



**Linnæus University**

Sweden

Bachelor thesis

## **South Africa – an emerging power?**

*A qualitative text analysis of South Africa's  
role in the international system*



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## Abstract

Despite a comprehensive research of South Africa's power status, the available literature does not provide a satisfactory explanation of whether South Africa is an emerging power or not. Countries in the Global South with a vigorous economic growth are often offhandedly assigned an emerging power status. Since power is built on more than economics, more specific indicators of how to measure South Africa's power status need to be applied, in order to draw legitimate conclusions about whether it is an emerging power or not, which this study aims to do. When South Africa's power status is identified, the observance of changes in international power distribution and understanding of powerful states' influence on the international arena may increase. It may also be easier to predict how their power statuses can favour or disfavour other countries. This investigation is conducted through a qualitative text analysis and a single case study with a deductive approach. South Africa's power status is analysed through the glasses of the analytical framework of Sven Biscop and Thomas Renard's "*seven dimensions of power*". The findings suggest that South Africa is an emerging power, since the country succeeds in five out of seven dimensions of power, and partly succeeds in two dimensions, but has also made a great progress in most power dimensions.

## Keywords

South Africa, dimensions of power, great powers, emerging powers, middle powers, small powers



## **Acknowledgements**

*I wish to show my gratitude to my research supervisor Daniel Silander, for his assistance and guidance through every step in the process of this study. I am very grateful for his support and dedicated involvement during these weeks.*



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## **List of Abbreviations**

ANC - African National Congress

AU - African Union

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

DOD - Department of Defence

EFTA - European Free Trade Association

FDI - Foreign Direct Investment

G20 - Group of 20

G7 - Group of 7

G77 - Group of 77

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

IBSA - India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum

IMF - International Monetary Fund

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NDB - New Development Bank

RSA - Republic of South Africa

RTA - Regional Trade Agreements

SACU - Southern African Customs Union

SADC - Southern African Development Community

SADF - South African Defence Force

SANDF - South African National Defence Force

TDCA - Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement

UK - United Kingdom

UN - United Nations

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

US - United States

WTO - World Trade Organisation



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Based on military strength, political and economic influence, international alliances and leader attributes, the United States (US), Russia, China, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) were, in 2019, ranked as the five most influential and powerful states in the world (US News & World Report, 2019). Over many years, the US has been regarded as a hegemonic world power, with a strong ability to achieve its foreign policy goals, through its influence and exercise of power against less dominant states (Foot, R., 2006:77). However, in recent years, it has been argued that the US' role as a hegemonic power is in decline and challenged by other dominant and powerful states. Countries in the Global South have started to achieve more power and influence on the international arena, especially the BRICS countries; namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Roberts, J. T., 2011:776). Many of the new groupings and associations in the Global South are crossing regions and have great influence in the global system, especially in economics and political negotiations (Cooper, A. F. & Flemes, D., 2013:944).

Four of the BRICS countries; Russia, China, India and Brazil, are often considered to be emerging powers, however, with different development levels. For instance, it is discussed that Russia starts to re-emerge after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, scholars such as Daniel Flesmes and Andrew F. Cooper are excluding Russia from the list of emerging powers, since the country is characterized by a lack of diversification in its investments and trade, bipolarity and a diminishing population, among other things. However, China, Brazil and India are regarded as the “*big three of emerging powers*”, since they all have a considerable military potential, political power, growing economy and an



influential role in the global system. The foreign policy behaviour of these powerful states can both favour and disfavour other actors in the international system, not least in their own regions. Occasionally, South Africa is also considered to be a potential emerging power - and the country is keen to appear as such (Cooper, A. F. & Flermes, D., 2013:944-946), even though its power status is discussable and needs to be further investigated.

During the period 1948-1994, when the apartheid system dominated in South Africa, the country was, to a large extent, isolated from the international system (Clark, N. L. & Worger, W. H., 2016). For instance, South Africa was excluded from the United Nations. The organisation was supporting economic sanctions against the country, which often was considered as effective and peaceful pressures against the apartheid regime (SAHO, 2017). In 1994, Nelson Mandela came to office and became president - and he emphasized freedom, human rights and democratic values. After 1994, South Africa has been integrated in the international system again. Today, the country is very active in various international organisations and it is often regarded to be an important and influential actor on the international arena - especially through G20 and South-South cooperations, such as BRICS (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:112). South Africa is often described as an emerging power, because of its economic growth and growing influence in the international system - and there is currently a discussion about South Africa's role on the international arena (Gray, K., 2016:558-560). This thesis will examine if South Africa meets the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power or not.

## **1.2 Research problem and relevance**

The available literature provides a lot of material about the concept of power, power relations on the international arena and different power categories, including emerging powers (Galves Derolle, G. 2015), as also seen in the sub-chapters 3.1 and 3.2. There are also plenty of material about South





Africa's foreign policy over the years (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:112). However, the available literature does not sufficiently explain whether South Africa is an emerging power or not. The title "emerging power" is often offhandedly assigned to countries in the Global South, including South Africa, just because they have had an increased influence and economic growth, but power is built on more than just economics. Countries with emerging economies are not necessarily emerging powers. For instance, the Asian Tigers (Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore) have emerging markets, but these countries can neither be considered as global powers or regional powers, since power does not only concern economic wealth. Several other factors must be taken into account, in order to analyse a country's international power status (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:56). More specific indicators of how to measure South Africa's growing influence need to be applied on this case, in order to provide a deeper understanding of its foreign policy and role on the international arena, but also to draw legitimate conclusions about whether South Africa is an emerging power or not.

This research problem is considered to be relevant from a political science perspective, since it concerns power statuses, international relations and foreign policy in the Global South. Through this investigation, South Africa's international influence and foreign policy behaviour can be identified, which can make people more attentive and vigilant over powerful states' behaviour on the international arena - and make it easier to predict behaviours that may favour or disfavour other actors and individuals. It also provides the reader with an update of how the power distribution on the international arena is changing.

### **1.3 Research objective and research questions**

In order to fill the research gap, the research objective of the paper is to present an analysis and conclude if South Africa can be labelled as an



emerging power, which can contribute to an information base in further research about emerging powers' foreign policy behaviour and influence on the international arena, as well as how the international power distribution is changing. In order to achieve the objective of this thesis, the following research question has been formulated:

- Is the Republic of South Africa an *emerging power* in the international system?

#### **1.4 Disposition of the thesis**

The following sections of this paper will present the methodological and analytical framework of the study, including its limitations and delimitations. The findings and the analysis will be presented in a common section, where Sven Biscop's and Thomas Renard's theory of "*seven dimensions of state power*" will be applied on the case of South Africa, to examine if the country meets the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power or not. The section will also present how South Africa's foreign policy and increased influence on the international arena affects other African states. The results and analysis will be summarised in the conclusion, which also will provide the reader with suggestions of future research.

## **2. Methodological framework**

In order to be able to achieve the research objective of this thesis, a qualitative text analysis and a single case study with a deductive approach will be conducted, which will be explained in the paragraphs below.

