



Publisher

<http://jssidoi.org/esc/home>



THE EU CONCEPT OF THE “STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP”: IDENTIFYING THE “UNIFYING” CRITERIA FOR THE DIFFERENTIATION OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS*

Eva Cihelková¹, Hung Phuoc Nguyen², Michal Fabuš³, Kristína Čimová⁴

¹ Faculty of Economics and Business, Pan-European University, Tematínska 10, 851 05 Bratislava, Slovak Republic

^{2,3} School of Economics and Management in Public Administration, Furdekova ul. 16, 851 04 Bratislava 5, Slovak Republic

⁴ School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, Bute Gardens, Glasgow, G12 8RT, United Kingdom

E-mails:¹ eva.cihelkova@paneurouni.com ; ² phuochung.nguyen@vsemvs.sk ; ³ michal.fabus@vsemvs.sk ;
1100175@student.gla.ac.uk

Received 13 February 2019; accepted 15 December 2019; published 30 March 2020

Abstract. Strategic partnerships are an essential tool of the common foreign policy of the European Union (EU), which should help fulfil its strategic interest – to be an influential global actor, to share responsibility for global security, and together with partners to respond to the current global challenges. Considering that the EU has not yet defined the nature of the strategic partnership, the first objective of this paper is to identify the instrument from a general perspective and to distinguish it from the default category of cooperation. Linking strategic partnership with legal standards, however, allows for the setting of certain criteria of the concept of strategic partnerships for the EU with other key countries and to determine the variability of possible approaches to the specific concept. To define these criteria and the variety of strategic partnerships set by these criteria, is the second goal of the article. If an adequate alternative approach to the concept of the EU is assigned to each individual strategic partner, which is the third objective of this paper, the results indicate the significant diversity of strategic partners of the EU. Based on obtained results, it can be concluded that in order to clarify the concept of the EU’s strategic partnership, it is necessary to take steps that will lead to a gradual convergence of existing forms of strategic partnerships and their focus on strategic issues.

Keywords: Cooperation; Partnership; Comprehensive Partnership; Strategic Partnership; European Union; EU External Relations; United States; Canada; Japan; Russia; South Korea; China; India; Brazil; Mexico; South Africa

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Cihelková, E., Nguyen, H. P., Fabuš, M. 2020. The EU concept of the “Strategic Partnership”: Identifying the “unifying” criteria for the differentiation of Strategic Partners. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 7(3), 1723-1739. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.7.3\(19\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.7.3(19))

JEL Classifications: F50, F55, F62, P16, P52

* This research was supported by two scientific projects: GAAA no. 9/2018 “Comparative Methodology and its Application by Examining the Specific International Business Environment (Case Study of China)”, funder: Grant Agency Academia Aurea, Czech Republic; and IGA no. 3/2017 “Development of International Business and International Management in the Conditions of Globalization”, funder: IGA of the School of Economics and Management in Public Administration).

1. Introduction

The European Union started to rely on the Lisbon Treaty at the end of 2009 and has adopted the document “Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” (European Commission, 2010) in March 2010. In this document, at the end of 2010, it has set out the objective to “be an effective global actor, ready to share in the responsibility for global security and to take the lead in the definition of joint responses to common challenges. A strong economy and internal cohesion will strengthen the European Union’s ability to project its influence in the world. The EU can draw on its firmly-rooted belief in effective multilateralism, especially the role of the UN, universal values, an open world economy and on its unique range of instruments” (European Council, 2010). One of the most important instruments for pursuing European objectives and interests are the EU’s strategic partnerships with key players in the world. These key partners are the United States, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea, China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. The EU also established strategic partnerships with several regional and international organizations, including Africa and the African Union, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean – the Community of Latin Americas and Caribbean States (CELAC), the United Nations and NATO. However, the subject of interest in this particular article will only be bilateral strategic partnerships with the ten above-mentioned member countries.

The category of “strategic partnership” has different meanings that often depend on the legal basis on which the partnership is built. From the international legal perspective, it is based on non-contractual or contractual relationships between individual national states, groups of countries or groups of countries with individual countries or international organizations. The partnership between the two parties envisages mutual participation in its establishment, as well as responsibility for sustainment and development. Strategic partnerships work only when they are based on mutual interests and benefits and on the premise that all actors have obligations as much as they have rights. The participation of emerging economies in the international system should allow for the benefits as well as for responsibilities to be distributed evenly (European Council, 2010). During the partnership, problems may arise due to potentially prioritising unilateral interests. If bilateral interests are ignored and neglected, the partnership can weaken and, consequently, lead to its termination. Therefore, the general foundation of a functioning partnership is a good two-way communication between partners.

The European Union, neither in its founding treaties nor in other documents, specified the nature of the strategic partnership. From the EU’s practical approach towards strategic partnerships, three elements are highlighted, which emphasize (Pałłasz, 2015: 5): (i) promoting trade and investment, (ii) looking for allies to promote multilateralism and strengthen international cooperation, (iii) burden-sharing in security matters. Due to the incompleteness and inconsistency, the concept of strategic partnership between the EU and other actors is often evaluated as unclear (Sautenet, 2008: 11), imperfect (Pałłasz, 2015: 7), and elusive (Maher, 2016: 959). This condition is diligently rectified by mentioned authors, as they propose an interconnection of strategic partnerships with legal measures, ie. by setting certain criteria, which should lead to a conceptualization of strategic partnerships and to the convergence of partnerships with various partners. The “unifying” criteria when applied to a particular strategic partnership, however, prove how much the involved individual projects are differentiated in real terms.

The aim of this paper is, with regard to the facts mentioned above to:

- Firstly, induce a sort of peculiar general definition of the term “strategic partnership”, including answers to two sub-questions, which concern both, the relationship between cooperation and partnership, as well as the sufficient emphasis based on “strategic issues”.

- Secondly, based on the clarification and description of “unifying” criteria to demonstrate variability of possible approaches to the concept of strategic partnership between the EU, which often leads to doubting the effectiveness of such partnerships.
- The third objective of this article is to compare strategic partners according to set criteria and corresponding variant approach to the concept of EU and, from them, a differentiated position is derived in relation to the European Union, including the perception of multilateralism and, therefore, the approach to global governance as well.

These objectives correspond to the three basic sections of the article dealing with gradual defined strategic partnerships as a category; with conceptualisation of the strategic partnership between the EU, and with differentiation of each of the strategic partners according to set criteria and possible approaches towards them. In conclusion, comments are presented, concerning the further development of this vital instrument of common EU foreign policy.

