How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics

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1. Introduction
2. Power hierarchies in international politics
3. Middle powers and regional powers
4. Conflicts or peaceful power transition
5. Regional hegemony and regional integration

Bibliography
"The superpower’s efforts to create a unipolar system stimulate greater effort by the major powers to move toward a multi-polar one. Virtually all major regional powers are increasingly asserting themselves to promote their own distinct interests which often conflict with those of the United States. Global politics has thus moved from the bipolar system of the Cold War through a unipolar moment .... And now is passing through one or two uni-multipolar decades before it enters a truly multi-polar 21st century." (Huntington 1999: 37)

1. Introduction

Talking about the rise of regional powers is quite fashionable these days. So much so, that it is not too difficult to enumerate the usual suspects: China, India, South Africa and Brazil. In addition, some analysts would also include Mexico, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia and perhaps Israel. At the same time, it can be said that there is a general lack of analytical instruments to identify and compare regional powers. We can mention some exceptions: Power Transition Theory develops the idea of power hierarchies and indicators to measure the power distribution in the international system; Stefan Schirm (2005) designed an analytical concept to study Brazil as a regional power; and the German Institute of Development Studies (DIE) coined and marketed the concept of anchor countries, which however is more a political than an analytical concept, including all of the before mentioned regional powers.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of confusion with regard to the concept of regional power and thus we have to confront many open questions:

- What is the reference region for the supposed regional power, for example regarding South Africa or China?
- What constitutes a region – geographic, economic, social, cultural or political factors?
- What are the indicators for a regional power – GDP, population, military power, technological resources, soft power resources?
- What is the time horizon for the power resources of regional powers? Are we speaking of the power resources of today or tomorrow?

1 The internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia presents the most all-embracing list of regional powers. The list includes India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Israel, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, France, United Kingdom Germany, Russia. Pastor (1999: 25) includes among the Regional Powers: Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan; China is ranked as a great power.
• Is it sufficient for the status of a regional power to demonstrate a regional power projection, or is it necessary to act as a global player as well?
• How does a regional power exercise regional hegemony?
• What are the implications of the rise of (new) regional powers for international politics – more conflicts, more order by means of regional power hierarchies, the transition to a multipolar world?

One should expect differences with regard to the relative power among regional powers, their power in the corresponding region and the power resources of the region.

This paper first discusses different theoretical approaches for the analysis of regional powers in the 21st century. It addresses the differences between regional powers and alternative concepts like middle powers, and it presents an analytical concept which can be used as a tool to identify, analyze and compare regional powers. Then the paper deals with two research topics: It discusses the implications of the rise of regional powers for international politics, and it contrasts more or less benign scenarios. Second, it deals with the question of the dominant pattern of regional hegemony in the first decades of the 21st century.

At the outset, we start with some general reflections and illustrations on the subject matter. If we talk about regional powers, we talk about regions, power or power resources, activities, and perceptions. We will commence with the perceptions. In general, a regional power is perceived as the most important country in the corresponding region as well as a major power on the global level. But on a global scale the perceptions of which regional powers should be classified as world powers diverge. In a survey conducted in nine major countries by the Bertelsmann Foundation, people were asked to identify the world powers of today as well as in 2020. The following charts present the values for China, India, Brazil, and South Africa.
Table 1: Which of the following countries are world powers today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents from</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Which of the following countries will be world powers in the year 2020?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents from</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is widespread confidence in the future global strength of China and India, but much less consensus with regard to the future position of Brazil and South Africa. Yet one third of the Brazilian respondents believe that in 2020 Brazil will have world power status, compared to 76% of the Indians and 71% of the Chinese, which attribute world power status to their own country. According to this public opinion survey, not all regional powers will achieve world power status. In addition, it is quite interesting to observe that there is great variation between the auto-perception of the supposed regional powers and the perceptions from the outside, especially in the case of India. The same is true if we compare the results of a survey applied by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in the United States, China, and India with regard to the influence of these three countries in the world today and in 10 years.
Table 3: Influence of Countries in the World

*Mean levels on a 10-point scale, with 0 meaning not influential at all and 10 meaning extremely influential.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Has now</th>
<th>Will have ten years from now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The American View</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Chinese View</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Indian View</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Chinese population is quite optimistic with regard to the future influence of its country, which will match up to the United States. Indian citizens perceive their country now and in the future as more influential in world politics than China. The Chinese people do not agree on this point. While the citizens of the United States, in a kind of wishful thinking, perceive China and India mostly as rivals in their mutual relationship. The Indian and Chinese citizens disagree on this topic.