### **2.1 Qualitative text analysis**

This paper will use a qualitative research strategy, which aims to describe, explain and make a deeper analysis of different events, actors and



phenomena in detail, in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the context, in which different actions, phenomena and events are taking place (Bryman, A., 2016:394). In this case, South Africa's power dimensions that concerns its military, economy, culture and national identity, diplomacy, resources, geography and population will be described and analysed, to provide a deeper understanding of South Africa's power status on the international arena. In order to present a satisfactory answer of the research question of this paper, a text analysis will be conducted. In this text analysis, the most important and relevant content of a text that is suitable for the study will be picked out. This is done through a careful review of available material (Esaiasson, P., et. al., 2017:211), that is considered to be relevant for examining South Africa's power status. Since South Africa's foreign policy behaviour and international role is well documented in the available literature, a desk study will be conducted, where a collection of documents and texts will be done, which later will be interpreted and analysed (Strang, V. & Szabo, V., 1997:377-379).

The use of a quantitative method is deselected, since it focuses on numerical data, instead of making deeper analyses of relevant texts, which a qualitative strategy is aiming to do (Bryman, A., 2016:375). The qualitative research strategy is considered to be more suitable, since the objective is to make a conclusion whether South Africa meets the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power or not, by explaining South Africa's foreign policy and role on the international arena in detail, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the context in which South Africa's role on the international arena is demonstrated.

## **2.2 Deductive approach**

This paper does not aim to establish new concepts or theories, where a new theory is developed based on the research, as in an inductive approach. The research will rather be generated out from already existing theories and



concepts, which is the case in a deductive approach (Bryman, A., 2016:690-691). In these theory consuming studies, the emphasis is on one single case. By using existing concepts, theories or explanatory factors, the single case can be explained (Esaiasson, P., et. al. 2017:42). In this study, the seven dimensions of state power will be used as analytical framework, in order to explain the power status of the single case of South Africa and thereby be able to answer the research question. Therefore, the paper will use a deductive approach.

### 2.3 Single case study

The research design of this thesis will be a case study design, with one single case of a potential emerging power, namely South Africa (Bryman, A., 2016:70). The risk with single case studies is that the results may be over-generalised and selection biased. However, studies based on a single case design often rely on congruence and within-case studies (Bennett, A. & George, A., 2005:80). The topic of the thesis is emerging powers and South Africa is used as a single case study. The criteria for being an emerging power will be applied on the case of South Africa. Therefore, a single case study could be suitable for this research. The weakness with single case studies, namely that the results can be over-generalised, will especially be kept in mind during the working process. However, this paper does not aim to determine if other countries are emerging powers, based on the case of South Africa, but South Africa can rather contribute to a information base in further research about powerful states' influence on the international arena, as well as how the international power distribution is changing.

### 2.4 Sources

Source criticism is an important method to use, in order to evaluate whether information and relevant material is reliable, accurate and anchored in reality. In a traditional source evaluation, sources are often tested by four



criteria, namely: 1) *time*; when was the information presented? 2) *authenticity*; is the source what it actually claims to be? 3) *tendency*; is the material biased? 4) *dependency*; does the source build on or belong to other sources, or is it independent? When evaluating a source's reliability, it is also important to investigate who the author is, as well as the objectives behind the material (Alexanderson, K., 2012:7, 8-9). When selecting information and relevant material for this paper, the reliability of the sources is examined, by applying the four criteria mentioned above. In order to provide the reader with as objective, reliable and relevant material as possible, the study is mainly based on scientific books and articles. There are plenty of available material that are considered to be relevant for answering the research questions of this paper, especially literature that concerns South Africa's role on the international arena. Instead of solely reviewing one or a few texts, the findings of the study are based on several articles and documents. In some cases, the study refers to online sources, in order to present additional relevant information. However, in similar to other academic texts that are used in this study, online sources are only used if they are assessed to be reliable, after the source critical review.

However, as this paper is presenting a desk study and mainly is using secondary information sources, including online sources and scientific books and articles, there is a risk that the used material may have been conceived, generated or biased in a certain way. Even academic articles are normally reflecting the worldview and preconceptions of the author. When they are working with their research, scholars do often want to demonstrate or prove a certain phenomenon or statement - and few texts are therefore totally objective (Strang, V. & Szabo, V., 1997:68-69). This will be considered and kept in mind during the collection of material for this study - and efforts will be taken to choose material with high reliability, objectivity and truthfulness. For instance, the reliability of sources will be controlled by reviewing articles from other authors, to see if other scholars are confirming



same information. This will be done in order to present a fair and impartial depiction of the reality, to the greatest extent as possible.

## **2.5 Limitations and delimitations**

One limitation of this study is the lack of language proficiency, as it obstructs the use of material presented in Afrikaans, isiZulu and isiXhosa. Several academic articles that concern the country's social, political and economic conditions are written in these South African languages, especially in Afrikaans, but these cannot be used in this study. Concerning the investigation of South Africa's diplomatic influence, this paper is delimited to not put a greater emphasis on its relation to individual states, since the country's foreign policy behaviour mainly is demonstrated through its engagement in various regional and international associations. Further, when investigating South Africa's level of progress in each dimension, the paper will not examine its progress in each and every indicator, but rather draw general conclusions whether the country has made a great progress or not.

## **3. Analytical framework**

### **3.1 Definitions and previous research of the concept of power**

Power is a central concept in international relations, but simultaneously also a complex and contested concept, without any definition or encompassing analytical approach that is widely recognised by most researchers (Hurrell, A., 2017:90). Instead, a wide range of definitions and approaches to power exist. The dictionary definition of the concept of power can be a "possession of control, authority, or influence over others" and an "ability to act or produce an effect" (Merriam-Webster, 2018), but also as "a person or organization that is strong or influential within a particular context" (Oxford University Press, 2018).



In 1957, Robert A. Dahl, professor in political science, launched a formal definition of the concept of power, which he describes as a phenomenon when “A has power over B, to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”. He argued that his definition could be useful in a comparison of different political actors’ power in a given sphere (Dahl, R. A., 1957:80). Dahl’s definition of power has been frequently cited, but also criticised for being incomplete and for excluding other important power dimensions. One of the critics is Steven Lukes, professor in sociology and political science, who complements Dahl’s concept of power in his book “Power: A Radical View”, where he presents his “*Three-Dimensional Power*”. The first dimension is built on Dahl’s formal definition, that describes one actor’s direct exercise of power over another actor (Lukes, S., 2005:17), which Lukes supplements with his second dimension of power, which means that power also can be indirectly exercised through existing values, structures and institutional practices, that is beneficial for one group and less beneficial for another (Ibid.:20-21). Lukes’ third power dimension means that power can be exercised through a combination of authority and manipulation, where one dominant actor can manipulate another actor’s wants and desires (Ibid.:27).