2. General definitions of “partnership”, “comprehensive partnership” and “(comprehensive) strategic partnership

The term “partnership” was used relatively often in the 90s, when the term was used as part of the phrase “partnership for development” by various international organizations (e.g. the World Bank). It referred to the need to restore balance between the North and the South. (Today, it more often refers to the “global partnership for development” (UN, 2015: 7), which means the creation of an environment conducive to development at the national and global levels.)

The European Union first used the term “partnership”, or more precisely “comprehensive partnership” in its Joint Statement “Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China” in March 1998, detailing that: “this Communication seeks to meet that challenge by building ... comprehensive EU-China partnership” (European Commission, 1998: 4). Antoine Sautenet claims, that “in the law of EU external relations, the term takes on the special meaning of a many-sided notion, tending to become a principle of action, a structuring method in the external relations of the EU” (Sautenet, 2008: 11). Moreover, Sautenet adds that “partnership implies at least three characteristics: adherence by partners to a minimum of common benchmarks, equal relations between the partners and the dynamic process for the construction of a common future” (Sautenet, 2008: 11). In principle, therefore, we can say that the “(comprehensive) partnership” can be considered as the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between equal partners, which is based on mutually recognized values (principles) and includes not only various forms of cooperation in trade, but also in many other economic and non-economic areas and is in many cases institutionalized.

In addition, the term “strategic partnership” first appeared as early as in December 1998. The European Council Conclusions session introduced it in the context of the financial crisis in Russia. EU officials had stated “that they considered Russia to be a strategic partner and were therefore willing to help and support the country to overcome its problems, including through food aid” (Pałasz, 2015: 4). This statement was made even though at the time the EU had already developed intensive relations with the US, Japan and Canada. In 2003 the Commission in its Policy Paper (European Commission, 2003) noted in the case of a comprehensive partnership with China that “this partnership was reaching maturity”. The EU comprehensive strategic partnership has not established explicitly the strategic partnership between China and the EU, but it has implied that “the EU and China share responsibilities in promoting global governance”. In the spirit of this statement, both sides should therefore work together “to safeguard and promote sustainable development, peace and stability” (European Commission, 2003: 6).

In December 2003, the Council of the EU adopted the European Security Strategy document “A secure Europe in a better world” (European Council, 2003). The document highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships with key countries and organizations, but without the specific objectives that should be achieved, or list of countries – strategic partners. The document only presented potential strategic partners, among which are the United States as “the irreplaceable partner” and Russia as “a major factor in our security and prosperity”, but also Japan and Canada. Other countries, groups of countries, and international organizations may become strategic partners that “share our goals and values and are prepared to act in their support” (European Council, 2003: 13-14). With “established partners” (USA, Russia, Japan and Canada), strategic partnerships were instituted at the moment of the adoption of the European Security Strategy. Partnerships with emerging countries (China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, South Korea) were established following the adoption of this strategy.

Because of the above vague identification of (comprehensive) strategic partnerships and strategic partners, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in 2004 tried to bring more clarity into the definition (Wen stresses importance of developing EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership, 2004). According to his opinion, “partnership” is defined as cooperation “on an equal footing, mutually beneficial and win-win” (Men, 2007: 6). “Comprehensive” means “all-dimensional, wide-ranging and multi-layered cooperation” (Men, 2007: 6). “Strategic” implies a “long-term and stable ... EU-China relations which transcend the differences in ideology and social system and are not subjected to the impacts of individual events that occur from time to time.” “The two sides should base themselves on mutual respect and mutual trust, endeavour to expand converging interests and seek common ground on major issues, while shelving differences on minor ones” (Men, 2007: 6).

The definition of this mutual relationship with the EU stems from the statement of the European Commission in 2003, encouraging a move “towards a mature partnership” (European Commission, 2003: 6). This new dimension of the “partnership” already appeared in the “Policy Paper on the EU” (State Council of the PRC, 2003), adopted by the Chinese government in October 2003, which was the first document of this kind for a particular country or territory in China’s foreign relations. The document states “that China-EU relations as a whole have been growing stronger and more mature and are now on track of comprehensive and sound development” (State Council of the PRC, 2003: 2). As the Policy Paper on the EU is based on China’s foreign policy, on the one hand it shares common interests with the EU, but on the other hand, it insists on applying the principles which are rooted in different historical and cultural backgrounds, political systems and levels of economic development. (This mostly relates to the enforcement of the “One China” policy, claiming the consolidation of Taiwan with mainland China, the “One Country, Two Systems” principle and the enforcement of the Basic Law, which reflects in Chinese relations with Hong Kong and Macao; as well as diligent adherence to the principle of respecting China’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in China’s internal affairs, which is a basis for its relationship with Tibet. It also relates to the general concept of a peaceful, non-conflict foreign policy preferring the so-called soft power approach over the hard power approach etc. (Fürst, 2007: 7-24)) As is apparent from policy decisions and various statements by the European Commission to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, the EU accepts this reality, and therefore also the principle mentioned in Wen’s definition. The combination of the terms “partnership” and “strategic” introduces a question of priorities in the implementation of joint actions. This also places emphasis on long-term relationships and their stability, which basically corresponds to the partial approaches of a “strategic partnership” defined by the EU.

Nevertheless, the above definition poses some questions both concerning the relationship between cooperation and strategic partnership, as well as the sufficiency of the emphasis based on “strategic issues”. These questions will be answered on the basis of the above definitions of partnerships outlined by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

Question 1

Wen Jiabao stated that the concept of a complex partnership stipulates an all-dimensional, wide-ranging and multi-layered cooperation. Our first question then posits whether there is a point at which this level of bilateral cooperation becomes strategic partnership (ie changes its qualitative value in all developed areas) or whether strategic partnership can arise out of an achieved level of cooperation in certain areas only, acting as a mere complement to bilateral cooperation.

