structure with the US as the only great power and global hegemon<sup>133</sup> (Waltz 2008; Krauthammer 1991). In addition to the 'pure' unipolar structure of the international system – often coined as the 'unipolar moment'

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<sup>133</sup> Hegemony is a complex concept. According to Layne (2006: 11), the hegemony of a state is firstly about hard power; about preponderance in terms of military capabilities and material resources and about economic supremacy. Secondly, it hints at the state's 'ambitions' (Layne 2006: 11), which make it act '[...] self-interestedly to safeguard its security, economic and ideological interests' (Layne 2006: 11). Thirdly, a hegemony denotes 'polarity' as its multifaceted supremacy as the only great power in the international system results in a unipolar system-structure (Layne 2006: 11). Fourthly, a hegemon has a will to use its 'overwhelming power' (Layne 2006: 11) to the end of forcing order onto the international system (Layne 2006: 11). Last but not least, hegemony implies 'structural change' as the international system moves from anarchy to more hierarchy (Layne 2006: 11). However, hegemony is a relative concept; hence, there are also limits to a hegemon's power (Layne 2006: 11-12).

(Krauthammer 1991; Waltz 2008: 215) – another international phenomenon has caught scholarly attention. Even though the international status quo was partly still believed to exist at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Rohde 2004: 181; Layne 2006), researchers and experts increasingly share the conviction that the international system-structure was and still is turning towards multipolarity in the 2000s (Waltz 2008: 221; Grant/Valasek 2007: 2; Snyder 1997: 18)<sup>134</sup>. For example, Samuel Huntington predicted in 1999 that after the end of bipolarity, the international system-structure was turning towards multipolarity: thus, in 1999 he described the international system-structure as ‘[...] a strange hybrid, a uni-multipolar system with one superpower and several major powers’ (Huntington 1999). But the US as the ‘lonely superpower’ (Huntington 1999) would be joined by ‘[...] several major power of comparable strength that cooperate and compete with each other in shifting patterns’ (Huntington 1999: 35). After about two decades of the hybrid uni-multipolar structure, the international system would be then ‘truly multipolar’ (Huntington 1999: 37) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Huntington 1999: 37).

Multi-polarity<sup>135</sup> signifies that there are more than two and, thus, multiple poles in an international system (Snyder 1997: 18). A ‘pole’, thereby, is a great/major power or a bloc (Waltz 1979: 11) in terms of material and structural power. Hence, in a multipolar international system-structure we can find several major/great powers. As Waltz puts it, ‘great powers are marked off from others by the combined capabilities (or power) they command’ (Waltz 2008: 74).

Thus, if there has been a bipolar and a unipolar system-structure, which is now moving towards a multipolar one, we are witnessing systemic change. Thus, changes take place within the international system-structure. As Waltz puts it, ‘changes in, and transformations of, systems originate not in the structure of a system but in its parts’ (Waltz 2008: 53). Thus, we need to look at the unit-level in order to ‘understand’

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<sup>134</sup> There are exceptions to this conviction: there are researchers arguing that the international system is still unipolar (Ikenberry et al. 2009). Moreover, Roberts (2012) claims that the emerging international system is ‘nonpolar’. He explains this by arguing that there is ‘[...] no clear leadership role exerted by a single, preeminent power’ (Roberts 2012). He questions that the so called rising powers are poles. However, I think that he somewhat intermingles the concepts of power, leadership and role in formulating his argument. Basically, he deduces from a lack of leadership a lack of poles. However, I would argue that a country can indeed be a regional or great power but may still not exert a regional or global leadership (role). Thus, even though regional or rising powers may not (yet) be great powers, there, nevertheless, seem to be more than one decisive power in the international system. As a consequence, I have elsewhere argued that the present international system may actually be a ‘multipower world’ (Hess 2013) because even small or medium-sized powers can presumably make an impact due to the interdependencies in the world. What is more, Ikenberry et al. (2009: 5) state that ‘[...] real international systems only approximate various polar ideal types [...]’. Thus, the study will stick with its presumption of the world and the international system turning towards multipolarity and mutlipowerness.

<sup>135</sup> By joining multipolarity and interdependence, Grevi (2009) argues that the international system actually reflects an ‘interpolar’ world.

systemic change. I will come back to this point in the subsequent subchapter on 'rising' powers (see Ch. 4.2.1.4).

Thus, the topic of systemic change is quite relevant for neorealists dealing with questions of international hierarchy and different 'ranks' of powers. Moving towards multipolarity also makes researchers wonder, which states (will) constitute the major powers in the international system. There is no agreement on this. For example, at the beginning of the 1990s, Waltz (2008: 170) believed that in the following two to three decades there would be up to five great powers, namely 'Germany of a West European state, Japan, and China', the US (Waltz 2008: 170, 185) and the Soviet Union/Russia, whereby the latter would fall 'from the ranks' (Waltz 2008: 170).

I will not engage or attempt at stipulating which countries definitely are or will be the great powers of the multipolar and multipower world. In that case, I would need to define, where I would posit the threshold of becoming a great power. But even though it would be interesting to know the great powers in the international system for sure, I believe that even smaller or weaker states can matter in today's world due to its interdependency. All states are more or less interdependent and of more or less significance to certain policy areas, which effectively results in a 'multipower world' (Hess 2012). Even though states are autonomous, the increased interdependence makes them lose in autonomy<sup>136</sup>. From this follows, that it is not necessarily the capabilities of a state, which determine whether a state is 'powerful' in international politics or not. Thus, the attempt of singling out the great powers is not of the utmost relevance or rather necessity to me and my study. I think that it is more useful (and necessary) to identify influential actors in world politics. This influence may run from the (great) power rank or a differently determined important 'status' or a clever diplomacy or 'issue-relevance' of an otherwise small country. Yet I nevertheless agree that the increase in economic capabilities is in any case an important requisite for international influence and power. Thus, I agree with Waltz in stating that 'the increase of a country's economic capabilities to the great-power level places it at the center of regional and global affairs' (Waltz 2008: 180). Furthermore, this economic rise indeed '[...] widens the range of a state's interests and increases their importance' (Waltz 2008: 180).

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<sup>136</sup> Thus, in this sense I do agree to a certain extent with neorealism which believes that changes (*with-*)in the system take place at the unit-level (Waltz 2008: 197). The move to Multipolarity is effectively a (nevertheless significant) change at unit-level as power capabilities of states or rather their distribution thereof. This is a within-systemic change. But the loss of the autonomy of the state is change *of* the system and, hence, which is to be found at the structural level. As Waltz (2008: 197) points out, a change of the system would require new theories, whereas changes within the system do not.

It is yet important to note that if systemic change occurs – thus, the number of great powers in the international system-structure changes –, then ‘[...] the calculations and behaviour of states, and the outcomes their interactions produce, vary’ (Waltz 2008: 74) as well. I have mentioned elsewhere (Hess 2012: 7) that I strongly believe that strategic partnerships are and will be a predominant feature of or in a multipolar world. Thus, in my view, as systemic change towards a multipolar system-structure is taking place, strategic partnerships are a preferred foreign policy tool for the interaction among states and the like. The strategic partnerships ‘[...] provide for flexibility, efficiency and dynamism in (simultaneously) building a network of interest coalitions with several partners depending on the issue/policy areas’ (Hess 2012: 7). I will elaborate more on this aspect, when I build the conceptual model of my study.

But interestingly, Rohde (2004: 169), who comments on Morgenthau’s depiction of the balance of power, mentions that the balance of power is connected to a ‘flexible policy of alliances’. The balance of power functions best in a multipolar international system where every actor has a flexible number of options. I believe that this observation is of high importance to the strategic partnerships as this rationale not only applies to alliances but to strategic partnerships as well.

Furthermore, Kenneth N. Waltz remarks rather randomly that ‘a great power that is one among many learns how to manipulate allies as well as adversaries’ (2008: 45). This is due to the fact that these ‘great powers have to accommodate some of their number in order to gain strength vis-à-vis others’ (Waltz 2008: 45). To be on the winning side of the ‘great-power game’ (Waltz 2008: 45), these major powers try to influence their equals and accordingly ‘design their policies to influence the action of others’ (Waltz 2008: 45). Matters of (mutual) dependence or (relative) independence of the alliance-partners are crucial to their (foreign policy) behaviour. States behave differently depending on whether they are independent or dependent on each other. This question of dependence also affects the working mechanisms of alliances and counter-alliances (Waltz 2008: 46). My hunch is that these deliberations are crucial to *understand* the strategic partnerships. I will come back to the issue of ‘manipulation’; the ‘adding of power’; the importance of ‘influence’ as well as the matters of ‘mutual’ in-/dependence in Ch. 5.

To sum up, the study will assume that there is a distinct move towards a multipolar and multipower world (building on a dominant, lasting tendency within

scholarly literature; see, e.g., Renard/Biscop 2012a: 185-186; de Vasconcelos 2008: 13), not least due to the witnessed interdependence in the world. Thereby, systemic change is taking place in terms of shifting power hierarchies, which will be the topic of the next subchapter.

#### **4.2.1.4 Rise of new (regional) powers and the international hierarchy**

The 'rise'/emergence' of (new) powers is inextricably linked to systemic change in the international system-structure and the move towards multipolarity (Grant/Valasek 2007: 2; Nolte 2012: 48-52; Renard 2012a). Most commonly, newly rising powers are associated with so called emerging markets (Sharma 2012) and the buzzword BRICs (or later BRICS<sup>137</sup>), which was coined by the investment bank Goldman Sachs in 2003 (Wilson/Purushothaman 2003), and further developed and modified in the following years (Nolte 2010: 881-882). Hence, there are close links between so called rising powers and 'emerging markets'<sup>138</sup> known in international business (Renard 2012a: 44-45).

As mentioned before, if there is systemic change, there are changes at the unit-level and, thus, at state-level. More precisely, it is a change in the distribution of capabilities (power) among the state-agents within the international system-structure (Waltz 2008: 79). Thus, if (new) powers 'rise', it signifies that they increase their power (capabilities). In essence, there is a change in relative power capabilities as there is a change in the distribution of power (capabilities) among the units of the international system. Thus, the (relative) 'emergence' of some actors inevitably involves the (relative) decline of others.

At the same time, these rising powers are often also considered to be powerful and influential within their 'own' reference regions. Put differently, regional powers are often also emerging powers (see Flesmes/Nabers/Nolte 2012; Nolte 2012)<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> The buzzword BRICs was translated into the political realm, when the concerned countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – started to have annual summits. Later, South Africa joined the 'alliance' by taking part in these high-level summits, which resulted in reframing BRICs into BRICS.

<sup>138</sup> In international business, '[...] emerging markets are former developing economies that have achieved substantial industrialization, modernization, and rapid economic growth since the 1980s' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 123). They are '[...] on their way to becoming advanced economies' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 134).

<sup>139</sup> However, it is worth noting that there are also critical voices concerning the so called 'rise' of these countries and, thereby, radically changing the (economic) outlook of the world as well as reaching the same income levels of so called developed countries. In fact, there are doubts regarding their (even and lasting) emergence in the long-term future (Sharma 2012).

Yet the topic of rising powers is not only linked to viewing the international system in terms of polarity but in terms of an international hierarchy as well (Nolte 2012: 22-29). Thus, the present study will assume that the international system not only displays a certain polarity but, thereby, also indicates an international hierarchy of differently powered actors (Nolte 2012: 24)<sup>140</sup>. It is the neorealist school of thought on International Relations, who particularly pay attention to the polarity of the international system; thus, the number of great powers. They endeavour to 'rank' states in a hierarchical order within the anarchical system based on state-capabilities (Diez et al. 2011: 181). It is also important to keep in mind that states, according to neorealists, aim to increase their relative gains and relative power. This opens the door to the proposition that states may 'team up' but specifically to counterbalance a great/major power<sup>141</sup> (Diez et al. 2011: 181). Furthermore, states may seek to gain as much as power as possible (following offensive neo-realism) or only to a certain extent (believing in defensive neo-realism) (Diez et al. 2011: 181-182). Crucially, in a multipolar system, international hierarchy is in flux (Wohlforth 2009: 40).

In addition to striving for more power, there is also a sense of 'aspiration' (Hurrell 2006: 2) on the sides of emerging and regional powers: For example, Hurrell notes that 'would-be great powers' (Hurrell 2006) '[...] share a belief in their entitlement to a more influential role in world affairs' (Hurrell 2006: 2).

I will not comment on convictions that multipolar systems are more instable than bipolar ones as, for example, neorealists do (Diez et al. 2011: 183) as this is not the focus of the study. However, I do agree with neorealists who point to the fact that in a multipolar system are several competitors (Diez et al. 2011: 184). Moreover, neorealists have particularly been fascinated by the 'rise' of new powers (Diez et al. 2011: 181, 185). This does not come by surprise because neorealism ranks states in international hierarchy in terms of power and capabilities. The 'emergence' of new powers poses a challenge to a somewhat established international hierarchy. Therefore, neorealist researchers surely wonder about the implications of this rise and change for world politics. Both offensive as well as defensive neorealists will assume that '[...] that the emergence of new powers will naturally tend to create power-political tensions' (Hurrell 2006: 6).

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<sup>140</sup> The study does not rule out that there may be several, overlapping hierarchies (Nolte 2012: 24, 29; Nolte 2010: 889), especially as several hierarchies mirror the distinctiveness of the regional level and an associated regional hierarchy. However, the particularities of the regional power hierarchy (Nolte 2012: 25) are of less relevance to this study. This is why the 'dominant' global/international hierarchy will be at the centre of focus here.

<sup>141</sup> The terms 'major' and 'great' power are used synonymously in this study. This synonymy is also used by other scholars, e.g. Diez et al (2011: 181, 183)

As a result, notions such as 'rise', 'emergence' as well as 'decline' hint at shifts within the international hierarchy of the international system. These power shifts mean that countries change 'ranks' within the international hierarchy – either relatively losing or gaining in power (capabilities) vis-à-vis other actors. It is a process of vertically moving up or down similarly to the game of snakes and ladders. As Nolte (2010: 887) points out, 'neither global nor regional power hierarchies are stable'. Waltz (1979: 177) mentions in this respect that over time the conclusion can be made that changes within the international ranking of states only take place slowly. He stipulates that 'war aside, the economic and other bases of power change little more rapidly in one major nation than they do in another' (Waltz 1979: 177). Moreover, economic growth is often too unsteady or too small as to enable a long-lasting 'rise' (Waltz 1979: 177). It is also unclear where the threshold of ranks are and how long the process of 'emergence' is, especially with respect to the 'world's most exclusive' club of great powers (Waltz 1979: 177-178, 183). However, it is important to note that the present study will assume that the differently powered actors within the international hierarchy<sup>142</sup> derive their power from various, not only military sources (Nolte 2012: 24). I agree with Hurrell (2006: 4) in assuming that 'being a great power has never been solely about the possession of large amounts of crude material power'. Thus, there is more than only material factors in rising on the international hierarchy. In understanding social behaviour, we need to take into account both the qualities of agents and those of social structures (Wendt 1987: 338). I will come back to this point when I address the 'bases of power' within my conceptual model in Ch. 5.2.

Overall, this subchapter has indicated the neo-/realist models of the study's analytical eclectic approach. As I have already outlined the broad properties of the

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<sup>142</sup> In this sense, the study will combine and cut across various accounts of international hierarchy (Nolte 2012: 23-24). From this follows that the study combines approaches by Wight (1995); by Organski and his *Power Transition Theory* (Tammen et al. 2000; by Lemke (2002); by Østerud (1992: 3-7); and by Lake (2009). Lake's account is interesting with regard to a socially informed view of international hierarchy (Lake 2009:3). The study will somewhat bluntly assume that the international system displays a hierarchy or rather several, overlapping hierarchies of differently powered states, whereby their power may be derived from various, not only military sources. Basically, the international hierarchy may consist of superpowers, major/great powers, (emerging) middle powers, (emerging) (great/major) regional powers, (secondary) regional powers, small or weak states. Crucially, due to a differentiated view of power resources and potential interests of powers, the thresholds between the ranks are not always clearcut, particularly when it comes to middle and regional powers (Nolte 2012: 30). The latter are informed by hierarchical and, in the latter case, regional views (Østerud 1992: 7), which may ultimately mean that a state is 'floating' between both middle and regional power 'status' in terms of positioning and foreign policy (roles or behaviour). Furthermore, one may distinguish between traditional/established (middle or regional) powers and emerging (middle/regional) powers (Nolte 2012: 30), which is a view informed by additional social categories (Nolte 2012: 34), as the study's chapter on the study's actor will show (see Ch. 4.2.2).

system-structure, I can now turn to the study assumptions regarding agency. Afterwards, I will turn to the strategic partnerships, in particular, as one form of action and interaction between agents.

#### **4.2.2 Actors and their power (status)**

In Ch. 3.1.4.2, I have clearly demarcated the agents of this project, namely the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa. Before I will turn to their power as actors, I will first briefly address their basic motivations. My presuppositions about agents' motivations build on my meta-theoretical framework – the analytic eclectic combination of (limited) Neoliberalism, Neo-/Realism and (Social) Constructivism – as well as my previous presuppositions about the international system-structure. It is important to note that this chapter about agents' motivations is not concluding but rather a theoretically-deduced starting point of my study. It will help with systemically grounding the study's actors..

The neoliberal analytic eclectic module in my study presumes that actors are indeed capable and to a certain extent also willing to cooperate with partners. Against the background of my presuppositions about the international system-structure, the need and even will for cooperation in an 'ever more' globalised, interdependent and multipolar (multipower) world confronted by global challenges is quite distinct. Multipolarity and the rise of new powers – the neo-/realist module – challenges the status quo of the international system-structure and international hierarchy. Here, 'new' powers strive for more power and status and 'old' powers are confronted with the challenges of a relative decline in power and status. The social constructivist module of my study cuts across the other modules: first, this perspective allows for actors to influence and shape the international system-structure. Thus, by its dual view of agency and structure, it draws attention to the fact that the *understanding* of social phenomena may entail factors on agency- as well as structural side. Secondly, it draws attention to the fact that social phenomena indeed are socially constructed. And thirdly, social constructivism allows for thinking about actors' interests in power-terms but also in other (maybe less obvious) dimensions. Overall, my scientific realist social approach allows for taking into account material as well as immaterial factors for *understanding* the agents' motivations. These will be addressed later when I build my analytical and conceptual model in Ch. 5

Structure and agency are also crucial to any conception of *power*. Linguistically, power is derived from the Latin word 'posse' and French ('poeir' or 'pouvoir'), which all mean 'to be able'. Moreover, following definitions in English dictionaries, an 'agent' is

defined as 'one who acts, or *exerts power* to bring something about' or 'as a person (...) that *exerts power or produces an effect*' (sic) (Hay 1995: 191). Thus, the conception of an agent (as the subject) emerging victorious over something representing the structure (as an object) is essentially linked to power. Or as Hay (1995: 191) puts it: 'power is a question of agency, of influencing or 'having an effect' upon the structures which set contexts and define the range of possibilities of others'. In my view, Hay is right to call for a relational view of structure and agency: "one person's agency is another person's structure (Hay 1995: 191)<sup>143</sup>. By ascribing agency, (causal and actual) power is ascribed as well (Hay 1995: 191).

Agents' power is also informed and based on the structured social context and delimitates the ranges of possible actions. Thus, in the following I will elaborate on the powers of the agents I and II in this study before I will actually turn to the *theorising* of strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools. Thus, I will now first briefly elaborate on how I frame the EU as an *established/traditional (external) power*. Secondly, I will address in more detail how I conceptualise Brazil, India and South Africa as *emerging regional powers*.

#### **4.2.2.1 Actor I: The EU as an established and traditional (extra-regional) power**

After having clarified before that the EU is an international agent and a meso-level-actor (see Ch. 3.1.4.2.1), the question arises as to what kind of *power* the EU represents. This question is not new, to say the least, and is regularly subject to discussion. The EU has indeed been described in terms of many different power-types (K. Smith 2008: 1).

In the beginning of this subchapter it is important to note that it is beyond the scope of this project to outline the debates around the powerness of the EU in its entirety. Suffice it to say that there are largely two perspectives among scholars or experts in this discussion: the first may be termed somewhat 'sympathetic' to the EU's sui-generis power. Amongst them are those who believe or assume that the EU is a major power/great power<sup>144</sup> (Herd/Dunay 2010: 3; Hill/Smith 2011b: 8) or at least

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<sup>143</sup> For example, an environmental directive by the European Union (EU) designs the structures that constrains the actions by the national environmental ministers, which again affects the national environmental policy constraining the action by the citizens in that particular EU-state.

<sup>144</sup> As mentioned before, I will use the terms great power and major power interchangeably in this study. The term 'great power' is not beyond dispute. Even though there often exists a sense as to which the great power in the international system are at a given point in time, there is no universal agreement as to exactly define great powerness and as to when they reach this 'rank' (Wight 1995: 46). Yet generally, there is an understanding that great powers have '[...] wider interests and greater resources than small powers [...]' (Wight 1995: 43; 49-50). Moreover, Wight argues that great powers need to have a willingness and capabilities of enforcing these interests (Wight 1995: 52).

influential on the international and global stage (Edwards 2011). This is predominantly due to its collective power as the biggest economic bloc – a ‘trade power’ (Meunier/Nicolaïdis 2011) or ‘economic superpower’ (Fraser 2007: xiii; Bretherton/Vogler 2008: 62) – in the world and the size of its market and importance of its currency (Cafruny/Ryner 2007: 2). The second perspective doubts whether the EU is a power at all (Hill/Smith 2011a: 479), particularly in comparison to the US (K. Smith 2008: 1; Youngs 2010: 4).

Additionally, against the background of systemic change, there have also been speculations over whether or not the EU constitutes or will constitute a ‘great power’ or ‘pole’ in the ‘new’ international system: there are authors, who somewhat presume that Europe/ the EU is a great power (Kagan 2008) or will be one of the ‘poles/centres’ in a multipolar world (Leonard 2007); others are more cautious in this regard (Grevi 2009: 6, 9; Andreatta 2011: 29). Furthermore, there is a sense that the EU, in addition to other powers of the ‘old “political” West’ (Herd/Dunay 2010: 4), is in relative decline vis-à-vis emerging powers (see, e.g., Herd/Dunay 2010: 4).

In the following I will sketch in an overview certain assumptions about classifying the EU as a power. I will end by stating that a concluding power conceptualisation of the EU is not the end of this study. Instead, it proves more worthwhile for the *understanding* of strategic partnerships to view the EU as a traditional/established (extra-regional/external<sup>145</sup>) power.

However, a conceptualisation of the EU’s power is, of course, linked to an understanding of its power in more ‘classical’ (hard, soft etc. power) means. Hence, it is indeed important to situate the EU in terms of (relative) power. In the following I will review and sketch some of the various terms attached to the EU and its power or role in the (future) world. However, I will not review the whole range of power concepts with regard to the EU, as this is, first, not the study’s prime focus. I will rather point out some influential contributions in this regard. I will state that the EU’s power clearly depends on the context, particularly when it comes to power as an instrument, such as strategic partnerships. Secondly, I deem a definite power conceptualisation of the EU as not ‘compulsory’, when understanding the strategic partnerships. This is due to the fact that I will introduce a sociological perspective, which I believe is more helpful in understanding the EU’s strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa: Building on Schweller, the EU’s power status will be framed in a ‘diagonal’ manner as will be demonstrated at the end of the present subchapter. Thus, I will conclude this subchapter by following and

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<sup>145</sup> The terms ‘extra-regional’ and ‘external’ will be used interchangeably in this study.

building on an assumption and perspective that the EU's *main power* (status) with regard to the strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa stems from a sociological view, namely the EU as an established/traditional (external) power. This is a diagonal view of power building on material and social sources of power, which will be further relevant to the concept-building (see Ch. 5).

As a prelude, it is important to be aware of the different dimensions of 'power' (e.g., in terms of status or power as an instrument). Le Gloannec (2011: 96) rightly refers to Galtung (1973) who draws a distinction between 'power as an actor', 'the nature of power' (e.g., soft power) and power 'as a relation between an actor and another subject'. Le Gloannec (ibid) further stresses not to confuse the second dimension ('nature of power') with the 'resources' of power. Yet these dimensions are almost inevitably linked. Hence, when analysing the EU as a power, at this stage I will firstly analyse its power as an actor (first dimension). Let me be clear on this matter by stating that in this chapter I am focusing on the EU as a power in terms of status (not instruments)<sup>146</sup>. Yet the other dimensions of power will necessarily feed into this discussion.

In the first place, it may prove worthwhile to consider if the EU itself offers an account of its own power. Are there any self-declarations on the EU-side as to what kind of power it is or perceives itself to be? If we look at the European Security Strategy (ESS) (Council/EU: 2003), which constitutes a major policy paper for the EU and which for the first time provided distinct objectives for progressing the EU's (security) interests, there is no clear statement on the EU's own understanding of its role or let alone its 'power status' in the world<sup>147</sup>. To sum up, neither the EU's security strategy nor any other

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<sup>146</sup> Even though admittedly, this differentiation is not clear cut. Often a certain power status already implies certain power instruments. Yet I mean that I will limit myself to power as status as the main focus in this subchapter. Even though I will mention certain power instruments along the way, I will not further elaborate on the means a specific power-status may imply.

<sup>147</sup> With regard to the ESS, Anne-Marie Le Gloannec (2011: 95) has remarked: 'In the security strategy (...), the European Union proclaimed itself to be a global power, albeit awkwardly: 'the European Union is inevitably a global player''. Le Gloannec (ibid) further reads from the document that 'the EU also considers itself to be a regional power [emphasis added] with regional aims, without however, calling itself one.' She retrieves this finding by referring to the ESS in which "an important part (...) deals with the neighbourhood and the necessity for the EU to be surrounded by a ring of well-governed countries that it would seek to promote" (ibid). This interpretation is rather exiguous as the passage on the region only appears on page 7 of the ESS. The global level features more prominently in the document. However, I would not interpret this fact as a sign that the EU necessarily considers itself to be a power with global reach. The fact that the EU in its ESS (Council/EU 2003: 1) states that 'as a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), and with a wide range of instruments at its disposal, the European Union is inevitably a global player' points, in my view, rather to the potential which the EU believes to have at its disposal regarding its resources. The ESS' conclusion also adheres to my interpretation: 'The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in

major EU-document include a clear self-declaration of the EU's power (status and instruments) (see Ch. 3.2.1). Hence, there is no clear self-assessment by the EU of its own *power*.

Let us now turn to discussions on the EU's power within the scholarly world more closely. In academia, there has been a long history of trying to get to grips with the EU's *sui generis* nature. This specifically follows from the difficulty of identifying the EU as an actor or a structure as has been mentioned before (see Ch. 3.1.4.2.1).

Over the years, researchers have coined very different terms with regard to the EU's power (and power instruments). One of the rather 'classical' accounts on the EU's power (role) is the concept of civilian power<sup>148</sup> by Francois Duchêne (1972) (Holden 2009: 9; Algieri 2010: 133; Andreatta 2011: 40; Keukelaire/MacNaughtan 2008: 10). This concept stresses how the EU takes international influence without resorting to military instruments. In the context of the introduction of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) within the EU, the concept of the EU's civilian power was somewhat dismissed<sup>149</sup> (Holden 2009: 9; Youngs 2010 6-7). A further, related approach to the EU's power-status is Ian Manner's normative power approach (Manners 2002, 2006. Manner's normative power concept combines the soft power- and civilian power approaches. Thereby, the EU is perceived as an international norms changer – partly by its own model as well as partly by its actions (Holden 2009: 9). As the normative power

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dealing with the threats and in helping realise the opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale' (Council/EU 2003: 14; emphasis added).

<sup>148</sup> Being a civilian power means that an actor concentrates on non-military means, and hence rather on economic, trade, developmental or diplomatic means, in its foreign policy behaviour. However, military means are not entirely foreclosed (Algieri 2010: 133). Civilian powers work towards 'civilian ends' (Andreatta 2011: 40).

<sup>149</sup> Moreover, as Holden puts it, the civilian power concept has a strong normative connotation and it mirrors the French idea of 'mission civilisatrice' (Holden 2009: 9). Similar to the criticism of Nye's soft power-concept, the concept of civilian power is criticised for not being critical (Holden 2009: 9). As a consequence, I would agree with Holden (2009: 9) that as researchers we need to find a concept of the EU's power which is 'critical' (Holden 2009: 9) and can be used analytically. Furthermore, the approach has to avoid a normatively-based bias in a sense that the EU is always a 'force for good' with no self-interest, except for 'universal' values. This is particularly relevant when dealing with the EU's foreign policy. My research tries to transcend normative approaches, also in order to transcend normatively-based assumptions about the EU. Instead, I will introduce more realist power-based approaches relating to self-interest and power as such. It is important to note that including a power-perspective does not have to result in a somewhat exaggerated view that every social phenomenon only can be explained by taking 'plain' interests and power into account. However, I do believe that power and interests indeed are very important for getting the whole picture (of analysis). Furthermore, I strongly believe that both norms (values) and (self-)interests are connected to power-dimensions and are, therefore, important for understanding EU foreign policy power (Holden 2009: 10). This is why I combine neorealist (power- and interest-based approach) with a social constructivist approaches in an eclectic way. Thereby, I also reduce the likeability of being 'blinded' by the political discourse of political documents. Moreover, this combination of realist and constructivist perspectives will be enriched by a sociological perspective.

approach is based on social constructivism, it stresses the importance of (moral) norms and values. It has particularly been used in approaches focusing on the EU's international role as well as analyses of discourses and dialogue as means of norms-spreading (Holden 2009: 9)<sup>150</sup>.

Overall, the EU's (great) powerness is contested (Algieri 2010: 24). Indeed, there generally intense discussion around the EU's power. The EU has been described as a 'major power' (Hill/Smith 2011b: 8); a 'regional power' (Tiersky/Van Oudenaren 2010: viii; Le Gloannec 2011) due to its structural dominance, influence and power on the European continent and its continued expansion with various enlargement rounds adding to the EU's size and scope (Tiersky/Van Oudenaren 2010: viii) or a '(major) regional power' (Kundnani 2011; Giessmann 2010: 257; Fröhlich 2010: 309); an actor with 'global reach' (Archer 2008: 2; Fraser 2007: xiii); a 'civilian power' (Ginsberg 2007: 284); a 'normative power' (Manners 2006, 2008); a declining power (Gamble/Lane 2009: 1); a 'soft power' (Laïdi 2008: 4); or as an 'empire' (Zielonka 2008) or no empire (Tiersky/Van Oudenaren 2010: viii). Some scholars have, thus, refrained from clearly denoting power to the EU in describing it as a '[...] *major factor* in the international system' (Hill 2003b) or as having the '[...] potential to exercise great potential in world affairs' (Thomas 2011: 3). Others see the EU as constituting no power at all (Hill/Smith 2011a: 479). In the context of systemic change, the EU has also been pictured as one of the (present as well as future) 'poles' in a multipolar system (Leonard 2007). This is largely due to the fact that it constitutes the biggest economic bloc worldwide (Bretherton/Vogler 2008: 62). Furthermore, there is also discussion around the EU's potential great or global power, particularly as one of the poles in a multipolar world (e.g., Renard/ Rogers 2011: 1). For example, some scholars believe that the EU has already attained or at least will attain (some kind) a 'superpower' status, particularly against the background of systemic change and (emerging) multipolarity (Cafruny/Ryner 2007: 2).

Of course, the different power conceptions of the EU are also influenced by the background of the author using a certain lense, e.g., looking at the EU from a European

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<sup>150</sup> However, I would agree with other critics (Holden 2009: 9-10) that social constructivist approaches, particularly with regard to the EU's international role, are often biased towards normative assumptions about the EU and underplay the role of power (Holden 2009: 10; Sjursen 2006a). As a result, researchers using 'normative power'-approaches often take political discourse for 'granted' in a sense that they simply 'believe' in the EU's (selfless) well-intention (Holden 2009: 10). As Sjursen (2006b: 170) states, 'this leaves researchers vulnerable to the charge of being unable to distinguish between their own sympathy for the European project and their academic role as critical analysts'. Overall, it appears that the concept of normative power could be rather useful for investigating international *roles* (Sjursen 2006a; Manners 2002: 252) in contrast to agents' power within the international hierarchy. For more critiques of the concepts of normative and civilian (ethical) power see, for example, Hyde-Price 2006, 2008.

Studies-perspective or from IR and its various paradigms. Moreover, the EU's power is also cast differently depending on whether the EU is in political or economic and financial crisis or not (Cafruny/Ryner 2007: 3-4; Youngs 2010: 1). Some experts are convinced that the EU has power and influence on a global scale (Zielonka 2008), whereas others think that the EU has merely regional influence and power (Le Gloannec 2011).

However, it is crucial to be aware of the fact that the discussion around the EU's power sometimes suffers by being artificially limited to a certain research perspective. As Le Gloannec (2011: 97) has said, 'some of these concepts were – or are – supposed to apply to the EU's role generally speaking, global or regional: civilian, normative or soft power, as well as the power of attraction, has been analysed in a global context and, a *contrario* [sic], in a more limited one, on the European continent and in its periphery'. Le Gloannec rightly points out that some approaches are 'per se more circumscribed geographically' (ibid), which are, for example, important for analysing the EU's enlargement policy but lose their relevance with increasing distance from the EU. Therefore, I would argue that it is crucial to take account and be aware of the fact that there is a (potential) difference in the EU's power and power instruments when either analysing the EU's membership applicant countries and its neighbouring countries or looking at actors located far beyond its borders. It is a change in context and it appears that the EU's power (-instruments) are rather fluid in terms of context and not a universal status. Therefore, I would stress that researchers can apply an *inward* or an *outward* view of the EU's power, as I would call it. First, the *inward view* deals with the EU's power and power instruments with regard to enlargement or the EU's 'near abroad': the EU's 'neighbourhood', as it is called by the EU, or its 'periphery' (Le Gloannec 2011: 97). Additionally, one could include in this view research on the phenomenon of 'Europeanisation' (for example, Wong/Hill 2011; Wong 2011) and in how far actors within the EU's confining structure, such as EU-member states, are affected and influenced by the EU as such. For example, research in the context of Europeanisation studies deals with the question whether and to what extent the foreign policies by EU-Member States are influenced by the fact that they are, have become or are trying/will become members of the EU. Secondly, the *outward perspective* deals with the EU's power and its power instruments with respect to the actors and structures beyond its borders and beyond the periphery. This differentiation is by no means an end in itself. It is a combination of the above mentioned second and third dimensions of power: nature of power and power as a relationship as well as, in an addition, power as an instrument. For example, it makes sense when being aware of the fact that against the background of an outward perspective, the EU loses one of its most powerful 'carrots' in terms of its 'transformative

power' (Tiersky 2010: 8): namely, offering the prospect of enlargement or rather becoming a member of the EU. This is quite significant when analysing the EU relations with countries beyond its borders such as Brazil, India and South Africa, which do not even aim for becoming a member of the bloc. There are no strong incentives to comply with EU norms such as law or regulations or political positions. Furthermore, the respective countries and the EU do not 'share' the same region as they do not have common borders. For example, they are not powers which are aiming for the dominant position within the same region. The only exception in the group of the strategic partners may be Russia. Thus, I would argue that Russia constitutes a somewhat special case within the strategic partner countries group of the EU (see Ch. 6)

When it comes to *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa, a less structurally-dominated power perspective of the EU seems to be most fruitful. I believe that it makes sense to move the power-discussion of the EU in terms of structural terms and hard power capabilities to the background. Hence, I will now move on to a sociologically informed and, as I call it, diagonal view of the EU's power status. This view is diagonal as it is informed by a structural (realist) perspective in terms of an international power hierarchy but, at the same time, includes social categories.

I think that it makes more sense to view the EU an established<sup>151</sup> and traditional power. In the following I will elaborate on the notions of an 'established power' and 'traditional power'. These are very close and will, thus, be used synonymously in this study. I will first mention Giddens account of established powers before I will predominantly draw on Schweller (1999) in depicting the EU as an established and traditional power.

In mentioning 'established' powers in his work, Giddens links the notion to discussions on core versus the periphery. In this context, he outlines that 'those who occupy centres 'establish' themselves as having control over resources which allow them to maintain differentiations between themselves and those in peripheral regions' (Giddens 1984: 131). The 'established' command a '[...] variety of forms of social closure to sustain distance from others who are effectively treated as inferiors or outsiders' (Giddens 1984: 131). It is the '[...] 'established' industrial nations of the Western 'core' [which; NH] maintain a central position in the world economy on the basis of their temporal precedence over the 'less developed' societies' (Giddens 1984: 131). Thus, he

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<sup>151</sup> Interestingly, it appears that more and more authors depict the EU as an established power (M. Smith 2013: 654; Narlikar 2013: 563).

contrasts established centres versus outside regions or periphery in terms of a horizontal or regional view. Even though there are similarities, this is not quite the sense of my usage of the term 'established power'. 'Established power' in my study refers to the EU as one entity from the '(Global) North' and/or the 'West'<sup>152</sup> signifying indeed predominantly industrialised countries. But there is an aspect, which is more important than a country's status of industrialisation<sup>153</sup>: I use the term 'established' in order to make clear that the EU is part of the group of 'countries', which have for decades after the Second World War dominated the outlook of the international system or rather its international organisations and institutions<sup>154</sup>, such as the UN or the G7/8 (see, e.g., Keukelaire/Bruyninckx 2011: 397). This depiction matches the political and scientific discourse on the 'established order' of the international system (see, e.g., Hurrell 2006: 2-3).

In this context, I will follow Schweller (1999), who contrasts 'established great powers'<sup>155</sup> with 'rising, *dissatisfied* challengers' (sic; 1). Contrasting established powers with rising powers, thus, connotes systemic change and the international hierarchy in terms of rising and declining powers (Schweller 1999: 1-2; Grevi 2009: 5). Similar statements have also been (implicitly or explicitly) made by other scholars in terms of 'opposing' established (great) powers (from the North) with rising (regional) powers (from the South) (Nolte 2012: 19; Hurrell 2006: 2; Nel 2010: 953-954; Schoeman 2000: 47; Vieira/Alden 2011: 508; Flesmes 2010: 95; Cornelissen 2009: 6). By contrast, rising and regional powers are seen as 'agents of change' (Nel 2010: 951) seeking redistribution; equality of (formal and informal) status as well as recognition (Hurrell 2006; Nel 2010). Thus, established powers are satisfied agents of preferably 'non-change', predominantly located in the so called 'Global North' or Western Hemisphere. Some authors mention

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<sup>152</sup> The 'West' is a fluid concept. As Gamble (2009: 18-19) explains it denoted Europe, then Europe and North America and later the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Association (NATO).

<sup>153</sup> This is probably partly due to the fact that the terms 'industrialised' vs. 'emerging' vs. 'developing' economies are increasingly losing in their explanatory value. As the world is confronted with more and more interdependence and global challenges, cooperation among states is less viewed in these terms. Rather the differences in policy positions, which may indeed sometimes – but not always – run along the lines of e.g. 'industrialised' vs. 'emerging' countries, are becoming more important in the shaping of world politics.

<sup>154</sup> Admittedly, this view of the EU's 'status' widely stems from its member states' role and joint power (Whitman 2010: 31).

<sup>155</sup> It is worth noting that, in contrast to Schweller, I do not think that every established power needs to be a great power. I think that the notion 'established power' rather hints at those countries, which are satisfied with and, crucially, have been dominating the structure, outlook and functioning of the international system. This is why the study can depict the EU as an established power because a majority of its member states have indeed – *traditionally* – been dominating the outlook of international politics. Furthermore, some of its member states have indeed been great powers in the international system for a considerable period of time. Of course, existing great powers are presumably more likely to be established rather than smaller powers.

explicitly that the EU (and the US, for example) is an established power (see, e.g., van Ham 2010: 158).

I would like to stress that I do not connote any normative sense with the term 'established' power. Yet I think it makes sense to use the term also in contrast to pure power-categorisations such as major/great power. This is due to the fact that the group of established powers – the non-emerging countries – include various powers. Thus, there are very different powers among the group of established powers such as a major power, e.g. the US, as well as the EU with a disputed power status and particular EU-member states, which are presumably rather middle or regional powers. Yet even though they differ in power terms, they all have been largely influential in international politics for a very long time. Hence, I believe it makes more sense to view the EU in terms of an established power, even more so with respect to its strategic partnerships with rising powers. In fact, the term 'established power' is often used to contrast a country vis-à-vis new, rising (regional powers) (Nel 2010: 954). It shows that, in contrast to Giddens, I rather follow a more 'vertical' view of differentiating between powers, namely in terms of power variance between the actors.

Ultimately, however, it is not only vertical but rather diagonal, particularly in the context of social structures (see Ch. 5.2), which brings to the second notion, 'traditional', which the study associates with the EU as a power. For the time being, the diagonal view incorporates both a structural as well as historical view of established/traditional powers. This historical or rather *traditional* understanding, which is widely shared but also not uncontested, indicates the established powers. The term 'tradition' hints that something is (done) because it is 'traditionally' has been (done) in this way. The term 'traditional player' or 'traditional partner' denotes a country, which is somewhat established in a certain sense, e.g., in a certain region or in a historical sense (Yang 2011: 84-85). For example, traditional partners are often the most important partners for a country in terms of trade relations or in terms of historical or cultural linkages (Yang 2011: 84-85). Similarly to the notion of an established power, the term 'traditional' is often used in the context of contrasting so called 'old players/partners' with new partners, players or actors, which appear and gain influence in a specific region or as a trade partner (Yang 2011: 84-85). Furthermore, the notion *traditional* is sometimes used to highlight differences between emerging and non-emerging/traditional powers (Jordaan 2003; Mayer 2010). New partners often compete with traditional partners in terms of attractiveness, influence and, ultimately, importance as a partner to a certain country or region, e.g. in terms of trade or development but also more generally (Yang 2011: 84-88).

In brief, similarly to the term 'established', the term 'traditional' has been used to denote nation states located in the 'West'<sup>156</sup>. Moreover, the notion *traditional powers* is also often juxtaposed against the term emerging powers (Kornegay/Landsberg 2011: 175-176). For example, Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 372-373) mention the 'traditional nation states of the West' (Hurrell 2006: 3). Even though the authors do so by referring to a different time period, namely the decline of the European powers after the Second World War and the concomitant rise of the US, they point to a comparable phenomenon: previously dominant – thus, established or traditional – powers decline in (relative) power. This correlates with my understanding and usage of the term *established/traditional powers*, which have for long 'dominated' the characteristics of the international system. Moreover, the EU is considered to be part of the 'West' (see, for example, Kornegay/Landsberg 2011: 188).

To sum up, I will use the terms 'traditional' and 'established' powers interchangeably at times in this study. Again, I do not attach any – neither positive nor negative – connotation to both the terms 'established' or 'traditional' powers.

Last but not least, it is important to note that the adjectives 'external/extra-regional' simply denotes that the EU is not part of the emerging regional powers' respective regions: external connotes extra-regional. Both terms will be used interchangeably in this study.

After having derived that the EU will be seen as an established/ traditional (external) power building on a diagonal power perspective (material and social power), I will now turn to the Agents/Actors II of this study.

#### **4.2.2.2 Actors II: Emerging Regional Power(s)**

This chapter will depict Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers. To this end, I will introduce and discuss various concepts and approaches to emerging regional powers. I have done so already to a certain extent in the *state of the art* (Ch. 2). However, I have to elaborate further in order to make clear how I arrive at this assumption. In this context, I will delimitate the choice of emerging regional powers vis-à-vis (emerging) middle powers. Furthermore, I will build on Nolte's concept of regional

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<sup>156</sup> This probably has its origins in the times of bipolarity where the international system was split along the lines of 'East' and 'West'. Yet in my study I will use the term 'traditional' in the sense of 'established' powers described above.

powers. In a last step, I will offer individual accounts of studies depicting Brazil, India and South Africa as *emerging regional powers*.

The rise of (new) regional or global powers is not only a fashionable topic but there are also various concepts and notions for depicting these countries individually as well as a group. Talking about the 'rise' of so called 'rising'/'emerging'<sup>157</sup> or regional powers is not entirely new (see, e.g., Värynen 1979) but it continues to be quite popular but what exactly is meant by the 'rise' and 'emergence' of countries and by the importance of regional powers?

Empirically, the rising/emerging powers, by contrast, are 'united' by the fact that they have 'risen' economically in terms of their growth rates or Gross Domestic Products (GDP). Even though a lot of these 'emerging countries' still have economic sectors, which are considered to reflect so called 'developing or emerging countries', they are still increasingly seen to compete with 'established powers' in economic power<sup>158</sup>. What is more, these economically-rising powers increasingly gather political power and influence.

Theoretically, 'emergence' denotes the rise in terms of power for a country and mostly denotes the rise to a great/major power in the international system by agglomerating more power capabilities. After the end of the Cold War the phenomenon of 'rising'/'emerging' powers mostly refer to countries such as China, India or Brazil, for example (Tiersky/Van Oudenaren 2010: vii; see International Affairs 2006 (82, 1)). Newly emerging/rising powers are thus on their way to become 'new great powers' (Tiersky/Van Oudenaren 2010: vii); thereby contributing to changes in the structure of the international system against the background of globalisation processes (Tiersky 2010: 12). Thereby, these rising powers are, thus, often identified as the new or present great powers within the international system (Kagan 2008) or rather in a (future) multipolar world, as has been mentioned before (Ch. 4.2.1.4). Sometimes the very same countries are also circumscribed as (great/major) regional powers.

In addition, the notion of regional powers' entails engaging in several multidimensional research areas. As Nolte (2011: 56) has pointed out:

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<sup>157</sup> 'Rise' and 'emergence' denote the same meaning and are used synonymously in this study.

<sup>158</sup> Thus, in contrast to the notion of an emerging country, which concentrates on the degree of the industrialisation of its economic sectors, it makes more sense to view emerging countries in terms of their increase in overall growth rates and Gross Domestic Product in order to grasp the phenomenon of rising powers.

*'The research topic of regional powers is a complex and multifaceted one; it delineates a research area that combines a geographical concept – region – with a basic concept of international relations theory – power [...]. It refers to power hierarchies in the international system. The label 'regional power' refers to countries that are influential and powerful in certain geographical regions or subregions (especially in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East).'*

This paragraph is rich in content with respect to delineating the research field of the study at hand. We need to understand the composition of the term regional power which comprises *region* and *power*. In addition to Nolte (2011: 56), the study will add the dimension of 'emergence' which refers to the above mentioned international power hierarchies and certain geographical regions or subregions.

This research project works from the assumption that Brazil, India and South Africa represent emerging regional powers. As Wight has explained, within an international system there may be – in addition to minor powers – 'regional great powers' and 'middle powers' (Wight 1995: 63; Jordaan 2003). Regional great powers, thereby, are great powers in a regional 'subsystem' or 'subordinate international society' (Wight 1995: 63). These regional great powers have interests, which are '[...] general interests relative to the limited region and a capacity to act alone' (Wight 1995: 63). In this context, Wight mentions explicitly Brazil and South Africa amongst others (Wight 1995: 63). Furthermore, he states that these regional great powers are likely aspirants for the '[...] for the rank of middle power' (Wight 1995: 63). The identification of middle powers is more challenging than that of great powers within the international system, particularly as there is no comparable tool of 'diplomatic recognition' (Wight 1995: 64) for middle powers (Wight 1995: 64). Wight describes middle powers by contrasting them to great powers (Wight 1995: 64-65). In this context, he mentions that in peacetime great powers will look for middle powers' support, whereas during war middle powers hope that the costs for great powers in attacking them may be too high (Wight 1995: 65). Moreover, 'middle powers appear when the qualifications for great-power status are being revised' (Wight 1995: 65). Wight mentions Brazil and India as middle powers amongst others (Wight 1995: 64). Generally, it proves difficult to delimitate (emerging) regional powers from (emerging) middle powers (Nolte 2012: 30). Indeed, some authors simply state that middle powers may also be regional powers and vice versa, including the cases of Brazil, India and South Africa (Flemes/Habib 2009: 138). This is a view, which the study follows as well.

Thus, even though I will not rule out that Brazil, India and South Africa are also seen as (emerging) middle powers (see Schoeman 2000), I believe that the concept of (new) emerging regional (great) powers is more suitable to capture their powerful and (at times) influential position within their respective regions (Nolte 2012: 31). I think that it is particularly the regional power base, which emerging regional powers use within their foreign policy and power profile. As Nel/Nolte (2010: 878) point out, '[...] in almost all cases regions provide the *locus standi* that enable emerging powers to stake and protect their claims on the global stage' (sic). The region is the very basis and 'springboard' for their emergence (Nel/Nolte 2010: 878; Spektor 2010: 200), irrespective of their capability or willingness in realising their regional power (potential). By contrast, the concept of (emerging) middle power rather relies on the concept of leadership and a certain foreign policy behaviour (Nolte 2012: 30-31; Flandes 2010: 95). The concept of an emerging middle power may complement the picture of an emerging regional power (Nolte 2010: 893), but it is more of an 'add-on' in terms of their general foreign policy behaviour and roles at the international and global levels (Schoeman 2000: 48). Above all, the wider foreign policy behaviour of emerging regional powers is yet not the study's prime focus.

Depicting particularly Brazil, India and South Africa (individually and collectively as IBSA-states) as (roughly) emerging regional (great) powers is based on a widespread 'agreement' on their 'status' (Godehardt/Nabers 2011b; Nolte 2011; Flandes/Nabers/Nolte 2012; Nolte 2012: 42; Schirm 2010; Geldenhuys 2010; Bava 2010; Flandes 2010a; Flandes/Nolte 2010; Nel/Nolte 2010; Nel 2010; Nel/Stephen 2010). They are more or less treated as 'usual suspects' in this respect (Nolte 2012: 20; Flandes/Nolte 2010: 1; Nolte 2010: 883). Thus, the presumption of this study in depicting these three countries in this particular way appears to be considerably reasonable and has not arrived out of the blue.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the beginning, the study works from an acknowledgement of the distinctiveness and significance of the regional level because it contributes to *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. Additionally, I believe that it makes sense to view Brazil, India and South Africa as *emerging regional powers* rather than *emerging middle powers* when considering their rise: I think that it is rather the countries' regional power base than their potential middle power base, on which they try to build their strive for more power and status in the international hierarchy (Nel/Nolte 2010). The term 'emerging middle power' (e.g.,

Jordaan 2003)<sup>159</sup>, by contrast, underestimates the influence of the regional level. The study, thereby, builds on the presumption that it lies in the very nature of agents as well as structurally-driven strategic reasoning to agglomerate additional (relative) power.

Even though research on so called ‘(major/great) regional powers’ and ‘emerging powers’ has increased in importance in recent years (Godehardt/Nabers 2011b; Flandes/Nabers/Nolte 2012; Nolte 2012; Flandes 2010b; Hurrell 2006)<sup>160</sup>, there is no universally agreed definition of what constitutes a regional power. I will neither dwell on the different definitions of a regional power nor will I attempt a new definition of regional power. In depicting Brazil, India and South Africa as regional powers, I will take Nolte’s analytical concept of a regional (leading) power as a basis (Nolte 2012; 2010; 2007; 2006). Basically, regional powers are ‘[...] countries that are influential and powerful in certain geographical regions or subregions (especially in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East’ (Nolte 2011: 56). Other concepts and definitions of somewhat rising and/or important regional states will be disregarded for different reasons<sup>161</sup>. Given the sheer number of concepts, it will not be possible to discuss each and every one concept of rising or regional powerness in greatest detail. Nonetheless, some will be mentioned now in order to indicate the well-considered decision of instead building upon Nolte (2006, 2010). For example, the concept of an anchor country (Stamm 2004)<sup>162</sup> is in my view too restricted as it primarily uses a developmental lens in singling out countries. It predominantly evaluates economic factors and underplays certain political dimensions in determining influential countries (Stamm 2004: 9-12). Moreover, the concept of a so called leading power is somewhat limited due to their pronounced political view of identifying partners for German foreign policy<sup>163</sup> (Nolte 2012: 39-40). Nolte’s concept of a regional power captivates by its very approach, which combines different perspectives of IR-paradigms offering a multifaceted and more scientific approach in analysing regional

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<sup>159</sup> For example, in Jordaan’s definition of an emerging middle power, he mentions that they have ‘regional influence and self-association’ and that they ‘[...] exhibit a strong regional orientation favouring regional integration [...]’ (Jordaan 2003: 165). This is, in my view, a view, which is less helpful in making sense of the EU’s reasoning in terms of being interested in strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. The regional *power* base is presumed to be also more important for the understanding of the three countries’ foreign policies.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, also the special issue of *International Affairs*, 82 (2006), 1, on regional and emerging powers.

<sup>161</sup> For more elaboration on other definitions and conceptualization of regional or rising (leading) powers see, e.g., Nolte 2012: 36-42.

<sup>162</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the anchor country-concept see, for example, Husar/Maihold (2009: 22-25).

<sup>163</sup> Similarly, I will not consider other concepts or strategy papers by the German Government dealing with emerging regional powers at large; such as, e.g., the German strategy paper on ‘Shaping Globalisation’ (Die Bundesregierung 2012). These strategy papers display a distinct political view from the German Government, which, therefore, cannot be used for this project.

powers (Nolte 2012: 21, 41). The usage of this model is believed to be more suitable for contributing to a better understanding of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

Critics of Nolte's concept on (newly) regional leading powers argue that the concept cannot account for the role of newly rising powers in dealing with the multidimensionality of global challenges and their respective cooperation potential in terms of global structural policy with, for example, Germany (Husar/Maihold 2009: 22-23). However, I would stress that this is not the purpose of the concept on regional powers in the first place. It is instead an attempt to analyse these very regional powers (Nolte 2012: 35). Furthermore, Husar/Maihold criticise that Nolte's concept is limited due to its assumption that only states with a regional power base may become great powers on a global scale (Nolte 2006: 8)<sup>164</sup>: according to them, this is due to the fact that there are states being influential in one policy area but lack a regional power base (Husar/Maihold 2009: 25). Yet I believe that Nolte's assumption is adequate: indeed, it seems largely unconceivable that a *great* power would not have a regional power base (Hurrell 2006: 8). Nevertheless, I agree with Husar/Maihold (2009) in stating that countries lacking a regional power base may still be influential in certain policy areas on an international level. Middle powers are an example in this respect. But this is yet in line with Nolte's assumption about great powers and their regional power base: middle powers are middle powers but no great powers. Additionally, Husar/Maihold (2009: 26) criticise that Nolte's concept offers no indication of how to delimitate a regional power's region. Yet in the meantime there are indeed by now contributions to analysing the interlinkages between regional powers and regions (see Godehardt/Nabers 2011b; Godehardt 2012; Nolte 2012: 43-48).

In this project I will either work from the respective regional power's view of 'its' region or from the EU's institutionalized view of region in terms of its biregional relations. Similarly to the concept of a nation, regions are envisioned political communities and, ultimately, socially constructed by drawing on different dimensions, such as geography or institutional frameworks (regional organisations) (see, e.g., Katzenstein 2005: 6-13). Last but not least, Husar/Maihold (2009: 26) argue that Nolte's concept is too static and too realist-power-based because it does not account for socialisation effects by an

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<sup>164</sup> This presumption does not contradict Hurrell (2010: 20), who argues that '[...] a successful major power may therefore arise precisely from not having to be an engaged regional power'. A regional power base is more of a potential and a structural resource, which is different from being engaged in a region. Along this line, a major power may have a regional power base but still be a disengaged regional power. I think it is worth noting that, from my view, being a 'global player' (Hurrell 2010: 21) is different from being a major power (Hurrell 2010: 21). Thus, Nolte's presumption that major powers can be assumed to have regional power base of some sort appears to be conceivable.

external power, such as the EU, in ascribing a certain role to certain countries regarding their regional powerness from the outside. However, Nolte (2012: 41-42) has already countered some of these points of criticism. Apart from that, the present study may account for the EU's 'role' with respect to these emerging regional powers and (limitedly) for socialisation effects by building on Nolte's concept of a regional power (see Ch. 7). Yet I agree with Husar/Maihold (2009: 27) in overall praising Nolte's concept for engaging in a multi-level perspective of regional powers. I believe that this view is crucial for *understanding* the phenomenon of regional and rising powers.

Hence, the study will assume that Brazil, India and South Africa are regional powers. In this context, I will follow Nolte's analytical concept of a regional power (Nolte 2010)<sup>165</sup>, which offers criteria for singling out regional powers as well as for comparing them (Nolte 2011: 57). Nolte (2010: 893; see also 2011: 57; Nolte 2012: 35-36) defines a regional power as a 'state that

1. articulates the pretension (self-conception) of a leading position in a region that is geographically, economically and political-ideationally delimited;
2. displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organisational (political) and ideological resources for regional power projection;
3. truly has great influence in regional affairs (activities and results); [...]
4. is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region;
5. influences in a significant way the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region;
6. exerts this influence by means of regional governance structures;
7. defines and articulates a common regional identity or project;
8. provides a collective good for the region or participates in a significant way in the provision of such a collective good;
9. defines the regional security agenda in a significant way;

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<sup>165</sup> Note that I will not 'dig into' the leadership dimension within the concept of regional power (Nolte 2011: 57, 59-60), because the regional power's engagement within its region or regarding its leadership role on a global level is not the major focus of this study (Nolte 2010: 893). Leadership will only be implicitly dealt with in this study; for example, when it comes to considering why the EU might be interested in partnering with emerging regional powers (see Ch.7). Thus, I will not further elaborate on the concept of leadership but use the concept of emerging regional powers in structural terms in the first place. This is also why I will not use the concept of a regional power provided by Schirm (2010), which is strongly influenced by the leadership dimension (Nolte 2010: 892). Thus, the study concentrates on the various power resources of a regional power for its regional power projection rather than its ability to lead or to influence (Nolte 2012: 35). Apart from that, Nolte (2012: 26) mentions himself that his concept of a regional power rather serves to 'analyse' certain states. The present study will build on this rationale. For elaboration on regional and/or rising powers and leadership see, for example, Destradi 2012; Wehner 2011; Fawcett 2011; Schirm 2010.

10. [...has a; NH] leading position in the region [that; NH] is recognized or least respected by other states inside and outside the region; especially by other regional powers;
11. is integrated in interregional and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of the regional interests.'

Points 10 and 11 are crucial for the present study as they allude to the research topic of how regional powers interact with 'other states [...] outside the region' and which significance they can display with regard to 'inter-regional and global forums and institutions where it [the regional power; NH] articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, [...] as a representative of the regional interests of others' (Nolte 2011:57).

In the following I will build on Nolte's analytical concept of a regional power: I will add the dimension of emergence to the analytical concept of a regional power. Informed by my presumptions about structure and agents (see 3.1.2, 3.1.4.1 and 3.1.4.2), I assume that every country has a somewhat natural (realist) as well as structurally-driven (neorealist) urge to strive for more, particularly relative power. As a result, regional powers actually even strive for more power, preferably becoming a great power or at least a country, which is also powerful on an international scale. Hence, the study will explicitly add the presumption that regional powers are not only regional powers but may also very likely be aspiring for more, namely more and preferably great power. This hints at the emergence of regional powers. Thus, I will build on Nolte's concept by working from a conceptualisation of Brazil, India and South Africa as *regional powers striving for more power*. Hence, the study will presume that Brazil, India and South Africa are *emerging regional powers*. This explicit presumption matches with arguments found in secondary literature on so called rising/emerging powers and regional power, which also 'rise' (see Nolte 2012: 21, 25; Huntington 1999: 36; Jaffrelot 2008; Rouquié 2008; Darbon 2008).

In the following I will provide more individual accounts of Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers, which fortify the study's presumption. The fact that I depict Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers is also mirrored in the secondary literature on these countries. Even though scholars do not use the term emerging regional power explicitly, similar or the same meaning of the notion is often reflected in their texts.

Firstly, Brazil is described as a rising power with a regional base (Zilla 2009: 49; Schirm 2010); a regional power with global pretension (Zilla 2009: 49; Soares de Lima/Hirst 2006: 21) as well as a 'middle-sized power globally' (Nel 2010: 957). Furthermore, becoming a great power has always been Brazil's calling according to Zilla (2009: 58; see also Mair/Neidermeier 2009: 274). It has informed its national identity and, again according to Zilla, nourished Brazil's leadership claims and at times hegemonic ambitions (Zilla 2009: 58; see also Soares de Lima/Hirst 2006: 21)<sup>166</sup>. One example of this aiming for more is Brazil's participation in the G4-initiative<sup>167</sup> for permanent membership in the UN-Security Council.

Its reference region is either South America (Zilla 2009: 49; Vieira/Alden 2011: 515-516; Flesmes 2010a: 100) or Latin America as a whole (Huntington 1999: 36). Its material capabilities and (hard power) resources<sup>168</sup> match its regional (relative) predominance vis-à-vis regional neighbours in various areas (Zilla 2009: 49-54). Its regional powerness is often associated with either the potential and/or strive for (regional and/or global) leadership function and/or representative functions for 'its' region. Therefore, Brazil is often viewed as an ideal interlocutor and partner for extra-regional actors for the region (Hess 2009). In this context, Brazil is identified as being or at least having the potential for bridge-building (especially between the so called Global North and Global South divisions) and vote-pulling functions (Zilla 2009: 49; Hess 2009: 1, 4). However, there are also authors questioning Brazil's leadership function or even genuine willingness for being a leader for the region due to its perceived refusal to assume responsibility (Spektor 2010: 192).

Secondly, India is the predominant power in South Asia in terms of hard power resources<sup>169</sup> (Wagner 2009b: 8-70; Vieira/Alden 2011: 519-520). South Asia is also its primary reference region (Huntington 1999: 36). Moreover, it is seen as an emerging power (Nel 2010: 957; Narlikar 2006: 59) with global aspirations (Bava 2010: 113). Furthermore, India does believe in becoming one of the future poles and, thus, one of the great powers, of the (coming) multipolar system (Wagner 2009b: 74; Narlikar 2006: 59). It does understand itself as being a great power (Wagner 2009b: 74; Mair/Niedermeier 2009: 270). Moreover, India is attested with a claim to both regional as well as international leadership roles (Wagner 2009b: 68, 74; Hurrell 2006: 8). Yet

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<sup>166</sup> For further elaboration on Brazil's foreign policy rationale and foreign policy actions please see Zilla 2009: 58-61).

<sup>167</sup> The G4—initiative is made of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan, which lobby as a group to become permanent members of the Un-Security Council (Erdmann 2009: 105).

<sup>168</sup> On Brazil's soft power resources and foreign policy norms see, e.g., Zilla (2009: 54-58).

<sup>169</sup> For more details about India's hard power resources see, e.g., Wagner (2009b: 68-70). For India's soft power resources and foreign policy norms see, for example, Wagner (2009b: 70-73). For illustration of some of India's foreign policy initiatives see, for example, Wagner 2009b: 73-75).

Wagner stipulates that India should rather be seen as a civilian or middle power (Wagner 2009b: 75). However irrespectively, this does not contradict my study's assumption of India being an emerging regional power because India obviously is the dominant country in South Asia in terms of hard power resources and displays the strive for becoming a great power (thus, emerging). In addition and similarly to Brazil, the fact that India as part of the G4 has been striving for a permanent seat in the UN-Security Council is but one example that India is striving for more.

Thirdly, South Africa's role has been described in different ways. Very often it is indeed perceived to be a regional power (Mair/Niedermeier 2009: 273) and a "natural" leader of the African continent' (Vieira/Alden 2011: 518; Geldenhuys 2010: 151). Erdmann mentions that South Africa is also seen as an 'aspiring middle power' on the one hand (2009: 99). For example, Schoeman has described South Africa as an 'emerging middle power' (Schoeman 2000). On the other hand, South Africa is also perceived as either 'benevolent or subimperialistic regional hegemon' (Erdmann 2009: 99, 111). Even though South Africa is often aspiring to act as a representative for the region and the Southern Hemisphere and to adopt a mediating middle position between North and South (Geldenhuys 2010: 159), Erdmann believes that South Africa's capacities to fulfil these roles are rather overrated. He believes that South Africa should rather be seen as a civilian power (Erdmann 2009: 99). The concept of a civilian power denotes a model of a country's role in foreign policy in a normative and analytical way. Basically, it posits that a nation is dedicated to multilateralism in terms of a civilisation of international relations and is willing to transfer sovereignty to international institutions. Moreover, this civilian power is eager to work towards a civilised international order even if this was against its own short-term national interests (Erdmann 2009: 112-113).

However, in terms of hard power resources<sup>170</sup> South Africa is indeed the strongest African economy and displays considerable relative economic power vis-à-vis other countries on the African continent (Erdmann 2009: 99-101). South Africa also has a self-conception of being a regional power, even though often avoiding the usage of its hard power resources (Mair/Niedermeier 2009: 273). Moreover, there are limits in terms of turning this economic power into direct political influence and power, especially regarding its African neighbours (Erdmann 2009: 101-102). Furthermore, Erdmann mentions the inhibition to even employ this power and influence even when disposable due to South Africa's difficult historical legacy and relations with its neighbours in the context of the Apartheid period. Particularly, South Africa tries to avoid to be perceived as a regional hegemon even if this is hardly entirely unavoidable due to its sheer size

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<sup>170</sup> For details on South Africa's soft power resources see, for example, Erdmann (2009: 103-106).

and active foreign policy (Erdmann 2009: 102, 104). Additionally, South Africa's military capabilities and, thus, military power are constrained as well (Erdmann 2009: 102-103). Nevertheless, a certain feeling of responsibility for the African continent and a claim to indeed represent Africa and act as a bridge-builder between the Global North and Global South can be deduced from South African documents even though this may not be explicitly articulated in an official way (Erdmann 2009: 104). Erdmann argues that South Africa, in fact, aims at leading African countries and, thus, aspires a leading role on the African continent as well as in the political processes of re-designing North-South-relations within international politics<sup>171</sup> (Erdmann 2009: 104). South Africa's reference regions are Africa as a whole and Southern (and Sub-saharan) Africa in particular (Huntington 1999: 36). I would call the former South Africa's wider region and the latter South Africa's inner regions<sup>172</sup>.

Overall, it shows that there is no agreement on the exact powerness and/or role of South Africa in (Southern) Africa and internationally<sup>173</sup>. This study is not the place to overcome this disagreement as this does not constitute the study's research goal. However, even though there may indeed be limitations to and discussion about South Africa's de facto role and power with respect to Africa and to international politics, it can indeed be found conceivable that South Africa is an emerging regional power aspiring to an influential role regarding 'its' region and international politics. Similarly to Brazil and India, South Africa initially aimed at a permanent seat at the UN-Security Council but eventually withdrew due to the concerns of its African fellows and the common goal of a permanent African seat in the UN-Security Council (Erdmann 2009: 105). Furthermore, South Africa has intensively lobbied for becoming a member of the BRICS-alliance. It succeeded in doing so even though it is admittedly smaller than its BRICS fellows in terms of geographical size and economic power. Hence, there is obviously an aspiration 'for more' on the South African side. Additionally, South Africa does raise a claim to act as a regional (leading) power vis-à-vis Sub-saharan Africa (Erdmann 2009: 110). Furthermore, both scholarly analysis as well as foreign policy discourse have in common that the region is crucial to South Africa's role, self-conception and powerness as well as to its perception (and expectations) by others. As a result, I will assume that South Africa is an emerging regional power in this study.

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<sup>171</sup> For elaboration on South Africa's foreign policy role and initiatives regarding international and global politics see, e.g., Erdmann (2009: 105-108).

<sup>172</sup> For more information on South Africa's initiatives for the African continent and the region of Southern Africa see, for example, Erdmann (2009: 105, 109).

<sup>173</sup> For further discussion of the various concepts and argumentations about South Africa's role and powerness see, for example, Erdmann (2009: 110-111).

Overall, all three countries are considered to be quite similar and, thus, comparable units in terms of a significant regional power base including '[...] a preponderance of material and ideational resources and institutional capacities to protect their interests and values beyond their immediate borders [...]' (Nel 2010: 957; see also Vieira/Alden 2011: 514-515; Nel/Stephen 2010: 71); of an aspiration for global power or at least considerable international influence as well as similar individual and collective foreign policy roles and behaviour in view of the Global South and their IBSA-alliance (Nel 2010: 957-962).

After having clearly defined the study's actors, I will now turn to building the analytical model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

## 5. Strategic Partnerships as foreign policy tools

In this chapter, strategic partnerships will be conceptualised in two dimensions. The first dimension casts strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. At the same time, the second dimension views strategic partnerships as a social relationship, which are foreign policy tools of social power. Moreover, both dimensions entail the constitutive features of Goertz' secondary level (see Ch. 4.1.3.3).

Firstly, I will argue that they are strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. The establishment of strategic alliances is linked to the characteristics of the international system-structure, which I have described in Ch. 4.2.1. Following a strategy of cooperating while competing makes sense to international (and less-autonomous) agents interacting in a multipolar, multipower and interdependent world confronted with transnational challenges (see Ch. 4.2.1.1). The outlook of the international system constitutes an incentive for cooperation: actors feel the need or have the will to cooperate in order to be able to shape international politics. However, strategic partners also compete for power against the background of the international hierarchy and systemic change (see Ch. 4.2.1.3-4.2.1.4). Thus, strategic partnerships represent both features of cooperation and competition reflecting the strategy of cooperating while competing. This is a view known from international business (see Ch. 5.1.3). Moreover, they reflect neoliberal and neo-/realist assumptions about international relations, available foreign policy tools and foreign policy behaviour of states by incorporating cooperation and competition (conflict) (see Stein 1990: x, 3-4).

Secondly, strategic partnerships are also social relationships building on (relational) social power bases of the respective strategic partners (see Ch. 5.2). Strategic partners are not only structurally grounded but also socially positioned within a social structure of the international system. The international system is, thus, also an international society consisting of social groups. This is the sociological perspective introduced within this chapter. The strategic partners also attempt to exert social influence by building on some of these social power bases. This second dimension of strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools hints at the constructivist module of the analytic eclectic concept of strategic partnerships.

In the following, the *first dimension* of strategic partnerships – strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing – will be built by drawing on (limited) neoliberal and neo-/realist insights about international cooperation and

competition (see Ch. 5). Insights from IR on strategic (military) alliances will be adapted. Thereby, the study will also introduce insights from international business and management, where companies also form strategic partnerships or strategic alliances. I will also elaborate on various dimensions of actor's interests with respect to strategic alliances, namely policy coordination (cooperation; adaptation); management and engagement (socialisation) at the bilateral, regional and global levels; keeping, increasing and demonstrating power (prestige); as well as status recognition. The *second dimension* of strategic partnerships – social relationships as foreign policy tools of social power (and influence) – will be based on the social constructivist perspective. Additionally, I will combine it with a sociological view. This combination of perspectives is based on a material view of the international system-structure but it incorporates 'more' than a purely ideational view as in Social Constructivism. Thereby, the study will build on a diagonal view of social structure and power: the international system-structure will be depicted as an international society, where states and state-like entities interact socially as well as form social groups and social relationships. States, thus, are not only ranked in terms of an international hierarchy but have a social position within the international system, which denotes their social status. As a result, strategic partnerships will be pictured as social relationships: strategic partners do not only have material powers but also social powers. Social power again is a relational view of power. As will be developed in Ch. 5.2.2.2.2, social power has several bases of power, namely informational power; reward or coercive power (positive or negative incentives); expert power; referent power; legitimate power and elements of social influence and socialisation.

