

Prosecute hunger not opposition

There are urgent and more serious issues to be addressed

Socialist staff reporter

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says hunger needs to be arrested, charged, and prosecuted to save people from starving to death.

He was speaking outside Lusaka Magistrates' Court where he was appearing accused of the "communication of certain information".

The case has been adjourned to October 9 for mention and possible plea, although the Director of Public Prosecutions has yet to give the go-ahead for the case to proceed.

Dr M'membe said it was the escalating level of hunger rather than opposition politicians that should be prosecuted and called on all stakeholders to treat the matter with the urgency it deserved.

Misbehaving

"Hunger is misbehaving in the country. It needs to be arrested, charged, and prosecuted very quickly.

"People are starving, they have difficulties feeding themselves and there is nothing that seems to be happening to change that position. We cannot continue like this, we can't play with people lives.

"It is not just an issue for those who are in government, but all leaders in our country. It is an issue our church leaders must look at, just as it is an issue for other civic and political leaders," he said.

And Dr M'membe said the issue of poverty "must be tackled in the same way the country dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic".

He said the media should report

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Socialist Party President Fred M'membe leaves Lusaka Magistrates' Court after the 'certain information' case against him is adjourned

It doesn't matter who they arrest, we will fight on

IT DOESN'T matter how many people they arrest, we will continue to speak for the people of Zambia, Socialist Party Deputy Secretary General Antonio Mourinho Mwanza has vowed.

Mwanza was speaking to the media outside Chelstone Police Station, where he was supporting Socialist Party National Youth Secretary Gabriel Elias Banda who was arrested on charges of proposing violence and criminal trespass.

He said that as the national budget was being presented in Parliament, the government's focus should be to lower the cost of living, among other things, and not on arresting people.

"This is wrong. Today the Minister is representing the national budget. We expect that the President should be busy with issues of the cost of living, that the President should be busy with issues of the economy, that the President should be busy with the issues of the thousands of students at the University of Zambia and other universities who have not been given government sponsorship," he said.

"We expect that the government will be dealing with the issue of the exchange rate which has gone off the roof, issues of inflation, which are killing the economy and making our people poorer."

But he said the government was not concerned about the welfare of the ordinary Zambians.

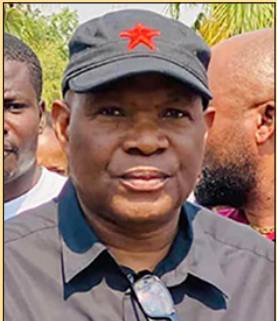
"They are not concerned with what matters to the people. Their only concern is to ensure that they steal gold, steal sugilite, and steal anything that they can. We, as the Socialist Party, want to tell the President and his government that we shall not calm down, we will not be intimidated," he said.

"It doesn't matter how many people they arrest, we will continue to speak for the people of Zambia and we will continue to defend the rights and aspirations of the people of Zambia."



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Corrupt regimes resort to tyranny

Enforcement agencies used to silence critics

WHENEVER a regime becomes tyrannical, it's a sure sign that corruption or the looting of public resources has become more widespread and more serious than before, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"History has shown that, in their quest to put a tight lid on their crimes and looting schemes, corrupt regimes and their leaders often weaponise the police and other law enforcement agencies in order to silence critical voices. In essence, they criminalise dissent so that they're not scrutinised or challenged by critics. This is one of the most noticeable symptoms of a regime that has become desperate, highly corrupt and grounded in plotting and perpetuating evil," he said.

And this is what we want the Zambian people to know and understand about Mr Hakainde Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime that is governing the country today.

"The people must know that the nation is in the hands of a brutal, corrupt, vindictive, and petty leadership that hates being upstaged by a people, especially the Socialist Party.

"Zambians must be made aware soon enough so that they can psyche themselves up about the risks and dangers of having such desperate people in leadership. The people must be prepared way ahead of the extreme desperation that is rapidly setting in, and how this desperation is leading to more state-orchestrated brutality, intimidation, and vile and malicious attacks against critical voices.

Desperate

"There is no doubt that Mr Hichilema and his league are getting more desperate and angry about their inability to turn things around as per the promises they made during their campaigns prior to the 2021 general election. And so they want to insult, intimidate and suppress leading critical voices, and citizens who want to express their anger and frustration with the deteriorating living conditions in the country since the government took office.

"We can safely say that for now, Zambia seems to be entering a critical period, as Mr Hichilema and his league are shifting their focus from dealing with the numerous problems facing the country to keeping a tight grip on power, despite their lack of understanding and solutions to the challenges the country is facing.

"They've resolved to ruthlessly deal with political opponents, especially us, in their desire to halt our momentum and the spread of

our message of justice, equity and peace. They have already sensed defeat and they're in panic mode. And when people panic, they start making reckless and costly mistakes.

"This is what is happening with Mr Hichilema. He is stuck, directionless and confused. As such, he has reverted to his default mode, which is directing his rogue and guerrilla media channels – Koswe and Zambian Watchdog – which are controlled from State House by his media team, to launch a vicious propaganda campaign of hate, insults, malicious content and vile attacks on his political competitors.

We are also aware of the surveys being conducted to gauge Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime's popularity in different regions of the country. For instance, we know that the public perception and acceptability of this government on the Copperbelt and elsewhere is at an all-time low compared with governments before it. Their approval ratings are very bad. They have been rejected outright and told about the Socialist Party and the inroads that we have made on the Copperbelt and other places countrywide.

"So we understand the panic and fear of being rejected by the people so soon after election victory.

"Nevertheless, they're gone. It's over for them! In fact, the vile rhetoric, lies, insults and malice presently emanating from Mr Hichilema's usual attack dogs at State House through their rogue media outlets is just speeding up the process of getting rid of this corrupt and dishonest puppet regime come 2026.

"We know the pressure is on and confusion is raging in this government as it continues to push its failed policies and destroy the country even further. But no matter what they do or say, aba bena nabaya!

"The countdown to their departure in 2026 has already started."

SP 'resolutely supports' Venezuela, China accord

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says the party "resolutely supports Venezuela's just cause against external interference".

"And we highly welcome the elevation of China's relations with Venezuela to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership'. This puts Venezuela in the very highest of relations with China."

The hierarchy is:

1. Mutual defence treaty. (DPRK is the only one at this, the highest level).
2. All-weather strategic partnership (only two in this group – Pakistan and Venezuela).
3. New era comprehensive strategic



Socialist Party Copperbelt provincial youth chairperson Warren Mulenga calls on youths to reject politics driven by intimidation

Govt arresting citizens rather than controlling prices

WE ARE deeply concerned to see the growing tendency for authoritarian and undemocratic governance in our country, Warren Mulenga, Socialist Party Copperbelt provincial youth chairperson says.

"It is clear that, the 'New Doom' government has failed to arrest the soaring prices of essential commodities and has opted to take the easier route of arresting citizens who are expressing displeasure and disappointment at the mess the UPND has created in the country," he said. "We want to remind the powers that be that political power is not eternal, but temporal.

"Ba elder, should just start eating 'ifibata

ne nkumba' because it is not morally right that on one hand he claims to abide by biblical teachings while ignoring the cardinal biblical teaching of love and justice on the other. This is being dishonest.

"The arrest and detention of the Socialist Party national youth secretary, Comrade Gabriel Elias Banda, is nothing more than a ploy to intimidate the youth.

"If indeed Gabriel has been found with a case to answer, why not arraign him before court for trial?

"The growing trend of using the police as 'political watchdogs' for the ruling UPND to be unleashed willy-nilly on those expressing

opposing views is politically out of order and must be stopped.

"It is common knowledge that the UPND government is reacting to its decline in ways that are inimical to the basic tenets of democratic governance.

"I urge all progressive youths in the country to decisively reject politics driven by intimidation, hate and malice.

"Politics must be a battle of ideas and not about promoting hostility and antagonism.

"For once learn to practise what you preach and show us the rule of law you claim to respect.

"Ubunga nishinga ku New Kasama?"

Serious issues over fertiliser supply tenders 'not baseless'

THERE are very serious issues being raised about the fertiliser supply tenders that Mr Hakainde Hichilema needs to explain, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"And these concerns are not baseless," he said in a Facebook post.

"There's what may be described as corruption as well as a serious lack of transparency and fairness in the awarding of these tenders."

● Best Med (Copperbelt Province) price US\$11,873,548.68

● Agrizam (Eastern Province) price

US\$24,191,422.05

● Alpha (Luapula Province) price US\$8,324,998.80

● ETG (Muchinga Province) price US\$8,570,290.77

● Growmax (North Western Province) price US\$8,510,253.58

● Growmax (Western Province) price US\$4,662,547.12

● Greenfield (Northern Province) price US\$12,328,701.00

● Kovenant (Southern Province) price US\$22,197,543.75

"Direct bidding will cost the Treasury about US\$7,790,616.27 more than was offered in the two cancelled tenders. This is money that could have been

used to buy medicines for hospitals, pay local government workers, and so on. How does Mr Hichilema justify this? How does he explain it? What label should be given to it if not corruption?

"Ever since UPND took office, the procurement of fertiliser has been scandalously expensive and has become increasingly difficult to conclude in a fair and transparent manner.

"The process has been carried out in a way that favours some of Mr Hichilema's friends and close associates in the industry while discriminating against other players in the sector.

"In fact, these dirty and unethical schemes in the procurement of fertiliser are being carried out on the direct orders of certain identifiable advisors in the presidential advisory team at State House.

"We are aware of these practices and the corrupt links between some presidential advisors and the entities that are being awarded the tenders. It is clear that this is a State House dirty job.

"Things can't continue this way. Let Mr Hichilema come clean on this matter and stop blaming those before him for the same corrupt practices he is tolerating in his own government.

"This regime should be ashamed and embarrassed by the corrupt manner in which it has handled the fertiliser procurement process since it took over power."

IMF rules mean fuel prices will increase

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe writes: As at September 21, oil prices were trading at US\$92.50, and analysts indicate that it will rise to US\$100.

International oil prices are one key variable in the determining of fuel prices. The second variable is the exchange rate, which has deteriorated further since the last price review, selling at over K21 per dollar as of today.

We can, therefore, confidently expect a fuel price increase at the end of September. While external factors are beyond our control, we do to some extent have control over the exchange rate to improve dollar inflows into the country, measures such as removing mining concessions and suspending fuel taxes on a temporary basis to allow a breathing space for consumers.

Sadly, none of these measures can be taken without breaching the IMF conditions. So we expect consumers to have to tighten their belts further.

The government can't do anything because one of the conditions of the IMF programme was a cost-reflective pump price.

Consequently, if it tampers with it or accords a temporary subsidy to cushion the consumer, the IMF will cancel the programme.

As such, it has no choice but to comply. And yet this is the same programme the leadership said would improve our economy and that once signed we would receive huge investor support. So how is the US\$188 million we received helping our economy? If anything, the Kwa-cha has depreciated further after receiving the US\$188 million.

Is it too late to abandon this programme before we lose half our citizens; before they start dying from hunger?

