

Stalinist Communist Party Marxist-Kenya seeks new political trap for rising discontent among workers, youth—Part One

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In November, the Stalinist Kenya Communist Party (CPK) held a high-profile Second Congress in Nairobi's business district of Upper Hill under the slogan, "Advancing the National Democratic Revolution for a Truly Independent Socialist Kenya."

The event drew significant attention from Kenya's mainstream capitalist media—*The Standard*, *Citizen Digital*, *Business Times Kenya*, and *Nairobi Wire*—as well as international Stalinist publications like *Peoples Dispatch* and *Peoples Democracy*, the English weekly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Stalinist parties worldwide, steeped in counter-revolution, sent messages of solidarity. The Communist Party of China, a ruthless enforcer of sweatshop conditions for foreign and domestic capitalists controlled by billionaires and bureaucrats, sent its endorsement. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), instrumental in sustaining national coalition governments which have pushed right-wing pro-market "reforms" to transform India into a hub for foreign investment and cheap labour, also expressed support. The South African Communist Party joined in, having recently defended the African National Congress government's starvation policy at Stilfontein, where the blockading of abandoned gold mines led to the massacre of at least 78 miners.

At the centre of the Congress was the rebranding of the CPK as the Communist Party Marxist-Kenya (CPM-K) in response to the party's internal crisis after General Secretary Benedict Wachira and National Chairperson Mwandawiro Mganga deserted the party to join President William Ruto's government in 2022, exposing the Stalinists as a tool of the Kenyan bourgeoisie.

Ruto has since imposed brutal International Monetary Fund (IMF)-dictated austerity measures, tax hikes, and social cuts, while escalating police repression against workers and youth. At the same time, he has deepened Kenya's alignment with US imperialism, becoming a major Non-NATO ally, supporting Washington's efforts to reshape the Middle East through genocide, regime change and wars and deploying Kenyan police to Haiti to suppress migration from the Caribbean to the United States.

Last year, Ruto's austerity measures provoked the Gen Z- protests, when millions of Kenyans, particularly youth, launched mass demonstrations across the country cutting across tribal divides long fostered by the ruling class. Police responded with mass violence, killing over 60 protestors and injuring hundreds more. This was followed by a strike wave, in which hundreds of thousands of teachers, health care workers, airport staff, county civil servants and lecturers mobilized to oppose budget cuts, privatisation schemes and broken promises over wages and staffing.

The Gen-Z uprising shook the government and the entire Kenyan ruling class. Similar protests spread to Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Mozambique. Capitals across Africa feared unrest could erupt, driven by the deepening global capitalist crisis.

In response to this radicalisation, the Kenyan Stalinists are putting on a new "left" shirt. The CPM-K adopted a new constitution and manifesto committed "to dismantling the exploitative capitalist structures and establishing a just and equitable society," adopted the hammer and sickle and selected *The Internationale* as its official anthem.

Booker Omole, formerly CPK's vice-chairman, was elected general-secretary. He declared that the new leadership "embodies the spirit of our struggle, with a renewed focus on building a mass revolutionary movement." He claimed the CPM-K's mission is to deepen "the Party's roots within the working masses" to "carry the torch of our people's democratic revolution."

Far from building a "genuine mass revolutionary movement," the CPM-K's Congress reaffirmed what was already clear: despite adding "Marxist" to its name, the party has no orientation to the working class. It remains a pro-capitalist organisation rooted in nationalism, representing the interests of sections of the bourgeoisie and middle class. Its ideological heritage is not Marxism but the counterrevolutionary traditions of Stalinism and its twin, Maoism.

The Congress made this explicit, approving a manifesto insisting—in keeping with the reactionary Stalinist two-stage theory—that the struggle for socialism in Kenya has to first pass through the stage of "democratic" capitalism through a "National Democratic Revolution"—an alliance between the working class and "patriotic" and "non-comprador" elements of the bourgeoisie.