It shows that the first and second dimensions of strategic partnerships do exhibit certain overlaps: first, there is the dimension of status. Secondly, elements of socialisation are also included in both dimensions. This is an advantage of the analytical model to be developed because it shows that the two dimensions of strategic partnerships are interlinked. Importantly, these two dimensions – strategic partnerships as strategic alliances and social relationships – are two sides of the strategic partnership-coin. Moreover, it will demonstrate that strategic partnerships are not static but also dynamic: the analytical model will reflect that strategic partnerships are not only about a certain (structural and social) status but also about a process of socially interacting strategic partnerships. In brief, strategic partnerships are both status/condition (strategic partnerships as instances of power; power as an end) and process (strategic partnerships as a power process/ power as a means to an end)

To sum up, the analytical eclectic modules of (limited) neoliberal and neo-/realist modules and international business are to be found in the *first dimension*, which pictures strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Social constructivist and sociological (analytical eclectic) modules are located in the second dimension: strategic partnerships are also social relationships, where the social power of strategic partners are at work. Elements of status and socialisation link the two dimensions of strategic partnerships. Additionally, strategic partnerships are instances of power (power as an end) and foreign policy tools of power processes (power as a means to an end). They are, thus, both status/condition and process.

Overall, these two dimensions of strategic partnerships will be incorporated into the morphogenetic scientific realist social theoretical conceptual model (see Figure 3). At the end of this chapter, the theoretically-/deductively-derived analytical model the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa will be established (see Figure 4). This constitutes the first (deductive) step of answering the study's guiding research questions of a) what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership; and b) how do the strategic partners interact.

Later, this developed analytical model will serve as a sensitising concept, which will be applied to the case studies (see Ch. 7). The application of the analytical model is hoped to generate inductive findings, which will enrich the analytical model.

In the following subchapter, I will focus on the first dimension of strategic partnerships: strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing.

### **5.1 Strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing**

International relations basically follow a pendulum of conflict and cooperation among its agents (Snyder 1997: 1). Similarly, alliances are 'associative-antagonistic relationships' (Schroeder 1976: 257), which generally include '[...] large elements of rivalry as well as cooperation, conflict as well as mutuality of purpose' (Schroeder 1976: 257). Hence, if we assume that strategic partnerships are strategic alliances, we need to understand the dimensions of cooperation, competition and mutuality of purpose.

To this end, this chapter will first understand the nature of cooperation and competition.

I argue that strategic partnerships are (adapted) strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing in a multipolar, interdependent world. I will first show that they combine components of cooperation and competition. Both dimensions are included in the strategy of cooperating while competing.

### **5.1.1 Cooperation and competition**

Cooperation and Competition (Conflict) lie at the essence of international relations and IR-theory (Stein 1990: 3-4). The dimension of cooperation in international politics is highlighted by liberals, whereas the dimension of conflict is stressed by realists (Stein 1990: x; Andreatta 2011: 32). Strategic partnerships are posited here to have elements of both cooperation and competition. To this end, I will, therefore, first elaborate on cooperation. Secondly, I will address the concept of competition.

Firstly, the concept of cooperation is popular among liberal and neoliberal approaches. As mentioned in the beginning, I will particularly draw on a (limited) neoliberal view, whereby mutual inter-/dependence furthers cooperation among states. From this mutual dependence of states follows a 'need for policy coordination' (Keohane 1984: 8). This policy coordination denotes a process. As Keohane puts it, 'cooperation requires that the actions of separate individuals or organisations – which are not in pre-existent harmony – be brought into conformity with one another through a process of negotiation, which is often referred to as "policy coordination"' (Keohane 1984: 51). Overall, Keohane arrives at the following definition of 'intergovernmental cooperation' which

'[...] takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of a process of policy coordination' (Keohane 1984: 51-52).

Cooperation among states presupposes (to a certain degree) shared interests among states (Keohane 1984: 6). Interestingly, Keohane (1984: 10) mentions that practitioners view cooperation '[...] less as an end in itself than a means to a variety of other objectives'. Importantly, cooperation does not automatically serve moral goals (Keohane 1984: 11). Viewing it as a means to an end, cooperation may bluntly serve the

self-interests of states. Hence, cooperation is not necessarily harmonious<sup>174</sup> (Keohane 1984: 12). In contrast to harmony, cooperation necessitates '[...] active attempts to adjust policies to meet the demands of others' (Keohane 1984: 12). Cooperation is as much about shared interests as it is about '[...] discord or potential discord' (Keohane 1984: 12). Crucially, 'where harmony reigns, cooperation is unnecessary' (Keohane 1984: 51). Keohane stresses that cooperation is more than only given shared interests (Keohane 1984: 12). He defines cooperation as 'mutual adjustment' (Keohane 1984: 12) instead of the simple existence of mutual interests, which successfully trade-off opposite interests (Keohane 1984: 12). Crucially, from shared interests does not result cooperation as there may be various hindrances to effectuating these common interests<sup>175</sup> (Keohane 1984: 12). Hence, '[...] discord sometimes prevails even when common interests exist' (Keohane 1984: 12). They may even be conflict despite cooperation among partners (Keohane 1984: 53-54). Thus, cooperation is also a means of countering or avoiding conflict (Keohane 1984: 54).

As a result, cooperation is an active effort of effectuating common interests. In this context, Keohane argues that institutions may help in doing so as they alleviate the potential hindrances to cooperation, such as unequal information among cooperation partners, uncertainty, collective-action challenges and strategic considerations (Keohane 1984: 12-14). Particularly, and as mentioned before, cooperation is believed to be incentivized by globalisation and interdependence, which is a view being prominent among IR-liberals (Hurrell 2006: 6).

Secondly, the feature of 'competition', which forms part of the dimension of conflict, which is the other dimension of the strategy of cooperating while competing, running through the strategic partnerships is the realist/neorealist module of my analytic eclectic approach in this study. According to Realists and Neorealists, competition is prevalent (and either inherent to human nature or based on structural differences) between states struggling for power in an anarchic world. Power or rather competition for power is crucial to this meta-theory. Competition for power is, thereby, either for power as a means to an end<sup>176</sup> (neorealism) or as an end in itself (classical realism) (Waltz

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<sup>174</sup> Harmony is defined by Keohane (1984: 51) as '[...] a situation in which actors' policies (pursued in their own self-interest without regard for others) *automatically* facilitate the attainment of others' goals'.

<sup>175</sup> Interestingly, Keohane differentiates between two forms of self-interests: on the one hand, self-interests may be simply egoistic as the term implies or 'more constricted' (Keohane 1984: 14). On the other hand, actors may frame their interests 'emphatically interdependent' (Keohane 1984: 14), which would make it easier for them to embrace to install international regimes (Keohane 1984: 14). My hunch is that this argument would apply to other cooperation forms, including strategic partnerships, as well.

<sup>176</sup> In neorealism, power as a means is, thereby, also 'a defining characteristic of structure' as it is framed in terms of an agent's capabilities, namely 'the combined capability of a state' (Waltz 2008: 79).

2008: 78-79). As Kenneth N. Waltz (2008: 42) has put it, 'in self-help systems, the pressures of competition weigh more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures'. Competition can, thereby, be depicted as the struggle for 'gain' (Waltz 2008: 78) and thus, benefits. This gain is predominantly depicted as 'more power' either as a means to an end or an end in itself in neo-/realist theories (Waltz 2008: 78-79). Additionally, as Waltz (2008: 197) has put it, 'competition in multipolar systems is more complicated than competition in bipolar ones because uncertainties about the comparative capabilities of states multiply as numbers grow, and because estimates of the cohesiveness and strength of coalitions are hard to make'. Particularly, the rise of new powers is believed to add to conflict and competition among powers (Hurrell 2006: 6). What is more, states may not only be competing for power but also for (higher or equal) status (Corbetta et al. 2011: 219).

Both dimensions – cooperation as well as competition – are believed to be key to the strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. After having understood the basic nature and features of cooperation and competition, we can now turn to the term strategic alliance as such in order to make sense of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances.

### **5.1.2 Adapting the concept of strategic alliances**

Is it only due to the similarity in terms that the two phenomena – (*strategic*) alliances and *strategic* partnerships – are often put into one box? Even though strategic partnerships are no military alliances, I believe that they are yet indeed strategic and share certain commonalities with alliances. Thus, it seems wise to thoroughly investigate literature on alliances and alliance-building if one assumes that strategic partnerships are strategic alliances. This I will do in this chapter.

Alliances have both cooperative and competitive features. Hence, I will refer to neoliberalism as alliances are geared towards cooperation among states. Yet, even more importantly, I will borrow from certain neo-/realist-informed arguments about (strategic) alliances adapting them to the social phenomenon of strategic partnerships.

In a prelude, let me state that my hunch is that strategic partnerships are strategic alliances with a non-military basis or rather not military-restricted. Furthermore, I believe that they are intentionally produced but structurally grounded. This correlates with the study's overall realist social theoretical basis and its dual view of the agency-structure-relationship. These are the premises, which I will try to substantiate in this subchapter. Indeed, alliances comprise both elements of cooperation and competition. In the

following, I will adapt the literature on (military) strategic alliances to a non-military-based view of strategic alliances in order to make it usable for *understanding* strategic partnerships. To this end, I will make mentioning of various scholarly pieces mentioning strategic (or military) alliances for deducing and adapting features of strategic alliances, which can help to grasp strategic partnerships. I will first outline that strategic partnerships are structurally grounded but intentionally produced. Secondly, I will highlight multiple characteristics of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances will be viewed from an actor's perspective in order to agglomerate features of strategic partnerships. Fourthly, I will make mentioning of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances against the background of a, as I find, more dual perspective of strategic alliances.

More specifically, I will first briefly refer to neoliberalism by acknowledging that strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are geared towards cooperation. Thereby, I will, however, dismiss arguments that view strategic alliances as institutions. This is related to the fact that early on in this project I have already established that strategic partnerships are no international regimes (see Ch. 3.1.2.1). The second step entails addressing alliances more deliberately. I will refer to both structure and agency when it comes to alliance-building because the present study is based on a dual view of structure and agency. In this context, I will review realist and neorealist accounts of alliance-building either from the perspective of the international system's outlook or from an agent's view and its characteristics. It makes sense to borrow from both neo-/realist 'depictions' of power because I believe that strategic partnerships are also both: they represent a powerful means (to an end, namely 'survival' in a certain sense) and at the same time they are an end in itself as they signify power (status).

Thereby, I will be able to adapt strategic alliances with regard to strategic partnerships by drawing on Snyder (1997), Schroeder (1976), Schweller (1999) and Wight (1995).

#### **5.1.2.1 Strategic partnerships are structurally grounded but intentionally produced**

Firstly, from a neoliberal perspective, alliances are a form of cooperation against the background of the balance of power within the international system (Keohane 1984: 7). Alliances are, hence, 'institutionalized' and 'formalized' 'cooperation' (Stein 1990: 4). Indeed, strategic partnerships appear to be formalised and institutionalized forms of cooperation. Yet at the same time, they do not really reflect common international institutions. As the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships are established between two partners, I will not evaluate literature on those alliances where there are more than two

partners, e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as an (institutional) alliance. I believe that they are not 'comparable' as they are presumably different dimensions at work if several partners/actors are involved<sup>177</sup>. Hence, I will not understand strategic partnership as an institution. I will only view them as an institutionalized form of cooperation.

Secondly, Snyder argues that the international system-structure provides the motivational context of and for alliances: 'alliances cannot be understood apart from their context in the international system' (Snyder 1997: 16). The outlook of alliances is bound to the outlook of the international system (Snyder 1997: 16), for example, in terms of the polarity of the system (Snyder 1997: 18). In a multipolar system, states can never entirely be sure of their friends or enemies. Thus, in contrast to a bipolar system, there is more 'uncertainty' (Snyder 1997: 19) among states in this respect. At the same time, alignments are more flexible in a multipolar system (Snyder 1997: 19). As a result, the more great powers within a system, the more flexible agreements are due to changing interests. Alliances in a multipolar system, thus, are destined to reduce the uncertainty within a system to a certain degree (Snyder 1997: 19). I believe that strategic partnerships work along similar lines: multipolarity incentivizes states to have several strategic partnerships. Moreover, this urge is aggravated by the fact that globalisation, interdependence and global challenges necessitate the cooperation with, preferably, several partners. Thus, strategic partnerships also provide for flexibility against the background of the sketched international context and system-structure (Hess 2012). At the same time, flexibility and the multitude of partners possibly also contributes to a lesser degree of commitment among strategic partners (Snyder 1997: 20). Concentrating on only one strategic partner, however, may end up in increasing a state's vulnerability (Snyder 1997: 20): in the case of the strategic partnerships, vulnerability does not mean the danger of being attacked from the back by an overlooked adversary (Snyder 1997: 20) but rather of being incapable of designing international politics in a desired way or the lack of effectively executing a policy due to the lack of or opposition by cooperation partners. Thus, states need to be alert and try to have several (strategic) partners available in order to effectively frame and effectuate (international) policies and successfully counter global challenges.

As a result, one can deduce from Snyder that the outlook of the international system-structure and –context demonstrates a high likeability of the establishment of strategic partnerships due to their provision of reducing uncertainty in an anarchical but

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<sup>177</sup> For elaboration on NATO as an alliance please see, e.g. Waltz 2008: 207-212). I believe that they are not ,comparable' as they are presumably different dimensions at work if several partners/actors are involved.

interdependent world; flexibility of partners and effectiveness of policy-framing and – implementation.

To conclude, Kenneth N. Waltz, for example, mentions with respect to alliances that they depend ‘more on external situations than on internal characteristics of allies’ (Waltz 2008: 44). Yet overall, even though the international system provides important context for strategic alliances, they are intentionally produced by agents. Thus, similarly to alliances (Dessler 1989: 462), strategic partnerships are intentionally produced as they are established by agents/strategic partners. Thus, in the next subchapter I will consider strategic alliances from an actor’s perspective.

### **5.1.2.2 Strategic partnerships from an actor-perspective**

There are multiple dimensions to strategic alliances from an actor-perspective. I will make mentioning of them according to the following dimensions of strategic alliances and: war, conflict and adversaries; the status quo; (shared) interests; relative power of partners; influence over partners, number of partners and time frame.

#### *War, conflict and adversaries*

First of all, alliances can be established for the sake of preventing a war (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 55). In this context, it is worth mentioning that alliances can be of defensive or offensive nature: hence, they are directed against an enemy or destined to undertake aggression (Snyder 1997: 12-13). Whereas alliances (due to their military rationale) are ‘[...] directed against a specific nations or group of nations’ and widespread during war (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 202, 205), this is not the case with strategic partnerships. The latter are about the strategic partners and their respective interests. Thus, whereas military alliances are about common military goals and directed against an adversary (Snyder 1997: 1), strategic partners may have common non-military goals. Thus, strategic partnerships appear to generally be less about conflict, security or aggression in comparison to alliances. Even though there is no war looming between the EU and its strategic partners, I do believe that strategic partnerships could also follow this rationale of an alliance. If competition increases, conflict becomes more likely. Yet if there is an institutionalized form of dialogue and cooperation, which is the case with strategic partnerships, the latter could indeed also help to avoid open conflict. However, I think that this particular rationale (open conflict) is nonetheless of less importance to the strategic partnerships, especially as the latter lack a legal basis in this respect. Additionally, history has shown that alliances cannot preclude war for sure. This

then would equally apply to a strategic partnership. In contrast to alliances, I presume that strategic partnerships, as (non-military) strategic alliances, are not about the protection of oneself (Walt 1987: viii) but rather a means for coordination and cooperating. However, my hunch is that they too have two dimensions, namely internal and external purposes. For example, strategic partnerships may only serve bilateral cooperation ends among the partners, but they may also be geared towards external cooperation areas, such as cooperation within a world region or on a multilateral level. Interestingly, Snyder mentions that alliances 'will have a preclusive effect' (Snyder 1997: 14) meaning that it will hinder the partner to establish other, possibly conflicting alliances (Snyder 1997: 14). I think that this is an important difference between alliances and strategic partnerships: the latter are more flexible in this respect because even presumably conflicting strategic partnerships are not mutually exclusive.

#### *The status quo*

Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 55) also mention that alliances (or rather the treaties thereof) often '[...] have the function of preserving the status quo in certain respect'. Even though the strategic partnerships are not a treaty, I suppose that they also entail this particular logic. The fact that the EU has proposed the strategic partnership in most cases, hints at that strategic partnerships are a policy tool serving the status quo from the EU's perspective.

#### *(Shared) interests*

In adapting Wight's elaboration on alliances, strategic partnerships '[...] cannot be disinterested' (Wight 1995: 122). Furthermore, strategic partnerships need not be friendships or but rather '[...] relationships based on utility' (Wight 1995: 122). Thus, they are no marriages but rather marriage of convenience, which takes an undue negative connotation in this context (Hess 2013). It is probably helpful to realise that strategic partnerships probably differ in terms of the perfectly balanced equality of interests and commitment as well as equal reciprocity of benefits for the strategic partners (Wight 1995: 123). A perfect balance between strategic partners appears to be rather an ideal-type strategic partnership.

Moreover, strategic partnerships as strategic alliances can, indeed, be quite diverse, similarly to relationships, in terms of their outlook (Wight 1995: 122). Furthermore, the strategic partners may be '[...] equal or unequal, according to the

relative status and power of the allies<sup>178</sup> (Wight 1995: 122). However, I think that strategic partnerships are seldom only short-lived (Wight 1995: 122). Additionally, strategic partnership may be established for both internal and external 'purposes' (Wight 1995: 122): on the one hand, internal purposes refer to the strategic partners per se and their mutual advantages. External purposes, on the other hand, denote having third parties in mind (Wight 1995: 122). My hunch is that most often strategic partnerships combine both internal as well as external purposes, particularly against the background of an interdependent, presumably multipolar and multipower world. Generally, the building of strategic partnerships is driven by an insight that '[...] no power is able to make its policy wholly without reliance on some other powers [...]' (Wight 1995: 157), especially in an interdependent world confronted with transnational challenges. As Walt (1987: vii) points out, 'the ability to attract allies is a valuable asset in any competitive system'. Strategic partnerships, thus, may rather be formed out of necessity and external incentives rather than a feeling of friendship or solidarity. Crucially, strategic partnerships, in contrast to alliances, need not entail the usage of '[...] force to achieve a common goal' (Schroeder 1976: 227).

Wight's arguments fit with arguments made by Morgenthau/Thompson (1985). Morgenthau/Thompson clarify that the policy of alliances is a matter of pragmatism: a nation will decide whether an alliance serves its purposes or rather its power capabilities (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 201). This accentuates the agency-centred view of Realism as alliances are based upon the choices of agents. As Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 202) state, alliances are a legal basis for necessitating a 'community of interests'. Thereby, the interests are often not precisely defined but geared towards an '**existing** community of interests and to the general policies and concrete measures serving them' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 202; emphasis added, NH). Again, these interests, policies and measures are military-related (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 202). In my view, strategic partnership can only be depicted as a community of interests in general terms, namely a common interest shared by both strategic partners to cooperate. Thereby, a further community of interests does not necessarily have to exist.

Additionally, Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 203-205) differentiate between alliances in terms of the interests they cover. First, they distinguish between 'identical', 'complementary' and 'ideological' interests covered by alliances. Secondly, they point to the characteristics of alliances in being 'mutual' or 'one-sided', 'general' or 'limited', 'temporary' or 'permanent' and 'operative' versus 'inoperative' alliances. In my view,

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<sup>178</sup> Being potentially unequal partners is somewhat a contradiction to the notion of a partnership. However, it may imply that the partnership-dimension of strategic partnerships is limited to the formal rights and duties of the partners. As a result, strategic partners need not be entirely equal in terms of power or status.

strategic partnerships cut across all of these categories. What seems to be for sure is the fact that strategic partnerships are permanent (at least long-term) and general. These are major differences to alliances, which are temporary and rather issue-bounded (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 202, 205). Moreover, strategic partnerships are assumed to mutual (to a certain extent). Additionally, I believe that interests are hardly always 'identical' within strategic partnerships as they are, in contrast to alliances, general in nature and cover too many issues. Moreover, Morgenthau/Thompson (1985) stipulate that the distribution of benefits within an alliance is supposed to be entirely mutual but that the benefits in the end are distributed along the lines of the power distribution within the alliance. Accordingly, the greater power would get more benefits (Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 204-205). Last but not least, whereas alliances have rather been inoperative – meaning that they have not served to coordinate the policies and measures of its entities (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 206) –, strategic partnerships are in this sense operative. This is due to the fact that they have institutionalized forms of dialogue and cooperation for a on a regular basis ranging from high-level summits to working group meetings.

#### *Influence over partners*

Alliances are related to dimensions of influence. According to Walt, alliances also serve to 'gain greater influence' over the alliance partners (Walt 2009: 89). Walt refers to Paul W. Schroeder, who stated that alliances are both 'weapons of power' and 'general tools for management and control in international affairs' (Schroeder 1976: 255; Walt 2009: 89). Thus, my hunch is that strategic partnerships are not really weapons but indeed also about power. Moreover, they are also about managing international politics and 'managing' other powers by engaging and influencing them. I will revisit these aspects in Ch. 5.1.4.2.1 on the strategy of engagement and attempts of social influence (socialisation).

#### *Relative power of partners*

Waltz states that an alliance is only agreeable if the partners are equal in power (Waltz 2008: 99). At the same time, he stipulates that an alliance needs an 'alliance leader' (Waltz 2008: 44). This leadership of one of the alliance-partners could be more easily upheld if one of the partners commands more power (Waltz 2008: 44). This hints at the fact that in an alliance powers can be dispersed unequally among the partners even though the contrary may be desirable. I believe that this circumstance equally applies to the strategic partnerships: even though the term partnership implies that the partners are equal in terms of power (capabilities), they may indeed be not. Yet at the same time and

contrary to an alliance, I do think that the strategic partnerships are equal in terms of 'decision-making power'. Thus, even though they may be different powers, they are equally entitled to bring in policy issues to and have equal 'voting' power within the strategic partnership. Thus, strategic partners are (at least in theory) on equal terms.

#### *Number of partners*

Most alliances have only two partners (Snyder 1997: 12). Generally, this may also be the case with strategic partnerships. As a consequence, strategic partnerships are mostly bilateral or multilateral in the first place in contrast to alliances, which can also be unilateral (Snyder 1997: 12). And similarly to alliances, strategic partnerships are also reciprocal (Snyder 1997: 8-9). Additionally, they share the commonality with alliances in being more than a tacit 'alignment', which is rather about expectations towards a partner-country and its behaviour (Snyder 1997: 4, 6). Both alliances and strategic partnerships are more formal and formalised agreements among partners in contrast to mere alignments. Thereby, both help to reduce the general (not necessarily military-related) insecurity of agents in an insecure (anarchical) system by increasing bindingness and commitment among partners: Whereas alliances may ensure the survival and security of states (Snyder 1997: 17), strategic partnerships probably contribute to mid-term certainty of planning via a range of more formalised alignments. Alliances may have equal or unequal partners in terms of power (Snyder 1997: 12). I believe that this also applies to strategic partnerships.

#### *Time frame*

Alliances and strategic partnerships appear to be more long-lasting and long-term in comparison to alignments. The latter change more quickly as interests in an issue-area may vary and the non-binding alignments may shift to a new partner (Snyder 1997: 7-8). As a result, alliances and strategic partnerships serve to strengthen alignments via increasing the formalization and explicitness of alignments. As a consequence, obligations and reciprocity between partners intensify as well (Snyder 1997: 8). However, whereas alliances are more specified than alignments (Snyder 1997: 8), strategic partnerships and alignments are both broader in contrast to classic alliances. Moreover, Snyder hints at certain psychological implications by forming an alliance (Snyder 1997: 8, 10), whereby the partners may become more alike or (seem to) share more interests than before due to the formalization of the alignment and increased interaction of partners. I think that this might well be the case with strategic partnerships. The amount of shared or divergent interests may vary both within alliances and strategic partnerships (Snyder 1997: 10-11). Last but not least, Snyder mentions that alliances may need

repetitious 'validation' of the partners' expectations flowing from an alliance (Snyder 1997: 11). This validation may be enacted by, for example, joint undertakings, support vis-à-vis a third party or a 'public restatement' (Snyder 1997: 11). This may be also of importance in the context of strategic partnerships.

In brief, there are various accounts of strategic alliances and of their (partly conflicting) characteristics. Hence, it appears, unfortunately, unfeasible to establish a definition of strategic partnerships on this basis. However, these dimensions will inform a certain understanding of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances as the below working definition indicates. It will help to establish strategies followed by strategic partners. Furthermore, they will be kept in mind as a background to the empirical analysis of the study's three cases. The inductive findings may be more instructive in clearly denoting the commonalities shared by strategic partnerships as strategic alliances.

Nevertheless, I will work from the perspective that strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are partnerships (not friendships) among (minimum and most likely) two partners geared towards the long-term and strive to achieve commonly shared goals. Partners are equal in terms of rights but not necessarily in terms of relative power. They are interested in the sense that the strategic partnerships have interests but not necessarily shared ones. Particularly, there need not be harmony amongst the partners, even though open conflict rather appears to be unlikely. The cooperative nature is pronounced. Thus, strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are tools for policy coordination and cooperation in a multitude of issue/ policy areas. They are mutually beneficial but there need not be an equality of benefits. There is a notion of partners influencing each other. Partners may be managing or engaging other countries.

Overall, there appears to be a strong agreement that strategic partnerships are structurally grounded but intentionally produced. However, the interlinkages between agency and structure are not entirely clear. Nevertheless, strategic alliances are best understood by looking at structure and agency. This matches well with the study's meta-theoretical dual view of agency and structure. Interestingly, Snyder (1997) offers a further perspective of alliances, which fits well with the study's view of structure and agency in the context of strategic partnerships. Therefore, I will turn to his account in the next subchapter in order to further *understand* strategic partnerships as strategic alliances.

### 5.1.2.3 Strategic partnerships from a dual perspective

Snyder (1997: 20-21) mentions that neorealist alliances are a form of relationship between states. In contrast to mere interaction, 'relations or relationships are not behavior but the situational context of behavior: the conflict, common interests, alignments, and power relations that motivate and shape behavioral choice' (sic; Snyder 1997: 20). Put differently, 'relationships lie between structure and interaction; they are the conduit through which structural effects are transmitted to behavior' (sic; Snyder 1997: 20). They are relationships [...] created by interactions' (Snyder 1997: 36)<sup>179</sup>. Furthermore, relationships are '[...] constrained by system structure and unit attributes' of states (Snyder 1997: 38). Interestingly, this will link up with my argument made later in this study that strategic partnerships are relationships of states (Ch. 5.2)<sup>180</sup>. Similarly to alliances, then, strategic partnerships are '[...] not structure, since they are not systemwide concepts, but characteristics of relationships between particular states' (Snyder 1997: 21). Moreover, strategic partnerships cannot be considered to be interaction because '[...] they establish the context of interaction but are not action itself' (Snyder 1997: 21). Crucially, neorealist theory allows for incorporating both common as well as conflicting interests into alliances between states (Snyder 1997: 22). Thus, this equally applies to strategic partnerships as strategic alliances<sup>181</sup>. As a result, in adapting Snyder (1997: 21), I define strategic partnerships as strategic alliances, which are a form of (social) relationship between states or state-like actors. Strategic partnerships as social relationships are located in between agency and structure. Actors can have shared as well as conflicting interests. I will come back to the dimension of strategic partnerships as social relationships on Ch. 5.2.

### 5.1.2.4 Conclusion

This subchapter has shown that there are various dimensions in viewing strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, it will not

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<sup>179</sup> In this context, Snyder mentions that '[...] relationships shape interaction choices [and] interactions may also change relationships' (Snyder 1997: 38).

<sup>180</sup> However, Snyder (1997: 32) views alliances relationships in terms of interests, capabilities, alignments and interdependence in contrast to my approach using social power.

<sup>181</sup> Thereby, alliances and, thus, strategic partnerships, may have 'quasi-structural effects' (Snyder 1997: 22): via identifying friends and adversaries and by agglomerating 'power among friends' (Snyder 1997: 22). Power in the system is, by this means, 'concentrated', whereby '[...] insecurities and dependencies [are delimited; NH] between particular states and groups of states' (Snyder 1997: 22). The concentration of power is in multipolar system more of transitory nature (Snyder 1997: 22).

be possible to state an ultimate definition of strategic partnerships' characteristics as strategic alliances on this basis.

Let me reiterate from the previous chapters: strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are partnerships (not friendships) among (minimum and most likely) two partners geared towards the long-term and strive to achieve commonly shared goals. Partners are equal in terms of rights but not necessarily in terms of relative power. Strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are 'interested' in the sense that the strategic partners have interests but not necessarily common shared ones. Particularly, there need not be harmony amongst the partners, even though open conflict rather appears to be unlikely. The cooperative nature is pronounced. Thus, strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are tools for policy coordination and cooperation in a multitude of issue/ policy areas. They are mutually beneficial but there need not be an equality of benefits. There is also a notion of partners influencing each other. Partners may be managing or engaging other countries. Moreover, the previous subchapters have indicated that strategic partnerships are also social relationships, which are located between agency and structure.

Thus, for now, the study will depict strategic partnerships as strategic alliances based on an understanding as presented in Ch. 5.1.2.2 and 5.1.2.3 as both (non-military) strategic alliances and social relationships. They are structurally grounded but intentionally produced and located between agency and structure. This depiction again reflects the necessitation to focus on agents, who are structurally grounded and to include a dual view of structure and agency when 'understanding' strategic partnerships.

In order to make further sense of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances, I will now turn to insights from international business and management literature, where strategic alliances are known, too.

### **5.1.3 Learning from international business and management**

This is the point where my conceptual model will benefit from international business' insights. I will draw on the international business-concept of strategic partnerships. Hence, at this stage I will assume that states and state-like entities act similarly to enterprises. This is an economic view (Gerring 2009: 1).

So called strategic partnerships are also known in international business<sup>182</sup> and international marketing<sup>183</sup>. There, strategic partnerships are called 'global strategic partnerships' (Keegan/Green 2013: 292), 'strategic partnering' (Vizjak 1990: 1); or simply 'strategic alliances' (Vizjak 1990: 1). Even though there are slightly differences in denoting the phenomenon of strategic partnerships, descriptions and definitions thereof are clearly similar.

For example, Keegan/Green (2013: 292) argue that strategic alliances are characterized by three dimensions: first, partners remain independent; secondly, partners '[...]' share the benefits of the alliance as well as control over the performance of assigned tasks' (Keegan/Green 2013: 292); and thirdly, the partners '[...]' make ongoing contributions in technology, products, and other key strategic areas' (Keegan/Green 2013: 292).

Similarly, Bovée/Thill (2013: 109) see strategic alliances '[...]' as a long-term partnership between companies to jointly develop, produce, or sell products [...]', which are different to a merger or acquisition<sup>184</sup> (Bovée/Thill 2013: 109).

Moreover, the notion strategic partnership connotes organisational forms based on partnership, which is strongly related to cooperation (Vizjak 1990: 1). Furthermore, Vizjak notes that strategic partnerships are non-hierarchical (1990: 33, 56). As Cavusgil et al. (2013: 38) explain, there are two forms of 'international collaborative ventures' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 38, 201): firms either form a 'joint venture' or '(international) strategic alliances' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 38, 201) by establishing a 'cross-border business partnership' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 201). Clearly, strategic partnerships in foreign policy are no joint venture<sup>185</sup>. This is due to the fact that joint ventures entail the establishment of a 'new legal entity' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 38)<sup>186</sup>. However, strategic partnerships do not lead to new legal entities, such as a new state or the like, but are rather political agreements. This corresponds well with the Baack et al.'s definition of a strategic alliance as '[...]' a formal agreement between companies to work together to

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<sup>182</sup> The term 'international business refers to the performance of trade and investment activities by firms across national borders' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 2).

<sup>183</sup> 'International marketing is concerned with identifying, measuring, and pursuing customer needs and market opportunities abroad' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 257; see also Baack et al. 2013: 9-13).

<sup>184</sup> Firstly, a merger is '[...]' an action taken by two companies to combine as a single entity' (Bovée/Thill 2013: G-9). Secondly, an acquisition can be defined as '[...]' an action taken by one company to buy a controlling interest in the voting stock of another company' (Bovée/Thill 2013: G-1).

<sup>185</sup> For more information on joint ventures see, for example, Cavusgil et al. 2013: 47, 202; Keegan/Green 2013: 284-285; Baack et al. 2013: 60; Bovée/Thill 2013: 110 or Daniels et al. 2013: 582-583.

<sup>186</sup> For the same reason, the study will not elaborate on the whole range of companies' mergers, where companies lose their autonomy. As Vizjak explains, the merge of companies is a generic term, which comprises different forms of merging such as fusions/ mergers, a group of companies as well as cooperations and strategic partnerships (Vizjak 1990: 1). Most importantly with respect to the latter, the strategic partners stay autonomous even after their merging (Vizjak 1990: 1-2).

achieve a common goal' (Baack et al. 2013: 60). Hence, I will not further consider literature on joint ventures when *understanding* strategic partnerships in foreign policy. Instead, it makes more sense to focus on so called strategic alliances in international business and marketing.

Generally, companies, which cooperate, '[...] pool resources and capabilities and share risks to carry out activities that each might be unable to perform on its own' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 38). Interestingly, Vizjak notes that strategic alliances are not only about cooperation<sup>187</sup> but at the same time an increasingly important form of competition (Vizjak 1990: 1; Keegan/Green 2013: 295). Moreover, this (organisational) form of partnership and joint competition can be detected in circumstances of changing environments in a strategic sense (Vizjak 1990: 1; Keegan/Green 2013: 292). This change in environment demands from companies a strategic reorientation, which, however, in many cases cannot be accomplished by the company on its own (Vizjak 1990: 1). The tumultuous changes in environment result in the curtailing of an individual company's capacities to develop capacities to cope with these changes due to time constraints (Vizjak 1990: 2). But in order to nevertheless diversify their business areas, companies often 'buy' this precious time for internal development: the time usually needed for internal development of a company is thus bridged by establishing a temporary organisational form such as strategic partnerships (Vizjak 1990: 2-3). These federal structures of autonomous companies correspond more easily to an environment calling for flexibility, dynamism and efficiency (Vizjak 1990: 3).

According to Vizjak, companies being competitors are forced<sup>188</sup> to rethink their competing posture vis-à-vis rivals and competitors (Vizjak 1990: 3). Paradoxically, even though competition aggravates, the willingness to cooperate increases as well (Vizjak 1990: 3). This may even lead to sheer networks of reciprocal relations between competitors in some areas (Vizjak 1990: 3). This behaviour by companies reflects how the latter have come to understand that their competition can only be won by a targeted and selective cooperation (Vizjak 1990: 3). Hence, where interests meet and overlap, companies form alliances, which again improve their respective relative competitive position<sup>189</sup> (Vizjak 1990: 3, 8). By their interrelation companies can expand their strategic

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<sup>187</sup> Essentially, cooperation is an umbrella term for all collaboration geared towards reaching a common goal (Vizjak 1990: 27-28). Cooperation is, thus, a collective term for a variety of different forms of entrepreneurial teamwork, which is characterized by a low degree of binding among the cooperation partners (Vizjak 1990: 28).

<sup>188</sup> As will become clear later, I disagree with Vizjak in this regard. I believe that companies and in the study's case nations are not forced but incentivised by their environment to establish strategic partnerships.

<sup>189</sup> This improvement in terms of relative competitive position as well as the achievement of lasting competitive advantages also denote the 'external synergy' (Vizjak 1990: 8) of strategic partnerships. Synergy, thereby, means as much as taking effect together, which again denotes the collaboration of several

options (Vizjak 1990: 3). Overall, we can deduce that strategic partnerships comprise both forms of competition and cooperation.

Even though this behaviour of companies is not entirely new, the establishment of strategic partnerships has significantly risen in numbers (Vizjak 1990: 3, 7), particularly since 1985 (Keegan/Green 2013: 292). This rise is clearly linked to the trends of globalisation and digitalization (Keegan/Green 2013: 292-293).

In brief, these various accounts of strategic alliances mentioned up until now are helpful in approaching strategic alliances in international business and marketing. In brief, we can for now state that partners in strategic alliances remain independent while pursuing common goals and sharing the benefits and costs of cooperation in specific strategic fields. Strategic alliances are strongly linked to changes in the (strategic) environment of companies. Moreover, strategic alliances are cooperative efforts but they are also linked to competition among firms.

In the following I will build on these accounts by particularly making usage of the more detailed definition by Keegan/Green on 'global strategic partnerships' (Keegan/Green 2013: 294), when elaborating on (global/International) strategic partnerships in international business.

Keegan/Green stress that 'true global strategic partnerships' (Keegan/Green 2013: 294-295) are characterised by five dimensions:

1. 'Two or more companies develop a joint long-term strategy aimed at achieving world leadership by pursuing cost leadership, differentiation, or a combination of the two. [...]'
2. 'The relationship is reciprocal. Each partner possesses specific strengths that it shares with the other; learning must take place on both sides. [...]'
3. 'The partners' vision and efforts are truly global, extending beyond home countries and home regions to the rest of the world. [...]'
4. 'The relationship is organized along horizontal, not vertical, lines. Continual transfer of resources laterally between partners is required, with technology sharing and resource pooling representing norms. [...]'
5. 'When competing in markets excluded from the partnership, the participants retain their national and ideological identities. [...]'

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forces, functions or objects (Vizjak 1990: 8). External synergy denotes the realisation of a potential of an interorganisational interweaving of autonomous companies (Vizjak 1990: 9). The implementation of external synergy, which can also be called external growth, signifies the added value of strategic partnerships (Vizjak 1990: 8, 9). Strategic partnerships, thus, represent a new way of realising the potential of external synergy (Vizjak 1990: 9).

Keegan/Green (2013: 304) add that both strategic (international) alliances and global strategic partnerships constitute a crucial 'market entry strategy in the twenty-first century'. Importantly, global strategic partnerships, thereby, are '[...] ambitious, reciprocal, cross-border alliances that may involve business partners in a number of different country markets' (Keegan/Green 2013: 304). They are crucial in the context of collaborating and entering 'emerging markets' (Keegan/Green 2013: 304). Overall, Keegan/Green define global strategic partnerships as '[...] a sophisticated market entry strategy via an alliance with one or more business partners for the purpose of serving the global market' (2013: 557).

Based on these five characteristics by Keegan/Green (2013) the study deduces that strategic partnerships are joint long-term strategic efforts by two (or more) partners, which are reciprocal and horizontal. Strategic partnerships build on the pooling and transfer of resources as well as on mutual learning. Strategic partners yet remain autonomous entities and have distinct identities. Moreover, the scope of global strategic partnerships covers not only bilateral dimensions but regional and particularly global dimensions as well. They are associated with market-entry strategies.

With regard to strategic partnerships as a form of cooperation, it is interesting to see that this specific form of cooperation amongst companies is identified as having the lowest degree of binding in comparison to other forms of company merging forms (Vizjak 1990: 27). Thus, there is agreement in international business on the fact that the strategic partners remain autonomous in both an economic and legal sense. This again reflects the constitutive character of cooperation. As a result, strategic partnerships are a form of cooperation (Vizjak 1990: 28). The degree of autonomy of the respective strategic partners can be assessed by evaluating the inter-/dependencies amongst the strategic partners. Vizjak explains that these inter-/dependencies are reflected by the valency of the cooperation business itself and in the relative share of the cooperation business vis-à-vis the entire business of the respective company as well as (Vizjak 1990: 29).

But which goals of companies do strategic partnerships serve according to international business and marketing? Interestingly, strategic partnerships as an organisational form are perceived to be geared towards growth of a company. Furthermore, strategic partnerships form part of a company's strategic planning process, which is geared towards realizing success potential (Vizjak 1990: 56). Additionally, they serve to overcome market barriers (Vizjak 1990: 209).

My hunch is that one of the main differences between strategic partnerships in business and strategic partnerships in foreign policy lies with their scope: the former 'only' applies to certain company sectors (Vizjak 1990: 57, 206), whereas the latter appears to be (at least potentially) more broad in the coverage of issues and policy areas. However, they are similar when it comes to the maintenance of the partners' autonomy: in both cases – business and foreign policy – there is no full integration of management or organisational structures (Vizjak 1990: 208). Furthermore, strategic alliances and strategic partnerships in international business life involve both features of cooperation and competition, whereby cooperative features seem to be more pronounced (see, e.g., Zentes et al. 2005a, 2005b). Thus, it seems worthwhile to dig deeper into the dimensions of cooperation and competition in international relations in order to make further sense of strategic partnerships in foreign policy.

In a conclusion, (adapted) strategic partnerships as strategic alliances within international business are alliances among independent partners pursuing common goals and sharing the benefits and costs of cooperation in specific strategic fields. Strategic alliances are strongly linked to changes in the (strategic) environment of companies. Moreover, strategic alliances are cooperative efforts but they are also linked to competition among firms. Furthermore, strategic partnerships are joint long-term strategic efforts by two (or more) partners, which are reciprocal and horizontal. Strategic partnerships build on the pooling and transfer of resources as well as on mutual learning. Strategic partners yet remain autonomous entities and have distinct identities. Moreover, the scope of global strategic partnerships covers not only bilateral dimensions but regional and particularly global dimensions as well. They are associated with market-entry strategies and growth of companies. There is low binding among partners.

There is considerable overlap between the depiction of strategic alliances in Ch. 5.1.2 and the picture here, even though there is no mentioning of a social relationship (apart from learning among partners). Due to this overlap, I will add to the depiction presented in Ch. 5.1.2 the concept of 'cooperating while competing' among alliance partners to the study's understanding of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. The following subchapter will demonstrate that this correlates well with the understanding of actor's interests and strategies regarding strategic partners forming a strategic alliance.

#### 5.1.4 Actor's interests and strategies: policy coordination and power

But what are the underlying interests<sup>190</sup> of actors in establishing strategic partnerships? Actors' interests have two primary dimensions reflecting the two dimensions of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Firstly, both strategic partners have an interest in policy coordination and, at best, policy cooperation (and adaptation). Secondly, strategic partners aim to demonstrate, keep or increase power. Thus, strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools serve policy coordination and power ends.

Additionally, in the context of power, both strategic partnerships have an interest in establishing a strategic alliance in order to demonstrate power. Furthermore, the established powers strive to also manage the rise of emerging powers by engaging them. This is the EU's strategy of keeping power by engaging rising powers (engagement strategy). Rising powers, on the other hand, try to increase power by seeking (status) recognition by establishing strategic partnerships in the context of their rising (power-status recognition strategy). Additionally, the EU is also seeking recognition but less in terms of status but rather with regard to its international and foreign policy actorness and 'partnerness'<sup>191</sup>.

Thus, in the following, I will elaborate on these dimensions: firstly, policy coordination (and cooperation) as well as, secondly, power (competition). The latter will be further subdivided into (power) management and engagement policies on the side of the EU as well as power-status recognition policies on the sides of the Brazil, India and South Africa. In the context of recognition, I will also refer to the EU. Thirdly, I will

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<sup>190</sup> It is worth mentioning in this regard that 'interests as general means/immediate ends must relate to resources so as to create opportunities for action' (Onuf 1989: 277). Moreover, for distinguishing power and interests, Schweller has mentioned, 'power tells us how much influence a state can be expected to have over others; interests tell us how and for what purposes that influence will be used' (Schweller 1999: 18).

<sup>191</sup> I agree with Cline et al. (2011:145) that status recognition may need to be differentiated depending on who recognises. As Cline et al. (2011: 145) put it, 'status can be attributed by actors within the region, by states outside of the region, and by the state itself'. The authors go on by stating amongst others that '[...] recognition from the global community, reinforces legitimacy as a regional power' (Cline et al. 2011: 145). Even though a strategic partnership may not be status recognition by the international community as a whole, the fact that it is offered by established (extra-regional) actors as well as newly influential emerging powers contributes to the significance of this particular status acknowledgement of either the EU's or the emerging regional powers' respective statuses. Conferring a certain, preferably high status may, therefore, be considered as an 'award' or 'reward' (Cline et al. 2011: 145, 148). I will come back to the 'reward'-dimension in the context of the social power bases (see Ch. 5.2.2). In the context of emerging regional power, my hunch is that having a certain status acknowledged from both the regional and international (extra-regional) levels seems particularly precious in the context of their status-seeking (Cline et al. 2011: 146, 148).

elaborate on strategic partnerships as means of demonstrating power in the context of prestige<sup>192</sup>.

#### **5.1.4.1 Policy coordination (adaptation) - Cooperation**

Let me start by elaborating on both strategic partners' interest in policy coordination. Against the background of the neoliberal module of my analytic eclectic approach, the study presumes that actors, firstly, have an interest in policy coordination and, at best, policy cooperation (including policy adaptation) with other actors due to the interdependence in international politics. When actors cooperate, '[...] they adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination' (Keohane 1984: 51). Policy coordination can be further defined as '[...] a set of decisions [which; NH] is coordinated if adjustments have been made in them, such that the adverse consequences of any one decision for other decisions are to a degree and in some frequency avoided, reduced, or counterbalanced or outweighed' (Keohane 1984: 51).

Reviewing Keohane, cooperation is '[...] a process through which policies actually followed by governments come to be regarded by their partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of policy coordination' (Keohane 1984: 63). Cooperation is different from harmony. Quite the contrary, it emerges from (possible) conflict. Thereby, discord incentivizes needs for policy adaptation. Ensued cooperation or even stronger discord may be the result. If cooperation takes place, 'mutual adjustment' of policies and actor behaviour is the result (Keohane 1984: 63). Thus, we can conclude that actors have an interest in policy coordination and policy adaptation. This felt need is even more prevalent in a globalised, interdependent world with global challenges (see Ch. 4.2.1; Grevi 2009: 32-33).

In this context, Keohane (1984: 52) mentions that if discord is present between two agents, 'discord often leads to efforts to induce others to change their policies' (Keohane 1984: 52). If this is not achieved, discord may lead to 'policy conflict' (Keohane 1984: 52). This fact will indeed be important in the context of strategic partners attempting social influence within a strategic partnership. My hunch is that these inducing efforts in cases of discord reflect the social influencing attempts within the strategic

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<sup>192</sup> 'Prestige' as a concept is difficult to grasp (Wight 1995: 97). Wight (1995: 97) mentions that 'it is the influence derived from power'. Crucially, he refers to E.H. Carr in stating that prestige is important for a country because it reflects the recognition of the country's strength (Wight 1995: 98). This corresponds with the fact that a high status such as a major power or of an established power may be prestigious as it hints at a certain power status.

partnership framework. Strategic partners may attempt to socially influence their partners in order to induce change and adaptation of behaviour patterns (Keohane 1984: 52-52). Conveniently, the strategic partnership framework is presumed to somewhat avoid open policy conflict if these socializing and inducing attempts should fail.

#### **5.1.4.2 Power and status - *Competition***

Actors have an interest in strategic partnerships as strategic alliances because they are about power and status. Against the background of the neo-/realist module of my analytic eclectic approach, the study presupposes that international actors are interested in having (more) relative power due to their nature and because of strategic reasons against the background of the anarchical system. As Schweller (1999: 1) notes, international politics have demonstrated over time that there always countries or regions rising or declining. There is somewhat a '[...] a natural power struggle between the established, satisfied powers and the rising, dissatisfied ones [...]' (Schweller 1999: 18). He further recommends to take into account '[...] the pace and context within which power shifts occur [...] as they influence how the declining and rising powers interact with each other and with regard to the systemic change (Schweller 1999: 24). I take this as a further confirmation of the study's benefit in pursuing a dual view of the agency-structure-relationships. Moreover, Hill/Smith (2011b: 13) mention that '[...] the EU has powerful competitors for international influence and status, most obviously the USA at the global level but others in specific regions or sectors of activity'. Hill/Smith specifically mention the BRICs-countries as contenders for the EU amongst others (Hill/Smith 2011b: 13).

In this context, the study depicts the EU as an established and traditional (major) power, which (possibly) encounters a relative power decline vis-à-vis the emerging regional powers Brazil, India and South Africa. As a consequence of their increasing economic rise, these powers may be expected to strive for expansion as well as for more political influence on a global scale for the pursuit and fulfillment of their interests. As a result, established powers' and rising powers' interests may bump into each other and may not be incompatible (Schweller 1999: 2-5). It is this context in which the power dimension of strategic partnerships needs to be seen: as Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 52) make clear, all political phenomena follow one of three fundamental arrangements: 'A political policy seeks either to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power'. Hence, this also applies to the strategic partnerships. My intuition tells me that the EU tries to keep power by establishing strategic partnerships, whereas the emerging regional powers aim to gain power. Furthermore, both aim to demonstrate power with

establishing strategic partnerships. In the following, I will first address the EU's considerations regarding the keeping of power. Secondly, I will make mentioning of the emerging powers' rationale with respect to increasing power. And thirdly, I will elaborate on why exactly both sides of the strategic partnership – the EU and the emerging regional powers – try to demonstrate power with strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools.

For the EU, strategic partnerships are (foreign) policy tools, which are supposed to help the EU to (limitedly) sustain the 'status quo'<sup>193</sup>. As Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 53) explain, 'the policy of the status quo aims at the maintenance of the distribution of power which exists at a particular moment in history'. The policy of the status quo is followed by nations that are trying to 'keep power' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 53). In this context, declining powers may be interested in forming alliances with other actors (Wight 2006: 190). If we assume that the EU is or will lose in relative power – thus, is declining – the establishment of strategic partnerships would follow the same logic as (military) alliance-building from the perspective of so called declining powers. Hence, as the EU is believed to lose in relative power vis-à-vis the emerging powers, it can propose the strategic partnership from a position of strength for the time being. This argument would match with the fact that the EU in most cases has proposed to establish strategic partnerships, particularly in the cases of Brazil, India and South Africa.

As indicated before, I believe that it is not necessary to clearly define the power-status of the EU. There is also disagreement among researchers as to whether the EU is to be seen as a pole (meaning a great power) or not now as well as in the future. Above all, I do not deem it necessary to exactly denote the EU's power status as I believe that its status as an established and traditional power is more important to the understanding of the strategic partnerships. This shows again that status is linked to power-status but status is nevertheless slightly different to power (see Ch. 5.2.1.3 on social position). In any case, I believe that established powers, similarly to great powers (Bull 2002: 200), try to keep the status quo of the international system-structure in order to maintain their 'privileged' position.

The agents II of my study, the 'emerging regional powers', are assumed to aspire a higher, superior and preferably great power 'status' within the international hierarchy and the international system-structure. Thereby, they effectively attempt a revision of the status quo of the international system. Their economic rise and attempt to agglomerate various (material) capacities demonstrates their goal of rising to a great power-rank. Thus, they attempt to increase power. Those countries, which are trying to *increase*

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<sup>193</sup> The dimension of status quo also emerged in the context of strategic alliances' characteristics (see Ch. 5.1.2.2).

power, will try to change the status quo; thus, they will try to ‘reverse [...] existing power relations’ (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 52)<sup>194</sup>. As a result, these countries aim to rise economically and politically and thereby, changing their positioning within the international system. Yet the study is based on the presumption that not only material capabilities count when a country aims to become a major power. Instead, (higher) status counts as well (Corbetta et al. 2011: 204). As Schoeman (2000: 47) notes, the term ‘rising’ indicates that the emerging regional powers have not yet achieved a certain status. As Corbetta et al. (2011: 204) suggest, ‘[...] while there is no doubt that all great powers must possess unusual amounts of material capabilities, major power *status* refers to the idea that a small subset of states occupies a prominent social position within the community of states’. Crucially, Corbetta et al. go on by stating that status, which is closely linked to ‘prestige’ and ‘rank’, ‘[...] is a social positional concept that extends beyond the simple possession of material attributes because it involves a social process of attribution or ascription’ (Corbetta et al. 2011: 204). Crucially, regional powers are clearly interested in status. Thereby, some members of the ‘regional power club’ (Corbetta 2011: 206) display an interest in ‘[...] more than regional status, and are searching for ways in which to attain membership in the club of global powers [...]’ (Corbetta et al. 2011: 206). I will come back to these suggestions in Ch. 5.2 on social relationships.

Moreover, as mentioned before, as ‘agents of change’ (Nel 2010: 951) they not only look for more general power but also seek redistribution<sup>195</sup> regarding wealth and privileges; equality of (formal and informal) status as well as recognition thereof (Hurrell 2006; Nel 2010: 951-953). At the same time, they are – just as all the actors within the system – generally dependent on partners, which make them choose the strategy of cooperating while competing.

Flowing from the strategic partners’ interests in policy coordination (and, possibly, policy cooperation and adaptation) as well as power, strategic partnerships represent

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<sup>194</sup> The ‘status quo’ actually means ‘status quo ante bellum’, which is a term from the diplomatic world. It refers to the withdrawal of troops from a territory after a peace treaty (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 53). However, I will limit the definition of the ‘status quo’ to the definition given above in terms of a distribution of power at a given time. I believe the fact that Morgenthau/Thompson frame status quo in terms of ‘ante bellum’ explains why they believe nations, which aim to increase power, would follow an imperial strategy either in terms of military, economic or cultural expansion and dominance (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 53; 71-77). I would doubt that this is the only strategy for nations to increase in power. I think that against the background of the multipolar, interdependent world these nations can also choose the strategy of cooperating while competing, which I am outlining in this chapter. The increasing interdependence of nations make them rather choose more ‘subtle’ strategies of increasing power than an imperial strategy such as rising in economic power and/or extending their political influence. These more subtle power strategies allow for competing and cooperating at the same time.

<sup>195</sup> Nel (2010: 962) describes redistribution as the ‘*who gets what, when, and how*’ of international politics [...]’ (sic).

foreign policy tools, which are part of either the engagement strategy of the EU or the power-status recognition strategy on the part of Brazil, India and South Africa. These will be further dismantled in the following two subchapters in addition to the power demonstration strategy by both strategic partners.

#### **5.1.4.2.1 Power management/ engagement strategy (EU)**

The study presumes that the EU – as an established but declining power with limited force or coercive measures, will try to rather stress the cooperation-dimension forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Thus, they rather form a partnership with these countries than to openly compete with them, especially also against the background of an interdependent world incentivizing cooperation.

Engagement can be viewed as an additional strategy<sup>196</sup> for established powers in dealing with rising powers. Engagement, which is non-coercive<sup>197</sup>, could be added to balancing and bandwagoning (Johnston/Ross 1999: xiii; xv). I have already established that strategic partnerships are neither balancing nor bandwagoning in the first place. Instead, I believe that from the perspective of the EU as an established power, strategic partnerships are geared towards engaging rising powers. 'Engagement seeks neither to limit, constrain, nor delay increases in the target country's power nor prevent the development of influence commensurate with its greater power' (Johnston/Ross 1999: xiv-xv). Engagement displays, thereby, a dimension of socialisation<sup>198</sup>: the EU

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<sup>196</sup> Engagement appears to be different, for example, from the strategy of hedging, which seems to be closely associated with security and military dimensions (Medeiros 2005): even though hedging may also comprise elements of engagement, it also includes (security) balancing (Medeiros 2005: 145). Goh (2005: viii, 4) argues that (in Southeast Asia) hedging lies in between balancing, bandwagoning and neutrality. Furthermore, hedging seems particularly important in the context of two or more actors interacting within a region (Goh 2005). I believe that this is an important difference to the strategic partnerships, which are neither a genuine form of balancing nor bandwagoning as has been established before (see Ch. 3.2.2). Additionally, neutrality somewhat runs contrary to strategic partnerships as engagement strategy. Moreover, strategic partnerships as engagement are not limited to the regional level. However, Goh (2005) mentions dimensions such as persuasion and socialisation in the context of (political, economic and strategic) engagement, I will come back to the dimension of socialisation in the context of social power and social influence (see Ch. 5). Thus, strategic partnerships include engagement strategies but cannot be considered to be a form of hedging.

<sup>197</sup> The non-coerciveness of engagement includes methods/strategies such as '[...] accommodation of legitimate interests, transformation of preferences, and entanglement in bilateral and multilateral institutional constraints' (Johnston/Ross 1999: xiv).

<sup>198</sup> It is worth noting that this socialisation mentioned by Johnston/Ross (1999) is slightly different to the type of socialisation, on which I will briefly elaborate on in Ch. 5.2 (social influence). Johnston/Ross seem to mean a socialisation process, whereby a rising power is 'socialised' into an established order in terms of becoming part of pre-existing international institutions. Socialisation and social influence in this study, by contrast, rather denotes a socialisation process, which takes place between two agents; e.g., in terms of 'convincing' the partner of the worthiness of certain values or preferences. Nonetheless, both views of socialisation are not mutually exclusive: the direct socialisation process referred to in this study may

establishes strategic partnerships with emerging powers because '[...] it seeks to [also; NH] "socialise" the rising power by encouraging its satisfaction with the evolving global or regional order'. As a result, established powers such as the EU will rather try to accommodate and integrate rising powers into the existing system and its institutions (Schweller 1999: 6). As indicated before, strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are foreign policy tools, which should be rather seen as 'tools of management' (Schweller 1997: 7) for the purpose of engaging<sup>199</sup> rising powers from the EU's perspective (Schweller 1999: 7). Overall, Schweller<sup>200</sup> somewhat recommends an engagement<sup>201</sup> strategy to established power for their interaction with regional powers (1999: 24). An engagement policy helps to overcome 'rivalry with the rising, dissatisfied power' (Schweller 1999: 24). Moreover, he mentions that the appropriate strategy [in the context of engagement; NH] is neither purely cooperative nor purely competitive but instead a mixture of both carrots and sticks' (schweller 1999: 24). This argument reflects my own in viewing strategic partnerships as an EU-strategy of engagement forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing.

Moreover, it is assumed that the EU's believes that the engagement of emerging regional powers would also have a benefit of the EU in terms of influence in their regions. This is a point, which has been made in the context of the US (Hurrell 2010: 26). Overall, the EU's strategy of engagement is, thus, directed at not only bilateral cooperation but at the regional and global (international) levels aswell.

#### **5.1.4.2.2 Power status recognition strategy (Brazil, India, South Africa and EU)**

For rising powers, such as Brazil, India and South Africa, strategic partnerships form also part of their power-status recognition strategy. Status may be in or rather an interest of a rational<sup>202</sup> actor, similarly to security or wealth (Onuf 1989: 258; 278). It is closely associated to power, which may be used to measure status. Power-status can be compared globally and, thus, to rank states (Onuf 1989: 281). As Onuf puts it, '[...states];

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actually contribute to the willingness of rising powers of being 'socialised' into the present order. The non-coercive methods mentioned in the previous footnote hint at how socialisation may be instrumentalised.

<sup>199</sup> Schweller mentions that engagement is best understood in terms of means instead of its ends. He indicates that a policy of engagement is based on '[...] the promise of rewards rather than the threat of punishment to influence the target's behavior' (Schweller 1999: 14). Schweller also mentions 'carrots' and 'sticks' in this context (Schweller 1999: 15).

<sup>200</sup> Schweller (1999) actually speaks explicitly of 'limited-aims revisionist power' (24). Yet on page 19, he says that this kind of power is typically a regional power, which is why I adapt his elaboration on limited-aims revisionist power to one of regional power.

<sup>201</sup> For further elaboration on engagement by the US, see, for example, Ross 1999.

<sup>202</sup> Rationality implies '[...] choosing (what is or at least what one thinks to) the best *means* to achieving a given *end*, goal, or objective' (sic; quoted from Onuf 1989: 259). Rationality is, thus, closely associated with being strategic or following a strategy of any kind.

NH] position and the measured difference between them in the standings are their power' (Onuf 1989: 281). Thus, states may compare their hard power (capabilities and resources) in order to determine and relatively compare and compete for power-status (Onuf 1989: 281). Overall, status is clearly interlinked with power both in absolute and, particularly, relative terms.

But 'equality of status' (Hurrell 2006: 2) cannot only be found by achieving the same or similar 'level' of hard power vis-à-vis established/traditional powers. Admittedly, a strategic partnership does not represent a permanent seat in the UN-Security Council, often aspired by emerging powers (Hurrell 2006: 10), and, thus, no '[...] equality of status within formal and informal international institutions' (Hurrell 2006: 2; Flesmes 2010a: 110). Yet I do think that the establishment of strategic partnership is supposed to serve similar ends, namely demonstrating a certain level of power-status. Thereby, I believe that it is not enough to acquire only material means as a rising power. There is more than only hard power. This is also due to the fact that the thresholds between, let us say, a middle power and a great power is not always clear-cut. This is even more significant in a multipolar and multipower world. In my view, if there are several powers, the boundaries between different ranks of the international hierarchy are even more fluid. Furthermore, I think that there are also immaterial means, which rising powers long for in the process of their rising such as their search for recognition by established actors in the international system. Interestingly, Hurrell mentions that 'the search for recognition [...] by would-be great powers; NH] is a fundamental part of the politics of hierarchy' (Hurrell 2006: 2). Furthermore, Hedley Bull refers to great powers by stating that they '[...] are comparable in status' and 'standing'" (Bull 2002: 194, 197). Furthermore, Bull thinks the existence of great powers suggests that there is a 'club with a rule of membership' (Bull 2002: 194). This shows that becoming a great power may entail more than 'only' acquiring various material capabilities. It may be rather about becoming a member of an exclusive club with members with comparable status<sup>203</sup>. Thereby, the entry to the club may be determined by its existing members. Being or becoming a great power, thereby, includes clear relational dimensions. Again, for example, Bull mentions that 'great powers are recognized by others to have [...] certain special rights and duties' (Bull 2002: 196). Thus, there is an element of 'attention', 'acceptance', 'recognition' and 'acknowledgement' of this status by others (Bull 2002: 196, 197, 199). And, to

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<sup>203</sup> Status appears to be closely linked to power and different power ranks within the international hierarchy. For example, Bull refers to categories such as inferior or superior status compared to great power status (Bull 2002: 197). Status and standing are equated by Bull (2002: 197). Furthermore, there appear to be (several) sources for this standing (Bull 2002: 197). Bull further hints at the fact that 'the status or standing of these three powers can be gauged by the degree of attention paid to them by other states in their foreign and military policies' (Bull 2002: 197). But status and power are not exactly the same. I will come back to this point in Ch. 5.2.1.3.

reformulate Bull (2002: 196), rights of a great power are asserted and accorded as well as recognised through various means at the same time. Thus, being a great power is not only determined by the international system-structure and the distribution of material capabilities but by the dynamics of the international society of states<sup>204</sup> (Bull 2002: 196). Bull mentions three 'requirements' for being a great power. The first requirement according to Bull is the before mentioned 'comparability of status' and the second requirement is a certain amount of military capabilities comparable to other great powers (Bull 2002: 194-196). Moreover, the author sees the recognition of 'great powerhood' as the third 'requirement' for being a great power (Bull 2002: 198). This matches with Schweller's argument that regional powers seek '[...] recognition as an equal among the great powers [...]' amongst others (Schweller 1999: 19). Moreover, engagement policy by an established power would be a very helpful strategy with respect to regional powers (Schweller 1999: 19-20, 24, 25). Furthermore, with respect to the dimension of recognition in being a great power, Bull points towards the relevance of official rhetoric. He elaborates on how the official rhetoric by (presumably) great powers reflect their (great power) status and whether it 'fits' with their actual behaviour and practices (Bull 2002: 198-199). Additionally, Bull's mentioning of rhetoric coincides with Nel's note that it is the '[...] *communicative dialogical level* [which; NH] is constitutive of the interests that states pursue in their strategic interactions within the society of states'<sup>205</sup> (Nel 2010: 954; emphasis added by the author). Overall, it shows that Bull follows a conception of a great power, which is determined by material as well as immaterial factors. This power conception is, thus, also relational, which is, in my view, very convincing. It is mirrored by Nel's (2010) elaboration on emerging regional powers seeking recognition as an 'absolute goal' (Nel 2010: 953). He describes recognition as '[...] the inter-subjective process through which agents are constituted as respected and esteemed members of a society [...] of states [...] informing; NH] their identity' (Nel 2010: 953). Hence, recognition is inherently relational. Nel (2010: 953) further mentions that recognition is yet more than '[...] simply the acknowledgement of prestige, that is, the reputation for power [...] as an important relative gain for states'. Recognition, including and closely related to prestige and (self-) esteem, is a strategic goal for states (Nel 2010: 953, 955). As a relational process recognition is strongly related to the notion of the society of states: recognition equals the acknowledgement '[...] as full and equal members of the society of states [...]' (Nel 2010: 953). Furthermore, it involves recognition of emerging regional powers' of the Global South '[...] distinct needs and interests that may or may

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<sup>204</sup> I will come back to the idea of an international society in Ch. 5.2.1.1.

<sup>205</sup> It is this 'communicative dialogical level' (Nel 2010: 954), where recognition can be traced empirically (Nel 2010: 954).

not coincide with the presumed universal interests of established states' (Nel 2010: 954). Nel (2010: 963) ultimately defines recognition in his article as the '[...] communicative process in the international society of states through which states mutually acknowledge the status and social esteem of other states'<sup>206</sup>.

To sum up, recognition for emerging regional powers is indeed multi-faceted by ranging from recognition in terms of formal membership in institutions over recognition of particular needs and interests over to recognition of a full and equal status within the society of states (Nel 2010; Vieira/Alden 2011: 512). I will come back to the latter point in Ch. 5.2. Recognition is, thereby, very relational being a 'social process' and a 'social good' (Nel 2010: 964) and closely related to prestige, esteem, acknowledgement and perception (Nel 2010). In contrast to the objective of redistribution, recognition can be considered to be an 'absolute goal' (Nel 2010: 953)<sup>207</sup>. Importantly, Nolte (2010: 900) stresses that particularly Brazil, India and South Africa may seek two different dimensions of recognition: firstly, the recognition of their own status and secondly, 'recognition in representation of others' (Nolte 2010: 900). With regard to the second dimension, Nolte (2010: 900) explicitly mentions the recognition in representing the Global South, which the IBSA-countries may seek. Additionally, I would mention that they may seek recognition in representing their regions. My intuition tells me that by establishing a strategic partnerships with the EU, Brazil, India and South Africa seek recognition and formal acknowledgement of their own power-status; their arrival at the 'hierarchical top' (Nolte 2010: 900) as well as joining the club and social group of major powers. Furthermore, it is a recognition of them representing their regions<sup>208</sup> as, in

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<sup>206</sup> Even though I agree with Nel (2010: 964) that '[...] states are indeed social actors', the present study will not further use his approach to recognition, apart from its definition, as it is strongly informed by a perspective of 'social conflict' (Nel 2010: 964), which is a view not used in this study.

<sup>207</sup> In this regard, I agree with Wohlforth (2009: 30; 39), who (by drawing on Snyder) mentions that rank and status are relative. Yet he perceives status only in terms in capabilities. However, if one views status from a sociological perspective, status is also informed by a 'diagonal' (vertical and horizontal) dimension: status is indeed informed by a structural view, but also by a sociological in terms of being part of a group. From this follows that status-recognition can also be an absolute good, because it is shared equally among a social group.

<sup>208</sup> This may match what Hurrell has called 'representational legitimacy' (Hurrell 2007: 141; Vieira/Alden 2011: 514); however, he only briefly mentions this notion in the context of regional powers being invited to the G8-group, which, thereby, adds to the representational legitimacy of global governance fora (Hurrell 2007: 141; 146). Furthermore, he mentions the legitimacy of regional institutions. Vieira/Alden (2011: 514), on the other hand, deal with this topic by linking it to the in-/acceptance of a regional leadership role of the IBSA-countries, which is a regional perspective. This is also mentioned by Hurrell (2007: 141). In this study, the topic of representational legitimacy seems to be closer to Hurrell's view: indeed, in a later article he mentions at the sidelines that the importance of regional representativeness may lie in terms of '[...] feeds into relations with the major states of the system' (Hurrell 2010: 26). This hint is related to the intuition here: the study deals with so called 'representational legitimacy' from an external or top-down-view, namely in presuming that extra-regional powers may possibly add to *emerging regional powers'* *representational legitimacy* by recognising their status via the establishment of a strategic partnership with

addition to biregional strategic partnerships (EU-LAC or EU-AU), the IBSA-countries are among the few countries having an 'exclusive' bilateral strategic partnership on top of that. Conveniently, this recognition of their regional 'representativeness' comes with no strings attached. This means that they can use this dimension of recognition for their foreign policy profile at the international and global levels without having to commit to any further provision of regional public goods. I will come back to these points made in the case analyses.

Additionally, the EU also seeks recognition but in a slightly different way in comparison to Brazil, India and South Africa. The establishment of strategic partnerships on EU-level with foreign policy partners, such as emerging regional powers, reflects the EU's search for recognition as an international and foreign policy actor. It is also an attempt by the EU to be considered as an interesting foreign policy partner. Hence, the EU's strategic partnerships also constitute foreign policy tools of seeking and attaining recognition (strategy of 'actorness'- and 'partnerness'-recognition).

Overall, strategic partnerships represent (foreign policy) tools/means of and for recognition sought and used by the EU as well as Brazil, India and South Africa. Thereby, recognition-dimension is closely linked to 'demonstrating' power by both agents, on which I will elaborate now.

#### **5.1.4.2.3 Power demonstration Strategy in the context of prestige (all)**

Thirdly, I suppose that the strategic partnerships are also a tool for both partners to 'demonstrate power': on the one hand, the EU tries to demonstrate its international actor capacity by showing that emerging regional powers are apparently interested in having a strategic partnership with the *sui-generis*-actor EU. The emerging regional powers, on the other hand, demonstrate their 'specialness' as they become part of the limited group of bilateral strategic partners and (often) represent the one and only strategic partner from 'their' respective world region. The strategy of 'demonstrating power' can be followed by countries, which are both either trying to increase or maintain power (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 53). It constitutes a 'policy of prestige' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 53). From this follows, that strategic partnerships also serve a foreign policy of prestige. Being or becoming a strategic partner, thus, signifies prestige. Interestingly, Schweller also mentions that established powers modify '[...] the

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the EU. This may be the sort of legitimacy, which Vieira/Alden (2011: 521) call 'external sources of legitimization'.

international hierarchy of prestige [...]’ (Schweller 1999: 14) by engaging ‘dissatisfied’ (Schweller 1999: 15) rising powers.

The ‘policy of prestige’ is, in contrast to power per se, yet not ‘an end in itself’ (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 86, 94). It is rather an instrument to achieve the other two basic goals in the struggle of power, namely maintain status-quo-power or increasing power (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 86). Prestige meaning the reputation for power is to be seen as a ‘by-product’ of an agent aiming at power per se (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 94).

