



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTH AFRICA
IN THE PRE- AND IMMEDIATE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

by

NATALIE CELESTE SLABBERT

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree

**MAGISTER ARTIUM
(INTERNATIONAL POLITICS)**

in the
FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
December 1999



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest gratitude to:

Prof. M. Hough for his guidance;

Estrellita Weyers; Wilma Martin; and my mother, Lorraine Slabbert, for their tireless efforts;

My husband, Christopher, for his constant support.

Dedicated to my Grandparents, Tony, and Connie.

Rest in Peace - you are not forgotten.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	v ii
CHAPTER 1: THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE	1
1. The concept of strategy	1
2. The traditional meaning of strategic significance	3
2.1 National capability	3
2.1.1 Strong and weak states	5
2.1.2 Physical determinants of national capability	6
2.1.2.1 Geography, location and size	6
2.1.2.2 Climatic conditions	7
2.1.2.3 Natural resources	8
a. Agricultural resources	8
b. Mineral resources	9
c. Energy resources	9
2.1.2.4 Population and manpower	10
a. Size and distribution	10
b. The importance of demography	11
c. Technical and educational levels	12
2.1.2.5 Economic capability	12
a. Industrial capacity	14
b. Technological capability	14
c. Communications infrastructure	15
2.1.2.6 Military capability	16
a. Uses of military capability	16
b. Types of military capability	17
2.1.3 Non-tangible determinants of national capability	19
2.1.3.1 National character and morale	19
2.1.3.2 Political organisation	20
2.1.3.3 Political leadership	21

2.1.3.4	Economic policy	22
2.1.4	Ego/role perception	23
2.1.5	The external environment	25
3.	The effect of the end of the Cold War on the concept of strategic significance	26
3.1	Effect on national capability	26
3.2	Effect on perceptions of strategic significance	27
3.2.1	The marginalisation of Africa	29
3.2.1.1	Economic marginalisation	29
3.2.1.2	Strategic/military marginalisation	32
3.2.1.3	Political/diplomatic marginalisation	32
4.	Conclusion	33
 CHAPTER 2: SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL CAPABILITY IN THE PRE-1990 PERIOD		45
1.	Physical determinants of national capability	45
1.1	Geography, location and size	46
1.1.1	Topographical features	46
1.1.2	Climatic conditions	47
1.2	Natural resources	48
1.2.1	Agricultural resources	48
1.2.2	Mineral resources	49
1.2.3	Energy resources	50
1.3	Population and manpower	52
1.3.1	Size and distribution	52
1.3.2	Employment in South Africa	54
1.3.3	Technical and educational levels	55
1.4	Economic capability	56
1.4.1	Industrial capacity	58
1.4.2	Technological capability	61
1.4.3	Communications infrastructure	63
1.5	Military capability	65
1.5.1	An overview of the defence budget	66
1.5.2	Manpower and armaments	66



1.5.3	Military objectives	68
2.	Non-tangible determinants of national capability	69
2.1	National character and morale	70
2.2	Political organisation	73
2.3	Political leadership	74
2.4	Economic policy	75
3.	Conclusion	76
 CHAPTER 3: SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL CAPABILITY IN THE 1990-1993 PERIOD		86
1.	Physical determinants of national capability	86
1.1	Natural resources	87
1.1.1	Agricultural resources	87
1.1.2	Mineral resources	88
1.1.3	Energy resources	89
1.2	Population and manpower	92
1.2.1	Size and distribution	92
1.2.2	Employment in South Africa	93
1.2.3	Technical and educational levels	93
1.3	Economic capability	95
1.3.1	Industrial capacity	96
1.3.2	Technological capability	99
1.3.3	Communications infrastructure	100
1.4	Military capability	101
1.4.1	An overview of the defence budget	102
1.4.2	Manpower and armaments	103
2.	Non-tangible determinants of national capability	106
2.1	National character and morale	106
2.2	Political organisation	110
2.3	Political leadership	112
2.4	Economic policy	113
3.	Conclusion	115