Other scholars, such as Joseph Nye, mainly search to categorise power into *hard power* and *soft power*, where the former represent a more traditional form of power, that includes coercive actions, in terms of military means and economic pressure means, which states can use in order to achieve their foreign policy objectives (Nye, J. S., 2009:95). The latter rather refers to an actor’s ability to shape the decisions, preferences and behaviour of another actor through attraction. Instead of commanding other states to act or behave in a certain manner, a country can attract other actors to support or allow situations that may produce the accomplishments of its own foreign policy objectives. The most common soft power means states are using is diplomacy, trade, co-optation, media and propaganda (Nye, J. S., 1990:166-



167). Depending on the situation, economic means can both be attributed to hard power and soft power. Economic pressure means, such as boycotts and sanctions, is an example of hard power, while economic cooperation and trade would be categorised under soft power (Feklyunina, V., 2015).

These theories and concept of power could be useful when analysing South Africa's international behaviour and exercise of power, but they do not provide specific indicators that can determine whether South Africa is an emerging power or not.

### **3.2 Four power categories**

#### **3.2.1 Great powers**

Robert O. Keohane, one of the most prominent academics in political science and international relations, mainly divides states in *great powers*, *middle powers* and *small powers*, depending on their level of influence in the international system. He defines a *great power* as a state with the power to all alone exercise a large impact, and perhaps also a decisive impact on the global system (Keohane, R. O., 1969:296). Great powers possess an economic and political dominance over other states, and they have a strong capability to achieve their foreign policy objectives on the international arena, often at the expense of less dominant states. Some researchers claim that the political order on the international arena is managed and built by great powers (McDonald, P. J., 2015:557). Some typical features of great powers are economic wealth, military strength, a large population, an influential culture and a considerable diplomatic influence in international forums, such as the UN, but also in their direct relations with other individual states. This may cause small powers or middle powers to take great powers' opinions into account, before they are taking actions or decisions of their own (Neumann, I. B., 2008:130). Great powers are also confidential and strong enough to intervene in conflicts in other states; and can achieve their





foreign policy objectives through these military interventions, but can also claim the responsibility to defend human rights on the international arena, even though the righteousness of their military actions can be questionable (Kerton-Johnson, N., et. al., 2010:2).

The most apparent case of this category is the US, which traditionally also is seen as the hegemonic power in the international system, which Keohane defines as a state “that is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, and is willing to do so” (Keohane, R. O., 2005:21). The US has a great ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives and has a large number of subordinated states, that take the US’ opinions into account, before they act by their own. The country has further an influential culture, a strong diplomatic influence, a big economy and a strong military; and has intervened in several conflicts around the globe (Lantis, J. S., 2013:1920-1925). France, the UK, Russia and China; the permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC, 2019), are often considered to be great powers. However, there is a disagreement among scholars if countries such as China and Russia can be regarded as great powers. Some would rather define them as emerging powers. There are also scholars, as previously mentioned, that not even would call Russia an emerging power (Cooper, A. F. & Flemes, D., 2013:944-946). Many Western scholars and politicians do not want to assign a great power status to Russia (Neumann, I. B., 2008:128-129).

### 3.2.2 Middle powers

According to Keohane, a *middle power* is “a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution” (Keohane, R.O., 1969:296). It has still a moderate influence on the international system, but not in the same extent as a great power. Similar to the other types of power explained above, the existing definitions of middle powers are relatively



broad. However, most researchers agree with this broad idea that countries with a middle-sized economy and a moderate or relatively large ability to influence other actors in the international system, without being the dominating power in any geographic area or context, can be labelled as middle powers. Concerning their foreign policy behaviour, middle powers are often characterised by a strong commitment to multilateralism, through their engagement in international institutions and cooperation with other states. Most middle powers act in a manner that stabilises the international order (James, P. & Kasoff, M. J., 2008:265), presumably because of their desire to maintain a privileged position in the world hierarchy (Jordaan, E, 2003:167-169).

A classic example of a middle power is Canada, which during the 20th century, has advocated multilateralism and been mediating in several conflicts. The country is well integrated in the global market and is engaged in several international cooperations and multilateral commitments, such as the British Commonwealth, NATO, G7, Francophonie, the UN and its branches, but has also a moderate influence in NAFTA and OAS on a regional level (Macdonald, L. & Paltiel, J., 2016:5), without being the dominated country in the region. However, the country has a larger economy than the average of middle powers. The category of middle powers includes a diverse group of states, with countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands (Behringer, R. M., 2005:306), Indonesia, Malaysia (Ping, J. H., 2005:4) and Australia (Jordaan, E, 2003:165).

### **3.2.3 Small powers**

Robert Keohane defines a *small power* as “a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system” (Keohane, R. O., 1969:296). However, they can influence the international system together with a larger group of countries. Nonetheless, small powers have a limited ability to achieve their foreign policy objectives,



but do often fall victim to middle-, emerging- and great powers' exercise of power. Other states with a higher power status often achieve their foreign policy objectives at the expense of small powers, even though these objectives occasionally also are in small powers' interests. In other words, small powers be both be favoured or disfavoured by powerful states' exercise of power (Rothstein, R. L., 1968:23).

Further, small powers cannot obtain national security through their own capabilities, but have to rely on the support and protection from other states, organisations and institutions (Ibid.:23). For instance, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania searched for protection, by joining the EU and NATO in 2004, in order to avoid Russian aggression (Stoicescu, K., 2015:1,6). According to David Vital, the survival of small powers as independent states may be precarious - and dependent on factors they cannot control themselves, or have little influence over (Vital, D., 1967:190). Small powers often take more powerful states' opinions into account, before they are acting on the international arena and taking decisions of their own (Neumann, I. B., 2008:130). Other common characteristics for a small power is a small economy with a low nominal GDP, unfavourable geographical conditions, a small land area and a small population size (Steinsson, S. & Thorhallsson, B., 2017:2). The category of small powers includes countries such as Albania, Montenegro (Archer, C., et. al., 2014), Estonia and Iceland (Pang, G. & Thomas, M. R., 2007:1).

### 3.2.4 Emerging powers

In more recent years, the concept of *emerging powers* has been developed. Emerging powers are in a development process between a middle power status and a great power status. They differ from great powers, in the sense that emerging powers are not, all alone, able to practice a considerable and decisive impact on the global system. In contrast to middle powers, emerging powers are in a continuous process of conquering space in the global



system, through political and economic means - and they have the capability to, often together with other emerging countries, challenge great powers' dominant positions on the international arena (Galves Derolle, G., 2015). Leslie Wehner, doctor in politics and international studies, refers emerging powers to states with increasing material assets and status-seeking behaviour, which may impact the global system and change or affect great powers' dominant position on the international arena. Emerging powers do often have emerging economies and they have steadily increased their presence and influence in international affairs. These emerging powers have adequate development levels and assets to be able to achieve their states' foreign policy objectives. Finally, emerging powers have a considerable regional influence and they normally hold, in contrast to middle powers, a political and economic dominance in their own regions (Wehner, L., 2017).

These features of emerging powers are mostly apparent in Brazil, India and China, since they, among other things, all have emerging economies, a strong diplomatic influence and are constantly conquering space in the global system; and have the ability to together challenge the West-dominated world order (Mahrenbach, L. C., 2015:348). The case of South Africa is more questionable, so the country's power status will be determined through Biscop's and Renard's analytical framework, that concerns the seven dimensions of power.