Asked to rate a list of threats to China’s vital interests, 38% of those Chinese surveyed see the U.S. military presence in Asia as critical. On the other side, the rise of China as a world power is viewed as a critical threat by 36% of Americans (Chicago Council 2006:16). In contrast, the prospect of Chinese military becoming significantly more powerful is seen critical in the United States and to a lesser degree in India, but very positive (by 90% of the respondents) in China. These questions reveal the perception of a certain conflict potential, but do not refer to the inevitability of conflicts between rising regional powers or between rising regional powers and the United States.

2. Power hierarchies in international politics

The topic of regional powers refers to power hierarchies in the international system. The assessment of the power distribution depends on the vantage point and the pre-selected indicators. While in scientific literature and in the press the status of the
United States as the only remaining superpower and the number one in the international power hierarchy is not contested (with some variations in regard to the dominance in different power dimensions), there is much less consensus as to the further characteristics of the international power hierarchy. Not even in regard to the terminology - secondary powers, second-tier states, great powers, intermediate states, middle powers, middle-tier states, regional (great) powers, to enumerate some examples – do the different authors or scientific approaches agree.

Wight (1978) in his classical text on Power Politics (first published in 1946), for example differentiates between dominant powers, great powers and minor powers, setting apart two categories of states: *regional great powers* and *middle powers*. The interests of regional great powers are focused on a limited region, where they can act on their own accord. Regional great powers are potential candidates for the status of middle powers in the international system (Wight 1978: 63). In contrast, middle powers are classified on the basis of their power in comparison with great powers, and power is first of all military power.  

Another and more recent analytical approach explicitly deals with power hierarchies in international politics: the so called „*Power Transition Theory*“, formulated by A.F.K. Organski (1958) (Kugler/Organski 1989; Tammen et al. 2000; Lemke 2002; Kugler/Tamen 2004; Kugler et al. 2004; Kugler 2006). In contrast to realist balance-of-power theories, Power Transition Theory posits a hierarchical international system with a dominant power at the top and great powers, middle powers and small powers subordinated. The hierarchy reflects the distribution of power resources and is based on political and economic resource allocation patterns which serve the dominant power.

In an extension of Power Transition Theory, Lemke (2002) developed a *multiple hierarchy model*. Instead of one international hierarchy of power, the international power hierarchy consists of a series of parallel and superposed power hierarchies.  

The sub-systems function according to the same logic as the overall power hierarchy

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2 A middle power is a power with such military strength, resources and strategic position that in peacetime the great powers bid for its support, and in wartime, while it has no hope of winning a war against a great power, it can hope to inflict costs on a great power out of proportion to what the great power can hope to gain by attacking it." (Wight 1978: 65). Other authors emphasize size (population) and economic power (GDP) as long term preconditions for middle power status (Kelly 2004).

3 Huntington (1999: 36) conceives a multi-level hierarchy, too. On top are the United States as the single superpower. At a second level are „major regional powers“ – the German-French condominium in Europe, Russia in Eurasia, China and potentially Japan in East Asia, India in South Asia, Iran in Southwest Asia, Brazil in Latin America, South Africa and Nigeria in Africa – and a third level of *secondary regional powers*.  

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– each of the regional or sub-regional systems has a dominant state at the top of the regional or sub-regional power pyramid. The regional or sub-regional sub-systems are subordinated to the global power hierarchy. The dominant power in the global hierarchy, but also other great powers, can interfere in the sub-systems, especially if the local status quo is at odds with the global dominant power’s preferences or the global patterns of political and economic resource allocation. Other issues – like the delimitation of boundaries and territorial control in the region/sub-region – can be resolved in the framework of the regional/sub-regional power hierarchy. They are part of the regional/sub-regional status quo (Lemke 2002: 54-55).

