

Global South

Teodora Jovanović, Romana Pozniak

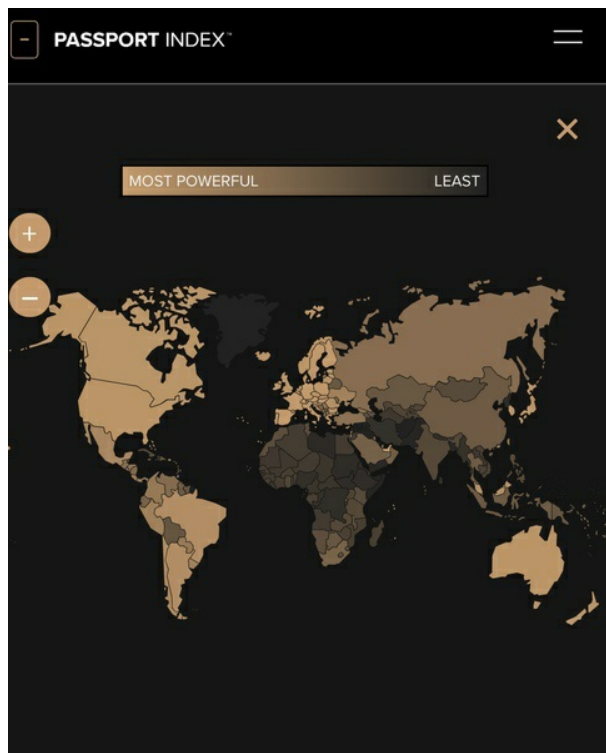
Although the term Global South has been widely used in recent years, even appearing in the names of various projects, academic departments, etc. (Haug et al. 2021), it is an ambivalent term, primarily economic in nature. While it has the potential to resist global power relations, it risks perpetuating the image of the “underdeveloped South” and, consequently, the perception of migrants/refugees/asylum seekers/people on the move as potentially dangerous and inferior subjects. The term began to be used more intensively after the fall of the Berlin Wall, at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. It primarily appears in development and international relations studies, most often as a replacement for the term Third World, which lost its original geopolitical meaning with the collapse of socialism in Europe at the end of the 20th century and the subsequent disintegration of the so-called Second World (cf. e.g., Escobar 1995). The term was coined by American political activist and writer Carl Oglesby in 1969. Today, it is used as a sort of euphemism and politically more neutral variant for terms marked by developmental and postcolonial discourse, such as “developing countries,” “underdeveloped countries,” “low-income countries,” etc.

The Global South, however, is not equivalent to the geographical area of the southern hemisphere. Most of the countries in the Global South are located in the northern hemisphere, while countries such as Australia and New Zealand, despite being in the southern hemisphere, socioeconomically belong to the “developed” Global North. The Brandt Line, a geographical illustration of the division between the “rich North” and the “poor South” proposed in the 1980s by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, and still in use today (cf. Haug et al. 2021: 1928), runs between the USA and Mexico, across the top of North Africa and Southwest Asia, then rises towards China and Mongolia, and finally descends, bypassing Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. However, according to this division, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, excluding Iraq (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, and the UAE), as well as places like Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea, are located in the “South,” although economically they belong to the “North” (cf. Sajeed 2020). Interestingly, the United Nations' Finance Center for South-South Cooperation (FCFSSC) list includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Singapore, and also lists Bosnia and Herzegovina as the only Balkan country not in the European Union. Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro are not considered part of the Global South according to the FCFSSC list. Therefore, different classifications, in the form of lists, charts, maps, and numbers, differently define what belongs to the Global South and according to what principles. As Aleena Sajeed (2020) points out, due to the “partial access to political and economic structures of the North,” Southeast European countries occupy a liminal position in global power relations. However, similar logic applies to many other areas and countries that, according to the described division, are placed in the Global North, including all of Eastern Europe and post-socialist states (Müller 2020), as well as all areas of neo-colonial exploitation and structural precarity in the Global North, such as regions predominantly inhabited by migrants/refugees/asylum seekers/people on the move, socially marginalized groups, indigenous populations, etc. (Sajeed 2020).

Furthermore, the term Global South was coined primarily in economic terms. As such, it appears to be devoid of the political connotations associated with terms like “the East” (linked to Orientalism) or “the Third World” (linked to colonialism). However, its usage risks perpetuating a depoliticized view of the unequal distribution of global power, as well as the associated movements from the Global South to the Global North. Catherine Besteman (2020) describes the efforts of Global North countries to defend against the mobility of people from the Global South as militarized global apartheid. Movement from Global South countries to the Global North is criminalized through a series of measures, policies, and practices. The geopolitical power relations are reflected in mobility regimes, as seen in passport indexes such as the Global Passport Index and the Henley Passport Index. These indexes clearly show that the countries with the weakest passports – those whose citizens need visas for the majority of other countries – are precisely the regions of the Global South from which asylum seekers and irregularized migrants on the Balkan route originate: Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Yemen, etc. Nevertheless, it is necessary to move away from Western-centric perspectives that posit migration from the Global South to the North as the norm (Nawyn 2016: 166). Not everyone goes, nor does everyone want to go to the “rich North.” Additionally, a significant portion of refugee movements occurs within the countries of the Global South. According to the latest UNHCR statistics, only 36% of the world's refugees are in Europe, and of the total 110 million displaced persons, over 62 million are internally displaced, 20% are in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, and 10% are in Turkey.

Despite the ambiguity and lack of systemic analysis of the meaning and function of the term Global South (Haug et

al. 2021: 1926) – as well as the fact that it is characterized by racialized, (post)colonial relations and, consequently, the problem of the interventionist stance of Western countries that still base their economic and political power on resources and cheap labor from the Global South (Sajeed 2020) – this term also appears in the context of resistance to the global distribution of power (Sud and Sánchez-Ancochea 2022: 1125). This is demonstrated by a series of protests against the “theft of the commons” and the “undermining of democratic institutions,” whereby the Global South simultaneously symbolizes a turn towards a global regime of neoliberalism, but also the possibility of social transformation (Sajed 2020).



Global Passport Power Rank 2024, January 2024. Figure taken from *Global Passport Index*: <https://www.passportindex.org/byRank.php>

4/1/2024

Literature

Besteman, Catherine. 2020. *Militarized Global Apartheid*. Durham i London: Duke University Press.

Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Haug, Sebastian, Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner i Günther Maihold. 2021. „The 'Global South' in the Study of World Politics. Examining a Meta Category“. *Third World Quarterly* 42/9: 1923-1944.

Müller, Martin. 2020. „In Search of the Global East. Thinking between North and South“. *Geopolitics* 25/3: 734-755.

Nawyn, Stephanie J. 2016. „New Directions for Research on Migration in the Global South“. *International Journal of Sociology* 46/3: 163-168.

Sajed, Alina. 2020. „From the Third World to the Global South“. *E-International Relations*.

Sud, Nikita i Diego Sánchez-Ancochea. 2022. „Southern Discomfort. Interrogating the Category of the Global South“. *Development and Change* 53/6: 1123-1150.