Thereby, the policy of prestige does not lose in importance. As Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 86-87) point out, ‘the policy of prestige [...] is as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals’. Thus, the policy of prestige plays an important role in the relations between nations. What is more, the policy of prestige is linked to ‘the desire for social recognition’, which ‘[...] is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions’ (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). An individual, and thus a nation as well, desires ‘confirmation’ by others ‘[...] of the evaluation [...] it; NH] puts upon himself’ (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). Consequently, the struggle of power is not only about acquiring raw materials but also about gaining recognition, confirmation, ‘tribute’ by others (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). Only then can an agent fully ‘enjoy’ its superiority. Thus, the perception and ultimately the confirmation by others are crucial to the struggle of power as well (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). It appears that this is particularly relevant in the context of being or becoming a great power<sup>209</sup>. As Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 87) put it, ‘the image in the mirror of our fellows’ minds (that is, our prestige) [...], determines what we are as members of society’. Thus, nations will see to it that their fellow countries’ minds reflect ‘one’s position in society’ (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). Thus, the drive of the policy of prestige is ‘[...] to impress other nations with the power one’s own nations actually possesses, or with the

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<sup>209</sup> Great powers often form a ‘club’ (Wight 1995: 42; Volgy et al.: 2011: 2) or ‘class’ (Wight 1995: 46) of great-power-peers (Wight 1995: 42). Furthermore, great powerness is reflected in a certain ‘status’, which may be reflected with a seat at the UN-Security Council legally *recognising* a country’s great power-*status* (Wight 1995: 43; emphasis added by NH). It ‘explains’ emerging powers’ aspiration for a permanent seat. However Apart from that, Herd/Dunay (2010: 3) mention that ‘great power status is attained through a combination of self-belief and declaration, as well as bestowed through acknowledgement and recognition by other Great Powers that states with this status have the military and economic capabilities to play a key role in international affairs [...]. Wight mentions that this status is temporary as countries may lose or ‘win’ great-power-status via leaving or joining the group of great powers. Crucially, even though a country may have reached great powerness in terms of interests and capabilities, ‘[...] formal recognition [of this new status; NH] will lag behind the growth or decay of power’ (Wight 1995: 46). This fact will be important for the understanding of the strategic partnerships as I will depict them, amongst others, as foreign policy tools of status recognition. This contradicts Wight, who argues that ‘great-power status is lost, as it is won, by violence’ (Wight 1995: 48). I believe that strategic partnerships could be an expression of the more subtle forms of being recognised as a great or at least influential power.

power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). It can have serious detrimental effects on the actor's power position, if an agent loses in prestige. At the same time, increasing prestige can positively influence the actor's power position or his capacity for shaping international policies (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 94). Hence, even though prestige may not be the final goal, its effects should not be underestimated. Moreover, if military force loses in importance, the prestige-factor only gains in significance as a political tool for winning the 'minds' of nations. Thus, prestige is ultimately 'reputation for performance and power' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 95). Prestige may not be sufficient for reaching a certain goal but it can constitute nevertheless an important component of a nation's foreign policy strategy (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 97, 100).

There are two means to employ the policy of prestige: 'diplomatic ceremonial in the widest meaning of the term' and the demonstration of 'military force' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985). As has been shown, the strategic partnerships have no distinct military dimension. Thus, this tool is not important to strategic partnerships as part of the policy of prestige and can be left aside with respect to this study. With respect to 'diplomatic ceremonial', several dimensions can be carved out from the deliberation by Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 87-92). First, the authors mention '[...] the symbols through which the power position [...] expresses itself [...]' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 87). Secondly, diplomats are a crucial 'tool' to the policy of prestige as they are the 'transmitters' of respect which is shown to or received by countries. In this context, the authors also mention that the 'equality of treatment' (of countries' representatives etc) signifies equality of prestige, which is the reputation for power (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 88-89). Fourthly, prestige is also linked to 'the [...] position of a great power' whose power position made the country assert 'the prestige due to its new status' (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 89). Fifthly, being the 'preponderant power' in a region is also linked to a country's prestige (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 91). Thus, we can conclude that the policy of prestige is linked to dimensions of the diplomatic world such as symbols, respect, reputation, (preponderance of the) power position and status. This indicates that the policy of prestige is very much linked to social dimensions or rather to dimensions of a social relationship between states. If strategic partnerships are part of the policy of prestige, then it is clear that we need to investigate them in more social dimensions. This is why I believe that strategic partnerships do not only form an important part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. But again there are also social relationships, where processes, powers and dimensions of social relations enter the research picture. Furthermore, it again shows that one should view strategic partnerships both in terms of status/position/positioning (condition) of the strategic

partners as well as in terms of a social relationship (process), which I will do in the following chapter.

### **5.1.5 Conclusion**

For the time being, it can be concluded that strategic partnerships serve to regulate competition and simultaneously further cooperation. Thereby, they form part of the strategy of cooperating while competing, which the study has derived from business and management studies.

Overall, strategic partnerships can be viewed as both (non-military) strategic alliances and social relationships. They are structurally grounded but intentionally produced and located between agency and structure. They form part of the strategy of cooperating while competing among the EU as an established power and Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers.

In adding up the characteristics of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances from the preceding chapters:

1. Strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are partnerships (not friendships) among (minimum and most likely) two partners geared towards the long-term and strive to achieve commonly shared goals. Partners are equal in terms of rights but not necessarily in terms of relative power. Strategic alliances are 'interested' in the sense that the strategic partners have interests but not necessarily common shared ones. Particularly, there need not be harmony amongst the partners, even though open conflict rather appears to be unlikely. The cooperative nature is pronounced. Thus, strategic partnerships as strategic alliances are tools for policy coordination and cooperation in a multitude of issue/policy areas. They are mutually beneficial but there need not be an equality of benefits. There is also a notion of partners influencing each other. Partners may be managing or engaging other countries.
2. Strategic partnerships are also social relationships, which are located between agency and structure.
3. (Adapted) strategic partnerships as strategic alliances within international business are alliances among independent partners pursuing common goals and sharing the benefits and costs of cooperation in specific strategic fields. Strategic alliances are strongly linked to changes in the (strategic) environment of companies. Moreover, strategic alliances are cooperative efforts but they are also linked to competition among firms. Furthermore, strategic partnerships are joint

long-term strategic efforts by two (or more) partners, which are reciprocal and horizontal. Strategic partnerships build on the pooling and transfer of resources as well as on mutual learning. Strategic partners yet remain autonomous entities and have distinct identities. Moreover, the scope of global strategic partnerships covers not only bilateral dimensions but regional and particularly global dimensions as well. They are associated with market-entry strategies and growth of companies. There is low binding among partners.

The above compilation of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances and social relationships forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing is, overall, quite extensive. It appears that strategic partnerships can hardly be defined in one sentence at this stage, which again and instead makes their conceptualisation even more pressing.

Additionally, strategic partnerships reflect certain strategies and interests on the sides of the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa. All of them share a desire or felt necessity to coordinate and possibly cooperate in the management of international and global politics (policy coordination/cooperation/adaptation). At the same time strategic partnerships also reflect a competition for power and status (competition). For the EU as an established and traditional (external) power, which is confronted with a relative power decline, tries to engage rising powers and, thereby manage their emergence (power management/engagement strategy). Strategic partnerships as engagement strategies are, thus, geared towards keeping power for the EU. The rising powers, on the other hand, try to increase power via strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools of power-status recognition. Moreover, having their status recognized and acknowledged<sup>210</sup> is a

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<sup>210</sup> The recognition and acknowledgement of status as it is perceived in this study is similar to the concept of 'major power status attribution' developed by Volgy et al. (2011). Volgy et al. (2011: 6) is defined as the perception '[...] by policy makers of other states within the international community as being unusually powerful and willing to influence the course of global affairs, and if they act toward it consistent with that perception'. This definition is yet clearly limited to the attribution of major power status. Yet I believe that there may also be other kinds of recognition, which then cannot be depicted as 'attribution' as the term appears to be of rather very concrete nature. However, I think that the becoming the EU's strategic partner does not clearly connote a particular 'power-status'. There are certain indications but there is no clear statement as to whether the emerging regional powers perceive the EU as a global power and vice versa. Thus, the strategic partnerships here constitute a more general status-recognition tool, which relates more to a social group in terms of being influential within the international system. This is why I will not use the term 'attribution' in this study. Nevertheless, when speaking of a social group, the study sides with Volgy et al. (2011: 7) that one of the modes in attaining may be via 'in-group status attribution' (Volgy et al.:7), whereby '[...] status may be conferred [...] when a state is recognized and accepted by other major powers as belonging to their club [...]' (Volgy et al.: 2011: 7). Yet I would substitute the notion of a major power with 'established powers' in the present case. Interestingly, Deng (2011: 78) mentions that '[...] established major powers states [sic] play a critical role in withholding and conferring recognition [...]'. Furthermore, Volgy et al. (2011) focus on a different mode of status attribution (2011: 8), which leaves the process of in-group status attribution, as they call it, rather vague. Yet the present study may shed light on the

further goal in its own right: the emerging regional powers with regard to their rise to major power status and the EU in terms of its disputed actorhood and partnerhood (power status recognition strategy). Both the EU and the rising powers also try to demonstrate power in the context of the policy of prestige (power demonstration strategy). The policy of prestige has hinted at the fact that strategic partnerships are not only about power position and status in terms of structural or material power but also about more social dimensions of power.

In this context, this chapter has shown it makes sense to conceptualise strategic partnerships as social relations in order to understand them; particularly, when it comes to the interaction and process of strategic partnerships. This also constitutes the social constructivist and sociological 'module' of my analytic eclectic research approach. Yet the dimension of a strategic partnership/strategic alliance as a social relationship between partners needs to be fleshed out. Thus, in the following chapter I will now elaborate on strategic partnerships as social relationships and as foreign policy tools of social power also dedicated to social influence/socialisation.

## **5.2 Social relationships: social structures and social power (bases)**

In the previous chapter I have investigated strategic partnerships as strategic alliances. As mentioned before, strategic alliances are 'associative-antagonistic relationships' (Schroeder 1976: 257). This investigation has shown that strategic alliances can also be depicted as social relationships between cooperation and competition. Yet this dimension needs to be substantiated. It is the very dimension of 'relationship' that is of prime interest to this subchapter.

I believe that by *understanding* strategic partnerships as social relationships, we can particularly *understand how* strategic partners interact<sup>211</sup>. This is the second important dimension of making sense of strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools.

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understanding of the functioning of this mode by following the sociological perspective. Yet I do find Corbetta et al. (2011: 223)'s statement '[...] status attribution is a complex process involving some combination of self-reference and ascription by the rest of the international community and by existing major powers themselves' generally plausible.

<sup>211</sup> Interaction can be defined as '[...] any behaviour that impinges on or is influenced by some other party' (Snyder 1997: 33). It is '[...] the process by which alignments, interests, capabilities, and dependence are translated into outcomes' (Snyder 1997: 33). Furthermore, it is different from relationships as it denotes an '[...] action – policy choice or the implementation of choice – rather than the expectations, values and power relations that shape action and choice' (Snyder 1997: 33). Interaction takes place in 'many different relational contexts' (Snyder 1997: 33). It may either be conflictual or cooperative (Snyder 1997: 34).

This is the moment where I will build on the constructivist module of my analytical eclectic approach. Constructivism will be further nourished by sociological insights.

In the following I will, first, introduce the overlaps between constructivism and sociology in more general terms before turning to the international system-structure as a social structure.

Depicting relations between states as social relations almost obviously shows the constructivist module in theorising strategic partnerships. Yet Clunan (2000: 90) notes, that constructivists disagree in '[...] how they conceive of social relations'. Yet constructivists borrow from sociology even though they also disagree on what is implied by this import of sociological approaches (Clunan 2000: 90). As a consequence, the present study does not only view the international system as a (material) system-structure. Additionally, it also introduces a sociological (and constructivist) perspective by looking at the international system as a social structure at the same time: the international system is also an international society made of social actors with social relationships and socially interacting in groups. As Gerring (2009: 1) puts it, it is a particularly sociological view to grasp certain phenomena in terms of social groups.

Hence, this second dimension in my *understanding* of strategic partnerships builds on a constructivist view of international politics strongly informed by sociology as '[...] a complex web of social relationships crossing the boundaries between domestic and international politics [...]' (Clunan 2000: 91). In this context, material structures including the distribution of power are not sufficient to grasp international relations and social life (Clunan 2000: 91; Wight 2006: 175). Instead, structure has both material as well as social features in constructivist thought and builds the environment for agents' interaction (Clunan 2000: 93).

Social interaction is inherent to international relations, which agents can reshape (Clunan 2000: 91-92). This is also from where the idea of international society is borrowed (Clunan 2000: 92). Equally to the international system-structure, the international society is anarchic, too. There is '[...] no natural harmony of interests [which; NH] makes this society cohere' (Clunan 2000: 92). However, the agents of international society can work towards order within anarchy via establishing '[...] international institutions, practices, identities, and norms that have brought order into anarchy and which create international society' (Clunan 2000: 92). Essentially, drawing on Bull (1977), an international society (or a society of states) is a group of states being aware of

certain common interests and values. They form a society perceiving themselves to adhere to a joint rule-set within their interrelations and work towards joint institutions (Clunan 2000: 92). This is a very institutionalised view, whereby institutions may influence interests of actors (Clunan 2000: 92-93). Basically, it reflects constructivist view that not only structures define (given) interests and constrain actor's behaviour but that interests can be re-shaped (Clunan 2000: 93). Hence, the sociological inspiration has led constructivists to think about international relations in terms of 'social structure' (Clunan 2000: 93).

I will build on the sociologically-inspired view of constructivism even though I will not work with categories such as norms, values or ideas being popular among them (Clunan 2000: 93). Furthermore, I will not adopt a view inspired by role theory and identities (of states) (e.g., Clunan 2000: 98). The only category of constructivists, which informs my view of strategic partnerships in an implicit way, is international institution as they, in my view, represent an institutionalized form of social interaction.

Hence, I am more interested in states' 'external [social; NH] interactions' (Clunan 2000: 98) than in their 'internal identity' (Clunan 2000: 98) as a country (Clunan 2000: 98). As indicated before, I will take the identities (or roles) of the agents in my study as given, namely the EU as an established, traditional power as well as Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers. The project will not engage in explaining or understanding how their identities or roles are or were formed (Clunan 2000: 101-102).

In brief, I will introduce insights from sociological theories and concepts. As Albert (2004b) has pointed out, '[...] the study of international relations has always benefited from taking insights from theories of society into account' (1). The introduction of sociological theories also demonstrates why my study is built on a realist social theoretical underpinning: in addition to structurally grounding the strategic partners, I socially ground them as well. In the following, strategic partnerships will be viewed as social relationships within the international system-(macro)-social structure. More explicitly, strategic partnerships constitute social relationships<sup>212</sup> for socially interacting agents disposing of social power (bases). These social relationships are a specific (intentional and institutionalized) form of social interaction within the macro-level social structure (meaning the international system). Thus, the macro-level social structure

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<sup>212</sup> Note that I use the term 'social relationship' in an abstract, not normative sense. A social relationship is a relation between two (or more) agents. It does not connote any predication over the nature of the relationship apart from the fact that it is geared toward a long-term period of duration (in contrast to 'mere' social interaction).

represents the international society of states, which equals the agents socially interacting within the international system.

The following chapter unfolds as follows: In the first part on strategic partnerships as social relationships I will first elaborate on social structure(s). Secondly, I will outline how I depict the international system-structure as an international society of states constituting the macro-level social structure of my study. Thereby, I will delimit my usage of the term 'international society' from notions such as 'international community' as well as the English School concepts of 'international society' and 'world society'. In a third step I will clarify the notion of a social relationship. As social relationships are a form of social interaction of agents, I will start out by explaining the differences between social interaction and social relationships. Fourthly, I will also elaborate on the importance of social status for social relationships as they are formed by socially grounded/positioned agents/agents with a social status.

This will be the changeover for further investigating strategic partnerships as social relationships and their relational dimensions in the second part of this chapter. I will introduce the concept of social power being a relational form of power. Then the social power bases, which can be employed in the interaction processes of social relationships, will be entering the research picture.

Note that along the way I will also highlight the differences between Giddens' structurationist perspective and my (realist social theoretic) approach.

### **5.2.1 Social structures**

What exactly are social structures and do they affect or influence<sup>213</sup> the behavior of actors? In most basic terms, a structure '[...] is defined by the arrangement of its parts' (Waltz 1979: 80). I would add that a structure is also defined by the interaction and relations of its parts, which is a more dynamic view. As indicated before, I will perceive actors as being systemically as well as socially grounded. I will transcend or rather combine both an anthropologic view of agents (e.g., including agents' personality and behavior; Waltz 1979: 80) à la Classical Realism as well as 'a purely positional picture of society' (Waltz 1979: 80) à la Neorealism. However, my study leans towards the ontology of 'individualism' by treating states and state-like entities as (human) individuals making choices for certain reasons ('why') and in certain ways ('how').

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<sup>213</sup> As mentioned before, I do not believe that social structures determine or 'coerce' (Sprague 1982: 110) agent's behaviour.

First of all, the view that the international system has social or societal features is quite a popular view within the constructivist view of International Relations (Buzan 2004: 1). It reflects the constructivist modules of my analytical eclectic approach of my study. As mentioned previously, constructivists have been inspired by sociological approaches (Clunan 2000). Constructivists believe that reality is socially constructed and, thus, focus on factors such as (shared) understandings, identities, (collective) ideas, culture and norms. All these factors are related to social structures (Clunan 2000: 90). According to constructivism, social structures can also influence the 'physical world' (Clunan 2000: 90). As Clunan puts it, 'the 'adherence to the social construction of reality promotes investigation of how international social structures, such as sovereignty, and anarchy, are formed, maintained, and changed' (Clunan 2000: 90). But at the same time, she mentions that there is no agreement among constructivists '[...] on the implications of sociological approaches for the concrete analysis of international affairs, as well as how they conceive of social relations' (Clunan 2000: 90).

Furthermore, the study's view of social structure is slightly different to a constructivist view. As mentioned before, constructivists, such as Wendt<sup>214</sup>, predominantly focus on non-material or non-structural ideational forces and structures such as shared ideas, beliefs, culture, roles and representations of agents in scientifically studying the social world (Rivas 2010: 204; Kratochwil 2008: 28, 33). However, in contrast to Wendt<sup>215</sup>, who mainly views social structure primarily in terms of ideational, immaterial factors (Wendt 1999: 1), I agree with Joseph (2010: 57) that social structure need not only be understood as immaterial: 'materialism can also be seen in social terms' (ibid). Thus, I conceive of (social) system-structure of being both materially and ideally (or socially) based. Thus, I transcend both a Wendtian<sup>216</sup> constructivist ('immaterial') as well as Waltzian neorealist ('material') understanding of structure (Joseph 2010: 57).

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<sup>214</sup> In the following I will be referring quite extensively to Wendt, which is due to the fact that this part of the study is quite close to constructivist approaches. Furthermore, Wendt himself has made high usage of sociological approaches in developing his social theory of international politics (Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 73).

<sup>215</sup> Besides, Wendt's account (1999) lies actually in between scientific realism and constructivism (Sárváry 2006: 160). Furthermore, he ultimately privileges ideational factors in terms of ontology and epistemology (Wendt 1999: 371-372), which the study does not do: the project here views the social realm in both material and immaterial, particularly, sociological terms. This lies in contrast to Wendt's 'ideas instantiated in practice' (Wendt 1999: 374), which somewhat downplays material (pre-) existing factors.

<sup>216</sup> Wendt views social structures as having three dimensions: 'material structure'; 'structure of interests' and 'ideational structure' (Wendt 1999: 139). However, he underlines the importance of culture ('socially shared knowledge'; Wendt 1999: 141) in this context (Wendt 1999: 140-141), which the study does not. Thus, the study stresses, in addition to Wendt, the social realm, whereby all three structures mentioned by Wendt are informed by a sociological perspective: hence, the study emphasizes a dimension of society instead of culture.

Following Joseph's (2010: 62) idea to a certain extent<sup>217</sup>, who advocates to analyse world politics in terms of 'social relations' and 'underlying social conditions', I conceive of strategic partnerships as social relations with underlying social conditions. Thus, I introduce a dimension of sociality into the research picture but in a different way than constructivists or proponents from the English School do. In this sense, I agree with Joseph (2010: 67), who states that social structure '[...] can be much more than interacting units, it has a deeper, underlying, relatively enduring existence irreducible to the actions or interactions of agents or units'.

Instead of relying solely on constructivism, I will introduce a more strongly pronounced sociological view of social structure. In fact, the concept of social structure<sup>218</sup> flows from the discipline of sociology. It is a crucial concept there; however, it has different meanings associated with it (Porpora 1989: 195; Wight 2006: 127). There is no common usage of the term social structure in sociology. In this context, Porpora (1989: 195-196) explains that there are four main views of social structure (Wight 2006: 127). I will not dwell extensively on these four different perspectives<sup>219</sup> as this is not the major focus of this study. Yet I will clearly define that I will be following the conception of social structure as 'systems of human relationships among social positions' (Porpora 1989: 195)<sup>220</sup>. This coincides with Merton's definition. Thus, this conception is strongly related to my view of strategic partnerships being social relationships: As Porpora (1989: 196) has explained, this specific view 'interprets **social structure** as a causal **mechanism** constituted by **relationships among social positions** that accounts for **social phenomena in terms of tendencies, strains and forces inherent in the nexus of**

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<sup>217</sup> Joseph (2010: 62) denies the rightness of analysing international politics according to vertical 'levels'. Yet I believe that an analysis running along (admittedly interlinked) levels can enhance understanding and knowledge and it should not be outruled upfront.

<sup>218</sup> Social structures can also be social systems: social systems are a special form of social structures denoting a high interdependence and interconnectivity of its parts (Wiswede 1985: 37).

<sup>219</sup> According to Porpora, there are four basic views of social structure, namely 1) 'Patterns of aggregate behavior that are stable over time; 2) Lawlike regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts; 3) Systems of human relationships among social positions; and 4) Collective rules and resources that structure behavior' (Porpora 1989: 195). The author also explains that the fourth conception is followed by Giddens (Porpora 1989: 196). Crucially, in contrast to Giddens (Porpora 1989: 201-202), I do believe that social relationships have independent causal properties and I do allow for a materialist perspective and material circumstances of agents. For further elaboration on the four basic views see, for example, Wight (2006).

<sup>220</sup> This 'third' conception in Porpora's account is strongly associated with Marxism as social positions are depicted as class positions and human relationships as class relationships (Porpora 1989: 198). However, it is important to note that this view of social structure is not limited to Marxism but has also been adopted by sociological realists amongst others (Elder-Vass 2010: 85). Furthermore, the difference between Marxism and the study's account lies in the fact that I view social positions in terms of the social positioning within the international system-structure regarding the international hierarchical ranks and groups. Furthermore, human relationships are in my study no (socio-economic) class relationships of productional modes but simply social relationships among interacting agents in an institutionalised form of meso-level social structure. Thus, Marxism will not be further considered in this study.

**those relationships** [emphasis added by NH]. Furthermore, it justifies that I am investigating strategic partnerships as social phenomena made by ‘forces’, which are located within a social relationship. Moreover, the mentioning of social positions implies that my view of also socially grounding the agents in my study is justified and necessary in order to *understand* strategic partnerships<sup>221</sup>.

In brief, I will follow one of the sociological views of social structures: namely, by seeing social structures as a multidimensional space of differentiated social positions of individuals of a society or a social collectivity as well as network of (somewhat interconnected) social inter-/actions (Wiswede 1985: 18, 19). Or as Wight has put it, ‘we need to see agents as socially positioned in networks of social relations that provide interests, identities, motivations and materials that enable and constrain social activity’ (Wight 2006: 173). Thus, ‘social relations can be constitutive of agency’ (Wight 2006: 173). This is reflected in this study in the fact that I can depict the EU as a traditional and established power as well as Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging (regional) powers. The social context informs the agency itself<sup>222</sup>. This coincides with Merton’s understanding, who has defined a social structure as an ‘[...] organized set of social relationships in which members of the society or group are variously implicated’ (Sztompka 1996: 12). If we equate persons with states, states are, according to this view, ‘[...] structurally located, anchored in networks of social relationships [...]’ (Sztompka 1996: 12). From this perspective, social relations are not only ‘internal relations’ (Wendt; quoted in Wight 2006: 165) but they acquire an external dimension as the states are structurally located<sup>223</sup>. Social structures, thereby, influence agents’

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<sup>221</sup> Additionally, Porpora states that this (‘third’) conception of social structures corresponds to a scientific realist perspective (Porpora 1989: 199). In this context the author mentions, similarly to my introductory chapter on the philosophical foundations of my study, that the world is made up of a ‘complex composite of entities’ where each entity has its ‘own causal properties’ meaning ‘tendencies, forces, and capabilities’ (both Porpora 1989: 199). These (causal) properties are to be found in an entity’s ‘internal structure’ (Porpora 1989: 199). Thus, every entity including humans and also states are ‘[...] causally capable of intervening in the world in a purposive way’ (Porpora 1989: 199). The purposive way hints at the fact that agents act consciously and according to their goals, which are, in my view, determined by their interests.

<sup>222</sup> Interestingly, Wight also mentions in this context that social relations can be quite enduring: ‘the most durable social structures are those that lock their occupants into situations that they cannot unilaterally change’ (Wight 2006: 173).

<sup>223</sup> The study follows an understanding of agents’ powers being derived from both their ‘internal or organisational structures’ (Wight 2006: 167) and from the ‘[...] social relations in which they are embedded’ (Wight 2006: 167). Thus, I believe that the embeddedness of actors in their social relations are also crucial to the agents’ powers. It reflects the study’s dual view of agency and structure in arguing for considering (interrelated) internal and external relations of agents. This is quite similar to Wendt’s view but I disagree in his strong favouring of structure in terms of ‘structural idealism’ (Wendt 1999:1; Wight 2006: 169). The actors in this study reflect both their material and social dimensions: in adapting Hughes (1976: 24), ‘[actors; NH] [...] may look like material stuff (in the same way as rocks and planetary bodies do), but that, as thinking bodies, humans are very unlike rocks and planetary bodies. The “forces” that move [actors; NH; ...; as actors; NH] rather than simply as physical bodies [...] are “meaningful stuff”. They are internal

behaviour by delimiting the the room for agents' manouvre: social behaviour is, thus, linked to the social context of social structures (Wiswede 1985: 21). This is similar to the characteristics of the study's view on agency and structure in general (see Ch. 4.2.1).

Importantly, there can be '[...] changes *within* social structures and changes of social structures [sic]' (Sztompka 1996: 13). This would presumably affect social relations as '[...] change in one part of the relation [...] is tied to change in the other. Thus, there may not only be change in structural but also social relations (Wight 2006: 173).

In any case, social structure in Merton's work is, thus, 'dynamic' (Sztompka 1996: 13). Thereby, social status of an agent can be seen as 'the building blockk of social structure' in Merton's work (Sztompka: 12).

In the study's conception of social structure, the latter does not hang over the agents in a metaphorical sense. Instead, social structures are 'located' and 'work' between agents as a '[...] nexus of connections among them, causally affecting their actions and in turn causally affected by them' (Porpora 1989: 200). Crucially, Porpora mentions how social structure causally affects agents: these causal effects on agents are to be found in specific 'structured interests, resources, powers, constraints and predicaments' which are embedded in 'each position by the web of relationships' (Porpora 1989: 200). This demonstrates again how closely the systemic and social grounding (positioning) of agents are interrelated. Porpora describes them as '**material circumstances**' in which (...) [states; NH] must act and which **motivate them to act in certain ways**' (Porpora 1989: 200; emphasis added, NH). By doing so, relationships connecting actors are modified 'in both intended and unintended ways' (Porpora 1989: 200). Agents' motivations to act in a particular way are based on the interests, which are '[...] structurally built into their social position' (Porpora 1989: 200). I follow Porpora's presumption that these interests (and the resulting motivations) of actors are the basis for action. Yet it is important to note that these interests do not determine agents' actions. Actors may choose to act against their interests because of other reasons amongst others (Porpora 1989: 200). However, as a baseline, it is very likely that actors act according to their interests because other behaviour may imply 'costs' for them (Porpora 1989: 200). Yet as the actions do not follow interests in a deterministic fashion but may have other 'creative ways' (Porpora 1989: 200), agents' action cannot be predicted (Porpora 1989: 200). Moreover, structural relationships among actors may be

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ideas, feelings, motives' (Hughes 1976: 24). Thereby, actors are '[...] purposeful, goal-seeking, feeling, meaning-attributing and meaning-responding creatures' (Hughes 1976: 24). This also demonstrates that the immaterial – social - factors in this study are more than ideas or 'pure' ideational factors.

formed intentionally or unintentionally (Porpora 1989: 200). This matches my conceptualisation of strategic partnerships as social relationships being intentionally formed between agents, whereas all agents are socially interacting (unintentionally-formed structural relationships).

In addition, this view of social structure also meets the study's dual view of structure and agency. As Porpora has outlined, 'there is a dialectical causal path that leads from structure to interests to motives to action and finally back to structure' (Porpora 1989: 200). According to this conception, structured relationships and the connected, possibly conflicting actor's interests create '[...] both the material conditions motivating action and the intended and unintended consequences of such action' (Porpora 1989: 200).

I am aware of the fact that I have elaborated on this matter in quite a detailed manner. However, I believe that this elaboration is important to the study's reader in order to demonstrate that my research interest, my research approach and my research design and process are all closely concerted. Overall, it is yet again important to remember that I investigate these social relationships in a non-causal way. Hence, even though I follow one of the definitions of social structure outlined by Porpora as '[...] systems of human relationships among social positions' (Porpora 1989: 195), I will adapt all of his elaboration from causal relationships, causal effects and causal powers to non-causal relationships, non-causal effects and non-causal effects because my study is dedicated to understanding and to a non-positivist investigation.

To conclude, the present study pictures the international system not only as a materially-structured system but also a social structure. Both structural and social context influence each other. As Wight has put it, '[...] structural contexts entail forms of power and authority that decisively influence social activity in these settings and contexts' (Wight 2006: 115). Thus, structural context also offers the social context for agents' action. But even more crucially, '[...] agential and structural contexts are inextricably bound together through social activity' (Wight 2006: 116). Thus, social dynamics are the linkage between structure and agency. Informed by social theory, agents can be, according to Wendt, seen as '[...] purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live' (quoted in Barkin 2010: 101). Agents, thereby, are 'the component units of social structure' (Barkin 2010: 101). Their behaviour is '[...] affected but not determined by the structures [...] within which actors find themselves' (Barkin 2010: 102).

To sum up, in adapting Merton's and Porpora's definitions, I define the international system (also) as a social structure in addition to a materially-based structure. It is characterized by agents, being structurally located and, thus, having a social position, and their sets of social relationships within the international society of states. The latter notion brings me the following paragraph clarifying the meaning of international society in this study.

### **5.2.1.1 International society**

The notion 'society' gets more and more attention in International Relations, which is often mentioned in the context of 'international society', 'global civil society' or 'world society' (Albert 2004c: 13). Society, thereby, relates often to a view of a post-Westphalian world (Albert 2004c: 13-14). The term 'international society' amongst others reflects a growing open-mindedness regarding the transcending of the central IR-conceptualisation of the international system as a state-system. It rather attempts a view that is able to incorporate the complex processes of globalisation going within and beyond the confines of the state (Albert 2004c: 15). This attempt reflects a perspective of the international system of also having societal dimensions cutting across national boundaries of states with their national societies (Albert 2004c: 15). However, Albert (2004c: 15) mentions that, similarly to the term '(international) system', society is underconceptualised in IR<sup>224</sup> and theories of society are somewhat overlooked in IR (Albert 2004c: 15). At the same time, it is disputed whether the international system can be seen as a society due to its anarchical structure, which national societies lack (Wight 1995: 105). But Wight (1995: 105) is correct to point out that, despite international anarchy, there is not only conflict and war present but also cooperation among and between states. I agree with Wight in stating that '[...] to admit that there is a system [of states; NH] comes halfway to admitting that there is a society; for a society is a number of individuals joined in a system of relationships for certain common purposes' (Wight 1995: 105). I will take Wight's view of an international society as a starting point for my argument introducing sociological approaches in order to conceive of the international system as an international society.

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<sup>224</sup> Albert (2004c: 15) hints at the fact that the undertheorizing of society may be due to the fact that scholars attempt to keep up interdisciplinary boundaries. But I agree with Albert (2004a) in stating that 'IR theory is [also, NH] social theory and as such needs to come up with proper conceptualizations of (global) social relations which cannot meaningfully be delineated by any kind of territorial imagination' (223-224).

Wight states that the international society of states, which is indeed unique, has four characteristics: first, its members are states, which include their societies. Secondly, the number of societal members is comparably limited. Thirdly, the members of the international society of states are more disparate in comparison to individuals in national societies in terms of size (population or geography), resources and so on. Fourthly, states 'live' longer than individuals on average (Wight 1995: 106-107). Irrespective of this, Wight views that 'the most essential evidence for the existence of an international society is the existence of international law' (Wight 1995: 107). This is due to the fact that 'every society has law [...] [determining; NH] the rights and duties of its [statal; NH] members' (Wight 1995: 107; 108)<sup>225</sup>.

Classically, the notion of society refers to a 'national society'. Hence, according to Albert (2004c: 16), a classical understanding of society draws on sociological theories, which depict society largely in terms of a shared identity and shared norms executing an integrative function. Sociology has been largely influenced by the development of the 'modern society' at the change over from the 18<sup>th</sup> to and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the following centuries (Lawson/Shilliam 2010: 71). These sociological theories differ on the integrating factors for society. However, there seems to be a certain common understanding among these various sociological approaches that a sense of community among a society has the potential capability of countering disintegrating forces. Yet the approaches differ on the exact dimension of this sense of community (such as identity, shared values or a historically developed common legal system etc.) flanking the formation of nation states (Albert 2004c: 16).

In this context, Albert (2004c: 16) mentions that some IR theories (especially the English School) have borrowed from the classical understanding of society in depicting their conceptualisation of international (or world) society. Important delimitation is, thus, necessary at this point in order to avoid misunderstandings over meanings of terms at the outset of this study. First, the term 'international society' is different from the notion 'international community'. Both terms have in common that they broadly denote the group of states in the international system. Yet 'international community' also signifies a normative attempt to realize common values (norms) and interests and to remind the international community of states that they exist for the good of their people. In this sense, states do not only follow their (national) selfish interests. Instead, the interests of

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<sup>225</sup> Interestingly, Wight depicts, amongst others, alliances as institutions of international society destined for bringing about common interests (Wight 1995: 111-112). This is where Wight and the present study differ. Here, strategic partnerships – as strategic alliances – will be viewed as social relationships rather than 'institutions'.

the international community form part of their interests (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 64). It shows that the term 'international community' has a normative orientation (Brock 2004: 98). Yet this normative orientation signifies exactly the dimension, where the difference between the terms 'international community' and the study's usage of the term 'international society' lies. The study's definition of the term 'international society' does not entail a normative orientation in the sense that it denotes common values or interests (let alone, a common identity) among its societal members.

Similarly, it is important to note that the study does not use the concept of international society – the 'flagship idea of the English school' (Buzan 2004: 1) – in the way that English School scholars do. The concept of international society has been introduced by the English School of International Relations (Diez et al. 2011: 121). Thus, in this sense I agree with the English school proponent Hedley Bull that the international system is also an international society where societal dimensions matter as well (Diez et al. 2011: 3). Hedley Bull, for example, defined an international society (or 'society of states') as a '[...] group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions' (Bull 2002: 13). Bull believes that international politics and the international state-system is somewhat turned into an international society by forming a social rule-system and rules-based international (social) institutions (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 66). The author further adds that 'an international society in this sense presupposes an international system, but an international system may exist that is not an international society' (Bull 2002: 13).

I believe that Bull's definition of international society demonstrates a strong interlinkage to sociological conceptualisations of (human and national) societies. From a sociological point of view, a society is more than only an agglomeration of individuals. It presupposes a certain sense of community – a 'we'-feeling – in order to make them feel as a social entity. A community spirit reflects the consciousness of common interests and values as in Bull's definition: Bull believes that the *consciousness* of actors of common interests and values is a prerequisite for an international society. This is where he draws the difference between a 'mere' international system and an international society.

I think that the issue of consciousness is crucial here. I think that it is difficult to presume a *consciousness* of common interests and values for an international system to form an international society. Thus, I believe that it is too normative or at least too premature to assume that the international system is an international society in the sense that all of its members consciously think or feel that they are part of a social entity

being automatically based on common interests, values and a collective identity. Moreover, world-wide conceptions of what makes a society a society are presumably quite different as national (or local) societies around the world describe societies as well as their characteristics and functions in different ways. Thus, even though one may think that it would be desirable in a normative sense to automatically equate the international system with an international society *consciously* sharing common interests, values and forming a collective identity, this may not be the case (yet) in practice.

This incongruence between Bull and the present study's conceptions of 'international society' is probably due to the fact that Bull's concept of international society works at a different level than the present project: Bull refrains from analytically treating states as individuals (Diez et al. 2011: 3) which the study does, however. He treats international society as something that works between states – it is not states that make the international society. Rather he concentrates on state's relations and their societal aspects (Diez et al. 2011: 121-122). From this perspective, it also seems more understandable to presuppose consciousness of common interests among an international society<sup>226</sup>. But the present study predominantly adopts a state and state-like perspective because states establish strategic partnerships. Hence, Bull's definition of an international society, which works 'above' and 'below' states at the same time, namely at the transnational level, cannot be used in this project. The same actually applies to the related concept of 'world society' introduced by the English School<sup>227</sup>. World society<sup>228</sup> is made up of individuals and the global population (as well as non-state organisations) instead of states (Diez et al. 2011: 122; Buzan 2004: xviii, 7). Thus, societal links among individuals, which transcend national boundaries and effect global norms, are investigated.

Overall, even though one may agree with Bull in a normative sense, I believe that it is indeed difficult to presume that this consciousness of intercommunity is spread around the world at state-level. Thus, as the study deals with groups of states instead of groups of individuals (Diez et al. 2011: 122), it has to refrain from definitions of international society or world society outlined above. Yet at the same time, the study presumes that there are societal forces at work within the international system.

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<sup>226</sup> It is important to note that I, as a person, do not want to rule out that this view of an international society, whose members are conscious of common interests, may be emerging or even has emerged. However, it is in any case based on a view of individuals being the societal members instead of states. This is yet not the study's perspective and, thus, cannot be used here.

<sup>227</sup> For more information on English School theory see, e.g., Buzan (2004).

<sup>228</sup> Buzan mentions that world society is also often called 'global society' or 'global civil society' (Buzan 2004: 2).

To this end, the term 'international society' will be used in a non-normative and less-individualised but in a more functional sense: thus, an international society made up by its units and their interaction. There may be common interests and values but the consciousness of them is not a prerequisite for an international system to be an international society. Thus, I will deal with societal processes of relations at work between its units – and whether these units are conscious of them or not.

To sum up, international system and international society are effectively equated in this study. Thus, the study does not presuppose the term society in a normative sense in terms of consciousness of certain common interests and values: states need not be conscious of common values and interests in order to form an 'international society' of states. Society and its societal members in this study simply refer to group/individual and inter-group-interactions. Thereby, they refer to state (-like) interactions within the international society of states as a group. Thus, meaning of the term 'international society' in this study is closer to the basic notion of the 'international state-system' than to the terms 'international community' or 'international/world society' à la English School as the latter work at a different level or are more normatively-based.

Additionally, there may be external constraints or rather incentives (such as global challenges crossing national borders) to form common interests. But this does not mean that states will automatically and consciously perceive interests as being common or that they will in any case share the shouldering of burdens or responsibilities by forming international institutions.

To conclude, one could compare the orientation of the term 'international society' with the meaning of anarchy: anarchy implies 'non-order' from a normative point of view but it does not mean chaos. Similarly to anarchy, international society is more like a general description of the conditions in the international system perceived in societal dimensions. It does not presuppose a harmonious group of states working towards the realization of common goals.

To sum up, in the present study, the term 'international society' is defined and used in the following: the international system-structure is an international society constituting the macro-level social structure of my study. Hence, the international system and the international society are congruent. Thus, the international system is analogously made of international agents and international agent (group) society. Therefore, social structure(s) constitute the group or society of states (and state-like entities such as the EU) and agents are members of the group/society of states. There are social subgroups, which can be formed intentionally or unintentionally. The study

assumes that the members of the international society of states do share common interests yet they need not be conscious of them in order to form an international society.

I will thereby follow a deeply relational view of the international system-structure: here, a social system has 'relational properties' meaning the 'relationships of social positions (...) to each other and to space' (Porpora 1989: 206-207). As a result, all agents interact socially within a social structure in one way or another. When we look at social interaction, we mean agents A and B (and C, D, E, etc.) that inter-act socially. This also matches Max Weber's understanding of a society, which is constituted of innumerable actions by agents. If action and the operation thereof by an agent meaningfully relates to and is oriented towards another agent and/or legitimate orders, it represents social action (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 87, 90, 92). Social action may, thereby, also follow 'legitimate orders'<sup>229</sup>, which points at law or conventions as well as norms and values (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 92). Following from Weber's insights, I depict the international system/society as a realm, where social inter-action between agents takes place. Thereby, it is important to note that not every social action is meaningful ('sinnhaft')<sup>230</sup> or conscious: action without a reason is effectively 'only' reaction (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 87; Weber 2002: 11-12).

Whereas social interaction (and reaction) generally takes place within the international system/society, I believe that strategic partnerships are somewhat 'more' than mere social interaction. Strategic partnerships are, in my view, a 'special form' of social interaction between agents. In contrast to social interaction, in general, strategic partnerships are a formalized arrangement of social interaction due to their (limited) institutionalised features. This is why I view strategic partnerships as a(n institutionalised) form of social relationship between agents. Social relationships denote a certain strength, depth and regularity of a social interaction. This is why the term 'social relationship' captures the general features of a strategic partnership better than a 'mere' social interaction. The following subchapter will explain in more detail of what is implied by a social relationship and its meaning for strategic partnerships.

### **5.2.1.2 Social interaction, social Groups and social relationships**

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<sup>229</sup> An order is legitimate if and in so far as this order is accepted as justified. This acceptance may bear on rational motives either in terms of goals or values; on affectual or traditional motives (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 92; 88-89)

<sup>230</sup> Meaning should not be understood in a normative sense (Weber 2002: 1).

In this subchapter I will now further delimit a social relationship from social interaction and outline the characteristics of a social relationship and the implications for a strategic partnership. I will first introduce a sociological view of social interaction and social groups and then turn to social relationships. This subchapter will already hint at the relevance of the social position of actors, which will be yet the topic of the subsequent subchapter (Ch. 5.2.1.3).

From a sociological point of view, social interaction roughly denotes reciprocal processes of exchange including rewards and sanctions (Wiswede 1985: 126) between agents. Or as Wight has defined it, social actions can be seen as '[...] actions involving, or oriented towards, other humans and performed in accordance with social forms such as conventions, social norms, rules, institutions, social groups and organisations' (Wight 2006: 200). Agents, which interact often, are often seen as a social group (Wiswede 1985: 132). A social group can be defined as '[...] particular individuals standing in certain relations' (Wight 2006: 201). Social groups can be formally (organisationally) or informally structured (Wight 2006: 201-202). Interestingly, frequent interaction among agents may lead to structuring effects within a social group in terms of their inner structure (Wiswede 1985: 135): for example, with regard to increasingly shared norms, roles, status and power (Wiswede 1985: 135).

Social groups are different from a society as the group members do know each other personally (Wiswede 1985: 132). This is a minimal-definition of social groups. Social groups may yet also be described by a maximal-definition. Social groups may also share certain common structural characteristics. These inform the social groups' shared motives, interests, norms, social positions and roles. Furthermore, there is a sense among the group of being interrelated and even of belonging together and solidarity (Wiswede 1985: 132). Applying this view of social groups on the strategic partnerships, Brazil, India and South Africa would form one social group, whereby the EU would be in the social group of established, traditional powers. This view will correlate with my elaboration on differences in social status in the following subchapter (see Ch. 5.2.1.3).

But what is a social relationship? In order to make sense of a social relationship in international relations, I will discuss both sociological and constructivist approaches to social interaction and social relationships because the proximity between sociology and constructivism (IR) also shows in the context of social relationships. For example, as Wendt (1987: 338) has put it, 'society is made up of social relationships, which structure the interactions between these purposeful actors'. Social relationships reflect the 'rules of

the game' for action (Wendt 1987: 338). Later, Wendt (1999: 132) indeed speaks of 'social relationships', 'sociation', 'recognition' and 'group membership'. However, he primarily links it to human beings' need for 'self-esteem' and 'social contact'. He does not mention in how far these categories are linked to power within the international system (Wendt 1999: 131-132).

In the following I will first mention why I disagree with Giddens view of social interaction and social relations because it is, in my view, not particularly helpful in understanding strategic partnerships. Thereby, I will draw on Porpora's elaboration. Secondly, I will make mentioning of Waltz' statement that relations are best understood in both the interaction of units and their respective positions. Thirdly, this will be the crossover to Porpora's account. Porpora already hints at the importance of the social and structurally-grounded position of actors, when it comes to the understanding of social relations. This reflects the study's dual view of agency and structure. Fourthly, Porpora's reasoning will be the stepping stone for introducing a sociological view of social relations: thereby, the study will make mentioning of Merton but will particularly draw on Max Weber.

Firstly, Giddens tries to differentiate between social interaction and social relations even though he admits himself that this is not an easy task. Social interaction, as he defines it, denotes '[...] encounters in which individuals engage in situations of co-presence [...]'. It depends on the actor's positioning in the time-space contexts of activity (Giddens 1984: 89). This hints at the material grounding of social interaction. However, this does not apply to Giddens' understanding of social relations, which relates to agents positioning 'within 'social space' of symbolic categories and ties' (Giddens 1984: 89). This is where I think that the structural grounding of positioning within social relations is missing. Giddens' differentiation between social interaction and social relations appears rather artificial. Nevertheless, I will revisit 'the 'situatedness' of interaction in time and space' (Giddens 1984: 110) when I address the social agents of the strategic partnerships in more detail later. Let me yet make this clear: I believe that both social interaction and social relations (relationships) are 'situated' in time and space and therefore to be contextualised (not only localised) with respect to system-structures. Additionally, Giddens sees structures in terms of rules and resources (Porpora 1989: 206). This is another point where I disagree with Giddens because I find his exclusion of material circumstances of social positions rather limiting in the context of this study. I do not think that only rules affect social positions. Moreover, I also disagree with Giddens who negates the independent (causal) powers of social relationships (Porpora 1989:

206). I thus agree with Porpora who states in this respect that rules are posterior to relationships, which are established before rules (Porpora 1989: 206). Overall, Giddens account of social relationships and social positions is rather limited when it comes to *understanding* strategic partnerships.

Secondly, it is important to note that I follow an understanding of 'relation' which denotes '[...] both the interaction of units and the positions they occupy vis-à-vis each other' (Waltz 1979: 80). This definition reflects my dual view of structure and agency. As a result, I need to look at both structure and agency in analysing the interaction of agents. Thus, even though interactions are situated at unit-level (Waltz 1979: 80), I also need to investigate how the unit-agents are related to one another and positioned within the system (systemic and social properties of agents). Whereas a neorealist like Waltz would 'only' analyse the systemic level when analysing agents' interaction (Waltz 1979: 80), I will research both unit- and systemic level by systemically grounding the interacting agents. Thereby, I will be able to denote the social positions of the agents being bound by a social relationship (meaning the strategic partnership). Thus, there is not only systemic context for action but social context as well. Both context spheres are interrelated. In this context, I will have to denote actor's interests (stemming from its own social positioning) concerning the social positioning of their 'strategic partner' within the international society. Only by this proceeding will I be able to identify the powers of the agents or rather the properties of their social positions with regard to the international system/society and, ultimately, the social dimensions of their relationship.

Thirdly, to this end, I will follow Porpora's account in stating that actor's capabilities are linked to social positions. As a result, these capabilities constitute in a certain sense the 'causal properties of social positions' (Porpora 1989: 207). Hence, agents have (causal) powers but their social position has (causal) powers, too. This is again a deeply relational view of (causal) powers. Furthermore, from the social positioning of an actor vis-à-vis the social positioning of another actor flow certain interests. Reformulating Porpora, interests are among the (causal) powers embedded in social positions. Interests are relational in a sense that they are embedded '[...] into a social position by the relationship of that position to other positions in the system' (Porpora 1989: 208). In this sense, interests of an actor are 'external' to that very actor (Porpora 1989: 208) due to these relational dimensions. Interests in this sense are 'forces' which are incentives for the actor in terms of motivations to act in a certain way (Porpora 1989: 208). Yet there is no deterministic or coercive element: actors may misrecognize or disregard their interests. As Porpora has put it, structures are not

constraining but motivating (Porpora 1989: 208). To sum up, from the social positioning of an actor stem interests, which represent motivations for an actor to act in a specific way. In brief, agents' interests are a 'function of their social position' (Porpora 1989: 208).

Fourthly, and as announced before, I will now introduce sociological approaches on social relationships in order to approach strategic partnerships from this angle. For this view of strategic partnerships I can draw on Max Weber's definition of a social relationship.

Interestingly, Merton has described social relationships 'as patterned, regular, and repetitive' (Sztompka 1996: 13). However, their arrangement need not be 'coherent' or 'harmonious' (Sztompka 1996: 13). Thus, whereas social interaction needs not be repetitive, social relationships indeed are of recurring nature.

Additionally, Weber's account introduces elements of reciprocity. Weber views social action as action constituted by an agent, which is meaningfully<sup>231</sup> oriented towards other actors and/or legitimate orders (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 92; Weber 2002: 1). The notion of a social relationship, by contrast, introduces a change of perception by introducing reciprocity: if two actors<sup>232</sup> relate their respective action to each other in a reciprocal way, they then share a social relationship (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 92-93). Hence, the full definition of a social relationship according to Weber constitutes the (meaningful) social action by two or more persons, which is oriented towards each other in a reciprocal way (Weber 2002: 13). Furthermore, this social action tends to be characterised by continuity (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 93; 97). The content of these social relationships may be quite diverse. Furthermore, the meaning attributed to this social relationship shared by actors may differ as well or even change over time. Additionally, the attributed meaning does not need to be concerted (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 93; Weber 2002: 13-14). Similarly to social action in general, social relationships are also oriented towards legitimate orders, such as the sharing of moral values (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 93-94; Weber 2002: 16-20). I believe that all these elements equally apply to strategic partnerships.

In addition, Weber differentiates between two different forms of social relationships: social relationships in the form of communitarianisation

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<sup>231</sup> Meaning, thereby, denotes subjective thoughts, motives and intentions held by an actor (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 89).

<sup>232</sup> A social relationship may also exist among several persons according to Weber (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 93).

(‘Vergemeinschaftung’) and social relationships in the form of socialisation (‘Vergesellschaftung’) (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 94; Weber 2002: 21-23). On the one hand, communitarianism depicts a social relationship, if and in so far social action is based on a subjectively felt attitude of togetherness due to affectual or traditional motives<sup>233</sup> shared by the (social) actors. On the other hand, socialisation means a social relationship, if and in so far social action is based on rational motives (either in terms of goals or values)<sup>234</sup> and is geared towards either interest balancing (‘Interessenausgleich’) or interest combination (‘Interessenverbindung’) (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 94, 97). This form of a social relationship is typically (but not necessarily) based on a rational agreement by a reciprocal consent (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 109). Kruse/Barrelmeyer (2012: 97) give the example of a friendships or a family for the former case, whereas they exemplify the latter case by mentioning a commercial enterprise or the (free) market (2012: 97, 94). However, social relationships may have elements from both forms of social relationships (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 95). Furthermore, hierarchical dimensions within social relationships may exist (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 95-97).

My hunch is that strategic partnerships reflect a social relationship in the form of socialisation<sup>235</sup> because I believe that the elements of both balancing and combining interests are crucial to strategic partnerships as strategic alliances being part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. I believe that strategic partnerships reflect the essential goal-orientation (in terms of interests and/or values) of a social relationship in terms of socialisation (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 94-95). Furthermore, strategic partnerships are indeed established by agreements reflecting a reciprocal consent.

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<sup>233</sup> There are according to Weber four different forms of motives for social action, which often appear as a mix in reality: rational motives in terms of goals or values; affectual motives or traditional motives (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 88-8; Weber 2002: 12-13). Rational motives in the form of goals reflect the search for adequate means for the ends characterised by the expected trade-off between costs and benefits as well as the consequences of the goals (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 88, 108). Affectual motives denote present emotions or affects being quite ad-hoc or intuitive (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 88-89, 108). Traditional motives, by contrast, reflect somewhat long-held habits or customs irrespective of considering goals or possible consequences from a certain social action (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 89, 108).

<sup>234</sup> Rational motives in the form of goals reflect the search for adequate means for the ends characterised by the expected trade-off between costs and benefits as well as the consequences of the goals. Rational motives in the form of values is oriented towards (moral or ethical) values but independent from the consequences of social action. Thus, these values are norms independent from the success of an action (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 88, 108).

<sup>235</sup> Johnston explains that ‘[...] socialisation is a process by which social interaction leads novices to endorse „expected ways of thinking, feeling, and acting“’ (2008: 20). It is linked to processes of ‘internalization’ (Johnston 2008: 21).

To sum up, and in addition to being strategic alliances (Ch. 5.1), strategic partnerships in international relations (also) denote, in my view, a form of social relationship intentionally formed between agents acting within a systemic context (macro-level social structure)<sup>236</sup>. A social relationship is a special (institutionalized and intended) form of social interaction between agents.

### 5.2.1.3 Social position: social status

After having explained strategic partnerships as social relationships, this subchapter will now turn to the social position of agents within the international society of states as a social structure, which has been mentioned before a few times. The issue of actor's social positioning is quite crucial for my conceptual model as it allows for structurally grounding the social actors<sup>237</sup>. This structural grounding of social actors is indispensable for the adherence to Archer's morphogenetic approach. Furthermore, I think that the social position of an actor is also crucial to a social relationship between actors.

In this context, I will first revisit Giddens (1984), Porpora (1989) and Weber (2002) with regard to the issue of social positioning. In the end, I will introduce Merton's sociological perspective on social status. Thereby, I can include research on status as a social phenomenon, which is present in political science, sociology and economics (Wohlforth 2009: 38): all three posit that '[...] actors seek to translate material resources into status' (Wohlforth 2009: 38). Put similarly, 'when social actors acquire resources, they try to convert them into something that can have more value to them than the mere possession of material things: social status' (Wohlforth 2009: 38). States, if seen as individuals, are not only power-seekers but status-seekers as well. Thus, states not only compete for power but also for (a preferably high) status (Wohlforth 2009: 42).

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<sup>236</sup> This widely corresponds with Archer's morphogenetic view, yet she relates social interaction with the micro-level: In this context, she states that '[...] systemic properties are always the (,macro') *context* confronted by (,micro') social interaction, whilst social activities between people (,micro') represent the *environment* in which the (,macro') features of systems are either reproduced or transformed' (Archer 1995: 11). However, as Archer deals with the society in terms of the domestic level, I believe that it makes more sense for my study to denote interaction between states as the 'meso'-level. Thereby, my depiction of levels would even allow for also speaking of the micro-level with respect to the national/domestic context. Even though this is not relevant for my study, where I generally 'outpicture' domestic/national contexts, this may nonetheless be of relevance for other studies employing the morphogenetic approach with respect to the interaction of micro- and meso-levels. An example would be to analyse a social phenomenon at the boundary of domestic/national contexts as well as the European context.

<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, the structural grounding of social actors corresponds to Nolte's (2010: 892) statement that even though a regional power is a '[...] social category that depends on the recognition of this status and the corresponding power hierarchy by other states', [...the; NH] inclusion in this social category also presupposes the corresponding material resources'. Thus, by using Archer's morphogenetic approach, the study is able of accounting for both material and social categories of having or gaining a particular power-status.

The morphogenetic view of both structurally grounded and socially positioned actors can be combined with the study's presumption about an international hierarchy of variedly powered states (see Ch. 4.2.1.4). Crucially, it thereby builds on a view that 'hierarchy'<sup>238</sup> is a dynamic, evolving relationship, not a static institution frozen at some prior moment of creation' (Lake 2009: 36).

The term 'status' is often used in the context of being a great power pointing to their 'great power status' (e.g., Waltz 2008: 220; Bull 2002: 194; Nolte 2012: 20; Volgy et al. 2011: 2). But it is an 'independent' term as there are different forms of status such as regional power-status (Nolte 2012). However, the term status is not well-defined. Thus, it is related to power but it is not the same. It is, furthermore, linked to the dimension of competition: Wohlforth mentions that competition for status is more likely when status hierarchies are vague (Wohlforth 2009: 39). And Hill/Smith mention that striving for 'international status and legitimacy' (Hill/Smith 2011b: 14) are amongst the crucial conditioning factors within international relations. Crucially, status is '[...] dependent on material capabilities [...as well as; NH] relational and intersubjective, ultimately conferred on a state by others who recognize its position in the system' (Lake 2013: 563). Moreover, as Corbetta et al. note, status is 'ascribed' (2011: 204).

In this context, status of a great power is related to the membership or joining of a 'club' (Bull 2002: 194; Hurrell 2006: 4; Volgy et al. 2011: 5)<sup>239</sup>. Relatedly, '[...] status itself is attributed to a state by the community of states as a whole or by the club of already high-status members the state seeks to join' (Lake 2013: 563)<sup>240</sup>. High status seemingly correlates with 'legitimacy' (Cline et al. 2011: 134).

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<sup>238</sup> As indicated before, Lake's account of international hierarchy is particularly interesting as he builds on a relational view of hierarchy. However, in contrast to Lake's conception of international hierarchy, which is informed by a view of 'social contracts' between 'rulers' with authority and 'ruled' (Lake 2009: 44, 45, 51), the present study will work with a sociological perspective, which puts emphasis on social interaction and social relationships. Furthermore, Lake does not believe that the international system-structure in its entirety constitutes an international hierarchy. His approach rather deals with 'hierarchical relations within the system' (Lake 2009: 62). The present study, by contrast, starts from the assumption of an international hierarchical system, which informs and influences social relationships among or between states as well as the social positioning and social groups of states. This view corresponds better with a later remark by Lake (2013: 556), where he mentions that '[...] great power hierarchies and all international structures are not simply physical facts defined by material capabilities but, rather, social constructs produced by the strategies adopted by the great powers themselves'. Hierarchies among states have, thereby, a 'social nature' (Lake 2013: 556).

<sup>239</sup> The same logic applies to the 'club of regional powers' (Cline et al. 2011: 133). Hence, there are actually several clubs within the international system (Corbetta et al. 2011: 213-215), which are not power-clubs, whose members are entirely equal in terms of material capabilities but rather 'status clubs' (Corbetta 2011: 215), whose members need not share the same capabilities (Corbetta 2011: 215).

<sup>240</sup> Volgy et al. even mention a third mode of achieving status, namely by 'self-reference' (2011: 9). However, this mode is negligible in the context of this study.

I believe that my usage of the term established or traditional power can demonstrate the difference between status and power: being an established/traditional power signifies a certain 'status' among the society of states but it does not determine the power of the status-holder. In my case status may coincide with certain great powers enjoying great power-status but this must not necessarily be the case<sup>241</sup>. For example, regional powers are also often described as to be having a certain status (Nolte 2012: 22). Interestingly, Nolte (2012: 34) mentions in this context that the status of a regional power amongst others is a social category, which not only necessitates certain hard power resources but also certain recognition of this status and the corresponding power hierarchy by other states. The same applies to 'becoming' a great power being or becoming a great power is more than 'only' agglomerating material power (Hurrell 2006: 4). Hurrell (2006: 4) explains that

'a state can claim great power status, but membership of the club of great powers is a social category that depends on recognition by others: by your peers in the club, but also by smaller and weaker states willing to accept the legitimacy and authority of those at the top of the international hierarchy'.

Hurrell clearly states that this rationale indicates dimensions of 'authority' and 'legitimacy' in becoming a great power (Hurrell 2004: 4). Thus, this also implies that the 'top of the international hierarchy' enjoys a certain 'legitimacy' and 'authority' in granting this 'recognition' to states located further down in the international hierarchy (Hurrell 2000: 3; Volgy et al. 2011: 10)<sup>242</sup>. My hunch is that by being recognized, emerging regional powers hope to acquire legitimacy and authority of their own, which would be flowing from the recognition of status.

Hurrell statements in this respect are clearly informed by a sociological perspective by speaking of 'social categories' such as 'clubs', 'recognition', 'peers' as well as 'legitimacy' and 'authority'. However, Hurrell neither explicitly acknowledges this nor does he further elaborate on these dimensions. However, in a later article, Hurrell mentions (also) briefly that a regional power may probably find it easier to control 'its'

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<sup>241</sup> Perceiving status in a more diagonal view in comparison to a purely structural-based perspective has the advantage that the same status-holders need not be entirely equal in terms of power. As Volgy et al. (2011: 2) explain the group of major powers may not be homogenous (Volgy et al. 2011: 2). I think that this is generally the case as entities and, thus, groups or clubs of certain 'powers' or 'status-holders' are not entirely equal.

<sup>242</sup> Hurrell arrives at this argument by using a constructivist perspective and referring to 'shared understandings' among 'groups of states' (Hurrell 2000: 3). This study will complement this constructivist view via going a step further by drawing on a more strongly pronounced sociological perspective: it enables to see groups of states and the process of becoming a great power in material and social dimensions in one step and at the same time.

region if it [...] can persuade other powers in the system to accept the legitimacy of your own regional predominance' (Hurrell 2010: 20). He goes on by stating that to a considerable degree, [...] regional power and regional hegemony are dependent upon *external recognition*' (Hurrell 2010: 20; emphasis added by NH).

In the following, I will further substantiate these various dimensions by again drawing on sociology.

From a sociological perspective, actors are seldomly acting on their own but in groups. The members of the group have respective statuses, ranks and power, whereby they may influence other actors' behaviour (Feldmann 2006: 67). Society can be seen as a network of social positions (Feldmann 2006: 69).

I believe that the (social) position/-ing of actors is of high relevance to a social relationship and the international society of states. With respect to relations between agents, Giddens makes brief reference to 'positioning of the body in social encounters' (Giddens 1984: xxiv) as one of the essentials of social life. He refers to positioning as the body's situating [...] in the immediate circumstances of co-presence in relation to others' (Giddens 1984: xxiv, 64). However, positioning does not feature as one of his core concepts. The author frames positioning shortly with respect to body movements (gestures), social identity or social roles. Giddens makes only brief reference to the 'contextuality of social action' (Giddens 1984: xxv) mentioning aspects of time and geography; location (environment) and properties of agents (Giddens 1984: xxiv-xxv, 83). Giddens ultimately equates positioning and social position: agents are positioned 'in circumstances of co-presence' (Giddens 1984: 84). In this context he mentions that 'social positions are constituted structurally [...]'. A social position is thereby defined as 'specification of a definite 'identity' within a network of social relations [...]' (Giddens 1984: 83). This is not enough in my view as he excludes a material view and predominantly concentrates on rules, which make social relationships (Porpora 1989: 206).

This is exactly the point where I will link the systemic and social grounding of actors provided by the study's 'true' dual view of structure and agency as well as my analytic eclectic approach. Thus, in my own account I go beyond Giddens' brief remarks on positioning and social position. I will do so by viewing a social position in terms of the structural and social grounding of (social) actors. This signifies at the component of socially interacting agents – agents acting in (social) relations to one another. I will follow

Porpora (1989: 206)<sup>243</sup> in this respect who mentions that '[...] social positions [...] are related by differences in power'.

The previous paragraphs have indicated that the 'powerness' of a country is linked to a certain status. For example, if a country is a great power, there is a certain status linked to its power position (Clunan 2000: 103). I believe that status refers to positioning within the (international) society of states and a states' (social) positioning within this society. Status is often mentioned in the context of constructivists' interest in identities of states (Clunan 2000). However, I believe that it is also crucial to the international society of states at large and, thus, the international (power) hierarchy.

This is also reflected in sociology where status is known as well. Wiswede (1985: 237-238) mentions that social status in colloquial terms means that a person belongs to a specific social class, which can be characterised by the proportion of particular positional features<sup>244</sup>. Status, thereby, indicates ranks of a hierarchy in terms of these (relative) proportions (Wiswede 1985: 238-239).

Even though there is no universal agreement on the definition of status, I will understand '(social) status' (Merton 1996: 43) as in the following sociological definition: Put differently, social status is defined as a '[...] position in a social system occupied by designated individuals' (Sztompka 1996: 12). Thereby, social status is linked to social structure: As Merton has pointed out from a sociological perspective, '[...] social structures designate certain statuses as having greater importance than others' (Merton 1996: 116). Furthermore, he underlines that '[...] occupants of a social status are not

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<sup>243</sup> It is again important to note that even though I will draw on Porpora, I will not investigate social relationships in a causal manner. Hence, even though they may be causal forces within social relationships, my study is dedicated to first uncover these forces without claiming that they have a causal effect.

<sup>244</sup> Individuals with the same social status form a social class. The notion of class is often used normatively or in terms of 'relations of productions' (Wight 2006: 164) among collectivities of individuals. But this is somewhat a limiting perspective of class as there is a multitude of dimensions to social interaction; for example material factors (resources, capabilities), ideational factors (norms, ideas) social relations (class) and factors reflecting the subjective agent (ideas) (Wight 2006: 174-175). As a result, it is important to note that class is here not used, for example, in a Marxian understanding. Moreover, social class may have very different features, which are, e.g., not only sociodemographic (Wiswede 1985: 237-238; Hughes 1976: 34). For example, Wight speaks of the 'class' of great powers (Wight 1995), which rather refers to a group ranked or graded similarly in terms of the international power hierarchy. Apart from that, Elder-Vass (2010: 86) even posits that '[...] the concept of *social structure* refers to [...] *powers of social groups*' [sic] I will view social class as a social construct, which can be framed by varied features. Apart from that, I will work with the concept of a social group instead of social class in order to avoid misunderstandings. Furthermore, Feldmann (2006: 186) mentions that there is always a group before an individual, which corresponds to the morphogenetic approach of pre-existing social structures. I believe that social group dynamics form part of the above mentioned social relations being also important to social life. Hence, collectivities of individual agents form a social group, which is a social construct and can be characterised by various 'groupforming' factors.

alone' (Merton 1996: 120). Agents occupying the same social position, thus, implicates that they are '[...] more or less like-circumstanced' (Merton 1996: 120).

In this study, social status<sup>245</sup> is determined by the relative power position of a state within the international (power) hierarchy<sup>246</sup>. It is important to note that status has two dimensions according to Merton. First, there is a normative dimension denoting '[...] the set of expectations regarding the socially defined, appropriate behavior [sic] for an incumbent of that status' (Sztompka 1996: 12). Secondly, the 'opportunity' dimension constitutes '[...] both the set of life-chances (Weber's term), options, resources, and facilities differentially accessible to the incumbent and the correlative opportunity structure which distributes and redistributes the probabilities of such differential access' (Sztompka: 12-13). Both (dimensional) 'structures' – normative and opportunity – constrain and facilitate '[...] influences on the behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations of persons located in them' (Sztompka 1996: 13). Moreover, they may encourage certain action behaviour, which will 're-shape social institutions' (Sztompka 1996: 13). I will exclude the latter dimension as it is of less relevance to the study's research goals. Instead, I will concentrate on the second dimension, namely the opportunity structure dimension (Sztompka 1996: 12). Thereby, I will particularly focus on the resources inherent in the opportunity dimension of agents' social status.

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<sup>245</sup> The concept of a social status is linked to social role and both are crucial to social structures (Merton 1996: 43; Merton 1965: 368; Etzrodt 2003: 289). It is important to note that I will not work with role theoretical approaches, which rather deal with how a person's status is implemented (Etzrodt 2003) or with role expectations (Feldmann 2006: 69). Yet this is not the prime focus here. As Merton (1996: 43-44) has explained, the understandings of social status are indeed close in his understanding and Linton's account of role(-set) theory. First of all, role theory, as e.g. exemplified by the anthropologist Ralph Linton (Lüth 1979: 7, 9), will not be used in this study as it deals with social status in the context of the the behaviour of states regarding the normative expectations of fellow states in terms of rights and obligations (Merton 1996: 43-44; Linton 1979: 97). According to Linton, a status is social position and a role is social behaviour against the background of expectations in light of a social position (Merton 1965: 368). Furthermore, role-set theory, in particular, also reveals closeness to the present study's approach of social status yet '[...] the shift in the angle of vision leads to successively more fundamental theoretical differences' (Merton 1996: 44). Role-set theory à la Linton posits that there are several roles flowing from several social statuses (Linton 1979: 97). This role-set is somewhat complementary to other social relationships because they particularly involve institutional roles (Merton 1996: 44). Both Merton and Linton assume that an individual has several statuses in society (which Merton calls a status-set) (Lüth 1979: 13). Yet confusingly, Merton also operates with a 'role-set' (Merton 1996: 113-122). Yet the main difference between the sociological strand followed here (Merton) and role-set theory (Linton) lies in the following fact: whereas in the former case one social status involves several roles (a 'role-set' or 'role-equipment', which is different to 'multiple roles' (Merton 1996: 113; Lüth 1979: 12)), Linton's role-set theory works from the assumption that a role-set involves several social statuses, particularly in institutional dimensions, and associated roles. Hence, Merton and Linton differ on the number of social statuses regarding a role-set and the number of roles associated with a status (Merton 1965: 368-369). Moreover, when Merton is more interested in the social positions, he relates to status (status-set) instead of roles (Lüth 1979: 13). In brief, according to Merton, an individual has several social statuses (a status-set) and each single social status has a role-set (with corresponding role-relationships) (Merton 1965: 370, 380-381). Multiple roles are different to a role-set as they refer to the array of roles of several social statuses (Merton 1996: 113; Merton 1965: 369), which is then equal to Linton's understanding of a role-set. Yet overall, the study follows Merton's approach and his understanding of social status.

<sup>246</sup> This again demonstrates how systemic (power) structure and social structure are combined in this study.

Additionally, according to Merton, certain types of social statuses inform the formation of social membership groups and their properties (Sztompka 1996: 13).

Hence, I think that status has two dimensions to it: a vertical as well as horizontal dimension<sup>247</sup>. Vertically, status within the society of states implies a hierarchy of different status positions of states. Thus, state A may have a higher status than state B, which often correlates with its material power (capabilities). Horizontally, status also refers to social groups of states within the society of states. In this sense, status may also be linked to the power position of states to a certain extent: for example, great powers form a certain social group and small powers form a certain group. This view implies that states have (several) group memberships flowing from their social status. However, I think that these memberships to groups may also be informed by other factors than 'only' material power. For example, group formation may be inspired by historical or other contextual factors. Depicting the EU as a traditional and established power is a view, which is inspired by a horizontal view of status. It is a somewhat historical view as traditional and established powers have dominated the outlook of international politics for quite a long time. Even though these countries may be relatively declining great powers today, they are still influential powers in international politics today and still benefit from this historically-derived special status of previously major powers. Hence, their membership of the group of established powers is informed by their power position and social status.