Regional power hierarchies are also central for another theoretical approach. In the framework of their *Regional Security Complex Theory* (RSCT), Buzan/Waever (2003) differentiate between superpowers and great powers, which act and have an impact on the global level (or system level) and regional powers whose influence may be large in their regions but are not considered much at the global level. This category of regional powers includes Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey. The status of a great power requires material resources as well as the formal recognition of this status by other great powers and observable repercussions on the operation of the international system and the behavior of other great powers (or superpowers).

Regional powers define the structure (polarity) of any regional security complex. Their power capabilities might be considerable, but they are restricted to the regional context. Higher-level powers from outside the region do not take them into account in their global power calculations. Buzan/Waever (2003) devised their typology for the analysis of regional security policies and complexes. It would be interesting to expand the analytical scheme - for example with respect to the analysis of the distribution of economic power - and create a multidimensional power model.

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4 “Superpowers and great powers define global level polarity, and the line between them and regional powers is the one that defines the difference between global and regional security dynamics.” (Buzan/Waever 2003: 34)

5 “Classification of any actor as a great power is not a simple act of measurement. It requires a combination of material capability, formal recognition of that status by others, and, from our point of view most importantly, observation of the practical mode of operation of states, particularly which other actors are responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations. A power acting at the global level reflects on the balance of power not only in terms of the existing superpower(s) – it has to include in its calculations also the great powers because of the consequences of their coalition behaviour.” (Buzan/Waever 2003: 32)
(including economic and soft power resources) for the study of the regional and global power distribution.

Synthesizing the different analytical approaches presented, we conclude that regional powers should be analyzed using a multilevel system that embraces both the regional level - the relations of the regional power with other states in the region - and the interregional level - the relations between regional powers (but also with states outside of their own region) - as well as the global level. It makes sense not to act on the assumption of only one global power hierarchy but rather to presuppose a parallel and superposed system of global, regional and, in some cases, sub-regional power hierarchies, which are in a permanent process of interaction. The stability of a regional power hierarchy depends on the perceived net gains of the involved states. The influence of outside great powers on regional power hierarchies will vary contingent with the strength of the regional power and the policy arenas. Regional powers are at variance in regard to their influence on the global layer. Some are very influential in their own region, but exert little influence on a global scale. Likewise, the acceptance of their status as a regional power by other regional powers could be variable.

3. Middle powers and regional powers

Up to now we do not dispose over persuasive indicators and models (exception Schirm 2005) for the definition and conceptualization of the different dimensions of a regional power. States which are usually listed as regional powers display in general a large population in the regional context and a high (absolute) GDP. They possess strong conventional armed forces and in some cases also nuclear weapons.

In one of the small number of publications on regional powers in international relations (Neumann 1992) a regional great power is defined as (Osterud 1992: 12),

- “a state which is geographically a part of the delineated region
- a state which is able to stand up against any coalition of other state in the region
- a state which is highly influential in regional affairs
- a state which, contrary to a ‘middle power’, might also be a great power on the world scale in addition to is regional standing.”
Based on the relevant literature it sometimes is quite difficult to discriminate in a clear cut way between the new concept of regional power and the traditional concept of middle power. Quite a few of the actual candidates for regional leadership are also listed as middle powers – for example India, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa (Cooper 1997; van der Westhuizen 1998; Hurrell 2000, 2006; Schoeman 2003). Therefore, the paper will address in short the concept of “middle power“, and will mark differences and common connotations with regard to the concept of “regional power“.

Moreover, in the more recent scientific literature there is a differentiation between traditional middle powers - for example Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries - which in some measure are losing influence - and new emerging regional powers or emerging middle powers (Schoeman 2003). This category includes South Africa, India, and Brazil. While traditional middle powers are first and foremost defined by their role in international politics, the new middle powers are, first of all, regional powers and in addition middle powers (with regard to their power resources) on a global scale.