CHAPTER 4: SOUTH AFRICA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF	
EGO PERCEPTIONS IN THE PRE-1990 PERIOD	124
1. World War II and South Africa's international status in the immediate aftermath	125
2. Ego perceptions based on South Africa's national capability	127
2.1 Geographical location	128
2.2 Anti-communist stalwart	130
2.3 Military capability	133
2.4 Strategic mineral reserves	135
2.5 Importance to the Southern African region	137
2.5.1 Economic role	137
2.5.2 Strategic role	140
2.5.3 Trade in Southern Africa	143
3. Conclusion	145
CHAPTER 5: SOUTH AFRICA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF	
ALTER PERCEPTIONS IN THE PRE-1990 PERIOD	154
1. The international community's perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance	155
1.1 The US and South Africa - perceptions and relations	155
1.1.1 1950s and 1960s	156
1.1.2 1970s	157
1.1.3 1980s	158
1.2 Britain and South Africa - perceptions and relations	163
1.3 The EC and South Africa - perceptions and relations	166
1.4 The Southern African region and South Africa - perceptions and relations	168
1.4.1 South West Africa/Namibia	170
1.4.2 Angola	171
1.4.3 The SADCC	172
1.4.4 The impact of sanctions on Southern Africa	174
1.5 The USSR and South Africa - perceptions and relations	176
2. The international sanctions campaign against South Africa	179
2.1 The legal framework for mandatory sanctions	180

2.2	A history of UN sanctions against South Africa	181
2.3	Co-operation and trade with South Africa during the sanctions era	183
2.3.1	Armaments trade during the embargo	183
2.3.2	Oil trade during the embargo	184
3.	Conclusion	185
CHAPTER 6: SOUTH AFRICA'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF		
EGO AND ALTER PERCEPTIONS IN THE 1990-1993 PERIOD		198
1.	Ego perceptions regarding the strategic significance of South Africa in the 1990-1993 period	199
1.1	Relevant elements of national capability and related ego perceptions	199
1.1.1	Strategic mineral reserves	200
1.1.2	National capability in the Southern African region	201
1.1.2.1	Trade and the possibility of a regional economic bloc	204
1.1.2.2	Regional security	206
1.1.2.3	Possible membership of regional and international organisations	207
1.1.3	International economic capability	208
1.1.3.1	Relations with the international community	210
1.1.3.2	Arms control, nuclear proliferation and international responsibility	211
2.	Alter perceptions regarding the strategic significance of South Africa in the 1990-1993 period	213
2.1	The end of the sanctions campaign against South Africa	214
2.2	The resumption of international relations	217
2.2.1	The US and South Africa - perceptions and relations	217
2.2.2	Britain and South Africa - perceptions and relations	221
2.2.3	The EC and South Africa - perceptions and relations	222
2.2.4	The African continent and South Africa - perceptions and relations	224
2.2.5	The USSR/Russia and South Africa - perceptions and relations	227
3.	Conclusion	230

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS	244
1. The concept of strategic significance and the end of the Cold War	244
2. Comparative analysis	245
2.1 National capability	246
2.1.1 South Africa's national capability in the pre-1990 period	246
2.1.2 South Africa's national capability in the 1990-1993 period	247
2.2 Ego perceptions	248
2.2.1 Ego perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance in the pre-1990 period	248
2.2.2 Ego perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance in the 1990-1993 period	250
2.3 Alter perceptions	251
2.3.1 Alter perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance in the pre-1990 period	251
2.3.2 Alter perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance in the 1990-1993 period	253
3. Tabulated comparison	254
SUMMARY	261
SAMEVATTING	263

INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study is to discuss the strategic significance of the Republic of South Africa over a specific period of time. *Strategic significance* and *strategy* have undergone an evolution in modern times to include aspects other than pure military power and three criteria have been identified as vital components of strategic significance. National capability, in both its physical and non-physical aspects, needs to be taken into account; as does a nation's ego perceptions of strategic significance. The third important element involves perceptions of the external environment as regards a particular nation's importance. Although these three elements are studied in isolation, the concept of strategic significance is a total one and these aspects thus interact with each other in a dynamic environment. The focus of the study takes the form of a comparative analysis, identifying two periods, the first from approximately the Second World War until 1989 and the second, from 1990 until 1993; while ultimately attempting to verify any changes in South Africa's strategic significance after 1989.

Chapter One undertakes a theoretical study of the word strategy, as well as the concept of strategic significance. The framework in this regard is predominantly derived from the publications of some of the pre-eminent theorists of our time, for example, Beaufré, A, *An Introduction to Strategy* and *Strategy of Action*; Lider, J, *Military Theory*; Holsti, K J, *International Politics* and; Morgenthau, H J, *Politics among Nations*. Factual and other data relating to South Africa, has been provided by various official sources, including the Central Statistical Service of South Africa and Debates of Parliament.