I also think that status is difficult to change. As an example, the considerable economic growth and/or size of rising powers seems not sufficient to automatically change their status. To the extent that status change takes effect rather seems to be a long-term and somewhat diffuse and subtle process. Moreover, it is not entirely clear which factors (directly or indirectly) within this process contribute to modifying statuses. It largely reminds of society where a rise in economic status does not necessarily include becoming part of a certain group. Often, the recognition of the group members is more important than the exceeding of a certain measurable threshold, e.g., in terms of wealth. I believe that a similar rationale applies to the international society of states. Similarly to

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<sup>247</sup> Thereby, the study focuses predominantly on only one social status within the international social structure (linked to possibly several roles), which is determined by its (relative) power position within the international system. This is in line with the fact that I depict the EU as an established and traditional power: it reflects both the relative power position and its social status: it is informed by its relative power status being inherent to European powers within the international system for a long time period. Yet the roles (role-set; Merton 1996: 113) associated to a certain social status are of no relevance to the study as a role-theoretical view does not exactly correspond to the study's research focus on theorising strategic partnerships.

dynamics in (human) societies (Linton 1979: 109), status is often (socially) ascribed by others, namely by a certain group (of (future) peers), (influential) individuals or society at large. Hence, it seems that status cannot always be (entirely) self-acquired. One can deduce from this that social status is also to a certain degree socially constructed.

Additionally, as the status hierarchy within a society also provides order, especially within the anarchical international system, it can be assumed that agents with a higher status will try to prevent status change affecting their social positioning negatively. At the same time, those agents with a somewhat inferior status will attempt to change status in order rise the ladder of statuses. This sociologically-inspired proposition corresponds to what has been stated about agents and their interests in Ch. 5.1.4 from a IR-power-perspective. This again demonstrates that system-structure and social structure are closely linked in their dynamics of action behaviour and agents' motivations. However, they are to a varying extent dependent on other agents: whereas status in change in terms of relative power can be achieved by an agent by him/herself, social status change is more dependent on other social actors.

#### **5.2.1.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the study's conceptualisation of social structures. To sum up, the international system is made by a social structure: an international society of states. They are not necessarily conscious of common interests in order to form an international society. Hence, the international system-structure and international society as a social structure are superimposable. Agents simply interact socially in this sense in an unintended as well as intended way. This is the macro-level social structure. Strategic partnerships are a form of social interaction, which denotes a form of social relationship intentionally formed between agents. It can be viewed as one out of many possible social structures embedded within the international society.

As mentioned before, Weber relates social power (and social dignity/prestige) to the positioning within a society (in the context of class and stands) (Weber 2002: 544). In order to understand *how* strategic partnerships as social relationships work and how strategic partners interact, I believe it makes sense to investigate the social powers of the strategic partners at play within their strategic partnership. At the nexus of particular social relationships there is relational and social power at work, which I intend to explore. But what then are the relational and social powers, when systemically grounded and socially positioned agents interact socially (against the background of the system-

structure)? More explicitly, what are the bases of the social power strategic partners draw on within their social relationship?

To answer these questions it will prove valuable to address the social power (bases) executed within a social relationship. To this end, I will now introduce social power being a relational form of power. I will first explain a relational view of power and then turn to social power as such. Later, I will investigate the bases/resources of social power by introducing the 'bases-of-power'-approach.

### **5.2.2 Social power: bases of power**

After having clarified that the strategic partnerships are a process of social interaction initiated by agents against the background of the international system structure, the question arises of what characterizes this social interaction. How do strategic partnerships as social relationships work exactly?

As strategic partnerships are social relationships and a process of social interaction, I believe that it makes sense to analyse this social phenomenon in terms of a social relationship between (social) actors with social power. Thus, I will now turn to social power in order to make sense of strategic partnerships, particularly in the context of interacting social agents within social structures. Therein, the study's benefit lies in introducing the concept of social structure, which comprises material and social (and ideational) dimensions. Thus, in this study, and for the purpose of *understanding* of strategic partnerships as social relationships within social structures, I believe that it makes sense to investigate relational power and, in particular, social power.

Power in IR is probably one of the most popular but also one of the most disputed concepts at large. Without reviewing the various debates on power, let me mention that power is indeed multifaceted and, indeed, multi-dimensional (Barnett/Duvall 2005). Research on emerging regional powers and declining powers as well as power shifts is often influenced by a marked appreciation of structural power including material resources or capabilities (Hurrell 2010: 16; Lemke 2010). This somewhat reflects a classical view of power, which is perceived in terms of (structural) resources and capabilities in terms of economic or military power (MacDonald 2011: 34). Even though this is, of course, worthwhile, it underestimates the manifoldness of power. Hurrell notes that 'the analysis of power within any particular domain has to be alert to the way in which that domain is embedded within broader and ideational structures' (Hurrell 2010: 16). Thus, power can also be seen in a more 'dynamic' (MacDonald 2011: 35) way

such as in terms of interrelational power dimensions (MacDonald 2011: 34-35). The present study tries to also allow for a more dynamic view of power as strategic partnerships are also a process of social interaction.

Hence, the present study builds on both dimensions of power. Firstly, by depicting the study's agents as established and emerging regional powers, this project builds on certain structurally informed power dimensions, particularly in the context of strategic alliances. Secondly, by theorizing strategic partnerships as social relationships the study also incorporates a more relational view of power, namely by drawing on social power<sup>248</sup>. I argue that strategic partnerships are (also) foreign policy tools of 'social power'.

I will now first explain relational power as a prelude to social power.

### **5.2.2.1 Relational Power and Social Power**

In this subchapter I will first highlight the differences between structural and relational power as well as elaborate briefly on relational power. Then, it will become clear that social power is relational, even though there are differences. Thereby, social power will be linked to the various dimensions of the very concept of power in order to clarify, where it enters the picture of the multifacetedness of power. I will, thereby, show the linkages between the study's (sociological and morphogenetic) view of social power and Barnett/Duvall's four dimensions of power (Barnett/Duvall 2005).

Many people may probably think of structural power when hearing the term 'power', particularly in the context of rising powers. But power is indeed also 'relational'. It is exercised between agents A and B. Put differently, agent A exercises power over agent B. Viewing power in relational terms goes back to Max Weber, where power is

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<sup>248</sup> It will be shown that social power is different from Nye's soft power. Soft power as defined by Nye (2004: 5) is '[...]-getting others to want the outcomes that you want [...]'. Soft power is non-coercive and works primarily via attraction (Nye 2004: 5). Or as MacDonald has put it, 'soft power works primarily via co-optation using attraction' (MacDonald 2011: 40; Nye 2004: 6-7). Ultimately, in contrast to hard power, it works without carrots and sticks (Nye 2004: 8; Nye 2008: 29, 40). Social power, by contrast, is also non-coercive but it rather draws on 'inducement using payments' (MacDonald 2011: 40). Thus, contrary to soft power but similarly to hard power (Nye 2004: 8, 31), social power also draws on carrots and sticks. Social power seems to be closer to the concept of influence in contrast to soft power (Nye 2004: 6). If soft power is '[...] one source of influence' (Nye 2008: 21), my hunch is that social power may, however, incorporate soft power. This particularly appears to be the dimension of 'co-optive power', which is '[...] the ability to shape what others want [...]' (Nye 2004: 7), but not necessarily via attraction but rather persuasion (Nye 2008: 31). Particularly, soft power resources of countries, namely 'culture', 'political values' and 'foreign policies' (Nye 2004: 11), appear to be rather specific in comparison to (more general) social power, which has more possible power bases. However, similarly to soft power (Nye 2008: 43), one should not attach any normative dimension to social power. Additionally, if 'smart power is the combination of the hard power of coercion and payment with the soft power of persuasion and attraction' (Nye 2011: xiii), social power even cuts across smart power.

exercised in social relations (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 109; Rohde 2004: 123). In this instance, power is asymmetrical between agent A and agent B. It is indeed a power relationship (Rohde 2004: 123). Thereby, Weber's concept of relational power is teleological: power is geared towards the achievement of a goal. The achievement of a goal is at the centre of the action by agent A, who has to provide the necessary means to attain this particular goal. If the attainment of this goal is dependent on other actors, agent A needs to be (cap)able with necessary means to convey (or rather force) his/her will on(to) these other actors (Rohde 2004: 123-124). This very enforcement of will by adequate means onto other actors represents power in Weber's concept (Rohde 2004: 124). Thus, power is every chance within a social relationship to force one's will onto another actor, even in a coercive manner against their opposition (Rohde 2004: 124; Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 97). Hence, power is exercised by force (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 98). The only alternative to coercion is yet a voluntary agreement among the interacting agents (Rohde 2004: 124). Thus, power emerges from the formation of a joint will and not from the instrumentalisation of another agent's will (Rohde 2004: 124). Hence, power in this sense is more about persuasion and a consensus among the agents rather than about 'using' another agent (Rohde 2004: 125). Thereby, power and force may follow the same mechanism. Thus, whereas force denotes the resources and means whereby a goal is achieved, power is the mobilization of a consensus amongst the agents (consensual power) (Rohde 2004: 124). This is exactly where Nye's concept of soft power (e.g., Nye 2011) has adjoined, namely in observing that power often involves soft 'means'. In order to effect policy solutions to international challenges, which are often formulated in multilateral fora, it is more and more crucial to convince other agents of one's goals (Rohde 2004: 124).

In fact, when depicting power as being relational, it is multifaceted (Baldwin 2013: 275). Hence, there are various accounts of viewing power in relational terms. The concept of relational power is also evident in Morgenthau's classical realism, even though international agents ultimately struggle for material power in his theory (Rohde 2004: 123, 126). For example, classical realist Morgenthau (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 32) states that 'political power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised'. Furthermore, agent A in this reading gets '[...] control over certain action [...]' of agent B. The mechanism is that agent B either benefits; dreads disadvantages or acquires respect or love. Moreover, agent A has several 'tools' or 'means' for exerting power, such as 'orders', 'threats', 'authority' or the like (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 32-33). In this context, Morgenthau/Thompson (1985: 33) differentiate between 'power' and 'influence'. For example, if a senior policy advisor

advises a politician and the politician follows his advice, the senior policy advisor has influence. Yet he has no power over the politician. At the same time, the politician has authority and can lay off his policy advisor. Thereby, he has power over the senior policy advisor (Morgenthau/Thompson 1985: 32).

Relational power can also be found in the neorealist work by Kenneth N. Waltz. He warns against believing that an agent's power equals control and that, as a consequence, an actor only needs power in order to get what he wants (Waltz 1979: 191). Instead, Waltz stipulates that '[...] to use power is to apply one's capabilities in an attempt to change someone else's behavior' (Waltz 1979: 191). Power does not imply automatic control of another actor's (action behavior) (Waltz 1979: 191).

Overall, a relational understanding views power as a means to an end, not (necessarily) an end in itself.

Secondly, social power is inherently relational power. Relational power and social power are often, particularly when mentioning Weber, equated (Wiswede 1985: 231). Relational power is social and social power is relational.

From a sociological point of view, power is the disposal over resources in terms of disposal over amplifiers, which denote the possibility to reward or to punish (Wiswede 1985: 232). Wiswede mentions that social power originates from physical force: the basic characteristics of power have only been modified later with regard to legitimacy and institutionalization (Wiswede 1985: 232).

However, it appears that there are important differences between relational power and social power. Indeed, social power is truly relational and executed between two or more actors as well as denotes a relationship between two or more actors. Yet, whereas relational power is a means to an end, my hunch is that social power is also something, which actors can possess. Thus, I believe that social power comprises both a status as well as instruments (means). Furthermore, I believe that social power, thereby, cuts across various power characteristics meaning that it can potentially involve hard power as well as soft or smart power. As mentioned before, the study's view of power can be characterized as 'diagonal' because it includes a structural (realist and material) power view and a social power view based on social structures and social capabilities. In this context, I could not agree more with Barnett/Duvall's (2005) statement that IR-researchers should be openminded to use 'multiple conceptions of power' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39, 40). The authors further define power as '[...] the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine

their circumstances and fate<sup>249</sup> (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39). Moreover, Barnett/Duvall (2005: 42) argue that there are two main 'analytical dimensions' to power: a) '[...] the kinds of social relations through which power works [...]'; and b) '[...] the specificity of social relations through which effects on actors' capacities are produced' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 42). Social relations are viewed in terms of 'constitution' and 'interaction'<sup>250</sup> (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39; 45). The study's (morphogenetic) view of social power cuts across these two analytical dimensions of power mentioned by Barnett/Duvall. By viewing social relations in terms of both 'constitution' and 'interaction' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39; 45), social power in this study is both an '[...] attribute of actors and their interactions [...]' as well as a '[...] social process of constituting what actors are as social beings, that is, their social identities and capacities' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 42). As a consequence, social power is (in theory) also both 'specific/direct' and 'diffuse/indirect' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39) in this project. Thus, social power can (theoretically) work directly (specifically) and indirectly (diffusely).

However, when it comes to the strategic partnerships in particular, I do not think that social power works via directly or indirectly 'controlling' another actor (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 43). As a social relationship, strategic partnerships are primarily 'social relations of constitution', even though they are based on 'social relations of interactions' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 39)<sup>251</sup>. As a consequence, within strategic partnerships social power is based on 'only' two of Barnett/Duvall's concepts of power: structural and productive<sup>252</sup>. 'Structural power' represents the '[...] constitution of subjects' capacities in direct structural relation to one another [...]' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 43; 52-55). From the perspective of structural power, '[...] the social relational capacities, subjectivities, and

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<sup>249</sup> Even though they are overlaps between Barnett/Duvall's and the study's view of power, I will not use Barnett/Duvall's definition of power because they neglect the power of persuasion and cooperation (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 42; Baldwin 2013: 287).

<sup>250</sup> Social relations of interaction denote the '[...] relations of interaction among previously constituted social actors' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 45). Social relations of constitution are, by contrast, '[...] relations of constitution of actors as particular kinds of social beings' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 45). It shows that the study's morphogenetic approach allows for viewing social structures and social relations in terms of both social relations of interaction (structural view) and of constitution (productive view). By combining both perspectives, the study can build on both perspectives of social relations, which inform the study's concept of social power.

<sup>251</sup> Crucially, Barnett/Duvall (2005: 46) mention in the context of 'social relations of constitution' that 'power [...] is irreducibly social' (2005: 46). Thereby, '[...] power works through social relations that analytically precede the social or subject positions of actors and that constitute them as social beings with their respective capacities and interests' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 46). In brief, they mention that '[...] particular social relations are responsible for producing particular kinds of actors' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 46). Without acknowledging it, Barnett/Duvall, thereby, appear to mirror Archer's morphogenetic analytical approach of pre-existing social structures and social actors.

<sup>252</sup> Barnett/Duvall's 'taxonomy of four types of power' also include 'compulsory power' and 'institutional power' (2005: 43). However, as mentioned above, strategic partnerships do not seem to allow for directly/indirectly controlling another actor, which is why these power-types are not of relevance for the study, even though social power, in theory, may actually include these other two power-types.

interests of actors are directly shaped by the social positions that they occupy' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 53). This is the material and realist view of diagonal social power. 'Productive power', on the other hand, represents the '[...] socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 43; 55-57). This is the constructivist view of diagonal social power. By combining structural and productive power<sup>253</sup>, the study arrives at its own diagonal – sociologically and morphogenetically inspired – view of social power: within strategic partnerships social power is both 'direct' due to its structural nature as well as 'diffuse' due to its productive nature. In brief, social power within strategic partnerships is both direct and diffuse: it is 'direct' because it is linked to structurally-inspired (relative) social positions within the international hierarchy (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 47). Social power is also 'socially diffuse' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 47) because it is at work in socially '[...] diffuse constitutive relations [...which; NH] produce the situated social capacities of actors (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 48)<sup>254</sup>. Overall, the study's approach of social power has the benefit of including a multifaceted view of power including relative (materially and structurally-based) power and relational power (Baldwin 2013: 285, 286).

After having understood power in relational terms, we can build on this step and turn to social power, in particular. Barkin posits that 'power politics, as understood, by most realists, is both social and relational – it is not simply the ability to destroy, but the ability to affect political outcomes in a way that promotes the interests of the user of power' (Barkin 2010: 90). I think that this holds widely true. However, Hurrell (2010: 15) points out that 'there is no overarching theory of social power and no single analytical approach [of power; NH] that provides the magic key'.

Nevertheless, this project will now try to make sense social power. So what then is social power in the context of this study? Of course, it seems reasonable to investigate social power when depicting strategic partnerships as social relationships due to the similarity in terms. But this is not the reasoning behind this study. After having approached the notion of social power, the author felt it may be particularly helpful in

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<sup>253</sup> Interestingly, Barnett/Duvall (2005: 55) mention that there is a certain intersection between productive and structural power in terms of 'constitutive social processes' and the social production of the 'social capacities of actors' (2005: 55).

<sup>254</sup> The main difference between Barnett/Duvall's (2005) and the study's approach to social power lies with the fact that the latter transcends the perspective adopted by Barnett/Duvall regarding productive power: the authors view productive power in terms of discourses and 'systems of knowledge' (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 55). Thereby, they detach from the structural power-perspective (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 55). The study, by contrast, deliberately attempts to link structural and productive power by following a sociological and morphogenetic perspective. As a result, actor's social capacities are more strongly linked to their structural positioning within the international hierarchy in comparison to Barnett/Duvall's approach. However, the study, thereby, inherently fulfills Barnett/Duvall's call for an additive approach to the different types of power (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 67).

understanding strategic partnerships as social relationships and as foreign policy tools of social power.

In my view, it makes sense to understand strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools of social power. Power is, thereby, located in the very (social) relationship between two or more actors. The study, thus, builds on a view, where '[...] reciprocal social interaction [...] is; NH] the *locus* of power [sic] (van Ham 2010: 7). Even though Guzzini (2011: 564) implies that a relational power dismisses an understanding of power in terms of resources, instruments and their effects (Guzzini 2011: 564), I do believe that social power can indeed be used as an instrument of power building on social power resources, even though it is difficult to grasp.

Consequently, the strategic partnerships can be analysed within the dimension of relational power from a diagonal (material and social) perspective. Overall, as indicated before, I believe that the concept of social power serves to incorporate both dimensions of power – structural and relational – as it builds on a diagonal view of power: power is based on material resources but also informed by a social view of power. Hence, it comprises both material and (social: material and immaterial) factors, which perfectly corresponds to my scientific realist approach. Thus, I think that power conceptualised in terms of social power serves to capture both features of power within strategic partnerships. Furthermore, social power, thereby, serves the conceptualisation of power both in terms of status and process, which I will demonstrate with my conceptual model. Social power and strategic partnerships as a whole then relate to both conceptions of power: an end in itself (power status) and a means to an end (power process)<sup>255</sup> as well as status/condition and process.

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<sup>255</sup> In order to avoid confusion: I believe that the power dimensions exercised and included within strategic partnerships are both an end in itself as well as a means to an end. Thus, within strategic partnerships there are two different power conceptions at work simultaneously. Both are equally relevant to the strategic partnership. Firstly, power as understood in 'static' (structural) terms relates to the international power hierarchy and material power bases, such as economic, military, institutional or technological power. Thus, power within the strategic partnerships is an end in itself as agents strive to agglomerate power in order to ascend rung after rung of the ladder of the international power hierarchy. This conception of power relates to power 'poles', which denote great powers within the international system in terms of structural, material power bases. Secondly, power within strategic partnerships also refers to relational dimensions: power as understood in relational dimensions is built on a diagonal view of power and it refers to the process of the strategic partnerships. Thus, social power comprises both power as an end and as a means. In brief, strategic partnerships comprise both power as an end as well as a means. Furthermore, strategic partnerships are both – a status (condition) and a process.

In the next subchapter, I will first highlight the interlinkages between social power, social structures and social relationships.

### **5.2.2.2 Social Power and Bases of (Social) Power**

I will now first indicate how social power, social structures, social relationships are interconnected. In this context, I will draw on Max Weber's insights about socially acting agents. Secondly, I will address social power more specifically. Fourthly, I will then 'dig deeper' into social power by addressing in more detail how actors may interact socially in their social relationships. In this context, I will further elaborate on the concept of social power and social power bases within social relationships.

#### ***5.2.2.2.1 Interlinkages: social power, social structures and social relationships***

Previous chapters have established an understanding of the international system as comprising certain social groups and, accordingly, social positioning and social status (see Ch. 5.2.1). These concepts will be revisited now with regard to their interlinkages with social power.

Firstly, social power is informed by the social context, which originates from the sociological perspective, which has been introduced in this study. Social power '[...]' resides in social structures [...]' (Wight 2006: 176). Thus, following from the study's view on (internal and external) social structure, agents also have social powers reflecting their position and capabilities regarding social context. Hence, hard power and social power are linked, whereby social power may build on hard power (van Ham 2010: 18, 19). As van Ham (2010: 18) puts it, '[...] the discreet ownership of hard power resources may give an actor a certain status and prestige, enhancing their voice, legitimacy, and credibility'. As a result, agents have structural powers and social powers, which are indeed interrelated.

Thereby, the relationship between social structures and social agents is dynamic and connected to time and space. Both exert mutual influence (Wight 2006: 210). Furthermore, social agents have different social positions, which again impact on many of their respective powers (in addition to their more inherent powers) (Wight 2006: 212). In this context, Wight builds on Archer in viewing agency '[...] as layered and differentiated and inextricably linked to social contexts through the relations in which it is embedded' (Wight 2006: 213). For example, due to their (possibly shifting) different

social positioning, agents and their resources are influenced by their social group membership(s) (Wight 2006: 213)<sup>256</sup>.

Secondly, Weber himself does not elaborate on social power, only in the context of class and stands as well as authority<sup>257</sup>. Nevertheless, we can look again at Weber's account in the context of class and stands in order to attempt making sense of social power. Weber's understanding of stands and class is different to the one by Karl Marx (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 101). Class is understood in terms of property and stands related to prestige. Whereby a high degree of property often correlates with prestige, this does not necessarily hold true vice versa (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 101). For example, to own property confers economic power yet the economic status may not be consistent with a certain prestige (meaning social dignity) (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 104; Weber 2002: 531). Class denotes a group of individuals belong to the same class roughly in terms of living conditions either in terms of property or of source of livelihood (Weber 2002: 177; Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 101-102). Stands, by contrast, do not necessarily relate to professional groups but also to members of an association. The members of a stand are defined by their (self-) attribution with regard to a specific honour (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 102-103; Weber 2002: 534). According to Kruse/Barrelmeyer, social power<sup>258</sup> and social dignity are crucial to Weber in relation to class and stands (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 104; Weber 2002: 539). I would add that social power matters in terms of a societal position according to Weber (Weber 2002: 544). Weber investigates class and stands as incidents of power distribution within a community (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 104).

Even though strategic partnerships do not relate to class or stands, I do believe that they follow a similar rationale in terms of group membership including the social power (and potentially social prestige) flowing from a particular group membership. I will come back to the issue of (social) prestige at a later stage. Weber describes social power in the context of parties, which is geared towards social power meaning to influence the contentwise action of a community (Weber 2002: 539). Social power is thus linked to his concept of socializing ('Vergesellschaftung') (Weber 2002: 539), which, as

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<sup>256</sup> In the context of social groups and social positions, Wight (2006: 214) goes on by drawing on role-theory, which yet will not be used here.

<sup>257</sup> It is important to be aware of the fact that within a strategic partnership there is no formal authority ('Herrschaft') by any of the agents. Weber defines authority in terms of a regulated, voluntary relationship of order and obedience (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 98; Weber 2002: 542-544). Hence, the 'controlled' agent acts voluntarily due to rational, affectual or habitual motives as well as because of believing in the legitimacy<sup>257</sup> of the authority (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 98).

<sup>258</sup> Predominantly, Weber refers most of the time to social dignity (prestige), which he yet closely relates to power: power is prestigious (Weber 2002: 531; 520-521).

mentioned above, is geared towards interest balancing or interest combination. Furthermore, Weber mentions that this social power action by parties serves (im-/material) purposes, whereby this purpose may be certain benefits, power or, as a result, social dignity (Weber 2002: 539). The means to these ends may be quite diverse ranging from force to more subtle means, such as social influence (Weber 2002: 539). Hence, social power is closely linked to the concept of influence and socializing as well as power and dignity (prestige) agglomeration.

The preceding paragraphs have helped to approach social power and demonstrate its interconnections with social context at large. It shows that the concept of social power corresponds well to the study's view of international system in societal terms (see Ch. 5.2.1). In the following subchapter the concept of social power will be introduced and further explained.

#### **5.2.2.2 Social Power and bases of (social) power**

This chapter will now turn to social power in more detail. Overall, there are different approaches to social power (Bosworth 2011). It appears to be a concept, which is somewhat scattered. Furthermore, the discussion over 'bases of social power' (Wiswede 1985: 232) cuts across various disciplines of social sciences, such as sociology, political science and social psychology (Wiswede 1985: 232)<sup>259</sup>. Van Ham (2010: 159) mentions that the concept of social power is seldomly used in IR.

#### Social Power

After having introduced social power, this present study will predominantly build on the approaches by Keith Dowding; John Harsanyi and French/Raven (Bosworth 2011; Gold 2011)<sup>260</sup>. Their accounts will be supplemented by the approaches by other authors, who make mentioning of (apparent) subdimensions of social power (namely, van Ham 2010 and Lake 2013). I believe that strategic partnerships are a form of '[...] power [which, N.H.] is exercised long before individuals [or international actors, N.H.] try to influence

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<sup>259</sup> Even though Wiswede (1985: 233-237) further mentions motivations for power and some power forms of rewards, such as power over status, amongst others, as well as scope of power and distribution of power, he does not further elaborate on the very bases of power.

<sup>260</sup> There is also an alternative definition of social power by Brian Barry: Social power is '[...] the ability to bring about desired states of the world by acting in such a way as to overcome the resistance of others' (Bosworth 2011: 617). His definition, however, will not be used here as his concentration on 'overcoming another actor's resistance' is limited in my view. Furthermore, he excludes dimensions such as 'persuasion' and 'authority' and, particularly, disregards the resources of social power (Bosworth 2011: 617). Especially the latter fact appears to be rather helpful when trying to use social power as an analytical tool.

policy outputs' (Dowding 1991: 2). I will build on the social power-approach as well as the categories of social resources (bases) in further designing the analytical concept for my research on strategic partnerships.

According to Bosworth (2011: 616), 'social power can be defined as the ability to achieve desired outcomes by deliberately changing the incentive structure of others'. Or as Gold (2011: 66) has put it, social power is '[...] the ability to get others to do one's will [...]'. Bosworth further mentions that social power as a concept is only '[...] one side of the analytic distinction' (Bosworth 2011: 616). The other side of the conceptual coin is normally called 'outcome power' [which; NH] is the ability to achieve desired outcomes' (Bosworth 2011: 616). At the same time, Bosworth admits that social power is indeed '[...] a form of outcome power' (Bosworth 2011: 616). The distinction between social and outcome power is, thus, artificial in a sense that it is not ontological. Instead, this differentiation simply serves analytical purposes in studying power in society (Bosworth 2011: 616). Both forms of power investigate the '[...] ability to get one what one wants' (Bosworth 2011: 616). Thereby, social power is one particular mode of doing so (Bosworth 2011: 616). It is exercised between an 'influencing agent' and a 'target' (Bosworth 2011: 616) or 'object of the attempted or successful influence' (Gold 2011: 66). Influencing agents have social power '[...] which are the means they may use to influence targets' (Gold 2011: 66)<sup>261</sup>.

After having briefly introduced social power, the study will now turn to Dowding's; Harsanyi's and French/Raven's accounts of social power and social resources/bases. The before mentioned analytic differentiation between social power and outcome power has originally been introduced by Keith M. Dowding and his book 'Rational Choice and Political Power' (Bosworth 2011: 616). He there defines 'social power' as '[...] the ability of actors to deliberately change the incentive structures of others'; and 'outcome power' as '[...] the ability of an actor to bring about some outcome' (Dowding 1991: 2) Thereby, social power is characterised by 'power over'- and outcome power by 'power to'-dimensions (Bosworth 2011: 616).

Crucially, the study will not track the working process of social power leading up to outcome power<sup>262</sup>. This is due to the fact that this project focuses on the bases of

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<sup>261</sup> Interestingly, van Ham (2010: 44) argues that '[...] in order to keep what is desirable and change what is no longer needed, Great Powers use both hard and social power'. He also mentions in this context that 'all Great Powers use social power to frame foreign policy in a way conducive to their strategic interests, pushing images and concepts that discursively legitimize their leadership' (2010: 44).

<sup>262</sup> For more information regarding the separation of social and outcome power see, for example, Bosworth 2011: 618-619.

social power, which will be addressed in the subsequent subchapter. As a result, it will also outpicture the dimensions of 'power over' and 'power to'<sup>263</sup>. In brief, the study concentrates on investigating the bases of (social) power at work when establishing and maintaining a strategic partnership.

Importantly, social power necessitates '[...] a social relationship between two or more actors' (Bosworth 2011: 616). As this study depicts strategic partnerships as social relationships, it will assume that social power is at work between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa, respectively.

Social power, thereby, includes a dimension of manipulation, namely the '[...] manipulation of another actor's incentive structure in the hope that it will bring about some desired end' (Bosworth 2011: 616). Social power signifies an attempt to change another actor's 'beliefs', 'attitudes', 'behavior' or 'emotions' (Gold 2011: 66). In elaborating on Dowding's approach, Bosworth explains that manipulating the incentive structure of other actors denotes a '[...] a hope that it will bring about some desired end' (Bosworth 2011: 616). Thereby, following Dowding, an actor may be conscious of the manipulation of his/her incentive structure: if interests are harmonious, there is still social power at work (Bosworth 2011: 618). As a result, actor A may reward actor B, who is aware of this rewarding act. Actor A then still disposes of social power as actor B does not need to be unconscious of this act of social power (Bosworth 2011: 618). Hence, social power does not need to be executed in a hidden or secretive manner.

Thus, we can deduce that social power is strategic because it is oriented towards an objective. However, at the same time the notion of 'hope' indicates that there is no automatism of social power. Crucially, social power focuses, thereby, on modifying another actor's incentive structure. By contrast, the thereby achieved outcome is outcome power ('power to'-dimension) (Bosworth 2011: 616).

Overall, it shows that social power is closely linked to the concept of (social) influence<sup>264</sup>. As Gold (2011: 66) explains, 'social power consists of the available tools

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<sup>263</sup> 'Power over'-dimensions are linked to a conception where actor A controls actor B by exercising influence (Barnett/Duvall 2005: 46; van Ham 2010: 22). The 'power-to'-dimension, by contrast, is indeed more linked to social relations of constitution, whereby '[...] social relations define who the actors are and what capacities and practices they are socially empowered to undertake [...]'. However, this view of 'power to' underestimates the capacities of actors (van Ham 2010: 22). This does not correspond to the study's fundament of a dual view of agency and structure.

<sup>264</sup> Similarly, van Ham (2010: 3) views social power as working underneath the surface and penetrating social relationships (amongst others). Moreover, it is highly 'contextual' and should be investigated as a 'long-term process' (van Ham 2010: 3). Additionally, social power is '[...] intangible and versatile' (van Ham 2010: 5), which also shows the benefit of basing the present study on scientific realism if aiming to understand strategic partnerships in the context of social power. What is more, Johnston mentions that

one person has to exert influence over another'. Thus, social power has also been described as 'potential influence' or rather 'social influence'<sup>265</sup> (Gold 2011: 69-70). French/Raven (1959: 152) mentions that 'commonly social influence takes place though an intentional act [...]', whereby the act does not need to be consciously executed (French/Raven 1959: 152). By drawing on social power resources, a so called 'influencing agent' tries to influence the so called 'target (of influence)' (Gold 2011: 66). Social power is, thereby, the (potential) means for influence (Gold 2011: 66; French/Raven 1959: 152).

Hence, in order to investigate social power, we need to look at the bases of social power, which are a) at work by establishing strategic partnership in the first place; and b) which are used within strategic partnerships destined to change the partner's incentive structure. Put differently, the study will not only look at the establishment of the strategic partnership as an outcome itself but instead also focus on the social power resources being at the respective strategic partners' disposal for attempting social power within a strategic partnership. Thus, I will now turn to social resources and bases of power.

#### *Social resources and bases of (social) power*

Bosworth defines social resources as '[...] the means to affect other actors' incentive structures (Bosworth 2011: 617). Hence, social power resources are the instruments for (the attempt of) executing social power. There are different 'social resources', which can be used to influence (manipulate) the incentive structure of another actor (Bosworth 2011: 617). I will 'fusion' the accounts of John Harsanyi (1969) and French/Raven (1959) regarding social power resources and 'bases of power' (Gold 2011), which are quite similar.

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'status maximization' may be a 'subprocess' of 'social influence' (Johnston 2008: 20; 82-83). He defines 'social influence' as a '[...] microprocess whereby a novice's behavior is judged by the in-group and rewarded with backpatting or status markers or punished by opprobrium and status devaluation' (Johnston 2008: 24). Status markers need not be material. Johnston compares status markers with 'medals' or 'public recognition' (Johnston 2008: 83, 84). Hence, we can deduce that granting a certain status may be an immaterial reward (Johnston 2008: 24-25, 83). Johnston goes on by stating that 'the rewards and punishments are social because only groups can provide them, and only groups whose approval an actor values will have this influence' (Johnston 2008: 25).

<sup>265</sup> Indeed, social power may be understood as 'potential influence' (Gold 2011: 70). Based on the 'power/interaction model of interpersonal influence' by French/Raven (Gold 2011: 69), social influence then again can be defined as '[...] (a) a change in the belief, attitude, or behaviour of a target of influence that has its origin in an influencing agent, or (b) stability or lack of change that is similarly attributable to an influencing agent' (Gold 2011: 69-70). The actual process of influencing is beyond the study's scope and focus. However, French/Raven model of power/interaction (Gold 2011: 69-71) could possibly be used in future research, which analyse and traces the process of social influence and social change (of incentive structures). By contrast, this study will limit itself to first make sense of the social power bases available within the working of the strategic partnerships.

Firstly, John Harsanyi outlines four predominant ways to influence: 'information', 'legitimate authority', 'unconditional incentives (positive and negative)', and 'conditional incentives (positive and negative)' (Harsanyi 1969: 230; Bosworth 2011: 617).

When an actor possesses *information*, it may use this very information in order to argue another actor into doing something by having modified this actor's incentive structure. This information may consist of new or consistent argumentation, which may incentivize an actor to change his/her opinion or stance. This change of position may be in the actor's interest because it may be more sincere against the background of the new information provided (Bosworth 2011: 617).

*Legitimate authority* functions along a similar rationale as the possession of information. Actor A may have legitimate authority, which may be helpful in changing actor B's incentive structure because of actor B's wish to '[...] appeal to legitimate authority' (Bosworth 2011: 617). Thus, authority may function 'both as a resource of power and as a legitimation of power [...]' (Connolly 1993: 110). Moreover, van Ham (2010: 4) mentions that legitimate authority may be the social power of a state<sup>266</sup>. Additionally, Lake (2013) mentions that, in addition to international status hierarchies, there are also 'authority hierarchies' (Lake 2013: 563): a state may use '[...] *legitimate* power over many or fewer aspects of another's foreign security or economic policies' (sic). Authority is, similarly to status, both 'relational' and 'intersubjective' (Lake 2013: 563) and can be defined as 'rightful rule' based on 'tradition' amongst others (Lake 2013: 564).

Moreover, *unconditional* and *conditional incentives* include positive and negative dimensions. Whereas the positive dimension denotes the holding out the prospect of a reward for acting in a certain way, the negative incentive includes punishment if a certain action is not carried out (Bosworth 2011: 617). The difference between conditional and unconditional (positive or negative) incentives lies in the fact that in the former case a reward or the punishment is only placed if the action is in fact carried out. In the latter case the action does not necessarily have to be taken out in order to be rewarded or punished (Bosworth 2011: 617). Importantly, Bosworth mentions that these social power resources need to be 'credible' (2011: 617), e.g., in terms of 'reputation' or 'power'

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<sup>266</sup> As a result, the state's '[...] actions and policies are [...believed to be; NH] necessary and legitimate' (van Ham 2010: 14). 'Legitimacy is a political construct that derives from many sources: tradition, divine revelation, charisma, formal-legal rules' (Lake 2009: 8). It is different from authority, which is 'rightful rule' (Lake 2009: 8). Legitimacy is usually put into context with authority, which is 'formal power' qua government or institution (Onuf 1989: 238). Onuf equates 'legitimate power' with 'authority' (Onuf 1989: 239). Moreover, van Ham (2010: 14) mentions that '[...] legitimacy is a powerful method to justify foreign policy actions and to gather support for them' in international relations. Crucially, he also argues that 'what is considered legitimate, and which process generates legitimacy, has changed remarkably over time. But one constant remains: those who determine what is legitimate have social power' (van Ham 2010: 14).

(Bosworth 2011: 617), in order to be fruitful. This may involve a certain 'cost' (Bosworth 2011: 617) for the actor disposing of this base of social power (Bosworth 2011: 617). Moreover, '[...] gaining legitimate authority and preserving that legitimate authority' (Bosworth 2011: 617) may cause expenses for an actor (Bosworth 2011: 617)<sup>267</sup>. Harsanyi's approach corresponds well with Dowding's elaboration who regards 'persuasion', 'authority' as well as '(conditional and unconditional) incentives' as 'subcategories' of social power (Bosworth 2011: 618).

Secondly, the approach of John R. P. French (Jr.) and Bertram H. Raven<sup>268</sup> is quite instructive in getting to grips with social power bases used for social influence (Bosworth 2011: 66; French/Raven 1959: 155-165). Their approach is quite similar to Harsanyi's account as they mention similar categories of social resources, which they yet call the 'bases of power' (Gold 2011: 66). These bases of power are 'informational', 'reward', 'coercion', 'legitimacy', 'expertise', and 'referent' (Gold 2011: 66). Before I will elaborate on these different social power bases, it is important to note that French/Raven differentiate between 'socially independent change' and 'socially dependent change' (Gold 2011: 66). Basically, the difference lies in whether the target relates the change in his/her incentive structure to the agent of change (Gold 2011: 67). In the case of socially independent change, the target does not need to relate the change to the agent of change. In the case of socially dependent change, however, the change has to be associated with the agent of change (Gold 2011: 67). This differentiation comes into play when differentiating between the different social power resources.

The first social power base mentioned by French/Raven is 'informational power' (Gold 2011: 67). *Informational power*, which signifies 'persuasion' (Gold 2011: 67), is grounded in '[...] the information or logical argument that the agent can present to the target' (Gold 2011: 67). It equals Harsanyi's possession of information and is similar to Johnston's definition of 'persuasion'<sup>269</sup> (Johnston 2008: 25)<sup>270</sup>. *Informational power* as a

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<sup>267</sup> The study will not measure the degree or amount of an actor's social power. See, for example, Bosworth (2011: 617) and French/Raven (1959: 165), who make reference as to how social power can be measured and under which conditions it is successful.

<sup>268</sup> Gold (2011: 66) mentions that their original approach has been further developed over time.

<sup>269</sup> Johnston (2008: 25) defines 'persuasion' as a '[...] a microprocess whereby novices are convinced through a process of cognition that particular norms, values, and causal understandings are correct and ought to be operative in their own behavior'. Persuasion is a 'microprocess of socialisation [...]' (Johnston 2008: 25) and a 'prevalent tool of social influence' (Johnston 2008: 155).

<sup>270</sup> 'Persuasion' also forms part of Nye's soft power-approach (Nye 2011: 93-94). As Nye (2011: 93) puts it, persuasion is '[...] the use of argument to influence the beliefs and actions of others without the threat of force or promise of payment'. Again, it shows that soft power may be part of social power.

base of influence is, thereby, socially independent as it does not have to be provided by the agent of change directly (Gold 2011: 67)<sup>271</sup>.

Secondly, French/Raven mention 'coercive power' and 'reward power', which are social power bases relating to socially dependent change (Gold 2011: 67). These two dimensions require 'surveillance' by the agent of change in terms of whether an action is carried or not. *Coercive power* is grounded in 'the threat of punishment [...]'. *Reward power*, by contrast, is based on '[...] the ability to grant some reward to the target, such as a promise of promotion or offering of certain privileges for complying with a request' (Gold 2011: 67). It shows that coercive power and reward power mirror Harsanyi's (un-/conditional) positive or negative incentives (Bosworth 2011: 617). Crucially, both coercive and reward power may be tangible as well as intangible (Gold 2011: 67-68).

Thirdly, the other three bases of power – 'expert power', 'referent power' and 'legitimate power' (Gold 2011: 68-69) – may '[...] lead to socially dependent change with surveillance unnecessary' (Gold 2011: 68). Hence, the agent of change does not need to monitor the target's behaviour. Nevertheless, these three social power bases need to be related to the agent of change by the target in order to be effective (Gold 2011: 68). As Gold (2011: 68) has put it, '[...] the success of the influence attempt [...] is socially dependent because it depends on qualities that the influencing agent is perceived to possess [...]'].

*Expert power* works in a similar way as informational power. However, it does not function via the target's persuasion in the light of a certain information or logical argument. Instead, it is rather the target's belief in the (superior) expertise and believability on the side of the influencing agent, which incentivizes the change in incentive structure (Gold 2011: 68; French/Raven 1959: 164).

*Referent power* functions via the target's positive identification with the agent of change. Referent power is closely related to quite personal dimensions, such as admiration, liking or positive feelings. It signifies that the target feels like being close and/or similar to the influencing agent, which incentivizes social change (Gold 2011: 68). Referent power may also be at work with regard to a 'reference group' and 'prestige suggestion' (French/Raven 1959: 162): the target of influence may adopt the opinions of a '[...] prestigious person or group' [...in order to; NH] be associated or identified [...; with this person or group; NH]. I think that referent power is very close to Nye's soft

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<sup>271</sup> Informational power or persuasion also matches Johnston view of 'socialisation', which signifies 'noncoercive diplomatic influence attempts' (Johnston 2008: 1). Socialisation attempts are geared towards "changing the minds" of others, at persuading, cajoling, or shaming them to accept, and hopefully internalize, new facts. Figures, arguments, norms, and causal understandings about particular issues' (Johnston 2008: 1). Thus, socialising other actors in a particular way may very well be a diplomatic objective (Johnston 2008: 1).

power because both soft power and referent power may work via the power of attraction or prestige (Nye 2004: 5; French/Raven 1959: 162-163). As a consequence, social power comprises soft power dimensions<sup>272</sup>.

Last but not least, *legitimate power* has several subdimensions. Essentially, it flows from '[...] social norms, such that the target feels an obligation to comply with the requests by the agent' (Gold 2011: 68). Legitimate power necessitates the target consent in '[...] the right of the influencing agent to require the changed behaviour, and the target's sense of obligation to comply' (Gold 2011: 68). There are *four subdimensions of legitimate power*: 'position', 'reciprocity', 'equity' and 'responsibility' (Gold 2011: 68). Firstly, the 'legitimate position power' (Gold 2011: 69) is linked to '[...] a certain position in an organisation, society, or group, and the power that comes with that position'. Thereby, it is associated with a hierarchy, whereby Gold (2011: 69) indicates that this need not be a formal hierarchy. Context is crucial in considering legitimate position power (Gold 2011: 69). I think that this subdimension of legitimate position power is close to Harsanyi's concept of legitimate authority. Interestingly, French/Raven (1959: 158, 159) mentions that legitimate power is related to sociological notions (amongst others): they explicitly mention the '[...] legitimacy of authority which has long been explored by sociologists, particularly by Weber [...]' (French/Raven 1959: 159). Furthermore, they argue that this legitimacy of authority does not have to relate to the concept of roles (French/Raven 1959: 159). Instead, they argue that social structure may be '[...] another basis for legitimate power' (French/Raven 1959: 160). This social structure may be a 'group' or a 'society', which include 'a hierarchy of authority' (French/Raven 1959: 160). Moreover, legitimate power may also be granted via 'the designation by a legitimizing agent' (French/Raven 1959: 160). This is echoed by van Ham<sup>273</sup> (2010: 4) by stating that '[...] legitimacy may confer power [...]' (van Ham 2010: 4). Even though legitimacy is not the same as power, it is '[...] one method to socialise

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<sup>272</sup> A similar argument has been made by van Ham (2010: 4) who states that 'social power is often used to advance policy issues not against the interests of others, but by co-opting other actors, rather than coercing them'. Thereby, it sounds similar to Nye's soft power, which is based '[...] on the ability to shape preferences of others' (Nye 2004: 5). Particularly, soft power is '[...] the power to attract (Nye 2004: 6). Or as Nye has (fully) defined in 2011, soft power is '[...] the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes' (Nye 2011: 20-21). Thereby, '[...] soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction' (Nye 2004: 6). Crucially, co-opting (primarily) functions without '[...] carrots and sticks' (Nye 2011: 16; 20-22, 84, 91-100).

<sup>273</sup> Even though van Ham's approach (2010) also builds on social power in international politics, it is very much influenced by a constructivist perspective working with norms and rules (van Ham 2010: 8) This is why van Ham (2010: 8) defines social power '[...] as the ability to set standards, and create norms and values that are deemed legitimate and desirable, without resorting to coercion or payment. Even though I agree with van Ham (2010: 8) in the belief that social power transcends Nye's soft power approach including 'attraction' and 'persuasion' (van Ham 2010: 8; Nye 2004: 5, 6), I will only borrow elements from van Ham's approach. Instead, I will more strongly make usage of a sociological perspective.

power' (van Ham 2010: 4). Van Ham (2010: 160) further adds that 'the ability and capability to legitimate foreign policy *in the eyes of others* is the staple of social power' [sic]. My hunch is that this social power base subcategory is crucial to understanding the strategic partnerships as social relationships. Furthermore, it is quite similar to Harsanyi's mentioning of 'legitimate authority'. Secondly, the 'legitimate power of reciprocity' (Gold 2011: 69) follows a 'tit-for-tat'-rationale. As Gold (2011: 69) puts it, 'reciprocity is a basic social norm, so basic that many respond automatically without thinking when the legitimate power of reciprocity is invoked'. Thirdly, the 'legitimate power of equity' (Gold 2011: 69) is grounded in the social norm of legitimate rights and legitimate claims. For example, if agent X has fulfilled an important task successfully, the social norm implies that he/she should be rewarded for accomplishing this task. The legitimate power of equity may also involve a 'compensatory norm' (Gold 2011: 69), whereby agent A acquires '[...] the social power to ask the target to compensate the agent to make things right' (Gold 2011: 69). Fourthly, the 'legitimate power of responsibility' (Gold 2011: 69) reflects the social norm of being responsible for the support of helpless actors. This form of legitimate power may also be named the '*power of dependence*' or the '*legitimate power of the powerless*' (Gold 2011: 69; sic). It is worth noting that the last two subcategories of legitimate power are grounded in '[...] the target's feeling of guilt' (Gold 2011: 69) in the context of actions in the past or future (Gold 2011: 69).

Overall, the approaches by Harsanyi and French/Raven appear very similar, which 'justifies' their 'fusion' for the purpose of this study. In fact, the notion 'bases' could be reframed into 'resources'. 'Resources are means to ends [...]' (Onuf 1989: 285). Thus, we need to also look at states' (social) resources in order to grasp the (potential) bases of (social) power<sup>274</sup>. Hence, the bases of social power include the following resources:

1. information/informational power;
2. (un-/conditional) positive or negative incentives (rewards/reward power or punishments/coercive power);
3. expert power;
4. referent power; and
5. legitimate power, which comprises

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<sup>274</sup> Interestingly, similar power bases, namely 'legitimate', 'referent', 'expert', 'reward' and 'coercive' (Baack et al. 2013: 388-390) are also known in international marketing in the context of 'marketing channel power' of 'channel partners' (Baack et al. 2013: 389, 388). Channel partners, thereby, are '[...] organisations with relationships that help move products from producers to consumers' (Baack et al. 2013: 388).

- a. legitimate position power/legitimate authority;
- b. legitimate power of reciprocity;
- c. legitimate power of equity; and
- d. legitimate power of responsibility.

These bases of social power, presumed to be at work within strategic partnerships as social relationships, will be incorporated into the analytical model. To this very analytical model, which is the first step of the study's abductive research strategy will be at the centre of the next chapter's attention. There I will provide an overview of the study's deductively-derived understanding of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and social relationships as foreign policy tools of social power.

### **5.3 (Deductively-derived) Analytical Model**

The following figure gives a résumé of the results of *understanding* and *theorising* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa on the basis of a concept-building informed by realist social conceptual model. It will serve as the sensitising concept, which will be applied to the three case studies as an analytical framework.

As planned, it is built on Goertz' and Archer's modes of concept-building merging Goertz' basic (Cycle 3; 'Structural modification'] and secondary-levels ('Social Interaction'; Cycle 2) as well as Archer's three cycles (see Figure 3 on the basis of Figure 2). Furthermore, the model reflects the study's assumptions of structure and agency (Cycle 1; 'Structural Conditioning' and 'Agency').

As relates to the content, the analytical model is deductively-derived and theoretically-informed. The EU as an established actor and the three partner countries as emerging regional powers compete and cooperate in an interdependent world characterized by global challenges (assumptions about structure and agency). As their shaping power (Hess 2013) in international politics is dependent, the system-structure incentivizes the need (will) to work together with several partners (logic of situation). With regard to the study's goal of understanding the underlying powers and dimensions of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa we have *understood* by now that strategic partnerships are strategic alliances, which are part of the strategy of

cooperating while competing<sup>275</sup>, and social relationships. Within strategic alliances, the strategic partners aim, overall, for the goal of policy coordination (cooperation, adaptation). Furthermore, the EU tries to manage the emerging regional powers' rise against the background of trying to keep power. Thereby, the EU engages (socialises) its strategic partners at several levels (bilateral, regional and global). Brazil, India and South Africa, on the other hand, are presumed to be striving to increase power. Moreover, all partners seek status recognition from establishing a strategic partnership and try to demonstrate power in the context of the policy of prestige. Whereas the EU seeks status recognition as an international actor and partner, the emerging regional powers seek status recognition with regard to their increased status and strive towards becoming major powers. In brief, the strategic partners as strategic alliance-partners do cooperate (neoliberal module) but also compete for power and influence as powers in a (multipolar or multipower) setting within an international hierarchy (neo-/realist module).

What is more, the strategic partners interact socially within an international society consisting of social groups as well as structurally grounded and socially positioned agents. Strategic partnerships are social relationships, where social powers, potentially derived from various bases of power, are at work. Social power is inherently relational. The bases of power may be, informational power; reward or coercive power (using positive or negative incentives); expert power; legitimate power. Overall, strategic partnerships are both status/ condition and process. Moreover, they are foreign policy tools serving power both as an end and as a means.

This analytical model will be the sensitising concept and analytical framework, which will be applied in the analysis of cases (see Ch. 7). Before analysing cases, I will now turn to the project's overall research design and methodology in order to prepare for analysis.

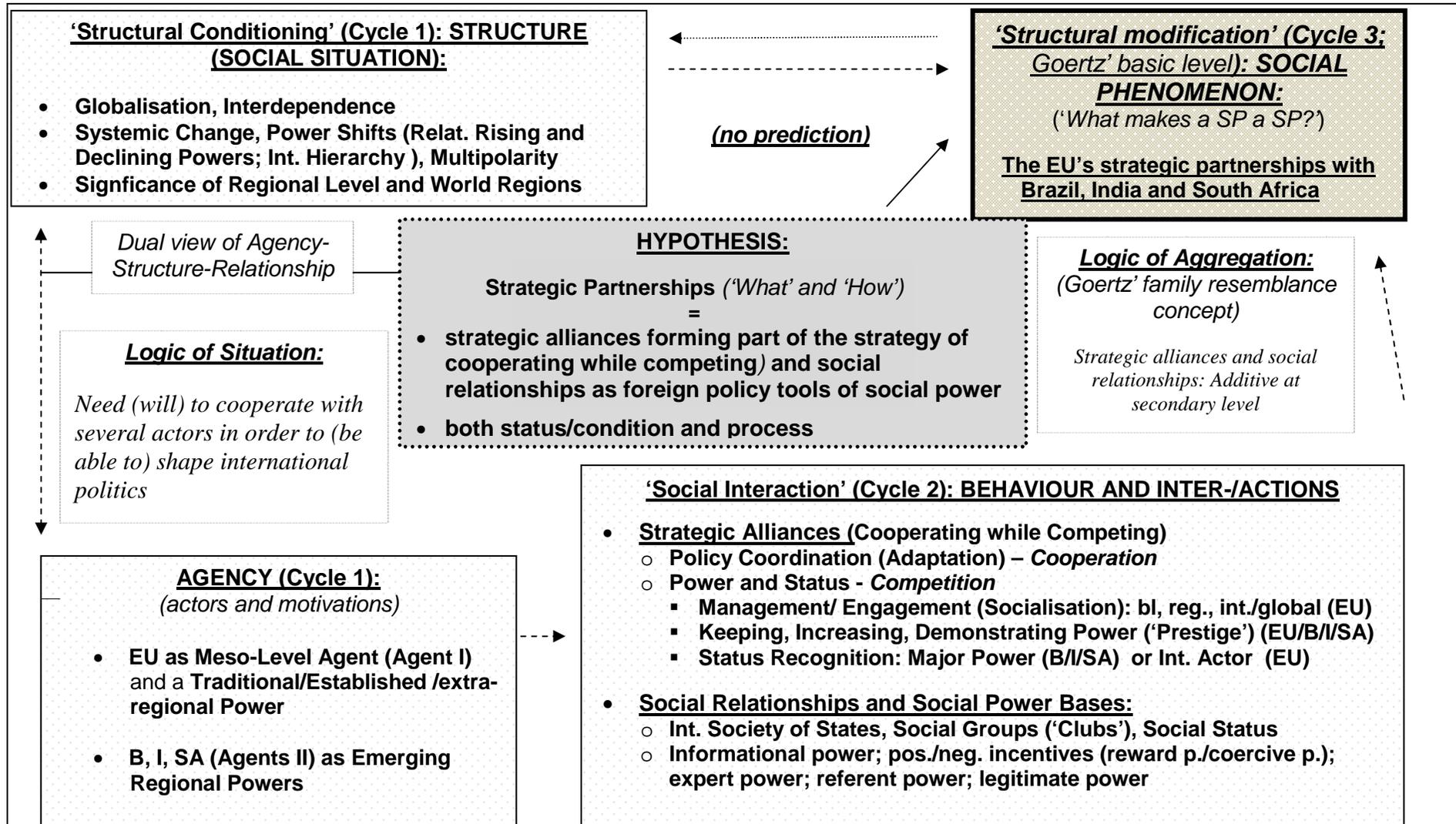
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<sup>275</sup> One could argue that the strategy of cooperating while competing represents a grand strategy for agents against the background of the international system's characteristics.



**Figure 4: (Sensitising, deductively-derived) Analytical Model**

(Figure 2 and 3 adapted and informed by Archer's morphogenetic approach ('social structuring') (1995); Goertz concept-building)



## **6. Research Design and Methodology**

Chapter Four is the chapter on the preparation for analysis in terms of research design and methodology. It consists of three sections: I will first outline the study's *research design*. There, I will elaborate on the choice of and for an exploratory, qualitative and cross-case study design. Furthermore, I will explain in greater detail the project's case selection and the logic of comparison. In a second step, the *proceeding of analysis* is described and particularities of foreign policy-making (both with regard to the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa respectively) are briefly outlined. Thirdly, the chapter ends with indicating the mode of data selection, collection, analysis and interpretation. Overall, this chapter prepares for analysis (Ch. 7).

### **6.1 Research Design**

All parts of a study need to be interlinked and compatible. As Leander (2008: 12) points out, 'there is a two-way relationship between research questions, theoretical approaches and the methods tied to them'. After I have clearly outlined my research question(s), my (meta-)theoretical fundament, and the deductively-derived analytical model, this chapter will now address the study's research design. This research design needs to be harmonised with my research question(s) and my (meta-) theoretical approach. As Pickel et al. (2009: 12) note, the research question and the research object determine the crucial criteria for choosing a study's methodology. Essentially, the research design needs to serve a 'purpose' (Gerring 2009: 71), which is determined by the inferences to be made by the study (Gerring 2009: 71).

To this end, let me briefly revisit the study's research goals its achievements so far. The study aims to *understand* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. To this end, the study follows an abductive research strategy in building a (middle-range) concept of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa consisting of theoretical building blocs. By now, I have established the deductive part of the theoretical building blocs: the deductively-derived analytical model (see Ch. 5.3; Figure 4). Along these lines, I have successfully developed my analytical model of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and as foreign policy tools of social power based on scientific realist social theory. It will be applied in the three empirical case studies (see Ch. 7). This chapter now prepares for analysis of the three case studies, which will offer the inductive inferences enriching the (established) analytical model.

In order to demonstrate the sound interlinkages of the study's various parts, the following subchapters will outline the dissertation's overall research design against the background of its research objectives and research approach. Firstly, the meta-theoretical basis of the study will be revisited in order to assess if there are methodological implications following from the dual view of the agency-structure-relationship and scientific realist social theory (Ch. 6.1.1). In this context, I will clearly state the level and the object of analysis against the background of the concept built on Goertz' and Archer's premises (see Ch. 4.1.4). Secondly, I will make mentioning of the implications of this exploratory study in terms of an exploratory research design (Ch. 6.1.2). Thereby, the study's research goals can be met best by following qualitative and interpretative research approaches. Thirdly, the abductive research strategy will be reviewed by outlining linkages to the qualitative data material and data collection as well as Grounded Theory (Ch. 6.1.3). The fourth subchapter will extensively elaborate on the case study method, which the study combines with a cross-regional comparative perspective (Ch. 6.1.4). Important considerations and delimitations will be made within this chapter regarding the sample of cases as well as the selection and comparison of cases. As strategic partnerships are part of foreign policy, Subchapter 6.1.5 will, fifthly, consider Foreign Policy Analysis as a brief prelude to the later chapter on foreign policy-making of the strategic partners (Ch. 6.2). Seventhly, the study's time frame is considered (Ch. 6.1.6). The last subchapter (Ch. 6.1.7) serves to conclude and to lead over to the exact steps of analysis (Ch. 6.2) before considering the study's selection, collection and analysis (interpretation) of data material (Ch. 6.3).

### **6.1.1 Preliminary meta-theoretical considerations**

The scientific-realist epistemology and, thus, methodology, of my study follows realist social theory. The philosophy of realism, in general, does not foresee a particular methodology or method. There have been numerous critics debating how to possibly design a realist empirical study (see Carter/New 2004: 15). So how then can or should I design my study with a (scientific) realist social basis? As mentioned briefly in the Chapter on the structure and agency debate (see Ch. 3.1.1.3), a realist social theoretical approach has certain epistemological and, hence, methodological implications. Generally, researchers work with via retroduction<sup>276</sup> in order to understand the

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<sup>276</sup> Retroduction means '[...] the inference of generative mechanisms from patterns of outcomes' (Carter/New 2004: 25).

concurrence of interacting mechanisms. The social phenomenon is *understood* by its mechanisms at the underlying level (see Carter/New 2004: 25).

Here, the study's realist social theoretical view implies that the scholar develops a model, which takes into account the interrelatedness of pre-existing structures and the agents in order to account for the dual view of structure and agency (Carter/New 2004: 14). Archer's morphogenetic model-building allows for doing so. Furthermore, as I seek to *understand* strategic partnerships, I need to *understand* the strategic partners as agents and their interrelationship (Archer's Cycle 2/ Goertz secondary level). Thereby, the international system-structure in this study is to be seen as the systemic and social context for enabling/constraining/de-/motivating actions. Agents and their powers are structurally and socially grounded. Against this background, the study will investigate agents' powers and interactions, which are embedded in their decisions, materially-based capabilities and social capacities (flowing from group membership; Carter/New 2004: 14).

After having revisited the meta-theoretical foundations of the study and the 'objects' and the level for investigation, I will now turn to the exploratory nature of this study.

### **6.1.2 Exploratory, qualitative and interpretative design**

For some topics, the fundament of research may be limited in terms of prevailing knowledge and literature. Hence, in those cases there are hardly concepts or hypotheses to build on. As a result, studies in these areas are automatically exploratory most of the time (Yin 1994: 28-29). The proposed research project has an exploratory design. Exploratory research in the social sciences can be described as: 'a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, pre-arranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalisations leading to description and understanding of an area of social [...] life' (Stebbins 2001: 3). Hence, even though I will analyse three individual case studies of the EU's strategic partnerships and the strategic partners' respective interaction, the comparative perspective is geared towards creating (limited) 'generalisable understanding' (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 47).

It is important to note that I will not start from a hypothetico-deductive research approach, which takes pre-existing theories for granted and tests these theories along the lines of hypotheses and corresponding variables (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 16). As a result, I

will refrain from a hypothetico-deductive research, where the researcher formulates empirically substantial, precise hypotheses at the beginning of the research project. This hypothetico-deductive approach could actually endanger the exploratory nature of my study amongst others (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 38).

The exploratory nature of the study's research strategy is (amongst others) characteristic for qualitative investigations (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 37). Even though the case study design of a study does not presuppose qualitative research (Yin 1994: 14), the qualitative research strategy as well as corresponding qualitative methods are, thereby, believed to be most suitable to the achievement of the research goals by analysing the (self-)acquired data and material qualitatively. Thus, for the purposes of an empirically-rich, yet theoretical knowledge-building, I will engage in a theory-led proceeding of qualitative research. Qualitative and interpretative techniques are an established part of empirical methods within social sciences (Strübing 2008: 79). Generally, qualitative analysis, also within single case studies, helps to build theory (amongst others) (Mayring 2008: 20-22).

In the following I will revisit the project's abductive research strategy by showing how it combines with the qualitative data material.

### **6.1.3 Deduction and inductive findings: abductive model meets with qualitative data**

Following exclusively either deductive or inductive reasoning (based on empirical data) will not suffice for (new) theory-building in qualitative research: deductive reasoning only reformulates existing knowledge and inductive reasoning only generalises singular observations. Neither on its own generates new knowledge (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23). From a methodological point of view, the scholar, who engages in theoretical concept-building working on the basis of qualitative data, needs to keep the following in mind: qualitatively-developed concepts need to be both empirically backed up and theoretically informed. The researcher, thus, uses both theoretical pre-knowledge and empirical data material in order to build new concepts with qualitative data (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23).

Therefore, the study, which engages in concept-building geared towards theoretical building blocs, works with an abductive<sup>277</sup> (however, non-causal<sup>278</sup>) proceeding combining deduction and induction. Abduction should not be confused with the before mentioned retroduction<sup>279</sup> (see Ch. 6.1.1). Basically, abduction reconstructs the empirically-founded generation of concepts and theoretical propositions as a process, which allows for the methodologically controlled combination of theoretical pre-knowledge with empirical knowledge derived from observation (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 13). Hence, the researcher does not start from a general law or rule used as an explanation. Instead, an unexpected or surprising phenomenon is the starting point to construct via abduction a new class or new rule.

As a result, I will develop the study's concept on the basis of empirical (qualitative) data but in a theoretically informed way (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23). Hence, the concept here emerges from both pre-existing theoretical knowledge as well as empirical data material (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23). As a result, I will start with my 'more or less explicit' and 'more or less (theoretically) abstract' pre-knowledge (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 39), whereby the researcher's and the actors theoretical as well as everyday knowledge can be linked (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 39).

Thus, as I have developed my analytical model in the first part of the study, I will now apply it in the analysis of three case studies (EU-Brazil, EU-India and EU-South Africa). In order to apply and further refine the (developed) analytical concept, the study resorts to the case study method. The three case studies will also offer a 'reality check' to the deductively-generated analytical model. The proceeding is now as follows: First, the before (deductively) developed analytical model will be applied (not tested) in the three (individual) case studies. Secondly, the three case studies will be cross-compared with a cross-case/regional comparative perspective<sup>280</sup> (see Ch. 6.1.4.2.4). Both the case

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<sup>277</sup> Abduction (hypothetical reasoning) as a model has been developed by Charles Sanders Pierce (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 13).

<sup>278</sup> Hypotheses following from abduction are, thus, hypotheses on a new general law, which explains an unexpected phenomenon. As I aim at *understanding*, it is important to keep in mind that the study's conceptual model will not be geared towards (causal) laws. Note that abduction is no method; it is instead a mode of how new explanations evolve against the background of unexpected facts (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 25).

<sup>279</sup> 'Retroductive inference moves from a knowledge of events to a knowledge of mechanisms operating at a deeper level which contribute to the generation of these events' (Higgs/Jones/Scambler 2004: 39). In contrast to retroduction, abduction '[...] also seeks to identify mechanisms but involves a process of inference from lay accounts of the social world to sociological theorising about it' (Higgs/Jones/Scambler 2004: 39).

<sup>280</sup> Note that some authors denote a large-n research design, when speaking of a cross-case research design (Gerring 2009). However, this is not the case with the present study. The cross-case nature of this study's design indicates that there will be a comparative perspective of the three cases included. Hence, the study

study approach and the cross-case study method will enrich the before developed analytical model.

Additionally, the exploratory dimension in the analysis and cross-case comparison of three cases allows for the production of (inductive) findings, which may not be covered by the analytical model. Similarly to the workings of Grounded Theory<sup>281</sup>, my concept will be enriched by the theoretical insights 'emerging' from the data (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 18). This is the point where I, as a researcher, need to be careful not to superimpose my own theoretical presuppositions and to distort the 'emerging' theory (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 18-19)<sup>282</sup>. At a later stage, similarities with the beforehand investigated literature can still be assessed (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 19).

This abductive triangulation of deductive and inductive results is supposed to offer different perspectives of the social phenomenon of strategic partnerships: the study is theoretically grounded but also close to the 'actual' world<sup>283</sup>. Overall, the triangulation of perspectives is also supposed to bestow upon the study higher validity and reliability as its policy-relevance is grounded in theory.

#### **6.1.4 The case study method with a (cross-case-/regional) comparative perspective**

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works not with a comparative method but with a cross-case and cross-regional comparative perspective. I will further elaborate on this matter Ch. 6.1.4.2.4.

<sup>281</sup> Similarly to the proceedings within Grounded Theory ('Gegenstandsbasierte Theorie'; Mayring 2002: 103), theoretical concepts are modified in the process of compiling and evaluating 'text material' in the course of the fieldwork. In so doing, the exploratory perspective of this research project is supported (Mayring 2002: 103-107) by adding inductive findings to the deductively derived theoretical pre-model. I will come back to the dis-/similarities between Grounded Theory and Abduction in Chapter 6.3.

<sup>282</sup> Kelle/Kluge (2010: 21) underline that a researcher cannot develop theoretical concepts in an inductive way only by generalising from empirically observed facts. Furthermore, a researcher cannot dismiss his 'starting point' of research in forms of pre-existing concepts and theories (ibid). However, I agree with Kelle/Kluge (2010: 21) that it is not only hypothetico-deductive research proceedings, which are valid or suitable. Hence, inductive research is not only the subsumption of data but an explanation of data (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23). Empirical observation is always embedded in a theoretical context (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 23).

<sup>283</sup> Furthermore and linked to this, I will enrich my analysis by triangulating results from scholarly sources with primary data retrieved from field research ((qualitative) data triangulation). I will come back to this matter in Ch. 6.3.

Case studies<sup>284</sup> are central to qualitative research approaches (Mayring 2002: 41). The case study research approach generally implies to pursue an in-depth analysis '[...]' of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)' (Gerring 2009: 37). My study follows a case study method with a comparative perspective. It thereby includes a multiple (cross-regional and cross-case) 'small-n' (qualitative) analysis of three single case studies in an exploratory design, which will add to the analytical model developed in the beginning of this research project. Overall, this leaves the study with an exploratory multiple 'small-n' cross-regional and cross-case comparative case study research strategy.

They are particularly suitable for exploratory research strategies (Gerring 2009: 39, 40), which corresponds well with the study here. The exploratory case study method is a method, which conveniently allows for combining theoretical and empirical research within this project. This method is advantageous when it comes to generating innovative theories and 'distilling' more concrete and field-related middle-range models from existing theoretical approaches. Furthermore, the study entails the investigation of few cases, which has the benefit of an in-depth investigation of cases (Gerring 2009: 37) and data material. Case studies also allow for combining different existing theories in a creative way, which is a further advantage of this method (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 128, 129; George/Bennett 2005: 64)<sup>285</sup>.

The research design of my study foresees the analysis of several cases: a multiple (small-n) cross-regional and cross-case (comparative) case study research strategy. It is important to note that even though I analyse several cases, my research

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<sup>284</sup> The term 'case' is often used in a confusing way (see Ragin 2000b: 1; Ragin 2000a: 217; Gerring 2009: 17-18). As Gerring (2009: 19) notes, a case represents 'a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time'. Or as Yin (1994: 3) has put it: a case study helps '[...] to understand complex social phenomena [...] [and, N.H.] allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events [...]'. Yin (1994: 13) further adds that a case study represents an 'empirical inquiry', which analyses 'a contemporary phenomena within its real-life context', particularly when the delimitations between phenomena and context are not clear-cut. Furthermore, a case study could be defined as 'the intensive study of a single case for the purpose of understanding a larger population of cases'. (Ragin 200b: 1). Thus, the notion case hints 'at the idea that the objects of investigation are similar enough and separate enough to permit treating them as comparable instances of the same general phenomenon' (Ragin 200b: 1). Thus, case studies allow for thorough analyses of social phenomena including their context as well as linking cases to a general population. Both dimensions of case studies are important to the present study's research goals.

<sup>285</sup> Thereby, the researcher needs to pay attention to carefully linking up to existing theories in order to avoid 'idiosyncratic theoretical islands' (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 129). This is exactly what I have done in Ch 3.2.2 (by 'checking' existing schools of thought in terms of their explanatory value regarding strategic partnerships. Furthermore, my analytical eclectic approach borrows from various theoretical bodies and, hence, links the developed conceptual model carefully to existing theories and concepts.

design actually involves the investigation of several single cases with a comparative perspective (Patzelt 2005: 37; Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 123). As mentioned before, I need to first understand the single cases and generate individual in-depth knowledge on each case, before the comparison of cases offers the (limited) 'generalisable understanding' in the sense of theory-building (Kruse/Barrelmeyer 2012: 45-47). Thus, as a 'single case study *per se*' (Keman 2005: 203) is not comparative and can only offer internal validity of results (Keman 2005: 203; 211), I have opted for analysing more than one single case study. Analysing three cases implies that I will use a multiple case study research design (in contrast to a single case study research design) (Yin 1994: 44-51; Gerring 2009: 20).

In the following I will first indicate the combination of the study's case study method with a cross-case perspective before turning to its cross-regional perspective from an IR-point of view.

#### **6.1.4.1 Cross-case comparative perspective**

The comparative perspective also entails that the results from the three individual case studies will be cross-compared along the lines of a structured and focused comparison. Via the comparison of cases, my research design is, in essence, 'theory-oriented' (Patzelt 2005: 38). This means that the comparison of cases works via the theoretical concept underlying all cases (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 124). Hence, my case study design can indeed be characterised as comparative and disposing of a 'comparative merit' (Muno 2009: 116).

Thereby, I agree with Gerring (2009: 12) in stating that case studies and cross-case studies are not opposed to each other but should be used in a complementary fashion. Furthermore, a (limited) comparison of cases as a research perspective is a means to an end: as I am aiming to *understand* the EU's strategic partnerships, it makes sense to look at several cases of strategic partnerships and identify their commonalities by comparing them. Making a comparison is inherently linked to achieve *understanding* (amongst others) (Sartori 1994: 15).

