

Research Briefing
26 February 2024
Number 9953

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South Africa election 2024 lookahead

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South Africa will hold a general election on 29 May 2024.

The ANC, the African National Congress, has won a majority of the vote, and seats in the National Assembly, in every election since 1994, when the first post-apartheid democratic election was held. However, their vote share has been declining in recent elections. Early election polls suggest that, for the first time, the ANC may not win a majority of votes.

Election analysis is contemplating the prospect of a coalition government. As it is expected to remain the largest party, early expectation is for the ANC to join forces with one of the smaller parties to govern. Opposition parties are sensing an opportunity. Seven parties have formed a “Moonshot” coalition, campaigning separately but pledging to govern together in the event they collectively secure a majority of seats in parliament.

Electoral issues will likely include South Africa's ongoing energy crisis, government and civil corruption and crime, and high unemployment, particularly among young South Africans. Dissatisfaction with ANC rule is also a factor, and the party faces challenges from former prominent leaders, including former President Jacob Zuma, who has endorsed a rival party.

In a notable change to the electoral system, independent candidates will be able to stand in national elections for the first time. The Electoral Amendment Act 2023 allows for individuals who are not associated with political parties to stand in national elections. Previously, only parties could compete in South Africa's proportional electoral system.

1 Thirty years on: South Africa's historic elections

In April 1994 South Africa held its first democratic election in which all South Africans could vote. Nearly 87% of eligible voters, over 19 million South Africans, participated in the four-day election, with [many queuing for hours](#).

The African National Congress (the ANC), banned during the apartheid era, won by a comfortable margin with 63% of the vote. On 9 May, Nelson Mandela was [elected as the first Black South African President](#) by the National Assembly and inaugurated as Head of State the next day. Commons Library briefing [South Africa's election and new constitution](#), published in April 1994, explains the political developments leading up to the election.

1 How the election works

National elections take place every five years. Anyone who is aged over 18 years of age and has registered, can vote. Elections for the nine provincial legislatures also take place on the same day.

South Africa uses a proportional representation electoral system to elect members to the National Assembly.

The Electoral Amendment Act 2023 allows individuals who are not associated with political parties to stand as independent candidates. They can contest any of the seats allocated to the regions. The method used to allocate seats remains the same as previously used when seats were allocated according to party lists, with an adaptation to facilitate the participation of independent candidates.¹

¹ Electoral Commission of South Africa, [What's new in the 2024 elections?](#), accessed 16 January 2024

The 400 seats in the National Assembly are divided into two groups:

- 200 seats are reserved for national party lists, which are contested only by political parties on a closed list basis.
- 200 seats are divided up among the nine regions, which are contested by parties and independent candidates.²

2019 election result

2019 National Assembly results (top 3 parties)			
Party	Vote share	Number of votes	Seats in Assembly
African National Congress	57.5%	10,026,475	230
Democratic Alliance	20.77%	3,622,531	84
Economic Freedom Fighters	10.8%	1,882,480	44

Source: [Electoral Commission of South Africa](#), accessed 16 January 2024

The National Assembly elects the President

The President of South Africa is elected by the National Assembly after the election.

When will the election be held?

The election will be held on 29 May 2024. The President has also declared a public holiday on the same day.³