### **3.2.5 Summary of the four power categories**

In short, a great power is a state that all alone can exercise a large and/or decisive impact on the global system and possesses an economic and political dominance over other states. It has a strong capability to achieve their foreign policy objectives. A middle power cannot all alone exercise a large impact on the global system and are normally not dominating in any particular context, but usually act in a moderate manner that stabilises the international order. It normally has a middle-sized economy and a moderate



ability to influence other actors, usually through an international organisation. A small power has a limited ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives and cannot make a large impact, neither on a small group nor on the international system. A small power normally has a small economy and its foreign policy behaviour is characterised by dependency. It cannot obtain national security through its own capabilities, but has to rely on other states or organisations. Finally, an emerging power is a country with a status-seeking behaviour, that has increased its influence on the international arena, and is often the dominant actor in its geographic region. It is in a development process between a middle power status and a great power status and is successively conquering space in the global system.

However, the definitions of these power concepts are relatively broad; and researchers often disagree about which countries belong to which power categories. By determining a country's power status and category, more precise power indicators can be applied. This will be done in the case of South Africa, which will be analysed through the "*seven dimensions of state power*", presented in the sub-chapter below. The seven dimensions of state power's connection to great-, middle-, small- and emerging powers will also be explained below.

### 3.3 Seven dimensions of power

In 2013, the Belgian professors Sven Biscop and Thomas Renard presented their theory of "*seven dimensions of state power*", which means that great powers are the only countries that have succeeded or have favourable conditions within all seven various dimensions of power, namely; economy, diplomacy, military, resources, culture, population and geography. When a country has succeeded in all these areas, the country can independently exercise a large and decisive impact of the global system. Biscop and Renard describe the international system as an "asymmetrical multipolarity", where the distribution of power is multipolar. This multipolarisation is quantified in



these seven dimensions of state power (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:17). The seven dimensions are divided between social determinants (military, economy, culture and diplomacy) and natural determinants (resources, geography and population), which will be further explained later in this chapter. Biscop and Renard consider sovereign states as “capability containers” - and when these are opened, the authors identify these seven dimensions of power. An emerging power is an actor that develops growing capabilities and has an ability and will to transform its power into successful outcomes in the majority of the dimensions of state power. Biscop and Renard mean that it is important to focus on country’s capabilities and outcomes, since a state that does not have the ability or will to use its own capabilities on an international level, cannot be regarded as a power. A country’s level of power is determined by its capabilities and the extent its capabilities can be transformed into power (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:53-57).

While great powers have succeeded in all of the seven dimensions, small powers have only succeeded in a few of them, or none of them, while middle powers and emerging powers at least have succeeded in more than half of the seven dimensions. In contrast to middle powers, emerging powers are in an ongoing process and successively make more and more progress in these dimensions - and are on their way to reach a great power status (Ibid.:53-57). In other words, small powers have succeeded, or have favourable conditions, in 0-3 of the dimensions, middle powers have succeeded in 4-6 dimensions and great powers have succeeded in all 7 dimensions. As previously mentioned, emerging powers have succeeded in the majority of the dimensions (4 dimensions or more) - and they have developed growing capabilities and made general great progress in most dimensions. They also strive to transform its power in outcomes in all dimensions. Important to notice; it is a possible scenario that a country has



done a great progress in a dimension, even though it has not succeeded in that particular dimension.

In order to fill the research gap and provide a satisfactory answer of the research questions, these seven dimensions will be used for measuring South Africa's level of power and international status, in order to clarify if South Africa meets the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power or not. The seven dimensions will be presented in the paragraphs below, which describes what a state needs to accomplish in order to succeed in each and every dimension.

### **3.3.1 Military**

According to Biscop and Renard, a country has succeeded in the military dimension if its military force is efficient and strong in relation to other states. The efficiency and strength of a country's military can be measured by the use of six indicators/parameters, namely the size of its *military personnel*, its amount of *military expenditures* (in % of GDP), efficiency of *air power*, *naval power* and *land power*, as well as the level of *logistics performance* of the national defence forces (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:17, 21). These six indicators will be applied on the case of South Africa in in paragraph 4.1.1. The country is considered to have succeeded in this dimension if it is ranked over the average all parameters and have partly succeeded if it is ranked over the average in the majority of the parameters. If it only ranked above average in a minority of parameters; three or less, the country has not succeeded in the military dimension.

### **3.3.2 Economy**

A state with a developed economy, that is well integrated in the global economy and has a large economic influence over other states, has succeeded in the economic dimension. The economic wealth, integration and influence of a country can be measured by the use of three main indicators, namely its



*nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ranking, balance of trade* as well as *its level of integration and influence in international financial institutions and cooperations* (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:19-21). These indicators will be applied on the case of South Africa in paragraph 4.1.2. The country has succeeded in this dimension if the results show that South Africa has a nominal GDP above the average and a positive trade balance, but also is engaged and has an influential role in several economic cooperations. It has partly succeeded in the economic dimension if it succeeds in one or two parameters, but have not succeeded if it does not fulfil the requirements of any of the parameters.

### **3.3.3 Culture and national identity**

Concerning the dimension of culture and national identity, a state has succeeded in this dimension if it has an apparent and united national identity and a strong cultural influence in other states (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:24). The investigation of South Africa's culture and national identity in paragraph 4.1.3, will make use of two main indicators. The first is the *level of national unity*, in terms of culture and identity, including traditions and lifestyles, while the second indicator is the *level of cultural influence*, which will be measured through its cultural influence ranking, even though it also will be presented how identities in South Africa are influencing other states. If South Africa both has a strong level of national unity and a high level of cultural influence, with a ranking above the average, it has succeeded in this dimension. If the country only succeeds in one of these two parameters, it has partly succeeded in the dimension, but if it neither has a strong level of national unity nor a considerable level of cultural influence, it has not succeeded in this dimension.





### 3.3.4 Diplomacy

A country with a strong diplomatic position on the international arena and a high level of influence in international forums has succeeded in the diplomatic dimension. Biscop and Renard are mainly measuring a country's diplomatic position and international influence by examining its engagement in international forums and its ability to achieve its foreign policy goals, but also its regional influence (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:23). The indicators for measuring if South Africa succeeds in the diplomatic dimension, in paragraph 4.1.4, will therefore be; *level of regional influence* and *level of influence in international forums*, which will be evaluated through investigating South Africa's engagement and ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives on both levels. South Africa succeeds if it is considered to have a strong regional influence and a noticeable influence in international forums. The country partly succeeds if it has a strong level of influence on one of these levels, but fails if it has a weak influence on both the regional and international level.

### 3.3.5 Resources

Concerning the natural determinants, a state with a lot of useful natural resources, in terms of food and raw materials, has succeeded in the dimension that concerns a country's resources. Biscop and Renard consider a country's natural resources to be useful when it can be self-sufficient on a range of food products and if the state can make a considerable profit on exporting its natural resources (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:19).