Resulting from analysis (Cihelková – Nguyen, 2016), cooperation between the EU and China since 1975, when diplomatic relations were established between the two parties, to present day, has intensified and qualitatively changed, due to both internal developments in the EU and China, and external conditions; mainly as a consequence of increasing globalization, global competition and the changed global situation in the world (decay of the bipolar world). Since 1995, the emphasis is placed on long-term relationship and the three-dimensional features (besides trade and economic relations, also deepened political dialogue, including dialogue on human rights). Implementation of this concept led to the 1998 declaration of comprehensive partnership. Compared to previous stages of cooperation, an emphasis started to be focused on the principles of operation and structuring methods in external relations (creating a hierarchy of political and economic dialogues). In 2003, the EU and China have elevated the comprehensive partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

The strategic nature of the partnership is based on:

- The strategic objectives planned by each party (resulted from conceptual documents of the EU and objectives of Chinese five-year plans and the two so-called Centenary goals) and objectives for the future development of bilateral relations, which were specified in two Policy Papers, adopted in 2003 by both parties (State Council of the PRC, 2003); (European Commission, 2003);
- The nature of instruments through which the following cooperation should be implemented – determining the terms of sectoral agreements, issuing joint declarations or creating dialogues in strategic areas (non-proliferation treaty and arms control, cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the use of outer space – navigation system Galileo, dialogue on intellectual property rights, energy, environment, industrial policy, information society, competition, macroeconomic issues, etc.).
- The common solutions for difficult challenges and sharing a responsibility for their solution. These tasks include: strengthening the UN's role in promoting world peace, security and sustainable development; strengthening cooperation on human rights, dealing with transnational challenges in the field of justice and home affairs, terrorism, regional conflicts, failing states and organized crime.

In addition, relations between the EU and China include not only conflict-free collaboration, but also cover the fields of economy, politics, society and culture in which they suggest disagreements and disputes between the two parties (human rights, the removal of the arms embargo, the fulfilment of the conditions and procedures of the WTO etc.). The Policy Papers include concepts such as: “growing responsibilities”, “competition”, that lead to creation of conflicting opinions on the formulation of a strategic partnership itself.

Therefore, to answer the first question, we can argue that the comprehensive strategic partnerships are not simply the next stage (sequences) of cooperation, which has become all-inclusive (except trade involves economic, political and other collaboration), comprehensive (covering many areas) and multi-level (development at the local, international, multinational, global); but it has evolved from such cooperation only in strategic (security, defensive) areas and global governance. In other words, it relates only to the specific issues and problems, in which both sides not only collaborate but also share responsibility. The cooperation concerns the international level. Strategic partnership is therefore a sort of parallel process to develop an all-encompassing, comprehensive and multi-level cooperation. Renard states that sequence cooperation – partnership – strategic partnership “should be reversed, at the least in part”. This is a new quality only in certain (strategic) issues. “It would be sensible to

start from concrete issues and to assess the added value of respective strategic partnership in each case” (Renard, 2012: 3). Additionally, the strategic partnership reaches beyond bilateral cooperation, because it is characterized by two features: triangulation and variable geometry. Triangulation means cooperation in third regions (countries, regions, etc.), where the EU and its partners have mutual or common interests (example of the cooperation between the EU and China in Central Asia, Africa, the Arctic, etc.). Variable geometry means that the composition of geographic clusters (alliances) between the EU and its strategic partners, eg. in international organizations, varies according to the nature of the problems discussed and according to the interests and advantages that solutions yield to respective partner parties. Political coalitions and their dynamics, therefore, differ depending on the type of problems being addressed at any given time. For instance, the EU has greater coherence in voting with China at the UN in resolving regional conflicts than on security issues and human rights issues. Nevertheless, the diplomatic challenge presents itself to the EU in selective targeting of its efforts to create the widest possible coalitions in addressing its strategic objectives, while maintaining dialogue with those partners who are not party to any coalition and may therefore be in the future, in coalition with the EU. The more coalitions that the EU shares with international partners, the higher is its “strategic” value (Renard, 2012: 3-4).

Question 2

In the second case, our initial point is Wen’s statement that “... EU-China relations which transcend the differences in ideology and social system and are not subjected to the impacts of individual events that occur from time to time” (Men, 2007: 6). “The two sides should base themselves on mutual respect and mutual trust, endeavour to expand converging interests and seek common ground on major issues, while shelving differences on minor ones” (Men, 2007: 6). These allegations then raise our next question of whether these “major issues” are really issues of strategic importance and related to global governance?

To answer this second question is easier – key strategic issues are essential for strategic partnerships. Although strategic partnerships should be comprehensive and should cover the whole spectrum of policies (based on the business and economic concerns), the partnership is only ever truly strategic when it exceeds that basis. It must include an effective, regular and structured architecture of solutions to political and security issues, including joint efforts to find solutions for preventing geopolitical and transnational crises. To this end, the EU introduced the concept of High-Level Strategic Dialogues to only few strategic partners, which also include China (in addition to the US, Canada and India). These summits are only one part of the strategic process. To play an important role in many aspects, they must be part of a structured process.

With regards to this outline, we now try to formulate our own general definition of a comprehensive strategic partnership. “Comprehensive strategic partnership”, as a high degree of maturity of relations between the two parties, is a foreign policy concept, including equivalent, mutually beneficial and institutionalized cooperation of partner countries in many economic and non-economic areas. It also includes a joint solution of difficult strategic (security and defensive) issues and challenges of global governance, which have appeared as an outcome of mutual cooperation and concerns only the specific issues and problems in which both parties not only work together, but also share responsibility. Presumption of mutual cooperation between the parties, as well as common solutions to the challenges of different types, is to promote sustainable development, peace and stability, conformity in values (principles) and the strategic interests of both sides; including their common goals, commitments and procedures, all in a long-term manner of sustainability. It is a response of global powers to the increasing interdependence of the world, in which a cooperation of key partners is necessary in order to maintain their shared values and interests on a global level.

3. Conceptualization of the EU's strategic partnership and its legal bases

The unspecified nature of the EU's strategic partnership as a general category on the one hand, and the fundamental debate by institutions and EU member states on making strategic partnerships into "pivotal [tools] for addressing global challenges and safeguarding the EU's core interests and objectives – mostly security and prosperity" (Renard, 2015) on the other, inevitably leads to the negotiation of new trade, political, and security agreements with these important partners. Renard states that "Trade agreements are an integral part of the EU's grand strategy. They are not just about tariffs, nor even about jobs and investment – even though both aspects are very important. These new and ambitious trade agreements are about maintaining EU competitive in a globalised economy, about spreading European norms and standards to other parts of the world. In short, what they are about is geo-economics". Political and security agreements are conversely "about geopolitics. They set the Framework for cooperation on a number of key political and security issues, such as counter-terrorism, cyber-security or maritime security, but also climate change and development issues. They are about asserting the EU as a global actor – perhaps even power – and a global security provider" (Renard, 2015).

Since bilateral relations framework can be considered as only one aspect of the concept of strategic partnership, shaping the relationship between the EU and selected countries in the world was set as the default, and other unifying criteria should lead to the convergence of values, forms and content focus on strategic partnerships. Their application to individual bilateral partners, however, shows considerable diversity of strategic partnerships and provides an opportunity to differentiate between existing strategic partnerships and then to compare strategic partners (as displayed in Table 2).