In this "National Democratic Revolution", the CPM-K advocates for the preservation of the profit system and a supposed national, state-led, path to developing Kenyan capitalism, as a first step to socialism in an undefined future. The CPM-K calls for a "mixed economic system where the state, private sector, and cooperative sector coexist".

Kenya's capitalist profits are also to be protected from external competition. "Neo-liberalism's liberalisation policies, which open local markets to unfair foreign competition, have stunted Kenya's agriculture, trade, and industry. CPM-K insists on the state's duty to protect and support these sectors. While foreign investment is welcome, it must not undermine areas Kenyans are capable of managing independently or compromise the nation's sovereignty."

The CPM-K insists on negotiations to "secure debt relief" with imperialist institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, stating, "The issue of Kenya's external debt will be tackled with lenders to secure debt relief, facilitating economic recovery and growth". In other words, it seeks a more comfortable arrangement with imperialist creditors, but the

working class will continue paying for the debt of the corrupt Kenyan ruling class.

The CPM-K's programme presents socialism as its ultimate goal, yet in practice it seeks to establish an ostensibly independent, self-sustaining capitalist economy. It explicitly states, "Ultimately, CPM-K aims to build an independent, nationally integrated, and self-sustaining economy by mobilising Kenya's resources." It further asserts its rejection of the "neoliberal economic framework," instead advocating "home-grown, creative policies based on Kenya's priorities and resources."

CPM-K's utopia of capitalist economic autarky is "Socialism in One Country"—the state policy of Stalinism in the USSR and Maoism in China—stripped of socialist trappings. In the case of both models, the perspective ended in the restoration of capitalism.

These events vindicated the longstanding analysis of the Trotskyist movement, represented today by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The ICFI insisted that the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 was not the failure of socialism but of Stalinism and its nationalist orientation, which was incapable of withstanding the pressures of globalised production.

Having abandoned the struggle for world socialist revolution long before, the Stalinist bureaucracy responded to the Soviet economy's deepening crisis and growing working-class unrest by integrating itself into global capitalism, securing its privileges through the restoration of capitalist private property.

The collapse of the USSR was not an isolated event but a symptom of the broader unravelling of the post-war order and the intensification of capitalism's fundamental contradiction between the world economy and the outmoded nation-state system.

Rather than opening up what bourgeois propagandists proclaimed as the "End of History" and the triumph of capitalist democracy, the fall of the Soviet Union and the demise of its autarkic economic model foreshadowed the transformation or collapse of all parties and institutions built on national economic regulation, social reform and import substitution industrialisation. None of the basic contradictions of capitalism that led to revolutionary struggles in the 20th century—war, social inequality, fascist reaction—had been resolved.

Today, facing explosive anger at social inequality produced by decades of post-Soviet European Union austerity and mass unemployment, the ruling class is again preparing for war and dictatorship.

In Kenya, the crisis has manifested in mass austerity, tax hikes under Ruto's government, widening inequality—where 8,300 people control more wealth than the bottom 99.9 percent (over 44 million people)—and escalating police repression.

The CPM-K is attempting to rebuild credibility among workers and youth amid rising mass opposition to the Ruto government, now openly joined by the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), whose billionaire leader, Raila Odinga, has long played the role of suppressing social unrest and channeling discontent into dead-end parliamentary maneuvers. A vacuum to the left is rapidly developing.

Under these conditions, the CPM-K's rebranding is a calculated effort to block rising opposition to the Ruto-Odinga political establishment among left-wing workers and youth. Representing the interests of an affluent upper-middle-class layer, the Stalinists rely on the suppression of the working class and its continued subordination to the existing political order.

CPM-K calls for a pivot to China

Beneath its left-wing rhetoric and nationalist appeals to prioritise

Kenyan capitalism, the CPM-K is positioning itself as a vehicle for sections of the bourgeoisie frustrated with the Ruto-Odinga government's alignment with the United States. With Kenya gaining little from its strategic partnership with Washington, these factions view China as a more lucrative alternative. Here, the CPM-K's Maoist lineage and leadership's ties with China are considered an asset in strengthening ties with Beijing.