Therefore, when evaluating how South Africa is doing in the resources dimension, in paragraph 4.1.5, the following indicators will be used; the *amount and variety of food products* and *export levels of natural resources*. The country succeeds in the resources dimension if it can be self-sufficient on several food products and makes big profits on its exports of natural



resources. It partly succeeds if it accomplishes one of the parameters, but does not succeed if it fails in both parameters.

### **3.3.6 Geography**

A country with a relatively large land area and a strategic geographic position that is beneficial for its foreign policy and trade relations with other states, has succeeded in the geographic dimension (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:18). In paragraph 4.1.6, the two main indicators *size of the land area* and *geographic position* will be used to determine whether South Africa succeeds in the geographic dimension or not. The distance to economic and political cores, access to the coastline and conditions in the neighbouring countries will determine whether its geographic position is strategic or not. If it has a close distance to economic and political cores, has access to the coast and is located in a region with stable conditions and economic wealth, it has a strategic geographic position. The country needs to fulfil at least two of three of these sub-parameters in order to have a strategic geographic position. If the size of the country's land area (in sq. km) is larger than the average and if it has a strategic geographic position, it has succeeded in the geographic dimension. It has partly succeeded if it has beneficial conditions in one of them, and not succeeded if it neither has a land area larger than the average of countries, nor a strategic geographic position.

### **3.3.7 Population**

Finally, to succeed in the dimension that concerns a country's population, a state needs a relatively large population, but also a large working-age population (Biscop, S. & Renard, T., 2013:18-19). The indicators for this investigation, in paragraph 4.1.7, will be the *size of the total population* and the *size the working-age population*. If South Africa's total population size and its size of working-age population is ranked above the average, the country has succeeded in this dimension. It has partly succeeded if one of



these is ranked above the average, and not succeeded if both are ranked under the average.

## **4. South Africa's power status**

### **4.1 Seven dimensions of power on the case of South Africa**

#### **4.1.1 Military**

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF), subordinated under the Department of Defence (DOD), consists of four armed services, namely; the South African Army, South African Air Force, South African Navy and the Military Health Service (DOD, 2009:2). Concerning the first indicator; the *size of its military personnel*, SANDF has in total 66 300 active servants and is ranked as the 56th largest army in the world, based on its active military personnel. However, the other members in BRICS, that often are considered as emerging powers, have much larger sizes of their armies. China is currently ranked as the largest army in the world, with 2 183 000 servants, followed by India, with 1 362 500 servants. Russia is ranked as the 5th largest army, with 1 013 628 servants, while Brazil is ranked as the 15th largest army, with an active military personnel of 334 500 persons. With South Africa's 66 300 active servants (Statista, 2019a), its army is considered to be relatively small, in comparison with the other BRICS countries. Further, SANDF's precursor South African Defence Force (SADF), which was in use during the apartheid era, had 82 400 active personnel in 1986 (Duignan, P., 1986:74), which shows that its amount of military personnel has been reduced in the post-apartheid era.

Regarding the second indicator of *military expenditures*, South Africa has a military budget of \$4.6bn. and is thereby ranked as the 43rd largest military spender. The country has relatively low military costs, in comparison to the other BRICS states, as China has the 2nd largest military



budget (\$224bn.), India the 4th largest (\$55.2bn.) and Russia the 8th largest (\$44bn.) (Statista, 2019b). In 2018, South Africa's military expenditures accounted for 0.98 % of the GDP, but under the apartheid regime, the corresponding number was roughly 5.3 % in 1977 and 4.6 % in 1988 (The World Bank Group, 2019e), which make it clear that both South Africa's budget and military personnel has been reduced in the post-apartheid era.

However, to protect its national security, a larger army and budget may not be necessary for the time being. In contrast to many other states, South Africa is not in an ongoing conflict and the state is not exposed to any direct threat - and may thereby not be in need for a rearmament. It does not necessarily need to be a failure to have minor forces, disarm and spend less financial assets on its military, but it is more important to be able to maintain the national security and meet its needs and foreign objectives. The threat against the sovereign state and national security was greater and more apparent against the apartheid regime, since the white minority rule feared a black uprising. Many states were also ideologically against the apartheid system and wanted to topple the regime. Therefore, it is more logical that the apartheid regime had larger military troops and prioritised more of its expenditures on its defence forces. However, if any internal or external threat would appear against South Africa in the near future, the country still has an available manpower of approximately 26 000 000, of which a majority is fit for service (Statista, 2019c), but they do not seem to be useful in the current time.

To continue, a country's military strength cannot only be measured by its military expenditures and the number of servants in the army. For instance, Israel won the Six Days-War in 1967 with 264 000 troops (of which 50 000 were active), against Egypt, Jordan and Syria, who together had 547 000 troops (Tucker, S., 2004:176). Naturally, it is beneficial for a country to have a large national force, but it is also important to notice how strong and efficient they are in relation to other national forces, which also can be



measured by the four other indicators, namely; *air power*, *naval power*, *land strength* and *logistics*. By measuring the total aircraft strength, South Africa has a ranking of #46, while it is ranked #69 in naval assets. In average, it is ranked #52 in land strength, by considering its amount of combat tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, self-propelled artillery, towed artillery and rocket projectors. Concerning logistics, which include labour force, merchant marine strength, major terminals/hubs/ports, railway coverage, roadway coverage and usable airports, the country is in average ranked #31. It has a great roadway and railway coverage, as well as many usable airports, in comparison to other states, but a mediocre merchant marine strength (Statista, 2019c).

To sum up, it can be concluded that South Africa has succeeded in this dimension, since it accomplishes all parameters and has thereby a stronger national defence force than most countries, in terms of military personnel, budget, air power, naval power, land strength and logistics. However, it has not made an overall great progress in this dimension, according to Biscop's and Renard's framework, since its military personnel and expenditures (in % of GDP) have decreased, which lower its ranking and weaken its military power, even though it is understandable, since the threats against the state drastically have been reduced, since 1994. South Africa is a large regional military power with advantages in war equipment, military personnel and budget, but in comparison with other powerful states on the international arena, such as the other members of BRICS, South Africa is far behind. The country is ranked above the average in all parameters, but is never among the top ten and is very low ranked in comparison to the other BRICS countries.

#### 4.1.2 Economy

South Africa is often described as a “continental economic giant” (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:112) and is the second largest economy in Africa,



after Nigeria, based on nominal GDP (IMF, 2019). The country has had a remarkable economic growth and has almost tripled its GDP in the two last decades. In 2000, its GDP was approximately 136 billion US\$, while the corresponding value in 2018 was roughly 368 billion US\$. At the present time, South Africa has the 34th highest *GDP ranking* in the world (The World Bank Group, 2019a), which is the first indicator for the economic dimension. South Africa has the most innovative economy and efficient market in its region, that mainly is driven by its developed transport infrastructure, a heavy domestic competition and strong economic institutions. The country's economy could grow even more, if it addressed corruption, the inflexible labour market, the shortage of skilled workers, as well as the country's inefficient electricity supply (WEF, 2015:326-327).

