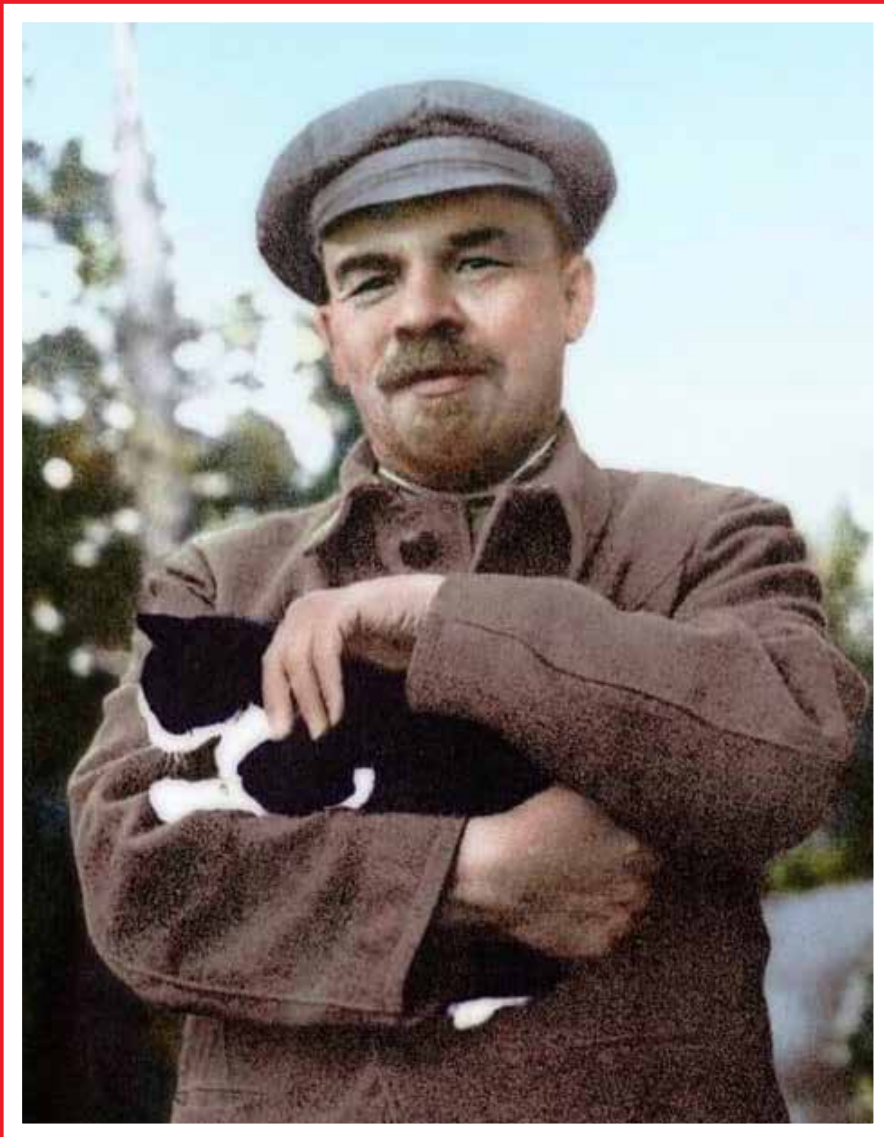


Imperialism in chaos – their crisis, our opportunity!



“

Monopolies, oligarchy, the striving for domination and not for freedom, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations—all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic or decaying capitalism. – Lenin

”

- **GNU socio-economic policies must protect the working class**
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- **Contesting Local Government Elections**

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Budget 2025: austerity for the poor, protection for the rich

This budget is a declaration of war on the working class, and the response must be organised, militant, and uncompromising.

The 2025 Budget, delivered by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana, confirms what the working class has long understood—this government remains committed to neoliberal economic policies that deepen inequality, protect corporate interests, and impose austerity on the poor. Disguised as “fiscal consolidation” and “responsible governance,” this budget is yet

another chapter in the ongoing assault on workers, the unemployed, and the poor majority.

worker buying bread as it does on a billionaire purchasing luxury goods is inherently unjust. The SACP has been clear in its rejection of this budget. We have called it “a form of violence against the people,” rightly identifying that those who are already struggling will bear the brunt of these policies. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has also condemned the budget, calling the VAT increase

““ *This budget, and the response to it, confirms the urgency of building a Popular Left Front to counter neoliberalism and capitalist exploitation*

another chapter in the ongoing assault on workers, the unemployed, and the poor majority.

The most glaring attack comes in the form of the proposed VAT hike. **Raising VAT from 15% to 16% over two years** will disproportionately impact the working class, who already struggle under rising food prices, transport costs and unaffordable electricity. The government claims that adding a few more items to the VAT zero-rated list will cushion the blow, but this does nothing to change the fundamentally regressive nature of VAT. A system that places the same tax burden on a factory

“pickpocketing of workers.” Cosatu further criticised the **failure to adjust personal income tax brackets to account for inflation**, which means workers will pay more tax in real terms despite stagnant wages.

The Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), which for years has championed the call for alternatives to austerity, reiterated its stance, highlighting how continued cuts to public spending in critical sectors such as health and education are eroding basic services. The underfunding of healthcare has already led to nearly **9,000 job losses**, with many hospitals and

clinics struggling to meet patient demand. The additional **R28.9 billion** allocated to health is merely an attempt to plug gaps in a system that has been systematically gutted.