My guess is as good as yours.

Reckless threats over FISP criticisms dangerous

A VIDEO circulating online showing Minister of Agriculture Mtole Phiri issuing “reckless threats” over criticisms of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) is unfortunate and dangerous, Socialist Party President Fred M’membe says.

“In the video, Mr Phiri is seen urging people to report anyone heard talking about the FISP programme in unfavourable terms to the police so that such people could get arrested,” he said.

“But why must people be threatened with arrests by the government when they have a right to protest or complain against the authorities over the many issues causing them untold suffering and hardship? Why should the government accuse citizens of attempting to ‘bring war’ as Mr Phiri puts it, for merely debating or discussing an agricultural programme?”

“Why is it that threats of arrests, detention, treason, sedition and so on and so forth, have become the best defence for Mr Hakainde Hichilema’s government whenever it’s challenged or called to be accountable for its policies and actions?”

“Clearly, this corrupt puppet regime, which is headed by Mr Hichilema, does not want to be held accountable for its failures, crimes and abuses in the way it is running the country. It wants to have a free reign to do what it wants and to have its own interests safeguarded without any distractions. It’s allergic to healthy political discourse and the contestation of ideas for the benefit of our country and its people.

“Going by their record so far, Mr Hichilema and his league have no intention whatsoever to change their minds about the wrong policies and notions they hold about the country, its people and its future. It is evident that these are not true liberal democrats. They’re just quacks and ignorant democrats who wrongly believe they have a moral responsibility to do what is necessary and best for themselves in order to perpetuate their greedy political agenda, even if it means going against the law and the Constitution.

“Theirs is an agenda to satisfy themselves first and foremost, and then the people and the country later through a little bit of trickle down approaches. They’re pretentious gluttons who are not even fully aware of the extent and consequences of the problems they’re creating, the unnecessary difficulties they are inflicting on our people, especially the poor.

“This regime has shown that whenever Mr Hichilema and his league are roasted for their own lies, deceit, and lack of delivery, the police and prison cells are the best response they are able to provide.

“We are getting more and more convinced that if they’re not careful, this regime will soon become a killing machine. What is even more dangerous about them is their reckless disregard for the law and the haste to make clowns of themselves through the unprecedented and predictable abuse of law enforcement, especially the police. They have weaponised the police in order to silence critical voices. They have literally criminalised dissent.

“They have anchored their political survival and influence on the abuse of the police and other law enforcement agencies. No wonder they’re not ashamed to use the police in prescribing the most unreasonable and ridiculous charges against the critics they don’t like. Their goal is to silence the critics through brutality, vindictiveness and pettiness.”

Using the police as political tools ‘will end in disaster’

Fred M’membe speaks out after visiting detained youth leader

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe has warned that using the police as political tools will end in disaster.

Dr M’membe made his comment while visiting Socialist Party National Youth League General Secretary Gabriel Elias Banda, who is being detained “unfairly” at Kanakantapa Police Post in Chongwe.

Dr M’membe said Banda’s alleged offence was committed in Lusaka district and not Chongwe and there was no justification for moving him from Chelstone Police Station in the middle of the night at high speed.

He said that if the former UNZASU president had high blood pressure he could easily have suffered a stroke.

“What was the purpose of all that? To torture him? Mentally, psychologically? To scare him? That is what we can assume. Is that the way to police? Is that the way for the police to control crime? Wherever the police has been used as a political tool, the outcome has been disastrous,” Dr M’membe said.

“The colonial masters tried to use the police as a political tool, they failed, they didn’t succeed. Successive Zambian governments have tried it, none of them has succeeded. The police are not a good political tools to use to control politics, or to get a favourable political outcome.”

Dr M’membe said the police should fight legitimate or genuine crime.

“When they start going to young people like Gabriel, then you know they have got a bigger problem on their hands. Because all over the world, it is young people who are quick to rise against unjust conditions that exist. They are the ones who bring about the changes we see in the world,” he said.

“If somebody is not revolutionary as a young person it will be very difficult for them to be revolutionaries in old age. Gabriel is a leader. He is a former UNZASU president; he was elected president by other young people. He is the general secretary of our youth league, again elected by young people.”



Socialist Party President Fred M’membe leaves Kabwe High Court after pleading not guilty to charges over the Serenje violence in April

‘The truth will be known’ about Serenje violence

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe has pleaded not guilty to three charges relating to the Serenje violence that occurred in April this year.

The first count alleges “acts intended to cause grievous harm”, while the other two allege “assault occasioning actual bodily harm”.

On the first count, the allegation is that Dr M’membe “on the 8th of April this year in Serenje district of Central Province, with

intent to maim, disfigure or cause grievous harm, wounded Emmanuel Simposya without any lawful justification”.

On the second count he is jointly charged with Daniel Mumba, and is alleged to have assaulted Haggai Kwenda on the same day and in the same place.

When the matter came up before Hon Lady Justice RH Chibbabuka at Kabwe High Court, both Dr M’membe and Mr Mumba pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Justice Chibbabuka set the 10th and 11th of this month for the commencement of trial.

Addressing party members outside the court, Dr M’membe said, “it’s good the matter is in the High Court. Lies will be revealed, no matter what concoctions people come up with, they won’t hold.

“The truth about the whole issue will be known, who was violent will be known, who was the victim will be known.”

Dr M’membe described Banda as “an unstoppable leader”. “He is a leader of his comrades, he is a leader of our party, and he is a leader of our country. No matter what type of intimidation, no matter what type of harassment they want to subject him to, they

will not succeed. They are actually just hardening these young people. They are making them more rebellious, they are making them more revolutionary. They should not be allowed to be given another five years in power in 2026, they will destroy this country,” he said.

“They are negating everything that this country has stood for. We were hoping for more, better respect for human rights, for freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, we are not seeing that.

What we are seeing is an increase in the violation of human rights. We are seeing more and more people detained in police cells for more than 24 hours, which is an illegality. That must be challenged before the courts of law. They have gotten away with it with impunity, it can’t continue.”

Dr M’membe stressed the need for people to start taking legal action against unjustified detention beyond 24 hours.

“They have detained Gabriel here from Thursday, unjustifi-

ably. They could have given him police bond, they have denied him police bond. They could have taken him to court on Friday, they didn’t want to take him to court,” he said.

“The charges they have brought against him are frivolous, they know that themselves. Again, it is simply a case of abuse of power.

“If this is not tyranny, what is it? If this is not repression, what is it? If this is not violation of human rights, what is it?” Dr M’membe asked.

It’s one law for them and another for the rest

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe has condemned discrepancies in the application of the law under the UPND government.

Dr M’membe says there is a pattern of preference, with supporters aligned to the government being treated more favourably when prosecuted, whatever the crime they commit.

Recently, the Director of Public Prosecutions denied permission for Inspector General of Police Graphel Musamba to be prosecuted for allegedly defaming Dr M’membe, a case which has since been dismissed.

Dr M’membe said the IG’s alleged offence was similar or even more serious than the one he (Dr M’membe) was arrested for, allegedly defaming Police Deputy IG Milner Muyambango.

He said this set a bad precedent, in that only selected people were prosecuted despite committing alleged similar offences.

Dr M’membe has emphasised that the Police Inspector General does not have the immunity from prosecution.

He said that if the current government was allowed to continue in 2026, Zambia would be totally destroyed.

“The IG offence is similar to what we have been arrested for. It is OK for them to defame others and get away with it, but it is not OK for others to complain when they are defamed.

“The same day I was being arrested for defaming the deputy IG, the IG was busy defaming me, probably in a more serious manner than my alleged defamation of the Deputy IG. Where is the rule of law and fairness?” he asked.

Dr M’membe has encouraged the Zambian people to analyse what is happening in the country and come to a conclusion on “the right thing to be done”.

“These are people not fit to govern, I have said repeatedly that if this country is to be a good country for any of us to live in, it must be a good country for all of us to live in. It can’t just be for one group,” he said.

“They are living well. They are the ones committing crimes with impunity while there is hunger in the country. Many people can’t afford a meal every day. They are

telling the people that the economy is OK; yes, it is OK for them, they are getting richer; by 2026 some of them will be billionaires. They are seizing people’s properties. They are buying property yet no one is questioning where the proceeds are coming from.

“This type of governing is not a recipe for governing well, it is a recipe for disaster. I urge the Zambian people to open their eyes and see, to analyse and come to their own conclusions based on what is happening.

“Babwelesa njala, what are they there for? What is the price of

mealie meal today and other commodities? What do people want from a government? They want to eat well and in peace,” he said.

As *Socialist Monthly* went to press the case where Dr M’membe is accused of defaming Deputy Police IG Milner Muyambango has still not been allocated.

Dr M’membe’s lawyer Simon Mwila Mulenga expressed disappointment that the matter has continued to drag. “There hasn’t been any proper response as to why they are not bringing the docket to court. We are going to the police to extend his bond. These are serious inconveniences,” he said.

UPND enemies? We thought we were just competitors

MINISTER of Justice Mulambo Haimbe has openly declared the Socialist Party and Patriotic Front as their enemies. What does this mean? What does being their enemy entail? Why are we their enemies? Socialist Party President Fred M’membe asks.

“We thought we were simply competitors in what is supposed to be a competition to serve our people and the country, and not enemies who should be crushed, annihilated or utterly destroyed,” he said.

“But Mr Haimbe’s declaration explains why we are treated the way we are being treated. It explains why lately, immigration officers

at KKIA have had to seek permission from higher authorities to clear me to proceed to board the aircraft. Indeed, only enemies can be treated this way.

“If anyone had doubts, Mr Haimbe has plainly and truthfully explained why we are being given the treatment that is only fit for enemies – because we are enemies.

“In fact, as we get closer to their departure from office in 2026, we expect worse treatment from them than we are currently receiving. They’re stuck. They’re confused. They’re desperate. And anybody who calls them out on their lies, deceit, and failures is

considered an enemy deserving all manner of intimidation and threats.

“Clearly, they don’t like us; they hate us and are ready to harm us. What type of democrats are these? What type of Christians are these? Because Jesus doesn’t allow us to be that way. He said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

“Mr Hichilema, Mr Haimbe and the UPND will never be our enemies. They will remain our competitors until they’re defeated.

“Zambia is bigger than all of us and there is absolutely no reason for political contestation to turn into enmity,” Dr M’membe said



The increasing levels of poverty in the country are a time bomb

The people will eventually speak and their message will be very clear

Fred M'membe
Socialist Party President

I WANT to share my deepest thoughts and feelings about the sad reality of the hunger, poverty, and despair that is prevailing in our homeland, among our people currently.

I want to candidly and fairly convey my true feelings and experiences about the situation we are faced with, not as a politician, but as a leader and parent, who is also raising a family in the midst of the high cost of living we are experiencing as a nation.

Certainly, the rising cost of living is hurting and there don't seem to be quick political fixes our people were promised. No one today is saying, "Bally will fix it" – not even Bally himself. This is worrying.