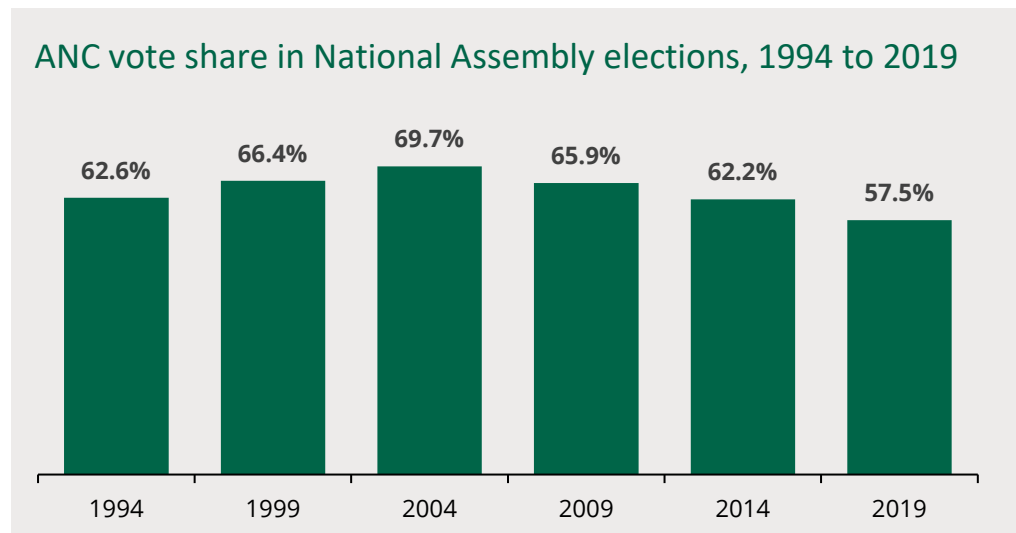
² [Electoral Commission of South Africa](#), accessed 16 January 2024

³ Presidency of South Africa, [President proclaims election date and public holiday](#), 23 February 2024

2

Declining support for the ANC

The ANC have won a majority of the vote, and seats in the National Assembly, in every election since 1994. However, their vote share has been declining in recent elections. In 2019 the party received the lowest share of the votes since the 1994 election, receiving 57.5% of the vote.



Sources: Electoral Commission for South Africa, [1994 national and provincial elections](#) (PDF) and [Elections portal](#)

Early opinion polls suggest the ANC may lose their majority

Early opinion polls suggest the ANC may receive less than 50% of the vote in the 2024 general election. South Africa's Social Research Foundation reported support for the ANC stood at 45% in October 2023, a drop of seven percentage points from March 2023. In the same period, the opposition Democratic Alliance and Economic Freedom Fighters parties gained ground.⁴

Why are voters leaving the ANC?

Sandy Africa, an associate professor of politics at the University of Pretoria, says there is a “mood of despair” over high levels of crime and violence, and “widespread frustration” over crumbling infrastructure and poor service delivery. She says the perception that the ANC has been unsuccessful in

⁴ Social Research Foundation, [South Africa's political state of play in October 2023](#), October 2023; Contenders brace for electoral upsets, Africa Confidential, 30 November 2023; IPSOS, [Possible political party choices in the 2024 election](#), 27 October 2023

combating corruption has “dented the country’s image”.⁵ President Ramaphosa was [mired in a corruption scandal](#) for much of 2022 before being cleared by South Africa’s anti-corruption watchdog.⁶ Former President Jacob Zuma was jailed in 2021 for contempt of court after refusing to testify before an inquiry investigating corruption under his presidency.⁷

Mohamed Cassimjee, a former South African diplomat, suggests voters have for some time “become concerned that the ANC is no longer serving their best interests” and that the ANC’s win in 2019 was due to the popularity of President Cyril Ramaphosa.⁸

That the ANC has governed for so long is also a factor. Africa Report says South Africans are “increasingly ready to move on from the party that has governed since independence.”⁹

President Ramaphosa, in a speech lauding the party’s achievements over the last thirty years, acknowledged “there have been missteps and mistakes.”¹⁰ Speaking in January 2024, on the anniversary of the party’s founding, he set out eight tasks for the party, giving an early insight into the contents of the ANC’s election manifesto. These include pledges to improve basic services and infrastructure, combat gender-based violence, resolve the energy crisis, strengthen the fight against crime and corruption and a party-specific pledge to renew the ANC movement.¹¹ The ANC launched its manifesto on 24 February 2024.¹²

Challenges from former leaders

The party may also lose support to prominent former members who have set up new parties. In recent months former President Jacob Zuma has said he cannot support the ANC under Ramaphosa’s leadership and has instead voiced support for a new party named after the ANC’s former military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK).¹³ Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, of the Africa Centre for Democratic Studies, says Zuma’s endorsement of the new party is

⁵ Sandy Africa, [South Africa’s ANC marks its 112th year with an eye on national elections, but its record is patchy and future uncertain](#), The Conversation, 16 January 2024

⁶ [‘Farmgate’: Cyril Ramaphosa inquiry ‘clears’ South African president but police still investigating](#), The Guardian, 12 March 2023