However, It is important to note that the comparison in my research is not oriented towards variables but towards cases. It means that research focuses on cases instead of variables (Muno 2009: 113; Ragin 2000b: 5). My study follows a 'holistic' approach (Patzelt 2005: 21) in the sense that I will first understand the individual cases

and then draw commonalities instead of approaching the cases with pre-determined variables structuring the comparison oriented towards the establishment of causal laws. Thus, despite the comparative perspective in my research, it is important to note that I am not following the comparative method in the first place. Particularly, I am not testing variables in the cases. Instead, I will deal with the cases on an individual basis and only introduce a (cross-regional) comparative perspective in a subsequent analytical step. As a result, the comparative method and, hence, its rather rigid case selection requirements need not be (entirely) met in this study. There is a certain methodological trade-off when being predominantly interested in the individual cases in the sense of the case study method and only introducing the comparative perspective in a second step. Since I do not follow the comparative method in the strict sense, its rigid case selection criteria do not apply here.

In this context, the reader should yet be aware of the following: I am 'drawn' to the cases as I am interested in the underlying dimensions of the respective strategic partnerships. Yet I am *not* investigating the *causal relationships between the strategic partnerships and particular variables*. More specifically, I am not interested in singling out the effects of one particular causal factor regarding the strategic partnerships. Additionally, my research interest is directed at finding the similarities or differences among the cases of my sample.

Therefore, the construction of a Most-Similar- or Most-Different-Nations-Design (Mackie/Marsh 1995: 178-9) is not the main driving force for constructing my study's research design. It is instead the case study method with a comparative perspective. The comparative perspective is only introduced by the subsequent cross-case comparison. Hence, the cases of my study are single and independent in the first place. Thus, the usage of the comparative method is not the main rationale of my research design. As a consequence, inferences for the larger population of cases is of interest, yet can only be approximated with this study.

#### **6.1.4.2 Cross-regional comparative perspective in IR**

As mentioned in Ch. 3.1.3.2, I combine IR as a discipline with a (modified) cross-regional perspective. As mentioned there, the phenomenon of the strategic partnerships concerns different world regions (see Ch. 6.1.5.1 'Universe of cases'). Hence, the EU's strategic partnerships as a research subject 'links' countries from different world regions. Hence, in order to make sense of the EU's strategic partnerships against the background of the

universe of cases concerning different world regions, it seems wise to pick cases from different world regions.

Thereby, the project is able to strike a very fruitful balance between nomothetic and idiographic research approaches by combining IR-case studies with a cross-regional perspective known from CAS (Sil no date). Hence, the project starts out from a more general, theoretical (IR-) approach but the case studies of countries located in three different world regions. This approach allows for reaping several benefits. Firstly, it enables a regional grounding and for benefiting from area studies expertise. Hence, it looks at the social phenomena in a vertical (general) as well as (horizontal) (cross-regional) way (Sil no date). Thereby, a cross-regional view in IR not only includes a limited regional contextualisation of case analyses and research results by adding an inductive research proceeding to the deductive approach of more general IR-theory. But secondly, the cross-regional perspective also allows for overcoming regionally-limited results of an area studies-view (Ahram 2011: 81-82). Most phenomena are indeed not regionally bounded. Hence, a social phenomenon and its relevance is seldomly restricted to one area, which may presumably even more relevant in IR and the international level of analysis.

Basedau/Köllner argue that CAS can be particularly helpful in investigating the underlying mechanisms leading up to the same outcome in diverse areas (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 11) It is important to note that CAS, according to Basedau/Köllner (2007: 11), is rather geared towards *explaining*, whereas area studies are often dedicated to *understanding*. They argue that if a scholar is looking for generalisations, he/she should turn to comparative area studies (Basedau/Köllner 2007: 11). In this context, Basedau/Köllner refer to causality and causal claims (2007: 10). Yet my hunch is that a comparative area studies-perspective can also serve to understand and, at the same time, to identify commonalities and generalisations across cases from different regions. The present study is an example for doing so in its endeavour to *theorise* strategic partnerships as an outcome in diverse cases as well as to understand them in cross-regional but non-causal way. As a result, a CAS-perspective in IR may even be beneficial to the project as a whole even if it works in a non-causal way of *understanding* and of (limited) generalisation.

To conclude, from a procedural point of view, a case study design usually starts from a problem statement or a research question and is followed by a theoretical framework. Afterwards, the selection of cases is justified in accordance with the research question. The actual case study, which results in concluding and either generating new

hypotheses or modifying existing hypotheses, is only carried out after these pre-steps have been undertaken (Muno 2009: 127; Patzelt 2005: 29-32). The procedure in my case study design differs slightly from this outline: as I have mentioned at various stages of this study, my study follows an abductive research strategy. This means that I will combine deductive and inductive inferences (see Ch. 6.1.3). Hence, I will approach the (single) cases with an analytical model based on deductive inference, which I have established in Ch. 5. This analytical model will help guiding the research process and instructs the whole process of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of results of a study with a comparative perspective. It is equally applied to the selected cases and helps to identify dis-/similarities between cases (Patzelt 2005: 32-33), which again will help with the structured, focused comparison. This analytical model will be enriched by the inductive inferences generating (truly) new hypotheses. By adding these inductive inferences to the pre-model, I will ultimately end up with the final conceptual model.

In the following sections I will first address qualitative sampling, in general, and to the study's sample of cases.

### **6.1.5 Qualitative sampling and the study's small-N sample**

There is a trade-off in terms of feasibility between the number of cases and in-depth analysis in qualitative studies (Plümper 2012: 76). Qualitative analyses generally rather only allow for a limited number of cases to be analysed due to the in-depth investigation pursued in contrast to quantitative analyses, which enable a large number in their sample.

As the theoretical and empirical knowledge base on the EU's strategic partnerships is still limited, I have decided to opt for an in-depth and rigorous analysis of cases instead of analysing a large number of cases. As we first need to *understand* strategic partnerships, it makes more sense to first investigate fewer cases for the benefit of a more thorough analysis. Hence, I will choose a small number of cases (small-n sample) from among the group of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships (established after 2003).

The (qualitative) 'sample' of my research constitutes three cases which, therefore, represent a small-n sample. A small-n analysis foresees to look for ' [...] similarities and contrasts in a small number of cases' (Abbott 2004: 14). Hence, the small-n-comparison perfectly corresponds with my research interest because I am looking for

commonalities among my three cases of the EU's strategic partnerships. By looking at three cases instead of only one, I will be able to refine my argument and make (limited) generalisations. Yet Klotz points at the challenge for small-n-studies constituting a '[...] gray-zone of 'more than two' but 'less than whatever is statistically significant'[...]' (Klotz 2008: 55). These small-n-studies, thus, pose '[...] difficult terrain for case selection' (Klotz 2008: 55). Thus, the researcher has to take particular care when choosing cases for a small-n-study.

In a next step, I will delineate the universe of cases.

#### **6.1.5.1 Cases and the universe of cases**

In this subsection I will first indicate the nature of a case and then turn to the universe of cases. As Audie Klotz (2008: 43) has pointed out, 'researchers need to remember that cases are cases of [sic ]something'. Cases are defined by the dependent variable; hence, the phenomenon to be explained or understood (Muno 2009: 128). The scholar needs to consider the '[...] universe of possible cases and the logic of comparison implied by the research question' (Klotz 2008: 43). For the time being, I will first describe the universe of cases and later turn to case selection and the essence of comparing cases. Hence, what is the universe of cases and of what is the case a case? (Klotz 2008: 44).

Very often, according to Goertz, qualitative researchers need to 'construct' their universe of cases (Goertz 2006: 159). However, this does not apply to my study. The 'universe of cases' in my study are all of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships established after the year 2003. Hence, the cases in my study are the EU's strategic partnerships with bilateral partner countries after the year 2003. My study's universe of cases is, thus, dictated by the social (empirical) reality of the phenomenon I am investigating (Klotz 2008: 51). This fact is in line with the fact that for a realist, cases are 'either given or empirically observable' instead of being 'consequences of theories or of conventions' (Ragin 200b: 8). It is important to note that it is not the country making the case but its strategic partnership with the EU. Put differently, I am not comparing the individual countries (Brazil, India and South Africa) but the strategic partnerships of the EU with these countries. Hence, the cases are EU-Brazil-strategic partnership; EU-India-strategic partnership and EU-South Africa-strategic partnership. But the question remains: how did I choose these three cases?

As indicated before, the universe of cases is empirically given: to date, there are ten 'bilateral' strategic partnerships<sup>286</sup> with Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, the US (in alphabetical order) (Hess 2012: 2; Renard/Rogers 2011: 4; Gratius 2011). One can differentiate between two groups of bilateral strategic partners: first, the bilateral strategic partnerships established before 2003 (US, Canada and Japan); and secondly, the bilateral strategic partnerships introduced after 2003 (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and South Korea). As mentioned before, the significant shift in the EU's foreign policy tradition – shifting from biregional to more and more bilateral strategic partnerships – started after 2003 and the introduction of the 'second' group of new, additional strategic partnerships. As a result, my 'universe of cases' comprises all strategic partnerships which have been established after 2003. This leaves me with *Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and South Korea*. After I have clearly demarcated the confines of the universe of cases, I can now turn to the selection and comparison of cases in this study.

Now, I will turn to the challenge of selecting cases from the universe of cases.

#### **6.1.5.2 Case selection**

After having defined the universe of cases, which is somewhat 'dictated' by the empirical reality, I now need to turn to the selection of cases. As Seawright/Gerring (2008: 294) note, '[...] choosing good cases for extremely small samples is a challenging endeavour'. Case selection is crucial when aiming for generalisation against the background of the population of cases (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 294).

As mentioned in the beginning, qualitative samples are usually limited in number/size. As I will be building on my own collection of data, I need to ensure that field research in all countries concerned is feasible for me as a single researcher. With three cases, this already leaves me with four field research stays (Brussels in addition to the three countries chosen). Issues of practicability are '[...] perfectly legitimate factors in

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<sup>286</sup> The EU also has biregional strategic partnerships with regional or international organisations or groups of countries such as the African Union or the Latin American and Caribbean countries. As mentioned in the state of the art (Ch. 2), the biregional strategic partnerships are somewhat of a historical tradition or rationale for the EU in the pursuit of its external relations. However, the fact that the EU has increasingly established bilateral strategic partnerships in the last ten years, constitutes a significant change in the EU's external relations and its foreign policy. It is precisely this change I am interested in. As a result, the 'universe of cases' is constituted by the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships and not its biregional ones. However, as will be shown later in the analysis, I do at times refer to specific biregional strategic partnerships as they are 'linked' to particular bilateral strategic partnerships.

case selection' (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 295). Hence, I will limit my sample to three countries. But I am still left with question of which countries to choose.

Case selection methods as presented by Seawright/Gerring (2008: 296) do not apply to studies, where researchers try to '[...] elucidate features specific to a specific case'. However, this is exactly done within the three individual case studies. It is yet with the comparative perspective against the background of a universe of cases that case selection issues enter the research picture. Let me reiterate that as I do not follow the comparative method, the study's case selection does not need to meet its strict case selection guidelines. Nevertheless, the study will approximate general case selection guidelines against the background of aiming for generalisable knowledge in the context of theory-building blocs on the EU's strategic partnerships with bilateral partners established after 2003 (universe of cases).

Additionally, an important caveat to case selection is the fact that the study is of exploratory nature. As Seawright/Gerring (2008) explain, 'if nothing - or very little - is known about the population, the methods described in this study cannot be implemented [...]' (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 296). Crucially, they mention that '[...] a case study whose primary purpose is casing - establishing what constitutes the case and, by extension, what constitutes the population [...] will not be able to make use of the techniques discussed [...]' (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 296) in Seawright/Gerring's work. As a result, as the study tries to understand the question of 'what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership' in the context of the EU and its bilateral strategic partners, this actually rules out case selection methods in this fashion. However, as the universe of cases is known and as the study works from a certain assumption as to what makes a case in the context of this study (strategic partnerships between the EU as a traditional/established power and emerging regional powers), I will nevertheless consider case selection techniques.

Hence, in terms of an approximation<sup>287</sup> to methodologically sound case selection, I will opt for an approximation to the method of 'diverse' cases (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 297): minimum two cases are selected exemplifying a diversity among the cases' characteristics (Seawright/Gerring 2008: 297). They are suitable for an exploratory research perspective and cases can be expected to have a certain degree of representativeness in terms of the diversity of cases' categories (Seawright/Gerring

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<sup>287</sup> Seawright/Gerring (2008: 295) mention that the modes of case selection concerns those studies, which '[...] build and test general *causal* theories about the social world on the basis of one or few cases' [emphasis added]. This is an important difference to the present study, which engages in non-causal research. Thus, there is only approximation to the case selection method.

2008: 297; 300-301). Seawright/Gerring yet point out that the researcher presumes '[...] that the identification of cases will, at the same time, identify categories that are internally homogenous [...]' (2008: 301). This corresponds well with the fact that I assume that the EU's strategic partnerships with bilateral partners after 2003 have similar rationales, even though the countries are located in different regional and cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, there is little knowledge as to what makes a strategic partnership a strategic partnership and, consequently, its diversity. However, the before mentioned difference in regional context may be helpful in accommodating for a certain diversity among cases' context. As a result, I will consider the geographic location of cases (Minkenberg/Kropp 2005: 11) and choose cases from different world regions ('cross-regional' case study).

As indicated before, the strategic partnerships, which have been established after 2003, are those with *Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and South Korea*. Firstly, I will exclude the cases of *Mexico*<sup>288</sup> and *South Korea*<sup>289</sup> because the decision to 'upgrade' relations and establish strategic partnership were only taken in the years 2008 and 2009. As the time frame of my study foresees the years between 2003 and 2010, this would leave me with a very short time period to be analysed. Secondly, Seawright/Gerring point out that a project following the case selection of diverse case should not consider a case that is '[...] an atypical member of a subgroup' (2008: 301). My hunch is that *Russia* could constitute an atypical case in the sense that this country is a direct neighbour to the EU. They share a common and, above all, direct neighbourhood which is a major difference to the other countries. As a consequence, I will not choose *Russia* for the sample of cases. Up to now, this leaves me yet again with four possible cases: *Brazil, China, India, and South Africa*.

As mentioned before, against the background of choosing cases from different regional contexts, I will for sure choose *Brazil* and *South Africa* as being country-cases representing cases from Latin America and Africa. This leaves me with either choosing *China* or *India*. Both countries are significant and, thus, important to research on the EU's strategic partnerships. On the one hand, *China* has been the first country among the EU's strategic partnerships after 2003. *China's* (economic and power) has attracted a lot of attention in general as well as with respect to EU-China-relations. On the other hand, *India* is also considered a rising power (economically and politically). Furthermore,

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<sup>288</sup> For elaboration on the EU-Mexico-strategic partnership see, for example, Maihold 2010b or Hess 2009.

<sup>289</sup> For information about EU-South Korea relations see, e.g., Andreosso-O'Callaghan 2010.

its strategic partnership with the EU has also been formalised 'early' (2004). Overall, both countries seem equally suitable and significant to the research topic of this study. Additionally, their respective strategic partnerships with the EU have both been established at a point in time allowing enough room and data for the analysis. However, as mentioned in the beginning, my research is dedicated and closely linked to policy advice, I will also consider choosing from a policy-oriented perspective. Thus, I will opt for Brazil, India and South Africa against the background of policy-advice and their alliance-building (see Ch. 6.1.5.3).

To sum up, from both a theoretical perspective as well as from the perspective of policy-advice it makes most sense to analyse Brazil, India and South Africa, when doing research on the EU's strategic partnerships established after 2003. Furthermore, the three countries concerned are located in three different world regions (Africa, Asia and Latin America, obviously). Additionally, choosing India over China has a further benefit: whereas there has been quite a few studies on EU-China-relations, EU-India-relations are somewhat overshadowed and still need more research. This also applies to research on the EU-Brazil and the EU-South Africa strategic partnerships. The present study can fruitfully contribute to these research areas.

### **6.1.5.3 Relevance of the Cases**

As mentioned before, strategic partnerships are used by several international actors. Even though I have a general interest in strategic partnerships as instruments, I am specifically curious regarding the EU's strategic partnerships<sup>290</sup>. This is due to the fact that the strategic partnerships have become a particularly popular instrument for the EU in recent years. One could even argue that the notion 'strategic partnership' is very much associated with the EU and its foreign policy. At the same time the EU is indeed a *sui-generis*-international actor lacking a joint foreign and security policy. However, it nevertheless represents a traditional/established power from the 'North', the 'West' and industrialised world. Consequently, it forms part of the countries which are expected to lose in relative power in the coming years and decades against the background of rising powers. At the nexus of these circumstances, one cannot avoid wondering, why and how the EU uses strategic partnerships to interact with certain countries. As a result, the

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<sup>290</sup> As generally every study in social science can be viewed as a case study (Ragin 2000b: 2), the present research can also be depicted as a case study of strategic partnerships, namely on the EU and its strategic partnerships established after 2003.

study specifically focuses on the strategic partnerships established by the EU with bilateral partners.

Yet knowledge on the foreign policy behaviour and interests of Brazil, India and South Africa countries is considered crucial both from a scientific as well as policy-advice perspective. The strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa are of particular relevance as all three countries are usually identified as being part of the group of rising and regional powers aspiring for greater international power and/or influence. All three form part of BRICS countries. Furthermore, it is important to note that India, Brazil and South Africa have teamed up in the 'IBSA Dialogue Forum' (2003). It constitutes a form of alliance against the background of South-South-Cooperation<sup>291</sup>. Researchers as well as practitioners from the so-called '(Global) North' have wondered how, for example, European powers and the EU should react to this alliance. Whereas over the years considerable research has been undertaken on the EU-China strategic partnership, the strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa seem comparably underresearched – both individually and as a 'group' (see Ch. 2). Thus, the case selection also addresses a research gap.

Hence, as my research is dedicated and closely linked to policy advice, the selection of Brazil, India and South Africa as cases also seems beneficial from a policy-oriented perspective.

#### **6.1.5.4 Undertaking Case Studies: Analytical Steps**

There is a certain (advisable) operational sequence in undertaking case studies. However, the researcher should not follow these steps in a strict chronologically way as this would not necessarily serve the ends of the qualitative methodology. Yet an awareness for the different subsequent steps or phases help to structure the research and analytical process (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 170). The first phase foresees the development of the research design including the drawing up of the state of the art; the development of the conceptual model; the identification of the puzzle and research gap and the formulation of the research question. Importantly, these steps predate the case selection in order to allow for selecting cases against the background of the theoretical framework or to construct a controlled comparison (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 170-179; George/Bennett 2005: 74) Almost all steps

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<sup>291</sup> South-South-Cooperation denotes cooperation among countries or regions from the 'Global South'.

from phase one of the case study have been presented by now. What is left is the operationalisation or rather the interpretation of a theoretical model as well as the identification of the (necessary) data (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 178-179). These missing elements of phase one will be outlined in the subchapter 6.3. In the second phase, the researcher collects the empirical data during field research<sup>292</sup> (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 179-183). The third phase entails the presentation of results and the drawing of case-specific and theoretical inferences from the gained findings (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 183-187). It is, thereby, important to link the presentation of empirical information to the context of the theoretical framework (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 183)

Essentially, the present case study design aiming for theory-building via hypothesis-generating forms part of the '[...] "*Building Block*" studies of particular types or subtypes of a phenomenon' (sic; George/Bennett 2005: 76). It represents a form of case study design, which is geared towards theory-building (George/Bennett 2005: 76). It works via the identification of shared 'patterns' among the cases (George/Bennett 2005: 76). To this end, the case analysis will be oriented towards George/Bennett's method of structured and focused comparison (George/Bennett 2005: 67-72). Firstly, analysing cases in a 'structured' manner implies to pose several questions at each individual case. Secondly, investigating cases in a 'focused' mode means that only particular dimensions of cases are of interest to the analysis. These questions and the linked dimensions have guided my data collection and they will also inform data analysis. Importantly, both questions and dimensions of interest (as well as data selection) are based on the deductively-developed theoretical pre-model. Analysing cases along the logic of structured and focused method will facilitate the identification of pattern-matching among cases as well as the comparison of cases (George/Bennett 2005: 67, 76, 86).

This shows how the individual in-depth case analyses of a limited number of strategic partnerships' characteristics and the identification of commonalities among the cases may help with theorising strategic partnerships (see Ch. 4.1.2; Boynton 1982).

### **6.1.6 Analysing foreign policies**

The Weberian concept of 'understanding' has strongly influenced Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) in International Relations, whereby analysis is centred on investigating on '[...] the reconstruction at an individual level' (Hollis/Smith 1990: 74). The decisions by policy-

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<sup>292</sup> I will outline the various field research stays, which I have conducted for this study, in Ch 6.3.2.

makers are 'understood' by looking at their reasons for decisions (Hollis/Smith 1990: 74). As a result, a state's foreign policy action is 'understood' by focusing on (rational) individuals with power including their perceptions and their analysis of situations (Hollis/Smith 1990: 74-75). As Hollis/Smith put it, 'collective action is a sum or combination of individual action'.

Foreign Policy is the policy of a state towards its 'environment' (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). Thereby, a nation-state pursues the fulfilment of its national interests versus foreign interests (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). These national interests can have political, economic, military or socio-cultural nature (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). In a classic sense, foreign policy can thus be defined as the action and non-actions by a state towards its environment pursuing its (national) interests (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). Foreign Policy can also entail its action within international organisations and – I would add – in international politics, in general. Thereby, its foreign policy becomes relational as its action and, more specifically, its interest-fulfillment becomes dependent on other actors (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). Hence, foreign policy is essentially relational as it is formulated and enacted within an interaction with other states.

Foreign policy is mainly dominated by the executive of a country (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116). Thereby, it is mainly framed by diplomats (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 116) and the foreign ministries. Diplomacy and the involved actors, such as diplomats and embassies, can be depicted as the means to an end and the bearers of a nation's foreign policy (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 119). Yet dependent on the political system, the presidency of a state may also be a driving force or key actor with respect to foreign policy. Furthermore, the before mentioned blurring of internal and external policies has resulted in the fact that previously (internally-oriented) ministries within a state have an external outlook and a say in foreign policy areas. Hence, foreign policy-making and the involved actors and decision-making is quite complex. I will elaborate on the characteristics of the foreign-policy making of my study's agents in Ch. 6.2 (Proceeding of analysis).

Basically, the present study engages in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). But what does Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) entail? A researcher needs to focus on a specific event. The underlying motivations and considerations of a state to act as it does frame its national interest. This national interest again 'determines' the choice of means to achieve a certain goal (Siedschlag 2007: 117).

As mentioned in the beginning of this study, the project is based on a realist social meta-theoretical basis. Archer's morphogenetic approach has been used to provide a dual analytical view of structure and agency. Carlsnaes (1992) has proposed to use Archer's approach for Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Hence, while analysing foreign policy, the researcher follows '[...] a morphogenetic conception of the contextually bound nature of the foreign policy behaviour of states [...]' (Carlsnaes 1992: 245). The morphogenetic approach is, thereby, also in line with comparative case study analysis (Carlsnaes 1992: 245).

By following the realist social view, neither agency nor structure is causally reduced but mutually linked (Carlsnaes 1992: 250). But how can a researcher account for this mutual interlinkage in analysing foreign policy? Archer's morphogenetic analytical dual approach has provided for doing so. Her approach has been incorporated into the building of the theoretical pre-model, which now can be used as an analytical model for qualitative data analysis. The building of the theoretical pre-model along the morphogenetic lines includes two things: first, it has already outlined the international system-structure as well as the international social structure as the constraining and enabling context for agents. Secondly, the model has also hinted at the (actual and potential) structural and social powers of the study's agents. Hence, I can use this theoretical pre-model as a guide and template for the qualitative data analysis (and the coding) of the single cases as well as for the comparative perspective. Within the analysis of cases, I will particularly focus on the *interaction* of 'interpretative, purposive actors' (Carlsnaes 1992: 256; 259) and their social powers (bases) against the background of the international systemic and social structure<sup>293</sup>.

This corresponds well with the fact that FPA is indeed 'agent-oriented' and 'actor-specific' (Hudson 2007: 8). Hence, in order to analyse the foreign policy in the form of the strategic partnerships, I will particularly focus on the behaviour of states or state-like entities and their inherent 'human decisionmakers' (Hudson 2007: 7). Therefore, it seems advisable to speak to foreign policy-makers in order to understand the reasoning behind the foreign policy-(decision-)making (Hudson 2007: 22, 31) of strategic partnerships, which is why the analysis of interview data is crucial for this study.

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<sup>293</sup> As I am not analysing change(s) within foreign policy, I will only engage in one morphogenetic cycle from 'structural conditioning' to 'social interaction' and excluding 'structural elaboration' (Carlsnaes 1992: 259). The usage of Archer's model yet implies that the study's results are limited to time and space and, thus, to a certain context (Carlsnaes 1992: 267). The foreign policy analysis of the three cases will 'only' offer 'contingent empirical generalisations' in the first place (Carlsnaes 1992: 267).

For the EU's side of the strategic partnerships, I have spoken to both national and European policy-makers being equally relevant to understanding (composite) European foreign policy. As European foreign policy in terms of strategic partnerships cuts across supranational and intergovernmental policy areas and processes, I have spoken to a wide variety of people at national as well as European 'levels'.

Overall, the FPA-approach is also in line with the study's aim of middle-range theorising, which is located at the '[...] interface between actor-general theory and the complexity of the real world' (Hudson 2007: 31).

### **6.1.7 Time frame of the study: 2003 - 2010**

The time frame of the present study are the years from 2003 to 2010. The starting point has been chosen due to two reasons. First, in 2003 the first bilateral strategic partnership with a so called emerging powers, namely China, has been established. Since then, several strategic partnerships have been established between the EU and so called rising powers after 2003. The year 2003 is, hence, the starting point for the emergence of the 'universe of cases' for my study. Secondly, in (December) 2003 the first European Security Strategy (ESS), a major EU-policy document, has been published (Fraser 2007: 7). Even though the ESS largely deals with security challenges and security-related topics, it also mentions the strategic partnerships. As mentioned in Ch. 3.2.1, the EU's ESS<sup>294</sup> (December 2003) (Council/EU 2003) provided the first strategic guidance framework for the EU. There, the strategic partnerships were mentioned in an 'overview' and presented as a building bloc for effective multilateralism. Shortly after, a whole range of 'new' strategic partnerships were established; amongst them, India, South Africa and Brazil. Hence, due to these reasons I have chosen to pick the December 2003 as the starting point of my study.

The end point of my study is the year 2010. I have picked the (end of the) year 2010 again for two reasons. First, the time frame of roughly six years is long enough as to ensure an in-depth analysis of the strategic partnerships over time. Secondly, it allows for including potential changes within the processes of the strategic partnerships due to the coming into place of the EU-Treaty of Lisbon (December 2009), which has introduced (amongst others) important innovations regarding European Foreign Policy, I

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<sup>294</sup> On the origins of the ESS please see Algieri (2010: 113-114). A more detailed elaboration on the contents of the ESS please see Algieri (2010: 115-117); Schmidt (2010: 205); Bretherton/Vogler (2008: 181-186) or Keukelaire/MacNaughtan (2008: 59-60).

have opted for allowing for the inclusion of the existence of the Lisbon-Treaty within the study's time frame, namely the year 2010.

To sum up, the project's time frame covers the years from December 2003 up until end of December 2010.

### **6.1.8 Conclusion**

To sum up, this research project follows a research design which involves a multiple case study method (including individual countries from different regions) with a cross-case/-regional comparative perspective. Brazil, India and South Africa have been selected from the universe of cases along the lines of the (approximated) 'diverse-cases'-case-selection method. Overall, this chapter has outlined various dimensions of the baselines of my study's research design. It has become clear that the topic and the research goal of my study already define certain boundaries in the range of possible research designs, research proceedings and methods.

## **6.2 Overview of foreign policy-making on strategic partnerships**

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of, first, the relevant actors within EU-Foreign Policy in the context of the strategic partnerships. Secondly, I will briefly provide some introductory remarks on the actors and structures of foreign-policy-making, particularly with regard to the strategic partnerships.

### **6.2.1 EU-Foreign policy on strategic partnerships**

Overall, the EU-member states lose in national autonomy and relative power when it comes to policy-making in Europe. This is due to the fact that the 'locus of decision – and therefore power – has shifted' to the 'common pooling of policy-making sovereignty' (Richardson 1996: 3). However, it is important to note that this is only partly true when it comes to foreign and security policy. Although the EU-Treaty of Maastricht (1993) introduced a *common* foreign and security policy at the European level and although this policy field was further developed with the EU-Treaty of Lisbon (2009), there is still to this date no *joint* foreign and security policy at EU-level. I will now outline main agents and structures in the fields of the EU's external relations and foreign policy. At times and where applicable, I will mention major changes in this respect, which are due to the

treaty changes in the context of the coming into being of the EU's Treaty of Lisbon (2009)<sup>295</sup>.

### 6.2.2.1 The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

As mentioned in the Ch. 3.1.4.2, the policy areas covered by the strategic partnerships cut across the EU's foreign policy and external relations. Strategic partnerships are, thus, wide-ranging in their coverage and act like a all-encompassing frame for the cooperation among the strategic partners. However, in a strict sense they form part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) originally introduced in 1993 with the EU's Treaty of Maastricht<sup>296</sup>. This is why I will at this stage briefly elaborate on the actors (and structures), which are of relevance to the formulation and shaping of strategic partnerships. As mentioned in the beginning, I deal with the EU at a meso-level from an International Relations-perspective. This is why I formally exclude the domestic level of the EU-member states as this is not the primary focus of this study. However, the member states do play an indirect role in this study as they are part of decision-making organs within the EU's CFSP. Hence, they do form part of the analysis in this study, even though not in their own right. As a result, I will also not consider, for example, national foreign policies with respect to neither Brazil, India nor South Africa or so called emerging powers in general. Yet they are part of the analysis when it comes, e.g., to the role of the EU-Presidencies (especially before the Treaty of Lisbon came into place).

It is important to note that I will not outline the historical origins of the EU's CFSP, such as its predecessor the European Political Cooperation (EPC)<sup>297</sup>. Furthermore, I will not explain the functioning or legal basis of the CFSP in great detail because the EU's working mechanisms in this area (both before and after Lisbon)<sup>298</sup> are not the major focus here. However, I will introduce the main institutions and working mechanisms regarding the CFSP as this will also explain, which sources or rather official documents I

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<sup>295</sup> For an overview of the functioning (including decision-making procedures) and instruments of the EU's foreign policy (within and beyond CFSP) before Lisbon see, for example, Fraser 2007; Schmidt 2010 or Keukelaire/MacNaughtan 2008: 66-123; 148-173; 199-228; or K. Smith 2008: 54-75. For details on the foreign policy and external relations machinery under the present Lisbon-Treaty see, e.g., Vanhoonacker 2011.

<sup>296</sup> Often the CFSP is analysed in combination with the related European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Even though security topics are also part of the strategic partnerships, I will not elaborate on the ESDP here as it 'only' forms one policy area in addition to others from the perspective of the strategic partnerships. On the ESDP see Algier (2010: 88-112).

<sup>297</sup> On the EPC and subsequent treaty revisions see, for example, Algieri (2010: 35-44); Wallace (2005), Keukelaire/MacNaughtan (2008: 35-65) or Fraser (2007: 23-28).

<sup>298</sup> In this respect see, for example, Wallace (2005); Edwards 2011; Vanhoonacker 2011: 87-93.

select and which experts on field research I have interviewed<sup>299</sup>. Furthermore, I will also mention *major* changes within the CFSP before and after the EU's Treaty of Lisbon came into place in December 2009. Yet again I will not elaborate on structures and agents in great detail. However, a brief overview on structures, institutions and actors will contribute to an understanding of which sub-actors are part of the EU's foreign policy and external relations. Furthermore, this will later also explain my choice of experts for my interviews during field research.

### **6.2.2.2 Actors and structures (before and after Lisbon)**

As indicated before, I will not dwell on the treaty changes in every detail from the EU's Treaty of Nice (2001) to the EU's Treaty of Lisbon (2009). However, I will mention some changes, which are significant to the policy area of foreign policy/external relations or to the strategic partnerships in particular. For example, Algieri (2010: 52-53) mentions that in contrast to the EU's Treaty of Nice, the Treaty of Lisbon acknowledges already within the actual treaty-text that foreign and security policy involves several policy areas. This corresponds well with the fact that strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools cut across various areas of external relations as a roof.

In the following I will briefly elaborate on the influence opportunities of the EU- 'level' and the national 'level' in order to make sense of the EU as a meso-level actor. It will indicate which representatives of these 'levels' I have sought to interview in order to 'understand' strategic partnerships.

#### **6.2.2.2.1 European Council**

The European Council has been turned into a formal organ with the Treaty of Lisbon (Algieri 2010: 53). It consists of a President<sup>300</sup>, the Heads of State from the EU-member states and the President of the European Commission (Algieri 2010: 53). Decisions are taken by consensus (Algieri 2010: 53). The Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission as well as the respective Presidency of the Council (of the EU) hold regular meetings in order to ensure cooperation and coordination (Algieri 2010: 53). Meetings of the European Council are prepared by the General Affairs Council. The

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<sup>299</sup> Admittedly, on field research I have also interviewed diplomats and officials from EU-Member state countries at the local embassies. Yet this I have always done with my questions including an EU-perspective. I have excluded answers from interviews, which contained a distinctly national view. As I have also spoken with representatives from the local EU-Delegations presenting the EU-view, I am able to contrast the presumably national versus 'European' views, if necessary.

<sup>300</sup> The first President of the European Council is Herman van Rompuy, who had started his first term on the 1st of December 2009 (Algieri 2010: 54; Edwards 2011: 65).

'new' organ of the EU is supported the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU (Algieri 2010: 53). The Treaty of Lisbon enhances the strategic lead function of the European Council, which is supposed to formulate the goals, strategic interests and priorities of the EU (Algieri 2010: 53).

The newly introduced President of the European Council also has a role to play with respect to the foreign policy: irrespective of the competences of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Council's President represents the European Union externally in affairs of the EU's CFSP (Algieri 2010: 54).

With respect to the strategic partnerships, the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy has (together with the President of the European Commission José Manuel Durão Barroso) regularly represented the EU at High-Level Summits with particular strategic partners in Brussels as well as in the respective strategic partners' countries.

#### **6.2.2.2 Council of the EU**

The Council of the EU actually consists of several council-configurations<sup>301</sup>. With the Treaty of Lisbon, the previous General Affairs and External Relations Council was split into two: the before mentioned General Affairs Council and the Foreign Affairs Council. Obviously, the latter council-configuration is crucial to the EU's external relations (Vanhoonacker 2011: 88-89). The EU-member states are represented in the Council at Ministerial or state secretary level (Algieri 2010: 55). The meetings, and ultimately its decisions, are most of the time pre-prepared by the Permanent Representatives Committee(s) (Coreper<sup>302</sup>) and its working groups or the Political and Security Committee (Algieri 2010: 58-59).

Hence, both the above mentioned European Council and the Council of the EU are involved in shaping the EU's CFSP in coordination with the EU-member states (Algieri 2010: 56). Algieri (2010: 56) states the Council is central designing organ for the EU's CFSP<sup>303</sup>. The Council decides on the basis of the strategic guidelines formulated by the European Council (Algieri 2010: 56) and of the joint proposals made by the EU's High Representative (for CFSP-matters) and the EU-Commission (for non-CFSP-matters of the EU's external relations) (Algieri 2010: 56). Furthermore, every EU-member state,

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<sup>301</sup> For an overview of all council-configurations see, for example, Algieri 2010: 56.

<sup>302</sup> Coreper stands for Comité des représentants permanents (french).

<sup>303</sup> However, Algieri (2010: 56) mentions that due to the upgrading of the European Council with the Treaty of Lisbon, the Council of the EU faces the challenge of re-defining its role with respect to the EU's CFSP.

the High Representative, supported by the EU-Commission, can make proposals or propose initiatives to the Council (Algieri 2010: 56).

#### **6.2.2.2.3 The European Commission**

When it comes to EU external relations at large, the EU-Commission has several areas of exerting influence, such as external commercial policy, development policy, environmental policy or neighbourhood policy (Algieri 2010: 73). This is also where its extensive competencies lie. Depending on the treaty provisions, the EU-Commission has also been involved at times in CFSP-matters. Since the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU-Commission is more directly involved from an institutional perspective due to the High Representative's double-hat as vice-president of the EU-Commission (Algieri 2010: 73). The EU-Commission together with the High Representative can also make 'proposals' to the Council (Algieri 73-74). Algieri (2010: 74) believes that the EU-Commission has gained in relevance as a CFSP-'actor' since the Treaty of Lisbon.

Regarding the strategic partnerships, it is quite remarkable that in most cases the EU-Commission has indeed been a driving force for 'the establishment of strategic partnerships by 'proposing' to the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. This is even more significant when remembering that these 'proposals' have been made before the Treaty of Lisbon has come into place. I will come back to the EU-Commission's role with respect to the strategic partnerships in the case studies.

#### **6.2.2.2.4 The High Representative**

Algieri (2010: 61) mentions that over time, there was a greater need for supranational policy coordination with respect to the CFSP. Hence, there was also need for more administrative support and even new structures. The General-secretariat developed a need for 'input' regarding CFSP for the respective EU-presidencies. The EU-Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) firstly introduced in 1999 the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy<sup>304</sup> (Algieri 2010: 61). This first 'High Representative' (pre-Lisbon) was supposed to support the Council of the EU regarding the EU's CFSP. In this context, he was eligible to formulate, prepare and implement political decisions. Furthermore, if authorised by the EU-Presidency in the Council, the High Representative was also 'allowed' to hold political dialogue with third countries (Algieri 2010: 62). An important support function is enacted by the Policy Unit located

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<sup>304</sup> Javier Solana held this office from 1999 to 2004.

within the Council-General Secretariat involving the officials from the General Secretariat, the EU-member states and the Commission amongst others (Algieri 2010: 62). The Policy Unit is a strategic and early-warning division in the context of the CFSP (Algieri 2010: 62). In addition to the information provided by EU-member states and the Commission, the directorate-general for economic external relations and politico-military relations within the General-Secretariat of the Council has also been important for the CFSP and its High Representative (Algieri 2010: 62).

Algieri (2010: 62-63) mentions that the High Representative should not be understood as a foreign minister because it has not been conceptualised in that way according to the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice. Rather, it seems as if the High Representative rather enacted a supporting function for the EU-Presidencies and its member states. The High Representative's coordination with the EU-Commissioner for External Relations was, hence, crucial for the functioning of the CFSP (Algieri 2010: 63). The perception of the EU, especially by 'outsiders' such as third countries, has not been facilitated by these different but overlapping competencies and institutions (Algieri 2010: 63).

The Treaty of Lisbon took on the post of the High Representative, only with a slight change in name: in December 2009 Lady Catherine Ashton became the first High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in the Lisbon era. The High Representative is not appointed by the President of the European Commission but by the European Council in a qualified majority-voting and by the consent of the President of the EU-Commission (Algieri 2010: 64-66).

The 'new' High Representative is not only double-hatted but actually triple-hatted: the post covers the High Representative of the Council of the EU; the rotating Presidency as well as Vice-President of the European Commission/Commissioner for External Relations (Vanhoonacker 2011: 89; Algieri 2010: 64). This multidimensional function is destined to enhance the coherence within the EU's external relations. The Commission, on the one hand, represents the EU in non-CFSP-areas of the EU's external relations. The High Representative, on the other, represents the EU regarding the CFSP and chairs the Foreign Affairs Council (Algieri 2010: 65; Vanhoonacker 2011: 89). In this context, he/she holds the dialogue with third countries and represents the EU's common position within international organisations or conferences (Algieri 2010: 65). Via his/her vice-presidency of the EU-Commission, the High Representative is also responsible for the non-CFSP-matters of the EU's external relations (Algieri 2010: 65). Crucially, since the Lisbon-Treaty, the High Representative is entitled to financial resources and staff (Algieri 2010: 65-66).

With respect to the strategic partnerships, the High Representative has in many cases represented the EU at high-level summits with strategic partners.

#### **6.2.2.2.5 The European External Action Service (EEAS/EAS)**

Another new institution, which the Treaty of Lisbon has brought about, is the European External Action Service (EEAS/EAS) (Algieri 2010: 67; Vanhoonacker 2011: 92). Essentially, it is a formal diplomatic apparatus for the EU. Algieri mentions in this respect that the establishment of the EAS signifies a further integration and institutionalisation within EU-foreign policy (Algieri 2010: 68). The EAS supports the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Algieri 2010: 69). The before existing delegations of the EU-Commission were developed into delegations of the EU with the Treaty of Lisbon (Algieri 2010: 69). Yet they do not replace national embassies or representations. However, the organising structure for the EAS was only developed over time (Algieri 2010: 70).

#### **6.2.2.2.6 The European Parliament**

The European Parliament (EP) only has a 'marginal role' regarding the EU's CFSP. It is mainly via its say in budgetary matters that the EP can take influence in the EU's external relations. However, the CFSP's budget<sup>305</sup> has been rather small (Algieri 2010: 72). However, budgetary matters are relevant to the funding of the European external service (Edwards 2011: 65). Since the Treaty of Lisbon, the High Representative has to report to the EP on a regular basis and to hear the latter regarding CFSP-matters (Algieri 2010: 72-73). Moreover, the EP can formulate parliamentary questions or opinions, which can be directed to the High Representative or the Council (Algieri 2010: 73). Apart from that, the EP within CFSP is primarily limited to parliamentary debates and formulating or receiving reports (Algieri 2010: 73; Edwards 2011: 65).

With respect to the strategic partnership one could also mention that there are parliamentary groups for the relations with parliamentarians from third countries or regions. But this is nothing exclusive to strategic partner countries.

#### **6.2.2.2.7 The EU-Presidency and the EU-Member States**

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<sup>305</sup> For further information on the financing of the EU's CFSP please see Algieri (2010: 97-82).

As mentioned before, the EU-member states are involved in the making of the EU foreign policy via their involvement in the European Council and the Council of the EU. Furthermore, before the Treaty of Lisbon every EU-member state has had its turn of setting 'own' priorities by running a 6-month presidency and setting the agenda (Algieri 2010: 57). As Algieri (2010: 57) points it, a member state has thereby had the chance of enhancing national priorities via the supranational EU-channel and to distinguish itself in contrast to the other EU-member states (Algieri 2010: 57). By holding the presidency, a EU-member state has had a coordinating and representative function. For example, the representative of that very member state in the context of the EU's CFSP was eligible to outline the EU's position in international institutions or to implement decisions. Furthermore, the Presidency has had a mediating role in the case of conflicting positions of EU-member states within negotiations. The presidency was supported by the General Secretariat of the Council/High Representative of the CFSP and the EU-Commission (Algieri 2010: 57). Since 2006, three successive ('trio') presidencies aligned common priorities in coordination with the EU-Commission for the sake of policy coherence (Algieri 2010: 57).

Regarding the strategic partnership it is hence quite illustrative to investigate under which Presidency the respective strategic partnerships were established and which previous Presidency has been influential in preparing the coming into place of the strategic partnerships. As I have elaborated elsewhere (Hess 2009), the strategic partnership with Brazil was established during the Portuguese Presidency in 2007 and prepared for by the previous German presidency. As the first 'trio'-presidency started its work with the German EU-Presidency in the first semester of 2007 (Algieri 2010: 57-58), one can speculate that the strategic partnership with Brazil was initiated by their concerted actions.

Since Lisbon, the Presidency has lost its formal, previously influential role with respect to the EU's CFSP. Now, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has taken over the Presidency's previous functions. As a result, the foreign ministers of the EU-member states have been marginalised in their importance. To a certain extent, this equally applies to the heads of EU-member states as they now 'adhere' to the President of the European Council (Algieri 2010: 58). In addition, the Presidency has also lost its influence in third countries. Since Lisbon, the meetings of heads of mission are now formally presided by the local EU-Delegation or rather the local EU-Ambassador (Hess 2012).

#### **6.2.2.2.8 Structures: EU foreign policy-making**

As indicated before, I will not elaborate in great (legal) detail on the decision- and policy-making structures of the EU's CFSP. Suffice it to say, that the EU's CFSP, in essence, is and remains a largely intergovernmental policy area even after Lisbon. Hence, unanimity is main decision-making rule within the CFSP (Algieri 2010: 74; Vanhoonacker 2011: 88). Qualified majority-voting only applies in few cases (Algieri 2010: 74-76; Vanhoonacker 2011: 88). The EU's CFSP is mainly characterised by common strategies, common actions and common standpoints<sup>306</sup> (Algieri 2010: 74). I will not further elaborate on these instruments as they are not highly relevant to the strategic partnerships.

### **6.2.2.3 Foreign-Policy-making in Brazil, India and South Africa**

I will not dwell on the foreign policy-making procedures of Brazil, India and South Africa respectively. This is due to the fact that the foreign policy machinery is not the main focus of this study. The main actors, and where applicable certain structures, will be indicated in order to understand the 'driving forces' of the strategic partnership process.

Foreign Policy in Brazil<sup>307</sup> is somewhat shared between the President and the Foreign Minister. Scholars argue that Brazil has experienced a 'presidentialisation' of foreign policy (Zilla 2009: 63). The Itamaraty is the Brazilian Foreign Ministry (Zilla 2009: 63).

India's Prime Minister and his advisors drive the foreign policy decision-making process (Wagner 2009b: 76) represented by India's foreign ministry, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)<sup>308</sup>.

South Africa's foreign policy is very much focused on the Office of the president (Erdmann 2009: 115). However, South African foreign policy is represented by the (nowadays called) Department for International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)<sup>309</sup>.

Diplomats in the respective foreign ministries of the countries concerned (Brazil/Itamaraty; India/Ministry of External Affairs; South Africa/Department for International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)) were the main interlocutors for the present study as they are

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<sup>306</sup> For further elaboration on these measures please see Algieri 2010 (74).

<sup>307</sup> For more information on the actors and structures of Brazilian Foreign Policy see e.g. Zilla (2009: 63-64).

<sup>308</sup> For more details on India's diplomatic apparatus and foreign policy structures please consult e.g. Wagner (2009b: 76-77).

<sup>309</sup> For more details on the South African structures for foreign policy see, for example, Erdmann (2009: 114-116).

After having denoted the actors and structures of the respective foreign policy-making by the strategic partners, I will now address the study's data selection and collection as well as analysis and interpretation.

### **6.3 Data Selection, Collection, Analysis and Interpretation**

As mentioned before, my study includes the (partly self-acquired) collection, analysis and interpretation of vast data material concerning the three cases studies. In order to understand the EU's strategic partnership with Brazil, India and South Africa, the second part of the present study engages in an in-depth analysis of three case studies by agglomerating and analysing corresponding data as research material. This data is firstly analysed and interpreted with respect to the single cases studies and secondly, compared. Qualitative methods are particularly helpful in doing so.

Crucial to this endeavour is for a scholar on field research to deeply engage oneself with a case on the ground. This is where theory meets real-life. At the same time, the researcher needs to stay at a certain distance to his/her research subject. Furthermore, the researcher has to pay attention not to 'drown' in the vast material collected (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 180).

Generally, a researcher should analyse data by relying on theoretical propositions in order to stay focused and not to drown because of data overload (Yin 1994: 103-104). However, similarly to the perspective of Grounded Theory and its 'theoretical sampling'<sup>310</sup> (Strübing 2008: 30; 53-54, 58, 60), the study's theoretical pre-model developed so far will serve as a sensitising concept (Strübing 2008: 31) for approaching the empirical data. Thus, I will not only rely on the categories formed on the basis of the deductive, theoretical pre-model. Instead, the data will also be analysed by being still open-minded to inductively-derived categories. This reflects the study's abductive research strategy.

#### **6.3.1 Data selection**

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<sup>310</sup> Theoretical sampling in Grounded Theory works nevertheless slightly different from the abductive research proceeding here. The former generates and also collects data with the purpose of theory-generation, yet it builds on a simultaneous process of collecting and analysing data as data analysis may 'determine' the selection of cases and further data collection (Strübing 2008: 30). This constitutes a repetitive research process (Strübing 2008: 30-33), while the study indeed follows a linear (abductive) research process by first building a deductive theoretical pre-model, which is then, secondly, supplemented by inductive inference from the case studies.

Generally, content analysis strives to analyse material, which originates from any kind of communication (Mayring 2008: 11; 12-13). The present study decides for the qualitative form of content analysis. Generally, and as mentioned before in the context of case studies, qualitative analyses help to formulate hypotheses and build theory (Mayring 2008: 20-22). More specifically, qualitative methods are particularly helpful in gathering 'meaning, process and context' (Devine 1995: 138). Qualitative methods actually rely on interpretation of social facts, which result in a verbal description of these facts (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 27). The qualitative collection of data leads to the generation of texts, which constitute the data (material) for analysis (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 43). As I am particularly interested in meaning and context, I have opted for qualitative methods and, thus, collecting and selecting qualitative data on the concerned strategic partnerships in order to attain the research goals. In brief, qualitative research as well as corresponding qualitative methods are most suitable to analysing the (self-) acquired data and material in order to answer the research questions of this research project.

Importantly, evidence within a case study may or rather should be drawn from various sources (Gerring 2009: 68; George/Bennett 2005: 97). The present study builds on qualitative data from official documents, secondary sources and (self-collected) data from expert interviewing. Hence, the qualitative data for (qualitative) data analysis will be selected from various sources. Thereby, the study will benefit of a triangulation<sup>311</sup> of data, which implies the usage 'of as many data sources as possible to illuminate the same subject-matter' (Hughes 1976: 276; Pickel 2009: 518). Primary sources (official 'documents'), secondary sources and interview data will be triangulated within the analysis of the three cases. As a result, the study avoids results from single-data sources (Hughes 1976: 277). When a researcher undertakes case studies, he/ she needs to 'dive into' the cases and their context. This entails vast literature research from primary and secondary resources. This literature research is complemented by the collection of additional data from 'original sources' (George/Bennett 2005: 97), which is in my case data from (mainly) qualitative expert interviews. This data has been collected during four extensive field research stays in the countries concerned. There, I have interviewed various actors and experts dealing with strategic partnerships either as practitioners or as scholars<sup>312</sup>. Furthermore, on-site I also have had the chance to collect grey literature (Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 180).

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<sup>311</sup> Triangulation here is used to accommodate for possible weaknesses of an investigation by the means of balancing different modes of data collection and analysis (see Pickel 2009: 518).

<sup>312</sup> George/Bennett (2005: 97) are right to point out that it is not enough to only rely on interviews with policy-makers. Indeed, interviews need to be assessed against the background of their 'evidentiary value' (George/Bennett 2005: 97). The data from interviews needs to be carefully complemented with other

Hence, there are three main sources of data material. Firstly, the material for the (qualitative) analysis and interpretation in this research project constitutes (text) material, which will be derived from a literature review of primary sources (such as official documents, speeches, press releases, media and newspaper articles)<sup>313</sup>. Secondly, secondary sources on the respective strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa will be considered as well and serve as a supplement to the primary sources. Both data from primary and secondary sources will be assembled, analysed and interpreted by a document analysis ('Dokumentenanalyse'<sup>314</sup>) (Mayring 2002: 46-49). Thirdly, and most importantly, the present research project also provided for field research in order to do research in the 'natural environment' of the research subject(s)<sup>315</sup> (Mayring 2002: 54-58). Qualitative (semi-structured/semi-guided expert) interviews by means of intensive and in-depth individual interviewing (Devine 1995) have been conducted with policy-makers, (governmental) officials, bureaucrats, civil servants, diplomats, researchers and business representatives in the EU(-context), Brazil, India and South Africa. The field research stays have allowed for (self-)compiling (text) material additional to the before mentioned (existing) documents and secondary sources considered in the document analysis.

As the field research stays in Brazil, Brussels (Belgium), India and South Africa have led to the collection of crucial and new data material on the strategic partnerships, I will in the following subchapter indicate the particularities of data collection in the context of field research and especially expert interviewing in the sensitive diplomatic and foreign policy sphere.

To sum up, the data for the case studies is largely drawn from written (primary and secondary) sources and oral (but summarised) primary sources, namely semi-

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sources, which I have done by also looking at secondary literature, public sources as well as by speaking to other experts.

<sup>313</sup> There is a dominance of sources from the EU-side, which is due to the fact that the EU is the connecting link between the three respective strategic partnerships and case studies thereof.

<sup>314</sup> Document analysis serves to analyse pre-existing material, which does not need to be 'created' by the researcher (in contrast to data from interviews, for example). Documents, thereby, can be quite diverse. Crucial to document analysis is the qualitative interpretation of material (Mayring 2002: 47).

<sup>315</sup> Admittedly, field research is rather known in sociology (Mayring 2002: 54), where the researcher predominantly observes the research subject (Mayring 2002: 54-55). This is not the case with this study as research subjects were not observed in that sense. Nonetheless, field research in the context of this study means that the study's author has gone to the 'field' in the sense of 'diving into' the environment of the interviewed experts. This has two major benefits. First, expert interviewing would otherwise not have been possible. Secondly, if the researcher had not been present in the field, some crucial interviews with experts would very probably not have taken place at all. Furthermore, Mayring (2008: 30) mentions that field research may include document analysis and open interviewing.

structured expert interviews<sup>316</sup>, in a qualitative manner. More specifically, the main types of evidence are (official) documents and interviews, which will be supplemented with secondary sources.

### **6.3.2 Data collection: field research stays (2010-2012): expert interviewing**

In addition to the gathering of documents on the strategic partnerships, field research in the context of this study has involved extensive and intensive (semi-structured/guideline and qualitative) expert interviewing<sup>317</sup>. Qualitative expert interviews are a method of qualitative social research (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 441) and a method for (self-)collecting data (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 451). I have opted for 'non-standardised expert interviews' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 442) because they particularly allow for investigating a phenomenon in an in-depth way by considering only a few cases (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 442). The choice of pursuing qualitative interviews also corresponds well with the fact that the present project attempts to understand the meaning of action (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 442). Thus, additional primary-sourced data for the three cases has been acquired in a qualitative way by means of qualitative expert-based interviewing.

As the study deals with sensitive and confidential data, oral interviewing is considered to be superior to a quantitative research design and corresponding methods, for example, surveys or polls. Even though surveys could be carried out with respect to several cases, which would enlarge the sample base and which would enable quantitative research, there is a realistic and considerable danger of not acquiring any data or information at all. There is a high likelihood that potential survey contributors may refrain from participating in surveys because these may disclose confidential data. When analysing foreign policy, which I do, a researcher very likely deals with confidential information and experts, which are bound to confidentiality.

Overall, I have conducted 72 semi-structured interviews during four field research trips in Brazil, Brussels (Belgium), India and South Africa during the time period from 2010 to 2012. The interviews were semi-structured in order to, on the one hand, base question on the developed theoretical pre-model and, on the other hand, still allow for enough room for new input from the interviewees (and, ultimately, allow for additional

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<sup>316</sup> These interviews have been conducted by the author on the basis of in-depth interviewing with an interview guide of open-ended questions informed by the theoretical pre-model and area as well as case knowledge of the author.

<sup>317</sup> For more elaboration on various forms of interview see, for example, Gläser/Laudel (2009: 40-43) and on the proceeding of semi-/structured guideline interviews and for building an interview guideline see, for example, Pickel/Pickel 2009: 446-448;

inductive inferences for the conceptual model, if applicable). The choice of interview partners has been guided by the author's knowledge of the foreign policy- and decision-making structures and involved foreign policy- and decision-making actors in the context of the strategic partnerships (see Ch. 6.2).

As a strategic partnership has two partners, I have not only interviewed representatives from and experts on Europe but have also spoken to the like on the Brazilian, Indian and South African side. Additionally, it is important to note that with respect to the the European Union side I have interviewed both practitioners from the 'European' level (EU-organs, EU-institutions, EU-delegations) and from national levels (national diplomats from the embassies and representations). Thereby, I have always tried to speak to representatives from the so called 'big EU-member states' (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2006: 26-27), which are believed to be particularly influential regarding the outlook of EU foreign policy. Furthermore, I have approached diplomats from those EU-member states holding the current EU-presidency or the respective EU-Presidency holding the tenure during which a strategic partnership was either co-prepared or established. Particularly, I have also spoken to those diplomats representing an EU-member state, which have held the EU-Presidency during which the high-level summits with Brazil, India and South Africa took or would took place.

Additionally, I have taken into account the advice by some experts and practitioners on whom to talk to<sup>318</sup>. For example, during field research in Brussels, I have been advised to speak to a person being heavily involved in the designing of the strategic partnerships, which is why I travelled to Paris in order to speak to this person.

The conduct of the interview has, thus, been guided by a list of major topics, which are informed by my theoretical pre-model and empirical pre-knowledge about the case and the context. These topics constituted the guideline of my interviewing. As Hughes has mentioned, '[...; the interviewer; NH] may ask certain major questions but is free to probe beyond them as he sees fit' (Hughes 1976: 146). The semi-structuration of the interview lies also in the fact that the interviewer is still flexible in order to account for input by the interviewees and gather additional inductive findings. Thus, the semi-structured interviews also correspond to the study's exploratory nature (Hughes 1976: 147) and abductive research strategy in applying the theoretical pre-model and nourishing it with inductive findings from case analysis.

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<sup>318</sup> Thereby, I owe great debt to several experts and practitioners not only for their advice on whom to talk to but also on their kind willingness to offer confidential contact details as well as being recommended as a(n apparently trustworthy) researcher.

Crucial in the process of interviewing is to take yourself back as a person and interviewer in order to 'unbias' the responses by the interviewees. Bias may result from the interviewer him-/herself (Hughes 1976: 151); from the formulation or 'wording' of questions, particularly in a cross-cultural context (Hughes 1976: 159-161); or from possibly reactions to interviewees' answers (Hughes 1976: 152-153); e.g., in terms of verbal utterances or body language<sup>319</sup>. Thus, I have opted for very open questions in order to avoid the distortion of data and, ultimately, the study's results as well as to incentivise the interviewee to 'narrate' and (more colloquially) 'open-up'. Leading questions were only used occasionally for the purpose of 'digging deeper' into issues or broaching certain subjects again<sup>320</sup>. I would strongly agree with Helfferich that 'active listening' in terms of being very attentive is one of the crucial competences for an interviewer (Helfferich 2009: 90). Furthermore, I would also agree with Pickel/Pickel that interviewers ideally have 'social competence' (2009: 448). The authors refer to an ideal conversational situation as much as possible regarding an open dialogue; taking the interviewees seriously; listening to the interviewees and showing interest in their responses (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 448). Moreover, from my own experience the building of trust between interviewer and interviewee as well as maintaining confidentiality are crucial for undertaking interviews in the context of foreign policies. This is why I will not quote the interviewees of this study directly but in an anonymised fashion. Interviewers should also acquire 'co-expertise' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 454) on the interview and subject matter. This co-expertise does not only serve the construction of the interview guideline. It also helps the researcher act and react flexibly in the course of the interview (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 454). I would add that interviewees also notice and appreciate if the interviewer is knowledgeable on the subject and interview matter. The researcher's pre-knowledge helps with being respected and, I would speculate, to retrieve more (detailed or confidential) information or insight. This is a major difference to biographical interviewing. Hence, qualitative expert interviewing is quite a challenging task for the researcher<sup>321</sup>, particularly when several case studies with multiple regional contexts are investigated.

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<sup>319</sup> For more elaboration on the particularities of the interview process itself, initiating interviews and conducting interviews see, for example, Helfferich 2009; Pickel/Pickel 2009: 454-461;

<sup>320</sup> This is where I disagree with Pickel/Pickel (2009: 448), who generally dismiss leading questions. Yet I believe that at least in the context of foreign policy expert interviewing and trained diplomats being capable of giving 'cloudy' answers, the researcher may use leading questions at times in the context of looking underneath the surface as he/she sees fit. Crucially, he/she needs to be aware when occasionally doing so.

<sup>321</sup> In addition, due to the refraining from recording the conduct of the interview itself is also very demanding for the researcher: he/she needs to pose questions; listen attentively; and re-/act flexibly while simultaneously taking notes and re-/think at the same time (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 157).

This is even more pressing in the context of research in the field of foreign policy as the latter is generally quite sensitive. Scholars encounter the challenge of building confidence especially with foreign policy practitioners. This entails to treat sensitive data in a confidential way. Yet in more practical terms, research in the sensitive area of foreign policy has important implications for the process and mode of data collection. As probably every kind of expert interview<sup>322</sup> has its particularities, expert interviewing within the diplomatic and foreign policy sphere has its special features and special circumstances. This holds especially true when it comes to recording the interview. Diplomats are very alert and cautious, when it comes to being recorded and cited by name. They are indeed 'experts' in telling different 'stories' dependent on the circumstance. Basically, there is a trade-off between collecting data in a methodologically adequate manner and retrieving (confidential) information and insight at all. As a consequence, even though I do have recorded a few interviews, I have abstained from doing so at some point<sup>323</sup>. Instead of transcribing the recording, the data and then the (text) material has been collected by writing minutes (selectively, but in a methodically controlled way) during the interview. Immediately after the interview, I have written a detailed verbatim and report from memory. These verbatim records are content protocols, which summarise the interviews as well as structure the content (summarising and selective content-protocols) (Mayring 2002: 94-99). I would argue that they already constitute a form of qualitative content analysis in the form of summarising and structuring the data material at an early stage. This is due to the fact that I have systematically summarised and structured the content protocol on the basis of the pre-established category system. If applicable, I have added notes on concepts and categories, which were not foreseen in the pre-established category system but 'emerged' from the interview and the respective case(s). Generally, a protocol is sufficient here as I am predominantly interested in the content and topic of the interview and less in the (language) context (Mayring 2002: 97). As a result, by deciding for content protocols of the expert interviews, the study has 'merged' the two (however,

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<sup>322</sup> Experts for an expert interview can be very different persons (Meuser/Nagel 2009: 468; Gläser/Laudel 2009: 11-15). By interviewing an expert, the researcher aims to retrieve insider-knowledge (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 444) or expert knowledge (Meuser/Nagel 2009: 466-467). Basically, experts are 'carriers of information' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 452): they are not questioned in terms of their respective biographies but instead regarding this very information and specific knowledge (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 453; Meuser/Nagel 2009: 469-470).

<sup>323</sup> Thus, I disagree with some authors, who (more strictly or less strictly) argue in an across-the-board manner that interviews should be recorded and transcribed (at any cost) (see Pickel/Pickel 2009: 448, 456; Meuser/Nagel 2009: 476; Gläser/Laudel 2009: 157-158, 193). I believe that the researcher needs to deliberate whether doing so – not only in ethical terms but also in terms of whether information-gathering is deemed successful when the tape recorder is running.

interrelated) steps of data collection and data analysis into one. This appears to be methodologically correct as these protocols have been developed in a systematic manner, namely on the basis of the pre-established category system. Notes on the context of the interview or particular statements were included as well (Mayring 2002: 97, 97-99).

Collecting data via qualitative interviewing is indeed closely connected to the subsequent analysis thereof (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 445; 448-449, which is why I will now turn to data analysis and interpretation.

### **6.3.3 Data analysis and interpretation: Qualitative Content Analysis**

Even though the present analysis will build on different sources, Pickel/Pickel (2009: 443-444) mention that the techniques of analysing either documents or expert interview data are very close: their unity serves to reconstruct meaning in a scientifically valid manner, which is the overall goal of qualitative research (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 448-449). Indeed, qualitative research is very close to interpretation (Schreier 2012: 26-27), which is the study qualitative research design is also in line with the mode of analysing and interpreting data.

Thus, both data analysis and data interpretation are conducted on the basis of text material (such as official documents, statements, speeches and interviews in written) (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 444). Hence, the triangulated data material in this study can be analysed in one step and via the same mode of analysis. Crucially, the interpretation of data needs to rely on the data analysis and should not be conducted in a spontaneous manner (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 449). Document analysis, interview analysis and case study analysis are also suitable methods for 'interpretative researchers' (Yanow 2009: 434), who investigate meaning (Yanow 2009: 434-444). What is more, the three techniques of qualitative content analysis (QCA) are the same techniques used for interpretation of data (Mayring 2008: 116). Hence, data analysis and interpretation are closely linked, which is why they will be 'merged' into one step of presenting the study's results of (data) analysis and interpretation in Ch. 6.3.3.

More specifically, the study's (text) material will be analysed, evaluated and interpreted by means of a qualitative content analysis (QCA) (Mayring 2002: 114-121; Schreier 2012: 1). Basically, qualitative content analysis '[...] is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material' (Schreier 2012: 1). It deals with the texts to be analysed as the material, in which data is to be found (Gläser/Laudel

2009: 199). QCA is a method, which is very well suited to 'understand' facts and subjective meanings (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 449) and for retrieving descriptions of social facts from texts in the context of 'reconstructive investigations' (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 47). It is also helpful in analysing expert interviews (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 47). This is why I opt for this mode of analysing the data material. Thus, the study opts for the method of qualitative content analysis in order to reconstruct the 'meaning' of the EU's respective strategic partnerships. Generally, content analysis encompasses 'extracting meaning from communication' (Hermann 2008: 151). Inferences are, thereby, made from text material in a procedurally controlled way (Hermann 2008: 151). My study involves to extract meaning from material such as official documents, interviews, press statements, speeches and articles as well as secondary literature. Thus, I do extract meaning from communication. Particularly, in the context of expert interviewing, meaning of human behaviour is reconstructed via the purposeful analysis of text material (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 449)<sup>324</sup>. Content analysis must be 'analytical' by being 'systematic' and 'intersubjective' in order to be methodologically correct (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 449-450).

Basically, qualitative content analysis works via the systemic analysis of (oral) material and text via the dissection and step-by-step processing of material as well as via the previous fixation of analytical aspects by a system of categories developed in a theory-led manner on the basis of the material (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 450). As Mayring puts it, qualitative content analysis allows for a step-by-step, systematic and strictly methodically controlled analysis of (dissected) material. It summarises, explicates and structures the material, by using a theory-led system of categories, which is informed by the material (Mayring 2002: 114-115). Thus, there are three possible modes of doing so (according to Mayring) (Mayring 2008: 44; Mayring 2002: 115; Pickel/Pickel 2009: 450, 458)<sup>325</sup>. First, the material is *summarized* via paraphrasing, generalisation and then reduction (selection, concentration and abstraction). Secondly, problematic text sections (notions, sentences etc.) are *extracted*: they are investigated more closely by also considering the inner or wider context of the text and, thus, additional material for elaborating on the respective text sections and explaining or interpreting them. This

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<sup>324</sup> Pickel/Pickel (2009: 449) actually distinctively speak of the 'transcribed text material' (2009: 449). However, for the reasons mentioned before, I will work without (entirely) transcribed text material but with protocols.

<sup>325</sup> More specifically, the third mode of Mayring's qualitative content analysis, structuration, has four subforms: 'formal structuring'; 'content-oriented structuring'; 'typecasting structuring' and 'scaling structuring' (Mayring 2008: 85). I will only use a 'content-oriented structuring', which works via extraction on the basis of theory-led, pre-determined categories (Mayring 2008: 89). Extracted material is paraphrased and subsumed under main or sub-categories (Mayring 2008: 89). Then, a summary is provided on the basis of these sub-/categories (Mayring 2008: 89).

second mode is particularly suitable for document analysis and when the analytical goal is very clear. Thirdly, the material is *structured*, which means that it is concentrated and interpreted systematically by using the developed category system. The category system filters and transverses the material, whereby the units of analysis need to be determined in advance (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 450-451; Mayring 2002: 115; Mayring 2008: 58)<sup>326</sup>.

Crucially, the *summary* of the material leads to the development of inductive categories. Thereby, this proceeding corresponds with the working procedure ('open coding') of Grounded Theory but the building of categories is more systematic than in the latter's case (Mayring 2002: 115, 116; Schreier 2012: 107-115). Thereby, the study's deductively-derived theoretical pre-model serves to determine the level of abstraction of and selection criteria for the inductively-derived categories within data analysis (Mayring 2002: 115-116, 116-117). Thus, neither empirical generalisations nor theoretical statements simply 'emerge' from the data material. Instead, a researcher does indeed look at the empirical field through a particular theoretical or conceptual lens which enables to 'see' the relevant data (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 28). This theoretical perspective signifies a 'theoretical sensitivity' (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 28; Strübing 2008: 31: it is the researcher's capability to reflect on empirically given material in theoretical terms (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 28). Thereby, so called 'sensitising concepts'<sup>327</sup> are developed, which are, in contrast to definitive concepts, comparably vague and imprecise and operate via rather vague notions. They are open and, thereby, sensitise the researcher for perceiving social meaning in concrete action areas (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 29, 30). These sensitising concepts should, thus, not be clarified in terms of a clear definition or operationalisation) before the empirical analysis. Only in direct 'confrontation' with the investigated phenomenon may a researcher concretize the sensitising concept (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 30). Hence, the definitive concept only emerges after having approached the empirical field and data (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 30).

Categories and the coding frame lie at the heart and are central instrument of (qualitative) content analysis because they concretise analytical goals into categories (Mayring 2008: 43; Schreier 2012: 58). Specifically, segments of data material are assigned to the main and sub-categories of the coding frame (Schreier 2012: 58; 58-61)<sup>328</sup>. Thus, a coding frame serves as the screening device for structuring the data

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<sup>326</sup> Interestingly, Pickel/Pickel (2009: 458) advise to use all three modes of qualitative content analysis in analysing expert interviews by 'merging' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 458-459) elements from them. The study will indeed do so to a certain extent (see below).

<sup>327</sup> These sensitising concepts are particularly relevant in sociology (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 28-30).

<sup>328</sup> For the process of segmenting material see Schreier (2012: 126-129; 134-145).

material (Schreier 2012: 61, 63). The building of a coding frame is informed by the goal of answering the research question (Schreier 2012: 63). The present study's coding frame will, firstly, consist of categories derived from the theoretical pre-model. The coding frame will be, secondly, further enriched by inductively-derived sub-/categories originating from the data itself<sup>329</sup> (Schreier 2012: 84-94; 107-125; Mayring 2010: 83)<sup>330</sup>. These may be additional main categories or sub-categories to the (deductive) main categories. In the latter case, sub-categories will be 'subsumed' under the (deductive) categories as sub-categories (Schreier 2012: 115-116).

Important delineation is necessary (Schreier 2012: 129-134) at this point: each case study is a 'unit of analysis' (equal to 'units of sampling') (Schreier 2012: 130). "*Units of coding [sic]* are those parts of the units of analysis that [...] be meaningfully interpret[ed] with respect to the categories at hand' (Schreier 2012: 131). Units of coding, thereby, represent a category from the coding frame (Schreier 2012: 131). 'Context units' are the 'surrounding context' (both Schreier 2012: 133), which are crucial to meaning of the before mentioned units of coding (Schreier 2012: 133). Context units will presumably be important with respect to the explicaton technique.

In the following I will provide a table with the category system, which has been derived from the deductively- theoretical pre-model and has informed the interview guideline for the expert interviews. Guiding questions link up theoretical pre-knowledge and qualitative methods of data collection (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 90). Guiding questions are characterised by the knowledge, which is supposed to be retrieved (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 91). For example, the category of 'strategic partnerships' has informed the following, very open question directed at the interviewee(s): 'how would you describe a strategic partnership?'