With the rising cost of living, our people are feeling the pressure financially, psychologically and otherwise. Words fail me to best describe the level of grief, sadness, anger and hunger I have come into contact with during my visits to several and different households and communities across the country, both in urban centres like Lusaka and the Copperbelt, and rural areas like Chinsali, where I am a traditional leader.

Despair

In my trips to these communities, the sadness, brokenness and desperation, which the rise in cost of living has brought to our people is heartbreaking and painful. We have witnessed unprecedented levels of hunger, poverty and despair amongst citizens, which is difficult to comprehend and later on articulate in a way that best reflects what is currently happening in our nation.

It is a fact that the rising cost of living is more than an economic squeeze; it is a public health emergency, potentially on a par with the COVID-19 pandemic. Not being able to afford the essentials, such as food, rent, electricity or trans-

port, has wide-ranging negative impacts on mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Families are in distress. Basic daily feeding has become a very big challenge. Our mothers, our wives, our aunts, our sisters are failing to sleep. Blood pressures are rising exponentially with the rise in the cost of living.

Far too many people in the country today can barely afford a meal or two in a day. We have seen how some households have devised a system to ensure that at least everybody eats something to keep them going. And this system involves members of the household to alternate between meals, where one group eats lunch and leaves dinner for the other group that skipped lunch to eat.

This may sound weird and baffling but that is the reality. It's happening in many households. Families are stressed and are breaking as providers battle to deal with the mental trauma of losing a livelihood and the inability to cope with the situation and fend for their families. Definitely, there is a silent but tragic story unfolding in our country today and politicians should urgently protect the most vulnerable, those in distress.

These problems cannot be left to our pastors, reverends, priests and other religious leaders when even the Sunday church offerings are declining because congregants have nothing or have very little to put in the basket. This is the first experience of such sharp and sustained cost of living increases since the 1980s. But unions were stronger and pay agreements were very different then.

While prices are increasing everyday, our earning power has been stuck in a rut. The cost of living has increased steadily and relentlessly over the past two years. But our political system means politicians' promises to tackle it have been largely futile. It will get worse. This gnaws away at a person's dignity.

An experience typically reserved for the poor is now afflicting middle classes and they aren't happy. It is spilling over to our pol-

The situation is worsening, not improving

INSTEAD of reducing, poverty is generally deepening in the country.

In June/July 2022 the Zambia Statistics Agency conducted the eighth Living Conditions and Monitoring Survey.

THE FINDINGS:

● National Average Poverty has worsened from 54% to 60% of the population are poor.

● Rural Poverty has worsened and now stands at an average of 78.8% from 76.6%.

● Urban poverty has worsened and now stands at 31.8% from 23.4%.

BY PROVINCE:

1. Muchinga Province 82.6% (from 69.3%)
2. Western Province 78.6% (from 82.2%)

3. Northern Province 78.0% (from 79.7%)
4. Luapula Province 77.3% (from 81.1%)
5. Eastern Province 76.4% (from 70.0%)
6. Central Province 67.5% (from 56.2%)
7. Southern Province 63.5% (from 57.6%)
8. North Western Province 61.6% (from 66.4%)
9. Copperbelt Province 35.9% (30.8%)
10. Lusaka Province 27.0% (from 20.2%)

This is a very sombre reality. And we share the bitter feeling of impotence that many have in the face of such problems, and the instability in their lives to which these problems give rise.

So gloomy are the realities and prospects for the future viewed as a whole,

that they could generate pessimism and discouragement if we were not sure of our aims. They are bitter pills to swallow, but if we are to face up to the realities, we have to first become aware of them.

History shows, however, that no problem has ever been solved until it has become a tangible reality of which everyone is aware.

Today, our people are faced with the most serious and anguishing situations ever known to them.

But no matter how enormous the difficulties, no matter how complex the task, there can be no room for pessimism. That would be to renounce all hope and resign ourselves to final defeat.

itics and there's panic in the political leadership of our country. They are scared about how the people will react to all this. They don't want anyone to talk about it, hence the attempt to silence key opposition leaders and critics. They are scared that talking about these issues may spark protests, hence the attempt to silence, intimidate the opposition with charges of treason, espionage and so on.

But this will not work. They can silence a few timid politicians, hire some spineless, hungry and greedy opposition politicians to speak for them, but it won't help them much. They can't silence the hungry masses of our people because if there's no one to speak for them – because their authentic representatives have been silenced – they will eventually start to directly speak for themselves. And

their language will be too clear to be ignored!

This uncontrolled daily increase in the cost of living is a time bomb! Therefore, arresting us on trumped up treason or espionage charges won't do, it will be an exercise in futility that is bound to backfire. And without us the explosion of this time bomb may be uncontrollable.

We socialists are patriots. With

or without us we would like to see Mr Hakainde Hichilema and his league succeed in addressing these very distressing challenges facing our people and our homeland.

We don't want to defeat them on the back of national failure. There will be enough reasons to seek their removal on August 13, 2026. Baleya!

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Trumped-up charges designed to intimidate

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the real situation on the ground with regards to poverty levels.

"This will help leaders – political, religious and traditional – to solve the problem from an informed perspective," he said.

Dr M'membe said the hunger situation in areas such as Shang'ombo was now becoming generalised and there was increasing urban poverty with rural poverty having now increased to more than 78 percent.

"If we need help from other countries, let's start seeking help now. Let's not wait until there are mass graves," he said.

In addition to the "communication of certain information" allegation, Dr M'membe also faces two other charges; an alleged offence of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, which has been committed to the High Court for trial, and an allegation of libel.

● The offence of libel Contrary to Section 191 CAP 87 of the Laws of Zambia, involves a claim by the State that he defamed Deputy Inspector General of Police for Operations, Milner Muyambango, in a Facebook post.

● The charge of Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm resulted from Dr M'membe discharging his pistol during an attack by UPND cadres at an ECZ authorised and scheduled election campaign meeting in Serenje five months ago.

He is alleged to have caused a head injury, but Dr M'membe says he shot into the air to scare away attackers and that no one was injured.

Dr M'membe says trumped-up charges and repeated police call-outs are designed to try to intimidate him and the Socialist Party, but that they are a waste of time and resources.

"There is a desperate plan by

Mr Hichilema to slap me with trumped-up charges in the hope that he slows down our momentum. But this will not work," he said.

"Our people have seen through this one-term puppet regime's corrupt and divisive rhetoric and have resolved to correct the mistake they made in the last general election.

"Even Mr Hichilema and the masters who control him know that we not only support our people, but that more and more of our people, especially the poor masses, heavily support us too.

"This is why Mr Hichilema and his league are desperate and willing to practise autocracy while preaching democracy.

But we fully understand what is happening to them and how this unstoppable mass movement of the people affects them," he said.

Dr M'membe said Hichilema and the police acting on his

orders could not intimidate him. "Intimidation cannot work on some of us. I have been in many struggles, which Mr Hichilema has never been in.

"I want to remind Mr Hichilema that the blood of a Bemba warrior runs through me. It gives me the courage,

"I also want to remind Mr Hichilema that the wisdom of the Lozis runs through my blood. A combination of Lozi wisdom and Bemba courage is not something he can conquer."

And he said the charges, court cases and repeated police call-outs would not affect the fight for justice, equality and peace and against imperialist puppets.

"Our people have suffered indignity and injustice from imperialists and their puppet regimes, such as the one governing our country today, for far too long.

"One bad term doesn't deserve another, aleya!"



Socialist Party President Fred M'membe with his grandson Pindulukani

We know the destructive dangers of bitterness

WE CAN'T afford to be bitter because we fully understand the dangerous consequences of bitterness. Bitterness is tantamount to self-destruction. And because of this we fear bitterness and run away from it. Nothing we say or do is propelled or fuelled by bitterness.

The book of Hebrews warns us about allowing bitterness to take root. "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." (Hebrews 12:15)

We can be bitter while claiming, "I'm not bitter! How could you say that?" We can tell ourselves we have forgiven someone while still allowing resentment to fester and build. Allowing bitterness to remain in your life will plunge you further and further away from the liberty and freedom of Christ. It will harden, break, and destroy the good in your life. Bitterness erodes optimism, shatters joy, and kills our ability to love others well. A bitter person goes through life with a heart that does not fully function. They live in a land of spiritual poverty while those around them drown.

It's not good to be bitter. No one has to be bitter! Jesus Christ offers the power to stop bitterness before it starts and heal wounded hearts no matter how great the offence. Forgiveness is the key. Part of Jesus's coming into the world was to "destroy the works of the devil", (see 1 John 3:8). Bitterness is a work of our flesh that the devil loves to exploit. Jesus came so that we could be truly free.

And bitterness has very serious physical consequences. It adversely alters the chemical balance in our bodies; ulcerative colitis, toxic goitres, and high blood pressure, are only a few of the scores of diseases caused by bitterness. Our resentments call forth certain hormones from the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid, and other glands. Excesses of these hormones can cause diseases in any part of the body.

Bitterness can also adversely affect our facial features. Refusing to forgive, results in physical fatigue and loss of sleep. We may try to hide our resentments, but soon they will also be etched into our eyes and facial muscles as permanent reflections of our inward feelings.

Bitterness is known to affect bone health; the life of the flesh is in the blood, (Leviticus 17:11). But the "factory" for the blood is the marrow of our bones. The health of our bones, therefore, determines the health of our body. Bitterness has a direct and devastating effect upon our bones. (Psalm 32:3; Proverbs 15:30; Proverbs 17:22; Proverbs 14:30; Proverbs 12:4; Ezekiel 32:27)

An inability to love God is the immediate result of hating another person. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4:20, 21)

Doubts regarding our relationship with God commonly accompany bitterness. This is quite natural since most of us have prayed the Lord's Prayer in which we pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

Hence, if we refuse to forgive other people, we are actually asking God not to forgive us. The significance of this point is emphasised by Jesus Christ, "For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences." (Matthew 6:14, 15)

Major hindrances to the spiritual development of others may result when we refuse to forgive, especially if we claim to be in a right fellowship with God. Our attitudes of bitterness will repel them from whatever it is that we are trying to convince them of. If we are to allow Christ to live in us we must allow Him to forgive through us.

And depression is one of the most significant consequences of refusing to forgive the people who wrong us. It requires a lot of emotional energy to maintain a grudge. Just as we become weary when our physical energy is exhausted,

so we become depressed when our emotional energy is exhausted.

Bitterness and resentment create an "emotional focus" toward the person who offended us. This focus is the chief cause of becoming just like the one we resent. The more we focus on his or her actions toward us, the more we resemble the basic attitudes that prompted their actions.

The moment you start hating someone, you become his or her slave. You can't enjoy your work any more because he or she controls your thoughts. Your resentments produce too many stress hormones in your body, and you become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work you formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. You can't escape his or her tyrannical grasp on your mind. It is for this reason that Solomon wrote, "It is better to be invited to herbs with love, than to a fatted calf with hatred." (Proverbs 15:17)

Bitterness is all too easily passed on from one generation to another, thus affecting hundreds of descendants. The sins of the parents are visited to the third and fourth generations of those who hold hatred in their heart. (Deuteronomy 5:9)

New values are needed

TO DEAL with the complex social, political and economic challenges we are facing today, new values are needed.