⁷ [Jacob Zuma lays down South Africa election challenge to ANC](#), BBC News, 18 December 2023

⁸ Mohamed Cassimjee, [South Africa weighs a new election outcome: coalitions](#), The World Today, 1 December 2023

⁹ [South Africa: Opinion polls spell trouble for the ANC](#), The Africa Report, 2 November 2023

¹⁰ ANC, [Address by ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa on the 112th anniversary of the ANC](#), 13 January 2024

¹¹ ANC, [Address by ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa on the 112th anniversary of the ANC](#), 13 January 2024

¹² [South Africa’s governing ANC promises ‘better lives’ at manifesto launch](#), Reuters, 24 February 2024

¹³ [Jacob Zuma lays down South Africa election challenge to ANC](#), BBC News, 18 December 2023

a “direct challenge to Ramaphosa’s leadership.”¹⁴ Mashupye Herbert Maserumule, who co-edited a book on the Zuma administration, suggests that in endorsing the party “[Zuma] not only challenges the ANC politically, but also claims its heritage.”¹⁵

Zuma has reportedly joined with a former ANC secretary-general, Ace Magashule, who has also set up a political party, to form an alliance ahead of the election. Hlengiwe Ndlovu, a lecturer at the Wits School of Governance in Johannesburg, says the move could be detrimental to the ANC, as they remain popular figures and some voters may not care the two leaders are “scandal-tainted.”¹⁶

A Social Research Foundation poll of the favourability of prominent political figures by registered voters in October 2023 gave Zuma a favourability perception score of 28.9% and Malema a score of 27.7%. Cyril Ramaphosa came second, with 44.4%, behind former President Thabo Mbeki, who received a 57.8% favourability score.¹⁷

3

Leading opposition parties

Opposition parties have been steadily carving into the ANC’s majority over time. Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook say they have “increased their capacity, experience, and leverage in forming coalitions”.¹⁸

The two main opposition parties, the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters, are profiled below.

The Democratic Alliance

Opinion polls suggest the Democratic Alliance (DA) is gaining support. The Social Research Foundation found support increased by seven-percentage

¹⁴ Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, [Africa’s 2024 elections: challenges and opportunities to regain democratic momentum](#), Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 17 January 2024

¹⁵ Mashupye Herbert Maserumule, [Jacob Zuma, the monster South Africa’s ruling ANC created, continues to haunt it](#), The Conversation, 27 January 2024

¹⁶ [Ex-ANC chiefs Zuma and Magashule team up ahead of South Africa’s elections](#), Al Jazeera, 12 January 2024

¹⁷ Social Research Foundation, [Favourability scores of prominent political figures in South Africa](#), November 2023

¹⁸ Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, [Africa’s 2024 elections: challenges and opportunities to regain democratic momentum](#), Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 17 January 2024

points over a six-month period in 2023, rising from 24% in March to 31% in October 2023.¹⁹

The party is led by John Steenhuisen, who has also driven the formation of the opposition ‘moonshot’ pact (see below). The party describes itself as broadly centrist and historically has drawn support from white South Africans. It governs the Western Cape province and the city of Cape Town.²⁰ Siegle and Cook suggest the party will need to overcome the perception of being a white-dominated party if it is to win further support.²¹

Economic Freedom Fighters

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) was formed in 2013 by two former members of the ANC and is led by Julius Malema, who was previously the youth leader for the ANC. The party describes itself as a “radical and militant movement for economic emancipation” and an “anti-imperialist and leftist movement with an internationalist outlook” that draws on the Marxist-Leninist tradition.²²

Ongama Mtimka, of Nelson Mandela University, and Gary Francis Prevost, Professor Emeritus at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University, says the party has become the country’s third largest political party by “stealing the ANC’s mantle.”²³ According to their analysis, the EFF portrays itself as the “true custodian” of the values espoused by the ANC during the anti-apartheid period and which the party argues the ANC has since abandoned. Mtimka and Prevost suggest the party’s focus on land and jobs resonates with the country’s history of Black land dispossession and young people affected by high unemployment (see section 3), and allows Black South African voters to shift support from the ANC to the EFF “without changing their political orientation.”²⁴