These "unifying" criteria, which are specifically geared towards convergence, rather than divergence of the EU's strategic partnerships include:

- [1] The creation method of strategic partnership;
- [2] The type of existing bilateral contractual basis for mutual relations;
- [3] The accepted normative concept;
- [4] The area and the intensity of cooperation and
- [5] The conception of the multilateral international order.

Criteria are set by individual strategic partners inconsistently respected and thus lead to an "inconsistent" concept of the EU's strategic partnership, as will be seen from the characteristics of these criteria.

Criterion [1]: Strategic partnerships with individual countries originated from a legal point of view in different ways. Some were announced without any formal document enshrining the strategic partnership. Eventually, other countries have upgraded their relations with the EU to a strategic partnership through a formal procedure, and there is also the partnership which was announced formally in the Summit Declaration. Formal procedure was put into practice in 2003. Commission communication would propose establishing a strategic partnership, followed by its adoption by the Council of the EU and a favourable recommendation from the European Parliament. A joint summit declaration would then confirm the strategic partnership (Cirlig, 2012: 3), or (Pałasz, 2015: 5).

Criterion [2]: The frameworks for the development of bilateral relations, between the EU and strategic partners, are also diversified. The main difference lies in whether it is a political and non-contractual type of arrangement that underpins these bilateral relations (political declarations or others), or a legally binding agreement. In practice, binding agreements prevail and involve the greatest number of strategic partners to date. The agreements are of different types, ranging from the narrowest legal relationship based on association agreements through comprehensive third generation free trade agreements, all the way to the second generation agreements, which take the form of either a Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, or various types of Framework Agreements for Trade and Cooperation, some of which may include Free Trade Agreements as well. The non-contracting

arrangements, as well as some agreements, such as Join Action Plans were adopted specifically for the purposes of implementing a strategic partnership with the EU. The EU's aim is to develop strategic partnerships with each country on the basis of comprehensive regulatory frameworks by using three types of agreements: a modern trade and investment agreement (Free Trade Agreement – FTA), all-inclusive political agreements (Strategic Partnership Agreements – SPA or Framework Agreements – FA) and safety agreements that would allow the partners to participate in EU operations for crisis management (Framework Participation Agreement – FPA), (Renard, 2015).

If the strategic partnership is not apparent from the framework of bilateral relations existing between the EU and its partners, it will automatically become an instrument of “soft law”. The concept of „soft law “can be defined as: “rules of conduct which lie in a sphere which is legally non-binding (in the sense of restrictions and sanctions), but which according to the intention of their author, must be considered as being part of the legal sphere” (Sautenet, 2008: 12). Different kinds of soft law instruments used by the EU can be distinguished: unilateral global acts (communications, country strategy paper, multi-annual programs), bilateral global acts (joint declarations during the annual summits), sectoral bilateral acts (Memorandum of Understanding, sectoral agreements), and sectoral (economic) and political dialogues. In this context, the strategic partnership is apprehended as para-legal and pre-legal in its nature. A para-legal normative system has parallel status with the EU legal system. It contains standards that have no formal binding mechanism but impact specific recipients that are in a particular area. It therefore has a normative character, which relates to only specific types of action. Because it lacks (especially) the attribute of generalisation, a para-legal system is not a source of law and the norms contained therein are not legal norms. As a para-legal system, strategic partnership is important for the progress of trade and economic relations, sectoral cooperation and political dialogue. Hence, the strategic partnership is complementary to the bilateral legal framework defining the relationship between the EU and its partners. “Pre-legal” regulations mean that standards can lead to conclusions about a new, legally binding (core) agreement. Para-legal and pre-legal nature of the strategic partnership is explained in detail by Sautenet (2008: 14-58).

The institutional structure, on which the development of strategic partnerships is based, is either integrated into the foundations for the development of bilateral relations or is a part of “soft law”. It usually involves high-level summits, ministerial meetings, expert working groups, and inter-parliamentary (cooperation) committees.

Criterion [3]: Another demonstration of the EU strategic partnership as not uniformly defined, is the phenomenon of different normative concepts, according to which the partnership is established. In early December 2009 the Lisbon Treaty (the consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, TEU, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU) came into force (Czech Government Office, 2009). Since then, the foundation for the development of relations and the creation of the EU's partnership with third countries, international, regional and global organizations are implemented in articles 21 and 22 TEU. The article 21 says: “The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations” (Czech Government Office, 2009: 33-34). The article 22 states, that “On the basis of the principles and objectives set out in Article 21, the European Council shall identify the strategic interests and objectives of the Union” (Czech Government Office, 2009: 35). For complex partnerships, Title I, III and V TFEU are legally relevant, regulating governing the common commercial policy, development policy and humanitarian aid and international

agreements. These should also constitute an essential criterion for choosing strategic partners. Basically, this criterion requires respect for the basic values on which the EU was founded, which continuously develop and expand. To consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law is one of the objectives of EU foreign policy. This so-called EU's normative objective, which is the basis of "normative convergence", in turn is the basis of converging interests and aspirations on both sides. Supporting normative objectives in relations with third countries should have become a part of the agreements with partners. Nonetheless, not all strategic partners respect this criterion. On the contrary, they underline "unconditional engagement" (Cirlig, 2012: 5) by the EU, normative diversity, equal partnership and common interests. Essentially, we can distinguish five normative concepts that are shared by the strategic partners of the EU (Cirlig, 2012: 2, 5):

- Normative convergence;
- Normative convergence, which does not always lead to a common strategy with the EU;
- Normative convergence, when, however, strategic partners interpret common values in different ways;
- Unconditional engagement, strategic partners insist on their normative concept about "common interests";
- Unconditional engagement, strategic partners insist on "enduring and mutually beneficial relations of equals".

Criterion [4]: Strategic Partnership is a tool that promotes the quantitative and qualitative development of mutual relations in many areas. The scope and depth of cooperation embodied particularly in the context of the development of bilateral relations is another criterion for differentiation among the strategic partners of the EU. Some strategic partners have achieved significant comprehensive cooperation with the EU in many areas, from trade and investment to foreign policy, crisis management, development cooperation, multilateral issues, etc. For the EU, these are "irreplaceable", or "like-minded" partners with a high degree of coordination and cooperation in a multilateral forum (Cirlig, 2012: 4). These partners therefore show a high degree of coordination and cooperation on a multilateral level, yet they appear more limited if compared to other partners. Another three groups of countries include partner states whose relations with the EU are developed by values and interest-driven and limited cooperation. Although these countries and the EU are mutually very dependent, different values and norms not only limit bilateral cooperation, but also occur in the nature of political dialogue not only about global relations and governance, but also, for example, about human rights and the existence of unresolved conflicts and disputes. In addition, countries are classified as either World Trade Organization (WTO) members under surveillance, or countries which have unresolved mutual grievances with the EU, or countries, which are markedly focusing on the development and political dialogue especially on regional issues. From this point of view, we can assign the corresponding categories: "countries with pursued WTO membership interest-driven and limited cooperation", "countries with values and interest-based, limited cooperation" and "partners with limited cooperation" (Cirlig, 2012: 4).