Since independence six decades ago, the Kenyan bourgeoisie has been a loyal stooge of imperialism. It hosts British and American military bases, facilitates intelligence operations, and participates in counterterrorism programmes. Kenya's military interventions, including its invasion of Somalia under the guise of fighting Al-Shabaab in 2011, were carried out in service of US geo-strategic objectives to control the Horn of Africa. Nairobi is also leading a Western-backed police mission in Haiti, supported the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians and aligned itself with US-UK airstrikes on Yemen.

Last year, this relationship culminated in Washington's designation of Kenya as a major non-NATO ally (MNNA). The MNNA designation makes Kenya the only Sub-Saharan African nation to have an elevated defense cooperation relationship with the US.

Over the past decade and a half, however, the extraordinary weight of Chinese economic influence has created a social basis for a pro-Chinese faction in the ruling class and sections of the affluent middle class.

Bilateral trade between Nairobi and Beijing has gone from approximately \$2.4 billion in 2011 to more than double in 2018 (\$5.3 billion). This upward trend has continued, with China's exports to Kenya reaching \$7.8 billion in 2024. Beijing has been instrumental in financing and constructing major infrastructure projects, including the Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), the Thika Super-highway easing transportation of raw materials and finished products between Nairobi and the country's second-most industrialised town of Thika, and projects like the Kipevu Oil Terminal in Mombasa Port, Lamu Port, Liwatoni Floating Bridge and Thwake Dam.

These years of Chinese investment and trade coincided with Kenya's economic growth, which averaged nearly 5 percent between 2015 and 2019. This expansion has contributed to the emergence of a small, fragile, but growing urban middle class—nearly one-third are just a financial shock away from falling back into poverty.

This layer finds expression in the CPM-K. Its general secretary **Omore** enjoys the comforts of a standalone house in Syokimau: a wealthy, gated community, far removed from the daily struggles of the working class—the vast majority of whom are trapped in slums like Kibera and Mathare or squeezed into densely populated apartments in Eastlands, Githurai and Ruiru. CPM-K's headquarters are in Kileleshwa, one of Nairobi's most affluent neighborhoods, where the rent for a two-bedroom apartment is three times the average worker's salary. Its leadership also indulges in high-end trips to Beijing.

The CPM-K has thus emerged as the most outspoken pro-Beijing faction, articulating the interests of sections of the middle class and the bourgeoisie that have benefited from the rise of China's economic influence across the continent. Its rebranding comes amid an intense debate within the ruling class over the country's foreign alignment—a debate heightened by US President Trump's cuts to USAID funding.

US assistance has contributed approximately \$1.68 billion annually to the Kenyan economy, with \$1 billion in direct bilateral and multilateral aid and an additional \$678 million from supportive policies. Cuts are expected to result in 35,000 job losses, further destabilising the already fragile economy.

During the 2000s, the Kenyan Stalinists collaborated with the Kenyan bourgeoisie and US and UK imperialism in drafting the 2010 Constitution. They endorsed Kenya's US-backed military intervention in Somalia in 2011, declaring, "We applauded Mr. [Uhuru] Kenyatta's administration

for taking the bold step to secure our borders [...]. And for sure, everyone can agree that after we had the Kenyan intervention in Somalia, there have been very minimal cases of terrorism.”

More than a decade later, the CPM-K is now calling for a fundamental reorientation of Kenya’s foreign policy—advocating a pivot away from the US and European imperialist powers toward closer alignment with capitalist China. Last year, General Secretary Omole travelled to London to participate in an event organised by the British Stalinist group Friends of Socialist China, titled *Africa, China, and the Rise of the Global South*. In his speech, Omole said:

Today, China stands as a counterforce, presenting an alternative path founded on mutual respect and cooperation. Its ascent without the subjugation of other nations sets it apart from the West, which amassed its wealth at the expense of the Global South. China’s policy of non-interference starkly opposes Western interventionism, whose legacies of looting and colonialism still haunt and define regions like Africa.