¹⁹ Social Research Foundation, [South Africa’s political state of play in October 2023](#), October 2023

²⁰ [Dream or mirage: Can South Africa’s white-led opposition win in 2024?](#), Al Jazeera, 9 November 2023

²¹ Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, [Africa’s 2024 elections: challenges and opportunities to regain democratic momentum](#), Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 17 January 2024

²² The Economic Freedom Fighters, [About the EFF](#), accessed 19 January 2024

²³ Ongama Mtimka and Gary Francis Prevost, [Economic Freedom Fighters became South Africa’s third largest political party in just 10 years. What’s behind its electoral success](#), The Economist, 10 October 2023

²⁴ Ongama Mtimka and Gary Francis Prevost, [Economic Freedom Fighters became South Africa’s third largest political party in just 10 years. What’s behind its electoral success](#), The Economist, 10 October 2023

Opposition pact and coalition speculation

Seven opposition parties have joined forces in an effort to oust the ANC. While each party will contest the election separately, they have agreed a “shared vision” to govern South Africa if, collectively, they win a majority of seats. The parties are the Democratic Alliance, Inkatha Freedom Party, ActionSA, the Freedom Front Plus, the United Independents Movement, the Spectrum National Party and Isanco. The pre-election agreement is known as the Multi-Party Charter, or “moonshot”, coalition.²⁵

Democratic Alliance (DA) leader John Steenhuisen says that while the formation of the alliance will appeal to voters disillusioned with the ANC, it must not “just be an anti-ANC project.”²⁶ However, Al Jazeera says the DA’s history of “failed partnerships” when in coalition in three major cities, including Johannesburg, may harm its coalition credentials.²⁷

Africa Confidential points out that, in the event they do win a majority of seats, and with independents allowed to run, the parties could unite behind an independent candidate for President rather than select one of the leaders of the seven parties.²⁸

Research undertaken by the Social Research Foundation in October 2023 reported a majority of registered voters thought the Moonshot Pact to be a good idea.²⁹

An ANC-led coalition?

Early speculation about an ANC-led coalition says the party is reportedly divided between those who favour a coalition with the Economic Freedom Fighters and those who look to the more centrist Democratic Alliance.³⁰ John Steenhuisen, the DA’s leader, has said his number one priority is “to prevent an ANC-EFF coalition.”³¹

Mohamed Cassimjee, a former South African diplomat, suggests an ANC/DA coalition “could see policy continuity” while an ANC/EFF coalition could

²⁵ [Opposition parties agree on moonshot coalition vision, principles and priorities](#), Mail and Guardian, 17 August 2023

²⁶ Democratic Alliance, [NationalConvention2024: The Moonshot is on the launchpad, ready for lift-off](#), 14 August 2023

²⁷ [Dream or mirage: Can South Africa’s white-led opposition win in 2024?](#), Al Jazeera, 9 November 2023

²⁸ [Former ANC business brain make take over Moonshot Pact](#), Africa Confidential, 6 December 2023

²⁹ Social Research Foundation, [Perceptions of the Moonshot Pact](#) [PDF], December 2023, Report 59/2023

³⁰ [Growing dissent pressures ANC from all angles](#), Africa Confidential, 14 December 2023

³¹ [Dream or mirage: Can South Africa’s white-led opposition win in 2024?](#), Al Jazeera, 9 November 2023

result in a “shift away from the West” and more of an “emphasis on ‘anti-imperialism’”.³²

4 Current issues

Power cuts

Lengthy power cuts and rolling blackouts, attributed in part to “years of mismanagement” of the state-owned utility, Eskom, have contributed to South Africa’s poor economic performance, according to the IMF.³³ Power cuts, or load shedding, can last several hours a day, affecting schools, businesses and services. BBC South Africa correspondent Andrew Harding reports that [sabotage, looting and criminality](#) have also contributed to South Africa’s energy problems.³⁴ In December 2022, the then chief executive of Eskom, Andre de Ruyter, reported being poisoned by cyanide. Mr de Ruyter, who subsequently stepped down as CEO, had spoken out against alleged criminality and corruption in the company.³⁵