Criterion [5]: Strategic partnership is also a tool that enables dialogues and cooperation for the development of effective multilateralism. Effective multilateralism is defined as "a rule-based international system" (Renard, 2012: 4), or as "the development of a stronger international society, well-functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order" with the UN and the WTO at its centre. Effective multilateralism is the main objective of the EU's foreign policy, as stated in the 2003 European Security Strategy (European Council, 2003: 9-10). The EU strategic partnerships are affected by some partners with a somewhat different perception of multilateralism. Cirlig (2012: 5) states that, in principle, there are three approaches towards the conceptualization of multilateralism:

- The first is based on a commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law;
- The second perceive multilateralism as a means to achieve multi-polarity in the world;
- The third, as a way of supporting particular national interests; countries sharing this approach tend to interpret their national interests strictly and prefer non-binding agreements.

As mentioned above, the EU criteria for the selection of strategic partners are not entirely clear, but factors that lead to diversity of strategic partners are quite obvious. Those are: a different creation process of strategic partnership, a different framework for bilateral relations, and diversity of generally accepted values (principles) hence, different normative concepts, different scope and intensity of cooperation and a different approach to multilateralism. As a result, partners are quite different within the classification of strategic partners.

Given criteria and EU approaches towards partner countries are summarized in Table 1.

4. Differentiation of EU's strategic partners

All the strategic partners of the EU have one thing in common: an economic as well as a political influence in regional and/or international issues. All the strategic partners of the EU are either major world economic players or countries with a high rate of economic growth and have great political ambitions. These countries are either able to directly affect the prosperity and security of the EU, with the EU being significantly interrelated and playing a central role in global governance (USA, Russia, China) or have the potential to influence the EU in the same way as its economic power grows along with their growing political importance (Brazil, India, South Africa). All strategic partners are aiming to become members of the former G8 + 5 (USA, Japan, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia – Russia was a member of the G8 until 24. 4. 2014 / Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa), or are the members of G20 (a group of the largest economies in the world, represented by finance ministers and central bank governors of 19 countries and the EU, that assume the role of chief coordinator of the global economy rather than the G8). For the EU, strategic partnerships should, therefore, fulfil a reflexive function, for instance, to promote the international position of the EU.

On the basis of the criteria set out in Table 1, it is possible to evaluate the different features of EU's individual strategic partners. Table 2 shows that, as far as the establishment of strategic partnerships with individual countries is concerned, the US, Japan, Canada and Russia were proclaimed partners without any formal document that enshrines the strategic partnership. In the case of China, India, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico strategic partnerships were established through a formal procedure, consecutively in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008. The strategic partnership with South Korea was formally announced at the EU-South Korea Summit Declaration in 2010.

Regarding the framework for the development of EU bilateral relations and strategic partners, the two countries (the US and Japan) formed a partnership based on non-contractual arrangements, specifically on the basis of political non-contractual acts – New Transatlantic Agenda (the US) a Joint Political Declaration (Japan) and additionally the Joint Action Plans. In relation to the USA Urszula Pałasz noted that “with the US, the EU has its densest legal and practical network” (Pałasz, 2015: 5), despite the fact that so far there is no relationship in the framework agreement. Terms are negotiated with difficulty in the form of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement, TTIP (negotiations on TTIP was launched in July 2013 and in October 2016 already took place on the 15th rounds; TTIP advisory group last meeting was held 9. 3. 2017; negotiations were halted by President Donald Trump, who then initiated a trade conflict with the EU). The negotiation of two agreements – the Strategic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) – started in 2013, and both agreements were signed on 17 July 2018 and entered into force on 1 February 2019. With the other countries, strategic partnerships are on contractual bases. Specifically, these include the association agreement Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement (Global Agreement) in the case of Mexico, which came into force in 2000. On 25th May 2016 the EU and Mexico launched the negotiations to modernize the Global Agreement. It is also the Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation between the European Communities and Canada of 1976; in October 2016 not only a comprehensive FTA third generation – Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), but also the Strategic Partnership Agreement (to replace the original agreement) were signed between the two parties. The only country that has signed all three

agreements with the EU, thus representing the “ideal-type” of a framework for strategic partnerships, is South Korea. The EU-South Korea FTA, together with Framework Agreement, were signed in 2010 and came into force on December 13, 2015. Framework Participation Agreement, a security agreement – the first one with a strategic partner – was signed by the two parties in the second half of 2014 and is waiting for ratification. Second generation agreements, which have the form of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA), are the basis for strategic partnership with Russia, and those gaining different types of Framework Agreements for Trade and Cooperation, some of which may include the FTA, are the basis for partnerships with Brazil, China, India and South Africa.

Table 1. Criteria for the concept of bilateral EU strategic partnership and variations of possible approaches from partners

Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5
Formation of strategic partnerships	Bilateral relations framework	Accepted normative concept	Areas of cooperation	Multilateralism understanding
No formal procedure	Political non-contractual acts	Normative convergence	Irreplaceable partners with all-inclusive cooperation	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
Formal procedure	Association agreements	Normative convergence – no common strategy	Like-minded partners with all-inclusive cooperation	Means to achieve multi-polarity
Formally announced in summit	Free Trade Agreements – 3 rd generation	Normative convergence – different readings of common values	Like-minded partners with high degree of coordination and cooperation in multilateral fora	Way to support specific national interests
	Various agreements – 2 nd generation	Unconditional engagement – common interest	Countries with pursued WTO membership, interest-driven and limited cooperation	
		Unconditional engagement –enduring and mutually beneficial relations of equals	Countries with values and interest-based, limited cooperation	
			Partners with limited cooperation	

Source: Author’s construction based on Cirlig (2012) a Renard (2012).