Despite this, the ANC continues to defend the budget, claiming that the VAT increase is necessary to maintain social spending. This is untrue. There are alternative revenue sources—progressive wealth taxes, stricter capital controls to prevent illicit financial flows, and increased corporate tax on industries that extract immense wealth from the country. But the ANC government, under the influence of big business and global financial institutions, refuses to pursue policies that would

shift the burden onto those who can afford it.

In a surprising move, the DA has also opposed the budget, though for entirely different reasons. Rather than opposing the VAT increase out of concern for workers and the poor, the DA is merely worried that higher taxes could hurt business confidence. Their opposition is rooted in a defence of capital, not an interest in reversing the neoliberal trajectory.

This budget, and the response to it, confirms the urgency of **building a Popular Left Front to counter neoliberalism and capitalist exploitation**. The Government of National Unity (GNU) is proving to be exactly what many feared—a

coalition that ultimately serves private interests, reinforcing an economic system that benefits a few while making life harder for the majority. Workers and progressive forces must reject austerity, resist regressive taxation, and fight for an economic programme that redistributes wealth and prioritises the needs of the people over the profits of the elite.

There is no neutrality in the class struggle. This budget is a declaration of war on the working class, and the response must be organised, militant, and uncompromising. If we fail to build a serious political alternative, the neoliberal onslaught will continue, and the poor will be left to pay the price—once again. ★



BOYCOTT APARTHEID ISRAEL

OUR PRIORITY TARGETS

The list of corporations that we are currently targeting and urge all Palestine supporters to boycott can be found here.

Please scroll further down to have a look at a larger list of companies with relations to the Apartheid state of Israel.

<p>ZZ2</p>	<p>Cape Union Mart</p>	<p>Pizza Hut</p>	<p>McDonalds</p>
<p>Demand: ZZ2 tomatoes must break ties with Hishtil!</p>	<p>Demand: We call for a boycott of Cape Union Mart and their brands K-way, Poetry, Old Khaki, and Sparks & Ellis until Phillip Krawitz ends his donations to Israeli apartheid war funds!</p>	<p>Pizza Hut South Africa must condemn their parent company for allowing its Israel branch to support genocide</p>	<p>McDonalds South Africa must condemn their parent company for allowing its Israel branch to support genocide.</p>

People Against Budget Cuts – austerity's new opponent

Exlira Giöse-Davids and Lucian Davids report on the People Budget Cuts March that took place on the day of the National budget speech delivery



On 19 February, the SACP, the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), together with various trade unions, and civil society organisations, held the People Against Budget Cuts March to Parliament in protest against the austerity measures (budget cuts) associated with Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's annual budget speech.

Godongwana continues to implement austerity measures to achieve lower public debt, which has led to the working class suffering from a poor healthcare system, under-resourced public schools, underpaid public service workers, and high unemployment rates.

The AIDC has conducted and presented progressive and alternative research for years, countering the mainstream neoliberal framework that constrains South African society. The call for unity among workers and civil society is crucial, and the role played by the AIDC cannot be understated.

This cause has brought together the South African Federation of Trade Unions and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, rival trade union federations, who now agree on the importance of a common programme to champion workers' interests against budget cuts alongside civil society.

Budget cuts have worsened under the 'Government of Neoliberal Unity'. We are yet to see positive results from these austerity measures; all we witness are corrupt politicians' wages increasing.

Issues highlighted during the march included the effects of austerity in healthcare, where budget cuts leave hospitals and other public healthcare facilities under-stocked with medicine, compromising the quality of health



Anti-austerity protestors in the People Against Budget cuts march to Parliament

services and life expectancy.

Preserving skilled labour is vital for maintaining a robust economy, which requires healthy and well-cared-for workers. The demand for land with water was emphasised during the march by female farmworkers and tied to numerous evictions of the children of deceased farmworkers.

The Trade Union of Learners in South Africa has brought attention to the challenging conditions faced by students in the country. Issues such as overcrowded classrooms with over sixty students per teacher, and a lack of ablution facilities, severely impact the quality of education and student welfare. Additionally, the absence of scholar transport forces students to walk long distances to school, resulting in fatigue and decreased attentiveness in class.

Upon reaching university or college, many students struggle to find accommodation. Some are compelled to offer sexual favours for housing or sleep on the floor in overcrowded rooms. Ultimately, these students go through these hardships only to join the unemployed graduates. This cycle of poverty predominantly affects non-white communities, and budget cuts exacerbate these issues.

Of particular concern is the resistance to a proposed a 2% increase

in Value Added Tax. While additional funding is necessary to support essential programs—especially since the US has reduced foreign aid to South Africa—the implementation of tax increases alongside budget cuts raises questions about the allocation of the funds. The perception among the public is that increased taxes may be enriching corrupt officials rather than addressing public debt, which is what austerity measures aim to reduce.

Despite the current difficulties, this period presents an opportunity to establish a Popular Left Front with a unified agenda to oppose the neoliberal policies that undermine the South African working class and impoverished communities. Since the end of apartheid, left-wing politics have been marginalised, allowing domestic and international capital to entrench neoliberal and austerity regimes. It is crucial to capitalise on this moment, build upon it and work towards empowering left-wing and popular movements. ★

Exlira Giöse-Davids and Lucian Davids are both National Committee members of the Young Communist League of South Africa and District Executive Committee members of the SACP in Brian Bunting District

GNU socio-economic policies must protect the working class

Khwezi Mabasa examines ways to counter the neoliberal offensive against the working class in the Government of National Unity



The recent political contestations over the budget speech highlight ideological and policy contestations within the Government of National Unity (GNU). The principles and agreements contained in the Statement of Intent (SoI) are interpreted differently. The Democratic Alliance (DA), which is the second largest party, has opposed several policy proposals to realise the SOI strategic policy objectives.