High unemployment

South Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world according to the World Bank.³⁶ Unemployment was 32% in the third quarter of 2023.³⁷ A UN Development Programme (UNDP) has described South Africa’s high unemployment rate as a “ticking time bomb.”³⁸ Eight in ten registered voters believe the country’s labour laws impede job creation, according to a poll by the Social Research Foundation.³⁹

³² Mohamed Cassimjee, [South Africa weights a new election outcome: coalitions](#), The World Today, 1 December 2023

³³ IMF, [South Africa's economy loses momentum amid record power cuts](#), 15 June 2023

³⁴ [South Africa load-shedding: The roots of Eskom’s power problem](#), BBC News, 24 May 2023

³⁵ [Scandal at South Africa’s Eskom: the CEO and the cyanide-laced coffee](#), Financial Times, 2 March 2023; [Cyanide poisoning of Eskom boss Andre de Ruyter shines light on corruption in South Africa](#), Sky News, 9 January 2023

³⁶ World Bank, [Unemployment, total \(% of total labour force\)](#), figures for 2022, accessed 19 January 2024

³⁷ South African Government, [Statistics South Africa on Quarterly Labour Force Survey quarter three 2023](#), 14 November 2023

³⁸ UNDP, [South Africa National Human Development Report 2022](#), 25 July 2023

³⁹ Social Research Foundation, [Perceptions of whether South Africa’s Labour laws impede job creation](#), December 2023

Youth unemployment is a particular concern. Around 60% of those aged 15 to 24 years old are unemployed.⁴⁰ Unemployment stands at 43% among those aged 15 to 34 (third quarter of 2023).⁴¹ Optimism about the future of South Africa among young South Africans has fallen since 2019, according to a poll carried out by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation. Only 28% of respondents said the country was going “in the right direction” in 2022, compared to 47% who felt more positive in 2019. Almost two-thirds (63%) say the country is on the wrong track.⁴² 75% are dissatisfied with job creation, with corruption identified as one of the barriers towards starting a business.⁴³

The UNDP says youth unemployment “stymies business growth, threatens social cohesion and puts pressure on public resources.”⁴⁴ Rogers Dhliwayo, economics advisor to the UNDP, says meaningful employment is “essential” if South Africa is to realise the potential of its youth.⁴⁵

Inequality

The World Bank considers South Africa to be the “most unequal country in the world”, ranked first among 164 countries in the bank’s global poverty database.⁴⁶ The Bank says the legacy of apartheid is a significant driver of inequality, but also says “inequality has increased since the end of apartheid in 1994.”⁴⁷

Corruption, criminality and insecurity

South Africa ranks 72nd out of 180 countries on Transparency International’s corruption perceptions index.⁴⁸ Transparency International says “public

⁴⁰ UNDP, [South Africa National Human Development Report 2022](#), 25 July 2023, data for fourth quarter 2022

⁴¹ South African Government, [Statistics South Africa on Quarterly Labour Force Survey quarter three 2023](#), 14 November 2023

⁴² Ichikowitz Family Foundation, [African Youth Survey 2022](#), 2023 and profile of [South Africa](#) [PDF] with further analysis of the data for South Africa.

⁴³ Ichikowitz Family Foundation, [African Youth Survey 2022](#), 2023 and profile of [South Africa](#) [PDF] with further analysis of the data for South Africa.

⁴⁴ UNDP, [South Africa National Human Development Report 2022](#), 25 July 2023

⁴⁵ UNDP, [Harnessing the employability of South Africa’s youth](#), 13 September 2023

⁴⁶ [South Africa most unequal country in the world](#), Al Jazeera, 10 March 2022; The World Bank, [Inequality in Southern Africa: An assessment of the Southern African Customs Union](#), 7 March 2022

⁴⁷ The World Bank, [Inequality in Southern Africa: An assessment of the Southern African Customs Union](#), 7 March 2022

⁴⁸ Transparency International, [South Africa country overview](#), accessed 19 January 2024

sector corruption is a serious problem” and there have been a series of corruption scandals “involving the former and incumbent presidents.”⁴⁹