Overall, there are two main dimensions of category-building in the study's qualitative content analysis: deductive and inductive. One dimension of the qualitative content analysis is constituted by the application of the deductive pre-model to the empirical material, which represents a (content-)structuring qualitative analysis and the development of deductive categories (Mayring 2008: 74-75; Mayring 2010: 66). Secondly, the second dimension of the qualitative content analysis foresees inductive category-building (Mayring 2008: 75). The summarization technique is assumed to lead to additional inductive categories (independent from the theoretical pre-model) directly from the empirical material, namely the official documents and interviews (Mayring 2008:

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<sup>329</sup> For further elaboration on the requisites of coding frames see Schreier (2012: 71-78) and the step-by-step-mode of building a coding frame see Schreier (2012: 80-106 and 107-125).

<sup>330</sup> Crucially, in QCA the coding frame is built on the material, which is also analysed (Schreier 2012: 92).

75; Mayring 2010: 66; Schreier 2012: 88). Thus, the study effectively pursues abductive building of categories. Additionally, the explication technique is used for 'nourishing' the (deductive and inductive) system of categories (Mayring 2008: 77). To this end, it will be based on a structuring technique on the basis of the deductive and inductive categories (Mayring 2010: 94). As Mayring (2002: 117) explains, the basic idea of explication is to define in advance, where to look for additional material in order to explicate the respective text section(s). The search for explication material is supposed to be systematized in that way (Mayring 2002: 117). Explication 'material' may either be 'inner' or 'wider' text context: the former looks for context as direct references within the text itself, which 'describe', 'explain', 'give examples' etc. (Mayring 2008: 79). The latter ('wider context') searches for context going beyond the text, such as information in the form of details about the author of the text as well as the genesis and the cultural surrounding of the text (Mayring 2002: 118). It may include the entire knowledge of the interpreter (Mayring 2008: 79). Explication is, thus, predominantly a '*context analysis*' (Mayring 2002: 118; emphasis added): it does not reduce, but rather add to the material (Mayring 2008: 77; 78). Context material is investigated by looking for explanatory paraphrases (Mayring 2002: 118; Mayring 2008: 79).

If we distinguish between sources, sources are analysed via different techniques: I will firstly take the primary sources and, secondly, the qualitative expert interviews as a starting point. Firstly, the official documents are the credentials of the strategic partners' interaction. There, I will apply the deductively-derived theoretical pre-model within the document analysis of these official documents. Using the corresponding deductively-derived categories, I engage in a structuring content analysis<sup>331</sup> (Mayring 2008: 74-75). Moreover, the official documents may also generate inductive categories via a generalisation process and summarizing technique, similarly to the workings of Grounded Theory (Mayring 2008: 75-76). Furthermore, if applicable, I will also turn to the explication technique ('inner context').

Secondly, the expert interviews provide for the in-depth insights on the study's research subject and, presumably, new knowledge. Crucially, and as mentioned before,

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<sup>331</sup> Note that I will refrain from a structuring qualitative content analysis in the sense that there is no absolute assignment of text material to the categories of the category system before the analysis (Mayring 2002: 118-119; Mayring 2008: 83-84). However, as mentioned before, a clear operationalization of categories does not correspond to the rationale of working with a sensitising concept (see above). Only in confrontation with material may the categories be further specified. This corresponds well with the before mentioned content-oriented structuring technique (Mayring 2008: 89). It demonstrates that the category-building in this study lies in between deductive and inductive, namely abductive category-building: it has pre-determined categories while still allowing for categories 'emerging' from the data.

the content protocols of the expert interviewing already constitute a form of summary and structuring of the material. Hence, the content protocols already represent two forms of qualitative data analysis, because they have already summarized and structured parts of the data. Moreover, the content protocols may offer crucial context knowledge ('inner' and 'wider context'), which is why the explicating technique will be used here as well.

Thirdly, the deductively and inductively-derived categories will be 'fleshed out' via the results from *explicating* of secondary sources (as documents) as supplementary sources in the context of 'inner and wider context'. Thereby, I will also apply the (content-) *structuring* technique in order to scan secondary sources. This will be done on the basis of the (beforehand developed) deductive (theoretical pre-model) and inductive categories (official documents and expert interviews).

To sum up, I effectively use all three modes of Mayring's qualitative content analysis.

It is important to note that I will not code the data material as understood in (general) coding. As Schreier (2012: 40) explains, 'coding and QCA are very similar in many ways, 'categories' play a role, and the process of data analysis is referred to 'coding'. Yet (general) coding<sup>332</sup> as a further mode of analysing texts works differently from qualitative content analysis, as the latter works primarily via extraction (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 44, 200, 202-204): as Gläser/Laudel explain, coding indexes texts in order to analyse them, whereas extraction strives to 'exhaust' information from material. Hence, coding considers both texts and indexes for analysis, whereas extraction 'only' looks at the extracted information from material (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 199, 200). Extraction appears to be more suitable for the research goal to, basically, further nourish the theoretical pre-model, which is used as a 'screening device' (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 206). Coding in general is indexing used for reducing material, whereas coding within QCA is a 'conceptual device' (Schreier 2012: 38): thereby, coding as a conceptual screening frame helps with '[...] opening up new meanings' (Schreier 2012: 39) via '[...] relating [...] data to concepts' (Schreier 2012: 39). As a result, coding (the process of data analysis) in QCA is geared towards relating data (not categories) and codes again are informed by both concepts and data (Schreier 2012: 41, 42).

As a consequence, I will abstain from coding the material in this sense (Mayring 2002: 119). Instead, the study opts for conceptual coding using a coding frame of categories for screening data, because conceptual coding strives to generate theory and to unseal data (Schreier 2012: 41).

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<sup>332</sup> For more information on 'coding' and the differences to QCA see, e.g., Schreier (2012: 37-44)

It may be of interest that I will not use any computer software in pursuing QCA. Indeed, there is no compulsion to do so (Schreier 2012: 241, 258)<sup>333</sup>.

After having analysed all interviews belonging to one case study; I will subsume the analysis via a 'comparison of topics' (Meuser/Nagel 2009: 476), which are based on the by then developed overall category system of deductively- and inductively derived categories cutting across the whole number of interviews belonging to a case. In addition, when all three cases have been analysed individually, I will also compare the cases via a 'comparison of topics' (Meuser/Nagel 2009: 476), which are based on the by then developed overall category system of deductively- and inductively derived categories from all three case studies. Overall, I believe that this proceeding of qualitative content analysis can be fruitfully used for the combination of a theory-led and yet exploratory-interpretative analysis of material (Mayring 2002: 121). Crucially, after completing the analysis I will present the combined deductive and inductive coding frame/analytical model, which can already be considered as a major research result, because it is a major result of the present exploratory study and analysis of data (Schreier 2012: 219)

In a final and interrelated step, the data will not only be analysed but its results will be interpreted<sup>334</sup> as well. Interpretation generally corresponds well with the study's goal to uncover 'underlying meanings' (Yanow 2009: 432) via the investigation of 'human language' (Yanow 2009: 432). Particularly, document analysis and the analysis of field research-based qualitative interview material are important within qualitative interpretative analysis (Mayring 2002: 46; Yanow 2009: 433). What is more, QCA is particularly helpful in 'finding' meaning that is 'less obvious' (Schreier 2012: 2). Essentially, as Gerring (2009: 69) notes, 'all data requires interpretation, and in this respect all techniques of evidence gathering are *interpretative*' (*sic*). He further explains that to interpret relates to methods in the tradition of either hermeneutic or 'Verstehen' (Gerring 2009: 69-70). Thus, interpreting relates to modes of collecting evidence, which put 'the intentions and subjective meanings contained in social actions'. Crucially, it is yet the researcher tasks to interpret the lay data (Gerring 2009: 70). This is how evidence is drawn.

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<sup>333</sup> Additionally, Schreier mentions that when it comes to 'interpretative data-driven coding' (Schreier 2012: 247), following 'computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS)' (*sic*; Schreier 2012: 241) may actually be 'dangerous' (Schreier 2012: 247).

<sup>334</sup> For elaboration on 'interpretive ways of knowing' see Yanow 2009.

Results from data analysis and interpretation will be presented according to cases, which allows for a detailed presentation of results per case (Schreier 2012: 220). The presentation of results will more or less run along the hierarchical coding frame and its categories. This will help with the subsequent comparison of cases in order to identify common patterns among cases (Schreier 2012: 225). All results from the cross-comparison of cases will feed into the final conceptual model of *understanding* the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

Thus, it is important to note that after having completed the qualitative content analysis of all three individual cases; I will finally merge the deductive and inductive components of the analytical model of strategic partnerships (against the background of identified common patterns). Hence, when comparing the cases in a subsequent step, I will consider the overall (deductively and inductively-derived) analytical model of the EU's strategic partnerships. Thereby, I will be able to answer the project's research question of what makes their strategic partnerships strategic partnerships and how do they interact as strategic partners.

## **7. The EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa (Cases)**

As the study does not engage in neither historical analysis nor process-tracing, the context of the strategic partnerships (see Ch. 4.2.1) is considered to be more important than to exactly outline the dates or sequences of the respective strategic partnership-processes<sup>335</sup>. This is why I will concentrate on applying the developed theoretical pre-model in the cases instead of providing details, which may enhance information but not necessarily knowledge. I will yet briefly introduce the respective strategic partnerships. It is important to note that by applying the theoretical pre-model, which also serves as the study's analytical model informing the qualitative content analysis, I will particularly concentrate on the dimensions of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances and as social relationships. This is due to the fact that these are the dimensions offering 'understanding' to the 'why'- and 'how'-questions of this very project. Hence, I will hint at the assumptions regarding agency and structure (see Ch. 4.2), but these categories are not at the centre of analysing the three cases.

### **7.1 Case Study: EU-Brazil-Strategic Partnership**

The EU-Brazil-Strategic Partnership has been prepared under the German EU(-Council) Presidency in the first half of the year 2007. Later, it has been formalized with a communication by the (European) Commission in May 2007 (under the German EU-Presidency) and formally established under the then Portuguese EU(-Council) Presidency in July 2007 (Hess 2009; Gratius 2009: 29; Maihold 2009: 190).

The Joint Action Plan was established in December 2008 under the French EU(-Council) Presidency (Council/EU (B) 2008; Ministry of External Relations (B) 2008; de Vasconcelos 2010: 75) and later updated in 2011 (Grevi 2012: 8). The working structure of the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership entails (annual) high level summits as well as meetings and committees at (political) working or societal level (Council/EU (B) 2008: 9; de Vasconcelos 2010: 75; Gratius 2012: 19).

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<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, there are many accounts, which provide details of the historical or sequential outline of the coming into being, the process and the institutional outlook of the strategic partnerships. See, for example, on the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership: Hess 2009, Lazarou 2011, Council Secretariat/EU (B) 2011; on the EU-India-strategic partnership: Hess 2013; and on the EU-South Africa strategic partnership: Hess 2010.

With regard to interregionalism, the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean countries (LAC) have a strategic partnership with the EU since 1999 (Edwards 2011: 57; Hess 2009: 2)<sup>336</sup>.

### **7.1.1 Analysis**

The political discourse on the EU-Brazil strategic partnerships reflects a willingness to cooperate bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally (Commission/EC (B) 2007: 2) on the basis of commonly shared values and interests (Commission/EC 2007: 5, 5-14; Council/EU (B) 2007: 2; Council/EU (B) 2008: 3). As the Commission communication argues, EU-Brazil relations have been diversified and intensified to an extent that a new framework for their relationship is necessary (Commission/EC 2007: 2).

In the following I will present the findings from qualitative data analysis with regard to the Brazil-EU-strategic partnership along the lines of the sensitising, analytical concept (see Figure 4). It will show that not every category has derived results. In a conclusion, I will summarise the findings and provide further interpretation.

#### **STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF SITUATION**

There are indeed indications of systemic change and power shifts when it comes to the EU-Brazil-relationship: Brazil is considered to be rising, whereas Europe is seen to be relatively declining (Gratius 2013: 1). Both '[...] are redefining their position in a fluid international system' (Gratius/Grevi 2013: 1). Furthermore, Brazil is considered to be refuting the international power hierarchy (Flemes/Habib 2009: 139).

The documents also reflect the presumed logic of situation in terms of the need or even will to cooperate in order to (be able to) shape international politics. For example, the Joint Statement following the third Brazil-EU Summit in Stockholm (2009) clearly states that '[...] both Brazil and the EU agreed on the importance of an effective multilateral system, centred on a strong United Nations, as a key factor in the tackling global challenges' (Council/EU (B) 2009: 2; Delegation/EUCom (B) 2009; Council/EU (B) 2010: 2). Additionally, a Brazilian diplomat (Bz-2 2012) argued that 'Brazil strives for a

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<sup>336</sup> For more information on the relations between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean countries see, for example, Archer 2008: 105-106; Fraser 2007: 168-169; K. Smith 2008: 92-95; Gratius 2009. Santander 2010 or Gratius 2013.

multipolar world and that the EU is part of that'. The EU was also considered to be a 'trend' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-6 2012) in this context.

### ESTABLISHED POWER AND EMERGING REGIONAL POWER

The original Commission communication starts off by not only pointing at Brazil becoming '[...] an increasingly significant global player [...]' and a 'key interlocutor' (both Commission/EC (B) 2007: 2) but by also making clear reference to the region, namely Latin and South America including Mercosur (Commission/EC (B) 2007: 2, 14; Ferrero-Waldner 2007).

Basically, Brazilian foreign policy is assumed to be guided by two main goals since the 1990s: first, to project Brazil as an global actor internationally and secondly, to act as a regional leader in South America (Gomes Saraiva 2012: 45). Herz notes that 'brazilian policy makers clearly view Brazil as a power on the rise: a dominant regional power at the forefront of regional integration and an emerging force in the global area' (2011: 160). Thereby, Brazil can use South America as a stepping stone in its strive for the status of a great power (Herz 2011: 173). Other authors also declare Brazil to be a regional power (in South America) (Fraser 2007: 3; Gratius 2009: 29, 41-42). Valladão notes that the declining interest in biregional relations coincided with Brazil's new assertiveness as a partner (Valladão 2008a: 19). These statements reflect the study's presumption about Brazil's current power and Brazilian ambitions. There are also reflected in the original Commission communication leading up to the establishment of the EU-Brazil strategic partnership, where the Brazilian emergence is mentioned several times (Commission/EC (B) 2007: 1). The Brazilian rise is also evident in other official sources (Barroso 2010b; Confidential Source (EU) 2007). Moreover, Brazil's regional preponderance in South and Latin America is clearly acknowledged by describing the country as 'a quasi-continent in its own right [...]' (Commission/EC (B) 2007: 2, 2-3) amongst others.

There was also a widespread consent among interview partners on Brazil being an 'emerging power' (Expert Bz-1 2012) and the 'most powerful emerging country' on a regional level and with important regional influence (European diplomat 2010 P-1; Expert Bz-2; European diplomat Bz-2 2012; European diplomat Bz-4 2012; European diplomat B-8 2010). Yet it is striking that there were many Brazilians or experts in Brazil describing Brazil as a 'middle power' rather than a regional power (Expert Bz-1 2012; Expert Bz-3 2012; European diplomat Bz-1 2012). However, it is considered to have the potential of

influencing its neighbours (European diplomat Bz-4 2012). Yet the Brazilian interview partners were rather cautious to call Brazil a global power (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012; Brazilian diplomat Bz-2 2012). Yet one Brazilian diplomat (Bz-2 2012) argued that 'Brazil has traditionally had a very important role in regional issues in the last 15 years' and 'has developed closer ties with neighbours via striving for regional integration amongst others'. However, Brazil was considered to 'currently have more leverage on global issues' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-2 2012). On the one hand, one could interpret these statements in terms of the view that Brazil does not want to be seen as a regional leader (European diplomat Bz-3 2012). On the other hand, these arguments could also signify that Brazil is 'peeling away from the region' and is rather interested in the global scene. There was, however, no explicit mentioning of the EU being an established power.

#### ***7.1.1.1 Strategic alliance (part of strategy of cooperating while competing)***

On the occasion of the first EU-Brazil Summit in 2007, EU-Commission President Barroso compared the newly established strategic partnership with a 'strategic alliance' (Press Release/EU (B) 2007c: 1). From the press release can be deduced that the strategic partnership goes beyond trade relations and comprises of various cooperation areas (Press Release/EU (B) 2007c). The Joint Statement establishing the EU-Brazil strategic partnership complements the impression of a relationship beyond trade by stating that it represents a '[...] political dialogue at the highest political level' (Council/EU 2007 (B): 1).

Gratius (2012: 8) posits that the strategic partnership between Brazil and the EU was supposed to create a 'global alliance' (Gratius 2012: 8). However, she does not exactly explain what this global alliance is. At the sidelines, she indicates that the alliance would need to be mutually beneficial (Gratius 2012: 8). Furthermore, reading from the text, a global alliance seems to be geared at cooperation at the international/global levels, in contrast to the regional level (Gratius 2012: 8). Indirectly, Gratius synonymizes a strategic partnership with a 'strategic alliance' (Gratius 2012: 11)<sup>337</sup>. This is matched by assessments of interview partners arguing that the EU tries to make Brazil an 'ally' (European diplomat Bz-1 2012; European diplomat Bz-6 2012).

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<sup>337</sup> Brazilian diplomat B-1 (2010) argued that the European Council Summit of Laeken (2001) was decisive for introducing the EU's strategic partnership. According to this diplomat, the EU-Commission was the driving force behind the establishment of the EU's strategic partnerships in convincing the EU-member states to introduce them. This also applies to the EU-Brazil strategic partnership: even though the German and Portuguese EU-Presidencies were indeed important, it was again the European Commission working to convince Germany and Portugal (Brazilian diplomat B-1, 2010). This Brazilian assessment matches with statements by European diplomat P-1. According to European diplomat P-1 (2010), there were many

The EU 'initiated' the strategic partnership and chose Brazil as a strategic partner also in terms of 'betting on' important players in the future (Brazilian diplomat B-1 2010). Brazil was seen as to having 'welcomed' the strategic partnership with the EU (European official B-2 2010). The EU-Brazil strategic partnership was replicated from the previous EU-India strategic partnership (European diplomat P-1 2010). It has also been considered as an attempt to prevent Brazil from 'aligning with other powers, such as China or Russia, on international issues' (European diplomat Bz-6 2012).

The fact that the EU-Brazil strategic partnership was also described as a 'win-win-relationship' (Expert Bz-2 2012; Expert Bz-4 2012) also reminds of an international business' perspective, where companies join in win-win-relationships or benefit from win-win-situations. Strategic partnerships are never a 'zero-sum game' (Expert Bz-4 2012). Both partners achieve 'mutually positive effects on both sides in fields of mutual interests (European diplomat Bz-5 2012). Yet from this perspective it is important to note that the strategic partnership's starting point is the 'own strategic (self-) interest' (European diplomat Bz-6 2012) and not necessarily commonly shared interests in the first place.

**a) Policy Coordination (Adaptation) - COOPERATION**

The documents on the EU-Brazil strategic partnership are explicit about the objective of cooperation in various policy areas and reaching policy adaptation (Commission/EC 2007: 3, 14; Press Release/EU (B) 2007a: 1; Council/EU (B) 2008). For example, the 2007 Commission communication postulates that both the EU and Brazil are interested in striving for a '[...] greater convergence of EU and Brazilian positions on a wide range of issues by means of closer co-operation and consultation at all levels' (Commission/EC 2007: 3).

Expert Bz-3 (2012) also noted that the EU's strong interest in forming similar positions with Brazil were one of the major driving forces to establish the strategic partnership with Brazil. Ideally, Brazil-EU cooperation would ideally lead to joint actions (European diplomat Bz-3 2012).

At the same time, the EU-Brazil strategic partnership serves to reach out to partners and maximize cooperation (Expert Bz-1 2012). They help 'to establish an

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discussion around the EU-Brazil strategic partnership within the European Commission and its DGs as well as among EU-member states.

agenda for cooperation' (Expert Bz-4 2012). For example, one Brazilian diplomat argued that the EU-Brazil strategic partnership was more cooperative than the EU-China strategic partnership (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012).

***b) Power and status – Competition***

***Management/ Engagement (Socialisation) – bilateral, regional, international/global***

The documents also mirror the objective of engaging the respective strategic partner in various institutions, at several levels (bilateral, regional and multilateral/global) and in multiple policy areas (Commission/EC 2007: 5, 8, 15; Press Release/EU (B) 2007a: 2; Press Release/EU (B) 2007b: 1; Ferrero-Waldner 2007; Press Release/EU 2008a; Council/EU (B) 2008: 3; Council/EU (B) 2009: 1; Infolatam 2010b). Several experts and diplomats also described that the strategic partnership between Brazil and the EU were taking place at the bilateral, regional and global (international/multilateral) levels (e.g., Expert Bz-1 2012; European diplomat B-8 2010).

With respect to the regional level, Brazilian diplomat B-1 (2010) argued that the bilateral EU-Brazil strategic partnership was indeed introduced because of the biregional strategic partnership's lack of results over the years (Expert Bz-3 2012). There are also authors, who have suggested that the establishment of the bilateral EU-Brazil-strategic partnership was grounded in the fact that the regional integration efforts in Latin and South America were stuttering and that the biregional strategic partnership was perceived to have lost in dynamism (Zilla 2009: 66; Hess 2009: 1; Hess 2012: 4). For example, the EU-Mercosur-negotiations were stalled (Zilla 2009: 66). Moreover, Brazil did not only attract attention due to its sheer geographical size in Latin America having somewhat outgrown the biregional partnership (European diplomat Bz-5 2012; Bz-6 2012). It was also the Brazilian behavior in the context of the WTO-negotiations, which had it made appear 'dangerous' to the Europeans (Brazilian diplomat B-1 2010; European diplomat P-1 2010 0).

Bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships are widely considered to each having their individual (independent) relevance (Brazilian diplomat 1-Br 2012; European diplomat Bz-5 2012) being 'complementary' (European diplomat P-1; European diplomat B-8 2010) or 'linked' (European diplomat Bz-1 2012). But at times the two frameworks were also seen as 'substitutable' (Expert Bz-3), whereby the bilateral framework would be more important (European diplomat Bz-6 2012). Moreover, the EU has aimed for a

channel for influencing the Latin American and Caribbean countries via Brazil (European official B-2 2010).

Yet, there were also voices stating that Brazil does not consider the regional level in pursuing a bilateral strategic partnership with the EU (Expert Bz-1 2012; Expert Bz-2 2012), partly due to the fact that Brazil does not want to be seen as a regional leader or hegemon (Expert Bz-1 2012; European diplomat Bz-1 2012). One interview partner put it quite bluntly in stating that it is 'delicate and dangerous' in 'equating' Brazil and the South American region: 'if you deal with Brazil, then don't think that you are dealing with the region at the same time' (European diplomat Bz-1 2012). Whereas the EU tries to keep the bilateral and biregional frameworks together, Brazil is seen as 'not wanting to be part of that "whole"' (European diplomat Bz-3 2012). Quite instructive in this respect was the following statement: a Brazilian diplomat (Bz-6) first said that the biregional strategic partnership is 'an important ingredient of the bilateral strategic partnership' adding quickly 'of course, you could see it the other way round' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-6 2012).

From a Brazilian perspective, Brazil at the time had to be convinced of a strategic partnership in the first place. The EU did try to 'use' Brazil in getting a better influence in the Latin American region. Yet Brazil managed to prevent the EU of doing so. At the same time, however, Brazil does, in fact, use the strategic partnership with the EU in order to be the speaking tube for the region. Brazil 'uses the bilateral forum to present the views and concerns of the Latin American region' (Brazilian diplomat B-1 2010). Additionally, the Brazilian diplomat mentioned that neither the EU nor Brazil would give up on the biregional framework with the LAC-countries. Implicitly, this appeared to be primarily for political reasons.

Interestingly, the documents reflect that Brazil and the EU talk about both of their respective regions in 2010 (Council/EU (B) 2010: 1). Before, the official discourse largely focused on Latin and South America when referring to the regional level. It may be assumed that the modification in discourse and in policy perspective in this respect could be due to the on-going European economic and financial crisis (Council/EU (B) 2010: 2; European Council/President (B) 2010a, 2010b). Additionally, there was a new impetus given to EU-Mercosur-trade talks in the context of the Brazil-EU Summit in 2010 (Vogel 2010; SELA 2010)

Elements of socialisation were hard to read from official documents. Interview sources were more helpful in bringing them to the surface. For example, a European

diplomat (Bz-6 2012) mentioned that the EU 'would like to influence Brazil'. The strategic partnership was, thereby, described as a 'process' (European diplomat Bz-6 2012).

### **Keeping; Increasing; Demonstrating Power ('prestige')**

The perspective of power shifts in the international system was also reflected in the interviews with both the European and the Brazilian interview partners. For example, Brazilian diplomat B-2 (2010) noted that Brazil is no 'superpower' but it becomes more 'important'. Europe, on the other hand, '[...] still has the dreamtime of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in mind, where Europe has been the leader of the world. But this is not the case anymore; this changed 20 years ago' (Brazilian diplomat B-2 2010).

Even though Gratius uses the terms of balancing and bandwagoning (and combinations thereof) with respect to the EU-Brazil-interaction and their increasing power-equalisation (Gratius 2012: 12, 18), I think that their interaction is better reflected by referring to the strategy of cooperating while competing. Particularly, as Gratius mentions herself that Brazil and the EU do '[...] compete for status and global influence' (Gratius 2012: 20) and compete in terms of '[...] gaining versus maintaining power quotas' (Gratius 2012: 21). At the same time, it is stated that 'on global challenges EU and Brazil are like-minded partners in key areas' (Ferrero-Waldner 2007: 2).

The fact that Brazil is striving to increase power, whereas the EU is striving to work against its decline, is reflected in Gratius' statement that the two partners are experiencing an '[...] increasing symmetry of power between them [...]' (Gratius 2012: 12). She also mentions that '[...] Brazil seeks status while the EU wants to maintain it' (Gratius 2012: 14); thereby, attempting '[...] to maintain the status quo [...]' (Gratius 2012: 14; Lazarou 2011: 4). In any case, there was a strong agreement among interview partners that Brazil was striving for major or global power (Expert Bz-2 2012; European diplomat Bz-2 2012). As a European diplomat has put it, Brazil is an 'emerging power trying to get more power' (European diplomat Bz-3 2012). Brazil is 'already gaining a new projection on the international scene' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-2 2012).

With respect to Brazil and the EU, Gratius mentions that 'both [...] seek recognition, prestige and influence' (Gratius 2012: 8). Indeed, Brazil tries '[...] to increase its influence and global presence' (Gratius 2012: 12). The strategic partnership with the EU has been considered by Brazil to possibly '[...] provide greater international prestige and recognition for the country [...]' (Gomes Saraiva 2012: 54).

Becoming the EU's strategic partner is considered to be prestigious (Expert Bz-1 2012). It is considered to support Brazil's international projection: 'it is one step to be more global' (Expert Bz-3 2012). Thus, there is an 'element of projection' (European diplomat Bz-1 2012) inherent to the establishment of a strategic partnership with Brazil. The strategic partnership is considered to be a relationship of partners being on a par (Expert Bz-2 2012).

Thus, strategic partnerships are related to prestige and demonstrating power.

### **Status recognition: Major Power; International Actor**

Brazil is considered to be looking for '[...] international recognition in accordance with its belief that it should assume its 'natural' role as a 'big country' in world affairs' (Soares de Lima/Hirst 2006: 21). A European diplomat mentioned that 'Brazil would like to be recognized on the international scene' (European diplomat Bz-3 2012). Hence, Brazil indeed strives for achieving a certain status or gaining in status in pursuing its foreign policy (amongst others) (Husar/Maihold 2009: 29). Particularly, Brazil is looking for 'major power status' (Herz 2011: 159) or global status (Corbetta et al. 2011: 222) in pursuing its foreign policy (Herz 2011: 159). To this end, it uses different tools (Zilla 2009: 66). In this context, Brazil is looking for status '[...] within the established system' (Herz 2011: 176), which means that it does not necessarily try to overthrow the present system. Herz (2011: 176) argues that the South American country is indeed more and more 'recognized' (Herz 2011: 176).

My presumption is that the strategic partnership constitutes foreign policy recognition of Brazil's new important status within the established system. The strategic partnership has a 'signaling function' regarding the regional and international levels for both the EU and Brazil (Hess 2009: 3, 6). The status of the EU's strategic partner is designated by the EU (Hess 2009: 6). I agree with Herz (2011: 177) in stating that '[...] there is a discrepancy between its self-image and the attribution of status by other relevant actors'. In the EU-political discourse Brazil is acknowledged as a regional power and a rising power (see, for example, Infolatam 2010a; Commission/EC (B) 2007).

Crucially, Garcia (2008), who has been special advisor to the Brazilian President, notes that the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership symbolises '[...] the European Union's recognition of the place Brazil today occupies in the world' (2008: 49). Once the EU proposed the strategic partnership to Brazil, the latter felt recognized as equal partner. There was a sense of 'triumphalism' as Brazilian aspirations were met (Expert Bz-1 2012). Overall, notions of Brazil's strategic partnership with the EU representing Brazil's

'recognition' or 'acknowledgement' were very strong (Expert Bz-3 2012; European diplomat Bz-1 2012; BZ-6 2012; European official B-12 2008). As one expert has put it, 'even though we have a lot of friends, you are very special' (Expert Bz-4 2012). Yet European official B-12 2008 underlined that Brazil 'wants more than a title – the strategic partnership is an acknowledgement of its leadership aspirations'. At the same time, one European diplomat noted the Brazilians also work towards being recognized and acknowledged as 'big, international player' recognition (European diplomat Bz-4 2012). Building on their self-esteem they are not dependent on 'waiting for' external or EU recognition (European diplomat Bz-4 2012).

With respect to the bilateral versus biregional strategic partnership, European official B-3 (2010) did not believe that one can have a biregional strategic partnership. Moreover, the official argued that Latin America as a bloc is not important. However, 'you had to have a relation with LAC back then; it was not possible to choose Brazil as others would have been mad' (European official B-3 2010). Moreover, even though Argentina wanted to be in the 'champions league', the EU-member states did not want an Argentinian strategic partner (European official B-3 2010). Furthermore, the official brought forward the argument that there is a 'symbolic difference' between the EU-Brazil- and the EU-Mexico-strategic partnership: whereas Brazil and the EU built their partnership on a Joint Action Plan, the EU-Mexico strategic partnership was founded on a Joint Executive Plan (European official B-3 2010)<sup>338</sup>. This is due to the fact that Mexico is 'less independent' in comparison to Brazil being part of the BRICs and BASIC<sup>339</sup>. When questioned if Mexico had to ask for a strategic partnership, whereas the strategic partnership was proposed to Brazil, the European official speculated: 'maybe someone asked Mexico to ask for it' (European official B-3 2010).

Furthermore, the EU also has an interest in being recognized as an international and/or global actor by becoming Brazil's strategic partner (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012). 'The EU-Brazil-strategic partnership serves to project the EU on the international scene' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-2 2012). Brazilian interview partners also pointed at the EU's inner

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<sup>338</sup> At the same time, European official B-6 denounced the idea that this difference in terminology plays any major role for the respective strategic partnerships' degree of importance (European official B-6 2010; European diplomat B-8 2010). Mexican diplomat B-2 (2010) argued that the difference in terminology was only due to the fact that the previous EU-Mexico Global Agreement already was an 'intense relationship' and that the strategic partnerships was only an additional 'boost' to the relationship. I believe that these various considerations around terminology exemplify the political significance of the political discourse and its relevance for the EU's strategic partners among one another.

<sup>339</sup> BASIC stands for Brazil, South Africa, India and China forming an alliance in the context of the UNFCCC climate change negotiations.

difficulties in terms of (shared) competences, yet the EU was also considered to be 'more than the sum of its parts' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012).

### **7.1.1.2 Social Relationship and Bases of Power**

The strategic partnership is described as a 'long-term relationship' (European diplomat Bz-5 2012). Elements of a relationship can arguably be read from statements such as that the '[...] strategic partnership involves commitments to deepen mutual understanding [...]' (Council/EU (B) 2007: 6) among the partners. One expert argued that Brazil and the EU speak the same language, which is a major contrast to the EU and India (European diplomat Bz-4 2012). Yet, Brazil and the EU were considered to be no allies (European official B-3 2010). 'They are something below friends but not enemies' (European official B-3 2010).

What is more, interview assessments made dimensions of socialisation more apparent: a European diplomat stated that the dialogue within the strategic partnerships is important. Even though there may be no common position among the strategic partners, the understanding of the other position is crucial (European diplomat Bz-5 2012). A strategic partnership is rather 'dynamic' and 'not static' (European diplomat Bz-6 2012).

#### **Int. society; social groups ('clubs'); social status**

Lazarou (2011: 4) mentions that there is '[...] shift of power from traditional to new actors [...]'. This is actually a statement, which not only reflects the power shifts from the EU to rising powers but also the sociologically informed view of power within the international society of states. Brazil is attested to strive for joining '[...] the club of world leaders [...]' (Gratius 2012: 9), dominated by 'traditional powers' (Gratius 2012: 9). However, in this context, Gratius mentions that Brazil re-oriented itself by shifting focus from pre-established international institutions of *traditional* power towards '[...] its *positioning* as BRICS country, a *group* generally opposed to the stances of *traditional* powers [...]' (Gratius 2012: 9; emphasis added by NH). BRICS is, thus, clearly depicted as a (social) group – irrespective of being composed of quite different countries (Gratius 2012: 9). The 'Global South' versus the 'Global North', whereby Brazil and the EU are located in different groups (Gratius 2012: 19), can also be understood in terms of social groups within the international society of states. Indeed, European official B-3 (2010) remarked that Brazil considers Europe to be 'over-represented' in the G20. Moreover,

Parliamentary Advisor/MEP (2010) argued in the context of Latin America becoming a European priority, 'as Europe becomes less important in the world, it is trying to find partners, which are more 'Western''. At the same time, European official B-12 2008 argued that Brazil functions as a 'hinge between the North and South'.

Furthermore, on the event of the proposed EU- Brazil strategic partnership, EU-Commission President Barroso stated that 'by proposing stronger ties, we are acknowledging Brazil's qualification as a 'key player' to join the restricted club of our strategic partners' (Press Release/EU (B) 2007a: 1). The EU uses the strategic partnerships in order to create a 'club' of strategic partners (Expert Bz-1 2012).

In addition, a Brazilian source mentioned that 'classes', such as emerging or developing countries are important criteria: 'the way you define things makes you shape them' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012). With formalizing a strategic partnership with Brazil, the EU 'labelled' Brazil (Expert Bz-4 2012). This is useful for Brazil as the EU demonstrates that Brazil is really different to other countries (Expert Bz-4 2012). What is more, Europeans are disappointed not to be named as 'fellow country', which is a Brazilian 'label' for the IBSA-countries (European diplomat Bz-3 2012).

### **Positive or negative incentives (reward or coercive power)**

As I have stated elsewhere, there is no power of force attached to the strategic partnerships: it comes with no strings attached (Hess 2009: 6). Thus, no conditionality is involved in the EU-Brazil-strategic partnership. However, it appears that the EU has constructed a 'club' of strategic partners. In fact, by constructing a limited club of the EU's strategic partners, the EU is able to create a 'privileged relationship' (Press Release/EU (B) 2007c; Expert Bz-2 2012), which again can be used to *reward* particular countries. From this follows that the EU, which has proposed the strategic partnership-status to Brazil, has certain kind of reward power: the reward power of conferring a certain status to a country. Indeed, being recognized by the EU as a traditional and established power may also explain for the triumphalism on the Brazilian side. Indeed, Brazil also has reward power in terms of recognizing the EU as an international actor as it is willing to enter into a strategic partnership with the EU.

### **Referent power**

One expert argued that the EU uses the strategic partnership with Brazil for the purpose of 'attraction' (Expert Bz-1 2012). Brazil, on the other hand, also having strategic

partnerships of its own rather uses it as an instrument of 'foreign policy and strategy of diversification' (Expert Bz-1 2012). It reflects the Brazilian foreign policy of 'concentric circles' (Brazilian diplomat Bz-1 2012; European diplomat Bz-4 2012).

Judgments of the EU's (potential) referent power were rather mixed from a Brazilian perspective. For example, in the context of the UN-negotiations on climate change (UNFCCC<sup>340</sup>), one Brazilian diplomat B-2 (2010) stated that the European felt like 'leaders' but that the rest of the world did not look at Europe as the 'vanguard', which was the EU's self-image. The same diplomat stressed that this impression was not due the EU's lack of coordination but that the EU's self-image simply did not correspond to the 'outer-perception'. Moreover, the EU's strive to create this self-image of a leader in various areas via political discourse is not possible as this 'psychological experiment' does not work (Brazilian diplomat B-2: 2010). Brazilian diplomat B-2 (2010) also mentioned that 'other countries are not interested in the EU's self-image in terms of pride and leadership. They care about the substance. Brazil does not ask the European Commission to understand Lula's charisma' (Brazilian diplomat B-2).

In this context, even European official B-3 did not see the cause of the EU-Brazil strategic partnership in a pronounced Brazilian liking of the EU. This interview partner stated quite bluntly: 'not everybody likes Europe' (European official B-3 2010).

### **7.1.2 Conclusion and Interpretation**

The results from the case study somewhat shows that the study's assumption about agency and structure appear to be traceable with the exception of the EU being an established power. Nonetheless, there is a sense of viewing the EU-Brazil strategic partnership as a strategic alliance starting from self-interest and building on mutual interests gaining mutual benefits. What is more, competition with other actors, in terms of Brazil aligning with other powers, was seen as a further incentive for the EU to intensify relations with Brazil.

Clearly, notion of cooperation and policy coordination in a wide array of issue areas were quite strong. Policy adaptation appears more of an ideal for the strategic partnership.

Competition was not mentioned explicitly. However, the EU's attempt of engaging Brazil and, thereby, managing its rise was hinted at widely. This involves all three levels. Additionally, bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships were widely seen as complementary, possibly because both partners have their interests with respect to the

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<sup>340</sup> UNFCCC stands for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Latin Americana and Caribbean or South American region: the EU was seen to indeed try to use Brazil as a channel and interlocutor, whereas Brazil proclaimed to present regional issues and views to the EU. The EU's region did not feature high. There was only one hint at a socialisation process, which could only be retrieved from an interview. Primary documents were (as expected) not helpful in this respect. Moreover, the EU-Brazil strategic partnership was also described as being a 'process'. Thus, the EU can be seen as following a management/engagement strategy with respect to Brazil. Additionally, analysis has shown that Brazil also follows a management/engagement strategy with respect to the EU.

Brazil's rise for more power, preferably major and global power, was strongly pronounced in the analysis. The EU is seen as working against its decline in terms of maintaining power as far as possible. Thus, competition for power – keeping versus increasing power - is mentioned (indirectly). Furthermore, strategic partnerships are related to power demonstration and prestige.

The analysis has also shown that strategic partnerships concern recognition and status of the strategic partners. Brazil is looking for (international) recognition and status of a global or even major power. By proposing the status of a strategic partner to Brazil, the EU can actually confer a certain status to Brazil: first, being part of the exclusive club of strategic partners, which are considered to be rising, influential, regional and increasingly more important powers. Thereby, this status recognition contributes to Brazil's general goal of collecting power status recognition. Additionally, as assumed, the EU also follows a status recognition strategy in terms of being viewed as an international and global actor via establishing a strategic partnership with Brazil. Apparently, the EU is indeed seen as an actor in addition to the EU-member states.

Moreover, the EU-Brazil strategic partnership has been cast in terms of a social relationship, even though it does not constitute a friendship. It is seen as serving mutual understanding of the strategic partnership by having this special dialogue. The strategic partnership was described as dynamic, which again demonstrates the process-nature of this framework.

Assuming an international society including social groups revealed that Brazil was considered to be in between the social groups/clubs of Global North and Global South. Moreover, the EU's group of strategic partners was considered to be a club of its own. BRICS can be viewed as a social group comprising countries, which are indeed quite different in size and power. What is more, the labelling of countries, such as emerging countries or IBSA or fellow countries, was deemed relevant in terms of having the power to shape things.

Linked to this, analysis has shown that the EU as the proposer of the strategic partnership and as a traditional power has a certain reward power in terms of conferring a certain status to its partner. Additionally, Brazil also has a certain reward power in terms of recognizing the EU as an actor.

However, the EU apparently does not have referent power from a Brazilian perspective.

No instances of informational power, coercive power, expert power or legitimate power could be traced.

To sum up, the EU-Brazil strategic partnership can be *understood* as strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. The EU, being a traditional/ established power, and Brazil, being an emerging regional power, attempt to cooperate in terms of coordination and in terms of thereby possibly adapting their policies. At the same time, they compete for power (status): the EU tries to keep power, while Brazil attempts to increase power. Thus, both can demonstrate power by having this 'prestigious' strategic partnership. Moreover, both parties have followed a status recognition strategy via this strategic partnership: Brazil is recognized in terms of being a powerful and influential regional and rising power and the EU is acknowledged as an international actor and major player. In this sense, both partners possess a certain kind of reward power, namely the power reward in terms of status and recognition. However, the EU-Brazil strategic partnership is not only about status but also a process, whereby the partners engage in a social relationship, which is informed by their respective social status and their membership of certain social groups and clubs. The partner's social status and social group membership informs their foreign policies, such as Brazil bridge-building role. Overall, the analysis has helped to *understand* the EU-Brazil strategic partnership by picturing it as a strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and a social relationship, which is a foreign policy tool of social power, particularly reward power.

## 7.2 Case Study: EU-India-Strategic Partnership

The EU-India-Strategic Partnership<sup>341</sup> has been established with a communication by the (European) Commission in the year 2004 at the fifth EU-India-Summit under the then Irish EU(-Council) Presidency (Commission/EC (I) 2004; Wagner 2009b: 79; Hess 2013: 194). The corresponding Joint Action Plan serving to refine and implement the goals of the strategic partnership was published in 2005 under the British EU-Presidency (Council/EU (I) 2005; Wagner 2009b: 79; Wagner 2009a: 116; No author (EU-I) 2007b) and updated in 2008 (de Vasconcelos 2010: 72; No author (EU-I) 2008b).

The structure of the strategic partner framework foresees meetings of the partners at various levels, namely (annual) high level summits<sup>342</sup> and working levels (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3).

In contrast to the other two cases, there is no biregional EU-SAARC<sup>343</sup> strategic partnership in place (Hess 2013: 190).

### 7.2.1 Analysis

The political discourse of the strategic partnership and the corresponding EU-India Summits highlights that the EU and India share values and beliefs as well as common commitments (Council/EU (I) 2004: 1). In the documents it is acknowledged that the EU's and India's '[...] partnership has evolved over the years from economic and development cooperation, to acquire higher political and strategic dimensions, and that this should be further strengthened through more intensive dialogue' (Council/EU (I) 2004: 1). The already close relationship between India and the EU (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3) was perceived to have moved from primarily trade dimensions to also include political dimensions (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3).

In the next subchapters, I will outline the results from qualitative data analysis with regard to the India-EU strategic partnerships based on the categories of the

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<sup>341</sup> For more elaboration on the relations between the EU and India see, for example, Archer 2008: 105; Aziz Wülbers 2011; Bava 2008 a: 237; Hess 2013: 193-194.

<sup>342</sup> However, one has to admit that summits have been held even before the establishment of the EU-India-strategic partnership, namely since the year 2000 (Council/EU (I) 2004; Wagner 2009b: 79). Nevertheless, even in retrospect, the upholding of annual summits was described as a 'watershed' (Ministry of External Affairs (India) 2005; Council/EU (I) 2005: 1) after the strategic partnership had been established.

<sup>343</sup> SAARC is the abbreviation for South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation. SAARC-member states are today Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. For more information on SAARC see e.g. Wagner (2009b: 71) or Renard (2013a: 365-369). For more information on the relations between the EU and SAARC see, for example, Fraser 2007: 154-156; K. Smith 2008: 91-92; Wagner 2008:96-98; Farrell 2010a: 121-122, 128 and Hess 2013: 189-193.

sensitising and analytical concept (see Figure 4). It will demonstrate that not every dimension has delivered results. The final subchapter will present a conclusion on the findings and interpret them.

### STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF SITUATION

Hints at the multipolar system and India's rise can also be found in the EU-policy documents (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 8, 5; No author (EU-I) 2007a: 1). Interdependence is acknowledged, too (No author (EU-I) 2008b: 1). A confidential document from the Indian official side on India-EU relation also notes that 'India and European Union are indispensable poles in the emerging multi-polar structures (Confidential Source (I) 2010). Notions of interdependence and power shifts can also be found within speeches (Ashton 2010).

On her visit to India, the EU's High Representative Ashton has avoided in addressing the EU's power. She only refers to the EU as '[...] now a serious actor on the world state, helping to solve global problems' (Ashton 2010). Indeed, this is rather description of the EU's global role instead of power (status). This is paralleled with a statement by EU-Commission President Barroso on the occasion of the EU-India summit, where he states that 'India and the European Union are important stakeholders in today's multi-polar world with their growing multilateral structures' (Barroso 2010a: 2).

### ESTABLISHED POWER AND EMERGING REGIONAL POWER

The qualitative analysis reflects the previously assumed emerging regional powerness of India. For example, the Commission's communication, which formally established the EU-India-strategic partnership, describes India in 2004 as 'an increasingly important international player and regional power' (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3) as well as a 'the major power in South Asia' (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3) due to its geographical size, economic and military power (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3). This is also matched by secondary sources, where India is often considered to be '[...] a major power in the making' (Basrur 2011: 181), a rising power (Basrur 2011: 190) as well as '[...] a major regional power and [...] a global power in the making' (Herz 2011: 182; Fraser 2007: 3). Thereby, South Asia clearly is India's regional building block (Basrur 2011:181). As mentioned before, secondary literature describes India very often as rising and/or regional power (Bava 2008b: 106; Jain 2008: 21; Khandekar 2012b: 2). It is contrasted with established powers and powers from the West in decline in a multipolar world (Khandekar 2012b: 1). This is the context – a rising India in a multipolar world and the

EU rising to global actorness – for the EU-India-strategic partnership (Bava 2008b: 113; Baroowa 2007: 732). This is also reflected in other documents, such as a speech by the then EU-Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy at the Indian Council for World Affairs in 2008, where she described India as an ‘[...] one of the world’s most dynamic economies and emerging powers’ (Ferrero-Waldner 2008: 2).

Practitioners described India as a ‘rising power’ (European business expert I-1 2010; European diplomat I-4 2010; Expert I-1 2010; Expert I-2 2010; Expert I-3 2010; European diplomat I-5 2010) viewing itself as a ‘BRIC-country’ (European business expert I-1 2010). Furthermore, India’s ‘potential’ was stressed in terms of being a country ‘on its way’ (European diplomat I-3 2010; Expert I-2 2010; Indian business expert I-1 2010) ‘to possibly global power’ (Expert I-1 2010). As Expert I-4 (2010) has put it, ‘India is a regional power and is moving up the global ladder’. Moreover, India is viewed as a ‘regional power dominating South Asia on the verge of global power’ (European diplomat I-3 2010; European diplomat I-2 2010; European diplomat I-4 2010; Expert I-1 2010; Expert I-3 2010). Indeed, it is considered to be an ‘increasingly global player’ (European diplomat I-4 2010). India, on the other hand, is assessed to believe in already being a global power (Expert I-3 2010; European diplomat I-6 2010). However, in the context of international responsibility, India was also viewed as a ‘reluctant regional and global power’ from a European perspective (European diplomat I-6 2010).

### ***7.2.1.1 Strategic alliance (part of strategy of cooperating while competing)***

As I have stated before, the EU-India-strategic partnership ‘[...] is not an unhappy marriage but a strategic alliance’ (Hess 2013: 200). The wording of a strategic alliance is even at times used in the context of the EU-India-strategic partnership: for example, the Commission communication introducing the strategic partnerships mentions the goal of ‘(...) a strategic alliance for the promotion of an effective multilateral approach’ (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3). Furthermore, the same document has described the EU-India strategic partnership as based on the fact that the EU and India ‘[...] now want to put a greater strategic edge on the partnership’ (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 9). This includes ‘[...] dialogue on ways of enhancing cooperation, on a sector-by-sector basis’ (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 9).

India demonstrates ‘[...] needs-based relationships with the major powers’ (Khandekar 2012b: 3). From an Indian perspective, the EU is seen as trying to foster close relations with emerging powers via strategic partnerships (Indian diplomat B-1

2010). Thereby, India would not mind the EU also having a strategic partnership with China.

The EU, on the other hand, views India as an important partner economically in a bilateral sense and politically in terms of the regional and international levels (Khandekar 2013: 2). From a European perspective, as a European diplomat I-4 (2010) has put it, the strategic partnership is geared towards making India a responsible and reliable partner on the global scene: 'this is long-term goal and makes the partnership strategic'.

**a) Policy Coordination (Adaptation) - COOPERATION**

There are also notions of cooperation between the EU and India to be found in the documents (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 3, 9; Council/EU (I) 2005: 2; No author (EU-I) 2007a 3, 4) in various policy areas (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4). However, often cooperation is rather stated as the goal: the EU and India should cooperate in a particular issue area (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4, 6). Later, the declaratory nature of the documents changes into a discourse apparently reflecting policy coordination in terms of dialogue seems to have taken place (No author 2008a: 2). The revised Joint Action Plan (2008) notes that the (previous) Joint Action Plan has offered '[...] a mechanism for coordination and a spur to stronger cooperation' (No author (EU-I) 2008b: 1). And Ashton notes on her visit to India in 2010: 'so the EU and India have the chance to step up our co-operation – deepening and broadening it. And above all, making it more strategic' (Ashton 2010).

The common goal of policy coordination and adaptation is also mentioned in the official documents. For example, the original Commission communication states that 'the EU and India should co-ordinate and harmonise positions in the preparation, negotiation and implementation of major multilateral conventions and conferences [...]' (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4). The notion of policy coordination including cooperation (and possibly adaptation) is inherent to the mentioning of a multitude of policy areas (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4-10; Council/EU (I) 2005: 4-6; Press Release/EU (I) 2007).

Practitioners also hinted widely at the fact that the EU's strategic partnership with India is supposed to serve policy coordination and ideally policy adaptation as well as cooperation (e.g., European official B-9 2010; European diplomat I-1 2010; Indian diplomat I-1 2010; Expert I-4 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010). In this context, one

expert defined a strategic partnership as ideally a 'convergence of interests' among the partners (Expert I-4 2010).

However, European diplomat I-1 (2010) stated that the EU-India strategic partnership has 'not yet used its full potential yet and that there is the need for more profound cooperation'. The strategic partnership between the EU and India was predominantly seen as to be dominated by trade matters and political matters were considered as to matter less to India in this context (Indian diplomat I-1 2010; European diplomat I-2 2010; European diplomat I-6 2010). This may probably be why some interview partners believed that the EU-India strategic partnerships has not yet reached its full potential (European diplomat I-1 2010; European diplomat I-2 2010). Yet European diplomat I-2 (2010) argued that the Lisbon Treaty would bring a change in this respect and India would also be interested in working on political matters with the EU, such as with respect to the fight against piracy, terrorism and (particularly) security issues at large (European diplomat I-3 2010). Indeed, political matters, such as economic and financial policies, particularly in the G20-context and security matters, such as (international) terrorism and Afghanistan, (increasingly) mattered to the Indians in their cooperation with the EU (Expert I-4 2010; European diplomat I-6 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010).

#### **b) Power and status – Competition**

#### **Management/ Engagement (Socialisation) – bilateral, regional, international/global**

The need or will on the European side to *engage* India can also be found in the official policy documents (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4, 5; 7). For example, the document states quite explicitly that the EU has the '[...] will to engage India as a major player in an increasingly multipolar world' (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 8) by having summits with India (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 8). Clearly, the EU's wish to engage India can be read from one of Ashton's speeches, where she first acknowledges increasing multipolarity and immediately refers to multilateralism. Thereby, she mentions that 'we see India playing an increasingly important role across wide range of global issues and problems' (sic; Ashton 2010).

This engagement does not only apply to bilateral cooperation (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 7, No author (EU-I) 2008a: 3) but also to the regional level (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 5, 8; No author (EU-I) 2008a: 1) and global level (Commission/EC (I) 2004: 4,7; No author (EU-I) 2008a: 2; Council/EU (I) 2009). However, cooperation at or for the regional

level is rather weakly expressed in the documents (Council/EU (I) 2005: 3; Press Release/EU (I) 2007; Ferrero-Waldner 2008; Press Release/EU (I) 2009). Bilateral and global levels appear to be more relevant to the EU-India strategic partnership (Press Release/EU (I) 2009; 2010). For example, at the occasion of the India-EU Summit in New Delhi (2007), the partners' Joint Statement mentioned in the context of their partnership that the EU and India wish '[...] to cooperate at the global level for the cause of peace, security and sustainable development for all' (No author (EU-I) 2007a: 1). An exception is apparently the Joint Statement of the eighth EU-India summit in 2007, which elaborates a little more on regional cooperation issues, particularly with regard to Afghanistan (No author (EU-I) 2007a: 4-5; No author (EU-I) 2008a: 1). South Asia or SAARC feature seldom in the documents (Press Release/ EU (I) 2008). Especially the revised Joint Action Plan (2008) makes predominantly reference to the bilateral and global levels in terms of cooperation between the EU and India (No author (EU-I) 2008b; see also No author (EU-I) 2008c). However, the Joint Statement on the EU-India Summit in 2009 during the Swedish Presidency presents a more balanced account of cooperation levels, particularly the balance between regional and global levels. Nevertheless, global levels are mentioned first in the document and the regional cooperation level also refers to the wider Asian region transcending the South Asian inner region of India (Council/EU (I) 2009).

The EU's 'region' appears to be discussed against the background of the Lisbon Treaty (No author 2008a: 3; Ashton 2010).

Often, scholars point at the fact that the EU has an interest to 'engage' India, particularly due to its global role and, thus, attractiveness as a partner (Wagner 2008: 103). Bava clearly states that it is the '[...] 'new' India with which the EU wants to engage intensively' (Bava 2008a: 254). Similarly, European official B-9 (2010) argues that 'the EU needs to engage India regarding solutions to global problems' (European diplomat I-3 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010). Furthermore, Indian diplomat I-1 clearly pictured the EU's strategic partnerships (with China and India) as 'engagement of important countries' (2010). However, European diplomat I-3 (2010) argued that it is 'incredibly difficult to engage India' as Europe, which due to its internal structure is hard to grasp for India. Furthermore, capacity constraints on the Indian side in terms of limited number of personnel working on the EU were mentioned in this respect (European diplomat I-3 2010; European diplomat I-6 2010).

Generally, both regional and global levels were deemed important to the EU-India strategic partnership (e.g., European official B-9 2010; European diplomat I-1 2010;

Indian diplomat I-1 2010; European diplomat I-2 2010; European diplomat I-3 2010). When it comes to South Asia, India is considered to be a 'regional power' (European diplomat I-2 2010; European diplomat I-3 2010); have 'regional influence' (European diplomat P-1 2010) and to be a 'strong regional player' (European diplomat I-1 2010).

However, Indian diplomat I-1 (2010) observed that EU-India relations moved faster than EU-SAARC relations. Relatedly, Bava argues that even though the EU-India-strategic partnership reflects an acknowledgement of the power balance in South Asia, it '[...] will have no impact on the EU-SAARC relationship (Bava 2008a: 252). In this context, European diplomat B-6 (2010) states that there is no logic behind bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships. Put differently, there is no automatic need for a biregional strategic partnership if a bilateral strategic partnership with India comes into place (European diplomat B-6 2010). Bilateral and biregional relations with India and South Asia, respectively, are 'complementary' (European diplomat B-6 2010). At the same time, European diplomat I-6 argued that there are 'little interlinkages' between the bilateral and biregional relations. However, European official B-9 (2010) argued that 'in an ideal-world, the EU prefers a region-to-region approach but that so far there is no hope to hold serious discussions with SAARC in comparison to Latin America, for example. As a result, the EU – as a successful regional integration model – develops the bilateral relations with key countries in parallel to biregional relations (European official B-9 2010; European diplomat I-3 2010). One European diplomat thought that Europe 'has come to the conclusion that the European model does not work everywhere' (European diplomat I-2 2010). One expert explained, that 'as SAARC displays an inability of being a regional actor, the bilateral EU-India strategic partnership is more important in comparison to the biregional EU-SAARC relations (Expert I-4 2010). This is matched by an assessment by European diplomat I-7 (2010) stating that 'as SAARC is a loose conglomeration, it is difficult to deal with it as a collective'.

With respect to India's attractiveness as a partner for the EU as a channel to South Asia, European diplomat B-6 (2010) argued that 'in a way, the EU has a better influence in South Asia via India as only India is truly influential in South Asia' (European official B-9 2010). Similarly, European diplomat I-1 (2010) said: 'if you want to talk to the region [South Asia; NH], you talk to India'. However, Indian diplomat I-1 (2010) strongly denounced the idea that India has taken the role of a spokesperson for South Asia 'because SAARC would not like that' (Expert I-4 2010). Indeed, European diplomat I-2 (2010) argued that India is not a spokesperson for South Asia: 'sometimes India tries to speak on behalf of South Asia and sometimes this is beneficial for countries like Bangladesh in the UN-context but, in general, the other South Asian countries do not like

that role for India'. However, the EU would like to see India take the role of a spokesperson, according to European diplomat I-6 (2010).

At the same time, India was partly seen as trying to exclude the EU from South Asia with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Indeed, Indian diplomat I-1 (2010) stated that India does not want any 'third party mediation' (European diplomat I-7 2010). However, the EU would not be seen by India as a threat but rather 'as putting its nose into these things' (European diplomat B-6 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010). Relatedly, Indian diplomat B-1 (2010) said that with respect to regional matters, the EU and India often have the same goals but pursue different paths, such as in the cases of supporting democratization in Nepal, Burma and Sri Lanka. As a result, some interview partners saw greater prospects for EU-India cooperation at the global level (Expert I-4 2010).

In addition, from an Indian perspective, the global level of cooperation was considered to be the most important for the India-EU strategic partnership (Indian diplomat B-1 2010). This could be interpreted as an Indian attempt to de-link their relationship with the EU from their South Asian neighbours or more generally in terms of the Indian strive to global power status.

### **Keeping; Increasing; Demonstrating Power ('prestige')**

Basically, a rising India is contrasted with a declining Europe (Allen 2013: 577, 578). Practitioners described India as a 'growing political power', which is 'not yet a superpower but expected to be treated like one now' (European diplomat I-1 2010). Furthermore, there was strong agreement that India indeed would be a 'big power' in the coming decades as well as having a 'big role' (European diplomat I-1 2010). I have stated elsewhere that '[...] India is striving to achieve a major or great power status within the international power hierarchy' (Hess 2013: 198).

Moreover, there is a sense that Europe is (relatively) declining in power in a multipolar world (Khandekar 2012b: 1). In contrast to India, the EU is indeed associated with a '[...] more status-quoist approach' (Bava 2008b: 108). India, on the other hand, is striving to '[...] change the *status quo* [sic] in matters of global governance' (Bava 2008b: 112) amongst others. The EU indeed sees that India is increasing in power. Ashton states in 2010: 'India is one of the most significant global powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is the biggest democracy in the world, an economic and cultural heavyweight, whose *power* can only *increase* (emphasis added; Ashton 2010). Thus, India and the EU do compete: India indeed is trying to increase power, whereas the EU tries to keep power.

Islam mentions quite explicitly, '[...] India views its strategic partnership with the EU [...] as a vehicle for ensuring greater worldwide visibility, prestige and political clout' (2009: 7). Indeed, the strategic partnership offered by the EU to India is described as a 'very significant gesture' (Pant 2009) due to the fact that the group of strategic partners is limited in size (Pant 2009). This is considered to be a significant change in policy as the EU, in contrast to the US, '[...] has been unable to articulate what role it sees for India in the emerging security architecture' (Pant 2009). From this can be deduced, that India associates the strategic partnership with a certain prestige, which is then linked to demonstrating power. It can be suggested that the EU has also tried to demonstrate power vis-à-vis the US, which is considered to be a more attractive partner for India.

### **Status recognition: Major Power; International Actor**

Basically, India and the EU are considered to have (varying) 'global aspirations' (Bava 2008b: 109). Similarly to Brazil, India also aims at achieving a certain status or gaining in status in pursuing its foreign policy (amongst others) (Husar/Maihold 2009: 29; Wagner 2008: 91). Preferably, India is looking for major or great power status against the background of the international power hierarchy of states (Narlikar 2006: 61; Corbetta et al. 2001: 209; 222; Hess 2013: 198). Presently, India is considered to have a 'rising power status' (Khandekar 2012b: 2); not yet having reached the 'status of global power' (Khandekar 2012b: 2). However, India is believed to be constantly moving towards the status of a great power since the end of the Cold War (Allen 2013: 576).

Furthermore, it is generally looking for 'recognition' of its global importance (Basrur 2011: 192). Wagner (2009b: 82) concedes India a status of a leading power, which succeeds in mobilizing alliances and followership in international institutions for the purpose of enforcing its own national interests. Moreover, Basrur argues that '[...] states outside the region have recognized [...India's; NH] potential as a major global power' (2011: 196). This also includes the 'recognition of India's rising status [...]' (Basrur 2011: 196) and of being an "'emerging power'" (Basrur 2011: 198). One European diplomat described India as 'status-obsessed' (European diplomat I-3 2010). However, European official B-9 (2010) noted that India is actually 'struggling to be recognized as a global power' by highlighting the lack of a permanent seat at the UN-Security Council. Indeed, these various statements strongly indicate that India is interested in status recognition.

Europe, however, '[...] ranks at the bottom of the list of partners in India's multipolar understanding of the future geometry of world affairs' (Lisbonne-de Vergeron

2006: xii). Indian diplomat I-1 described the EU as an 'economic power' and a 'supranational bloc' (2010). This clearly demonstrates that the EU is perceived as a trade power and not necessarily as a political actor through Indian eyes (European diplomat I-4 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010).

The India-EU strategic partnership is closely linked to status recognition efforts by both partners – in general and vis-à-vis their strategic partner. The strategic partnership is considered to be a reciprocal acknowledgement of being 'important global actors' (Khandekar 2013: 2; Baroowa 2007: 733, 741).

Jain mentions that the India-EU-strategic partnership connotes a '[...] recognition of India's growing stature and influence regionally and globally [...]' (Jain 2008: 22; Bava 2008a: 248; Bava 2007: 4). Khandekar notes that 'India was acknowledged as a strategic partner in 2004' (2011: 1). It comes along with a certain indication of equality as a partner (Bava 2008a: 248-249; Bava 2007: 3). A strategic partnership is considered to be an 'upgrade' (Confidential Source (I) 2010: 1) of relations between India and the EU. The Indian document clearly notes how the EU depicts India, namely as 'regional and global leader ... [sic] engaging increasingly on equal terms with other world powers' (Confidential Source (I) 2010: 2). Thus, India does pay close attention as to how it is officially described and keeps track of who is included in the EU's group of strategic partners (Confidential Source (I) 2010: 2). I have also mentioned before that the EU's strategic partnership with India represents '[...] a form of '(status) recognition' and '(status) acknowledgement' for both the EU and India' (Hess 2013: 199). It is this status recognition and acknowledgement, whereby India tries to '[...] expand its regional and international power, diversify its foreign relations as well as to climb up the ladder of the international (power) hierarchy' (Hess 2013: 199). India can utilize this mode of formal status symbol for its journey towards reaching the status of a great power (Hess 2013: 200). One expert even said: if there is something strategic about a strategic partnership, then it is about 'enhancing status' (Expert I-4 2010). In this context, European diplomat I-7 (2010) argued that the 'labelling' of India as a strategic partner sends 'signals'.

The Indian strategic partnership with the EU was also depicted as recognition of the Indian importance by practitioners (European official B-9 2010; European diplomat I-7 2010). For example, an India source put it quite strongly by stating that the India strategic partnership with the EU was 'primarily' a recognition of India's status as well as of the EU's role in the world (Indian diplomat B-1 2010).

Indeed, the EU has an interest in being seen as an actor and attractive partner through Indian eyes and it tries to promote its actorness and partneriness to India. For

example, Ashton refers to the Lisbon Treaty and its new diplomatic apparatus in mentioning in one of her speeches in 2010: 'Simplifying procedures and adding greater effectiveness to our external actions should also help us become a better interlocutor' (Ashton 2010). This is, of course, no status recognition. Yet it reflects that the EU indeed looks for recognition from India in order to be taken seriously as an actor and partner. In fact, Ashton goes on by declaring in a self-affirmative manner: 'we are an important partner in political terms, and see this as of interest to India too' (Ashton 2010). Similarly, European diplomat I-2 (2010) called on India 'to take the EU as an actor seriously'. In this context, European official B-8 (2010) remarked that the EU has a different standing in Indian eyes, which is why the EU has had the 'role of demandeur' with respect to the EU-India strategic partnership. In fact, by sharing a strategic partnership with India, '[...] the EU can work against its contested (international and global) actor- and power-status' (Hess 2013: 200). Furthermore, it is presumably a European attempt to be a more attractive (political) partner for India, especially in comparison to the US (Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006: xiii; 5-7, 20).

To sum up, both the EU and India follow status recognition strategies by establishing a strategic partnership.

### ***7.2.1.2 Social Relationship and Bases of Power***

An Indian source described the EU-India strategic partnership as a 'high level of interaction, whereby the interaction takes place in many fields' (Indian diplomat I-1 2010). Generally, the EU's strategic partnership with India was pictured as a 'long-term investment' and as a 'process', whereby the benefits may possibly only reaped later (European official B-9 2010). The framework of the strategic partnership, thereby, 'provides for having an open dialogue, which would otherwise not be possible' (European official B-9 2010). In this context, the confidential source from the Indian side describes EU-India relations as a 'close friendship' (Confidential Source (I) 2010: 1). This paper also states that regular meetings on various issues '[...] has led to greater appreciation of each others' perspectives' (Confidential Source (I) 2010: 1). Also, European diplomat I-2 (2010) and European diplomat I-7 (2010) clearly described the strategic partnership between the EU and India rather as a 'process' than a 'status'.

What is more, an Indian source compared the strategic partnerships of the EU with friendships among humans. In this context, the Indian source commented on the fact that the EU maintains strategic partnerships with both China and India. As Indian diplomat B-1 (2010) has put it figuratively: 'I can be friends with a friend and I do not

particularly care about with whom he else also has a friendship'. Thereby, the India-EU relationship was described as 'important but difficult' (Indian diplomat B-1 2010; European diplomat I-6 2010). Nevertheless, a strategic partnership 'allows to tie the partners' (European diplomat I-7 2010).

From my point of view, these statements reflect the procedural nature and social dimensions of the EU-India strategic partnership.

### **Int. society; social groups ('clubs'); social status**

Notions of international society, social groups and social status were rather indirectly expressed in the analysis of this case study. Nevertheless, in the context of the EU-India strategic partnership, Khandekar mentions the declining established powers and powers from the West in a multipolar setting (Khandekar 2012b: 1). According to Bava, the end of the Cold War has made India reviews '[...] its position and role both at the regional global level' (Bava 2007: 2, 5). Thereby, India is unwilling '[...] to walk the course of an 'old world order' power (Khandekar 2012b: 5). India views itself as a 'BRIC-country' (European business expert I-1 2010).

The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Lady Catherine Ashton makes brief reference to the 'West' (Ashton 2010) on her visit to India in 2010. There, she not only mentions India's rise but, in addition, that 'power is also shifting between political systems – roughly from the old "West" to both East and South' (Ashton 2010). She calls for '[...] new, broad coalitions to tackle global problems: not just the "West" [...]' (Ashton 2010).

Basrur (2011: 183) mentions that one way of assessing a country's status is to investigate its '[...] membership in the club of major powers' (Basrur 2011: 183). However, he does not further elaborate on how to effectively do that, apart from pointing out that it may be rather of no avail in the first place (Basrur 2011: 183).

These statements indicate that India and the EU are socially positioned in terms of social status in social groups.

### **Positive or negative incentives (reward or coercive power)**

A European diplomat pointed out that the strategic partnership with India was proposed to India in order to vitalize and stimulate EU-India-relations. Hence, there is a sense that the strategic partnership and the associated status was supposed to act as a positive incentive from a European perspective to make the EU and cooperation with the EU more interesting and attractive to the Indians.

Moreover, the EU-India strategic partnership is generally considered as an upgraded relationship from an Indian perspective (Khandekar 2012b: 5). Similarly, the implementation of the strategic partnership was described by the Indian side as an 'upgrade' of relations in the sense that it covers a whole range of topics (Ministry of External Affairs (India) 2005). Hence, the strategic partnership with the EU can be seen as a reward and an incentive for countries. In this context, European official B-9 (2010) remarked that Pakistan as India's competitor also definitely wanted a strategic partnership with the EU. Or as Expert I-4 (2010) described it, 'India and Pakistan have something like a twin relationship: everything India has, Pakistan wants to have as well'. Thus, the EU's strategic partnership links up to the perceiving the strategic partnership as status recognition being a reward. What is more, by entering into a strategic partnership with the EU, India effectively rewards the EU by becoming a partner and, thus international and political actor, to the EU.

However, it is important to note that the EU's proposed strategic partnership to India works without conditionality. Furthermore, it cannot be assessed if this incentive has actually worked to vitalize relations. Nonetheless, with respect to status recognition, the EU's strategic partnership can be deemed as a reward for India in terms of upgrading relations.

### **Referent power**

In contrast to China, India did not perceive the EU as an important or interesting interlocutor (European diplomat P-1 2010). This (European) assessment corresponds with an Indian assessment, whereby Indian diplomat B-1 (2010) argued that India shared a real strategic partnership with the US but not with EU. When it comes to the EU's attractiveness as a player and partner, a European diplomat described EU-India relations as 'pathetic and particularly weak' (European diplomat B-1 2010). The source also assessed that the EU was less attractive as a partner to India in comparison to the US (European diplomat B-1 2010; Expert I-4 2010). In this context, Expert I-4 (2010) remarked that 'the EU is still looking down on India. The US does that differently'. At the same time, European diplomat I-6 (2010) believed that India does not see the EU as a strategic partner.

This does not seem to indicate that neither the EU nor India have high degrees of referent power vis-à-vis their strategic partner. This would rather imply a certain feeling of necessity or pragmatism in maintaining this relationship. This hunch may be supported

by the strong trade dimension of the EU-India-relationship: at the time of the establishment of the EU-India-Strategic Partnership the EU has been India's most important trade partner (Ministry of External Affairs (India) 2005). Furthermore, the EU has been one of India's crucial sources for foreign direct investment (Ministry of External Affairs (India) 2005).

