

DOES THE EMERGENCE OF A GLOBAL SOUTH LEAD US TO RETHINK PEACE?

Friday 27 september, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Or room



Kaush Arha, Evren Balta, Guy Sorman and Adekeye Adebajo

The emergence of a Global South is seen as an academic exercise, in contrast to the old term of the Third World, which formerly designated all poor, developing countries in a rather negative manner. 'When you work with these countries, none of them present themselves as belonging to the Global South, it's totally informal, and used in an academic analysis framework, explained Kaush Arha, Researcher at the Krach Institute for Tech Diplomacy. While the concept of the Global South dates back to the 1980s to identify countries with the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the southern hemisphere, and those not part of the former Western bloc formed during the Cold War, nor the European Union, it has been widely used

MODERATION

Guy Sorman, President of La Maison Française at New York University

SPEAKERS

Adekeye Adebajo, Professor, University of Pretoria

Kaush Arha, Researcher at the Krach Institute for Tech Diplomacy

Evren Balta, Professor of International Relations at Özyeğin and Harvard Universities

It would be good to move away from a vision of the world that is too "Eurocentric"

Evren Balta

since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022. At that time, the United States and the European Union believed that the countries of the South would support Ukraine with one voice in its fight against the Russian invasion. But the reality was much more nuanced. How can we explain such an error of judgement by Western countries? 'Perhaps the West is not always very good at self-criticism,' said Guy Sorman. 'Perhaps, to understand this better, it would be good to move away from a vision of the world that is too «Eurocentric»,' added Evren Balta, Professor of International Relations at Özyeğin University in Istanbul, Turkey.



Evren Balta

The Global South is not monolithic

Adekeye Adebajo

Cooperation between the United States and Europe, while primarily economic, does not serve the interests of the countries that make up, for example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ‘Cooperation isn’t just economic but also normative. Many countries in the Global South don’t share the same values around democracy and don’t want to align themselves with the two blocs of the United States and Europe,’ she explained.

Divergent interests with the West, as well as a lack of recognition and representativeness of international institu-

tions, would explain what unites these countries ideologically. In other words, these so-called ‘developing’ countries, formerly colonized by Europe, would try to gain more independence, as they had already wanted after the Bandung Conference in 1955, which gave rise to the non-aligned movement, which was in opposition to the major world powers. According to Adekeye Adebajo, Professor at the University of Pretoria, these countries of the Global South have three principles: not signing a military agreement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), supporting institutions and governments when their rights are violated and fighting for their own regional autonomy without Western intervention. That said, Adekeye Adebajo does not recognise any geographical alliance in the Global South: ‘The Global South is not monolithic; it is more of a political alliance. Some countries in this group aren’t even in the southern hemisphere.’

In this context of world polarisation, how could global peace be possible? Perhaps, as Guy Sorman suggested, we could start by recognising the harmful impact of colonisation, the effects of which are still being felt, in these countries of the Global South. ‘President Macron sent shockwaves through Burkina Faso in 2017, when he said that France’s colonisation of Africa was a crime against humanity. It was an extraordinary statement but not one that was commented on enough,’ he declared with a tone of regret. This slow process has also resulted in a number of French museums returning works of art, particularly to Benin. Belgium, Italy, Germany and Great Britain also contributed to this restitution mission. ‘Germany was also forced to recognise the genocide committed in Namibia between 1904 and 1908,’ added Adekeye Adebajo. ‘This was a rehearsal for the genocide of the Jews. There were concentration camps, massacres and experiments on bodies. Skulls had to be returned because they had been



displayed in German museums.’ But is this enough? Guy Sorman declared his belief that decolonisation never went far enough. A new generation in Africa has risen up against French influence. For example, in Senegal, students now prefer to pursue their higher education in the United States. ‘This lack of love for France’, tempered Adekeye Adebajo, ‘is political and not cultural. Many French people are not even aware of what their elites have done in Africa.’

Political differences, not cultural ones, but perhaps also religious ones. According to Adekeye Adebajo, this is even one of the most important divisions that pits the Global South against the West. He noted that Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have established themselves in the Sahel and the north of Africa as far as Mozambique. For its part, Turkey, a country with a Muslim tradition, has financed more than 200 schools in Africa in 25 countries. Although these schools do not provide Muslim education they are, in effect,



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Muslim schools. He pointed out that Christianity, which is in clear decline in Europe, is growing in Africa, particularly through Pentecostal churches. ‘But these churches often block actions that target governments. They are very conservative and preach prosperity rather than freedom,’ he said. Should Africa, which still suffers from a dependency born of neocolonialism, therefore separate itself completely from the West? ‘Not at all’, declared Adekeye Adebajo. ‘It is not realistic in our globalised world to detach oneself from the supply chain.’ This is especially the case since Africa’s new trading partner is China, which has built ‘33% of new African infrastructure’, he added. With this new Chinese influence in the Global South, the country could even surpass the economic power of the United States within 20 years.

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Adekeye Adebajo

However, can we imagine that the Global South could take the world out of its system of domination and lead it towards more universalism? While a complete reversal of the balance of power seems unlikely, Adekeye Adebajo believes that this fight is worth fighting. ‘When we know that 1% of the population controls 40% of the world’s wealth, this has to stop. This is not sustainable if we really want peace.’ The creation of BRICS in 2009, a group consisting of nine high-growth countries, including Brazil, Russia, India and China, and which controls 36% of global GDP, is not going in this direction. ‘I don’t see them as a revisionist power’, he said.