A three-year judicial inquiry into ‘state capture’ during President Jacob Zuma’s term was completed by Chief Justice Raymond Zondo in June 2022.⁵⁰ The commission found that state capture had taken place “on an extensive scale.”⁵¹ A BBC report described the report as revealing “how almost every arm of the state was suffocated and left bankrupt by leaders of the African National Congress.”⁵²

President Zuma had resigned in February 2018 after facing numerous allegations of corruption, being replaced by then Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

In June 2023, President Ramaphosa was cleared of wrong-doing by South Africa’s corruption watchdog, the public protector ombudswoman, for his handling of a case involving the theft of hundreds of thousands of dollars from his farm in Limpopo province.⁵³ According to Associated Press news agency, the President “was accused of not reporting the theft properly to police in an attempt to cover up the existence of the large sum of cash hidden in furniture at his farm.”⁵⁴

In February 2023 the international financial crime watchdog, the Paris based Financial Action Task Force, added South Africa to its list of “grey countries” under special scrutiny to address deficiencies in their system to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing.⁵⁵

Political violence is also reportedly on the rise. BBC correspondent Fergal Keane reports that more than 20 councillors were killed in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in 2023. The Police Minister said most of the dead councillors had been victims of internal political battles, and most were from the ANC.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Transparency International, [9 countries to watch on the 2022 corruption perceptions index](#), 14 February 2023

⁵⁰ BBC News explains state capture is a form of corruption in which “businesses and politicians conspire to influence a country’s decision-making process to advance their own interests. As most democracies have laws to make sure this does not happen, state capture also involves weakening those laws, and neutralising any agencies that enforce them.” [State capture: Zuma, the Guptas, and the sale of South Africa](#), BBC News, 15 July 2019

⁵¹ Public Affairs Research Institute, [The Zondo Commission: A bite-sized summary](#), 5 September 2022

⁵² [South Africa’s Zondo commission: Damning report exposes rampant corruption](#), BBC News, 23 June 2022

⁵³ [South Africa’s graft watchdog clears Ramaphosa in farm cash scandal](#), Al Jazeera, 30 June 2023

⁵⁴ [South African President cleared of wrongdoing in scandal over \\$580,000 in cash stolen from his farm](#), AP, 30 June 2023

⁵⁵ [Financial crime watchdog adds South Africa to ‘grey list’](#), Reuters, 24 February 2023

⁵⁶ [South Africa: the region where political violence is on the rise ahead of elections](#), BBC News, 3 December 2023

Murder rate highest in twenty years

South Africa's crime rate continues to grow, with the murder rate reportedly the highest in 20 years in 2022/23, a 50% increase compared to 2012/13.⁵⁷ In one three-month period in 2022, more than 7,000 people were murdered, and 4,000 kidnappings, 10,000 cases of rape and over 6,000 carjackings were reported.⁵⁸ BBC News reporter Daniel De Simone says "getting away with murder has become normal."⁵⁹

Guy Lamb, a criminologist at the University of Stellenbosch, says South African police have prioritised "militarised policing approaches" which he says can erode public trust in the police, while low conviction rates also decrease confidence in the criminal justice system.⁶⁰

5 A non-aligned approach to foreign policy

South Africa takes a non-aligned approach to foreign policy. President Ramaphosa says such an approach "has enabled us to pursue an independent foreign policy and to forge our own developmental path."⁶¹

At a time of rising geopolitical competition, South Africa has sought to avoid being drawn into supporting one centre of power over another. At the 2024 summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Ramaphosa urged fellow leaders to remain independent "when the world appears to be once again divided between east and west."⁶²

Defining its National Interest

In August 2022 the Government published a document outlining its approach to international affairs. It first defined what it calls its National Interest:

⁵⁷ Guy Lamb, [South Africa's police are losing the war on crime – here's how they need to rethink their approach](#), 17 November 2023

⁵⁸ [Crime 'worrying' in South Africa: 7,000 murdered in three months](#), Al Jazeera, 23 November 2022

⁵⁹ [Cash-in-transit heists bring terror to South Africa's roads](#), BBC News, 19 January 2024

⁶⁰ Guy Lamb, [South Africa's police are losing the war on crime – here's how they need to rethink their approach](#), 17 November 2023

⁶¹ South African Government, [Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa on outcomes of the XV BRICS Summit](#), 3 September 2023