Additionally regional powers, in contrast to middle powers, have to bear a special responsibility for regional security and for the maintenance of order in the region. However, to fulfill this role, regional powers – in our terminology and emerging middle powers in the terminology of Schoeman (2003: 353) – have to meet various conditions:

- “The internal dynamics of such a state should allow it to play a stabilising and leading role in its region. …”
- Such a state “should indicate and demonstrate its willingness, and of course also its capacity or ability, to assume the role of regional leader, stabiliser and, if not peacekeeper, or at least peacemaker. …

The internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia which is not a scientific publication, nevertheless reflects very well the state of the art and the difficulties to differentiate precisely between the two concepts: “Middle power is a term in the field of international relations to describe states that are not superpowers or great powers, but still have some influence internationally. … Some middle powers can be regarded as regional powers and vice versa; hence, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, though their definitions are not strictly the same. … Middle powers are characterized by allegiance to groups, but not leadership of them. … Middle powers are often the states most committed to multilateralism.”

“A regional power is a term used in the field of international relations to describe a state with power and influence that is to some extent limited to its region of the world. A regional power is similar to a great power, but on a regional rather than a global scale. Many regional powers can be regarded as middle powers and vice versa … There is no clear delineation between a ‘regional power’ and a ‘great power’. Different theorists will disagree as to whether some states should be classified as regional or great powers. Also, some states that are regarded as regional powers are potentially future great powers.”
• should be acceptable to its neighbours – the members of the security complex in which it operates – as a leader responsible for regional security. A broader, or extra-regional acceptance is perhaps a necessary condition, but not sufficient, even if supported and promoted by big powers."

Some reflections and research approaches applied in the analysis of traditional middle powers can be adapted productively to the analysis of regional powers, because regional powers frequently utilize strategies which are attributed to traditional middle powers. So, traditional middle powers have been accredited with a special interest in international institutions or in forming coalitions in such institutions which serve the objective to constrain the power of stronger states (Stairs 1998; Hurrell 2000; Cooper 2000; Royals 2000). Conflicts over power and influence will be settled more and more in the framework of such institutions. Therefore the power of traditional middle powers as well as of new regional powers could be measured, among other things, by means of the influence they bring to bear on the structure of international institutions. We agree with Hurrell (200: 3-4):

"Institutions are not just concerned with liberal purposes of solving common problems or promoting shared values. They are also sites of power and reflect and entrench power hierarchies and the interest of powerful states. Indeed sovereignty may be increasingly defined not by power to insulate one’s state from external influences but by the power to participate effectively in international institutions of all kinds."

At the same time we have to take into account that, from the perspective of regional powers, global and regional institutions comply with different functions (vgl. Hurrell 2006: 11).

Traditional middle powers display a specific political approach of coalition building and cooperation, in which they can act as a catalyser or as a "facilitator". Therefore middle powers are highly appreciated cooperation partners for regional powers inside and outside of the corresponding region. For a better discrimination between middle powers and regional powers it makes sense to differentiate between a leading power, which is defined by means of its power resources and self-conception, and leadership. Leadership refers to political influence in diplomatic forums which could by exercised by middle powers. Regional powers usually combine leadership and power over resources.

7 The more as since the 1990s we can identify a trend towards stronger interregional networks of regional powers (Cooper 1997b: 17-19).
Like traditional middle powers\(^8\) most regional powers favor a multilateral and cooperative approach in international politics, and articulate a preference for international institutions. Because of the power disequilibrium in many political areas between the existing regional powers and the only superpower (USA) one can argue that, when trying to assert their interests, regional powers have to resort to strategies normally attributed to middle powers. This produces an appreciation of the middle powers in the region – regional middle powers, Huntington (1999) uses the term “secondary regional powers“ –, because regional powers depend on the cooperation of regional middle powers when they try to assert their interests in the region as well as on a global level.

The self-conception, which is important for the classification as regional power, constitutes another link to the scientific literature on middle powers. Most of the authors do not refer to specific objective criteria or resources (GDP, military power etc.) to differentiate middle powers from great powers or less powerful states. Rather, they define a middle power from a constructivist point of view as an self created identity or an ideology for the conduct of foreign policy (Hurrell 2000).\(^9\) Therefore, what applies for great powers is also true for middle powers and regional powers:

"You can claim Great Power status but membership of the club of Great Powers is a social category that depends on recognition by others – by your peers in the club, but also by smaller and weaker states willing to accept the legitimacy and authority of those at the top of the international hierarchy. So a constructivist approach would view power hierarchies in terms of shared understandings that develop amongst groups of states." (Hurrell 2000: 3)

The status of middle power or regional power is a social category that depends on the recognition of this status and the corresponding power hierarchy by other states. Nevertheless, the inclusion in this social category also presupposes the corresponding material resources.

