

Communist Party Marxist - Kenya defends counter-revolutionary Maoist strategy against Trotskyism—Part 2

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The “People’s Democratic State”, China and imperialism in Africa

Having reduced the working class to a “tiny” social force, the CPM-K insists it must ally with the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the “vacillating national bourgeoisie” to develop capitalism to “its maturity” under the “People’s Democratic State”. It is to this reactionary formula, presented as a road to liberation, that we turn next.

The CPM-K’s National Democratic Revolution centres on the construction of what it calls a “People’s Democratic State”—a capitalist regime in which the working class is nominally declared the “leader” while in practice its interests are subordinated to the supposedly patriotic or vacillating national bourgeoisie.

Kaluka rescues this formula from Mao’s texts, insisting that such a state, with “the working class as its leader, will allow the development of national capital, which has been hindered by foreign finance capital and semi-feudal relations. This national capital will be of a special type, as it will be under the workers’ state and will be restricted to operate within the state’s plan for planned and proportional development. This is different from capitalism, where a few individuals own capital and use it to extract surplus from the majority of society.”^[1]

But if capital retains its role in directing production, investment and accumulation, then the working class does not hold real power, however much the CPM-K dresses this up as a “People’s Democratic State.” Capital does not cease to be capital because it is partially nationally owned, let alone merely administratively regulated or subordinated to a state plan. The underlying social relations remain capitalist.

The supposed model is China, which occupies a central place in the CPM-K’s programme. In a 2023 statement marking 60 years of Sino-Kenya relations, the party hailed China as “an alternative to the neoliberal globalization of the West” and explicitly called on the Kenyan bourgeoisie to “seek funds, investment, markets, and technologies” from Beijing.^[2]

China today is not a socialist alternative to imperialism, but a capitalist state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy. It has either the world’s largest or second-largest number of billionaires, depending on whether one uses the Hurun or Forbes rankings: Hurun’s 2026 list counted 1,110 billionaires in China, ahead of the United States, while Forbes counted 539, second only to the US. This oligarchy rests on the exploitation of hundreds of millions of workers, alongside stock

exchanges, private corporations, export-processing zones, sweatshop labour and the ruthless suppression of the working class. Its invocations of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” serve to conceal the social reality of capitalist exploitation.

The CPM-K’s orientation to China expresses the interests of sections of the Kenyan bourgeoisie and affluent middle class. Over the past two decades, Beijing has become one of Kenya’s largest economic partners, enriching and politically strengthening contractors, importers, financiers, state officials and upper-middle-class layers whose wealth depends on Chinese loans, infrastructure projects, trade and investment.

The scale of Chinese involvement is vast. The Standard Gauge Railway, Kenya’s flagship infrastructure project, cost \$4.7 billion, borrowed from Chinese banks. Chinese firms have financed, built or operated major transport projects, including the Mombasa–Nairobi and Nairobi–Naivasha SGR, the Thika Superhighway, the Nairobi Expressway, and the new \$1.5 billion highway expansion along the Mombasa–Nairobi–Uganda corridor, to be built by Chinese state firms under a toll-concession model. Chinese FDI stock in Kenya rose from just \$30 million in 2003 to \$1.91 billion in 2024, about 12 percent of Kenya’s total FDI stock.

This is part of a broader process across Africa. China has become the continent’s largest trading partner and a central financier, builder and operator of infrastructure. China-Africa trade reached a record \$348 billion in 2025, up 17.7 percent year-on-year, consolidating Beijing’s position as Africa’s largest trading partner. At the same time, Beijing is shifting from the earlier “Angola Model” of infrastructure-for-resources deals toward a deeper integration of African economies into Chinese-led supply chains. This new “Hunan Model” is centred on logistics hubs, construction machinery, mining equipment, minerals processing, electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products.

This expanding Chinese role has alarmed the old imperialist powers, whose position in Africa has visibly eroded over the past decades. The EU’s goods trade with Africa stood at almost €355 billion in 2024, but this reflects the combined weight of 27 European states and grew by only 27.1 percent over the entire previous decade. US-Africa trade is far smaller and has been thrown into crisis by the uncertainty surrounding the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the 25-year-old US trade-preference programme that granted eligible sub-Saharan African exports duty-free access to the American market. The Trump administration allowed AGOA to expire in September 2025, renewed it retroactively in February 2026 only until year end, and left African exporters facing deep uncertainty, with AGOA exports falling 32 percent in the year to November 2025.

Even in infrastructure and industrial projects, where Europe and the US once dominated, African bourgeois layers increasingly turn to Beijing because Chinese firms arrive with state-backed credit, export insurance

and long-term repayment structures, while Western companies and lenders often demand large upfront payments or impose punitive financial terms.