This opposition is evident in recent public responses to the government's policy regulatory amendments as well as the party's election manifesto documents. For example, the party has pushed back on implementing the National Health Insurance (NHI), Transformation Fund, Employment Equity (EE), and Expropriation Act. Democratic Alliance leaders have

gone to the extent of instituting legal challenges and threatening to exit the GNU. All these developments are based on a market fundamentalist approach, which essentially attacks the working class and deepens racialised socio-economic inequalities in society. The following three main policy principles characterise this political view and they should be opposed by the alliance.

First, an argument that attempts to erase or overtly deny racialised class and gendered inequalities in society. This is expressed in statements that explicitly call on South African policymakers to disregard race in creating policy or regulatory amendments. This is astonishing because researched policy documents from several credible organisations (including Stats SA's recent Household Survey) amplify persistent racialised disparities in essential human development areas such

as employment, wages, household income, wealth and food security. Yet, the DA continues to advance a cause for removing racial redress and other redistributive socio-economic policy measures.

The Alliance should challenge this perspective by drawing from the constitution, revolutionary political theory and discussion documents that highlight the need for working-class biased racial redress. All these sources illuminate how structural inequalities associated with racialised capitalism are still prevalent in our communities. In addition, they propose several policy-based redistributive measures to address systemic inequalities. The NHI, EE and Expropriation Acts are examples of interventions aimed at ameliorating the racialised disparities mentioned above.

A second characteristic of market fundamentalist policy attacks is



The right-wing Democratic Alliance is seeking to wreck the implementation of National Health Insurance and other progressive legislation

minimising the state's role in the economy. This is exemplified in the DA's recent budget expectation statement and overall inputs in fiscal policy debates. Party leaders have essentially supported austerity and budget cuts that are aimed at minimising government's role in the economy. More importantly, these propositions advance a case for lowering fiscal allocations in crucial redistributive socio-economic interventions such as social grants, nutritional programmes, and public service expenditure.

The DA's fiscal policy proposals also support privatisation indirectly in several ways. These statements propose increased private sector participation in delivering essential public goods as well as deepening the corporatisation of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The latter reduces

the main function of SOEs to corporate performance standards such as profit, revenue generation and market investor confidence. Social returns and public interest benefit indicators – such as public enterprise contributions

“ Alliance partners must rebut market fundamentalist fiscal policy perspectives using anti-neoliberal alternatives

towards decent work creation, localisation, industrialisation and skills development – are overlooked in this view. Alliance partners

must rebut market fundamentalist fiscal policy perspectives using anti-neoliberal alternatives. These alternatives emphasise the state's role in the economy, creating demand through redistributive policy, reindustrialisation, tax justice reforms (i.e. wealth tax) and improving access to public goods.

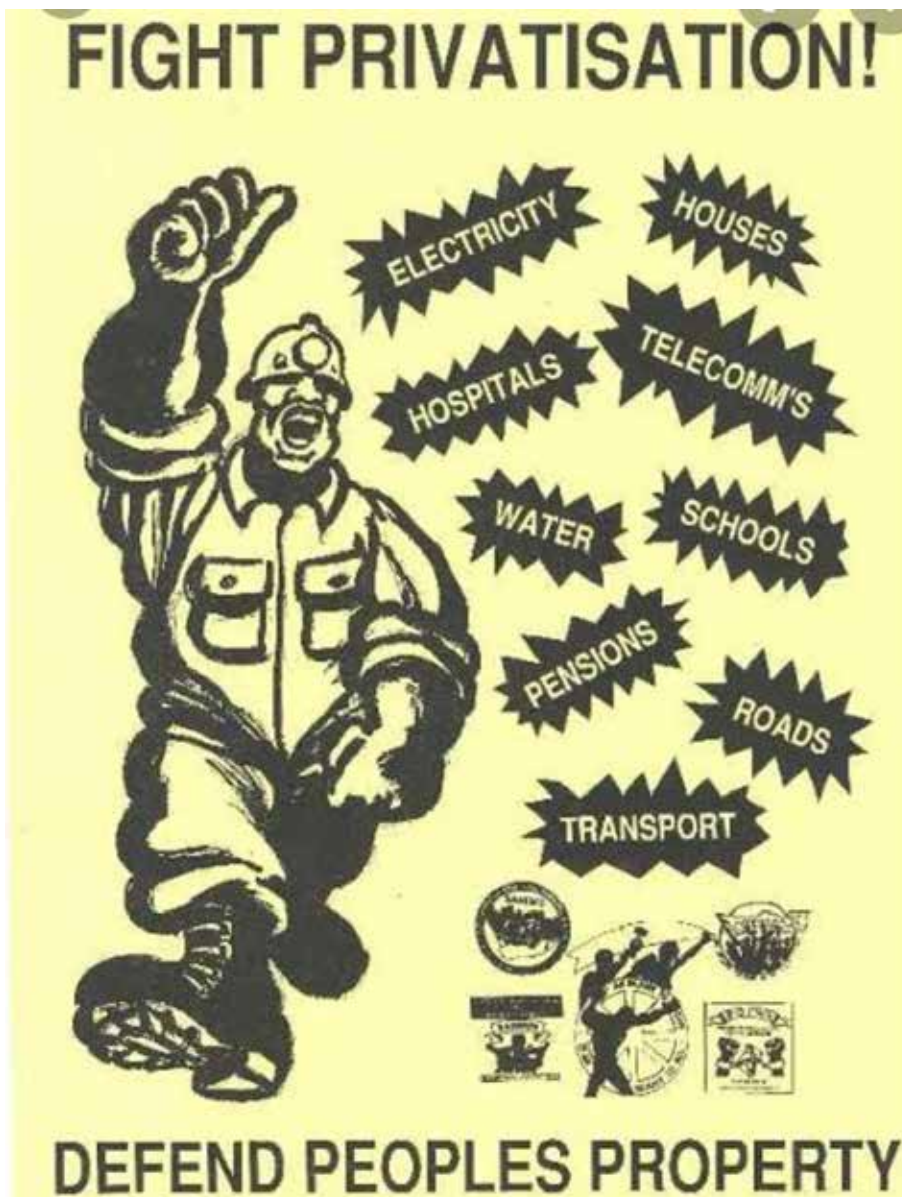
Finally, the DA and other parties in the GNU view the country's labour laws as too rigid. They all support more flexibility in labour markets and constraining wage growth in the economy (especially public sector wages). There is a general attack on labour rights in the GNU and it is mainly led by conservative parties that support corporate interests aimed at deepening the exploitation of the working class.