But these values won't come on their own, they have to be nurtured. We urgently must start building a new awareness. We require a lot of conversations about the values we want, build awareness and more principles than ever before. Where are these principles, values going to come from? They will come from adding together the best of our religious teachings, political teaching, ethical and humane ideas.

Who will bring about these principles, values, ideas? Who will sow them, cultivate them and make them grow? You will – you yourselves, we ourselves, because it is objectively inevitable and there's no alternative to it if we have to harbour any hope of a better life, a more just, more fair, and more humane Zambia.

We can't continue on this path, we need to rise to the occasion. It's impossible to build a better Zambia without strong principles, values and new progressive ideas.

Expressions of democracy

IN A truly free and peaceful world, democracy takes many forms of expression. There are many ways for people to choose their leaders.

The Western type of elections are not the only way of people choosing their leaders.

The Chinese meritocracy approach to choosing leaders deserves our attention. There is something we can learn from it. I am not saying we should copy and paste it.

The conditions and circumstances of each country are different, each path is different and each country has its own unique characteristics. But we can still learn from others and draw inspiration from other's experiences without trying to decorate our tomorrows with other people's yesterdays.

The drumbeat of war

THE German parliament has been debating how to increase the country's annual military budget to €85.5 billion, which would be a 53 percent increase on 2022 alone!

This is allegedly to meet the US NATO demand of 2 percent of GDP. The ACTUAL US military spend as a percentage of GDP is a vile 6 percent. It is hard to keep up with all the extra Ukraine allotments for the US.

The drumbeat for a US-led war could not be louder!

Nothing is permanent

THERE was once a one-party state which was so powerful that we never thought it would end. But it ended, and the people's will triumphed. No government is permanent, no system is permanent. What we are seeing today, the injustice we continue to see, will not last forever.

We would like to caution that without building sufficient consensus on where we want to go as a country, we'll have problems. It gets dark sometimes but the morning comes. Don't give up, don't despair!



Vedanta/KCM saga arrogance, greed and lies

Fred M'membe

Socialist Party President

ARTHUR Schopenhauer once said, "All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

We said it, and Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime ridiculed and violently opposed our perspective on the issues that were surrounding the situation at KCM. But here we are again in the same situation they ridiculed and violently disputed when we raised the alarm.

It is now evident that they were merely trying to silence the voices of truth on this issue so they could be heard and seen as the only ones who can do what is best for the people of the Copperbelt, in particular the people of Chingola and Chilabombwe.

We repeat what we have said before; that the return of Vedanta at KCM after its Indian owner Anil Agarwal parted with US\$200 million, endorses the betrayal and disrespect Mr Hakainde Hichilema has for the people on the Copperbelt.

This particular move has a revealing effect on what type of a leader Mr Hichilema is and how he views and treats the people on the Copperbelt – with low value.

By this decision alone, Mr Hichilema has spat in the face of the people of the Copperbelt, especially the miners, who braved the meandering queues to cast their votes and put him into office.

Below are the articles we published on this issue in July this year.

VEDANTA'S AGARWAL TO GET BACK KCM AFTER PARTING WITH US\$200M

AFTER parting with US\$200 million, Vedanta Resources plc's 69-year-old Indian owner, Anil Agarwal, is assured of getting back KCM, which he lost control of in a Zambian government initiated liquidation order in 2020.

Agarwal acquired KCM in 2004 in a transaction that had an aggregate value of approximately US\$270 million, comprised of a cash consideration of US\$48.2 million for the 51 per cent stake, a commitment on the part of Vedanta to fund cash flows in KCM to an aggregate limit of US\$220 million, and an agreement on the part of Vedanta to contribute US\$1

million towards the cost of a feasibility study of substantial deeper level resources associated with the Konkola mine (containing estimated resources of around 250 million tonnes at 3.8 percent copper), to be undertaken by December 31, 2006.

In August 2021, while addressing miners in Kitwe, the then President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Edgar Lungu, claimed that he had received a report that Mr Hakainde Hichilema was soliciting US\$300,000 from Vedanta, promising to give them back KCM once elected. An accusation, which Mr Hichilema vehemently denied.

On April 25, 2022, during a media briefing at State House, Mr Hichilema dismissed media reports suggesting that the government planned to give back KCM to Vedanta as falsehoods.

But on May 9, 2022, Mr Hichilema U-turned stating, "Vedanta and ourselves have agreed that we suspend litigation,"

Going by the sequence of events and inconsistencies in the statements, especially on the part of Mr Hichilema, we demand that he comes clean on the Vedanta issue. What is going on? The Zambian people deserve to know the truth and how decisions have been arrived at in this matter.

In the same month of July, we again guided as follows:

HICHILEMA HAS BETRAYED THE COPPERBELT ON VEDANTA

THE RETURN of Vedanta at KCM after its Indian owner Anil Agarwal parted with US\$200 million, endorses the betrayal and disrespect Mr Hakainde Hichilema has for the people on the Copperbelt.

This particular move has a revealing effect on what type of a leader Mr Hichilema is and how he views and treats the people on the Copperbelt – with low value. By this decision alone, Mr Hichilema has spat in the face of the people of the Copperbelt, especially the miners, who braved the meandering queues to cast their votes and put him into office.

As usual, Mr Hichilema has made known to the Zambian people that the poor masses of this country are nowhere near the equation, and as such deserve no place, value, or respect from his government. Like we have always said, Mr Hichilema is here to protect mining transnational capital and not the working masses. And we shall validate our standpoint stated above

by highlighting the facts that led the Zambian government to initiate a liquidation order in 2020, so that citizens can see and judge for themselves.

Under Vedanta, KCM faced various operational difficulties, which included:

- 1) the mine failed to meet its financial obligations to the workers thereby subjecting them to poor working conditions,
- 2) the mine failed to honour its debts with contractors and suppliers,
- 3) the mine was highly indebted and threatened with insolvency, to the extent that as of September 30, 2013, KCM's total liability stood overwhelmingly at US\$1.5 billion, surpassing its asset base by US\$123 million. This situation definitely made it unfeasible for the mine to meet its financial obligations. For this reason, KCM defaulted on its US\$700 million loan signed with Standard Bank. By the way, this particular loan was secured on the KCM assets,
- 4) Vedanta failed to live up to its pledge to inject a sum of US\$397 million foreign direct investment in the mine but resorted to diverting funds it was generating locally to other ventures thereby choking the mine and leaving it with no resources to inject in its operations,
- 5) Vedanta lamentably failed to operationalise the Konkola Deep Mining Project despite making numerous pledges and commitments over the same, and,
- 6) Vedanta never invested in its own equipment. It was merely subcontracting its works. This made it extremely expensive to run the mine.

Above are just some of the many reasons the Zambia government repossessed the mine and opted to find another investor. Now, with all that we have stated above, we ask a question: which principled and decent leader would surrender back such a key national asset to a dishonest investor like Vedanta?

Clearly, Mr Hichilema is a selfish and showboating politician. But all this won't end well. It will soon catch up with him because Zambians are not fools. Already the atmosphere is one of exhaustion. People are fatigued of his lies, inconsistency, and self-serving attitude.

Let him know that this country is way bigger than him and so he must stop playing with people's livelihoods and the country's future by dishing out key national assets willy-nilly like sweets in a market parlour.

How China eradicated

Li Xiaoyun and
Yang Chengxue

THE END of an era of radical revolution does not mean that revolution becomes relegated to memory. As globalisation continues to expand, countries governed by revolutionary parties face the challenge of completing unfinished revolutionary missions.

In the current era, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has highlighted the importance of “remaining true to our original aspiration and founding mission”; this is not merely a rhetorical nod to the past, but rather an ideological basis for the party’s concrete action to maintain its revolutionary character in the new political and economic context.

This concrete action has been primarily focused on the issue of poverty alleviation.

Since 2012, poverty alleviation has been elevated to a central task for the whole party and society, with the party’s general secretary personally responsible for its completion.

The party’s poverty alleviation strategy evolved from its conventional techno-bureaucratic approach to the “battle against poverty”, which focused on innovating institutions of governance to promote economic and social transformation. Poverty alleviation has been given a new weight in the country’s political and economic environment in the current period.

The battle against poverty approach has incorporated revolutionary language and slogans, giving the social issue a sense of importance and sacredness. For example, poverty has been referred to as the “enemy”, poverty alleviation as the “battlefield”, and the struggle against poverty as the “hard battle”; mobilisation meetings have declared a “war against poverty” and celebrated the victories in the “battle”; and a multitude of young cadres have been sent to the “battlefield”, while those who have succumbed in this “battle” have been hailed as the “heroes who died on the battlefield”.

The “revolutionising” of poverty alleviation has not simply been a mass movement or social mobilisation in the post-revolutionary era; rather, it was a political and symbolic response to the growing inequalities that had emerged in China over the course of reform and opening up – inequalities that contradicted the basic philosophy of the CPC. In other words, the CPC made a return of sorts to its historic revolutionary agenda, in the post-revolutionary era, addressing the national and global dilemma of the distribution of social wealth. This reflects a new stage of the CPC’s governance that seeks to consolidate and “remain true to its original aspiration and founding mission” on the road to national modernisation.

The revolutionary discourse of the poverty alleviation campaign is, of course, metaphorical. If class enemies no longer exist, it is time to bid farewell to the revolution; but if the poverty that the revolution vowed to eliminate is still present, an “enemy” of the revolution persists and an essential task of the revolution remains unfinished. In this battle, the CPC has continuously redistributed socio-economic resources towards poverty alleviation, using the political and institutional means at its disposal and transcending the shackles of the existing bureaucracy and social interest groups; this resource mobilisation is arguably the most intensive and powerful in China’s history.

The CPC’s capacity to regulate the pattern of social distribution of resources through the state institutions under its leadership as well as its ability to both initiate market-oriented reform and correct its developmental disparities, demonstrates a fundamental improvement in the institutional



These images accompany a series of articles published in conjunction with *Wenhua Zongheng* on the theme of “China’s path from extreme poverty to socialist modernisation”. You

strength and capacity of the modern Chinese state compared to the late Qing dynasty (1840–1912) and the Republic of China (1912–1949) periods. The practical significance of the battle against poverty extends beyond the domain of economic and social development policy, and has had a broader, profound political and economic impact. However, there has been little discussion and analysis of this extensive campaign to improve the people’s livelihood, rarely seen since the beginning of reform and opening up, in terms of the historic relationship between poverty and the political practices of the CPC.

In recent years, Chinese social scientists have gone beyond their traditional focus on revolutionary themes in party history, and have launched an academic initiative to “bring back the revolution”.

Intellectual communities have started to rethink the grand narrative of traditional Chinese civilisation and begun to analyse how the political and ideological changes that have taken place in modern China have been shaped by the logic of the revolution.