Chapters Two and Three of the dissertation present statistical and other evidence of South Africa's national capability in the two periods under discussion. Both the tangible and non-tangible aspects of capability are discussed in an attempt to discover any differences in this regard, hence the utilisation of a comparative analysis. Chapter Four commences with a brief description of South Africa's historical background in the period during and immediately after the Second World War, in order to ascertain any factors which could have had an influence on South Africa's strategic significance. Ego perceptions of strategic significance in the pre-1990 period are also discussed in this chapter. Role perceptions, as based on elements of national capability, are considered particularly important in this regard in that a nation's significance and ability to fulfill policy goals is dependent on the correct utilisation and manipulation of national capability. This is followed by Chapter Five, which discusses alter perceptions relating to South Africa's strategic significance during the same period; while Chapter Six covers the second period under discussion in this study, namely, from 1990 to 1993 and the relevant aspects of ego and alter perceptions.

It can be noted that the external environment has an important impact on strategic significance in that constant interactions in the international system are unavoidable. It has, however, proved difficult to obtain information relating to alter perceptions of South Africa's strategic significance, particularly as regards

certain nations, such as the former USSR/Russia, and particularly in the post-Cold War period. Whether this is because South Africa was not considered a valuable player in global politics can be contested on the grounds of the various relationships established between the RSA and the international community, albeit secretly in many cases. This study will present indications of strategic significance as deduced from these very relationships. Primary sources have, however, been used where possible, as have yearbooks, magazines and newspapers, in an attempt to execute a detailed study. The lack of information in the 1990-1993 period can also be attributed, in part, to the end of the Cold War when nations became increasingly introspective as they attempted to strengthen their economies and attend to other national concerns. Chapter Six is followed by a comparative analysis, where South Africa's strategic significance during both periods will be discussed. In this section, various evidence and deductions will be presented in an attempt to verify the importance of South Africa, both perceived and actual, to the international community in general. This will include a classification, in tabulated form, of the primary elements of South Africa's national capability, as well as ego and alter perceptions of strategic significance, in order to assess any differences and similarities between the two periods under discussion.

It is thus possible to execute a comparative analysis at a narrower level than total polity and the narrower focus gradually became more fashionable within the political science profession. Comparison makes it possible to construct rankings and classifications, and also provides an indication of differences. Factors which can be included in a comparative analysis are agricultural production; population; size; Gross National Product; political leadership and; newspaper circulation. Of these, there are naturally certain characteristics which are difficult to precisely measure, for example, leadership charisma.¹⁾ Comparative analysis also poses certain methodological problems. The first of these is selecting the units of comparison; while another problem is that of the construction of indices for the comparison of variables. The third problem is that of comparability. While the question has been raised as to the value of comparative studies, it would appear that such an analysis can indeed provide a partial explanation of certain aspects and phenomena in the political environment.²⁾ Comparison is not, however, the only approach utilised in this study and there is also a certain amount of descriptive analysis.

Comparative study has been defined as: "The study of numerous cases along the same lines, with a view to reporting and interpreting numerous measures on the same variables of different *individuals*".³⁾ Comparative politics has also been described as: "A combination of appropriate method, strategy and theoretical approach by which one seeks generalisations that provide explanations related to particular problems or questions about politics".⁴⁾ A third definition is offered in Marsh and Stoker: "The comparative method involves the presentation of empirical evidence of some kind in an attempt to compare systematically and explicitly political phenomena".⁵⁾ By the late 1990s, this method of study was considered an essential tool for political research.⁶⁾ In broad terms, the concept of comparative study involves the presentation of information, in the form of facts and/or figures, for the purpose of comparison.

Max Weber characterised modern science as being concerned with the study of empirical reality, in a world which should be dealt with in pieces and not as a whole. He was convinced that modern science provides the true condition of the universe or what he terms the “nature of objective reality” and emphasised that facts were always subject to continual refinement and change. Weber also stated that science was progressive in nature, with modern science, for example, displaying superiority to ancient science.⁷⁾ The comparative method investigates empirical reality, in a piecemeal fashion, as emphasised by Weber. As will be ascertained, the concepts and facts dealt with in this study are also dynamic ones and are thus open to re-evaluation. It is thus interesting to note that no matter how archaic Weber’s observations may seem, they remain salient, particularly as regards comparative study.

