

Letter**Letter: Global South is expression of uneven power relations**

From Sara Stevano and others

SEPTEMBER 22 2023

According to Alan Beattie, the term Global South is “deeply unhelpful” and “public debate would be better off without it” ([Opinion](#), September 14). This argument, based on a reductive understanding of what Global South means, risks throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Global South does not refer to countries below the equator. Instead, it is a “geo-historical” concept connecting regions with a shared history of colonial domination, with legacies into the present. For example, it is well-documented that the contemporary global financial architecture keeps the Global South in a position of subordination, in ways that replicate colonial relations. As a consequence, Global South countries face difficulties in borrowing abroad, responding to crises, and financing their development at affordable cost.

It is also well-known that the integration of workers in global value chains has led to insecure working conditions and poor wages in the Global South. During Covid, the increased precarity of informal and migrant workers and those at the margins of global value chains was thrown into sharp relief by the reality that decision-making power resided in companies in the Global North.

It is true that there is much diversity within the Global South and new global relations are emerging. However, we cannot ignore the persistence of NorthSouth divides. Calls for abandoning the concept in favour of income-based rankings (which, by the way, are already in use) lead to obscuring these divides and denying historical processes and responsibilities.

Global South may be the least problematic of a set of worse alternatives. Strongly in its favour is that it forces us to foreground global politico-economic asymmetries and uneven power relations. Global South is not about erasing a hemisphere but about gaining perspectives informed by the experiences and trajectories of places and peoples in peripheral locations of the global economy.

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