The battle against poverty, as a “revolutionary form”, provides a vivid case study of the Chinese party-led state system and of how the CPC has shaped a new political tradition. This article, rather than a scholarly discussion of the meanings of revolution and post-revolution, or an evaluation of the battle against poverty, aims to use the concepts of revolution and post-revolution to discuss the importance of this revolutionised movement for the people’s wellbeing in the context of modern Chinese politics and society.

Poverty: A thread connecting the stages of the Chinese revolution

REVOLUTION is a process of transformation that produces major political, economic, and technological changes in a society. Since the mid-19th century, Chinese society has been marked by revolution during almost every stage of its history. In contrast to the “revolutions” in ancient Chinese history, which saw dynastic rule continue under different royal surnames, the series of revolutions that occurred in China after the mid-19th century began to break away from the traditional pattern of dynastic change, becoming linked to Western revolutionary thought and practice based on the theory of social evolution. China entered a new, revolutionary phase in its history mainly because it was no longer possible for the Qing dynasty’s ruling system to cope with external pressures and internal strife, which inevitably led to domestic resistance from political forces that were not part of the governing system, namely, a bottom-up movement based upon the collabo-

ration of the lower and middle gentry classes, the national bourgeoisie, civil society including anti-Qing secret societies, new intellectual circles, and the Nationalist Party of China, or Kuomintang (KMT), with the New Army under its control.

It is important to note that the anti-Qing rebel forces that emerged in the late Qing period were completely different in composition, ideology, and practice to those forces that had spurred previous dynastic changes.

Some scholars have argued that the momentous changes that have taken place in China since the late Qing period were simply a natural continuation of Chinese civilisation and indigenous modernity, through the self-critical and adaptive Confucian system.

However, there was also an external impetus for change. After the opening up of the country in the mid-19th century, the huge civilisational gap in development, technology, and knowledge between China and Western capitalism began to enter the national consciousness; at the same time, Western Enlightenment ideas began to reach China, where the intellectual elite began to embrace these new world views.

Systemic

As the centuries-old rule of the Qing dynasty came to an end, the rebels who sought to replace it were not the traditional forces of change, but revolutionaries who, to varying degrees, understood the systemic roots of China’s “backwardness”. As with previous dynastic changes and crises of legitimacy in China, people’s suffering was the root cause of the crisis of Qing rule; but unlike the previous rebellions, the demands of the anti-Qing revolutionaries were formulated through dialogue with the West, a study of China’s religion and culture, and a systematic, comprehensive, and reflective examination of the country’s political, economic, and social history.

Poverty was a key thread running through the phases of the anti-Qing revolution. In 1904, the Guangxu Emperor (the tenth emperor of the Qing dynasty, ruling from 1875–1908) had issued an imperial decree stating, “The only way to sustain a nation is to protect the people. In recent years, the people’s financial resources have been depleted to the extreme, and with all the provinces sharing the burden of war reparations, the people’s livelihood has become increasingly precarious.”

While the emperor recognised that the people’s wealth had dried up and that they had become deeply impoverished, he failed to recognise the inability of the Qing system to cope with the internal concerns and the external threats, making it impossible to ease poverty. In contrast, the revolutionar-

ies almost universally advocated modernisation as a solution to the country’s problem of poverty.

One of the leading intellectual figures in China’s modernisation movement, Yan Fu, believed that resolving the issue of poverty was critical to China’s survival, arguing that “the first thing to do to save the country today is to eliminate this poverty. Only when poverty can be cured can we talk about making the nation stronger, and then steadily advance the people’s wealth, intelligence and morality”.

Yan Fu not only placed poverty at the centre of China’s problems, but also put forward a number of ideas on poverty alleviation, including building roads and mines – which can be regarded as a source of the popular saying of “building roads before getting rich” – improving education, supporting the rural smallholder economy, and developing a comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty. Meanwhile, the leader of the 1911 revolution, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, also centred his thinking on nation-building on the matter of resolving the problem of poverty in China.

In *Plan for National Reconstruction*, published in 1918, Sun discussed the reasons for the rise of poverty in China, and in *Principles of People’s Livelihood*, published in 1924, he proposed a governing strategy that focused on the “Three Principles of the People” – nationalism, democracy, and “the people’s livelihood” – and sought to modernise China through bourgeois revolution.

Despite the revolutionaries in this period sharing the aims of eradicating poverty and achieving national prosperity and strength through modernisation, the actual practice of nation-building after the 1911 Xinhai Revolution – which overthrew the Qing dynasty and led to the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) – did not set the country on a trajectory out of poverty. As the modernisation scholar Luo Rongqu pointed out, the Xinhai Revolution had failed because a modern state was not established after the collapse of the Qing dynasty; Chinese modernisation required that a strong political force first constructed a state that was capable of the task.

After the Xinhai Revolution, the construction of a modern state was impeded by the existence of a plurality of local centres of power. The KMT attempted to overcome this fragmentation by leading a military campaign to reunify the country, known as the National Revolution or Northern Expedition (1926–1928), and through the centralisation of power, with party rule at its core. However, the KMT-led ROC government remained a complex and fragile arrangement that was swayed by multiple local political and



military forces. In addition, the main political forces on which the government relied were in sharp class conflict with the rural population. As a result, the KMT government lacked sufficient political authority to effectively mobilise the social resources necessary for top-down modernisation. During the ROC period, progress was not made in poverty alleviation and industrialisation – the issues that the Xinhai and National Revolutions had aimed to address – and so the KMT’s rule was plunged into a crisis of legitimacy.

The organisational composition of the KMT dictated that it could not transform the basic class structure of China. Resolving the issues of poverty and modernisation in China required a political authority that was powered by the majority of society, that is, the peasantry; the establishment of this authority required a radical transformation of China’s superstructure. These factors pushed the struggle to eradicate poverty and modernise China from a reformist path to a revolutionary one. Landlords, capitalists, and feudal forces, along with the forces of imperialism, were increasingly seen as the causes of China’s poverty and backwardness, and consequently were identified as the enemies of the revolution.

In this context, the CPC came onto the political scene in modern China. Since its founding in 1921, the CPC had expressly declared its mission to transform China from a poor country into a prosperous and powerful one. The party’s early alliance with the KMT had been based on the Three Principles of the People with the equal right to land at its core. Under the leadership of the CPC, the revolution not only aimed to fulfil the unfinished tasks of the Xinhai Revolution – namely, anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism – but sought to incorporate them into the Communist Revolution.

Although poverty eradication and modernisation were common aspirations shared by the different revolutionary currents in modern China, which connected the Xinhai, National, and Communist Revolutions, the hope for a solution only emerged when the CPC came to power.

The Communist Party of China’s approach to poverty

THE CPC and social reformists shared the view that China was poor and backward; however, they differed in terms of how to resolve these issues. While many historians and political scientists have studied the CPC’s grassroots mobilisations and the strategies through which it gained power, such as the united front, armed struggle, party building, and the mass line; scholars have often neglected to examine how the party sought to use its power to redefine the meaning of development

and pursued a radical form of revolution to achieve modernisation.

During the early 20th century, Chinese civil society lacked the self-organisation and power to effectively promote industrialisation, so it was necessary for the state to step in and direct the process. In the ROC period, the KMT’s party-run state was unable to realise industrialisation; the necessary transformation of the Chinese state would finally be achieved through the political mobilisation of a Marxist-Leninist party, the CPC.

In fact, the legitimacy of the CPC, in replacing the KMT administration, was determined by its capacity to advance state-building and, consequently, modernisation. In the late 1930s, Mao Zedong proposed that “economic construction should be at the centre of the entire work of the party and people’s organisations, and at the centre of the work of the party’s committees and governments”.

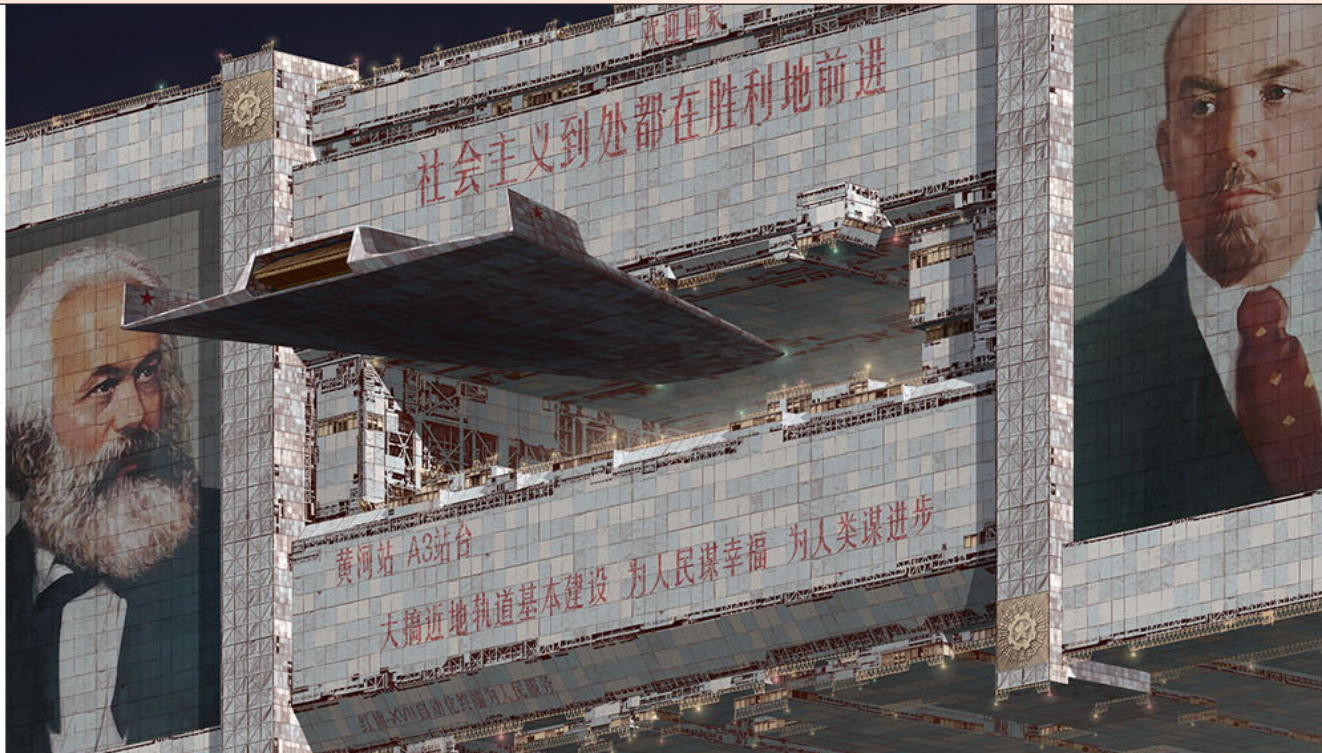
He also pointed out that “the people support the Communist Party because we represent the demands of the nation and the people. But if we fail to solve the problems, build new forms of industry, and develop productive forces, the people will not necessarily support us”.

In this sense, it is not difficult to understand the CPC’s consistent prioritisation of national development and pursuit of the eradication of poverty and industrialisation, as well as its motivation to launch reform and opening up.