The CPM-K claims in its Constitution that North Korea, Russia, China, Iran and movements “in the Global South” are “paving the way for a new multipolar world”. It adds, “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”.^[3]

This is a political fraud. The rise of China has not opened a peaceful road to African sovereignty. On the contrary, it has intensified the imperialist scramble to prevent Beijing from consolidating its influence over the continent. The theory of “multipolarity” is a repackaged version of Kautsky’s old fantasy of “ultra-imperialism”: the claim that rival capitalist states can collectively and peacefully regulate the division of the world’s markets, raw materials, labour and strategic routes. But the peaceful distribution of global resources among capitalist and imperialist powers is impossible. The contradiction between a globally integrated economy and the capitalist nation-state system leads not to harmonious coexistence, but to trade war, militarism and world war. Africa is being transformed ever more directly into a new front of the developing world war.

The relationship between imperialism and Africa was not ended by formal independence in the 1960s. After the Second World War, the imperialist powers were compelled by revolutionary upheavals, anti-colonial struggles and the Cold War to retreat from direct colonial rule. But they never reconciled themselves to the genuine independence of the continent. Colonial administration was replaced by neo-colonial domination through debt, unequal trade, military bases, multinational corporations, aid dependency, coups and military interventions. Now, the imperialist powers are driven to reassert ever more direct and openly colonial forms of domination as part of their confrontation with China and Russia.

The US Defense Department’s 2025 report, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, warns that Beijing is seeking defence ties, access to Africa’s Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts, raw materials and critical minerals with defence applications. This is the framework behind Washington’s backing for the Lobito Corridor, designed to connect copper and cobalt mines in Zambia and the DRC to Angola’s Atlantic coast, and US-supported rare earth projects in South Africa—both aimed at reducing dependence on China and securing strategic minerals. Every temporary negotiation or diplomatic “thaw” with Beijing is used by US imperialism to deepen rearmament, restructure supply chains and prepare for a stronger position for confrontation.

Meanwhile, the EU’s €150 billion Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package is aimed at reasserting European influence over Africa’s green, digital and transport infrastructure. The 2024 Draghi report, *The Future of European Competitiveness*, expressed the alarm within European ruling circles that China’s domination of mineral processing and its state-backed acquisition of mining assets threaten to lock Europe out of the raw materials needed for electric vehicles, batteries, renewable energy, digital infrastructure and rearmament.

Britain’s *Vision 2035: Critical Minerals Strategy*, published by the UK in January 2026, likewise identifies African cobalt, lithium, copper, manganese and rare earths as central to supply chains in which China dominates refining and processing. It says the critical minerals supply chain is “dominated by a handful of countries including China and Russia,” creating supply-chain security concerns for British bourgeoisie.

The US war on Iran has further increased the tensions between imperialist powers and China over African resources. In May, Beijing extended zero-tariff access up to 2028 to imports from 53 African countries. The measure is part of a broader drive to consolidate China’s position with the African bourgeoisie under conditions of US tariffs and global trade disruption.

Weeks later, France organised the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi, a concrete expression that the imperialist powers will not idly stay aside as Beijing increases its influence. Co-hosted by France and Kenya, the summit was the first France-Africa gathering of this kind held in an English-speaking African country, drawing more than 30 African leaders as Paris sought to compensate for its dwindling position in the Sahel, where French military forces have been driven out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Macron announced €23 billion in investment commitments, including €14 billion from French companies, under the banner of a new Europe-Africa partnership and “strategic autonomy.” The largest deal was a €700 million investment by the French shipping and logistics giant CMA CGM to expand capacity at Kenya’s Port of Mombasa, modernise freight-management systems and improve inland logistics networks. This is aimed at securing control over one of the principal gateways to East and Central Africa, including the mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo.

This economic offensive is inseparable from military preparations. France and Kenya signed a defence cooperation agreement in October 2025, ratified in April 2026, and the pact was preceded by the arrival of 800 French troops in Mombasa for joint training exercises with the Kenya Defence Forces. The Kenyan bourgeoisie is thus opening the country’s ports, transport corridors and soldiers to French imperialism, just as it has subordinated Kenya since independence to the strategic interests of British and American imperialism. It is drawing the country ever more directly into the maelstrom of imperialist war.

The alternative to US, British, French and European domination is not the construction of a new capitalist state on “national” foundations and aligned with Beijing. Such a state would not free Kenya from imperialism, but make it even more of a target of imperialism. Nor can Chinese workers secure their own future through Xi Jinping’s appeals for “peaceful cooperation” with imperialism, any more than Kenyan workers can secure theirs through alignment with Beijing.

The only way forward is the independent political mobilisation of the African working class, in alliance with workers in China, Europe, the United States and throughout the world, in the fight for world socialist revolution. This is the perspective of Permanent Revolution, against which the CPM-K directs its central attack.

To be continued.

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