Strategic partnership with Russia began to be established in May 2003, on the basis of PCA, which was signed in 1993 and come into force in 1997 for a period of ten years (until 2007) and the Road Maps for the Common Spaces, adopted in May 2005. PCA is a legal act that regulates a wide range of policy areas, including economic and political problems. The Road Maps are soft law acts that contain a number of short- and medium-term instruments for the implementation of the four Common Spaces: the Common Economic Space; the Common Space on Freedom, Security, and Justice; the Common Space on External Security; and the Common Space on Research, Education, and Culture. In 2008 it was decided to negotiate a new framework agreement, although in 2014 negotiations were suspended in connection with the Ukrainian crisis. Despite the resolution of the plenary session of the European Parliament in June 2015, prompting further not to treat Russia as a strategic partner, we believe that the EU and Russia are each other’s so important partners so that severing relations goes against the logic of the development of the contemporary world. V. Voynikov and I. Kant argue: “The disputes over the Ukraine crisis prevent the realization of common projects within the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership, which are subjects of common interest. On the other hand, the EU and Russia are not ready to give up their strategic partnership. That is why, from the EU side, EU-Russia cooperation could be defined as a ‘frozen Strategic

Partnership” (Voynikov – Kant, 2015: 21). To some extent, negotiations of the comprehensive PCA with China are frozen as well.

With regards to the accepted normative concept, USA, as well as South Korea, respect the same fundamental values of the EU, and thus share the concept of “normative convergence” (consensus on values and interests). Moreover, normative convergence is also accepted by Japan and Canada. Nevertheless, a common normative concept does not necessarily lead to common strategies. Mexico, Brazil, India and South Africa also operate on the basis of normative convergence; however they often interpret common values in different ways. Russia bases its normative concept on “common interests”, China on “enduring and mutually beneficial relationship of equals” and both partners emphasise “unconditional engagement” by the EU (for more details see Cirlig, 2012: 5-6).

In case of cooperation, we can say that the new agreements between the EU and its strategic partners will deepen and broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation on a wide range of issues, such as international peace and security, counter-terrorism, human rights and nuclear non-proliferation, clean energy and climate change, migration and peaceful pluralism, sustainable development, and innovation. For example, the CETA and the SPA will take Canada-EU relations to a new level of intensified and structured engagement. Also, the “EU-China Strategic Agenda for Cooperation”, adopted in 2013, became the basis for cooperation in security and defensive matters. The EU has delineated the following groups of strategic partners, according to the degree of coordination and cooperation at the multilateral level (Cirlig, 2012: 4):

- “irreplaceable partners with all-inclusive cooperation, aimed at promoting global peace and stability, development and multilateralism to address global challenges” (USA),
- “like-minded partners with all-inclusive cooperation” (Canada),
- “like-minded partners with high degree of coordination and cooperation in multilateral for a” (Japan, South Korea, Mexico),
- “countries with pursued WTO, interest-driven and limited cooperation” (Russia and China), [about “how China’s commitments in the WTO influenced China’s merchandise trade in period of 2001-2010 and what impact it had on the European Union”, see paper by Lenka Fojtíková (2012: 56-65)],
- “countries with values and interest-based, limited cooperation” (Brazil, India),
- “partners with limited cooperation” (South Africa).

The countries that are developing interest-based cooperation with the EU, are often situated in opposing allies to the EU, particularly within BRICS, or BASIC format (BRICS without Russia), or IBSA dialogue forum (India, Brazil, South Africa), but also in international forums on trade, climate, global economic governance.

According to how strategic partners perceive multilateralism, the group of countries which are based on a commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law, include USA, Canada, Japan, Mexico and South Korea. Among the countries that perceive multilateralism as a means to achieve multi-polarity in the world are China, Russia and, increasingly, South Africa and Brazil. The final group consists of India, which conceives multilateralism as a way of fostering particular national interests. Countries that are sharing this way of understanding multilateralism, tend to interpret strictly their national interests and prefer non-binding agreements (sometimes this approach is also preferred by the USA). These different approaches often represent challenges for the EU, especially when dealing with a number of global issues. For instance, climate change, where the EU has faced different opinions from the BASIC group, and the US enforcement regardless of the EU’s decision; discussions on generic drugs or liberalization of agricultural products, where IBSA group has presented different opinions than those of the EU, USA and Japan. Furthermore, there was the question of the reform of the International Monetary Fund, where the EU stands in opposition to the BRICS, which in turn is supported by the US; moreover, strategic partners voting preferences in the United Nations are often different from the position of the EU. In 2004-2009, the least coherence with the EU vote was expressed by the following countries: the USA,

China and India, and the highest voting cohesion was recorded in the case of Canada, Japan and South Korea. The different normative concepts professed by various partners are reflected in votes on specific global issues. For example, EU's opinion that advocates humanitarian interventions, is opposed by the countries that support the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference (Cirlig, 2012: 5).

The comparison of approaches by the EU's strategic partners according to individual criteria is summarized in Table 2.

Although the EU is developing a similar cooperation with all its strategic partners and partnerships are expanding both in terms of horizontal, multilateral and global politics, the implemented policies, the status of global actors, and the nature of the strategic partnership with the EU varies widely. Hence, the formation of a strategic partnership is sometimes derived not from the criteria of the concept of strategic partnership between the EU, but from "the capacity of the country to exert a significant influence on global issues" instead, such as Mexico (European Commission, 2008). As a consequence, ambiguity or inconsistency emerges in the concept of the EU strategic partnerships. The actual non-existence of the uniform concept of the EU strategic partnership leads to the fact that some authors question the effectiveness of the EU in promoting its values towards third partners and propose to distinguish between democratic and non-democratic partners and adapt it to particular partnerships. Other authors, taking into account Articles 21 and 22 of the Treaty of Lisbon, as well as the differentiation of partners according to other criteria on which some authors questioned some of the existing strategic partnership (see eg. Maher, 2016). EU itself classified its partners as:

- the essential (the US);
- the pivotal – crucial at global level (Russia, China, Brazil, India);
- the natural allies – like-minded countries and traditional allies (Canada, Japan, South Korea)
- and regional partners – potential leaders in Their regions (Mexico and South Africa) (Cirlig, 2012: 3).

This affects the strategy that the EU uses to approach these partners.

After the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the European Council decided on the processing of internal periodic progress reports with the intent to monitor and evaluate existing strategic partnerships, including frequency, as well as forms and outcomes of summits. The first Progress Report was issued in December 2010 (Strategic Partners Progress Report for the European Council, 2010) having discussed the US, China and Russia (the three partnerships with the highest priority), and in 2011 – India, Brazil and South Africa (European Parliament, 2012). Reports monitored both common elements in all partnerships and at the same time focused on the specific characteristics of each partner. These reports have demonstrated the limitations of identified goals, common interests and priorities in each of the respective partnerships. Nonetheless, these reports confirmed that one of the fundamental goals of the strategic partnership is to coordinate a process between the EU and its partners to promote effective multilateralism in the world, including international organizations. Progress Reports, however, not only brought to light open questions related to the content of partnerships, such as regarding the EU strategy towards its partners and coordination of their relations, but also questions of technical nature – what is the mission of such reports, and whether it is appropriate for a single assessment document using a unified method to encompass the integration into the global foreign policy strategy (broader strategic framework) (Cirlig, 2012: 1), (Renard 2012: 2).