For that reason Stefan Schirm (2005: 110-111) in his definition of regional power combines power resources (“hard power“) with the role definition and the

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\(^8\) According to Keohane (1969: 296), 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."

\(^9\) Indicators for the self-conception as regional power are the scientific literature and the mass media in the corresponding countries, if they use this terminology. With regard to South Africa, Brazil, and India see Schoeman (2003); van der Westhuizen (1998), Roque (2004), Soares de Lima/Hirst (2006), Nayar (2003).
perception of the regional power by other states. He proposes the following criteria for the classification as a regional power:

- The articulated claim for leadership as *rule maker*, which is part of the own role definition and communicated to other actors/states.
- The material, organizational and ideological (D.N.) resources for a regional and international power projection (*power over resources*).
- Activities, to honour the claim of leadership and to mobilize power resources.
- The recognition and acceptance of leadership status by other actors/states in the region and outside of the region.
- Real political influence in the region (*power over outcomes*).

In summary, the status as regional power presupposes the will to reclaim this position, but also the recognition of this status (a) by other states in the region, (b) other regional powers, or (c) the leading global power (USA). The compliance with the last three conditions is variable, so the claim for regional leadership can be substantiated differently. The same is true in regard to the material resources to support the leadership claim.

Based on the preceding discussion we propose an analytical concept of regional power. Within the broader theoretical framework that we presented before, this concept defines the principal analytical dimensions which make it possible to differentiate regional powers from other states and to compare different regional powers with regard to their power status or relative power. We expect that different regional powers will comply in a different way with these criteria and that some regional powers will not comply with all criteria (fragmented or faceted regional leadership). In this case we have to discuss if they will still classify as regional powers.

The label that we use, “regional power”, depends on the topic we are interested in analysing. Thus, the same object or country could be labeled differently, as great power, middle power or as regional power. These concepts are not mutually exclusive, for in a certain way they can be complementary. We like to analyze countries which are influential and powerful in certain geographic regions or sub-regions (especially in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Near and Middle East). The same states could be middle powers or great powers in the global context. Inversely, we can start with the global power hierarchy and take a look at the regional
embeddedness of great powers and middle powers. In short, the concept of “regional power” delineates a research program that

- First of all, refers to the regional embeddedness of great powers and middle powers.
- Secondly, it refers to regional power hierarchies and puts the focus on the question if there exist a regional power in the corresponding regions and what are the reasons and implications or their absence.
- Thirdly, it refers to the interactions between different regions and the corresponding role and influence of “regional powers”.
- Fourthly, it analyzes the relations between the USA (and the EU) and these regional powers.

From a comparative perspective with regard to different regional powers, the concept encompasses three topics:

- The region, which could be more or less powerful with regard to different power resources;
- The country, that has been identified as regional power and could be more or less powerful with regard to its resources; and
- The regional embeddedness of the so called regional power which could vary with regard to different regional powers and different indicators of embeddedness.

Based on these theoretical and analytical reflections we define a regional power as follows.
A regional power is a state:

- that is part of a region which is geographically, economically and politically-ideationally delimited;
- which articulates the pretension of a leading position in the region (self-conception);
- which influences in a significant way the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region;
- which displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organizational (political) and ideological resources for a regional power projection;
- which is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region;
- which truly has great influence in regional affairs (activities and results);
- which exerts this influence also (and more and more) by means of regional governance structures;
- which defines the regional security agenda in a significant way;
- whose leading position in the region is recognized or at least respected by other states inside and outside of the region, especially by other regional powers;
- which is integrated in interregional and global forums and institutions where he articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least rudimentary, as a representative of regional interests.

On the basis of the preceding definition it is possible to develop a catalogue of indicators to measure the power and influence of regional powers and, in due course, to construct a typology.
**Indicators of regional power**

**Boundaries**
- Which is the geographical reference region of the supposed regional power?
  - Indicators: official documents, press coverage, survey data etc.
- What are the economic boundaries of the region?
  - Indicators: trade and investment flows, border crossing.
- What are the political-ideational boundaries of the region?
  - Indicators: membership in regional organizations, official documents, press coverage, survey data etc.