Comparative analysis creates an opportunity to discuss specific phenomena and identify uniformities and differences. It is, in fact, an old discipline and as the concept evolved, it shifted to the study of separate countries. Aristotle has been noted as the first student of comparative politics. He defined *constitution* in broad terms and included such aspects as political institutions and the educational levels of citizens.⁸⁾ Comparative analysis can be conducted without a theoretical starting point, although in this study, a broad theoretical framework has been utilised. The concept, however, is not always simple as regards execution. It requires systematically-collected data which, as noted, is not always readily attainable and even when such data is available, it is not always possible to make a suitable comparison.⁹⁾

The modern state can be defined according to the means available to it or to be more precise, the use of force.¹⁰⁾ In other words, the variables and capabilities available to a particular state will determine, to a certain extent, the power and hence strategic significance of that state. As the concept of comparative politics has developed, it has become clear that the problem is not that this type of analysis is impossible, but rather that *so much* of it is possible. According to the *Handbook of Political Science*, one of the primary purposes of attempts to rank variables has been to discover where policies are determined by variables within the nation-state or by variables in the external environment. It is thus necessary to consider both sets of variables and examine their interactions, if any, as well as discover what ultimately affects a nation’s foreign policies: its domestic circumstances or the activities of other states. The purpose of a conceptual framework is to identify the variables to be used in the analysis. These variables should, however, be general enough so that they can be located in various systems. The implication is thus that the analysis of, for example, physical, technological and organisational factors, is necessary in the evaluation of a nation’s strategic significance.¹¹⁾

In conclusion, it is vital to emphasise that strategic significance remains a dynamic concept, as evidenced by the changes of the last few decades. Capabilities change, perceptions change, relations change, and the actual concept of strategic significance itself has been altered. In practical terms, no single state can be of value purely to itself. The external environment exerts continual pressure in this regard which cannot be ignored and which has to be taken into account in an analysis of strategic significance.

REFERENCES

1. Scarrow, H A, *Comparative political analysis: an introduction*, Harper&Row Publishers, New York, 1969, pp. 6-13.
2. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol 14, 1968, pp. 424-425.
3. *Handbook of Political Science: strategies of inquiry*, Vol 7, 1975, p. 85.
4. Lewis, P G and Potter, D C(eds), *The practice of comparative politics*, Longman, London, 1973, p. 5
5. Marsh, D and Stoker, G(eds), *Theory and methods in Political Science*, MacMillan Press, London, 1995, p. 173.
6. Ibid, p. 187.
7. Leshen, J A, *On the methodology of political inquiry: philosophical reflections on the possibility of a scientific access to politics*, University Microfilms International, London, 1980, pp. 18-19.
8. Macridis, R C, "The nature of comparative analysis", In: Lewis, P G...[*et al*], *op cit*, pp. 17-19.
9. Hauss, C, *Comparative politics: domestic responses to global challenges*, West Publishing Co., Minneapolis/St. Paul, 1997, p. 17.
10. Weber, M, "What is politics?-II", In: Lewis, P G...[*et al*], *op cit*, p. 15.
11. *Handbook of Political Science: policies and policymaking*, Vol 6, 1975, pp. 385-389.

SUMMARY

THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE PRE- AND IMMEDIATE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By

NATALIE CELESTE SLABBERT

LEADER	:	PROF. M. HOUGH
DEPARTMENT	:	POLITICAL SCIENCES
DEGREE FOR WHICH DISSERTATION IS PRESENTED	:	MAGISTER ARTIUM IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

The aim of this dissertation is a comparative study of South Africa's strategic significance in two distinct periods, namely, from approximately the Second World War to 1989 and from 1990 to 1993. The research methodology followed was to firstly identify the theoretical framework to be utilised as regards the concept of strategic significance and then to highlight the relative variables to be compared. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of a new era following the end of the Cold War, which resulted in changes in the external environment and to the concept of strategic significance. In this study, this concept is based on three criteria, namely, a state's national capability; ego perceptions of strategic significance, based in part on the national capability noted above; and alter perceptions or perceptions of the external environment regarding a particular state's strategic significance.

The study presents evidence of South Africa's relatively strong national capability in both periods under discussion, especially when compared to the rest of the African continent. The RSA's strategic significance was particularly strong during the pre-1990 period, primarily as a result of the Cold War conflict and the resultant superpower battle for the extension of influence. South Africa, with a wealth of vital strategic minerals, anti-communist sentiment, relatively strong economy, and having possession of the Cape Sea Route, was thus awarded a certain degree of international importance. This was indicated by continuing international contacts and trade relations during a period when the RSA's domestic apartheid policies were under constant international criticism.

The end of the Cold War, however, resulted in a diminishing of strategic significance as regards the above-mentioned aspects; while the value of South Africa's role on the African continent in general and in the Southern African region in particular, began to take precedence over previous concerns of communist expansionism in the Third World. This role was especially relevant in light of continuing marginalisation of Third World countries. As a result, both the developed North and the underdeveloped South began to perceive South Africa as a potential "saviour" and "engine of development" for the African continent. South Africa's role as an international economic partner and supplier of strategic minerals, however, continued.