Table 2. Comparison of the strategic partners of the European Union by selected criteria

Partner	Formation of strategic partnerships	Bilateral relations framework	Accepted normative concept	Areas of cooperation	Multilateralism understanding
USA	No formal document	Political non-contractual acts	Normative convergence	Irreplaceable partner with all-inclusive cooperation	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
Canada	No formal document	Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation	Normative convergence – without common strategy	Like-minded partner with all-inclusive cooperation	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
Japan	No formal document	Political non-contractual acts	Normative convergence – without common strategy	Like-minded partner with high degree of coordination and cooperation in multilateral fora	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
Russia	No formal document	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement	Unconditional engagement – common interest	Country with pursued WTO membership, interest-driven and limited cooperation	Means to achieve multi-polarity
South Korea	Formally announced in summit (2010)	Framework Agreement and Free Trade Agreement	Normative convergence	Like-minded partner with high degree of coordination and cooperation in multilateral fora	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
China	Formal procedure (2003)	Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation	Unconditional engagement – enduring and mutually beneficial relations of equals	Country with pursued WTO membership, interest-driven and limited cooperation	Means to achieve multi-polarity
India	Formal procedure (2004)	Cooperation agreement on partnership and development	Normative convergence – different readings of common values	Country with values and interest-based, limited cooperation	Way to support specific national interests
Brazil	Formal procedure (2007)	Framework Agreement for Cooperation	Normative convergence – different readings of common values	Countries with values and interest-based, limited cooperation	Means to achieve multi-polarity (ambivalent approach)
Mexico	Formal procedure (2008)	Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement	Normative convergence – different readings of common values	Like-minded partner with high degree of coordination and cooperation in multilateral fora	Commitment to global governance, based on shared rules and international law
South Africa	Formal procedure (2006)	Agreement on Trade, Development and Cooperation	Normative convergence – different readings of common values	Partner with limited cooperation	Means to achieve multi-polarity (ambivalent approach)

Source: Author’s construction based on Cirlig (2012) and Renard (2012).

Conclusion

From the works of various authors above, especially Thomas Renard (2012: 3-5), we can see that in the future it will be necessary for the EU and its Member States to act more strategically. Moreover, it will be increasingly important for them to clearly formulate goals, strategic interests, and direct their resources and financial instruments to realisation. This fact was confirmed in 2010 by President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, when he said “We have strategic partners, now we need a strategy” (Van Rompuy, 2010). From this perspective, it is necessary to create strategic partnerships as a part of a broader strategic base, enhance coordination not only between the EU and the Member States but also between the EU institutions, and effectively use the summits for the integration of all relevant instruments and policies. Strategic partnerships should be gradually integrated into various regional and thematic strategies. For example, a strategy for Asia, Central Asia, Africa, energy security, weapons of mass destruction should take into account the role of strategic partners and cooperation with them. In other words, regional and thematic strategies should be firmly anchored in strategic partnerships. Creation of a broader strategic framework should be based on existing documents and agreements and harmonize all dimensions of security in a coherent framework which should take into account the role and the potential of the strategic partnerships.

Strengthening the coordination between the EU and Member States should be ensured by the uniform access of Europeans on key issues of international agenda, especially those that fall under shared competencies and in cases of exclusive competence of the EU. Some Member States have negotiated with third countries (USA, China) their own bilateral partnerships (for instance the latest case- Czech Republic and China). If so, these relationships should not compete with partnerships at the EU level or undermine efforts to deal with strategic issues. Strengthening coordination is also expected between the EU institutions. Institution that coordinate the EU's external action is the European *External Action Service (EEAS)*. The EEAS should take responsibility for coordinating all EU policies with respect to strategic partners and to encourage the role of EU delegations. Summits should, among other things, be helpful in supporting of negotiations unblocking on certain issues. Summits with strategic partners should not only be challenging to organize, but also will ensure delivering adequate results. It is important, that these are strategic summits which will lead to a better agreement on the diplomatic level and will create a broader concept of strategic partnership.

If the EU is to increase its international influence in the world and become a global player, it must actively approach establishing a multilateral order. For this purpose, in particular the strategic partnerships should serve as a means through which it is possible to achieve “variable geometry” agreements and strengthen the multilateral system. Partnership is a way to promote convergence and to reduce divergence of partner's approaches in a given context. Various political and sectoral dialogues can help to create new coalitions and agreements. Multi-polarism would weaken the influence of the EU, which currently does not have a common foreign policy and, moreover, as an “individual” partner have no experience in real politics.

In its external relations, the EU, with regard to its identity, has always supported regional integration and inter-regionalism and has led by example to the number of integration groupings, especially in Africa and Latin America. Renard, however points out that bilateralism in term of strengthening strategic partners vis-a-vis other countries may change regional dynamics with consequences for integration and the growing international role of the EU might weaken its influence in regional organizations. For countries like Brazil, India and South Africa, it is unthinkable to renounce, in the newly acquired global influence, their power in regional clusters. The EU will therefore have to rethink its regional approach and transform it into a complementary approach towards multilateralism (Renard, 2012: 4).

As far as strategic partners are involved, the EU should strengthen and deepen these strategic partnerships in the future. These partners have been selected, however, as seen above, rather randomly, as opposed to being based on

strategic considerations. Therefore, the number, or the list of partners, may not be final. Already in 2008, the revised European Security Strategy (European Council, 2009) recommended as key partners countries such as Norway and Switzerland (and a number of regional organizations). Renard considered Turkey as a possible strategic partner, especially in the context of the current immigration crisis in the EU, which has growing strategic interests, but is also an aspiring candidate for EU membership (Renard, 2012: 6). EU's strategic partnerships are therefore informal and flexible categories, rather than definitive and permanent list.

Finally, we note that the EU should aim for the effective and genuine strategic partnership. Such partnership should be comprehensive, empathetic (understanding of mutual values and interests), built on reciprocity, long-term oriented strategic issues in which the partners have common interests, promote multilateralism and cooperation in the region, and be integrated into a broader strategy of the EU. In the future, we can therefore expect, as mentioned by Cirlig, two scenarios – first, the deepening of partnerships with fewer highly prioritized countries or, second, expanding a partnership with a bigger circle of countries and framework policies in place (Cirlig, 2012: 7). Taking into account our findings, we argue for the second scenario.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by two scientific projects: GAAA no. 9/2018 “Comparative Metodology and its Application by Examining the Specific International Business Environment (Case Study of China)”, funder: Grant Agency Academia Aurea, Czech Republic; and IGA no. 3/2017 “Development of International Business and International Management in the Conditions of Globalization”, funder: IGA of the School of Economics and Management in Public Administration).