**Leadership pretension/claim**
- Is there an articulated and documented claim for regional leadership?
  - Indicators: official documents, elite survey data in the supposed regional power.
  - Indicators: Perception of this claim in other countries in the region and outside of the region; official documents, elite survey data, press coverage etc.

**Delimitation**
- Does the putative regional power have a significant influence on the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region?
  - Indicators: construction of regional organizations (inclusion/exclusion; strategic position of regional power, process of negotiations)
  - Indicators: official discourse of regional power, regional charters (influence of regional power)

**Resources**
- Does the putative regional power have sufficient economic power resources?
  - Indicators: GDP, GDP per capita, R/D as % GDP
- Does the putative regional power have sufficient military power resources?
  - Indicators: relative military power (strengths of the armed forces, equipment) in the region.
  - Indicators: power projection in the region (participation in international military missions, weapon systems / projection capabilities).
  - Indicators: power projection outside the region (participation in international military missions, weapon systems / projection capabilities).
- Does the putative regional power have sufficient demographic power resources?
  - Indicators: population, working age population, projection 2020.
- Does the putative regional power have sufficient ideological power resources?
  - Indicators: attraction in other countries (surveys, foreign students, diffusion of culture).
- Does the putative regional power have sufficient political-organizational power resources?
  - Indicators: stability of political institutions, consensus in political elite.

**Regional Embeddedness**
- Is the putative regional power economically interconnected?
  - Indicators: trade statistics (participation in regional trade, bilateral trade patterns), investment flows (participation in regional investment, bilateral investment flows)
- Is the putative regional power politically interconnected?
Indicators: size of the embassies of the states in the region in the corresponding regional power, influence in regional political organizations

- Is the putative regional power culturally interconnected?
  - Indicators: language training, foreign students, media, influence on cultural trends

**Influence in regional affairs**

- Does the putative regional power have great influence in regional affairs?
  - Indicators: Positions or influence over decisions in different regional policy areas.

**Influence over regional governance structures**

- Does the putative regional power have great influence over regional governance structures?
  - Indicators: Shape of regional organizations
  - Indicators: Positions and influence over decision in regional governance structures (examples).

**Regional security agenda**

- Does the putative regional power have great influence over the regional security agenda?
  - Indicators: Is there a regional security agenda (documents, organizations).
  - Indicators: Influence over regional agenda (documents, organizations).

**Recognition**

- Is the status as a regional power recognized, respected or denied inside and outside of the region, especially by other regional powers?
  - Indicators: Recognition / denial by other regional powers (participation in forums of regional powers, coordination with other regional powers in international forums)
  - Indicators: official recognition/denial by other countries in the region (documents, declaration)
  - Indicators: Relationship with the USA/EU (recognition / denial of special status, regional leadership)

**Representation of regional interests in international forums**

- Does the putative regional power represent regional interest in international forums?
  - Indicators: Negotiations in international organizations (document, press coverage);
  - Indicators: Agenda setting in international politics (forcing topics of regional interest).
4. Conflicts or peaceful power transition

Power and the fight over predominance or the creation of a balance of power are outstanding topics of the realist approach to international relations. In this process, regional hegemonies and great powers are highly important. According to one realist vision of international relations the current unipolar constellation of US hegemony can only be transformed if regional unipolarities, that is regional hegemonies, are established. „All scenarios for the rapid return of multipolarity involve regional unification or the emergence of strong regional unipolarities.“ (Wohlfort 1999: 30). These regional hegemonic powers could attempt to create a counterbalancing factor against the United States. At the same time it is possible that countries in the regions themselves form counter alliances against the emerging regional power. This process could be boosted by the leading global power.