Concerning the second indicator of *balance of trade*, the country exported goods for \$108bn., and imported for \$81.9bn. in 2017, which results in a positive trade balance. The main export destinations for South African goods are China, the US, India, the UK and Germany, while the top imports origins of South Africa are China, Germany, the US, India and Saudi Arabia (Simoës, A., 2018). By going further to the third indicator; the *level of integration and influence in international financial institutions and cooperations*, it is apparent that the country is well integrated in the global economy and has an influential role in many international economic associations. On a regional level, South Africa is participating in several regional trade agreements (RTAs). It has a prominent role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), among others, which is an economic association with fifteen member states (SADC, 2004). It is also a part of the Southern African Customs Union, which is a customs union between Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and South Africa (SACU, 2013). Further, the country is active in matters that concern economic affairs and trade within the AU. As a “continental economic giant” it has a strong



influence over economic policies within the union (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2017).

Beyond the African continent, South Africa is also a part of several economic associations and cooperations on an international level. For instance, it has a close economic cooperation with the other BRICS countries. In 2014, they created the New Development Bank (NDB), in order to achieve sustainable and balanced growth in the member states (New Development Bank, 2018). Furthermore, South Africa has close trade relations with the EU, mainly through the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA), but also through SADC's trade agreement with the EU. The country also has trade relations with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), through its membership in SACU (WTO, 2019). Finally, South Africa is also a member in IMF and WTO, where it cooperates with other member states to promote international trade and secure a financial stability around the world (Boulle, L., 2011:136).

To draw a conclusion, South Africa has succeeded in this dimension, since it has accomplished all three parameters that decides whether a country succeeds in the economic dimension or not. The country's GDP is ranked over the average, has a positive trade balance and is well integrated in the global economy has a considerable influence in several international financial institutions and cooperations, but mostly at a regional level, through associations such as AU, SADC and SACU. The country has also made a great progress in this dimension, since it has had a noticeable economic growth and is today well integrated in the global economy, in contrast to the apartheid era.

#### **4.1.3 Culture and national identity**

By applying the first indicator of *level of national unity*, in terms of identity and culture, on the case of South Africa, it is apparent that the country has a multicultural and divided national identity, which to a large extent is based



on language and ethnic background. The South African constitution recognizes 11 official languages, but a range of unofficial languages are also spoken in the country (Murray, J., 2012:93). Only 9.6 % of the South African population have English as their first language. The most frequently spoken languages in South African households are IsiZulu; 22.7 %, IsiXhosa; 16 % and Afrikaans; 13.5 % (Statistics South Africa, 2012:24). The country also has a range of ethnic groups with different origins. *Statistics South Africa* asked people to classify their ethnic origin in one of five different racial categories. This investigation displayed that the population consisted of 76.4 % Black South African, 9.1 % White, 8.9 % Coloured, 2.5 % Asian and 0.5 % Other/Unspecified (Ibid.:31). There are, however, large contradictions between groups with various ethnic backgrounds in South Africa. Racism and xenophobic attitudes are still common - and violence based on ethnicity is frequently occurring, which undermine the trust and affinity between different groups (Adjai, C. & Lazaridis, G., 2013:192). The fragmented South African identity may constrain its decisive foreign policy and its ability to transform its ambitions and foreign policy objectives into concrete accomplishments on the international arena (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:111).

Concerning the second indicator of *cultural influence*, South Africa is included on the list of the 80 most cultural influential states in the world; and among these is South Africa ranked at #37 (US News & World Report, 2019b). Many black and coloured communities have their own identities, languages and traditions, while the white minority to a large extent is influenced by a Western culture, in terms of lifestyle, traditions, religion, gender roles, etc. The modern Western lifestyle has also successively influenced South Africans with other ethical backgrounds. However, in a protest against a white dominating society, African nationalism and an African renaissance has also been prominent in South Africa during the post-1994 era, which also was reflected by the leading party African National





Congress (ANC), especially under the former president Thabo Mbeki. The idea of African nationalism and a common African culture and an ‘African identity’ has influenced several other states on the African continent, in particular through associations such as the African Union (AU). The fundamental idea is that Africans should take pride of and demand their Africanness, after the damage colonialism and apartheid have caused to many African societies (Eze, C., 2014:236-238).

To sum up, South Africa has a low level of cultural unity, with disputes between different ethnic groups and where people’s identities are rather determined by their ethical background than their nationality; and has thereby not accomplished the first parameter. However, it has a relatively high level of cultural influence, with a cultural influence ranking of #37, which is above the average, and has thereby accomplished one out of two parameters, which means that South Africa partly has succeeded in this dimension. Further, the country has made some progress in this dimension, since it is less fractionated than during the apartheid era and has a higher level of cultural influence than before 1994, when the country was isolated from the international community. The country has further developed from having an oppressive apartheid system with a systematic racial discrimination, to spreading the idea of retaking the Africinity all over the continent.

#### **4.1.4 Diplomacy**

South Africa has a prominent diplomatic position both on a regional and international level, most apparent through its engagement in international organisations and associations. The main objectives of the country’s foreign policy is to promote Africanism and contribute to peace, development and human rights around the globe, but also to maintain a “global recognition as Africa’s leading state”. Its regional power status has deep roots and it is developed by political leaders and presidents with internationalist-oriented



interests (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:112). When Thabo Mbeki came to office (1999-2008), Africanism, internationalism and universalism was promoted, in order to overturn the policies, ideological principles and mindsets, which was normalised by the preceding white minority authorities during the apartheid-era. After 1994, South Africa kept a unique international status, but not as an “island of European civilisation” in Africa, but rather because of its neo-liberal values and transitions (Ibid.:113).

South Africa also has an influential and important role in the African Union. Thabo Mbeki was the first chairman of the union (The African Union Commission, 2018) and AU’s Pan-African Parliament is based in Johannesburg (Frykberg, M., 2018). South Africa was also one of the states that founded the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which is a development programme of the AU and mainly aims to improve regional integration, human capital development and industrialisation in Africa (New Partnership for Africa’s Development, 2018). South Africa has a prominent role in AU’s agenda setting and decision-making process. The country is particularly striving for a greater integration and free movement within the AU (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2017). The country’s foreign policy during the post-apartheid era has been characterised by an endeavour to create a developmental and redistributive justice on a regional, as well as an international level, that enlarges the engagement for peace and human rights, that was uplifted by Nelson Mandela (Le Pere, G., 2014:31-32). South Africa has, among other things, been mediating in armed conflicts in Libya, Burundi, Zimbabwe and the Ivory Coast (Hawkins, V., 2012:6). The country is also providing some development aid to other African states and is currently the leading aid-donor in Africa (Le Pere, G., 2014:51). However, the country cannot offer as large amounts as other aid-providers in the Global South, such as the Gulf states and the BRIC countries (Vickers, B., 2012:535).