A comparative analysis is presented at the end of the study to assess similarities and differences in South Africa's strategic significance during the two periods, and it is concluded that the RSA was indeed considered to hold a certain degree of strategic importance throughout both periods under discussion, although the emphasis of such value was altered in response to changes in both the internal and external environments.

Strategic significance

National capability

Ego perceptions

Alter perceptions

International sanctions campaign

Strategic minerals

Cape Sea Route

Communist expansionism

Trade relations

Normalisation of international relations



SAMEVATTING

DIE STRATEGIESE BELANG VAN SUID-AFRIKA GEDURENDE DIE VOOR- EN ONMIDDELLIKE NAKOUDE OORLOG PERIODE: 'N VERGELYKENDE STUDIE

Deur

NATALIE CELESTE SLABBERT

LEIER	:	PROF. M. HOUGH
DEPARTEMENT	:	POLITIEKE WETENSKAPPE
GRAAD WAARVOOR VERHANDELING INGEDIEN WORD	:	MAGISTER ARTIUM IN INTERNASIONALE POLITIEK

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling is om 'n vergelykende studie van Suid-Afrika se strategiese belang gedurende twee afsonderlike periodes, naamlik vanaf ongeveer die Tweede Wêreldoorlog tot 1989 en vanaf 1990 tot 1993, te doen. Die metodologie wat aangewend is, was om eerstens die teoretiese raamwerk wat betref die konsep strategiese belang te identifiseer en dan om die toepaslike veranderlikes wat vergelyk gaan word, uit te lig. Klem is veral gelê op die ontwikkeling van 'n nuwe era ná die einde van die Koue Oorlog, wat gelei het tot veranderinge in die eksterne omgewing en in die konsep strategiese belang. Hierdie konsep is in hierdie studie op drie kriteria gebaseer, naamlik 'n staat se nasionale vermoë; ego persepsies van strategiese belang, gedeeltelik gebaseer op bogenoemde nasionale vermoë; en alter persepsies, of persepsies van die eksterne omgewing rakende 'n bepaalde staat se strategiese belang.

Hierdie studie lê bewyse voor van Suid-Afrika se betreklike sterk nasionale vermoë in albei periodes wat bespreek word, veral wanneer dit met die res van Afrika vergelyk word. Die RSA se strategiese belang was veral groot gedurende die voor-1990 periode, hoofsaaklik as gevolg van die Koue Oorlog-konflik en die gevolglike supermoondheidstryd vir die uitbreiding van invloed. Suid-Afrika, met 'n rykdom van kardinale strategiese minerale, teen-kommunistiese sentiment, betreklike sterk ekonomie, en met beheer van die Kaapse Seeroete, is dus 'n bepaalde internasionale belang toegeken. Dit was duidelik na aanloop van voortdurende internasionale kontak en handelsbetrekkinge gedurende 'n periode toe die RSA se binnelandse beleid die teken van konstante internasionale kritiek was.



Die einde van die Koue Oorlog het 'n vermindering van strategiese belang wat betref bogenoemde aspekte tot gevolg gehad, terwyl Suid-Afrika se rol in Afrika oor die algemeen en in Suider-Afrika in besonder, toenemende belang aangeneem het in teenstelling met vorige vrese oor kommunistiese uitbreiding in die Derde Wêreld. Hierdie rol was veral toepaslik in die lig van die voordurende marginalisasie van Derdewêreldlande. Die resultaat was dat beide die ontwikkelde Noorde en die onderontwikkelde Suide, Suid-Afrika as 'n moontlike "redder" en "lokomotief vir ontwikkeling" vir Afrika beskou het. Suid-Afrika se rol as 'n internasionale ekonomiese vennoot en verskaffer van strategiese minerale het ook bly voortbestaan.

'n Vergelykende analise is aan die einde van die studie gedoen om ooreenkomste en verskille in Suid-Afrika se strategiese belang gedurende die twee eras vas te stel, en die gevolgtrekking is gemaak dat die RSA inderdaad 'n sekere mate van strategiese belang tydens beide periodes onder bespreking verleen is, alhoewel die klem van dié belang verander het na aanleiding van veranderinge in Suid-Afrika se interne asook eksterne omgewings.

Strategiese belang

Nasionale vermoë

Ego persepsies

Alter persepsies

Internasionale sanksieveldtog

Strategiese minerale

Kaapse Seeroete

Kommunistiese uitbreiding

Handelsbetrekkinge

Normalisering van buitelandse betrekkinge