Alliance partners should highlight researched policy evidence that illustrates flaws in these arguments. South Africa's labour markets are very flexible and fragmented because of outsourcing, atypical employment contracts and workplace restructuring. Additionally, wage share in the national income has been declining for years and the economy-wide median wage currently stands at R5500 a month.

Our public sector is not bloated if one considers our population growth and human resource-to-population ratios. On the contrary, South Africa needs to expand employment in essential front-line services such as health, policing and education. This point is highlighted in public employment studies conducted by the Institute of Economic Justice (IEJ) and Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS).

The immediate task in GNU policy debates is to raise the arguments and policy propositions presented in different sections of this article. These proposals are crucial for defending working-class socio-economic interests as we navigate different policy options in the country's future development path. ★

Cde Mabasa is the economic and social policy lead at Friedrich Ebert Stiftung South Africa and a part-time sociology lecturer at the University of Pretoria. His work focuses on labour studies, political economy and racial capitalism



Workers in South Africa have a long history of fighting privatisation
Source: South African History Archive

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Forward with our independent 2026 Local Government Elections campaign!

Tinyiko Ntini unpacks the decisions of the 5th SNC on the SACP's contestation of the 2026 Local Government Elections



The SACP's 15th Congress and 5th Special National Congress (SNC) constituted a watershed moment in the life of the Party, a defining moment for its renewal, remodelling and rejuvenation to adapt to the prevailing harsh material conditions of the working class.

The Party's clarion call to "Consolidate And Build A Powerful Socialist Movement Of The Workers And Poor" provides it with an opportunity to reposition itself as a real vanguard of the workers and poor. This requires the Party to put forward a clear and distinctive socialist platform of the SACP, emphasising the Party's focus on working-class needs. It is this independent vision and voice that will set the Party apart from the ANC and other political bodies.

The SNC does not convene for special issues but as a mid-term review and deep dive into the challenges and successes in implementing the resolutions of the previous Congress. The SNC is also a platform to analyse the material conditions and subjective factors concerning the state of revolutionary and motive forces and to determine what needs to be done differently.

A key responsibility of the 5th SNC was to determine how to implement the decision of the 15th National Congress to contest elections, specifically the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE), including the modalities of how we coordinate with Alliance partners on where we contest, whether to contest in specific municipalities or wards or go for wall-to-wall municipal contestation. After two decades of discussion, the 5th SNC gave directions and chose the modality of our contest as wall to wall, simply meaning contest all 257 municipalities.

Our stance as the SACP of contesting the 2026 LGE is primarily rooted in

opening local government to meaningful participation from the working class and the poor, defending their class interests and asserting themselves as a motive force of the national democratic revolution (NDR).

The downtrodden masses are not at the core of planning service delivery, a painful regression from participatory democracy. The Party holds the conviction that winning state

ground since leadership engagements in the boardrooms have consistently failed. As we said in *The role of the SACP in the transition to democracy and socialism* (1993), "the SACP should not adopt an autonomous role unless the national liberation project is successfully hijacked by some liberal project".

The current posture of the Party is based on the refusal to reconfigure the Alliance, and because of the neoliberal offensive against the workers and poor, exacerbated by corporate capture of the state across all levels of the state.

Drawing on lessons learnt from Metsimaholo in 2017 and last year's national general elections, the SNC concluded that the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system, which is employed by local government, must be leveraged by the SACP to establish a balanced, inclusive, and impactful presence at the local level. The MMP system ensures the allocation of council seats through a mixture of direct ward representation and proportional representation (PR). The SACP elections strategy must fully understand this system of seat allocation, where PR allocation allows the SACP to win Council seats off the back of overall vote share, even in municipalities where winning direct wards is going to be more difficult.

This system guarantees fair representation of all the parties contesting and ensures that every vote counts. That is in accordance with the SACP basic principle of ensuring maximum working-class representation across South Africa. This relates to the first of the two elements of the socialist vision of contesting power through deepening democracy by ensuring an electoral platform for the working class and poor.

The SACP envisages extending working class power over the political and economic domains of state power.



power can translate into transforming the economic and political power relations in society. We see the state as an agent of change, working at the behest of the lower classes on whose support it depends.

The 5th SNC further reaffirmed the Party's commitment to a reconfigured and renewed alliance capable of adapting to the changing material conditions. The decision to contest elections is part of our modality to reconfigure the Alliance from the

“Contesting state power beyond the political domain is universally shared by Communist Parties



The refusal to reconfigure the Alliance and the current offensive against the working class are key reasons why the SACP is contesting the 2026 Local Government Elections

Contesting state power beyond the political domain is universally shared by Communist Parties. As we fought the ascent of neoliberalism, the SACP saw national democracy as not only necessary for the construction of socialism but a multiparty electoral

system as an equally important mechanism for ensuring accountability and control by the citizenry.