In its early years, while developing the revolutionary struggle, the CPC carried out a series of poverty alleviation campaigns in the revolutionary base areas. These campaigns foreshadowed the developmental policies in the “post-revolutionary” period, and reflected the CPC’s original intention in building a modernised state. For example, the party’s efforts in land reform, education, healthcare, social security, and social assistance in the Central Revolutionary Base or Jiangxi–Fujian Soviet and in the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia Border Region during the 1930s and 1940s bear a striking resemblance to the party’s battle against poverty today.

First, the CPC’s two-pronged approach to resolving poverty in the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia Border Region – focusing on economic backwardness and providing social assistance – shares similarities with the party’s contemporary poverty alleviation programmes. In the Border Region, the party set agricultural production as the initial priority in economic construction, organising the peasants through cooperatives to improve productivity and boost rural development. Subsequently, the party enacted a progressive tax system where people from

ed extreme poverty



you can read the articles and view the art by clicking this link: <https://thetricontinental.org/wenhua-zongheng-2023-2-china-path-from-poverty-to-socialist-modernisation/>

all classes – except those in dire poverty – had to pay taxes to the government, while providing rent and interest relief. Finally, the party created an institution devoted to social assistance, granting special funds for disaster relief and the resettlement of refugees from China’s civil war and the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945).

In some ways, the experience in the Border Region represented the prototype for the party’s contemporary development-oriented poverty alleviation programmes, focused on improving living conditions in the long term by promoting economic development in poorer areas, and welfare-oriented poverty alleviation programmes, focused on providing immediate relief and support for those living in poverty.

Second, the CPC’s development of education in the Central Revolutionary Base shares similarities with the party’s contemporary poverty alleviation efforts. After establishing the base area in 1931, the party had built primary schools in all of its townships by January 1934, providing free education for all children. Along with developing a system of compulsory education for children and youths, the CPC also carried out a large-scale adult learning campaign in the base area to eradicate illiteracy. For example, in Xingguo County the party set up 1,900 night schools, open to all those who were illiterate under the age of 35 – women accounted for 69 percent of students.

During the founding of the Central Revolutionary Base, Mao had declared that everyone had an equal right to education regardless of gender, status, or identity; in addition, the constitution that governed the base area guaranteed the right of the working, peasant, and toiling masses to receive education and the implementation of a system of free, universal education.

China now has a nationwide free and compulsory nine-year education system and the party continues to pursue poverty alleviation through education, focused on increasing access to education and educational resources in rural areas to block the intergenerational transmission of poverty as well as providing vocational education and skills training.

In addition, the CPC’s social assistance practices in the Central Revolutionary Base also resemble the aforementioned welfare-oriented poverty alleviation programmes of today. In the base area, the party established a working people’s committee that enforced labour rights, supported unemployed workers, and provided social security, as well as various mutual aid societies. The party also set up corresponding offices that primarily worked to rescue and aid victims of war and natural disasters. This tradition, which

With the eradication of absolute poverty in 2021, China achieved its first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society; however, to achieve its second centenary goal of building a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful, the CPC must continue this battle and confront relative poverty and inequality

dates back to the party’s earliest experiences in governance, continues to this day.

Regarding the campaigns to improve people’s livelihood in the Central Revolutionary Base, Mao emphasised that no one should be left behind or neglected, and that all people should be treated equally and with respect, especially the marginalised sections of the groups such as women, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

The battle against poverty today carries on this principle of “leaving no one behind”

DESPITE the CPC’s view that the root causes of poverty were the exploitation of the peasantry by the feudal landlord class, the economic aggression of imperialism, and the oppression of the bureaucrat-capitalist class, following the victory of the revolution and the completion of the land reform, the party came to the sobering realisation that the fundamental conditions of poverty in the rural areas had not changed. Immediately after the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the CPC embarked on a process of systematic social transformation with the aim of eradicating poverty, implementing a nationwide land reform that completely destroyed the feudal land system. At the same time, recognising the importance of transforming the individual economy of smallholders, the CPC mobilised a mutual aid and cooperative movement in rural areas. Yet, in 1956, in his notes for The High Tide of Socialism in Rural China, Mao would write that China was still very poor and that it would take decades for China to become rich. Two decades later, when Mao met Kukrit Pramoj, Prime Minister of Thailand, in 1975, he would state that “the Communist Party is not fearful, but what is really fearful is poverty”.

These examples reflect the longstanding emphasis on poverty alleviation in the political agenda of the CPC.

Throughout the Mao era, the party continued to pursue social transformation across the country and on all fronts, developing basic infrastructure in agriculture, water conservancy, transportation, education, and health-care, and achieving basic industrialisation. In this sense, the period of socialist construction between the founding of the PRC and 1978, can broadly be placed within the history of what the party now calls development-oriented poverty alleviation.

In 1978, China entered a period of market economic reform. Despite the profound changes in the CPC’s economic strategy, poverty remained central in the party’s political agenda, as Deng Xiaoping stated, “Our decades-long struggle has always had the purpose of eliminating poverty”.

To attain this goal, Deng argued that it was necessary to take a different approach from the previous era, “Our 20 years of experience from 1958 to 1976 have told us: poverty is not socialism, socialism is to eliminate poverty”.

Creative

Deng attempted to clarify the relationship between modernisation and poverty, putting forward creative formulations such as “those who get rich first bring others along”. In the West, Deng Xiaoping is often miscited as only saying “let some get rich first”, while omitting the second part of his statement, indicating that the wealthier members of society have a responsibility to “bring others along” towards the goal of common prosperity.

This was the introduction of the concept of building a “moderately prosperous society” as the goal of modernisation, proposing the Three-Step Development Strategy to achieve modernisation, and setting the CPC’s ruling objective as leading the Chinese people to achieve “common prosperity”.

Although subsequent CPC leaders have continued to emphasise the party’s adherence to the goal of common prosperity as reform and opening up has proceeded, polarisation and social inequality have become increasingly serious issues amid the country’s rapid economic development. Although the CPC identified the problem of poverty at the beginning of reform and opening up and has undertaken a series of initiatives to address the issue during this period – including the development-oriented poverty alleviation campaign in the “three areas” in the early 1980s and the Seven-Year Priority Poverty Alleviation Programme to lift 80 million people out of absolute poverty

between 1994 and 2000 – it has become increasingly difficult for poor populations to escape from poverty as inequality has soared. While China has made significant achievements in modernisation, it is clear that the CPC now faces the major challenge of managing the relationship between efficiency and equity.

Prior to the revolution, China’s economy and society suffered from a long-term period of underdevelopment due to, on the one hand, the weakness of grassroots and civil society forces to drive economic development and, on the other hand, the state’s inability to advance modernisation at the national level. When the CPC came to power in 1949, it provided a new force to drive the country’s modernisation process forward and became equipped with the political, institutional, and administrative capacity to transform Chinese society, breaking the cycle of dynastic change and putting China’s national development on secure footing. However, in the post-revolutionary era, the CPC has faced challenges in regulating and distributing wealth in a society with diverse interests.

An Alternative Revolutionary Practice to Eradicate Poverty

THE 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 marked a shift in the party’s approach, as it placed a greater weight on using its institutional strength to guide the modernisation process. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated at the time, “Eliminating poverty, improving people’s livelihood and achieving common prosperity are the essential requirements of socialism. Today, the majority of the population have seen a great improvement in their living standards, with the emergence of middle-income and high-income groups, but there are still a large number of low-income people, and it is they who really need our help”.

In a series of discussions on poverty alleviation work, Xi Jinping repeatedly emphasised the fundamental concept that “shared development is focused on addressing issues of social justice”.

Among CPC leaders in recent decades, Xi has raised the issue of poverty most frequently, representing the party’s increased concern for social justice issues in this new stage of development. Whereas the initial challenge that the CPC faced, in transforming from a revolutionary party to a ruling party, concerned the advancement of China’s modernisation, with an emphasis on economic development; now, having made great economic achievements, the party faces the challenge of promoting social justice to fully realise the country’s modernisation.

During the post-revolutionary era, changes in party-government rela-

tions, state-society relations, and sociocultural factors have limited the CPC’s use of revolutionary means to the distribution of social wealth. Furthermore, because the problem of poverty is structural, the normative mechanisms of techno-bureaucratic governance have been incapable of regulating the distribution. As a result, to change the pattern of distribution, the party has had to use its institutional resources and make institutional interventions, while also going beyond existing institutions through “revolutionary” initiatives. This has included a self-revolution within the CPC itself, reshaping the interests of the party and the personal interests of its members.

The evolution of the party’s approach, from its techno-bureaucratic strategy to the large-scale poverty eradication campaign, was not an irrational mass movement akin to the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), but a rational movement of consensus building and mass mobilisation, an experiment to revitalise revolutionary practice and symbolism in the post-revolutionary era.

The battle against poverty has re-established the political authority of the CPC, closing the gap between the party and government that emerged amid the prioritisation of economic growth; party secretaries at all five levels of government – village, town, county, city, and province – are responsible for ensuring the success of poverty alleviation efforts assuming overall responsibility, under the direct leadership of the general secretary. The return of centralised party leadership has helped the CPC to rebuild social consensus, avoid social disorder, and manage the complex internal and external environment. In this way, the battle against poverty has had a political significance that goes far beyond the improvement of people’s livelihoods.

This impact has been particularly visible in rural areas, which is not surprising given that resolving the issue of rural poverty in China is essential to realising modernisation, building a moderately prosperous society, and advancing social justice in the country. The CPC has implemented a wide range of measures in rural areas that have broken with the techno-bureaucratic logic and the constraints of existing administrative and technical norms, allowing social justice goals to transcend the administrative process. Examples include concentrating resources on poverty-stricken areas, such as the “three regions and three prefectures”. The “three regions” are Tibet, the Tibetan ethnic areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai province, and the four prefectures in southern Xinjiang (Hotan, Aksu, Kashgar, and the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture). The “three prefectures”

are Liangshan in Sichuan, Nujiang in Yunnan, and Linxia in Gansu.

Officials have been sent to poor villages to take on lead responsibilities for local poverty alleviation efforts as first party secretaries, and implementing a system of oversight to address problems in poverty-stricken counties and villages, which in some cases requires relocating people who lived in very difficult or dangerous conditions. The government has also introduced many initiatives that have simultaneously been market-oriented and also run counter to market interests, such as poverty alleviation through consumption, focused on promoting the purchase of rural goods and services to promote development. These initiatives include poverty alleviation workshops, and the “10,000 enterprises helping 10,000 villages” programme, which mobilises private firms to contribute to rural poverty alleviation efforts. The CPC has been able to reset the balance between equity and efficiency by using “victory” in the battle against poverty and the “quality of the victory” as standards to monitor and evaluate party and governmental work.

To complete the unfinished tasks of the revolution in the post-revolutionary era, the CPC has needed to overcome the existing normative framework of governance and the influence of interest groups that have emerged during reform and opening up. At the same time, from past experiences, such as the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the party is keenly aware of the need to ensure institutional stability. Altogether, the battle against poverty can be understood as an alternative type of revolutionary practice.