In his theoretical framework of „offensive realism“, Mearsheimer (2001: 140-143; 2005: 47-48) postulates that great powers strive for hegemony in their own region of reference. At the same time they try to frustrate other great powers’ efforts to gain hegemony in their respective regions. Regional hegemonic powers do not like peer competitors. Instead, they are interested that in other regions several states compete for regional leadership. From a US point of view it has been a great advantage that at the moment (and in the past) no state in the Western Hemisphere constitutes a serious threat to its security or survival. So the United States has been free to cause trouble in the backyards of potential regional hegemonic powers. Therefore the United States suspects that emerging regional powers could try to build beachheads in its backyard. In this perspective, from a Chinese point of view, it would be ideal if Argentina, Brazil or Mexico became regional powers. This would force the United States to concentrate more power resources and political attention on its own region (Mearsheimer 2005: 50).

Meanwhile, in this context, the growing economic presence of China in South America is perceived as a challenge to US security. This is especially the case with regard to the access to scarce raw materials (first of all oil). On the other hand, there exist suspicions that some Latin American countries, while playing the Chinese card, could steer a more independent course in their relations with the United States. The Chinese presence in the western hemisphere is perceived as a sign for the erosion of the power and the geopolitical position of the United States in the region.
In contrast to realist balance of power theories, Power Transition Theory asserts that the international system is stable if there is a dominant power at the top. States accept their position in the international order and recognize that influence is based on differences in the power distribution among nations. In contrast, instability and the probability of conflict increase during periods of relative power parity among potential competitors. In this view the conditions for a peaceful international order are more propitious when the dominant power has a large power advantage over potential contenders. The dominant power defines and enforces the rules of the international order. These rules project and diffuse the political and economic resource allocation patterns it employs domestically to the international level (Lemke 2002: 22). This provides not only material gains for the dominant power but also legitimacy for its leadership and the guiding principles of the international order because they have been proven to be successful domestically.

Contrary to realist approaches, according to Power Transition Theory, international competition between states is not driven by the ambition to maximize power but rather to maximize the net gains that could be accrued from the competition over scarce resources in the international order. The international order is stable as long as the great powers and potential power contenders are satisfied with the way goods are distributed and net gains realized.

“Peace in the international order is assured by the dominant nation with the support of the great powers that are satisfied with the distribution of benefits and the rules by which it is run.” (Kugler/Organski 1989: 173).

The system becomes instable when a great power disposes over comparable power resources as the dominant power and is dissatisfied with the way the international order functions. The combination of parity and dissatisfaction are dangerous. In such a constellation conflicts and wars are possible but not inevitable (Kugler 2006).

“The political negotiations among contenders determine whether potential challengers can be made satisfied with the rules and norms governing world politics. If the declining dominant state is able to engineer a satisfactory compromise between the demands of the rising state and its own requirements as Britain and the U.S. did when peacefully passing the mantle of international leadership.” (Kugler 2006: 40)

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10 Power is a combination of the population (number), the economic productivity (GDP per capita) and the effectiveness of the political system (political capacity) to mobilize human and material resources.
5. Regional hegemony and regional integration

In the 1990s, in different regions of the world, the processes of regional integration have become more important. What is the relationship of regional powers with regard to the processes of integration in the corresponding regions? Are regional powers the motor of regional integration? Do they need regional integration as a basis for their power projection on a global scale? What are the importance and function of regional governance structures for regional powers and great powers outside of the region?

Up to now the relationship between regional hegemony and regionalism or *regional governance* is barely explored (Hurrell 2005c)\(^{11}\). From a US-point of view, (Ikenberry 2005; De Santis 2005: 31) a strategy of embedding the middle powers, *middle-tier states* or regional powers – explicitly mentioned are China and India – in regional multilateral institutions offers an opportunity to influence their behavior and make their actions more calculable. But the same institutions can be used outwards as instruments of discrimination and exclusion against other states. At the same time the shape of the institutions of *regional governance* can be used as an indicator for the power distribution in the region and the type of regional hegemony. For strong states (*rule makers*) regional institutions many times are a more cost-effective and reliable instruments for dominance. For weaker states – as *rule takers* – regional institutions offer an opportunity (Hurrell 2005c: 196-197):

- to constrain the freedom of the powerful states by means of established rules and procedures;
- to make known their interests in a broader forum and by this means garner the support of other states;
- to provide political space for the building of coalitions to lay down new norms that are congruent with their interests or can restrain the influence of the more powerful states.