The SACP went further to highlight that the logic and principles of the path to state power had to be deepened and extended into all other spheres of society

“ All members and structures of the SACP are expected to be ‘all-hands-on-deck’ in implementing the SNC resolutions

- from the political, which included the government and administration, to the economic, social, and cultural spheres.

The Party envisioned an extensive role for the organs of people’s power, community-based organisations, and other formations in local government and over the broad direction of the economy. This informs our approach to Party building, mobilising and campaigning around the material conditions of the working class and lifting the independent voice of the SACP while building the Alliance to strengthen and put the NDR back on track.

All members and structures of the SACP are expected to be ‘all-hands-on-deck’ in implementing these congress resolutions. We march forward to a working-class contestation of the 2026 Local Government Elections in the quest of raising the voice of the working class and for a socialist South Africa. ★

Cde Ntini is a Central Committee Member and National Elections Coordinator



SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE

Image: Sou Mi

IMPERIALISM

A new direction for US imperialism and global capitalism? –implications for the Global South and South Africa

Rob Davies examines the implications of Trump 2.0 and the new phase of imperialism: while the Global South must watch its back, there may be scope for its greater autonomy



The early stages of the Trump administration have made clear that a dramatic shift is underway in the trajectory of US imperialism and the broader global capitalist order. Central to this transformation is Elon Musk, the South African-born tech oligarch, who has assumed a significant role in shaping the new direction of US power. Musk's prominence during Trump's inauguration and his leadership in advancing "Project 2025" have highlighted the growing influence of the tech oligarchy within the US capitalist ruling class.

For South African Marxists, Musk's rise is particularly notable due to his apartheid-era upbringing and his commitment to promoting "disruptive change" on a global scale. This essay will explore the immediate implications of these developments for South Africa, analyse the broader shifts in global capitalism, and assess the long-term impact of US imperialism in the context of a multipolar world.

Targeting transformation in, and solidarity by, South Africa

The Trump administration has already taken several actions that signal a hostile approach toward South Africa, marking a departure from previous diplomatic norms. These measures, though rooted in geopolitical calculations, reflect a broader agenda to reshape global power dynamics in favour of US interests.

Halting US Financial Aid

One of the first significant moves by the Trump administration was the suspension of US financial aid to South Africa. This decision was justified by citing South Africa's Expropriation



Act, its support for the International Court of Justice's position on Israeli actions in Gaza, and alleged ties with Iran. Among the most significant cuts was the reduction of \$439 million in funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar), a program that accounts for 20% of South Africa's total AIDS funding. Although Pepfar was temporarily exempted, other programs aimed at addressing climate change, gender equality, and democracy promotion remain under threat.

Refugee programme prioritisation

Trump's administration has also directed officials to prioritize Afrikaner refugees from South Africa for resettlement in the United States. This racially motivated action is exclusionary and reflects the Trump administration's broader agenda to shift refugee policies in ways that benefit specific demographic groups while sidelining others.

Review of US-South Africa relations

A broader review of US-South Africa relations has been initiated, signalling a potential weakening of the bilateral relationship. South Africa's standing in global forums like the G20 may be undermined as a result of this shift, leaving the country with less leverage

in international negotiations.

Threats to AGOA

Perhaps most concerning is the uncertainty surrounding South Africa's participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provides non-reciprocal trade preferences. AGOA has been critical to South Africa's manufacturing and agricultural exports, but its renewal in 2025 is uncertain, especially given Trump's insistence on reciprocity in trade relations.

The bigger picture: the decline of the empire

The global order is undergoing a profound transformation, with significant implications for both US hegemony and the global balance of power. The unipolar world dominated by the US since the end of the Cold War is beginning to give way to a more multipolar system.

Rise of China

China has emerged as a peer competitor to the US, making significant strides in both digital and low-carbon technologies. China's industrial and trade policies position it as a global leader, directly challenging US



Palstinians gathered at Nelson Mandela Square in Ramallah in December 2023 to demonstrate appreciation to South Africa for its case at the International Court of Justice
 Photo: Ramallah Municipality

hegemony and reshaping global supply chains.

Russia's resurgence

Russia has reasserted itself as a major power, particularly in its actions in Ukraine. Russia's military interventions and its strategic positioning in the global geopolitical landscape have further eroded US dominance, signalling a shift toward a more multipolar world.

Unilateral departures from global rules

The US and its allies have increasingly departed from multilateral trade rules, imposing tariffs and restrictions justified as matters of "national security." This trend has weakened institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and created space for countries in the Global South to pursue independent developmental strategies, potentially leading to a reordering of global economic structures.

Possible new directions of US foreign policy

The Trump administration's foreign policy is likely to focus on several key areas that will have far-reaching consequences for the Global South, particularly for African nations like South Africa.

Containing China

A more assertive "pivot to the East" is expected, with the US seeking to contain China's rise and reduce global dependence on the US dollar. This strategy could involve economic

sanctions, military posturing, and diplomatic efforts to isolate China on the global stage.

Economic warfare

The Trump administration is likely to favor economic warfare over military interventions, employing aggressive tariff policies and unilateral impositions of norms and conditions on foreign nations. This shift reflects a broader tendency to use economic tools of statecraft as instruments of power.