Concluding remarks

THE USE of the term “post-revolutionary era” in this article is not an argument to abandon revolutionary concepts or practices in the age of globalisation, nor is it an argument for returning to the revolutionary practices of previous eras.

The CPC identifies the current historical stage of China as the “primary stage of socialism”, in which relations of production that are incompatible with the basic principles of socialism will continue to exist. Accordingly, radical revolutionary practices have lost legitimacy. However, the realisation of the revolutionary goals remains of great importance, both in the party’s theory and practice, as it manages the tension between equity and efficiency in China’s modernisation process.

With the eradication of absolute poverty in 2021, China achieved its first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society; however, to achieve its second centenary goal of building a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful, the CPC must continue this battle and confront relative poverty and inequality.

At the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the party announced a set of developmental goals – known as the “two centenary goals” – to be achieved by two significant 100-year anniversaries. The first centenary goal was to eradicate absolute poverty and build a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2021, the centenary of the CPC’s founding in 1921; the second centenary goal is to build a “modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful” by 2049, the centenary of the founding of the PRC in 1949.

It remains to be seen whether the alternative revolutionary practices of the battle against poverty will fade to memory or become established as a new political tradition.

● *THIS article, originally published in Wenhua Zongheng, was reproduced online by the tricontinental.org. The text of that article with sources and citations can be read here: <https://thetricontinental.org/wenhua-zongheng-2023-2-china-battle-against-poverty/>*

US pursues relations with Vietnam to ‘contain’ China

Biden hails elevated status with Hanoi as ‘historic moment’

Peter Symonds

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden described his recent trip to Vietnam as an “historic moment” that took the relationship between the two countries to a “new elevated status that will be a force for prosperity and security”.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While Biden denied that US imperialism was engaged in a Cold War with China or was seeking to “contain” it, the purpose of his visit was to consolidate ties with Hanoi as part of Washington’s offensive throughout the region in preparation for possible war with Beijing.

Biden’s trip followed the G20 summit, in which the US and its allies suffered a humiliating failure in their efforts to insert language into the final communiqué condemning Russia, following the failure of the US-backed Ukrainian spring offensive.

Biden joined Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, in signing a comprehensive security partnership that opens the door for closer economic and military collaboration between the two countries.

The partnership is not a formal military alliance, but it does place the US on the top tier of formal relations with Vietnam, on a par diplomatically with Russia and China, which already have such ties with Vietnam. Top Vietnamese leader Trong declared that the US-Vietnamese ties had grown by “leaps and bounds” and was now “elevated to a new height”.

While Vietnam has been cautious about alienating China – its number one trading partner – its close ties with the United States is an implicit warning to Beijing that it has other economic options. Prior to Biden’s visit to Vietnam, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning again called on the US to “abandon the Cold War mentality” in its diplomacy in Asia, and to “abide by the basic norms of international relations”.

The embrace of Washington by the Vietnamese Communist Party leadership is all the more pointed given the devastation wreaked on Vietnam by US imperialism during the Vietnam War. Millions of Vietnamese civilians and soldiers were killed in the conflict and the impact of the war continues today as a result of the US military’s blanket use of the poisonous defoliant Agent Orange and extensive use of cluster bombs.

Moreover, the US forged a bloc with China against the Soviet Union, encouraging Beijing to launch an invasion of northern Vietnam in a brief but bloody war in March 1979, just months after the US and China established formal diplomatic ties. Tens of thousands were killed on both sides in the conflict.

The Vietnamese Communist Party abandoned its socialist pretensions and turned to the capital-



US President Joe Biden raises a toast at a state luncheon with Vietnam President Vo Van Thuong in Hanoi

ist market in 1986 with the elaboration of its Doi Moi programme of pro-market reforms. In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Vietnam has turned ever more openly towards US imperialism which had maintained an economic blockade since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Formal diplomatic relations were established under President Clinton in 1995 and expanded under President Obama. Now, with the sealing of a comprehensive partnership, the Vietnamese leadership is clearly hoping to cash in on US efforts to establish alternative supply chains for crucial strategic supplies as it prepares for possible war with China.

As of 2022, the US was Vietnam’s second largest trading partner after China, and Vietnam was the ninth largest of the United States. The joint statement between Biden and Trong noted that Vietnam had officially asked for a review of its status as a market economy on September 8, which the US will conduct as “expeditiously as possible”. Market economy status will open the way for wider American investment in Vietnam.

Advanced

The US is looking to Vietnam as an alternative source of semi-conductors, vital not only in numerous commercial applications but also for military equipment. Conflict with China could severely disrupt supplies of semi-conductors, not only from China itself, but also from Taiwan, which is the world’s largest manufacturer, particularly of the most advanced computer chips.

The Biden administration is stoking a war with China over Taiwan by deliberately undermining the One China policy under which Washington de facto recognises Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

‘Vietnam has been identified as a crucial strategic partner despite its relations with Russia and China, and the brutal history of the Vietnam War. Speaking prior to Biden’s visit, the White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan told a media briefing, ‘It reflects the leading role that Vietnam will play in our growing network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific as we look to the future.’

In his meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Biden announced a US-Vietnam Semiconductor Partnership. Biden and Chinh also hailed the US\$7.8 billion deal that Vietnam Airlines has signed with Boeing to buy 50 of its 737 Max passenger aircraft.

Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken also met with Chinh and top Vietnamese officials and business executives to discuss expanding technological and economic cooperation. Senior executives from top American corporations, including Google, chipmakers Intel, GlobalFoundries, and Boeing, took part in the “innovation and investment summit”. Dell, Google, Microsoft and Apple have already invested heavily in Vietnam under conditions of deteriorating relations between the US and China.

In another significant strategic economic area, the comprehensive security partnership refers to expanding Vietnam’s production of rare earths that are critical for many commercial and military applications, including the manu-

facture of semi-conductors. China currently dominates the world’s production. Vietnam has the world’s second-largest deposits of rare earths after China.

While not discussed publicly, the US is undoubtedly seeking to strengthen military ties with Vietnam, which has longstanding territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. While still at a limited level, the US has increased its exports of arms to Vietnam after lifting its ban on the sale of lethal weapons to the country.

The US under Obama, Trump, and Biden has provided Vietnam with 24 new coast guard patrol vessels, unmanned aircraft systems, coastal radar, and two decommissioned US Coast Guard Hamilton-class cutters, Vietnam’s largest coast guard ships. At the same time, US aircraft carriers have made port calls in Vietnam for the first time since the Vietnam War, most recently in June when the USS Ronald Reagan arrived in Danang accompanied by two guided-missile cruisers – USS Anietam and USS Robert Smalls.

Security

Vietnam, however, remains heavily dependent on Russia for some 80 percent of its armaments and has long established relations. Hanoi has pointedly not condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and is continuing to buy weapons from Russia, despite the risk of US sanctions. In his efforts to strengthen ties with Vietnam, Biden has turned a blind eye to its Russian arms purchases and his joint statement with Trong simply referred to the need for “a comprehensive, just, and durable peace” in the Ukraine war.

Biden’s signing of a comprehensive security partnership with Vietnam is part of far broader preparations for a possible US-led war with China which includes:

- A vast US military build-up and restructuring throughout the Indo-

Pacific that began with the Obama administration and continued under Trump and Biden. By 2020, 60 percent of the US military’s air and naval assets were to be stationed in the region.

- Strengthening anti-China Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad, with Australia, Japan and India.

- The AUKUS pact with Australia and Britain that will provide Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines and other advanced weaponry. It includes a major expansion of basing arrangements that is transforming northern Australia into a huge military platform for war with China.

- The expansion of US bases in the Philippines to include strategic areas of Luzon directly adjacent to the South China Sea – a major focus of US naval and air provocations against China.

- The formalisation of close security relations between two major US allies in North East Asia – South Korea and Japan – that is essential to US war plans, not least because of major American bases and anti-missile sites in both countries.

- The systematic strengthening of Washington’s strategic partnership with India.

Within this context, Vietnam has been identified a crucial strategic partner despite its relations with Russia and China, and the brutal history of the Vietnam War. Speaking prior to Biden’s visit, the White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan told a media briefing: “It reflects the leading role that Vietnam will play in our growing network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific as we look to the future.”

Relations are likely to be further boosted when Biden welcomes Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Trong to San Francisco in November for a meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

wsws.org

CHINA WATCH

INTEREST in China is growing, yet most news and analysis outside the country is produced by mainstream media from the global north. To provide Chinese perspectives, the *Dongsheng Collective* – researchers from various countries – offers a China digest. This is an edited selection. <https://dongshengnews.org/en>

Xi pledges to aid Syria

SYRIA and China have elevated their relationship to a “strategic partnership”, during the first visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad after almost 20 years. China said illegal unilateral sanctions against Syria should be lifted and that it opposes the illegal military presence and illegal plundering of the country’s natural resources. Xi said that China would help rebuild Syria’s economy through the Belt and Road Initiative, which it joined in 2022.

South China Morning Post

Mexico tariffs increase

MEXICO has increased import tariffs from 5% to 25% applying to almost 90% of Chinese exports to the country. The change affects 392 imports from countries with which Mexico does not have a free trade agreement. To circumvent US trade restrictions, some Chinese companies have transferred their factories to Mexico. Advisers say that China should increase investments in the Latin American country.

South China Morning Post

Semiconductors plan

CHINA is exploring the creation of new technologies to circumvent sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on lithography machines to produce semiconductors. Researchers at Tsinghua University aim to build a particle accelerator with a circumference of 100 to 150 metres to create a new laser source for various lithography machines.

South China Morning Post

US sanctions warning

IT IS reported that increased sanctions against China could leave the US economy vulnerable, especially in defence and basic infrastructure areas. The US does not have the factories or skilled labour to replace Chinese imports. The North American country imported US\$33 billion in capital goods from China for electricity generation and distribution in 2022. One of the country’s largest defence contractors, Raytheon, says it has several thousand suppliers in China and warned that “disassociation” is impossible.

Asia Times

Banking on the climate

THE ASIAN Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) plans to triple annual loans for climate change projects by 2030. In eight years, the bank’s climate financing will increase from US\$2.6 billion to around US\$7-8 billion, representing more than half of the entity’s funds. In addition to mitigation, AIIB will focus on creating infrastructure resilience to combat the next 3-4 decades of temperature increases.

Financial Times

German reinvestment

IN SPITE of Germany’s “risk reduction” strategy, its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in China reached almost record levels in the first half of the year. German FDI in China was EUR10.31 billion, just below the record EUR12 billion year-on-year. Most of Germany’s FDI was the reinvestment of profits (EUR8.5 billion), indicating companies are doubling down in the country.

China Briefing

The world's centre of gravity will shift starting January next year

BRICS encompasses 47.3% of the global population with 36.4% GDP

Vijay Prashad

ON THE last day of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, the five founding states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) welcomed six new members: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The BRICS partnership now encompasses 47.3 percent of the world's population, with a combined global Gross Domestic Product (by purchasing power parity, or PPP,) of 36.4 percent. By comparison, though the G7 states (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) account for merely 10 percent of the world's population, their share of the global GDP (by PPP) is 30.4 percent.

