Twitter Thread by Bethlehem Tekola



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Academics routinely use the term “sub-Saharan Africa”. Until recently, I also used it without really thinking much about it or questioning its use. But it’s problematic and should be avoided. Here are two excellent pieces explaining why:

It’s confusing and geographically inaccurate:
https://t.co/j3qZgTy3IT

"46 of Africa’s 54 countries are listed as “sub-Saharan,” excluding Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan & Tunisia. This doesn’t make geographical sense: 4 countries included are on the Sahara, while Eritrea is “sub-Saharan”, but its neighbour Djibouti isn’t.”

It’s rooted in racist thought:
https://t.co/IsVIk81D3C

“it divides Africa according to white ideas of race making North Africans white enough to be considered for their glories, but not really white enough…It is a way of saying “Black Africa” and talk about black Africans without sounding overtly racist.”

Instead use more accurate geographic markers like East, West, Central and Southern Africa or simply list the names of the countries you are refereeing to.