Disengagement from multilateralism

A key feature of Trump's foreign policy is disengagement from multilateral institutions and a focus on bilateral deals. This approach undermines global cooperation and may lead to a more fragmented and contentious international system.

Marginalisation of Africa

The Trump administration's policies toward Africa may involve marginalising the continent in favour of other global priorities. While this could prove detrimental to African economies, it may also reduce external interference, allowing for greater autonomy in the region.

Significance of Restructuring the US State

Domestically, the Trump administration, with Musk's influence, is pushing for a profound restructuring of the US state apparatus. This transformation has significant implications for both the US working class and the global capitalist order.

Tech Oligarchy's Role

Musk and other tech oligarchs are driving a new wave of "disruptive change" that prioritizes the interests of tech, finance, and big oil capital at the expense of the working class and the poor. This represents a further consolidation of wealth and power within a small elite, with far-reaching consequences for global inequality.

Austerity measures

The administration has implemented austerity measures, including tax cuts for the wealthy and cuts to social welfare programs. These policies reflect a broader neoliberal agenda that seeks to reduce the role of the state in providing for its citizens, shifting the burden of responsibility onto individuals and communities.

Digitisation of government

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and the digitisation of governmental processes are creating new revenue streams for tech capital. This shift could accelerate the concentration of power within the tech industry, further entrenching the dominance of oligarchs like Musk.

The alliance between Trump and Musk represents a significant shift in US imperialism and global capitalism. For South Africa and the Global South, this new direction presents both challenges and opportunities. While the Trump administration's hostile actions—such as halting US aid and threatening AGOA—pose significant risks, they also highlight the need for resistance to external interference.

Progressive forces in the Global South must remain vigilant, recognising that the rise of reactionary figures like Trump and Musk strengthens the hand of similar forces globally. Ultimately, the decline of US hegemony and the rise of a multipolar world offer the Global South an opportunity to assert greater autonomy and pursue alternative developmental paths free from the shackles of imperialism. ★

Cde Davies is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member and a former Minister of Trade and Industry. He is on the advisory council on the Industrial and Trade policy of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the advisory board of a largely Middle East and North Africa-based New Horizons research group

IMPERIALISM

Only anti-imperialist unity can quell conflicts in Africa and West Asia

Ben Martins surveys the contexts of conflicts stoked by increasingly aggressive imperialist policies



Unity and continuity in historical change refer to how events change over time. The scar lines on the African continent post the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, which delineated states, were products of colonisation and rivalry between European states. The long dark shadow of 1884-1885 Berlin Conference still looms over the continent.

Why is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one of the most resource-rich countries of the world but also one of the poorest countries, plagued by conflict and never-ending war? The root of the current civil war, instability and conflict in the DRC can be traced back to the decisions made by European imperialists and the consequences of their economic, military, and geopolitical interests. This did not take into consideration the impact on the division of indigenous people.

As a result of the arbitrary

delineation of countries, members of the same family, clan or tribe ended up split in various countries. This happened mostly in the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. In January 2025, military engagement between the Republic of Congo security forces and militant groups led by the March 23 Movement (M23) escalated rapidly, culminating in M23's capture of Goma, the regional economic hub of the Eastern DRC on the Rwandan border.

Rwanda, the primary backer of the M23 group, supported its offensive in the eastern DRC. As Goma fell, thousands of locals, many of whom were already internally displaced, fled the region. Between 900 people and 2,000 people, by United Nations and DRC estimates, were killed in the offensive on Goma. M23 is the latest in a series of Rwanda-backed militant groups that have been vying for territory and valuable national resources in the eastern Congo since the late 1990s.

The first Congo War (1996 -1997) began in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan

Genocide, during which ethnic Hutu extremists killed an estimated one million minority ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda, DRC's neighbour to the east. During and following the genocide, approximately two million Hutu refugees crossed the border, mostly settling in refugee camps in the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. A small number of those Rwandans who entered the DRC were Hutu extremists who began organising militias within the Congo. Pressure mounted and intensified as Tutsi militias organised against the Hutu groups in turn and foreign powers began taking sides in the conflict.

Following the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF's) victory against the genocidal Rwandan government, the new Tutsi-led government began its involvement in the DRC, then known as the Republic of Zaire. Rwandan troops, under the leadership of Paul Kagame, and Congo-based Tutsi militias with Rwandan backing launched an invasion of Zaire, which was ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko. Kigali justified both efforts



by arguing that Hutu groups in eastern DRC were still a threat to its Tutsi population and that the Mobutu regime was harbouring Hutu extremists who had fled across the border.

Rwanda waged the First Congo War against Zaire with the help of Uganda, Angola and Burundi. The Rwandan coalition's invasion was coordinated with the assistance of Zaire's then opposition leader, Laurent Kabila. On Mobutu fleeing Kinshasa the Kagame-Kabila coalition won the First Congo War in 1997. Laurent Kabila was installed as president of Zaire and changed the country's name back to The DRC. In 1998, the Second Congo War broke out following the deterioration of relations between Kigali and Kinshasa. In a reversal of alliances, Kabila ordered all foreign troops out of the Congo and allowed Hutu armed groups to organise at the border of Rwanda once again.

Rwanda's response was to invade in 1998 again. Kigali's stated aim was to create a zone in the DRC-Rwanda border lands controlled by its own troops to ensure more distance from Hutu groups in eastern DRC. Amidst the war, Laurent Kabila was assassinated in a 2001 coup d'état attempt. Kabila's son, Joseph Kabila, took power and the Second Congo War was ended in 2002.