South Africa is, however, very engaged and has an important role in several international associations, such as the United Nations and G20. South Africa was one of the founding members of the UN, but was suspended from the organisation in 1974, because of its apartheid system. In the post-apartheid period, when South Africa was allowed to be a part of the UN system again, the government assumed a foreign policy with a strong focus on multilateralism and its engagement in the United Nations. The country has been serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC twice (2007-2008 and 2011-2012) and is engaged in all five main bodies of the UN and is thereby actively promoting the principles of the UN Charter. Through its engagement in the UN, South Africa has also been able to promote security, peace and development on the African continent, in line with its foreign policy interests and the African Agenda (PMUN, 2018). South Africa is also a member of the G20, which is described as an association of the twenty wealthiest most powerful states worldwide. At present, South Africa is the only African state in the group - and the country has been able to make great efforts in forming a new development agenda within the association (Ebrahim, S., 2018). South Africa claims itself to have a representative role for other African states in international forums, in order to rise new priorities and voices on the international arena, but also to create a “gateway into Africa” (Boulle, L., 2011:136).

South Africa is also increasingly engaged in different South-South cooperations. In 2003, the country entered a partnership with Brazil and India, through “IBSA Dialogue Forum” (Cooper, A. F. & Fledes, D., 2013:952), that is aiming to achieve sustainable development and a higher standard of living for people in developing countries, but also to develop cohesive policies that concerns issues such as security, energy, agriculture and environment (Stuenkel, O., 2015:2). In 2009, South Africa founded the BASIC association, together with Brazil, India and China. These four newly industrialised countries are mainly cooperating in the climate issue and are



striving to cut their greenhouse gas emissions (Hallding, K., et. al., 2013:609). South Africa is further engaged in several economic cooperations, as mentioned in the economic dimension in 4.1.2. In 2010, the country finally became a member in BRICS, which is a cooperative association, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (The Banking Association South Africa, 2015). The member states are mainly cooperating through formal diplomacy between their governments, governmental institutions, such as state-own companies, and a common engagement for civil society issues in their own countries (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2018). Since the BRICS is a South-South cooperation, they can claim themselves to be representatives for other developing countries in the Global South - and they may carry similar grievances towards the current world order that is dominated by the West (Cooper, A. F. & Flesher, D., 2013:952).

To sum up, South Africa has considerable level of international influence and a great ability to reach its foreign policy objectives through its engagement on a regional level and in international forums. Therefore, it has accomplished both parameters and has thereby succeeded in the diplomatic dimension. South Africa has also made a clear progress in this dimension; from being isolated from international community during the apartheid era, to being a regional power and an influential actor in several international associations.

#### **4.1.5 Resources**

During the apartheid era, South Africa's investments and international trade were negatively affected by boycotts and sanctions by countries that were opposed the South African apartheid system and, therefore, the country's natural resources were not useful on the international market (Kumar, R., 2002:133-134). However, a great transformation occurred when the country became a democracy in 1994, when the country once again became included



in the international system and its exports of its natural resources increased (Alden, C. & Schoeman, M., 2013:112).

South Africa has a lot of useful natural resources, such as diamonds, gold and platinum, which also are the country's main exports (Simoes, A., 2018). The country is the second largest gold producer in the world, the third largest coal exporter and the largest producer of platinum, manganese and chrome. The mining sector further generates hundreds of thousands of jobs and contributes to more employment (Morgan, B. M., et. al., 2013:4), but also attracts foreign direct investments (FDIs) in South Africa (Gebrehiwet, N., 2019:463). South Africa's agricultural sector is highly diversified, and it includes the production of sugar, oilseeds, subtropical fruits, wine, most vegetables and the major grains, except from rice. The country's livestock production includes sheep, cattle, hogs and dairy, as well as a well-developed egg and poultry industry. Roughly 10 % of South Africa's export earnings origin from the agricultural sector, with the value of \$11bn, where wine, corn, citrus and grapes are accounting for the largest part of the exports. The country is self-sufficient on all these food products and does not need to import them. However, it imports other food products, such as rice, wheat, offal and chicken cuts, palm oil and soybean meals (International Trade Administration, 2019).

To conclude, South Africa has succeeded in this dimension, since the country has a large amount and variety of food products and is self-sufficient on a range of products. It has also very useful resources for the export market, since the country is among the world's top three largest exporters of gold, coal, manganese, platinum and chrome; and makes big profits on these raw materials. Therefore, the country accomplishes both parameters and has thereby succeeded in the dimension that concerns a country's resources. In addition, the country has made a great progress in this dimension, since natural resources has been successively more and more



useful on the international market, especially after South Africa became included in the international community again, after the apartheid era.

#### 4.1.6 Geography

South Africa has a surface area of 1,219,090 million square kilometres and has thereby the 23rd largest territory in the world (The World Bank Group, 2019d). The country has a coastline of roughly 3000 km (Misheer, N., et. al., 2006:1640), which is beneficial for its foreign trade and for transporting goods over the seas. South Africa is often mentioned as a “*gateway to Africa*”, where its physical geography and location provide opportunities for being a gateway, mainly because of its long coastline and access to both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. Other states in Southern Africa also depend upon South Africa’s transport infrastructure, in terms of roads and railways, as well as harbours and airports, in order to be connected to the world market (Draper, P. & Scholvin, S., 2012:5). For instance, landlocked Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are closely tied to South Africa, because of their geographical location, since it is mainly through South Africa’s territory they can be connected to the oceans and thereby reach the world markets (Ibid.:9). Therefore, these countries need to keep good relations with South Africa, so the latter do not restrict their transport links to the ocean (Ibid.:3).

However, South Africa is located in a relatively poor region and is surrounded with countries suffering from a low GDP and internal conflicts. By noticing countries such as Austria and Switzerland, it is clear that they have benefited a lot from their geographic location and their wealthy and peaceful neighbours, or in other words; benefited from a positive spillover effect, much because of the neighbouring markets (Collier, P., 2007:55-56). Similar can be seen in South Africa’s region, where its neighbours may benefit from a growth spillover from South Africa’s prosperous economy, while South Africa itself may be disfavoured by a negative spillover effect from its neighbours and does not benefit from the



neighbouring markets. The country would probably have been more economically favoured by being located in Europe. Conflicts in other countries in the region also impair their economy, which may lead to a negative spillover effect in South Africa. The country has not been involved in any interstate conflicts in recent times, but has made a military intervention in its neighbouring country Lesotho (Williams, C., 2019:25).

Further, South Africa's geographical location is unfavourable in another aspect; it lacks centrality and is far distanced from political and economic cores, such as Europe and the US. However, South Africa is the only state in Africa that has a coastline towards both the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. The country can be easily accessed by cargo ships from other emerging cores on the international arena, such as China, India and Brazil (Draper, P. & Scholvin, S., 2012:8).

To conclude, South Africa has partly succeeded in this dimension, since the size of its land area is above the average of countries and has thereby accomplished the first parameter. However, even though it has a long coastline and access to both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean two seas, which is beneficial for its foreign trade, it is far distanced to the recent economic and political cores and is undermined by bad conditions in the neighbouring countries; and does thereby not accomplish the second parameter, since it fails in two of three sub-parameters. Therefore, the country has partly succeeded in the geographic dimension, since it accomplished one of two parameters. Concerning the progress, the country has had a constant status, since it obviously cannot change its geographical location, that lacks centrality. However, the country may benefit more and more of its location, by changes in the international power distribution, such as the rise of the Global South, when other political and economic cores appear.