China’s engagement with Africa has indeed become a hallmark of the new era. An era characterized by strategic partnerships and mutual cooperation. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, China challenges Western finance capital dominance in Africa, offering much-needed and sustainable alternatives for development. [...] Its contributions to the global south, from infrastructure to technology, signify the changing tides of globalization.

As China champions a new and just international order through socialist ideals with Chinese characteristics, it uplifts billions out of poverty and fosters national development. In contrast to Western hypocrisy on human rights, China emphasizes economic rights and sovereignty as hallmarks of true equality.

This is a lie. China is not a socialist state but a capitalist police-state dictatorship ruled by the Communist Party of China (CCP)—an apparatus that violently crushed the working class during the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre before accelerating full-scale capitalist restoration. Today, the CCP is the ruling party of the Chinese bourgeoisie and its billionaires.

More importantly, China’s rise as an economic power has not led to a peaceful development of capitalism but has only intensified conflicts between Beijing and the imperialist powers. While China’s ruling oligarchy restricts direct imperialist plunder of its vast resources, labour force, and rapidly advancing technology, the Western powers—driven by their deepening crises—are determined to remove all restrictions, by war if necessary. Incapable of making any appeal to the working class, the Chinese regime responds to these threats by hovering between military sabre rattling and attempts at negotiations with the imperialist powers.

CPM-K deliberately downplays the danger of war. Indeed, it promotes the false theory of “multipolarity” that asserts that the former colonies can coexist more or less peacefully with NATO imperialist powers. It’s new manifesto states:

The weakening of the U.S. dollar’s dominance and the rise of alternative economic structures like BRICS are harbingers of a world order no longer shackled by US imperialist dictates. This transformation will allow national liberation revolutions to thrive, sparking a resurgence of socialism and people’s democracies across oppressed nations. The decline of imperialism foreshadows a brighter future where nations pursue true independence, peace,

and social justice on their own terms.

This perspective is bankrupt, based on the illusion that US and European powers will passively accept their decline and allow China to consolidate control over key minerals and natural resources across Africa and beyond. In reality, Washington has spent the past three decades waging continuous wars across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa in a desperate bid to offset its economic decline. Today, China finds itself encircled by an expanding network of US-led military alliances.

This escalating rivalry is sharply reflected in the Trump administration’s aggressive reorientation of US foreign policy, aimed at securing critical resources and global trade routes. Trump has proposed to annex Greenland and assert control over the Panama Canal, both essential to global commerce and military logistics, while intensifying economic and military pressure on Canada and Latin America to cement US dominance over the Western Hemisphere.

These maneuvers are part of a broader strategy against China, as Washington ramps up economic warfare, expands trade restrictions, and seeks to dominate global supply chains—particularly in semiconductors and rare earth minerals, which are crucial to modern industry and military technology.

The BRICS can pose no alternative to the US. It is a loose coalition of capitalist states bound only by a shared recognition of the existential threat posed by Washington’s global dominance and the dollar’s hegemony. Member and candidate states—such as India and Pakistan or Iran and Saudi Arabia—have repeatedly been on the brink of war, with long-standing geopolitical tensions that directly contradict the notion of a cohesive bloc as depicted by the Kenyan Stalinists.

The CPM-K’s orientation to Beijing has nothing to do with any solidarity with the Chinese working class which faces the prospects of an imperialist-led war, but securing the flow of Chinese capital to enrich Kenya’s bourgeoisie while hoping the deceptive portrayal of China as a socialist state—coupled with a steady influx of Chinese capital—will help the Kenyan bourgeoisie contain the class struggle.

The only viable perspective for dealing with the imperialist powers’ relentless escalation of war is to build a revolutionary, socialist anti-war movement in the international working class.

To be continued



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