### **7.2.2 Conclusion and Interpretation**

The analysis of the case study on the EU-India strategic partnership highlights the study's assumption about the international system-structure in terms of multipolarity, interdependence and shifts in the international hierarchy. Furthermore, the EU is described as an established power as well as India is widely seen as a rising power and regional power in South Asia. Furthermore, the documents explicitly refer to the EU-India strategic partnership as a strategic alliance. The analysis has shown that this strategic alliance appears to be very pragmatic and needs-based as well as dominated by trade matters. From an Indian perspective, it also appears to be seen as less relevant than the Indian strategic partnership with the US. The Indian side is aware of the EU's various strategic partnerships, which are understood as a (strategic) European attempt to foster close relations with rising powers. From a European point of view, the strategic partnership with the EU is geared towards turning India into a cooperation partner at various levels.

However, even though the ideal of cooperation and policy coordination (preferably policy adaptation) between the two strategic partners is acknowledged from both sides, the EU-India strategic partnership is somewhat characterised by unrealized potential in terms of political cooperation. Yet, against the background of the introduced Lisbon Treaty, India was seen to show greater interest in political cooperation with the EU, particularly when it comes to security matters as well as economic and financial policies.

No explicit mentioning of competition was made. By contrast, the EU's aim to engage India was more strongly pronounced, which hints at the fact that the EU indeed tries to manage India's rise. The EU's engagement strategy applies to all three levels: bilateral, regional (South Asia) and international (global) cooperation levels. However, the regional level in terms of India's region (South Asia) features rather low with respect to the EU-India cooperation dimensions. Cooperation at the bilateral and global (international) levels plays a higher relevance. However, this seems to be linked to the fact that South Asia displays limited regional cooperation, in general. Additionally, no biregional strategic partnership with South Asia or SAARC is in place. Even though

interviewees did not see any contradiction between bilateral and biregional relations from a European perspective, they did not see strong interlinkages either. The EU's region apparently does not play a major role. In addition, socialisation processes could not be traced.

India's role as an interlocutor for the EU for regional, South Asian matters appears to be primarily due to India's predominance in the region and the lack of SAARC's regional actorness. At the same time, even though there were indications of India trying to exclude the EU from its region, the dimension of exclusion does not play a major role. It seems to be rather a sense of a general Indian opposition to external interference, particularly against the background of the strategic partners not always agreeing on the exact path for fulfilling a certain (common) goal. Moreover, India does not execute the role of a spokesperson for South Asia. It is not entirely clear whether this is due to an Indian deliberate decision or rather because of neighbour's opposition. Nevertheless, the EU is seen to have an interest in India fulfilling the role of a spokesperson for the region. Overall, the global level plays a more important role for the EU-India strategic partnership than the regional level. This fact is probably due to several, before indicated factors: the limitedness of SAARC's actorness and limited regional cooperation within South Asia as well as India's de-linking from its region in its strive for global power (status). India was described as a difficult partner for engagement from a European perspective. In contrast to Brazil, an Indian engagement strategy of the EU could hardly be identified; possibly only with respect to security matters and Afghanistan. What is more, there were no 'hits' identified when it comes to socialisation processes between the EU and India.

Competition for power (status) is mentioned indirectly: whereas Europe is considered to be relatively declining and trying to keep power, India is clearly rising and attempting to increase power. Moreover, there is indication of strategic partnerships being linked to prestige for both partners, which highlights power demonstration strategies on both sides.

Furthermore, the EU-India strategic partnership is closely linked to status recognition strategies on both strategic partners' sides. An important difference seems to be that India is trying to enhance its international (power) status more in general and not primarily vis-à-vis the EU. By contrast, the EU follows both a status recognition strategy for enhancing its status in general but apparently even more so vis-à-vis India in particular. In addition, the analysis has shown that the EU confers status to India by labelling it as a strategic partner, which sends political signals.

The EU-India strategic partnership can also be seen as a social relationship as it has been described as a high level of interaction and even as a friendship. Moreover, it

has been compared to a process. Analysis has also indicated that a strategic partnership helps to understand the (different) perspectives of partners.

With respect to the categories of international society, social groups (clubs) and social status, the analysis has indicated that the EU and India are socially positioned in terms of social status in social groups. The EU, thereby, forms part of the social groups of established powers and the West. India forms part of the BRIC(S)-group.

The strategic partnership for the EU represents a reward for India in terms of conferring status recognition to India. From a European perspective, it is, thereby, supposed to work as an unconditional incentive to vitalize relations with India. Additionally, India also displays reward power by acknowledging the EU as an international and political actor via entering into the strategic partnership. This again links up to the strategy of status recognition mentioned before.

However, as analysis has shown this does not mean that the EU is considered to be an attractive or more attractive partner for India against the background of referent power.

No traces of informational power, coercive power, expert power or legitimate power could be identified in the analysis.

To conclude, the EU-India strategic partnership can be *understood* as a strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. The EU, being a traditional/ established power, and India, being an emerging regional power, attempt to cooperate in terms of coordination and in terms of thereby possibly adapting their policies. However, this policy coordination and cooperation seems to be more of an ideal for the time present. At the same time, they compete for power (status): the EU tries to keep power, while India attempts to increase power. Furthermore, both can demonstrate power by having this 'prestigious' strategic partnership. Moreover, both parties have followed a status recognition strategy via this strategic partnership: India is recognized in terms of being a powerful and influential regional and rising power and the EU is acknowledged as an international actor and partner for India. In this sense, both partners have certain kind of reward power, namely the power reward in terms of status and recognition. However, the EU-India strategic partnership is not only about status but also a process, whereby the partners engage in a social relationship, which is informed by their respective social status and their membership of certain social groups and clubs. Overall, the analysis has helped to *understand* the EU-India strategic partnership by picturing it as a strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and a social relationship, which is a foreign policy tool of social power, particularly reward power.



### 7.3 Case Study: EU-South Africa-Strategic Partnership

In 2006, the EU-Commission issued a communication proposing the EU-South Africa strategic partnership (Oberthür/Groen 2012: 45; Hess 2010: 190; Commission/EC (SA) 2006) during the Austrian EU-Presidency. However, the goal of working towards an EU-South Africa strategic partnerships was already apparent during the EU-Presidency of the UK in the second semester of 2005 (Council/EU (SA) 2005). The strategic partnerships between South Africa and the EU build on the pre-established Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) (1999) (Grevi 2012: 8; Hess 2010: 190). The EU-South Africa strategic partnership as such has been formalised in 2007 with a Joint Action Plan under the German EU-Presidency (Council/EU (SA) 2007b). Moreover, the EU-South Africa Joint Action Plan introduced the so called Mogôbagôba<sup>344</sup> Dialogue and outlines the (sectoral) areas of/for cooperation (Chevallier 2008: 25; Oberthür/Groen 2012: 45; Hess 2010: 190; Council/EU (SA) 2007b). The first summit meeting took place in 2008 under the French EU-Presidency (Hess 2010: 190; No author 2008b). As in the other two cases, the EU-South Africa strategic partnerships is also characterized by various levels of meetings including working and high-level (annual summit-)meetings in various policy areas (Chevallier 2008: 25; Hess 2010: 190; Council/EU (SA) 2007b: 2).

With regard to interregionalism, the EU and African countries have established a strategic partnership in December 2005 (Grimm 2009: 48; Council/EU (SA) 2005; Edwards 2011: 57; Hess 2010; Bendiek/Kramer 2010: 453)<sup>345</sup>.

#### 7.3.1 Analysis

The political discourse on the strategic partnerships and the corresponding EU-South Africa Summits state that the proposed strategic partnerships represents a '[...] comprehensive long-term framework for the EU's relationship with South Africa, which takes account the country's position as an anchor in the region and its important role on the African continent and in international relations' (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006b). Furthermore, the strategic partnership is circumscribed as '[...] bilateral relations [which; NH] have developed into an enhanced mutually beneficial partnership, based on strengthened political dialogue and cooperation in a wide range of economic and other

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<sup>344</sup> Mogôbagôba is the national tree of South Africa (Chevallier 2008: 25; Oberthür/Groen 2012: 45).

<sup>345</sup> For an overview of EU-Africa-relations in more general terms see, for example, Grimm 2009; Farrell 2010b.

areas' (No author (EU-SA) 2008b: 1). Values and interests are shared among the partners, whereby the strategic partnership is an 'instrument' to promote their objectives (No author (EU-SA) 2008b: 1; No author (EU-SA) 2010; European Council/President (SA) 2010a; 2010b).

In the following I will present the findings from qualitative data analysis with regard to the South Africa-EU-strategic partnership on the basis of the sensitising, analytical concept (see Figure 4). It will show that not every category features in the results. In a conclusion, I will summarise the findings and provide further interpretation.

### STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF SITUATION

In describing commonalities between the EU-South Africa strategic partnership and other strategic partnerships of the EU, European diplomat SA- 4 (2010) argued that all of the EU's strategic partners are 'key players' and 'new kids on the block' contributing to changes in the international political economy and political clout of international actors. Furthermore, there was a sense that the establishment of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership was linked to China's rise and expansion in Africa (Expert SA-4 2010; Expert SA-3 2010; Expert SA-6 2010).

### ESTABLISHED POWER AND EMERGING REGIONAL POWER

Olivier already mentioned in 2004 that the EU appears to be interested in a special relationship with South Africa '[...] in view of South Africa's importance as a trading partner, its new global status, its regional strength and Third World leadership [...]' (Olivier 2004: 19). South Africa is widely considered to be a regional power in Southern Africa and Africa as a whole, at least in terms of material preponderance and with certain important leadership capacities (Kornegay/Landsberg 2011: 172-173; Chevallier 2008: 24). This is also reflected in the primary EU-documents on the strategic partnerships, where South Africa's regional standing in and its international posture for Africa dominates (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006b). However, the South African importance on the international level is acknowledged as well (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006c). But often this importance is cast in terms of 'important role' (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006c; Commission/EC (SA) 2006: 4, 8-10; Press Release/EU 2006a: 13), which is different from a power status.

The Southern African country is also associated with other 'emerging powers' (Chevallier 2008: 24) with a '[...] regional and global role [...]' (Chevallier 2008: 24). It is also identified as '[...] a focal point for the EU and an important partner in any multilateral system' (Chevallier 2008: 24; Helly 2012: 2). Expert SA-7 (2010) described South Africa as a 'pivotal state'.

This assessment also matches arguments made by practitioners. For example, European diplomat B-2 (2010) described South Africa as a 'major player and a role model' (European official B-5 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010). European official B-8 noted that South Africa has a 'growing weight in Africa and is a major regional power' (2010). In fact, European diplomat SA-5 (2010) described South Africa as 'the most important country in the region'. South Africa was also pictured as a voice for Africa (European official B-5 2010) or 'voice for Sub-Saharan Africa' (Member of South African Parliament 2010), such as in the context of 'being the only African country in the G20' (South African diplomat SA-5 2010) and as an 'African powerhouse' (European diplomat SA-1 2010). Thereby, it was also seen as having the role of 'leading the way' in Africa (with regard to democracy or human rights) (European diplomat SA-1 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010). Indeed, EU-Commission President Barroso is said to have named '[...] South Africa a leading and respected player on the world stage' (Mail & Guardian 2008). It is also seen to have an important role with respect to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (European diplomat B-7 2010). Yet by contrast, South Africa has also been described as more of an 'economic giant in Africa' even though not as a 'political giant' (European official B-4 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010). Nevertheless, South Africa was viewed as a 'natural partner because of the role it seeks in regional and global terms, compared to other African countries. South Africa is more pronounced' (European diplomat B-7 2010). Additionally, its international role is one of a 'strong African player' (European diplomat B-7 2010) and a 'bridge-builder' (Expert SA-1 2010; South African diplomat SA-5 2010; South African diplomat SA-4 2010). It was also termed as a 'rising power' (European diplomat SA-1 2010). Overall, in addition to the importance of trade and economic relations between South Africa and the EU (e.g., Expert SA-6 2010), South Africa was seen to have important roles to play regionally, in Africa and internationally. For example, it was highlighted that South Africa being the only African country is often invited to different international fora (European diplomat SA-2 2010). From a South African perspective, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) stated that 'we are Africa's powerhouse whether we like it or not'.

Overall, Expert SA-2 (2010) described the various nuances of the debated power status of South Africa by saying that South Africa is '[...] definitely not a major power; we are not a middle power; maybe a middle power of a second order. In terms of our

regional position, we are a middle power but not in global terms. We play and ought to play an important role [...]. But even if South Africa was a regional power: would it allow things to develop the way they did [...] it plays an important role but in empirical reality, that is not the case'.

The notion of the EU as an established power was not directly traceable in the analysis.

### **7.3.1.1 Strategic alliance (part of strategy of cooperating while competing)**

In a prelude and as Expert SA-6 (2010) has described it, 'South Africa is not a big power but a big power in African terms'. Thus, 'South Africa is like everyone's partner' (Expert SA-6 2010). This hints at the fact that South Africa may generally be an attractive partner for external powers due to its relative predominance vis-à-vis its African neighbours<sup>346</sup>.

Olivier describes the EU-South Africa relationship in 2004<sup>347</sup> [...] as mutually beneficial, substantial and amicable, but also businesslike and competitive' (Olivier 2004: 17). I think that this hints at the dimensions of the strategic alliance<sup>348</sup> as a relation of cooperating while competing similarly to companies. Moreover, Helly argues that the motivation for the strategic partnership with South Africa still applies today, namely its regional preponderance in Africa as a whole and sub-Saharan Africa (Helly 2012: 1-2). Thus, the interest of the EU to cooperate with South Africa is grounded in its regional importance and rising importance internationally (Hess 2010: 191-194, 195-196). This fits with an assessment made by European official B-5 (2010), who argued that the EU needs one interlocutor in Africa and, for example, that South Africa is an increasing player in climate change or conflict resolution (particularly in Africa) (European diplomat SA-4 2010; Expert SA-7 2010). As European diplomat SA-4 (2010) noted, the strategic partnership with South Africa is strategic because South Africa is 'such an important player and actor in Africa and the world'. As Expert SA-2 (2010) has put it, 'South Africa tries to play a leadership role in Africa'.

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<sup>346</sup> Interestingly, there were voices stipulating that the EU would be very open-minded to have more strategic partners in African sub-regions, if they were politically more stable (South African diplomat SA-6 2010; Expert SA-3 2010).

<sup>347</sup> Admittedly, the EU-South Africa strategic partnership was not in place at the time. This is, however, also reflected in Olivier's article as he also mentions that there exists no 'special relationship' (Olivier 2004: 17).

<sup>348</sup> At a closed DIRCO-conference, the IBSA-alliance was also understood as one of South Africa's 'strategic alliances' (2010). Indeed, Brazil, India and South Africa also share strategic partnerships amongst each other. Hence, from this can be argued that the South African strategic partnership with the EU can also be viewed as a strategic alliance through South African eyes.

In fact, South African diplomat SA-6 termed the EU-South Africa strategic partnership as a 'strategic alliance'. Expert SA-2 (2010) argued that the strategic partnership with South Africa helps to 'promote its interests'. Furthermore, the source stated that the strategic partnership serves '[...] to combine forces to deal with issues; we share interests; and the partnership is our [South African; NH] interest because the EU is an important player; we are an important player. But it's not the same or identical interests as the rationales and viewpoints of the partners differ [...]' (Expert SA-2 2010). South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) argued that both the EU and South Africa wanted to move beyond development cooperation. And as South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) argued 'it is a strategic partnership more than a collaborative one'. South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) explained that for Europe, 'South Africa is a good partner in terms of trade and investment but also its emergence of importance, particularly from an African perspective: it enabled the EU to see us a more valuable partner in global issues'. As a Member of South African Parliament (2010) argues, South Africa's bridge-building role in the international sphere is welcomingly used by other international actor for bridging the developing and developed world. Generally, the strategic partnership between the EU and South Africa was seen as 'new level of relations reflecting the priority of relations' (Expert SA-6 2010).

To conclude, South Africa's strategic importance is from a European perspective grounded in its importance in Africa and, partly as a result, for the international scene.

#### **a) Policy Coordination (Adaptation) - COOPERATION**

Dimensions of cooperation and coordination are strongly pronounced in the documents (Press Release/EU 2006c: 2; No author (EU-SA) 2008b: 1; Press Release/EU (SA) 2009; No author (EU-SA) 2010). For example, the goal of cooperation was declared by the original Commission communication regarding the EU-South Africa strategic partnership: namely, to put forward '[...] a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated long-term framework for political cooperation with the Republic of South Africa [...]' (Commission/EC (SA) 2006: 2). With regard to 'international cooperation on global issues', the document also states that South Africa and the EU '[...] need to promote stronger political coordination [...]' (Commission/EC (SA) 2006: 9). Cooperation areas cover a broad spectrum and, particularly, transcend well beyond development cooperation (e.g., No author (EU-SA) 2008b; Council/EU (SA) 2009a; 2009b).

One practitioner stated that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership was requested by South Africa in 2004, which was particularly interested in a political dialogue with the EU (European official B-4 2010). However, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) mentioned that 'it was the EU who proposed to take the relations to a higher level'. In any case, discussion around a South Africa-EU strategic partnership gained pace in 2005 (European official B-5 2010). Even though the TDCA between the EU and South Africa already allowed for political cooperation between the EU and South Africa, the political dimension of relations was 'unusual' for the EU's external relations at large (European official B-4 2010). Furthermore, the South African request was described as also unusual as the EU was widely seen as a purely economic giant, particularly before the Treaty of Lisbon came into place (European official B-4 2010). The established strategic partnership thus served as an 'umbrella' for the TDCA and the 'stand-alone political discussion' between South Africa and the EU: whereas the TDCA-meetings were downgraded, meetings within the strategic partnerships were upgraded in terms of level of meetings (European official B-4 2010; South African diplomat SA-2 2010). As a result, the strategic partnership was described as an 'upgrade' for South Africa (European diplomat SA-2 2010). Furthermore, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) explained that the TDCA was restricted to topics relating to EU-South African cooperation.

At a broader level, the EU-South Africa strategic partnership was clearly linked to the notion of policy coordination in terms of coordinating (and preferably adapting) political positions on a broad range of issues at various levels (European official B-5 2010; European diplomat B-7 2010; Member of European Parliament 2010; European diplomat SA-1 2010; Expert SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-2 2010; European diplomat SA-4 2010). A strategic partnership in the context of South Africa was described as 'dense relations' (European diplomat SA-1 2010). Expert SA-2 (2010) described the framework of the South Africa-EU strategic partnerships as 'creating a basis for cooperation'. As European diplomat SA-2 (2010) explained, we [EU and South Africa] have come a long way since the establishment of the strategic partnership; it has consistently been progressing and we now have good, regular cooperation in various areas with South Africa'. However, South African diplomat SA-2 said that 'we are not at the level of policy alignment yet. It is more of a process to first get to know each other and finding complementarities' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). As Expert SA-4 (2010) mentioned that even though the EU and South Africa have similar goals, they differ on how to realize these goals (Expert SA-6 2010).

## **b) Power and status – Competition**

### **Management/ Engagement (Socialisation) – bilateral, regional, international/global**

In 2010, the EU (2010: 1) states regarding its strategic partnership with South Africa clearly that it '[...] is committed to pursuing its engagement with South Africa and to strengthening its partnership with that country'. What is more, the mentioning of the bilateral, regional and international level for EU-South African cooperation is very strongly pronounced in the documents. For example, a press release after the proposal of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership states that 'both share many objectives on regional, pan-African and international issues' (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006b). Furthermore, African issues often feature considerably on the agenda of EU-South Africa dialogues in addition to international issues (Council/EU (SA) 2007a; Press Release/EU (SA) 2008a; 2008b; Council/EU (SA) 2010). The connection to South Africa's regional sphere is always clearly made (Council/EU (SA) 2007a: 2). For example, it is said that the strategic partnerships will help '[...] to work even more closely together at regional, continental and global levels to support Africa meet its developmental goals' (Press Release/EU (SA) 2006b). The linkage to the biregional dimension of the regional level of cooperation is stated even more explicitly in the General Affairs-Council conclusion in 2006: 'The Council stressed that the strategic partnership between the EU and South Africa shall be complementary to and fully consistent with the EU Strategy for Africa' (Press Release/EU 2006b: 13).

South Africa's key role with regard to Africa has also been acknowledged by interview partners (European diplomat SA-1 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010). As one European diplomat has put it: 'if you want influence in Africa, you need to work with South Africa' (European diplomat B-1 2010). This fits with the assessment made by European official B-4 (2010) arguing that 'South Africa's influence in Africa is crucial to the EU' (Expert SA-2 2010). Expert SA-2 (2010) argues that the EU is trying to 'back the biggies [South Africa; NH] in Africa in order to get a better foothold in Africa' via South Africa (Expert SA-5 2010). 'If you want to play with Africa, you need South Africa and strategically you want to engage South Africa' (Expert SA-4 2010). However, South Africa as a player also has its own interests in the African region, which may indeed display a 'potential for conflict of interests' between Europe and South Africa (European official B-4 2010; Expert SA-2 2010). Nonetheless, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) put it more deliberately: 'we have to be clear on that the EU did not try to hide the fact that the EU's primary interest in the EU-South Africa strategic partnership was in terms

of South Africa's role in Africa. This is the high order of the EU's interest. The second order is the global level, such as climate change [...]. In some of these issues at this level, South Africa can play a bridge-building role' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). Moreover, from a South African perspective, the source stated: 'we don't want the strategic partnership only to be about Africa, even though Africa is our foreign policy priority. So we do discuss other topics like the Middle East or Iran or climate change, for example' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) argued that a strategic partnership is generally and in the South African case 'global in nature'; a 'global dialogue' and on 'global issues'. Thus, 'it is not only about EU-South Africa cooperation but takes it to a different level' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). 'The EU wants to see us [South Africa; NH] as a more valuable partner in global issues' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). Overall, all three levels – bilateral, global levels and regional (and continental) – are all relevant to the EU-South Africa strategic partnership (South African diplomat SA-6 2010).

Thereby, the linkage to and importance of the regional level featured very high with respect to the EU-South Africa strategic partnership. The commitment to the regional level is made very clear by the South African side. For example, South African diplomat SA-3 reiterated the commitment to Africa and the African agenda<sup>349</sup> in the pursuit of the bilateral EU-South Africa strategic partnership:

'everything that we do in our bilateral relationship is informed by and takes into account the implications for the regional and the continental and the global, so the African agenda is the centre. So everything what we do is informed by what is good for Africa and everything that is good for Africa should hopefully be good for us, too.'

Moreover, bilateral and biregional relations – similarly to cases in Asia or Latin America - were mostly considered to be complementary (European diplomat B-2 2010; European official B-5 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010) or 'linked' (European diplomat B-7 2010; South African diplomat SA-6 2010). European diplomat SA-4 (2010) noted that the EU's bilateral strategic partnership with South Africa does not mean that 'other African states are not important'. The strategic partnership with South Africa is simply an 'additional' venue (European diplomat B-2 2010). Thereby, South Africa also uses the EU and its channel to Europe for (at best) aligning positions with the EU

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<sup>349</sup> For more information on the so called African agenda, see, for example, Landsberg/Kondlo 2007.

(European official B-5 2010). Indeed, the EU 'would like South Africa to have a strong voice within the African Union' (European diplomat B-7 2010). And as European diplomat SA-2 (2010) explained, 'we [the EU; NH] would want see South Africa as the representative for Africa'.

Yet as South African diplomat SA-6 (2010) mentioned that South Africa has 'up to now been very reluctant to exert a regional leadership role' (Expert SA-7 2010; Expert SA-6 2010). South Africa does not want to be perceived as a 'Western Trojan Horse' or a regional bully (Expert SA-7 2010; European diplomat SA-4 2010; Expert SA-4 2010). Moreover, South African expert SA-3 (2010) argued that the EU did not familiarize itself enough with the South African regional sensitivities. Yet European diplomat (SA-4 2010) observed that South Africa was indeed hesitant when the strategic partnership was proposed and that they appeared to be worried about potential reactions from SADC-countries, which is why they wished to first consult with certain African partners. In this context, one could draw attention to the fact that after the strategic partnership was proposed, South Africa specifically issued a briefing on the matter addressing the AU and ACP<sup>350</sup>-Ambassadors, which reads:

'South Africa has agreed, in principle, to discussing the elevation of its relations with the EU to that of a strategic partnership. Although South Africa welcomes the proposal, it upholds and affirms its continuing and utmost commitment to its SADC, AU, ACP and South-South partners. South Africa is mindful of these priorities when entering into any negotiations and the proposed strategic partnership with the EU is no exception.' (DIRCO 2006).

It shows that South Africa is generally very sensitive to potential regional implications to the bilateral strategic partnership. For example, European diplomat SA-1 (2010) noted that 'even though South Africa views itself as the African voice and African advocate, it is aware of the fact that this is not without controversy. In the African context, South Africa acts very carefully and is ready to represent an African position, which possibly may not be its own'. Furthermore, South Africa is very careful not be perceived as an African or regional hegemon. As South African diplomat SA-1 (2010) has described it, 'South African never claims to speak on behalf of Africa and we [South Africa; NH] are very aware and sensitive not to be perceived as taking over the role of the voice of Africa' (South African diplomat SA-6 2010; Expert SA-7 2010). Moreover, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) strongly argued that South Africa does not want to

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<sup>350</sup> ACP stands for the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries.

be '[...] developed into a tool for Europe. We strongly resist that' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). However, the source mentioned that South Africa 'can speak on behalf of Africa but not for Africa' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010).

Furthermore, there was a hint at the fact that South Africa could help the EU in how to best deal with certain issues relating to Africa (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). In further relating the bilateral (South Africa) and biregional strategic partnerships (AU), South African diplomat SA-2 2010 said: 'I am not saying that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership is higher [than the biregional EU-AU strategic partnership; NH]..... but we can speak nicely to the EU about how we view certain things and the EU takes it seriously. The bilateral strategic partnership was also represented as being 'in support of the African agenda: 'we [South Africa; NH] can tell the EU certain things, which other African countries cannot and even things the AU may not be able to say' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). What is more, the idea of South Africa possibly excluding the EU as an external actor was strongly renounced. Instead, South Africa was seen to wish for even more European engagement and looking for opportunities to support the progress of certain political processes (South African diplomat SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010; Expert SA-5 2010). In this context, the strategic partnership was clearly related to the notion of partners engaging each other in their interaction (South African diplomat SA-6 2010). From a European perspective, it was rather described that 'South Africa sometimes wishes the EU to be quieter in order to strike political deals' (European diplomat SA-4 2010).

What is more, as an expert (Expert SA-1 2010) has put it, 'South Africa in the South does want to play a prominent position, but it's not as visible as what the European expect'. The same source went on by saying: 'there is pressure on South Africa to adopt this role but it's not always possible as we [South Africa; NH] are balancing it with as how we respond to our fellow countries on the continent and the African agenda; the importance we attach to multilateralism and balancing it with South-South cooperation' (Expert SA-1 2010). Overall, South Africa was often seen as torn between avoiding the image of a regional hegemon and at the same aspiring the role of a regional representative (Expert SA-1 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010). Thereby, the EU was seen as having an interest in projecting South Africa as a representative and/or role model of/for the African region (Expert SA-1 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010; Expert SA-4 2010; Member of South African Parliament 2010). However, one European diplomat SA-2 (2010) noted the South African 'ambivalent position' and described as a 'reluctant leader in some respects'. From a South African perspective, South Africa was instead described as a 'leading player', particularly with respect to global governance (South African diplomat SA-5 2010). At the same time, South African

diplomat SA-3 (2010) underlined that ‘we [South Africa; NH] only play a leadership or mediating role if we are invited to do so’. Furthermore, being seen or portraying itself as a representative for Africa was yet somewhat slightly less problematized by South African diplomatic sources with respect to the global level than with regard to the regional level (South African diplomat SA-5 2010).

The EU’s ‘region’ is predominantly mentioned in the context of the Lisbon Treaty (Council/EU (SA) 2010: 3).

The interaction of the strategic partners on all three – bilateral, regional and international levels – was acknowledged by the practitioners (e.g., European official B-5 2010; European diplomat SA-1 2010). Yet a European insider noted that initially the EU ‘had no interest in discussing international issues with South Africa and it was South Africa, which had a stronger interest in also discussing international issues, such as, for example, the Middle East, because they have an agenda going beyond Africa’ (European official B-4 2010). Interestingly, the global dimensions of cooperation are mentioned first only in 2010 (Council Secretariat/EU (SA) 2010). European diplomat B-5 (2010) indeed noted that the bilateral strategic partnership with South Africa is ‘a means to have a bigger effect in the region’. Yet it was also hinted at the fact that the importance of levels may also be determined by Europe or, more specifically, the interests of the acting EU-Presidency (European diplomat B-7 2010). Moreover, South Africa as a player also has its own interests in the African region, which may indeed display a ‘potential for conflict of interests’ between Europe and South Africa (European official B-4 2010).

At a closed DIRCO-conference in March 2010, one conference speaker noted that it was in the South African interest to engage other regional powers but also the EU and the US. Indeed, South African diplomat SA-3 explicitly stated that despite the lack of a European common position in some cases, ‘we [South Africa; NH] definitely use them as an engagement partner’. Indeed, the South African expectation concerning the strategic partnership with the EU was described as ‘getting to a different level of engagement’ (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). These statements show that it is not only the EU engaging South Africa but that it works both ways.

To conclude, the EU tries to engage South Africa at all three levels. Yet interestingly, the South African side appears to also follow an engagement strategy by trying to engage the EU.

### **Keeping; Increasing; Demonstrating Power ('prestige')**

Overall, notions of competition between the EU and South Africa were rather mentioned implicitly or at the side-lines (Expert SA-2 2010).

South Africa is viewed to contest the international power hierarchy (Flemes/Habib 2009: 139). Moreover, Kornegay has described South Africa as a '[...] revisionist power within the African context' (Kornegay 2008: 16). He explains that the country's '[...] revisionist vocation is to propel the African continent from its marginalized peripheral position in the global order to great power status [...]' (Kornegay 2012: 15). Generally, South Africa aspires '[...] to maximise its global prestige and influence [...]' (Landsberg 2005: 9). In this context, South Africa uses (strategic) partnerships (both) with the North (and the South) in order to gain in influence, prominence, prestige and status on an international scale (Landsberg 2005: 12; Chevallier 2009: 8). Clearly, strategic partnerships (including bi-national commissions) with the North are an important foreign policy tool for South Africa geared towards broader ends (Landsberg 2005: 13, 14): for South Africa, strategic partnerships with extra-regional powers are means to '[...] gain international prestige and influence [...]' (Landsberg 2005: 19). Indeed, one European official (B-5 2010) noted that South Africa took a certain pride in becoming the EU's strategic partner. At the same time, South Africa also displayed an ambiguous reaction as the formalization of the strategic partnerships rather received a low profile in terms of (public or official) visibility. This was seen caused by the South African fear of being seen as a hegemon or the EU's only interlocutor (European official B-5 2010). As South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) explained, 'there were a few African countries being weary because of the EU-South African strategic partnership'. Moreover, the source was quick to underline that South Africa did not establish the strategic partnership with the EU with the prospect of recognition, it also mentioned '[...] you cannot deny that there is a certain symbolism involved in having a strategic partnership' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). To conclude, the strategic partnership with the EU is clearly a means for South Africa in its general strive for increasing power. It is a tool, which also serves to demonstrate South African power.

When it comes to the EU, there was hardly mentioning that it was linked to an attempt of keeping power. However, one could presume that the strategic partnership with South Africa at least served to improve its perception in terms of being an attractive political partner and, therefore, demonstrate power. The South African side was indeed aware of the EU's strive for more global clout. For example, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) noted that at the time of establishing the EU-South Africa strategic partnership, 'the EU's importance was growing' against the background of enlargement and the

Constitution for Europe and later the Lisbon Treaty. [...] Furthermore, the EU was competing with NATO at the time in terms of making itself relevant on a global stage and going on a new cause'.

**Status recognition: Major Power; International Actor**

Corbetta et al. (2011: 221-222) argue that South Africa (amongst others), in contrast to India and Brazil, is not believed to be looking for global status in the near future. In a slightly different assessment, Kornegay states that 'South Africa does not and cannot realistically aspire to great power status, like India and Brazil' (Kornegay 2008: 15). Its main 'status'-source is '[...] its geographic, geopolitical and geo-strategic role in Africa' (Landsberg 2005: 2). However, South Africa encounters the challenge of striking a balance between more status but less suspicion from its neighbours possibly viewing South Africa as a hegemon (Landsberg 2005: 10). In its briefing to AU and ACP-Ambassadors, the South African side tries to present the goals of the goals of the strategic partnership as EU-goal (DIRCO 2006). Hence, even though South Africa may be keen to recognized, it is particularly aware of regional suspicion. The South African sensitivity to reassure its regional neighbours is also apparent in the following paragraph of the briefing:

'[...] South Africa would like to assure your countries, as our partners, that we will only enter into a strategic partnership with the EU on condition that, the partnership enhances South Africa's national, regional and African responsibilities' (DIRCO 2006).

Even though South Africa has ultimately refrained from openly pushing for a permanent UN-Security Council seat (Soares de Lima/Hirst 2006: 36) due to African solidarity, South Africa can still be perceived to be looking for a certain status even though it may not be the one of a great power. The fact that the country has been intensively lobbying for becoming a member of the BRICs/BRICS-alliance exemplifies its aspiration. What is more, Expert SA-4 (2010) argued that South Africa has 'enormous global ambitions'. Moreover, there are various authors mentioning or hinting at the fact that South Africa is looking for 'recognition' (Van der Westhuizen 2011: 225). This recognition may be granted regionally or by the (Global) North, for example (Van der Westhuizen 2011: 225).

A European official (B-4 2010) argued explicitly that the strategic partnership with the EU 'is important for South Africa in a political sense and for its standing'. Moreover,

Expert SA-2 (2010) also equated the strategic partnership with the EU as 'recognition of South Africa's status [...]'. Indeed, according to European official B-5 (2010), the strategic partnership with the EU represents the recognition of the South African role in Africa and Southern Africa and in international issue areas such as conflict resolution or climate change. Furthermore, South Africa has an interest in being recognized as an emerging country at the global level as it is not always considered to play in the same league of other emerging countries (European official B-5 2010; European diplomat SA-4 2010). Hence, being the EU's strategic partner is on a different 'level' in comparison to other countries admittedly having also meetings with the EU but not strategic partnership, such as Nigeria (European diplomat B-7 2010). European diplomat B-7 (2010) explicitly stated that the strategic partnership with the EU is an 'acknowledgement of the South African position' (European diplomat SA-1 2010). Or as Expert SA-3 (2010) has put it, South Africa has been elevated to the status [of a strategic partnership; NH] (Chevallier 2009: 4, 5). Thus, being the EU's strategic partner signifies a political upgrade and elevation of relations. Similarly, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) that the strategic partnership with the EU represents 'a recognition of the role that South Africa was maybe playing in the world today and also its importance within the African continent – of course, not in our own right'. Clearly, the latter statement also reflects it is convenient and important to South Africa that the recognition was granted externally and was not asked for by South Africa. This must be seen in the context of, firstly, the South African efforts to always demonstrate its commitment to the African agenda and Africa as its foremost foreign policy priority. Secondly it is linked to the fact that South Africa tries to avoid an image that it would be detaching from its region and the continent. This demonstrates that recognition of an important role or status is convenient when conferred externally as South Africa can always say that they did not actively seek that recognition or status, possibly viewed as being at the expense of its African neighbours. At the same time, South African can use this recognition and status for its foreign policy profile as well as international status and positioning. Thus, we can conclude that South Africa is following a status recognition strategy in terms of its position and role vis-à-vis the region and internationally. The strategic partnership with the EU is indeed linked to that the strategy.

With respect to the EU, it has also been assessed to be interested in being viewed as a coherent actor in the context of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership (European official B-4 2010). Similarly, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) remarked that the EU at the time was competing with NATO in terms of making itself relevant on a global stage'. Moreover, Expert SA-2 (2010) explained that 'as the EU became more

aware of its global power, it regarded South Africa as an important element in the promotion of its relations in Southern Africa and Africa (Expert SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-2 2010). Therefore, the EU was keen to put things [the relations with South Africa; NH] on a higher plateau'. Moreover, 'the EU sees itself as an international role player of considerable importance; but there are many stumbling blocks: they compete with major power and they are not taken seriously. [...] The EU is an economic giant and a political pygmy, so how do you overcome this discrepancy? Now the EU uses partnerships to overcome this [...]' (Expert SA-2 2010). These arguments link the establishment of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership to the EU's own ambitions of becoming a global or international political actor being taken seriously by partners and other international players. Generally, South African diplomats viewed the EU as an international actor (South African diplomat SA-1 2010; South African diplomat SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-5 2010). However, the EU's actorness in foreign policy depends on issues (South African diplomat SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010) and on the EU-member states in terms of referring their partners to the EU (South African diplomat SA-5 2010). One source described as a 'significant player in multilateral fora' (South African diplomat SA-6 2010). However, South African diplomat hinted at the fact that South Africa pragmatically deals with both the EU and its EU-member states (South African diplomat SA-3 2010; South African diplomat SA-6 2010; European diplomat SA-5 2010). As the source explained, 'the EU is a factor that is but it's the question whether they play the role effectively and strategically [...]'. In fact, Expert SA-4 (2010) viewed the EU as an 'international actor but an ineffectual actor because of its very nature in terms of the need for consensus, particularly on the big issues'. Furthermore, the EU was pictured as an 'international actor but with a fair voice internationally' (Member of South African Parliament 2010).

To conclude, both South Africa and the EU follow status recognition strategies by establishing the respective strategic partnership.

### **7.3.1.2 Social Relationship and Bases of Power**

South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) stated that 'a strategic partnership is supposed to be more than the normal interaction'. Interestingly, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) argued that 'you don't have to be equal in order to be partners' (South African diplomat SA-6 2010). In terms of numbers and size, the EU and South Africa are not equal as the EU is far larger than South Africa. Yet in terms of entities, they are equal. As partnership has 'to be based on mutual interests, mutual respect and understanding so that it does

not work only in a one way street (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). As the relations between South Africa and the EU deepen, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) underlined that South Africa can be a very valuable partner to the EU in terms of explaining certain African positions and opinions by developing countries. In this context, the strategic partnership was viewed as an

‘opportunity to put issues of African positions and developing countries’ positions forward within a friendship kind of thing. It’s a lot easier to speak about challenges to someone with whom you have a very long and established partnership with than just going into a meeting and reading from a statement’ (South African diplomat SA-3 2010).

The process of a strategic partnership is explicitly highlighted in the original proposal of the strategic partnership. It argues that ‘[...] such a strategic partnership is not built overnight; it is the result of a dynamic development’ (Commission/EC (SA) 2006: 10). The Joint Action Plan even describes it as an ‘evolutionary process’ (Council/EU (SA) 2007b: 2). Expert SA-2 (2010) described a strategic partnership as a ‘growth process’.

### **Int. society; social groups (‘clubs’); social status**

Landsberg mentions at the sidelines that the international society is ‘western-dominated’ (Landsberg 2005: 19) from a South African foreign policy perspective (Landsberg 2005: 19). South Africa is somewhat torn between various ‘clubs’, such as IBSA, BRICS or the West (Helly 2012: 3) as well as the (industrialised) North, the South and Africa as a whole (Landsberg 2005: 19). Indeed, this correlates with the fact that South Africa often tries to have a bridging role between the North and the South as well as Africa and the rest of the world (Landsberg 2005: 5). In this context, the Commission-communication notes that ‘South Africa and the EU share much common ground as bridge-builder between North and South, between West and East [...]’ (Commission/EC (SA) 2006: 10). For example, in the context of climate change, the EU pictures South Africa with ‘an essential bridge-building role’ (Press Release/EU (SA) 2009), where trusts needs to be built ‘[...] between industrialised, emerging and developing countries [...]’ (Press Release/EU (SA) 2009).

Indeed, the South African strategic partnership with the EU is pictured as one between the Global North and the Global South (Landsberg 2006: 2, 7, 8), which are also (from a South African perspective) dedicated to the goals of the African agenda

(Landsberg/Kondlo 2007: 2). As Expert SA-2 (2010) has circumscribed the EU-South Africa strategic partnership, 'now South Africa stands with one foot in the South and one in the North [...]'. However, South Africa 'does not want to be seen as too Western in many respects' (European diplomat SA-2 2010). Indeed, European diplomat SA-4 (2010) argued that South Africa is essentially a 'Southern country' and the 'loyalty lies with the groups associated with the South'. The bridge-building role is nevertheless in the South African interest because it makes them more relevant (European diplomat SA-4 2010).

The mentioning of social groups was, thus, often mentioned in the context of South Africa as a 'bridge-builder'<sup>351</sup> (Expert SA-1 2010) or in the context of international issues, such as climate change (Expert SA-1 and SA-6 2010). As South African diplomat SA-1 (2010) has put it, South Africa is

'a bridge-builder between the developing world and the developed world, because we [South Africa; NH] are two countries in one. We can definitely identify that we are from Africa and African priorities are at the top of our international relations priorities. But with our history, we try to fulfill this role of a bridge-builder – sometimes we identify with priorities of the developed world but the developing world is our priority'.

Indeed, South Africa has been described as a bridge-builder between North and South; East and West; developed and underdeveloped and First and Second World [...] (South African diplomat SA-2 2010; South African diplomat SA-6 2010). Furthermore, South African diplomat (SA-5 2010) stated that 'both developed and developing countries can relate to South Africa as we are struggling with both worlds in our country'. The strategic partnership is seen as a 'platform' for engaging in bridge-building from a South African perspective (South African diplomat SA-6 2010). However, interviewees were not always sure if South Africa effectively acts as a bridge-builder (e.g., European diplomat SA-5 2010; Expert SA-7 2010).

Interestingly, European official B-4 (2010) argued that the South African interest in a strategic partnership with the EU lay in the fact that it 'resented to be seen as a developing country. South Africa rather wants to be seen as a full political partner and strategic partner, such as Brazil and India' (Member of European Parliament 2010). Or

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<sup>351</sup> At a closed conference within the DIRCO (19 March 2010), several South African conference participants also pictured South Africa in terms of what one conference speaker called a 'bridge-builder walking with two legs between North and South after 1998 under the Mbeki-presidency'.

as European diplomat SA-4 (2010) has put it, 'South Africa wants to be seen as being part of the group of rising powers'. This links up with European official B-5 assessment (2010) that South Africa's strategic partnership with the EU serves to label relations in the same way as in the Brazilian or other cases of strategic partners. South Africa is happy to gain recognition as it belongs to the club of the EU's strategic partners (European official B-5 2010).

However, in the dialogue process on African issues, South Africa is viewed to 'become very African as they are afraid of being seen as a lackey of the West. This is when they become more African than Africa' (European official B-4 2010). As South Africa 'does not know how to see itself' in the context of the Western lackey and a regional hegemon, this sometimes leads to an 'inconsistent' South African foreign policy (European official B-4 2010). Hence, 'South Africa has not made up its mind' (European official B-4 2010). European official B-4 (2010) attested South Africa a certain 'hostility towards the West', whereby South Africa would not trust Western powers. In this respect, the same interview partner remarked jokingly that South Africa does not need to go to bed with us' [Europe; NH] (European official B-4 2010).

From a South African perspective, on the other hand, there was the hope that the EU-South Africa strategic partnership framework would also help the EU in understanding the reasoning behind certain positions taken by African or developing countries. Firstly, the EU could potentially draw on its dialogue with South Africa in meeting other developed countries and 'convey messages to other developed countries'. Thereby, the EU-South Africa strategic partnerships would also help with the South African aim of bridge-building. Secondly, South Africa 'having equal status with the EU in speaking to each other' could bring forward the concerns of smaller countries, which may never have the chance to speak to the EU in that way (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). It all boiled down to what South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) said in the context of mutual understanding even if there may not be agreement on positions: 'we don't agree with you but we understand'.

Overall, notions of social groups with different social statuses were particularly strong in the analysis of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership, especially with respect to South Africa's international positioning, social status as well as bridge-building role between the North and South and other categories, such as developed and developing countries. Moreover, the dimension of a social group was mentioned in the context of the EU's labelling of the group of strategic partners being linked to receiving certain recognition.

**Positive or negative incentives (reward or coercive power)**

In the context of South Africa's 'global aspirations' striving for a 'global role' and 'global status' in terms of a 'spokesperson of the South', Expert SA-3 (2010) argued that South Africa also views 'Africa as a means to an end', namely this global role and global status. By being viewed as the representative for Africa on the international scene, South Africa is 'rewarded with continental status'. Moreover, the source related the strategic partnership with the EU as South Africa having the 'status of a global player (not power)'. As a consequence, we can actually deduce that the EU confers a certain status and recognizes (acknowledges) a particular South African status in the sense of being an emerging regional power with important regional and important roles. Thus, this recognition of status, which is, to a certain extent, in South Africa's interest amidst regional sensitivities, constitutes a reward for South Africa. As a result, the EU possesses reward power.

With respect to reward power, it seems relevant to consider the actor, who initially proposed to establish the strategic partnership. As mentioned before, a European official stated (B-4 2010) that South Africa had shown interest in a strategic partnership with the EU, whereas South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) argued that it has been the EU-side proposing the upgrade of relations (South African diplomat SA-6 2010). Then, South Africa assessed that 'it was in the South African interest to actually have that higher and strategic level' South African diplomat SA-3 (2010). Thus, from the South African perspective, 'it wasn't a South African initiative but a European initiative' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010).

In this respect, it was instructive to observe that in the South African case, interview partners were particularly interested in hearing from me how other interview partners had responded to the question on who had proposed the strategic partnership<sup>352</sup>. For example, one European official (2010) was keen to hear if the South Africans had argued that the EU had proposed the strategic partnership. The source was rather sure in stipulating that South Africa would have very likely have said so.

It appears only logical that it is indeed highly relevant which side proposed a strategic partnership. When assessed in terms of status recognition, it would be highly relevant to South Africa that it was indeed the EU as an established power proposing the strategic partnership, which is also important to South Africa's somewhat inhibited regional standing. I believe that we can deduce from this hunch that the EU has a certain

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<sup>352</sup> It is important to note that I have kept sources and responses by interviewees confidential.

reward power in terms of status recognition flowing from its established position enhanced by its extra-regional positioning. Moreover, South Africa has reward power against the background of status-recognising the EU's attractiveness as a international political actor and partner. Overall, the subchapter has demonstrated how the categories of status recognition, social groups and social status as well as reward power may coalesce.

### **Referent power**

In 2004, the EU did not feature high in terms of South African public attention (Olivier 2004: 23-24). Furthermore, Expert SA-2 (2010) stated that 'the EU has an image problem in the world. Thus, it wants to enhance its image as a role player and South Africa has a good name in international politics. When South Africa says good things about the EU, the EU will therefore like that'. The same source argued that the EU has an interest in the strategic partnership with South Africa in order to be '[...] associated with a popular country in the world as it is looking for a better image [...]'. If we assume that this is true, it would rather be the South African rather than the EU's referent power playing a role in the EU-South Africa strategic partnership.

### **Legitimate power**

There is a brief mentioning of South Africa's authority, which may be linked to the study's analytical framework and legitimate position power: the original Commission document proposing South Africa's strategic partnership with the EU states that South Africa '[...] has emerged as a leading nation and a peace broker in the region and on the African continent. It has authority not just in Africa but in global institutions' (Commission/EC 2006: 1). Even though South Africa's status as a regional power in Africa and its authority are not directly linked in the text, I believe that we can trace this as an instance of legitimate position power: South Africa's legitimate position power is based on its position the international and regional hierarchy as a regional power. From this flows South Africa's legitimate authority with respect to the international society of states. Note that this is an official discourse by the EU – I do not claim that South Africa commands de facto legitimate authority/legitimate position power. Rather, it is viewed by the EU of doing so. In this context, one could refer to a statement by South African diplomat SA-3 (2010). The source believed that the EU has high and ambitious expectations regarding South Africa (South African diplomat SA-3 2010; Expert SA-7 2010): 'they [the EU; NH] look to us to lead and take a more proactive position. We [South Africa; NH] can take positions but we can't speak on behalf of the continent. [...] hypothetically, the EU would

like us to say publicly 'we like what Europe does' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). The EU might like SA to take a very firm position and they would correctly say that gives us a lot of credibility because of our [South African] importance on the continent. We are very careful not to do that because then Africa will point fingers at us 'you don't have any right to speak on our behalf. We need to come up with an African position' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). However, as Expert SA-3 (2010) has argued, 'by having this important African player as a strategic partner [South Africa; NH], it brings legitimacy to Europe'.

Overall, it shows that the EU attempts to build up its credibility by drawing on the South African position power. But as the analysis shows, South Africa does not seem to have de facto legitimate position power because it faces regional and continental opposition to the kind of role on which Europe would like to draw on. One could frame it as South Africa's legitimate power potential. What is more, if South Africa agreed to publicly 'endorse' the rightfulness of European policies and positions, the country runs into danger of being viewed as a Western puppet by African partners and other international players.

What is more, European diplomat SA-3 (2010) argued that BRICS can be more than a buzzword. A notion such as being a BRICS-country carries certain legitimation for a country for indeed being an important rising country. In this context, the source also mentioned that a country's (international) legitimacy is, thus, conferred 'rather from the outside than from the inside' (European diplomat SA-3 2010). Following from this statement, one could hypothesise that being 'labelled' with a certain notion such as BRICS or being the EU's strategic partner – being part of a certain social group - can be used by a country in terms of its foreign policy profile and for possibly gaining in legitimate position power. Moreover, a conference speaker at a closed DIRCO-conference (2010) argued that South Africa's engagement in Southern Africa is a 'test case for its legitimacy'. Another conference speaker took up on this argument by saying that 'legitimacy is power and symbolism is important for legitimacy'.

Presuming these statements and arguments as correct, a country would effectively need outsiders (e.g., African neighbours or the EU) or social group peers (fellow BRICS-countries) in order to gain in international legitimacy with respect to a certain position within the international or regional hierarchy. Moreover, symbols are deemed relevant when it comes to international legitimacy and a country's power building on legitimacy. However, these aspects would need to be further investigated in future research and to be linked to scholarly work on (international) legitimacy.

### 7.3.2 Conclusion and Interpretation

The findings from the case study reflect the study's assumptions about structure and agency even though it seems that notions of multipolarity were not particularly distinct in this case study. South Africa was widely identified as the predominant power in Southern Africa and, to a certain extent, on the African continent informing its foreign policy. Furthermore, the country is put into context with other rising powers, even though there is a sense that it is smaller compared to other rising powers and derives its importance to a high degree from its relative predominance vis-à-vis its African neighbours. The EU as an established or traditional power did not feature high in the case study's results even though interviewees indirectly referred to the EU-member states and their colonial and historical relations with African countries including South Africa. This may be seen as indication of the EU as a traditional power in Africa, particularly against the background of 'new' powers gaining ground in Africa, such as China.

The South Africa-EU strategic partnership is explicitly described as a strategic alliance. From a European point of view, the strategic nature of this alliance is particularly derived from South Africa's (relative) economic and, to a certain degree, political power in Southern Africa and Africa and the role that comes along with this position. This fact incentivizes the willingness and possibly need to cooperate with South Africa regionally and internationally and to upgrade the relations with this country.

The latter point already hints at the dimension of cooperation and policy coordination and, ideally, policy adaptation between the EU and South Africa. These dimensions were strongly pronounced even though policy alignment is considered more of a prospect.

Competition is not mentioned explicitly.

Yet the EU's engagement strategy in terms of engaging South Africa at all three levels (bilateral, regional and international/ global) is reflected in the analysis, whereby the EU apparently manages South Africa's rise. Yet, the significance of the regional level was particularly pronounced. Firstly, the bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships were seen as complementary and linked by both partners. South Africa is viewed to supposedly serve as an important interlocutor, influence channel and African spokesperson for the EU when it comes to Africa. However, even though South Africa is clearly interested in the dialogue with the EU with the goal of supporting African interests and the African agenda, it renounces the role of a spokesperson of or for Africa. The EU's region does not play a major role as it seems. No socialisation processes could be traced directly from the documents. Thus, the EU can be seen as following a

management/engagement strategy with respect to South Africa. Moreover, the South African side appears to also follow an engagement strategy by trying to engage the EU.

South Africa indeed strives for more power (status) and prestige, whereby it generally uses strategic partnerships – thus, including the one with the EU – in its foreign policy. Hence, the South African strategic partnership with the EU is clearly linked to South Africa's attempt to increase and demonstrate power. This is less clear when it comes to the EU. Yet, one can assume that the EU has tried to improve its perception by South Africa and, ultimately, other international actors of being a (global) political actor and attractive political partner, which would hint at a power demonstration strategy.

Both South Africa and the EU follow status recognition strategies by establishing the respective strategic partnership. From a South African perspective, the strategic partnership with the EU appears to be more of an acknowledgement of the South African positioning and role in Southern Africa and Africa rather than a recognition that South Africa is becoming a major power. Nevertheless, South Africa can use this status recognition for its foreign policy profile as it is grouped by the EU into the same group of strategic partners and important rising powers as Brazil, China or India. The EU is assumed to be also following a status recognition strategy in terms of being viewed as an international and global political actor as well as important actor in Africa via establishing a strategic partnership with South Africa.

Moreover, the EU-South Africa strategic partnership can be understood in terms of a social relationship, even though it may not constitute a friendship. It is seen as serving mutual understanding of the strategic partnership by having this special dialogue. The strategic partnership was described as as being a 'process', which hints at the more dynamic process-nature of this framework.

Presuming an international society including social groups showed in this case study that South Africa was perceived to be part of several social groups. This in-between membership of social groups – be it Global North and Global South or developed and developing countries – strongly informs South Africa's international posture, social status and foreign policy rationale of bridge-building. In addition, the EU's strategic partners are put into a social group by labelling them as strategic partners, whereby they retrieve specific (status) recognition.

Relatedly, the EU possesses reward power as a traditional/established and extra-regional power in terms of recognizing and acknowledging South Africa's status and conferring status in terms of the strategic partnership. Thereby, this case study has particularly demonstrated the relevance of the proposer of the strategic partnership in the context of reward power linked to status recognition and status conferment. As

mentioned before, this exemplifies how the categories of status recognition, social groups and social status as well as reward power overlap and coalesce.

Moreover, the EU apparently does not have referent power following the South African assessment. It seems as if it is rather South Africa possessing referent power.

Additionally, the case study on the EU-South Africa strategic partnership has disclosed elements of legitimate power in terms of legitimate position power. First, South Africa can be assumed to have legitimate position power potential flowing from its positioning in terms of (relative) economic predominance and a considerably important political role in Southern Africa and the continent. Thereby, legitimate position power is linked to an authority of a country, which ends up to show that legitimate position power and legitimate authority are indeed linked just as the analytical model with respect to the social power bases has assumed (see Fig. 4 and Ch. 5.2.2.2.2). It is exactly this conjuncture of legitimate position power and legitimate authority, on which established, extra-regional powers such as the EU like to make usage of: the EU tries to receive South Africa's official support for its policies and positions in order to gain in credibility and legitimacy for itself and its policies. Yet, South Africa tries to refrain from doing so because this is exactly the mechanism, which may lead to perceptions by its African neighbours and peers of being a Western puppet.

It seems that legitimate position power (potential) and legitimate authority may be derived from both a rank within the international hierarchy as well as from being part of a social group within international society. Thereby, it is linked to the study's own view of power being structurally grounded and/or socially positioned. However, it is important to note that this may rather be a legitimate position power *potential* and legitimate authority *potential* instead of de facto legitimate position power and de facto legitimate authority.

In addition, analysis has indicated that labelling a country in a specific way – such as a BRICS-country or as the EU's strategic partner – may include legitimation or at least the hopes of a country to be legitimized in terms of being a rising and increasingly important country. Thus, these notions may involve that a country gains or at least hopes for gaining in international legitimacy vis-à-vis the international society of states. Moreover, it has been indicated that symbols play an important role in the context of legitimacy as legitimacy is power. As a result, one could presume that becoming a strategic partner of the EU is also linked to the dimensions of international legitimacy and legitimation: having been rewarded with the symbolic social status of being the EU's strategic partner is prestigious for a country as it may contribute to its international legitimacy and legitimate authority following from this legitimate position power. This argument shows how the study's dimensions of demonstrating power (prestige), status

recognition, social groups, social status, reward power and legitimate power (legitimate position power and legitimate authority) coalesce and act together.

No instances of informational power, coercive or expert power could be traced.

To conclude, the South Africa-EU strategic partnership can be *understood* as strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. The EU, being a traditional/ established power, and South Africa, being an emerging regional power, attempt to cooperate in terms of coordination and in terms of thereby possibly adapting their policies. Both South Africa and the EU compete for power even though is not a direct competition: while South Africa tries to (moderately) gain in power, the EU tries to keep power. Both demonstrate power by establishing a strategic partnership, which is prestigious to both for different reasons. The strategic partnership's prestige is linked to both strategic partners' status recognition strategies: by becoming the EU's strategic partner, South Africa is recognized in its status of an emerging regional power. By becoming South Africa's strategic partner, the EU is effectively recognized as an international actor and as an international partner. As a result, both partners have the power to reward their respective strategic partner in terms of status and recognition. What is more, the strategic partnership between the EU and South Africa is not only about status or to be seen as a status, it can also be cast as a social relationship and as a process between social actors. Their social relationship is informed by their respective social status and membership of social groups against the background of the international society of states. From a South African perspective, being part of the club of the EU's strategic partners is a social group of its own carrying symbolic importance. This symbolic and prestigious social status again can be used in and for the South African foreign policy profile and international positioning in terms of its social status within the international society. Moreover, analysis has indicated the relevance of international legitimacy and legitimate power. Both the EU and South Africa have legitimate power (potential) and (potential) legitimate authority: firstly, the EU by being an established, extra-regional power confers certain legitimization to South Africa by recognizing its status of a strategic partner of the EU. Secondly, South Africa due to its position and role in Southern Africa and Africa is deemed to have legitimate position power and legitimate authority from the EU's perspective: the EU hopes to make usage of these dimensions of legitimate power in order to add to the legitimacy and legitimate authority of its own role and policies, particularly in the African context but probably also in multilateral fora at the international (global) level.

Overall, I believe that the analysis has contributed to an understanding of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership by viewing it as strategic alliance forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and a social relationship, which is a foreign

policy tool of social power, particularly reward power and legitimate power (legitimate position power and legitimate authority).

## 7.4 Cross-Case Comparison: Common Patterns

This chapter serves to identify common patterns among the three cases concerned along the lines of the structured, focused comparison based on the sensitising, analytical model (Fig. 4). This is the chapter, where the cross-case comparative perspective between the cases is included (see Ch. 6.1.4.1). It will help to identify common patterns at the strategic partnerships' underlying level (Goertz' secondary level of the family resemblance model) (see Fig. 4; Ch. 4.1.3.3-4.1.4). It reflects Goertz' (constitutive) family resemblance concept-building used in this study: similarities of cases ideally lie with the secondary level. The study has been informed by the hunch that it is indeed the secondary level, where the commonalities and similar rationale of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships of Brazil, India and South Africa lie.

It is important to note that this chapter includes additional, more general references and statements, which were retrieved from (primary and secondary) documents or made by interview partners on the strategic partnerships of the EU. They did not necessarily concern one case of this study and, therefore, included in this chapter of cross-comparison.

A European diplomat points out that all strategic partnerships are different, albeit the IBSA countries could be similar (European diplomat Bz-3 2012). Strategic partnerships should be regarded pragmatically as a 'political undertaking and as a 'framework for triggering action' (European official B-2 2010). 'They are different and this is good. Relations are different and should be different' (European official B-2 2010). However, from a practitioner's perspective, one should not rank countries within the group of strategic partnerships as these ranking attempts are 'too academic' (European official B-2 2010). Rather, all strategic partners are 'important as they have regional influence and global aspirations' (European official B-2 2010). They represent a 'number of handpicked countries' (European official B-9 2010). Similarly, European diplomat I-3 (2010) describes a strategic partner as 'partner who has a regional and global impact or both'.

Most of the time interview partners rather describe than clearly define strategic partnerships. As European official B-12 (2008) put it, 'there is no satisfactory definition of a strategic partnership'. At the same time, the same source emphasizes that 'there is not a lack of substance but a lack of research with regard to the strategic partnerships' (European official B-12 2008). Overall, practitioners view the strategic partnerships quite pragmatically (e.g., European official B-1 2010; European official B-4 2010; European

official B-7 2010; European diplomat B-6 2010; European official B-10 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010). They are viewed as being different in content but which was seldomly seen as a problem but rather as a fact (European diplomat B-3 2010; European official B-4 2010; European official B-7 2010; South African diplomat SA-2 2010; Expert SA-5 2010). For example, European official B-9 says that 'every strategic partnership has a life of its own' (2010). Furthermore, one practitioner describes bilateral strategic partnerships as a 'helpful foreign policy instrument' (European diplomat B-3 2010). Moreover, another practitioner mentions that strategic partnerships would be established with important partners, such as Brazil being important in Latin America as well as India and South Africa, which view themselves as 'poles' (European diplomat B-4 2010). It is only then that they are 'charged with contents' (European diplomat B-4 2010). Moreover, European diplomat B-5 (2010) argues that strategic partnerships should be rather viewed as a 'process' rather than a status (quo) (European diplomat I-2 2010; European diplomat SA-2 2010; European diplomat SA-5 2010). Strategic partners are 'mutually dependent' (European diplomat B-5 2010).

These statements highlight the flexibility of the strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments in terms of policy areas and issues. Thus, strategic partnerships rather appear as a framework for relations or an 'umbrella' (European official B-4 2010; European diplomat SA-5 2010). In this context, European diplomat B-4 (2010) asks for patience with regard to the Joint Action Plans, which would need to effectively come into place over time.

Non-European diplomats describe the EU's strategic partnerships in a similar way as the European diplomats and officials. For example, a Mexican diplomat (B-1 2010) argues that strategic partnerships are 'special relationships between the EU and a selected group of countries playing an important role in the world'.

When comparing the three cases (EU-Brazil; EU-India and EU-South Africa), the strategic partnerships all came into being at a similar point in time (2004-2007). The structure of the strategic partnership in terms of dialogue and working processes (high-level summits and working level) are similar. However, an important difference between the three cases lies in the fact that the bilateral strategic partnerships with Brazil and South Africa function against the background of simultaneous biregional strategic partnership (EU-LAC and EU-Africa/AU). In the case of the EU-India strategic partnership, there is no biregional strategic partnership with SAARC or South Asia.

### 7.4.1 Analysis

The political discourse on the respective strategic partnerships stresses that the partners share common values and interests. Furthermore, it is indicated that relations between the partners have diversified and intensified to a degree that a strategic partnerships as a new (comprehensive and long-term) framework or level for relations is deemed necessary. For example, EU-Brazil relations are seen as having intensified and diversified. In the Indian case it is implied that relations have moved from a trade and developmental to a political relationship. In the South African case, relations are seen as to have transcended development cooperation towards a relationship of cooperation in various economic and political areas. The strategic partnerships are depicted as a tool for achieving commonly shared objectives and to reap mutual benefits. The mentioning of levels – bilateral, regional and international (global) – can be read from the documents on the Brazilian and South African cases but not in the Indian case.

#### STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF SITUATION

There are assessments of the international system as representing an intermixed, fluid system of '[...] established great powers<sup>353</sup>, newly emerging regional powers, and multiple regional structures' (Flemes/Habib 2009: 141). Notions of multipolarity and of strategic partners being poles of that multipolar world are strongly expressed in the Brazilian and Indian cases but somewhat less pronounced in the South Africa case study. Furthermore, systemic change and power shifts within the international hierarchy among rising and declining powers are also more visible in the first two cases. However, all three – Brazil, India and South Africa – are widely identified as rising powers, which are crucial actors in and for multilateral structures tackling global challenges and addressing interdependence in terms of a need to cooperate. From a structural perspective, the significance of the regional level and world regions was particularly acknowledged in the South African case with respect to China's rise and expansion on the African continent. Overall, there is a considerable agreement on the study's assumed *logic of the situation*.

#### ESTABLISHED POWER AND EMERGING REGIONAL POWERS

Implicitly, scholars denote the EU's most recent strategic partnerships with bilateral partners as relations between 'established and emerging powers' (Grevi 2011: 8). The European member states are considered to be '[...] now collectively reconstituted within

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<sup>353</sup> Yet I would add that established powers need not necessarily be great powers.

the EU as a potential major power [...]’ (Allen 2013: 573). The EU is associated with an established but declining status in the international system (Allen 2013: 57). EU-documents do reflect a differentiation between ‘established’ and ‘emerging powers’ (Renard 2011: 13). Indeed, the strategic partners, whose strategic partnerships with the EU have been formalised after 2003, are identified as ‘emerging powers’ in the foreign policy discourse, including Brazil, India and South Africa (Gratius 2011a: 5).

Indeed, the power status of EU and Brazil, India and South Africa are not beyond dispute. Gratius points out that ‘[...] the international powers of EU and IBSA countries [...] fall between middle and great powers [...]’ (Gratius 2008: 27). Nevertheless, it is mentioned in the context of systemic change that the EU tries to ‘reposition itself’ because ‘[...] its *traditional* weight in setting the global agenda is increasingly contested’ (Gratius/Grevi 2013: 1; emphasis added by NH).

The BRICS countries, on the other hand, are seen as ‘[...] a rather incoherent group of emerging major powers [...]’ (Allen 2013: 573).

The importance of the regional level was more strongly pronounced when it comes to Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers and the assumptions about *agency*. When comparing the three cases (EU-Brazil; EU-India and EU-South Africa), there was strong agreement on viewing Brazil, India and South Africa as emerging regional powers, whereas the notion of the EU as an established power was not always directly traceable in the analysis. This could be due to the fact that the EU-member states are actually the established powers and not the EU as an entity. But this remains stipulation for the time being. All three – Brazil, India and South Africa – were widely seen as rising powers and regional powers in structural terms. Hence, their relative economic preponderance was hardly doubted in contrast to their political regional powerness in terms of regional leadership and regional roles. Nevertheless, all three countries were seen as to make usage of their regional power bases: Brazil and Latin or South America; India and South Asia as well as South Africa and Southern Africa and, to a certain degree, Africa as a whole. The importance of the regional level was most strongly pronounced in the South African case; least pronounced in the Indian case, whereby Brazil was somewhere in between in this regard. Interestingly, Brazilian interviewees quite often preferred to describe Brazil as a middle power rather than a regional power.

Sometimes, interview partners<sup>354</sup> differentiate between Brazil, India and South Africa: South Africa is considered to be a smaller power or of less importance in comparison to the other (two) strategic partners of the EU (European diplomat Bz-1 2012; European diplomat Bz-3 2012; European official B-3 2010; Mexican diplomat B-1 2010). European official B-6 (2010) questions: 'what is strategic about South Africa?'. In addition, South Africa is also seen as punching above its weight vis-à-vis Brazil or India being almost continents in their own right: even though South Africa is relatively smaller in 'its' African region, it is still seen as a regional power (European diplomat SA-1 2010; Expert SA-2 2010; Expert SA-3 2010). This is seen as a success of South African foreign policy (European diplomat SA-1 2010). The observation that South Africa is punching above its weight, is also mentioned by South African diplomats (e.g., South African diplomat SA-1 2010; South African diplomat SA-6 2010). At the same time, South African diplomat SA-2 (2010) pragmatically states that 'every strategic partnership is different and South Africa does not pretend to be something it's not. We are quite comfortable in our shoes'. Thus, there was also a pragmatic assessment on the South African side that there are commonalities between Brazil, India and South Africa but also differences (South African diplomat SA-2 2010).

#### ***7.4.1.1 Strategic Alliance (part of strategy of cooperating while competing)***

The EU's strategic partnerships are associated with an acknowledgement of the international system's changed outlook in terms of multipolarity (Lazarou 2011: 4). As Chevallier (2009: 2) notes, strategic partnerships are linked to '[...] the changes in the global geopolitical landscape [...] and [...] the need to explore broader areas of engagement with new partners significant in the global landscape [...]'. Thus, the intersection of multipolarity and interdependence enhances interlinkedness between powers in the international system. As Grevi notes, 'it is about needing each other more than loving each other. But needs are a workable basis for cooperation and the habit of cooperation can foster better mutual understanding' (Grevi 2011: 5). Indeed, European diplomat SA-4 related the establishment of the strategic partnerships of the EU to the 'new players' and the 'changes in the international political economy and the political clout that comes with'. 'The EU is still an important economic bloc but we are not the engine anymore – there are new kids on the block' (European diplomat SA-4 2010). Similarly, European official B-11 (2010) noted that the strategic partnerships 'try to build on common values and interests in order to address common challenges and transnational risks'. Generally, scholars acknowledge the fact that international system is

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<sup>354</sup> These persons were not necessarily dealing with or in charge of EU-South Africa relations.

characterized by '[...] a blend of competition and cooperation [...]' (Lennon/Kozlowski 2008: viii) and emerging powers are viewed as competitive factors to and as partners for Europe (Siroën 2008: 177, 181). Furthermore, the EU's strategic partnerships are closely related to dimensions of cooperation with partners in an interdependent world (Grevi 2008: 147; Grevi 2012: 10, 16, 20). Some authors, however, argue that the EU's encounter with rising powers in the context of the strategic partnerships may either be characterized by competition or cooperation (Renard 2011: 4). As Islam notes, the strategic partnerships '[...] are signed with countries that – depending on the issues at stake – can, at the same time, be partners, competitors and even adversaries' (2009: 4). In 2007, Bava has posited the question of whether emerging powers, including Brazil, India and South Africa '[...] want to take on and challenge the established international system [...]' or '[...] want to work together [...] by cooperating' (Bava 2007: 6)?

I believe that the conjuncture of the above statements reflect actor' strategy of cooperating while competing against the background of the assumed logic of situations and the characteristics of the international system-structure.

Moreover, the presumed nature of the agents concerned in this study, is also implied by statements made about the rationale of the strategic partnerships of the EU. A Brazilian diplomat suggested that the strategic partners are chosen by the EU in terms of 'betting on who will be important in the near future' (Brazilian diplomat B-1 2010). An Indian diplomat (B-1 2010) argued similarly in depicting strategic partnerships as the EU's attempt to foster close relations with emerging powers. From a South African perspective, strategic partnerships were described as being built on 'common interests of the partners' (South African diplomat SA-2 2010). It is a 'high-level strategic alignment of interests and having interests in common'. Furthermore, South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) noted that 'it is not only a cooperative thing; it is strategic'. Furthermore, the source went on by stating: 'it is a strategic partnership more than a collaborative one' (South African diplomat SA-3 2010). To conclude, South African diplomat SA-6 (2010) related the EU's strategic partnership to 'if you cover the big powers in all world regions, you've got your building blocks for your global network'. Furthermore, South African expert SA-3 (2010) argued that in order to form a strategic partnership, both partners 'need to be important beyond their regions and the partners must occupy a place in the region'.

Strategic partnerships can indeed be understood as foreign policy tools in terms of strategic alliances. Renard remarks that the Gymnich, which is an informal meeting, pre-dating the European Council, in September 2010 framed strategic partnerships as

'instruments' (Renard 2011: 15). Thus, the European Council on 16 September acknowledged '[...] for the first time that the strategic partnerships are an important instrument of foreign policy' (Renard 2011: 15). Grevi states that 'the conclusions of the European Council held on 16 September 2010 have placed the so-called 'strategic partnerships with key players in the world' at the forefront of the EU foreign policy debate' (2011: 1). Indeed, Renard mentions in this context that 'turning strategic partnerships into an effective foreign policy instrument is a priority for the EU' (Renard 2012b: 1).