⁶² South African Government, [Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa during 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, Kampala, Uganda](#), 19 January 2024

The protection and promotion of its national sovereignty and constitutional order, the well-being, safety and prosperity of its citizens, and a better Africa and the world.⁶³

The document set out South Africa's international goals:

- To promote and protect the political independence of the African continent to determine its own destiny
- To increase the voice and representation of Africa in all global bodies
- To build strategic partnership with other countries on the continent in pursuit of common objectives, starting with the Southern African Development community (SADC)
- To defend multilateralism and the rules-based international system, particularly the reform of global political and economic governance to be fair, equitable and representative
- To champion international cooperation to find lasting solutions to global challenges.⁶⁴

The BRICS and the Global South

South Africa has “sought to position itself as a leading voice of the global south” according to analysis by the South African Institute for Strategic Studies.⁶⁵

South Africa is the only African country that is a member of the G20 and the BRICS, the informal network of emerging economies consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.⁶⁶ Analysts suggest that membership of BRICS “remains a cornerstone of its foreign policy.”⁶⁷

After hosting the BRICS summit in August 2023, President Ramaphosa lauded the efforts of fellow leaders to “take forward the struggle for a fairer and

⁶³ South Africa Department of International Relations and Cooperation, [Framework on South Africa's National Interest and its Advancement in a Global Environment](#), August 2022

⁶⁴ South Africa Department of International Relations and Cooperation, [Framework on South Africa's National Interest and its Advancement in a Global Environment](#), August 2022

⁶⁵ Ronak Gopaldas and Priyal Singh, [South Africa's ICJ case has already altered its foreign policy space](#), 24 January 2024. For explanations of the term Global South, see: [The Global South is on the rise – but what exactly is the Global South?](#), The Conversation, 3 July 2023; [Everyone's talking about the Global South. But what is it?](#), AP News, 7 September 2023; [The term “Global South” is surging. It should be retired](#), Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 15 August 2023

⁶⁶ Ethiopia joined the BRICS in 2024 and the African Union became a permanent member of the G20 in 2023.

⁶⁷ C Chivvis, Z Usman and B Geaghan-Breiner, [South Africa in the emerging world order](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 21 December 2023

more inclusive world order that is focused on the equal development of all peoples.”⁶⁸

At the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in January 2024, the President set out his ambition for both his country and the movement:

We must give meaning to the principle of sovereign equality of nations and ensure that the voice of the African Continent and the Global South is strengthened in the broader multilateral system.⁶⁹

South African diplomats have sought to dampen western concern that the recently enlarged BRICS are becoming a powerful counterpart to the West or that it represents a shift away from South Africa’s policy of non-alignment.⁷⁰

However, some analysts have questioned whether South Africa’s response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which it says reflects its neutrality, actually indicates “the dilution of Pretoria’s commitment to genuine non-alignment in favour of more opposition to the West and greater alignment with the West’s (often authoritarian) adversaries.” The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies argues this approach could have damaging repercussions for its trade relations, particularly with the US, and suggests “the economic costs of this policy will mount ahead of the national and provincial elections in 2024.”⁷¹ South Africa led the African Peace Mission to Ukraine and Russia in June 2023, a reflection of Pretoria’s adoption of a more prominent role in acting as a mediator in international conflicts.⁷²

South Africa and Israel

South Africa has led international legal efforts against Israel, which it argues is committing the crime of genocide in Gaza, bringing a [case against Israel](#) in the International Court of Justice in January 2024.

⁶⁸ South African Government, [Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa on outcomes of the XV BRICS Summit](#), 3 September 2023

⁶⁹ South African Government, [Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa during 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, Kampala, Uganda](#), 19 January 2024

⁷⁰ [BRICS expansion isn’t aimed at countering the West, South African official says](#), Bloomberg, 7 August 2023

⁷¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, [The state of non-alignment in South Africa’s foreign policy](#), Strategic Comments, July 2023. Further analysis available by Good Governance Africa, [South Africa foreign policy: Ambiguous or misunderstood?](#), 13 June 2022

⁷² [Africa’s Ukraine-Russia peace mission: What was achieved?](#), BBC News, 19 June 2023

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