Over the past two decades, other flashpoints have arisen in states on the Congo-Rwanda border. A major complication to (for?) peace efforts in the DRC has been the proliferation of mining operations. The DRC is endowed with some of the world's largest reserves of metals and rare earth metals used to produce advanced electronics. As the world has become more reliant on cobalt, copper, zinc, and other minerals, local and external groups have become more and more incentivised to get involved in the Congolese conflict.

US companies once owned vast cobalt mines in the Congo. Most of these companies were sold to Chinese companies during the Barack Obama and the first Donald Trump administrations. Chinese companies control the majority of foreign-owned cobalt, uranium and copper mines in the DRC, and the Congolese army has several times been deployed to mining sites in the eastern DRC to protect Chinese assets.

Currently, the DRC is embroiled

in an ongoing political and military confrontation with Rwanda yet again. Kigali accuses Kinshasa of supporting Hutu extremist militias such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Kwame Nkrumah's vision for a united Africa was to create a 'United States of Africa'. He held the view that Africa should be a self-reliant member of the world community. He saw the necessity of the restoration of African dignity that was undermined as a result of slavery and colonialism. Nkrumah deemed its restoration as necessary to enable Africans to function freely in the world as equals. He supported and funded the independence struggles of African countries, then still under colonial rule which included Namibia and South Africa.

Many decades later, in 2025, Africa is still far from realising Nkrumah's vision but has come nearer to it by many a long and bitter march. The yoke of colonialism has been largely cast away, except in areas like Western Sahara where the Saharawi people are fighting the Morocco-Israel axis for independence. History is being progressively shaped by anti-imperialist struggles. The grip of neo-colonialism is being shattered as can be seen in the Sahel region of Africa, where popular coup d'états were supported by the peoples of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which toppled incumbent leaderships that were propped up by French political and socio-economic neocolonial interests.

Niger's General Abdourahmane Tchiani, Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traore, and Mali's Colonel Assimi Goita's examples continue to inspire and represent beacons of progress and hope. These leaders signed a confederation treaty, as a step towards greater integration of the three countries. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are showing signs of safeguarding their newly acquired independence and charting the road to social progress, through the pursuit of self-determination, national democracy and determining their own destiny.

The revolutionary upsurge demanding independence from colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism by the oppressed peoples of the world is a fire that must be fanned and kept alive. ★

The broader context

In Zimbabwe the ruling ZANU-PF, which has historically positioned itself as pro-Palestine, recently made overtures to seek closer ties to the Zionist state of Israel in the hope of securing more investment and doing away with sanctions. One of the Zimbabwe government's recent moves to improve relations with Israel has been the appointment last year of the Israeli national, Ronny Levi Musan, as honorary consul of Zimbabwe to Israel. It is reasonable to surmise that Israel aims to get Zimbabwe to follow the example of Malawi which announced plans to open an embassy in Jerusalem.

Without progress towards greater African unity, there will be failure and collapse of people's liberty. Turning focus to the US: Under President Joe Biden's administration the world witnessed a US-funded and televised genocide by Israel in Gaza. Arthur James Balfour was the author of the Balfour Declaration, which approved the establishment in Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people. The Balfour Declaration foreshadowed the formation of a Zionist state and preordained that the indigenous Palestinians would be made stateless and consigned to a political prison.

In 1964, Malcolm X stated: "The situation in Palestine serves as a brutal reminder of the consequences of colonialism and the ruthless dispossession of indigenous people. It is an agonising reminder that the struggle for justice knows no borders and we must stand united and in solidarity with all oppressed peoples, anywhere around the world". The tempo of Zionist ethnic cleansing is today still being intensified in the West Bank, premised upon hatred, and a superiority complex of religion, language and culture.

The past months have shown that the ceasefire in Gaza is being used by Israel as an extension of its scorched earth policy. Under President Donald Trump's administration, diplomacy and multilateralism are under attack and siege. Minute by minute, hour by hour instability, uncertainty, rants, threats and the wanton abuse of presidential prerogatives have become the order of the day.

Presidents Biden and Trump are but two sides of the same coin. Their decisions have hollowed out the multilateral foundation and global authority of the United Nations. President Trump has boldly ushered in the ascendancy of oligarchs and right-wing technology billionaires into key positions in the US government.

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Building a revolutionary reading culture – lessons from the 5th Special National Congress

Sarah Mokwebo aims to ignite a passion for reading among communists: “The goal is not just to read but to analyse, critique, and apply socialist thought to real-world struggles.”



I had the pleasure of facilitating a panel discussion on reading circles at the SACP gala dinner, held during the 5th Special National Congress. The panel, featuring esteemed comrades Reneva Fourie, Mandlakhe Radebe, and Molaodi Wa Sekake, explored the role of structured reading in political education, movement-building, and the ideological sharpening of cadres.

This was not just a discussion about books; it was about the fundamental role that reading circles must play in cadre development and mass political education. We examined why we read, what we read, and how we critically engage with texts, ensuring that literature serves as a tool for both reflection and action.

Reading, writing and struggle

Reading and writing are twin forces of resistance and transformation. Reading nourishes the mind with knowledge while writing wields that knowledge to challenge, imagine, and create. As Molaodi Wa Sekake emphasised, reading and writing should reflect the concrete struggles of the people. Literature should not exist in a vacuum; it must be rooted in lived experiences, making political theory relevant to daily realities.

Cde Mandla Radebe reinforced the need for critical engagement with texts, especially in a world where capital and media shape dominant narratives. He urged comrades to interrogate the information they consume, always questioning who controls it, whose interests it serves, and how it influences public consciousness.