References

- CIHELKOVÁ, Eva – NGUYEN, Hung Phuoc (2016). Qualitative Changes in the Development of the EU-China Relationships: From one-dimensional, more-limited and one-level cooperation to the all-dimensional, wide-ranging and multi-tiered Strategic Partnership. *European Studies. The Review of European Law, Economics and Politics*. Volume 3/2016, Wolters Kluwer. ISBN 978-80-7552-739-4.
- CIRLIG, Carmen-Cristina. (2012). EU Strategic Partnerships with third countries. Library of the European Parliament. *Library Briefing*. 26/09/2012.
- European Commission (1998). *Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China*. Communication from the Commission. COM(1998) 181 final. Brussels, 25. 3. 1998.
- European Commission (2003). Commission Policy Paper for Transmission to the Council and the European Parliament “*A maturing partnership – shared interests and challenges in EU-China relations*” (updating the European Commission’s Communications on EU-China relations of 1998 and 2001). COM(2003) 533 final. Brussels, 10. 9. 2003.
- European Commission (2008). *Towards an EU-Mexico Strategic Partnership*. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. COM (2008) 447 final. Brussels, 15. 7. 2008.
- European Commission (2010). *Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Communication from the Commission. COM (2010) 2020. Brussels: European Commission, 3. 3. 2010.
- European Council (2003). European Security Strategy. *A secure Europe in a better world*. Brussels: Council of the European Union, 12 December 2003 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>
- European Council (2009). European Security Strategy. *A secure Europe in a better world*. Council of the European Union. Brussels: Council of the European Union. ISBN 978-92-824-2421-6.
- European Council (2010). *European Council Conclusions*, 16 September 2010, EUCO 21/1/10 REV 1. Brussels: European Council, 12 October 2010.

European Parliament (2012). *EU foreign policy towards the BRICS and other emerging powers*. European Parliament resolution of 2 February 2012 on the EU foreign policy towards the BRICS and other emerging powers: objectives and strategies (2011/2111(INI)). P7_TA(2012)0017. Brussels, 2 February 2012.

FÜRST, Rudolf. (2007). Strategické partnerství EU – ČLR. Příležitost, skutečnost a eufemismus. *Mezinárodní vztahy* 1/2007.

FOJTÍKOVÁ, Lenka (2012). *China's External Trade after its Entrance into the WTO with the Impact on the EU*. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on European Integration 2012. Ostrava: VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava, 17th – 18th May 2012. ISBN 978-80-248-2685-1.

MAHER, Richard (2016). The elusive EU-China strategic partnership. *International Affairs*, 92: 4, 2016.

MEN, Jing. (2007). The EU-China Strategic Partnership: Achievements and Challenges. *Policy Paper No 12, November 2007*. http://aei.pitt.edu/7527/1/2007-EU-China_Partnership.pdf

PALLASZ, Urszula (2015). Strategic Partnerships in the EU's Foreign Policy Approach: Challenges and opportunities. In: Marcus, Dara – Sangsar, Marcel (eds.) *Strategic Partnership as an Instrument of EU Foreign Policy – Workshop Report*. Carleton: Carleton University's Centre for European Studies and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, November 2015. [2016-10-20] <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Strategic-Partnership-Workshop-Report-final.pdf>

RENARD, Thomas (2012). The EU Strategic Partnerships Review: Ten Guiding Principles. European Strategic Partnerships Observatory. *Policy Brief* 2, April 2012.

RENARD, Thomas (2015). The EU's strategic partnership agreements: balancing geo-economics and geopolitics. Heindrich Böll Stiftung, 08. June 2015. Available at: <http://reshaping-europe.boellblog.org/2015/11/25/isis-in-pursuit-of-its-end-some-reflections-on-its-millennarian-aspect/>

SAUTENET, Antoine (2008). *Europe and China: Cooperation with Complex Legal Dimensions*. Asia Visions 3. Paris: IFRI, May 2008. ISBN 978-2-86592-312-0.

State Council of the PRC (2003). *China's EU Policy Paper*. Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. October 2003. http://en.people.cn/200310/13/eng20031013_125906.shtml

Strategic Partners Progress Report for the European Council (2010). 16. – 17. December 2010. <https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/379/response/1148/attach/4/Strategic%20partners%20Dec%202010%20disclosable%201.pdf>

Úřad vlády ČR (2009). *Treaty of Lisbon*. Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. 2nd revised and updated edition. Praha: Úřad vlády České republiky, Odbor informování o evropských záležitostech (Prague: Office of the Czech Republic Government, Department of Information on European Affairs). ISBN 978-80-7440-017-9.

UN (2015). *Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*. United Nations: New York [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

VAN ROMPUY, Herman (2010). *EU External Relations*. European Council, PCE 186/10, Brussels, 14 September 2010.

VOYNIKOV, Vadim – KANT, Immanuel (2015). The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: Its nature and perspectives. In: Marcus, Dara – Sangsar, Marcel (eds.) *Strategic Partnership as an Instrument of EU Foreign Policy – Workshop Report*. Carleton: Carleton University's Centre for European Studies and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, November 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Strategic-Partnership-Workshop-Report-final.pdf>

Wen stresses importance of developing EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership. *People's Daily Online*, 7 May 2004. http://english.people.com.cn/200405/07/eng20040507_142556.html

Prof. Ing. **Eva CIHELKOVÁ**, CSc. in World Economics, obtained at University of Economics, Prague, guarantor of study programs, academic researcher, Faculty of Economics and Business, Pan-European University in Bratislava (PEVŠ), Slovakia.

ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-7428-1584

MSc. **Hung Phuoc NGUYEN**, PhD. in Economics and Management of International Business, obtained at Pan-European University, Bratislava, lecturer at the School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava (VSEMs), Slovakia.

ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-4528-9827

Ing. **Michal FABUS** PhD. in International Economics Relations, obtained at University of Economics in Bratislava, Vice-rector for Foreign Affairs, Head of Department of Economics and Finance, School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava (VSEMs), Slovakia.

ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-3792-179X

Kristina Cimova MA MSc, is PhD candidate in Central East European Studies, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0001-7747-9230

Register for an ORCID ID:

<https://orcid.org/register>

Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and VSI Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Center

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