But, according to the theory of *co-operative hegemony* (Pedersen 2002), processes of regional institutionalization are best explained by the interests and strategies of the strongest state in the region – in our terminology the regional power. In addition to the regulation by norms within the framework of formal institutions, hegemonic powers resort to *transnational regulatory networks* to foster their interests.

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\(^{11}\) With regard to the *Asian Drivers and regional governance* see Kaplinsky (2005).
The preconditions for a strategy of co-operative hegemony are a capacity of the corresponding regional power:

- of power aggregation capacity, that is the capacity to convince a sufficient number of states in the region to rally around its regional project;
- of power-sharing capacity vis-à-vis weaker states in the region;
- for the commitment to a long-term strategy of regional institutionalization.

Co-operative hegemony is a “soft” form of domination by means of cooperative institutional arrangements based on long term strategy. From the perspective of a regional power, a strategy of co-operative hegemony (in comparison with unilateral hegemony) offers the following advantages:

- Regional integration and institutionalization are instruments of power aggregation (advantages of scale), that is especially important for emerging regional powers which want to boost their influence in global politics.
- A domination based on co-operative hegemony is more stable and more legitimate, because it co-opts other states via positive incentives, it guaranties stability in the region, and it makes it more difficult to form counter alliances inside the region or with states outside of the region.
- It is inclusive because the strategy facilitates and hedges the access of the regional power to strategic resources (raw materials) in the region.
- It facilitates the diffusion of political ideas and models which serve the interest of the regional power.

A distinction can be made between an offensive and a defensive version of cooperative hegemony. In the first instance, regional integration/institutionalization provides a basis for the claim of an emerging regional power to perform a more important role on the global stage. These are often states that dispose of much soft power – on the dimensions of economic power, technological expertise, institution building, cultural and ideological influence –, but little or minor military power. The second category of co-operative hegemony on the one hand includes great powers that have lost military power compared to other great powers. They try to stabilize

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12 For a critical inventory of the capacities and the willingness of Brazil to shoulder the costs of regional integration as a necessary ingredient of regional hegemony see Burges (2005).

13 "Power-sharing capacity refers to a big power’s capacity to share power with its neighbours on a durable basis within common institutions with significant competences." (Pedersen 2002: 689).

14 "Such networks allow powerful states to shape and influence the process of integration without the need for informal interstate bargaining. For powerful states the choice is often not between institutions and no institutions, but rather which institutions offer the best trade-off between effectiveness on the one hand and the maximization of the control and self-insulation on the other." (Hurrell 2005c: 202).
their power basis by means of a stronger integration with their region. On the other hand it also includes states which are weak with regard to specific power resources – including legitimacy and prestige – and therefore try to compensate these deficiencies by means of regional institutions.

We argue that, in the context of global economic integration and the power disequilibrium in many political areas between the existing regional powers and the only superpower (USA) at the present time, for most states a regional dominance is only possible in the form of co-operative hegemony. To defend regional hegemony it is vital to exclude outside powers – and, if necessary, powers competing for regional leadership – from the regional institutions of cooperation. The dispute over the consolidation of regional leadership is also a conflict over the creation of exclusive institutions of cooperation and integration. In this process regional middle powers are of great importance.

The concept of regional middle power – in differentiation from regional powers – is useful insofar as regional powers have to interact with middle powers inside and outside of the corresponding region, as middle powers are privileged partners of the only superpower, and, in specific policy areas, regional middle powers can articulate a leadership which transcend their region. We can adjust the middle power concept to regional middle powers and characterize regional middle powers in a similar way by means of their preference for a cooperative strategy and behavior in the framework of international institutions.

From the point of view of regional powers, the regional middle powers are pivotal actors for the construction and maintenance of regional governance structures in the framework of co-operative regional hegemony. Therefore it is important to analyze regional powers in their interaction with regional middle powers. As a consequence, we should ask the interesting question: What are the conditions or facilitators that cause regional middle powers to accept the leadership of a regional power? In adapting the analysis of the behavior of traditional middle powers to the analysis of regional middle powers we are interested

“to know why followers follow. ... We argue that the dynamics of leadership in international politics are more clearly revealed by an examination of followership” (Cooper et al. 1993: 16).
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