Cde Reneva Fourie, reflecting on her work in gender and political policy, emphasised that reading circles should be grounded in people’s realities. Whether tackling political theory, memoirs, or historical texts, these



A strong foundation in socialist literature is key to developing a class-conscious, historically grounded, and theoretically sharp cadre

discussions should connect knowledge with practice, ensuring that they empower working-class communities.

Starting a revolutionary reading circle

A revolutionary reading circle is more than just a space for discussion; it is a tool for political education, cadre development, and movement-building. The goal is not just to read but to analyse, critique, and apply socialist thought to real-world struggles.

For those looking to establish a book club or reading circle within the Party or broader working-class movements, here are some key steps:

Put together a socialist reading list

A strong foundation in socialist literature is key to developing a class-conscious, historically grounded, and theoretically sharp cadre. A structured reading list should cover:

- Foundational Marxist Theory – *The Communist Manifesto (Marx & Engels)*, *State and Revolution (Lenin)*, *Capital (Marx)*.
- Imperialism & Class Struggle – *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Lenin)*, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Rodney)*.

- Revolutionary Struggles – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire)*, *The Wretched of the Earth (Fanon)*.
- African & South African Socialism – *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism (Nkrumah)*, works by Anton Lembede & Ruth First.
- Women & Socialism – *Women, Race, & Class (Angela Davis)*, *Caliban and the Witch (Federici)*.

Fiction also brings socialist theory to life, illustrating class struggle, alienation, and resistance. Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* foreshadows capitalist imperialism, while Orwell’s *Animal Farm* critiques bureaucratic degeneration. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* and Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* expose neocolonialism’s betrayal of African independence, while Sembène Ousmane’s *God’s Bits of Wood* highlights worker solidarity in anti-colonial struggles.

In South Africa, literature has been a tool of resistance. Mongane Wally Serote’s *To Every Birth Its Blood* and Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* reflect working-class struggles in post-apartheid South Africa, while Lauretta

Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* explores the intersection of gender, race, and class. Other notable works include Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (a critique of post-independence elites) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (a study of colonial oppression)

Incorporating fiction into socialist study circles deepens understanding of class struggle and reinforces the urgency of political transformation through storytelling. A well-rounded reading circle must engage with literature that critiques the world as it is- and envisions what it could be.

Encourage critical engagement

Reading alone is not enough; engagement must be critical and political. Members should write reflections after each session, considering what challenged their thinking and how the text applies to contemporary struggles. These reflections deepen understanding and create a collective record of insights.

The group must also interrogate the text by asking: Whose class interests does this serve? How does it apply to our reality? This prevents passive reading and encourages active critique. Comparing perspectives further sharpens ideological clarity-contrasting, for example, Lenin's views on state dismantling with Luxemburg's critique of vanguardism, or Nkrumah's state-led African socialism with Fanon's anti-colonial radicalism. This dialectical approach fosters independent thinking, strengthens arguments, and ensures theory is tied to revolutionary action.

Host Regular Discussions

Structured discussions sustain engagement. A fixed schedule (weekly, biweekly, or monthly) ensures consistency, while rotating discussion leaders allows for diverse perspectives. Sessions should include:

- Debates (e.g., Lenin vs. Luxemburg on revolution vs.

reform)

- Historical case studies (e.g., communists in South African liberation)
- Thematic discussions (e.g., women in socialist movements)

To accommodate all members, digital platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Telegram) should supplement in-person meetings, ensuring accessibility and ongoing engagement beyond physical gatherings.

Ensure Accessibility

A revolutionary reading circle must be inclusive. Free online resources such as Marxists.org, Internet Archive, and Left Book Club can provide socialist texts, while communal libraries ensure access to physical copies.

For those with time constraints or literacy barriers, summaries, audio readings, and read-aloud sessions can improve accessibility. Translating key texts into African languages further broadens participation. Breaking down these barriers ensures that no comrade is excluded from political education.

Link theory to action

Reading must translate into practice and political struggle. Discussions on imperialism should lead to analyses of its local impact, such as IMF and World Bank policies in Africa. Members should use their insights to create study guides, pamphlets, and workshops for broader education.

Encouraging comrades to write opinion pieces, critiques, and reports ensures that theoretical discussions contribute to current political debates. Engaging with community and worker struggles grounds learning in real-world organizing, transforming the reading circle into a tool for revolutionary change, not just intellectual exercise.

Incorporate oral tradition, art and music

When I joined the student movement, one of the first things I was

taught was that song was one of the best ways to conscientise anyone. Songs carry knowledge with them.

This is why reading circles should not be limited to books alone. They can be enriched by incorporating oral tradition, revolutionary art, and music, making political education more engaging and culturally rooted. In African societies, knowledge has long been preserved and passed down orally, through storytelling, poetry, and proverbs. These traditions do not merely entertain-they teach, mobilise, and radicalise.

Sharing stories, songs, and artistic expressions that reflect the struggles and aspirations of the movement can deepen understanding and create a more holistic learning experience.

Reading as a revolutionary act

Reading is not just an intellectual exercise; it is an act of political commitment. It sharpens ideological clarity, strengthens movements, and provides the language to articulate struggles and envision alternatives.

Socialist movements have always understood that literacy and liberation go hand in hand. From Lenin's study circles in Russia to Amilcar Cabral's political education programmes in Guinea-Bissau to reading groups among South African activists under apartheid collective study has been a foundation of revolutionary action.

A reading circle is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is about developing class consciousness, sharpening strategy, and building a cadre capable of leading struggle. ★

Cde Mokwebo is a National Committee member of the YCLSA and Founder and Curator of The Book Stokvel, a collective that pools resources to buy, share, and discuss books, with a strong focus on African literature.

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