More broadly, European diplomat SA-2 (2010) argued that a strategic partnership entails that there are 'political benefits on both sides'. Technically, it involves high-level summits (European diplomat SA-2 2010). Moreover, the very establishment of a strategic partnership is seen as a 'commitment of intent to jointly strive for common interests' (European diplomat SA-2 2010). Strategic partnerships are indeed more flexible than (military) alliances (Nadkarni 2010: 48). Thereby, they are interest-based (Nadkarni 2010: 48). As European diplomat P-1 (2010) mentioned, strategic partnerships are rather 'political agreements as there is a political spin about them'. Indeed, they are not 'legally binding' but rather send a 'political message' (European official B-2 2010) being 'politically significant' (Expert SA-5 2010). And as European official B-7 put it, 'it is not about the legal basis but about the substance of strategic partnerships' (2010). Strategic partnerships are simply 'strategic means of looking ahead in a 10 to 15 time span; thinking that these relations will be of extreme importance and sometimes almost vital' (European official B-11 2010). In addition, the EU was seen as an 'indispensable partner' for its strategic partners as it constitutes the main trading partner for most countries (European official B-11 2010). A European diplomat argued that the EU tries to establish strategic partnerships with countries, which are 'regional leaders with economic weight' (European diplomat SA-2 2010). European official B-12 2008 explained pragmatically: strategic partnerships are 'Realpolitik'. Hence, Europe will also work with authoritarian states (European official B-12 2008). Strategic partnerships are by no means 'paternalistic or colonialist [...]' (European official B-12 2008). At the same time, 'Europe can and will defend its values' (European official B-12 2008).

When comparing the results of the three case studies, strategic partnerships are explicitly described as strategic alliances, which start off from the actors self-interest and, importantly, not the commonly shared interests among partners. At the same time, they are cooperative, whereby cooperation may concern several levels and policy areas. Thereby, offer mutual benefits to the strategic partners similarly to win-win-relationship known from international business. They represent relations at the highest political level.

They are linked to competition in terms of being directed by the EU at partners expected to be important players in the future, which hints at their rise in power. Moreover, it is indicated that strategic partnerships also incentivized by other international actors, who are wooing for partnership with these rising powers. This reflects another dimension of competition: it is not competition for power but competition for partners and partnership.

**a) Policy Coordination (Adaptation) - COOPERATION**

Strategic partnerships are closely related to policy coordination with partners. As Renard notes, '[...] strategic partnerships offer a privileged channel for the EU to promote convergence and lessen divergences with its strategic partners over and within the multilateral system' (Renard 2012b: 4). This statement also holds a connotation of socialisation ('lessen divergence'), which is relevant for the next dimension of management and engagement. Moreover, as Reiterer has pointed out in a normative sense: 'strategic partners should attempt to coordinate positions on solving common problems or threats in multilateral for a in spite of inherent limits of cooperation [...]' (Reiterer 2013: 81).

Strategic partnerships are not only considered to be a bilateral foreign policy tool but also a tool comprising of 'multilateral engagement' (Reiterer 2013: 81). This reflects that strategic partnerships are means for policy coordination, cooperation and (ideally) adaptation from both partners' perspectives.

Generally, interview partners almost universally point at the fact that strategic partnerships are about policy coordination (and preferably adaptation) at various levels and in several policies (e.g., European official B-8 2010; European diplomat B-6 2010; Mexican diplomat B-1 2010; European official B-10 2010; South African diplomat SA-3 2010). South African diplomat SA-3 (2010) explains, 'it is not based on a particular issue but covers a broad range of issues'. Crucially, a strategic partnership does not imply that the partners agree on all occasions (e.g., South African diplomat SA-3 2010). What is more, Expert SA-4 (2010) argues that a strategic partnership ideally would not only need coincidence of partner's interests but also how to go about in order to achieve these goals.

The comparison of results from the three case studies also highlight the importance of cooperation as a crucial element and rationale of strategic partnerships. Cooperation between the strategic partners concerns various levels and issue areas.

However, the element of policy adaptation rather appears to the ideal end of the cooperation process not only in theory but widely in practice as well.

**b) Power and status – Competition**

**Management/ Engagement (Socialisation) – bilateral, regional, international/global**

Generally, strategic partnerships are assessed to '[...] call for greater engagement between the parties than mere ad hoc relationships [...]' (Nadkarni 2010: 48). Scholars call for the EU's '[...] engaging [of; NH] old and new global players in the management of common challenges through multilateral frameworks' (Grevi 2008: 172). Thereby, strategic partnerships are clearly identified to potentially '[...] play an important role' (Grevi 2008: 172; Renard 2012b: 4). Relatedly, strategic partnerships clearly have a dimension of '[...] engagement with major global and regional powers [...]' (Grevi 2012: 20). As Chevallier (2009) has put it, 'the EU's engagement with key states through Strategic Partnerships is part of its external repositioning aimed at strengthening its relations with important, emerging powers [...]'. Thus, notions of engagement are quite pronounced (Islam 2009: 4; Grevi 2011: 5; Reiterer 2013: 81). As indicated above, a strategic partnership is seen as a 'privileged channel' (Renard 2012b: 4) for promoting the European views regarding certain policy areas and about multilateralism as such (Renard 2012b: 4).

The EU's engagement strategy was also (implicitly) confirmed by practitioners. Yet interestingly, European official B-8 (2010) noted that the strategic partners of the EU are also interested in engaging the EU: 'The EU has a genuine interest to engage with these countries. But at the same time, these countries also have a genuine interest in engaging with the EU' (European official B-8 2010). Strategic partnerships, thereby, are 'in a bureaucratic sense about summits with confirmed dates but they are also about coinciding levels' (European official B-8 2010). The interaction of strategic partners at the three levels (bilateral, regional and biregional as well as international/global) were acknowledged by a majority of the interview partners. Bilateral and global cooperation levels for strategic partners were often mentioned by the experts and practitioners in addition to the regional level. For example, European official B-2 (2010) argued that strategic partnerships are 'reinforced political cooperation on mainly global agenda. The regional level only matters to a certain extent'. Or as a Parliamentary Advisor/MEP (2010) has described it, strategic partnerships are an attempt to 'go hand-in-hand to global fora'. Yet this generally corresponds with the assessment made by European diplomat B-5 (2010) stating that the relevance of the regional level regarding cooperation

between the EU and its partners would depend on the respective partner and standing or policy vis-à-vis the region.

Most of the time, an interview partner would only speak about the respective case-country. Yet sometimes, interview partners remarked their assumption that Brazil's, India's or South Africa's respective regional influence and importance would also be relevant in the other two respective cases of the EU's strategic partnerships. For example, European diplomat B-1 assessed South Africa's regional influence while also mentioning a hunch that other strategic partners of the EU presumably also have regional influence (European diplomat B-1 2010).

A crucial difference between the cases is the before mentioned fact that there is no biregional strategic partnership with South Asia or SAARC. This is an important difference to the other two cases. In the cases studies on the EU-Brazil and EU-South Africa strategic partnership, bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships were predominantly seen as complementary (European diplomat B-2 2010; European diplomat B-3 2010; European official B-11 2010; European official B-12 2008). However, the perceived limited substance of biregional strategic partnerships was sometimes seen as a disadvantage in comparison to the bilateral ones (European diplomat B-3 2010). Nevertheless, the biregional relations were put into the context of the EU as a role-model for other regions (European diplomat B-5 2010). Therefore, European official B-8 underlined that 'the EU does not want be seen as downgrading the biregional relations' (2010). To the contrary, European official B-12 2008 mentioned that 'the bilateral strategic partnerships could be a means to strengthen the regional approach'<sup>355</sup>.

The three levels – bilateral, regional and international (global) – all played a role in terms of the EU's engagement strategy and, thus, management strategy of the emerging regional power's rise. However, the Brazilian case study has shown that the Brazilian side seemed to be more interested in global and other international cooperation areas in cooperating with the EU. This may be due to Brazil's striving for a less-regionally based power status or to the fact that Brazil does not want to act as a spokesperson for the region of South or Latin America. In the cooperation with India, bilateral and international (global) levels appear to be more relevant to the strategic partnership process than the regional level. In the South African case, the significance of

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<sup>355</sup> However, it is instructive that a Mexican diplomat (B-1 2010) states that biregional and bilateral strategic partnerships are 'independent'. This could be interpreted as an attempt of the strategic partner to de-link itself from the region and making itself more independent from 'its' region. Nevertheless, the benefit of being important in or to the region was circumscribed by the fact that Mexico was still considered to have a 'bridge-builder-role' for the EU vis-à-vis Latin America (Mexican diplomat B-1 2010).

the regional level for cooperation is the most pronounced among all three cases from both the EU's and South Africa's perspectives. Yet, this does not only concern cooperation between these two strategic partners in Southern Africa and Africa but also in terms of cooperating in multilateral frameworks, where the 'African voices' always form part of the dialogue and foreign policy reasoning.

All three of the EU's strategic partners are seen as important interlocutors and, preferably, as influence channels into their regions. Moreover, the EU is seen to be interested in the strategic partners acting as spokespersons, which the three countries – at least to the public and neighbourly eyes – try to avoid. Nevertheless, South Africa claims to use its exclusive channel to the EU for presenting regional views.

The EU's region – Europe – does not play a major role for the respective strategic partnerships.

Interestingly, analysis has hinted at the fact that it is not only the EU trying to engage its partner but the strategic partners also attempt to engage the EU. Thus, Brazil, India and South Africa also follow an engagement strategy.

Mostly implicitly, scholars hint at the fact that strategic partnerships also constitute (processes of) socialisation between the partners. For example, Islam mentions that

'by encouraging frequent meetings, dialogues and open debate, the EU's strategic partnerships are designed to promote just such an understanding of the rapidly changing global environment, while also helping Europe and its partners to accommodate each other's interests and points of view when formulating policies' (Islam 2009: 10).

Similarly, Reiterer puts up the question if the strategic partnerships have been helpful '[...] in promoting the EU's worldview and interests [...]' (2013: 86). Simply the fact that this is expected from the framework of a strategic partnership, which, by the way, can also be expected from bilateral political relations in general, (Reiterer 2013: 86) may hint at the fact that strategic partnerships are designated to promote socialisation processes.

However, it was particularly hard to trace processes of socialisation in the analysis of case studies. This may be due to the fact that the strategic partnerships are still of a quite recent nature and socialisation is easier to trace against the background of a long-term process. Moreover, if policy adaptation has not taken place (as interview partners have indicated at times), there is hardly socialisation to be traced. Nevertheless,

I believe that strategic partnerships are foreign policy tools also geared towards socializing the partner as this may actually help with policy adaptation. In future research, research should probably concentrate on one policy area in order to trace socialisation processes in particular issue area rather than in a more general approach as it has been attempted here.

### **Keeping; Increasing; Demonstrating Power ('prestige')**

Expert SA-4 (2010) highlighted that a strategic partnership also has to do with issues of power. Against the background of systemic change, the EU's strategic partnerships with key partners from the Global South are seen in terms of the necessity '[...] to secure its position [...]' (Chevallier 2009: 3). Moreover, becoming the strategic partner of both either the EU or rising, influential powers is connected to the policy of increasing and demonstrating power as well as connotes prestige. For example, Renard mentions that with respect to rising powers becoming the EU's strategic partners, including Brazil, India and South Africa, experience an 'empowerment' (Renard 2012b: 4) vis-à-vis their regional neighbours (Renard 2012b: 4). Clearly, this hints at the fact that strategic partnerships are prestigious for countries in terms of competing at the regional level. Furthermore, it also signifies an increase in power for rising power, which again points at the policy of increasing power. Interview partners also associated Brazil, India and South Africa as revisionist countries. As one expert noted with regard to the IBSA-countries, 'they are trying to change what traditional powers have created' (Expert Bz-4 2012). Generally, strategic partnerships are associated with 'prestige' (Hess 2012: 5; Mexican diplomat B-1 2010) as it is an elevated status vis-à-vis other countries (Hess 2012: 5). Overall, becoming the EU's strategic partner carries importance and may be used with respect to the international power hierarchy (Hess 2012: 5).

Overall, notions of competition could not be directly traced in the analysis. This is no wonder as it would seem highly improbable that competitive features would be included in official statements. Furthermore, notions of direct competition between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa were not explicitly highlighted by interviewees. This has been somewhat expected by the author for the same reason as in the official documents. Irrespective of this, strategic partnerships are believed to encounter all too direct competition, which is probably another reason for competition featuring low in the analysis. Additionally, power shifts in the international system are more of a structural perspective: more figuratively, competition between strategic partners should not be seen as in a auto racing, where vehicles driving next to each other are eyeing the

respective strategic partner and are trying to get in the lead. Thus, strategic partners do not directly compete for power in terms of their direct interaction but it rather informs the outlook of their foreign policy behavior and room for manoeuvre.

However, the analysis of case has shown that the emerging regional powers are indeed trying to increase in power (status), whereas the EU is trying to keep its power. All strategic partnership are associated with demonstrating power, whereby strategic partnerships are linked to prestige. As a result, the three strategic partnerships display the strategies of either increasing or keeping power as well as demonstrating power in the context of prestige.

### **Status recognition: Major Power; International Actor**

Renard/Biscop (2012a: 187) mention that an emerging power searches for 'international recognition of its emerging status given that global power is a social construct rather than a fact'. Moreover, Grevi (2012: 12) thinks that the announcement of a strategic partnerships results in '[...] upgrading their status in mutual relations and beyond'. Particularly, he makes reference to '[...] status as global players' for '[...] large emerging powers such as China and India' (Grevi 2012: 12). However, he does not further explain how this actually works. Nevertheless, Grevi's assessment is matched by arguments made by practitioners. For example, a European official compared the strategic partnership-status with a 'frequent traveler status' (European official B-1 2010). Basically, having a strategic partnership with the EU signifies the recognition of a country's importance (European official B-9 2010). It is a political message to have a strategic partnership with the EU. This is why there have been several countries requesting to have a strategic partnership (European official B-2 2010). One European official contemplated that 'the EU has too many strategic partners and, as a result, cannot treat the individual countries as they should be treated' (European official B-4 2010).

Indeed, there are authors claiming that the EU lacks '[...] recognition as a political actor [...]' (de Vasconcelos 2008: 17). Thus, '[...] on a world scale it is striving to obtain recognition as a "de facto super state" on which the classic attributes of power would be conferred' (Laïdi 2008: 2). Strategic partnerships, thereby, are seen as '[...] a key test for the Union as an international actor' (Grevi 2008: 154) and 'fully-fledged global actor' (Grevi 2011: 20) as well as help to position the EU '[...] on the map as a key global player [...]' (Grevi 2012: 12; 13) and to improve '[...] visibility as a pivotal political actor on the global stage' (Chevallier 2009: 2). They are means to augment the EU's global

profile (Allen 2013: 574). Interestingly, Grevi notes (2012: 12, 13) that strategic partnerships also carry an element of '[...] self-assertion of the EU as a partner, an actor or a pole in a challenging international system' (2012: 12). This matches one of my arguments made elsewhere that

'Being the strategic partners for other international (state) actors, especially for newly important and so called 'emerging' partners, signifies that the EU is indeed perceived as an international (and possibly global) actor and, in any case, an interesting partner' (Hess 2013: 199).

Against the background of the EU financial crisis, Grevi argues that the EU is actually in the position of requesting 'political recognition' (Grevi 2012: 14) vis-à-vis rising powers (Grevi 2012: 14). However, the present study has shown that it is a very special kind of recognition the EU has to offer, which may not be affected so easily even in the wake of a substantial financial and economic crisis. Renard mentions (2011: III) that the EU has a '[...] vital long-term strategic interest: secure a relevant status in the coming multipolar environment dominated by great powers'.

Strategic partnerships are closely linked to status: there is widely mentioning of the status of being a strategic partner of the EU (Gratius 2012: 11). Renard mentions that '[...] the strategic partnership status has little impact on the structural arrangements of the relationship and on the EU institutional set-up' (Renard 2013b: 308). Yet the study and the conceptual model of strategic partnership developed here indicate that it is indeed a different kind of status, which matters particularly to the rising powers but to the EU as well. Often, authors indicate that by establishing a strategic partnership with a country, '[...] the EU sends an important, positive and inclusive message [...]' (Grevi 2008: 158). I have termed this as a 'signaling function' (Hess 2009). The selection as one of the EU's strategic partner represents '[...] the recognition of their regional and international power status by so-called established powers' (Hess 2012: 5). Recognition by an *extra-regional* and *traditional/established* actor is quite interesting for an emerging regional power regarding their regional and international power profiles as well as the diversification of foreign relations (Hess 2012: 5). Being "new" global players', rising powers are seen as having not only gained in 'economic clout', but also as having '[...] rapidly acquired political status [...]' (all Grevi 2008: 159). Furthermore, emerging powers are associated with "revisionist" attitudes' (Grevi 2008: 160). There is a sense that once they have somewhat reached a certain 'level' of wealth (Grevi 2008: 160), they will turn into '[...] *status quo*-oriented powers [sic], although the *status quo* [sic] will need to be

adjusted to include them in the first place' (Grevi 2008: 160). This statement exemplifies that it is not enough for emerging powers to gain in economic clout or wealth but that they also seek and need other forms of reaching a certain level of status. Strategic partnerships with the EU, which are exclusive due to limited in numbers, are like a 'status symbol' (Hess 2013: 199) in this respect.

Analysis has highlighted that Brazil, India and South Africa are all looking for international recognition and status, whereby the latter cuts across general international status, major power status and global status. South Africa is seen as to aspire to more status but less so in terms of a great power, which is different to Brazil and India. One could hypothesise that status recognition in the South African case is more of status confirmation in terms of being an important international and regional player (emerging regional power) rather than in the process of becoming a major power. Furthermore, South Africa is the country, which is the most hesitant in openly displaying this status vis-à-vis its regional neighbours in comparison to Brazil or India. Moreover, the EU is also looking for recognition and status but more in terms of being viewed as an international and political actor and international political partner. As a result, all agents pursue status recognition strategies in terms of confirming their emerging regional power status and, in the cases of Brazil and India, a status recognition of their way to major power status. Hence, strategic partnerships are foreign policy tools of status recognition.

Basically, strategic partnerships can be proposed by either of the strategic partners (European official B-8 2010). Yet from the perspective of status recognition, it plays a major role, who proposed the strategic partnerships as some of the remarks by interviewees have demonstrated.

#### ***7.4.1.2 Social Relationship and Bases of Power***

Strategic partnerships appear to be, in fact, close to social relationships and more than social interaction. Nadkarni (2010: 48) contrasts them to '[...] mere ad hoc bilateral relationships that ensue as a result of normal diplomatic intercourse between states'. Sometimes, there is an implicit sense of a relationship (Gratius 2012: 7). But this sense is not conceptualised but remains at a symbolical or metaphorical level (Gratius 2012: 7). But as a European diplomat stressed 'strategic partnerships are also about getting to know each other. They are about being partners rather than being strategic' (European diplomat P-1 2010). In this context, an expert hinted at the fact that some strategic partnerships are more strategic than others (Expert Bz-4 2012). Furthermore, another

European diplomat argued in favour of ending the rotating EU-presidencies, whereby rotating was considered to be 'mad', by making the following remark: 'you need continuity in relationships' (both European diplomat B-1 2010). Furthermore, the status of being the EU's strategic partner does not automatically imply a friendship: 'some strategic partners are allies; others are friends or even enemies' (European official B-3 2010). Similarly, European official B-11 argued that strategic partnerships may have the 'potential of good as well as bad relations' (2010). The source compared a strategic partnership with an 'interest-driven marriage': if there is the possibility of love, then it's good; if no love, that's also fine' (European official B-11 2010). Strikingly, European diplomat I-1 (2010) even argued that a strategic partnership is the attempt to go beyond a normal friendship in order to reap more benefits'.

The case studies highlight that strategic partnership are not only about status but also a process. They are a long-term process, whereby partners interact closely. This differentiates strategic partnership from other social interaction in the international society of states. Furthermore, viewing a strategic partnership as a process and social relationship has revealed that they are about getting to know each other and enhance mutual understanding of strategic partners. This fact also hints at socialisation processes, which may come into play in this process.

### **Int. society; social groups ('clubs'); social status**

There is a sense in the literature that the end of the bipolar international system-structure has led to a system, which includes several loci of established and emerging powers (Allen 2013: 576). Moreover, there are, in fact, hints at various 'clubs' within the international system such as 'IBSA', 'BRICS' or the 'West' (Helly 2012: 3, 4). The EU's strategic partners are sometimes described as a 'club' (Lazarou 2011: 7; Allen 2013: 574). In this context, one European official argued that the BRICs have a 'common ground in the sense that Western Powers don't give them credit with respect to the UN-Security Council and in multilateral fora' (European official B-3 2010). For example, the BRICs<sup>356</sup> were not satisfied with the G8+5-format and the G20 were considered to be 'revolutionary' (European official B-3 2010) .

Apart from the case study on the EU-India strategic partnerships, the mentioning of social groups and clubs was strongly pronounced in the analysis. Interestingly, the

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<sup>356</sup> In a side note and from a European perspective, the BRICS-alliance was considered to be more important than the IBSA-alliance: IBSA stands only at the beginning (European official B-3 2010) and is 'embryonic' (European official B-4 2010).

three emerging regional powers are viewed as having features of both the developed and developing world. Furthermore, the membership of various groups, such as being halfway in the group of developed countries; at the same time developing but also rising powers from the Global South, informs the foreign policy and international positioning of Brazil and South Africa to a high degree. It is this bridge-building role, which is also of interest to the EU and its strategic partnership with these two players. The EU would like to make usage of their bridge-building role with respect to multilateral fora.

Depicting the structure of this study not only as an international system but also as an international society has the benefit of understanding the relevance of social groups, social group membership and social status.

Moreover, viewing countries only in terms of a rank within international hierarchy does not suffice for understanding the significance of being the EU's strategic partner. The prestige of a strategic partnership with the EU lies not only in their exclusivity and limited number but also in the fact that the EU is a traditional and established power (Hess 2013: 199; Mexican diplomat B-1 2010). Moreover, the EU's strategic partners are depicted as countries, which are rising in power and influence. Being a member of this specific social group of rising and influential powers of 'strategic partners' carries political weight. This political weight of being the EU's strategic partner can be used by a country for its foreign policy profile and its standing<sup>357</sup>. It is interesting to see how this more or less deliberate creation of a club of strategic partners by the EU has turned into something, which is aspired by rising countries such as Brazil. I will revisit this in Ch. 7.4.1.3 on the EU's labelling and branding strategy.

### **Expert power**

With regard to the EU's expert power, Brazil, India or South Africa would need to be persuaded: persuasion via expert power, however, does not work via logical arguments (being informational power). Instead, persuasion via expert power functions via the strategic partners' opinion that the EU has superior expertise and is, thus, believable. There was only one indication of – yet non-existent – expert power. As European official B-6 put it, 'especially the EU-member states do not understand that the EU is not a teacher and the strategic partners are not the pupils. Foreign Policy and international relations are about interests and values – the EU is not an NGO [...]' (2010).

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<sup>357</sup> For example, even though the Mexican diplomat B-1 (2010) stated that BRICs were 'only an acronym', it is nevertheless 'frustrating' for Mexico not to be viewed as that kind of an emerging country.

### **Positive or negative incentives (reward or coercive power)**

Crucially, there is no surveillance or conditionality coming along with the establishment of strategic partnerships. For example, Renard/Grevi (2012: 9) note that strategic partnerships '[...] occur with little follow-up or monitoring [...]'. Furthermore, analysis has not identified any coercive power associated with the strategic partnerships.

Yet when it comes to reward power, Renard mentions on the sidelines that via the strategic partnerships, '[...] the EU **granted** [...its partners; NH] them a new kind of **reward** to maintain a comprehensive framework for the relationship and ensure their continued commitment' (Renard 2011: 22; emphasis added by NH). However, he does not further pick up on this argument (Renard 2013b: 305) and does not clarify what kind of reward this is. His statement matches with Islam's argument, who (somewhat deprecatingly) says that the strategic partnership-'[...] agreements are often seen as little more than prestigious and aspirational documents or 'prizes' awarded by the EU to countries in recognition of their geopolitical status and clout' (Islam 2009: 4).

Indeed, European diplomat B-5 (2010) confirmed the 'significance' of being the EU's strategic partner. The strategic partnerships and the summits held send a 'political message', which some of the strategic partners of the EU use for internal reasons (European official B-8 2010)<sup>358</sup>.

I have stated elsewhere that the status of being the EU's strategic partner is 'convenient' (Hess 2012: 5) because it is the EU being considered as the 'official driving force' (Hess 2012: 5) in terms of offering the status to the emerging regional powers (Hess 2012: 5).

All three case studies imply that becoming the EU's strategic partner and being part of the club of the EU's strategic partners resembles a reward to the respective countries. Furthermore, the case study on India implies that a strategic partnership may also be used as an incentive to vitalize relations. Becoming the EU's strategic partner signifies being an important country and the bilateral strategic partners after 2003 are also viewed as rising powers.

The EU-South Africa case study has particularly highlighted the relevance of the proposer of a strategic partnership. As the EU has proposed the strategic partnership in all three cases, the EU is the primary sender of the strategic partnership. The EU can be

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<sup>358</sup> Interestingly, a Mexican diplomat B-1 (2010) explained that Mexico has an interest in being the EU's strategic partner as it is prestigious and signifies an 'upgrade of the political agenda'.

viewed as having reward power by rewarding the countries both recognition and status. This recognition and status reflects the strategic partners (rising) importance at the regional and international levels. To this end, the EU has socially constructed social category of its own in terms of a distinctive group of 'the EU's strategic partners'. Being part of this social club is a social status of its own being symbolic but prestigious as well as fruitfully usable for the countries foreign policy positioning and social positioning in terms of social status.

Thereby, Brazil, India and South Africa also confer status to the EU in terms of recognizing its status of being an international actor and international partner. As a result, the three countries also have reward power.

It shows that with respect to these three cases, the dimensions of reward power including positive incentives, power demonstration (prestige) and status recognition strategy are interlinked.

### **Referent power**

All three cases have suggested that even though the EU may increasingly be seen as an international political actor in addition to its member states, the EU does not have referent power vis-à-vis Brazil, India and South Africa. The case study of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership even implied that it is South Africa having referent power, which may be of interest to the EU. The latter argument could be linked up to the EU's status recognition strategy: indeed, from this perspective, the strategic partnerships can be viewed as a European attempt to increase its attractiveness as a partner. Yet, overall, dimensions of referent power were almost non-existent and thus negligible for the present study.

### **Legitimate power**

The dimension of legitimate power in terms of legitimate position power and legitimate authority was only mentioned in the EU-South Africa case study. There, South Africa is viewed by the EU have legitimate power in terms of position power regarding its (emerging) regional power standing. However, due to regional and continental opposition to a South African leadership role, South Africa has more of legitimate power position potential and legitimate authority potential. This case study has hinted at the fact that a country would need outsiders, such as extra-regional actors or African neighbours, or social group peers, such as BRICS-partners, in order to achieve certain international

legitimacy with respect to a certain position within the international or regional hierarchy. Thereby, symbols are seen as helpful in this respect.

Even though the dimension of legitimate power is not mentioned in the cases on Brazil and India, my hunch is that they follow similar lines as in the South African case. Against the background, Brazil and India would also have legitimate power position (potential) and legitimate authority (potential) by being emerging regional powers. However, as the South African case suggests, Brazil and India may actually also be working against European attempts of using their legitimate power.

However, in the context of strategic partnerships, it is interestingly to read that the EU '[...] remains a very attractive partner, but is not perceived as commanding much authority when it comes to power relations' (Grevi 2008: 155). Yet, this argument has to be leveled against the background of the study's analytical model: legitimate authority appears to be close to legitimacy position power. The EU being an established/traditional power holds legitimate position power regarding the international hierarchy and society of states. Thus, it seems that the EU indeed has a certain authority in terms of *legitimate position power*, of which it can make usage as *reward power* in *status-recognising* emerging regional powers by formalising strategic partnerships with them. This argument highlights again how the analytical model's dimension may coalesce. It contributes to an understanding of why and how the EU is actually able to grant emerging regional power this kind of reward of status recognition. The actor's social status and social group membership – being an established/traditional and extra-regional power – indeed plays a role in the context of status recognition. Furthermore, it explains the significance of the actor who initially proposes the strategic partnership as the South African case study has implied. If the strategic partnerships are proposed by emerging regional powers, they could not make usage of the EU's legitimate position power with regard to being an established power. A strategic partnership would no longer be a strong reward and it loses in prestige and its significance in the context of demonstrating power.

This again highlights that a power status is not the only factor in the equation of international politics. Instead, the social positioning of actors plays a role as well.

#### **7.4.1.3 The EU's strategy of labelling and branding**

The analysis of cases has indeed contributed to additional inductive findings: the EU's labelling of strategic partners. The analysis of case studies has revealed that interviewees mentioned that Brazil and South Africa have been labeled as the EU's

strategic partners. Hence, the concept of a 'label' was also mentioned by practitioners (e.g., European official B-5 2010; European official B-10 2010). For example, a European diplomat did indicate that the EU's strategic partnerships were indeed an attempt to create a 'label' (European diplomat P-1 2010). The 'label' would serve to highlight the 'importance of relations with key countries' (European official B-2 2010). Interestingly, authors often use the term 'brand' or 'label' when describing the strategic partnerships (Grevi 2008: 158; Grevi 2012: 10; Renard 2011: 35; Reiterer 2013: 75). Some scholars claim that this branding represents '[...] an important, positive and inclusive message [...]' (Grevi 2008: 158) by the EU. Others, by contrast, view the employment of the label as a 'rhetorical façade' (Renard 2011: 35).

The labelling appears to be socially constructed to a certain extent. Firstly, one expert argued that it may be 'easy to label strategic partners' (Expert Bz-4 2012). Secondly, building a club of strategic partnerships is clearly linked to the attempt of creating a label (European diplomat P-1 2010). As European diplomat P-1 pointed out as an example, once India realized that it had been put into one group with the US, Canada, Japan, China and Russia, it contributed to the India satisfaction. The group-building is, thus, part of the label's strength (European diplomat P-1 2010). Thirdly, a European official laughed and said ironically that 'if there were 25 strategic partners in the future, we [the EU; NH] would, if need be, come up with a new label' (European official B-2 2010). Yet at the same time, the same European official denounced the idea that strategic partnerships were only rhetoric: 'we do want more than a photo' (European official B-2 2010). 'The label is useful because it means special engagement to converge on issues on a regional and global level' (European official B-2 2010). In addition, European diplomat B-5 (2010) noted the 'risk of inflation' correlating with the increase or high number of the EU's strategic partnerships (European diplomat B-6 2010).

Labelling and, thereby, creating a brand is indeed socially constructed. If we again turn to literature on international business and marketing, we can learn from companies' reasoning in creating a label. Labelling is linked to numerous functions of communication (Baack et al. 2013: 236). It is supposed to help the consumer or customer to know the characteristics of a product before buying it (Baack et al. 2013: 236). As Baack et al. have put it, the process of creating a label constitutes '[...] an important marketing process [...]'. Furthermore, in developing a product and an associated brand, global marketing strategies are highly relevant for managers (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 263). Developing a global brand is the ultimate outcome of a 'global positioning strategy' (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 263). Brands are highly symbolic in terms of

picturing not only the characteristics but also the quality of a product. Global brands need or serve to indicate these characteristics and qualities on a global scale (Cavusgil et al. 2013: 263). Brands may also represent 'status symbols worldwide' (Cavusgil et al. 2013). Applied to the EU, the EU as a manager has developed a global brand indicating a prestigious 'product', namely the EU's strategic partnerships. They are prestigious as they indicate a social status by being a member of this socially constructed club of strategic partners, which are all important countries and rising powers. It is an exclusive club of limited numbers and the entry to this club is determined by the EU. It signifies relations at the highest political level and is considered to be an upgrade. Being the EU's strategic partner can be compared to a status symbol, which is understood worldwide. To conclude, I argue that the EU has followed a strategy of labelling and branding with respect to its strategic partnerships. By labelling countries as strategic partners, the EU is constructing a global brand. This global brand represents an exclusive club of countries comprising states, which are important on a regional and global scale. Thereby, the EU is able to confer recognition and status to these countries, which is as relevant as a symbolic, yet prestigious status symbol. This status symbol is geared towards retrieving status recognition from its strategic partners in terms of being an attractive, international political actor and partner. Essentially, the EU can offer a reward to these countries and attempts to offer a positive incentive. Thereby, it builds on its legitimate power in terms of legitimate position power and legitimate authority as an established, external power. Furthermore, the EU aims to not only engage the emerging regional powers and manage their rise but to also make use of their legitimate power (potential). The respective strategic partners can use this status recognition and status symbol for demonstrating power and, more generally, in their strive to increase power and (social) status. To sum up, the EU's strategic partnerships are an EU strategy of labelling and branding.

Overall it shows that the dimensions of demonstrating power and prestige; status recognition; social groups and social status; reward power and positive incentive as well as legitimate power including legitimate position power and legitimate authority are interconnected. I believe that it is indeed the interlinkage of these dimensions, which come into play in the EU's labelling and branding strategy of its strategic partnerships.

## 7.4.2 Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to this subchapter, this subchapter serves to identify common patterns among the three case studies analysed on the basis of a structured, focused comparison informed by the sensitising, analytical model. As a result, the strategic partnerships underlying level (Goertz' secondary level) indeed display a high degree of similarity and common patterns among the cases. As assumed by the author, it is indeed the secondary level, where the commonalities and similar rationale of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships of Brazil, India and South Africa lie. These common patterns, which reflect the common inductive findings from the three cases, will be fused into the analytical model (see Fig. 4) as the abductive research approach implies. I will not summarise the common patterns identified before I will present the ultimate conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa (Figure 5).

Overall, the results from the case studies deem the study's assumptions about structure and agency justifiable. There were hints at the presumed characteristics of the international system-structure in terms of interdependence, systemic change, power shifts, (relatively) rising powers, declining powers, the international power hierarchy and the significance of world regions and the regional level. Furthermore, the assumed logic of the situation in terms of the need or even will) to cooperate with several actors in order to (be able to) shape international politics can also be read from the analyses of cases. However, the notion of the EU as an established power was not particularly strong pronounced in the analysis. This notion rather features in secondary sources. Yet, Brazil, India and South Africa are widely viewed as emerging regional powers in South/Latin America, South Asia and Southern Africa and (to a certain degree) Africa, respectively. In further interpreting the findings, South Africa was seen to be a smaller power in comparison to Brazil and India. Furthermore, one can argue that India is most detached in terms of linking its power status and foreign policy to the region. South Africa is most attached in terms of linking its power status and foreign policy to the region. Brazil, however, could be seen as being in the process of increasingly detaching its power status and foreign policy to the region.

When it comes to the social interaction of agents, there is a strong sense of understanding strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Strategic alliances are based on self-interest. The self-interest of being able to shape international politics incentivises policy coordination

among the strategic partners. Hence, common interests (let alone, common values) are not the main driving force of strategic partnerships in the first place. In order to coordinate policies, strategic partners try to cooperate and, ideally, adapt policies at several political levels and in numerous policy areas. This cooperation holds the prospect of a win-win-situation and mutual benefits. Nevertheless, strategic partners are still interested in power and status. Even though they may not directly compete for power, the power shifts within the international hierarchy informs a competitive behaviour of agents. The EU establishes strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa because they are emerging regional powers. Thereby, it tries to manage their rise and engage them at bilateral, regional and international (global) cooperation levels. It reflects the EU's power management and engagement strategy, which ideally results in policy adaptation (possibly via socialisation effects). This particular strategy is also incentivized by other players wooing for emerging regional powers' attention, cooperation and partnership. Thus strategic partnerships are not only related to competition for power and status but also competition for partnership (see logic of situation). What is more, analysis has shown that emerging regional power may also try to follow an engagement strategy in terms of engaging the EU. This is where the analytical model will be adapted (see Fig. 5). The EU would wish for all three emerging regional powers to serve as interlocutors, spokespersons, influence channels and bridge-builders when it comes to their respective regions. However, all three emerging regional powers try to avoid of doing so (publicly or officially). Bilateral and biregional strategic partnerships or relations were predominantly seen as complementary even though there is a sense that the bilateral strategic partnerships are deemed as more relevant. Biregional strategic partnerships keep, however, their relevance in terms of the EU's 'export' of its regional project. The EU's region hardly played any role. It was only sometimes mentioned in the context of the EU's Treaty of Lisbon or the European economic and financial crisis. Socialisation processes could not be traced at a high range.

The EU's strategic partnerships are strongly linked to strategies of either emerging regional powers' increasing power (status) or of the EU's keeping power (status). All strategic partners follow a power demonstration strategy by establishing a strategic partnership, which is linked to political prestige.

Moreover, all strategic partners adhere to a strategy of status recognition in establishing a strategic partnership. Whereas Brazil and India can use the strategic partnership with respect to confirming their status as emerging regional power and somewhat helping to project their striving for major and global power status, this was not exactly the case with South Africa. In the case of South Africa, the strategic partnership with the EU appears to be a confirmation of its emerging regional power status. Figure 4

will be adapted in this respect (see Fig. 5). However, analysis has shown that the EU is indeed following a status recognition strategy in terms of being acknowledged as an international political actor and attractive partner.

I believe that the conjuncture of the above arguments overall reflect agents' strategy of cooperating while competing against the background of the assumed logic of situation and the characteristics of the international system-structure.

Moreover, the case studies have demonstrated that the EU's strategic partnerships are more than mere social interaction taking place somewhat automatically within the international society. Strategic partnerships have been related to friendship, yet I would stick to casting them as social relationships because friendships are too normative from my point of view. As social relationships, strategic partnerships are geared towards the long-term as well as mutual understanding and possibly socialisation among the partners. Moreover, strategic partnerships should not only be understood in terms of (power) status but also in terms of a (social) process. The morphogenetic approach and the dual view of agency and structure have allowed viewing power and status from a diagonal perspective in terms of being not only structural but also as socially positioned. Thus, power status is not only structurally conditioned but socially positioned and can be socially informed (and possibly modified). Put differently, power status is not only about the international power hierarchy but also about the international society of states made of social groups with social group access and social actors with a social status and social group memberships. The strategic partners are not only materially based agents but also social actors. As social actors, they are socially positioned in terms of social status, which informs and is informed by their membership of social groups and social clubs. This social status and social group membership strongly impacts on the foreign policies of the emerging strategic partners, particularly in the Brazilian and South African cases and their (attempted) bridge-building roles. The EU's strategic partners are a socially constructed, social group of its own, whereby membership to that group is decided upon by the EU. Hence, the club is limited in numbers and exclusive. By becoming the EU's strategic partner, the EU is able to label countries and create a global brand signifying a particular social status. This social status hints at important as well as emerging regional powers possibly on their way to becoming major powers. It represents somewhat a prestigious status symbol linked to status recognition and power demonstration strategies. Drawing on its legitimate power as an established, external power, the EU can reward Brazil, India and South Africa by conferring social status and recognition to them. Furthermore, the EU tries to vitalize relations by offering the strategic partnership as a positive incentive. Indirectly, by agreeing to enter into this strategic partnership with the EU, the three emerging regional

powers effectively reward the EU with status and recognition. Hence, all agents possess reward power. Moreover, the EU tries to draw on Brazil's, India's, and South Africa's believed legitimate power in terms of their assumed legitimate position power and legitimate authority as emerging regional powers. However, as the analyses of case studies have shown, Brazil's, India's and South Africa's legitimate power is contested and, thus, more of a potential legitimate position power and potential legitimate authority.

However, the three case studies have not displayed any or considerable instances of informational power, coercive power including negative incentives, expert power or referent power. Hence, they will be removed and will not feature in the conceptual model (see Fig. 5).

Yet, Chapter 7 has revealed the newly found EU-strategy of labelling and branding, which cuts across and fruitfully interlinks various dimensions of the analytical model. Thereby, these additional inductive findings, which was not foreseen in the analytical model, has contributed to an even better understanding of the EU's legitimate power and the exact functioning of the EU's strategic partnerships as a reward for emerging regional powers. Only being member of the social group of established powers enables the EU to reward the emerging regional powers. Hence, it is not so much its structural power-position but its social power position, social status and social group membership allowing for rewarding status and recognition. Linked to this, inductive findings have implied why the initial proposer of the strategic partnerships is indeed of high relevance to the rewarding nature of being the EU's strategic partner (see Ch. 7.4.1.3).

All summarized findings will be now fused into Figure 4. Thereby, the study will finally arrive at the abductively-derived conceptual model of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa.

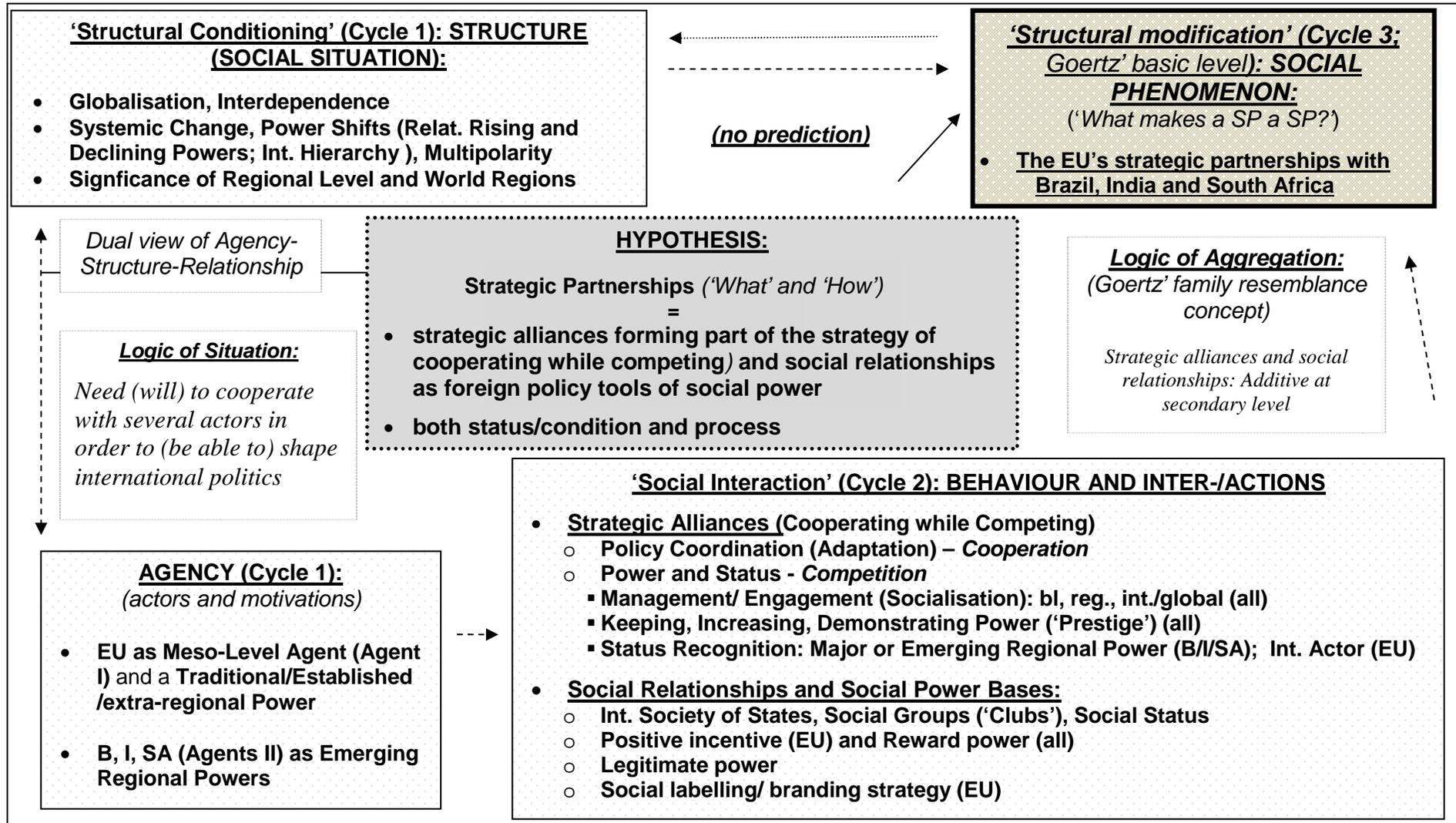
## 7.5 The EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa

In brief, the study has demonstrated that the three cases of the EU's strategic partnerships – EU-Brazil; EU-India and EU-South Africa – can be *understood* as strategic alliances and social relationships between an established/traditional (external) actor and emerging regional powers. Based on self-interest, the strategic alliances form part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Strategic partnerships are both status/condition and a process. The process may also entail socialisation efforts by the partners in order to alleviate mutual understanding and, ultimately, policy adaptation. The strategic partners try to coordinate and ideally adapt their policies in various issue areas in order to (be able to) shape international politics. At the same time, the strategic partners compete for power and status. All agents try to engage their strategic partners at the bilateral, regional and international (global) levels, whereby the EU also tries to manage the rise of emerging regional powers. Furthermore, whereas Brazil, India and South Africa try to increase power, the EU attempts to maintain power. Furthermore, their respective strategic partnerships are linked to demonstrating power in the context of prestige. Moreover, strategic partnerships imply a status recognition strategy by all agents. The strategic partners have the power to reward status and recognition. The structurally-grounded and socially-positioned power statuses of the study's agents inform their social status and social group membership within the international society of states. Drawing on this social status and social group membership, the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa possess reward power and legitimate power (potential) in terms of legitimate position power and legitimate authority. In this context, the EU builds on this legitimate power in socially constructing a social group of strategic partners. Thus, the EU follows a strategy of (social) labelling and branding.

To conclude, I believe it makes sense to conceive of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and as social relationships, which are foreign policy tools of social power, particularly reward power (including positive incentives) and legitimate power (legitimate position power and legitimate authority).



Figure 5: Conceptual Model: The EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India, South Africa



## **8. Conclusion and Outlook**

In the conclusion and outlook to this dissertation, I will revisit the research findings in light of a broader perspective. Moreover, I will discuss potential future research areas deduced from or linked to the study's findings. The final subchapter will also indicate possible implications for practitioners dealing with the EU's strategic partnerships both from a European as well as from an emerging regional power's perspective.

### **8.1 Research findings, the study's assets and future research**

The present project originated from the research puzzle and research gap(s) identified in terms of understanding the underlying nature of the strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa (respectively and collectively) as well as the underlying powers of and strategies by the respective strategic partners used in their interaction.

In the effort of holistically conceptualising these three strategic partnerships following an exploratory and abductive research perspective, the study's main argument reads as follows: the strategic partnerships between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa are strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing and as social relationships, which are foreign policy tools of social power, particularly reward power (including positive incentives) and legitimate power (legitimate position power and legitimate authority).

Thus, I believe that the strategic partnership here have three major dimensions, which are indeed interrelated. First, there are strategic alliances which form part of the strategy of cooperating while competing. Secondly, strategic partnerships are social relationships, which are foreign policy tools of social power. And thirdly, strategic partnerships are a status (in the sense of a state description/condition) and a process at the same time. Put differently, strategic partnerships are both ends (power and status) and means to an end (social relationship and social power in terms of socialisation and influence).

In the following, I will draw some further conclusions, which build on the study's results but go beyond the present project's research goals and questions.

The study's conceptual model of these three strategic partnerships of the EU is, of course, not automatically generalisable to the rest of the EU's bilateral strategic

partnerships after 2003. This is due to the fact that the cross-case-comparative inductive results having been fused into the conceptual model are only generalisable to the three cases concerned (Figure 5). However, it may prove fruitful to use the analytical model (Figure 4), which is built on deductive inferences, and apply it to the other cases of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships after 2003 with rising powers, such as China, Mexico or South Korea. It may possibly be the case that similar results can be found as to the strategies and powers employed within these strategic partnerships. Ideally, research would find that all of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships established after 2003 follow a similar rationale. On the other hand, additional case studies may serve to highlight the dimensions of those social power bases, which featured low in this analysis. A product of the further application of the study's analytical and conceptual model may be a typology of the EU's strategic partnerships. However, this is for future research to show.

In addition, the analytical model could be used for studying strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools, in general. As mentioned before in the introduction and state of the art of this introduction, strategic partnerships are not only increasingly used by the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa but by other international actors as well. The analytical model could be adapted in terms of changing, if necessary, the power status of the actors concerned. Yet, the theoretical building block of a social relationship (Cycle 2; see Figure 4) could be probably used without having to change it too drastically. Hence, the analytical model and conceptual model could be both used for future research on the EU's strategic partnerships and strategic partnerships as foreign policy tools in international relations. This could be of benefit to both IR and European Studies.

Considering the results along the lines of the theoretical and empirical building blocks, the results from this project indicate further potentially interesting research topics and questions.

In a prelude, it may be stated that the usage of Archer's morphogenetic approach in this project has not only helped to *understand* the three strategic partnerships but has also demonstrated a mode of how research in IR and Foreign Policy Analysis may include a fruitful, dual view of the agency-structure relationship. Moreover, this study contributes to a growing research perspective within the social sciences and political science, which is geared towards the integration of intercultural and interdisciplinary perspectives in order to contribute to innovative results (Pickel et al. 2009: 11). By the study's analytic eclectic approach, which accommodates insight from international business and sociology, it has fruitfully contributed to new knowledge on strategic partnerships in international politics. Furthermore, the project has followed an abductive

research strategy, which is genuinely able to generate 'new knowledge' (Strübing 2008: 46, 45-46) again being the research goal of this project. Moreover, results are thereby theoretically-rich but empirically embedded. Additionally, by building on vast data material from both sides of the strategic partnership-coin including views from countries located in different world regional contexts, this research project transcends a (possibly) one-sided perspective on the EU's strategic partnerships. These are the overarching, major benefits of the present study as a whole as well as its research focus and approach.

In addition, I will now address more specific assets of the study's results. First of all, this project has investigated strategic partnerships, which are not only strategic partnership between the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa: they are also strategic partnerships between an established/traditional extra-regional power and emerging regional powers. Hence, strategic partnerships are foreign policy instruments used for and in the interaction of an established/traditional extra-regional power and emerging regional powers. Thus, the research results on this interaction at bilateral, regional and international (global) levels may be of interest to researchers investigating the interaction, instruments and strategies of powers, which are either seen as relatively rising or relatively declining against the background of systemic change and a presumed more multipolar system-structure. Moreover, the study has contributed to an understanding of how the EU as an international actor pursues its composite foreign policy beyond its own region, its 'neighbourhood' and its biregional relations. It has also indicated the interrelationship of biregional relations and bilateral strategic partnerships. Furthermore, this project adds to knowledge on the EU as a composite foreign policy actor involving both the EU-level and its member states, which interacts with partners in the 'wider' international system. Linked to this, the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships as increasingly important foreign policy tools used in this respect have been made sense of. Thereby, it concerns a time period, which includes the EU's foreign policy behaviour before and after the EU-Treaty has come into place. Moreover, the study's results contribute to an understanding of how regional powers interact with extraregional powers and partners at the regional and international level.

Secondly, and linked to the previous point, the study draws on vast amount of first-hand insights and expert knowledge on all three strategic partnerships concerned. Thereby, it involves various perspectives on the strategic partnerships: the author has not only addressed the European side (including EU-institutions, EU-delegations and EU-member state embassies) but has also equally included perspectives from the Brazilian, Indian and South African sides. Moreover, it has consulted views from various

angles by asking both practitioners as well as scholars, which may also help to bridge audiences when it comes to the study's results. Additionally, it has indicated certain precautions and particularities with respect to expert interviewing in a foreign policy and multi-country context. It should be noted that the case study design including three cases has entailed that the study's author has undertaken four extensive field research stays of several months. I would agree with Gerring (2009: 59) in stating that

'the collection of original data is typically more difficult in cross-case analysis than in [single; NH] case study analysis, involving greater expense, greater difficulties in identifying and coding cases, learning foreign languages, traveling, and so forth'.

It should be added that cross-case studies for a single investigator are also more time-consuming (Yin 1994: 45). Hence, 'whatever can be done for a set of cases can usually be done more easily for a single case' (Gerring 2009: 59). I would add that this 'add-on effort' of a multiple case design is even more distinct with the present study as Gerring (2009: 41) refers to research designs where no in-depth analysis of cases is entailed, namely large-n research. However, I would also agree with his statement at a later stage, that 'sometimes in-depth single-case analysis is more time-consuming than cross-case analysis' (Gerring 2009: 60). Thus, it needs to be highlighted that the present 'holistic multiple-case study' (Yin 1994: 51<sup>359</sup>) has accounted for not only three different (contexts of) cases but also respective detailed analyses thereof.

Thereby, as a researcher, I have been confronted with the challenges of data collection in this respect: data collection within a case study method are challenging for a researcher as they are not 'routinized' (Yin 1994: 55). As Yin points out, '[...] the skills required for collecting case study data are much more demanding than those for experiments and surveys' (Yin 1994: 55). An investigator on field research is confronted with the '[...] the continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected' (Yin 1994: 55)<sup>360</sup>. Furthermore, doing research on foreign policy matter is particularly difficult as the researcher strives to acquire sensitive information: expert interviews in a foreign policy realm are particularly challenging as foreign policy is generally regarded as sensitive. Researchers have to take particularly care of issues concerning confidentiality<sup>361</sup>. In any case, the four field research stays in Brazil, Brussels,

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<sup>359</sup> A holistic multiple case study means that every case is studied holistically (Yin 1994: 51).

<sup>360</sup> For an indication of the criteria of skilled case study researchers and some challenges of field research please see, for example, Yin (1994: 55-59; 66-69).

<sup>361</sup> In this context, it has been mentioned before that recording facilities were at some point not always used in order to either comply with the interviewee's wishes or to avoid the 'distortion' of interviewee's responses to (sensitive) questions.

India and South Africa have provided a vast amount of new data, especially from the countries concerned.

Thirdly, the study originally assumed that the strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing constitute a power management/engagement strategy on the part of the EU. However, analysis of cases indicated that the emerging regional powers also try to engage the EU at various levels. Thus, it appears that engagement as a strategy could be further investigated from the perspective of emerging regional powers. This appears to be even more relevant if one considers that an engagement strategy on the part of an emerging regional power can hardly be understood as a power management strategy as the emerging regional power is viewed as the very power, which is rising and, thus, does not need to manage the rise of another power by forming a strategic partnership with the EU.

Fourthly, the study's models imply that there are socialisation processes possibly at work between strategic partners. It may prove worthwhile to try to trace them more thoroughly in future research by focusing on one particular issue area and try to investigate these socialisation processes. This would necessitate intensive interviewing. In any case, strategic partnerships are both status/condition as well as process.

Fifthly, the insights from international business and management have helped to understand the strategic partnerships and to bridge disciplines. The international business and management literature has introduced the perspective of strategic partnerships as strategic alliances forming part of the strategy of cooperating while competing, which is a major starting point of this study. As I have established before on the strategy of cooperating while competing: strategic partnerships concern both cooperation and competition. Where the interests and goals of strategic partners overlap, they may form an interest coalition (Hess 2012: 3). At the same time, strategic partners are also competing for power, even though this need not be a direct power competition. The international business and management perspective has also helped to conceptualise the EU's strategy of labelling and branding its strategic partners, which has interlinked various dimensions and theoretical building blocks of this project. The sociological perspective has been crucial in opening up to a view of power being not only structurally and materially based but at the same time socially positioned. This view does not only fit very well with the project's dual view of the agency-structure relationship following the morphogenetic approach. It also has helped to cast the international system as an international society of states, which comprises social groups and social actors with social status. I believe that this view has particularly supported to understand the nature and powers of the EU as an established power with its associated reward power and legitimate power with respect to the strategic partnerships.

Sixthly, the sociological perspective has helped to depict the EU's strategic partnerships as social relationships, which are foreign policy tools of social power, has highlighted the significance of social power. Social power is not about making friends. Instead, it has helped to uncover the underlying workings of the social interaction of strategic partners in terms of reward power as well as legitimate position power and legitimate authority. It fruitfully builds on the study's dual view of agency and structure by viewing strategic partners as social actors, which are materially and structurally grounded but also socially positioned. Power and status are, as a result, not only structurally and materially determined but also socially informed. Analysis has shown that the structural and material characteristics of agents are not determining agents' behaviour regarding strategic partnerships as outcome of their social interaction. Their social positioning in terms of social status and social group membership give actors a certain leeway in terms of positioning themselves within an international society of states. Viewing the international system-structure in these terms is a more dynamic and less static view of the international hierarchy of states. The materially-grounded and socially-positioned power statuses of the study's agents inform their social status and social group membership within the international society of states. In this context, it shows how the EU, which is often contested in power terms, can make usage of its social positioning and of social groups via its strategy of social labelling and branding. Similarly, the case study on South Africa has shown the South African creative leeway of indeed punching above its weight via memberships of particular social groups, such as BRICS or the EU's club of strategic partners: even though it is considerably smaller in size and structural power than Brazil and India, the membership in these social groups helps to socially position itself as an important player at the international level. Moreover, viewing strategic partnerships in terms of social power bases has also helped to make further sense of the status recognition strategies by all strategic partners addressed in this study: it is actually the strategic partners' social power enabling them to reward status and recognition. Specifically, it is by drawing on this social status and social group membership that the EU and Brazil, India and South Africa possess reward power and legitimate power (potential) in terms of legitimate position power and legitimate authority. Moreover, the view of social power has also revealed the workings of the EU's strategy of social labelling and branding strategic partners: basically, the EU socially constructs a social group of strategic partners and creates a brand and product of strategic partnership-status of the EU. By drawing on its legitimate power, the EU is able to build reward power.

Seventhly, when considering the inductive results from the three individual case studies and the cross-case comparative perspective, the study's findings hint at the fact

that the three emerging regional powers indeed display different degrees of 'attachment' to their regions and regional power bases. These different degrees of regional attachment inform their foreign policy reasoning, behaviour and leeway. Whereas India seems to be most independent from its region, South Africa appears to be the emerging regional power, which is attached the most considering the three cases at hand. Brazil seems to be fall into the middle in terms of extent of regional attachment. These are indications, which may be deemed further insightful in the context of research on regional powers.

Eightly, against the background of the study's benefits of taking the social status of states into account, future research may be further informed by drawing on insights from social psychology, where knowledge on social identities could be used for opening up new avenues for research.

Overall, the study has developed and interlinked several theoretical building blocks via its conceptualisation of the EU's strategic partnerships with Brazil, India and South Africa. These building blocks and empirical results have further opened the door to questions and perspectives for future research. Given the diversity of research results in terms of opening up to new research topics and perspectives, the present project may be deemed as helpful fundament for generating further theory-building, linked empirical analysis and new knowledge.

In the following, I will turn to critically assessing the limitations of the study's results.

## **8.2 The study's limitations**

Now it is time to fairly assess the quality of the study's results. Every study has its limitations, which I will outline in this subchapter. I will first comment on the potential limitations of the study, which are due to the research design of the study. Secondly, I will make reference to the possible confines of the results linked to its sources and data, particularly with respect to the expert interview sources. Thirdly, I will mention the limitations, which may have occurred because of the chosen mode of analysing and interpreting the data.

### *Research Design*

The present project has used the case study method combined with a cross-case and cross-regional perspective, which is believed to be a very valuable asset of and for the

quality, scope and significance of the study's results. The case study method's advantage generally lies in the fact that it provides in-depth and new knowledge on even very complex matter (Muno 2009: 121; 125; Blatter/Janning/Wagemann 2007: 127). Hence, the three cases here have been analysed in an in-depth manner and have allowed for taking the cases' multi-faceted context into account. Moreover, the comparative perspective in terms of identifying dis-/similarities among the three cases has served to generate results, which are generalisable for the study's three cases. Thereby, this project crosses regional contexts and cases' individual context by having included a cross-case and cross-regional perspective, which may add to the usability of results for other cases. However, and as indicated in the previous chapter, the study's conceptual model only applies to the three cases analysed here. Hence, results are only – as expected – limitedly generalisable. It cannot be stated that they hold true for the entire universe of cases, namely all of the EU's bilateral strategic partnerships (after 2003). Thus, even though the case studies provide for an in-depth investigation of cases, their results are not generalisable to the universe of cases. Nevertheless, and as mentioned before, the study's results may be useful for further analysing other cases of the EU's strategic partnerships.

The project here is dedicated to qualitative research. A successful qualitative research design stands out by its continuous integration of empirical and theoretical steps of the research procedure. The latter can only be ensured by a theory-led qualitative research mode: this entails that the categories and characteristics, which structure the empirical analysis, are actually relevant for the research question (Kelle/Kluge 2010: 40). I believe that my study fulfils this criterion with its abductive proceeding of concept-building by, first, deductive and, secondly, inductive reasoning. Moreover, the study is of exploratory nature. Yin (1994: 29) highlights that exploratory (case) studies need to state precisely the nature, the objectives and the criteria in/for exploration in a first step. I believe that the present study has done exactly so by having established two main guiding questions in the beginning and by developing an analytical mode before analysing the cases.

#### *Sources and Data collection*

The study's self-acquired sources of evidence are both asset and liability. The study benefits from new and differentiated viewpoints on the strategic partnerships due to the intensive and extensive expert interviewing during field research and the involved vast self-acquired data material. Yet, as a researcher engaging in qualitative expert interviewing, one should be 'self-reflexive' about how interview data is collected and

interpreted and possible implications (Helfferich 2009: 157; Yanow 2009: 436)<sup>362</sup>. Crucially, building an analysis and interpretation on expert interviews has its challenges from a methodological perspective. Expert interviews as sources of evidence may be criticised on the basis of 'strong subjectivity', 'problems of comparability' and 'great heterogeneity of research subjects' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 462). Furthermore, the study's results may suffer from the 'low degree of generalisation and standardisation due to the individual approach to the research subject' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 462). Interview protocols may be quite varied due to the open and less-standardised conduct of interviews (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 462). However, potential biases from interview data are believed to be alleviated due to the high number and particularly diverse group of interviewees.

Furthermore, different languages may also be a disadvantage for a study's comparability of results (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 462). How can a researcher allow for the 'equivalence of meaning' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 462), when different languages are involved? I have conducted almost all interviews in English<sup>363</sup> with few exceptions<sup>364</sup>. In the context of the present study, this point is particularly relevant for the case study of EU-Brazil-relations. Even though my own language skills of Brazilian Portuguese are limited, they are sufficient for reading Brazilian primary and secondary sources and, therefore, being aware of the context of Brazilian foreign policy. Additionally, as I research Brazilian foreign policy, my interview partners are not Brazilian civil society in general but Brazilian elites in a sense that they are perfectly capable of interacting in English. Hence, the fact that the interviews have been conducted in English is not a major disadvantage in terms of language bias of research results. To the contrary, the fact that the interviews of all three case studies have been conducted in the same language alleviates the comparability of the data analysis results<sup>365</sup>. In any case, the

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<sup>362</sup> In this context, it may be worth mentioning that I have tried to take myself back as a researcher and as an individual as far as possible (see, e.g., Meuser/Nagel 2009: 475). Indeed, as an interviewer I can accommodate for body language and the like or hold personal opinions or unreflected utterances back (Helfferich 2009: 98-100). Yet some possibly 'interfering' factors (Yanow 2009: 436) may generally not be avoided, such as the fact that I am from a European country and, thus, possibly being considered to be biased in my judgement by interview partners. Nevertheless, I have always tried to demonstrate that I am an impartial and neutral researcher (as far as possible); sometimes by mentioning that I grew up in 'non-European' countries in order to possibly alleviate some pre-judgements or distorting factors within interviewing in the first place. In any case, these self-reflexive considerations have also informed my interpretation of data.

<sup>363</sup> As I have been raised bilingually (German/English), I deem that language bias originating from the difference of meaning(s) on my side may be considered to be limited or has been reasonably accommodated for.

<sup>364</sup> Some interviews have indeed been conducted in German.

<sup>365</sup> In this context, I am particularly thankful to those interview partners, who would have preferred a different interview language but were nonetheless willing to switch to English. Yet overall, all interview protocols are in English (some in German), which makes them more comparable.

study profits from the fact that it has interviewed 'elites' in the sense that profound proficiency of the English language is common standard.

Yet overall, the triangulation of data in this study is indeed presumed to alleviate potential disadvantages from basing analysis and interpretation on this particular source of evidence (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 463).

#### *Data analysis and Interpretation*

Thirdly, the process of analysing the three case studies has shown that it has been difficult at times to apply the deductively-derived analytical model, particularly with respect to primary documents. However, it has yet again highlighted the necessity of expert interviewing, where the dimensions of the analytical model could be applied more accurately, especially with respect to analysing strategic partnerships as social relationships and in terms of social power (bases). Against this background, it seems advisable for future research not to only rely on primary political documents but to engage in expert interviewing in order to look underneath the surface of ultimately sensitive foreign policy.

With respect to analysing and interpreting the data, the study's results presumably benefit from the fact that I do dispose of case- and country-related knowledge in terms of regional and cultural context of the cases as well as country-specific context (possibly being relevant to their foreign policy and relations with the respective strategic partner).

However, qualitative data and its analysis is criticised for being 'unreliable' (Devine 1995: 141). Moreover, data interpretation may deem challenging to assess (Devine 1995: 141). Above all, qualitative data may also be ungeneralisable (Devine 1995: 141). Overall, qualitative methods and data analysis may have weaknesses, particularly regarding '[...] reliability, interpretation and generalisability' (Devine 1995: 152). However, by following the procedures of qualitative content analysis, data has been analysed systematically and in an open-minded fashion; according to rules as well as in a theory-led way (Gläser/Laudel 2009: 204-206; Schreier 2012: 5-6). Thereby, I have elaborated quite extensively on how the interviews were systematically conceptualised, conducted, analysed and interpreted, which makes the qualitative content analysis of interview data (at least theoretically) 'reproducible' (Pickel/Pickel 2009: 463). Hence, I believe that the study's results does display a reasonable degree of reliability as the qualitative data analysis could be replicated by another researcher retrieving same results as I have applied categories consistently (Schreier 2012: 167).

After having critically assessed the study's limitations, I will next turn to the implications for practice drawn from the research results.

### **8.3 Implications for practice**

The study provides results, which may be deemed as insightful to practitioners dealing with strategic partnership.

Firstly, practitioners have often asked if there actually exists a strategic partnership, where joint political action has taken off successfully at a wide range. I believe that the study's results indicate that strategic partnerships are a long-term framework and process, where effective political cooperation may rather be the ideal endpoint of the process. In this context, strategic partnerships are seen as being helpful with intensifying mutual understanding – not only among the strategic partners but also with respect to understanding the views and positions of regional neighbours or of a particular alliance like IBSA or BRICS. Being able to dialogue before a multilateral event takes place has been mentioned by practitioners as one of the benefits of maintaining a strategic partnership, which allows for a regular dialogue at various levels and on diverse policy areas. Moreover, even though the analysis here has found it challenging to trace socialisation processes and, let alone, socialisation effects, I still think that strategic partnerships may serve to socialise strategic partners in terms of attempting social influence. Thereby, policy adaptation and alignment could become easier. To conclude, even though strategic partnerships are very much about status, they are also open-ended processes. Practitioners – and scholars – should protect themselves from exaggerated expectations with regard to strategic partnerships in terms of automatic interest or value convergences among the strategic partners.

Secondly, the study has highlighted that strategic partnerships as strategic alliances have self-interests of the respective partners at their heart. These self-interests against the background of the need or will to be able to shape international politics incentivize the establishment of strategic partnerships. Hence, there need not be common values or interests among the actors in order to allow for establishing a strategic partnership. Thus, I would dismiss the idea of a true or real strategic partnership. Strategic partnerships are pragmatic and should be viewed pragmatically. This holds particularly true as international actors may very likely establish a network of strategic partners involving very different partners because strategic partnerships as foreign policy instruments provide for flexibility in an interdependent world (Hess 2012: 7).

Thirdly, exaggerated expectations should also be avoided with respect to Brazil, India and South Africa as functioning as official spokespersons for their regions. As emerging regional powers, they indeed may be important interlocutors for regional and international (global) cooperation levels but the study has shown that all three countries will refrain from being seen as official regional representatives. Moreover, they will avoid of publicly endorsing the rightfulness of the EU's policies or positions, particularly with respect to their regions. Similarly to companies, which form strategic alliances in international business and remain independent entities, the same applies to strategic partners remaining independent foreign policy actors in international politics.

Fourthly, interview partners have sometimes joked about the possibly infinite number of strategic partners on the part of the EU. However, the brand of the EU's strategic partnerships needs to remain something special and, thus, should be limited in numbers. As I have stated before, 'strategic partnerships need to remain something special and exclusive, limited in number. Inflationary tendencies endanger the very nature and benefit of such a partnership' (Hess 2012: 7). If the brand and product of being the EU's strategic partner loses in attractiveness due to the hypothetical fact that almost every country in the world is the EU's strategic partner, the EU compromises its reward power and its strategy of social labelling and branding countries into the social group of the EU's strategic partners.

Fifthly, as the international system is changing, it remains to be seen how the power status of the strategic partners further develops. If we assumed the EU to lose its established power status due to a further decline and a revision of established international institutions, it may prove to have been a good moment in time of having proposed a strategic partnership to emerging regional powers, while the EU still draws from (being perceived as) being part of the social group of established powers. However, I would assume that social status within the international society of states does not change as quickly as economic numbers. It appears to be quite enduring.

Sixthly, from a European perspective, it may be interesting to know that practitioners and experts (less so the general civil society) in Brazil, India and South Africa do increasingly view the EU as an international actor and partner. However, it needs to be stressed at the same time that the EU is predominantly viewed as an additional or simultaneous actor and partner next to EU-member states. The EU does not substitute Brazilian, Indian or South African interaction with the EU-member states.

Seventhly, I believe that social power – both as power as an end and power as a means – may be particularly relevant to international actors in terms of their capacity and ability to shape international politics, especially in comparison to only relying on structural, material and/or soft power. Social power as an end would imply that an

international actor would seek to be part of several, preferably prestigious and influential social clubs in order to be part of the countries. Thereby, these actors gain in legitimate power and helpful venues to shape international politics aside from seeking a permanent seat at the UN-Security Council, for example. Moreover, using social power as a means and drawing on various bases of social power for socially interacting with other powers may help with being successful at reaching certain policy objectives and with socialising international partners. Strategic partnerships are, thereby, useful means for arriving at social power (both as an end and means) and the ability to effectively shape international politics in terms of 'shaping power' (Hess 2012: 7).

Overall, practitioners (and, of course, scholars) from either Brazil, India, South Africa or the EU and its member states may be interested in the study's results in order to track a wide variety of aspects on the strategic partnerships of the EU – respectively, collectively and/or more generally and of views from Europe, Brazil, India and South Africa. Foreign policy officials and diplomats may be interested in one particular case of the three cases studied here; they may want to particularly know about the cross-case findings; they may want to read into the EU's strategic partnerships more generally; or they may want use the project's findings to apply them to other strategic partnerships in international politics.



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