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Now I will give the floor to a geographer who, a few years ago, became head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Analysis and Forecast Center before being named as an ambassador, who knows the Baltic countries well, and is a thinker. My dear Michel, the floor is yours.

Michel Foucher

The expression "Global South" is a representation of today's world. As a geographer, I would say it's a mental map. The term was coined in 1969 by an American researcher in Ann Arbor to denounce the domination of the North during the Vietnam War. But it did not become the expression of the year until 2023, enriching the *Dictionary of Received Ideas* (along with "the collective West" and "the global majority"), which Gustave Flaubert nicknamed "the catalogue of trendy ideas". In international economics circles, it replaced the term "emerging countries," which underscores the weight of geopolitical issues in major economic decisions.

This stereotype tells us about the speakers, for whom it is an anti-Western narrative battering ram. China has deliberately promoted this world view. Introducing the triannual Forum on Sino-African Cooperation (Beijing, September 2–5, 2024), an event that seeks to remake the world order attended by 53 of the continent's 54 countries, Liu Yuxi, the Chinese government's special representative for African affairs, said, "The world is undergoing profound transformations driven by the rise of the Global South [...] We will not return to the old days of colonialism," he said, slamming "the rise of the Cold War mentality." This kind of language is repeated during official visits and at every international conference in Beijing, such as the November 2022 G20 meeting in Bali. There has been a continuity in China's world view since the 1955 Bandung Conference: opposition to the Cold War, the division of the world into blocs, the presence of US military forces in East Asia, which is seen as China's sphere of influence, and promotion of a community of interests with the former Third World. China portrays itself as a developing country. Fyodor Lukyanov gives another example of this world view. "Russia is the standard-bearer of the Global South, which is sick and tired of the West's domination of world affairs," he said. He is masking the fact that there are other kinds of empires and colonies. Russia brandishes its anti-Western rhetoric within the framework of "Eurasia." "Kick the extra-regional forces out of Eurasia," Lavrov said during the meeting of foreign affairs ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Vientiane on July 25, 2024.

The expression speaks to us of a world where the midsize powers are classically Westphalian. They want their place in the sun, as von Bülow said about Germany in 1897 in

relation to the great power rivalry between France and Great Britain. The “Global” South is not a cohesive group but brings together the BRICs and the countries aspiring to join them. It is heterogeneous and contradictory (see the strategic rivalry between China and India, both in the Northern hemisphere). It lacks the cohesion of Alfred Sauvy’s former Third World (high population growth everywhere before the demographic transition). It is a caricature to portray the Global South as an anti-Western bloc. The UN resolutions condemning Russia’s invasion (March 2022-February 2023): 16% abstentions; 80% in favor.

Their national, sovereign interests guide their policy.

- Vietnam practices active neutrality, an omnidirectional foreign policy called bamboo diplomacy.
- During the G20 meeting, Indonesia practiced “free and active” (bebas aktif) neutral diplomacy by obtaining a 169-word agreement condemning the Russian invasion (ASEAN, Bali, November 2022).
- India: Voice of Global South Summit (January 12–13, 2023, 125 countries, context of the G20 presidency); closer economic ties with China despite restrictions on Chinese investments: an \$85 billion trade deficit in 2023; need for Chinese products to modernize.

While “Global South” is a shared, incantatory reference, these countries by no means oppose the international order. They want to participate in it more and offer no alternative model to the present order, starting with the market economy.

We in the North must understand that we no longer have the monopoly on normative and narrative power, and so, hear the issues and messages of the local Souths. Understanding the demand for a level playing field. A recent example is the demand by Senegal’s president Bassirou Diomaye Faye to rebalance relations with Paris. He asked a simple question about the French military presence maintained by his predecessors: “How many Senegalese soldiers are in France? Why must Paris station 100 soldiers in a sovereign, independent state? That is not our idea of sovereignty and independence. Let’s turn the tables and see how the French feel about it” (*Le Monde*, November 30, 2024). This also means that this power is legitimate and no longer needs guarantees from outside (unlike Niger’s former president, Mohamadou Issoufou, 2011–2021).

Reform of the UNSC: Kishore Mahbubani asked Keir Starmer to cede his country’s UNSC seat to India (*Financial Times*, “UN credibility depends on matching veto rights to shift in global power,” August 12, 2024).

One visit by Biden to Africa (Angola, December 2024); one visit by an African Head of State to the USA in 15 years (William Ruto, Kenya, in May); five visits by Xi Jinping; 20 Heads of State visited Beijing in 2023.

Africans have no illusions about their new Chinese “friends” (extraction of critical raw materials with no industrial benefits in Africa). South Africa’s economic partners have changed, but it still exports raw materials. India’s transactional position was summed up by foreign affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar at the 2022 GLOBASEC forum in Bratislava. “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that its problems are the world’s



problems, but the world's problems are not its problems," he said. In other words, why support you on Ukraine if you are silent about Chinese attacks on the Himalayan border?

On the economical level, we should:

- Invest in the connector countries (Morocco, Mexico, Southeast Asia).
- Stop treating Francophone Africa like a cash cow (Senegal is revising contracts). But Nigeria is the one that rejected replacing the badly named CFA franc with the ECO.

On the multilateral level, we should address all the fault lines with the countries concerned: health, energy, technology, currency, standards and rules.