## 4.1.7 Population

South Africa has a population of roughly 58 millions and is ranked as the 24th most populated country in the world. In similar to most states, South Africa has had a steady population growth, and has doubled its population size since 1980. China and India are the two most populated countries and the world, while Brazil has the 6th and Russia the 9th largest population (The World Bank Group, 2019b). South Africa has a rather normal working-age population, with 17.24 % in early working age (15-24 years), 42.05 % in prime working age (25-54 years) and 6.71 % in mature working age (55-64 years). The total working-age population represents 66 % of the population (Index Mundi, 2019). The average working-age population in the world is 65.3 %, so South Africa is just over the average. The corresponding numbers for the other BRICS members are: Brazil 70 %, China 71 %, India 67 % and Russia 67 % (The World Bank Group, 2019c). However, in numbers, the working-age populations in these countries are far more, since they have much larger populations than South Africa.

Since South Africa's total population size is ranked above the average, and has a moderate size of its working-age population that is ranked just above the average, the country has accomplished both parameters in the dimension that concerns a country's population; and has thereby succeeded in this dimension. It has also made great progress in this dimension, since the country has had a fast population growth and has doubled its population size in 40 years.

## 4.2 Final discussion of South Africa's power status

This paragraph aims to conclude and answer the research question of whether South Africa is an emerging power or not. By going back to the analytical framework, Biscop and Renard characterise an emerging power as a state that has succeeded in 4-6 dimensions, in similar to a middle power.





However, in contrast to a middle power, an emerging power has also made a great progress, in general terms, in most of the dimensions and strives to succeed in all dimensions. Great powers are the only countries that have succeeded in all dimensions.

The results of how well South Africa is doing in the different dimensions are concluded in the table below, which indicates that South Africa has succeeded in five dimensions and partly succeeded in two dimensions.

**Table 1: Compilation of the dimensions on the case of South Africa**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Succeed</i>	<i>Partly succeed</i>	<i>Does not succeed</i>	<i>Has made a general positive progress</i>
Military	X			No
Economy	X			Yes
Culture and national identity		X		Yes
Diplomacy	X			Yes
Resources	X			Yes
Geography		X		Static
Population	X			Yes

As seen in the table above, the country has also made great progress in most of the dimensions during the years, especially in those dimensions it succeeds in. South Africa has had a vigorous economic growth, and in contrast to the apartheid era, the country is today well integrated in the global economy and has an influential role in several economic associations. Its economy is no longer a subject for sanctions and boycotts. The country has



made some progress in the cultural dimension, since it is less fractionated than during the apartheid era and has a higher level of cultural influence than before 1994, when the country has isolated from the international community. Even though its own culture and national identity is still fragmented, the country has developed from having an oppressive apartheid system with a systematic racial discrimination, to spreading the idea of retaking the Africanity all over the continent. Concerning its diplomacy, the country is once again integrated in the international community and more and more active in international organisations, such as the UN and G20. It has the same resources as in the apartheid era, but they are much more useful now on the export market. Finally, it has a relatively large population and has doubled its population in less than 40 years. The country has made great progress in all these five dimensions. South Africa is still in an ongoing process and will probably advance even more in the coming years, which is a characteristic of an emerging power.

By following Biscop's and Renard's requirements for succeeding in the military dimension, South Africa has made less progress in this dimension, since it has a smaller amount of military personnel and less military expenditures (in % of its total GDP), than during the apartheid era. However, it is still considered to have succeeded in this dimension, since it is still ranked higher than the average, in terms of military personnel, military expenditures (in % of GDP), air power, naval power, land power and logistics performance. Finally, concerning the geographic dimension, the country has had a constant status, since it obviously cannot change its geographical location that lacks centrality. However, the country may actually get more and more advantages of its geographical location, by changes on the international arena, such as the rise of the Global South, when other political and economic cores appear. Since South Africa is considered to have succeeded in five dimensions and have made a great progress in five



of the dimensions, the country meets the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power, according to Biscop and Renard's framework.

It is important to notice that even though South Africa fills the requirements for being labelled as an emerging power, according to Biscop's and Renard's framework, it is a much weaker power than the other BRICS countries and has problems to emerge all alone. In similar to a middle power, South Africa cannot all alone act efficiently on the international arena, but is able to affect and have a systemic impact on the international system through a smaller group or an international organisation. However, in contrast to a great power, it does not have the ability to all alone exercise a large and/or decisive impact on the international system, and have not yet succeeded in all dimensions. South Africa has a status-seeking behaviour and an increasing influence in the international system. It has made a great progress in most of the dimensions and strives to succeed in all seven dimensions. However, it is very dependent on international associations, such as the BRICS, UN and G20. It has a greater opportunity to achieve its foreign policy objectives, represents other African states and get a greater influence through associations like these. At present, South-South Cooperations like IBSA, BRICS and AU may not have the capability to overthrow or seriously challenge the Western-dominated global system, but can rather offer an alternative to Western domination and have a great impact on other states in the Global South, such as newly independent states on the African continent. Powerful South-South Cooperations, like BRICS, present a critical perspective against the liberal Western system and may possibly challenge the liberal world order in the future.

## **5. Conclusions**

By applying Biscop's and Renard's seven dimensions of power on the case of South Africa, it can be concluded that South Africa is an emerging power,



since it has succeeded in the dimensions that concern military, economy, diplomacy, resources and population and partly succeeded in the dimensions that concerns culture and national identity and geography. The country has also made progress in all dimensions, except from the military dimension and geographic dimension. However, South Africa is the weakest power of the member states in BRICS, that often are mentioned as emerging powers, and does neither have the ability to all alone exercise a large nor a decisive impact on the global system, as a great power is able to do. Similar to a middle power, it is to a large extent dependent on international cooperations and institutions, but has made a great progress in most of the power dimensions and obtains an increasing influence over other states on the international arena. South Africa is still in an ongoing process and will probably continue to advance in the dimensions in a fast pace. Therefore, the country will presumably be a stronger emerging power in the future - and may also develop into a potential great power, even though it is not very likely in a near future.

It would be relevant for future research to investigate which political and economic consequences South Africa's emerging power status and its prominent role in the international community may bring for other African states. Another area for future research may also be to conduct a multiple case study and compare the status-seeking strategies of several emerging powers, but also to examine how their prominent roles on the international arena affect their neighbouring countries. As mentioned earlier in this study, dominant countries has a great influence on less powerful states. The power distribution on the international arena has changed significantly during the last decades, and has turned into an increasing multipolar system, where other states in the Global South get more influence and power over less dominating countries. The power distribution on the international arena is not static, but is constantly changing. Even though powerful states can provide advantages for other countries, they can also abuse their power status to



achieve their foreign policy objectives at the expense of other states. Therefore, it is important to stay updated and not get stuck in outdated notions of the world order and power distribution on the international arena, but noticing emerging powers, such as South Africa and other BRICS members in the Global South and carefully monitor their foreign policy behaviour and exercise of power. Thereby, early warning signals for pernicious exercise of power can be identified, which in turn may promote the work against dominant countries' eventual violations and abuse of power, as well as the efforts for a more just world.



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