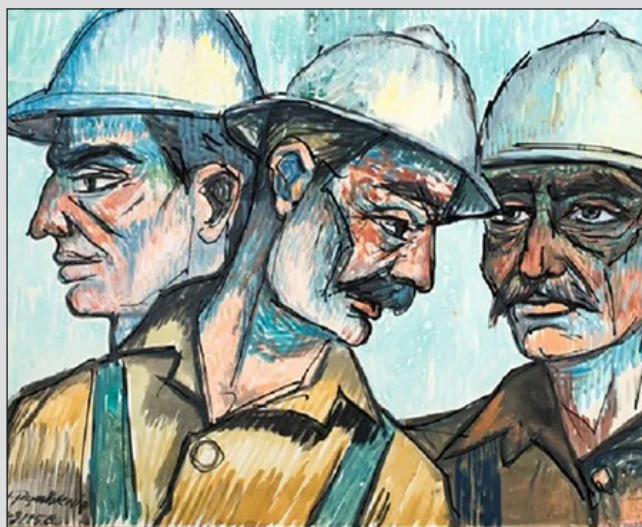
In 2021, the nations that today form the expanded BRICS group were responsible for 38.3 percent of global industrial output while their G7 counterparts accounted for 30.5 percent. All available indicators, including harvest production and the total volume of metal production, show the immense power of this new grouping.

Celso Amorim, advisor to the Brazilian government and one of the architects of BRICS during his former tenure as foreign minister, said of the new development that “the world can no longer be dictated by the G7”.

Certainly, the BRICS nations, for all their internal hierarchies and challenges, now represent a larger share of the global GDP than the G7, which continues to behave as the world's executive body. More than 40 countries expressed an interest in joining BRICS, although only 23 applied for membership before the South Africa meeting (including seven of the 13 countries in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC).

Indonesia, the world's seventh largest country in terms of GDP (by PPP), withdrew its application to BRICS at the last moment but said it would consider joining later. Indonesia's President Joko Widodo's comments reflect the mood of the summit: “We must reject trade discrimination. Industrial down-streaming must not be hindered. We must all continue to voice equal and inclusive cooperation.”

BRICS does not operate independently of new regional formations that aim to build platforms outside the grip of the West, such as the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Instead, BRICS membership has the potential to enhance regionalism for those already within these regional fora. Both sets of interregional bodies are leaning into a historical tide supported by important data, analysed by Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research using a range of widely available and reliable global databases. The facts are clear: the Global North's percentage of



Top: Abdel Hadi el-Gazzar (Egypt), *The Popular Chorus or Food or Comrades on the Theatre of Life*, 1948 (post-dated 1951). Above left: Tadesse Mesfin (Ethiopia), *Pillars of Life: Waiting*, 2018. Above right: Houshang Pezeshknia (Iran), *Khark*, 1958. These images accompanied the original Tricontinental article which can be accessed by clicking this link: <https://thetricontinental.org/newsletter/issue/brics-expansion/>

world GDP fell from 57.3 percent in 1993 to 40.6 percent in 2022, with the US's percentage shrinking from 19.7 percent to only 15.6 percent of global GDP (by PPP) in the same period – despite its monopoly privilege. In 2022, the Global South, without China, had a GDP (by PPP) greater than that of the Global North.

The West, perhaps because of its rapid relative economic decline, is struggling to maintain its hegemony by driving a New Cold War against emergent states such as China. Perhaps the single best evidence of the racial, political, military, and economic plans of the Western powers can be summed up by a recent declaration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU):

Monarchies

“NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. We will further mobilise the combined set of instruments at our disposal, be they political, economic, or military, to pursue our common objectives to the benefit of our one billion citizens.”

Why did BRICS welcome such a disparate group of countries, including two monarchies, into its fold? When asked to reflect on the character of the new full member states, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said, “What mat-

ters is not the person who governs but the importance of the country. We can't deny the geopolitical importance of Iran and other countries that will join BRICS.” This is a measure of how the founding countries made the decision to expand their alliance. At the heart of BRICS's growth are at least three issues: control over energy supplies and pathways, control over global financial and development systems, and control over institutions for peace and security.

A larger BRICS has now created a formidable energy group. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are also members of OPEC, which, with Russia, a key member of OPEC+, now accounts for 26.3 million barrels of oil per day, just below 30 percent of global daily oil production. Egypt, which is not an OPEC member, is nonetheless one of the largest African oil producers, with an output of 567,650 barrels per day. China's role in brokering a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia in April enabled the entry of both of these oil-producing countries into BRICS. The issue here is not just the production of oil, but the establishment of new global energy pathways.

The Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative has already created a web of oil and natural gas platforms around the Global South, integrated into the expansion of Khalifa Port and natural gas facilities at Fujairah and Ruwais in the UAE, alongside the development of Saudi

Arabia's Vision 2030. There is every expectation that the expanded BRICS will begin to coordinate its energy infrastructure outside of OPEC+, including the volumes of oil and natural gas that are drawn out of the earth. Tensions between Russia and Saudi Arabia over oil volumes have simmered this year as Russia exceeded its quota to compensate for Western sanctions placed on it due to the war in Ukraine. Now these two countries will have another forum, outside of OPEC+ and with China at the table, to build a common agenda on energy. Saudi Arabia plans to sell oil to China in renminbi (RMB), undermining the structure of the petrodollar system (China's two other main oil providers, Iraq and Russia, already receive payment in RMB).

Both the discussions at the BRICS summit and its final communiqué focused on the need to strengthen a financial and development architecture for the world that is not governed by the triumvirate of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Wall Street, and the US dollar. However, BRICS does not seek to circumvent established global trade and development institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, and the IMF. For instance, BRICS reaffirmed the importance of the “rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation at its core” and called for “a robust Global Financial Safety Net with a quota-based and adequately re-

sourced [IMF] at its centre”. Its proposals do not fundamentally break with the IMF or WTO; rather, they offer a dual pathway forward: first, for BRICS to exert more control and direction over these organisations, of which they are members but have been subordinated to a Western agenda, and second, for BRICS states to realise their aspirations to build their own parallel institutions (such as the New Development Bank, or NDB). Saudi Arabia's massive investment fund is worth close to US\$1 trillion, which could partially resource the NDB.

BRICS's agenda to improve “the stability, reliability, and fairness of the global financial architecture” is mostly being carried forward by the “use of local currencies, alternative financial arrangements, and alternative payment systems”.

Messaging

The concept of “local currencies” refers to the growing practice of states using their own currencies for cross-border trade rather than relying upon the dollar.

Although approximately 150 currencies in the world are considered to be legal tender, cross-border payments almost always rely on the dollar (which, as of 2021, accounted for 40 percent of flows over the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, or SWIFT, network).

Other currencies play a limited role, with the Chinese RMB com-

prising 2.5 percent of cross-border payments. However, the emergence of new global messaging platforms – such as China's Cross-Border Payment Interbank System, India's Unified Payments Interface, and Russia's Financial Messaging System (SPFS), as well as regional digital currency systems, promise to increase the use of alternative currencies. For instance, cryptocurrency assets briefly provided a potential avenue for new trading systems before their asset valuations declined, and the expanded BRICS recently approved the establishment of a working group to study a BRICS reference currency.

Following the expansion of BRICS, the NDB said it would also expand its members and that, as its General Strategy, 2022–2026 notes, 30 percent of all of its financing would be in local currencies. As part of its framework for a new development system, its president, Dilma Rousseff, said the NDB would not follow the IMF policy of imposing conditions on borrowing countries. “We repudiate any kind of conditionality,” Rousseff said. “Often a loan is given upon the condition that certain policies are carried out. We don't do that. We respect the policies of each country.”

In their communiqué, the BRICS nations write about the importance of “comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council”. Currently, the UN Security Council has 15 members, five of which are permanent (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US). There are no permanent members from Africa, Latin America, or the most populous country in the world, India. To repair these inequities, BRICS offers its support to “the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including Brazil, India, and South Africa to play a greater role in international affairs”. The West's refusal to allow these countries a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has only strengthened their commitment to the BRICS process and to enhance their role in the G20.

The entry of Ethiopia and Iran into BRICS shows how these large Global South states are reacting to the West's sanctions policy against dozens of countries, including two founding BRICS members (China and Russia). The Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter – Venezuela's initiative from 2019 – brings together 20 UN member states that are facing the brunt of illegal US sanctions, from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Many of these states attended the BRICS summit as invitees and are eager to join the expanded BRICS as full members.

We are not living in a period of revolutions. Socialists always seek to advance democratic and progressive trends. As is often the case in history, the actions of a dying empire create common ground for its victims to look for new alternatives, no matter how embryonic and contradictory they are. The diversity of support for the expansion of BRICS is an indication of the growing loss of political hegemony of imperialism.

Tricontinental

Flooding finished what NATO started

Storm Daniel destroyed dams in war-torn Libya

Vijay Prashad

THREE days before the Abu Mansur and Al Bilad dams collapsed in Wadi Derna, Libya, on the night of September 10, the poet Mustafa al-Trabelsi participated in a discussion at the Derna House of Culture about the neglect of basic infrastructure in his city.

At the meeting, al-Trabelsi warned about the poor condition of the dams. As he wrote on Facebook that same day, over the past decade his beloved city has been “exposed to whipping and bombing, and then it was enclosed by a wall that had no door, leaving it shrouded in fear and depression”.

Then, Storm Daniel picked up off the Mediterranean coast, dragged itself into Libya, and broke the dams. CCTV camera footage in the city’s Maghar neighbourhood showed the rapid advance of the floodwaters, powerful enough to destroy buildings and crush lives. A reported 70 percent of infrastructure and 95 percent of educational institutions have been damaged in the flood-affected areas.

As of Wednesday September 20, an estimated 4,000 to 11,000 people have died in the flood – among them the poet Mustafa al-Trabelsi, whose warnings over the years went unheeded – and another 10,000 are missing.

Tsunami

Hisham Chkiouat, Aviation Minister of Libya’s Government of National Stability (based in Sirte), visited Derna in the wake of the flood and told the BBC, “I was shocked by what I saw. It’s like a tsunami. A massive neighbourhood has been destroyed. There is a large number of victims, which is increasing each hour.”

The Mediterranean Sea ate up this ancient city with roots in the Hellenistic period (326 BCE to 30 BCE). Hussein Swaydan, head of Derna’s Roads and Bridges Authority, said that the total area with “severe damage” amounted to three million square metres. “The situation in this city,” he said, “is more than catastrophic.” Dr Margaret Harris of the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that the flood was of “epic proportions”. “There’s not been a storm like this in the region in living memory,” she said, “so it’s a great shock.”

Howls of anguish across Libya morphed into anger at the devastation, which are now developing

into demands for an investigation. But who will conduct this investigation? The Tripoli-based Government of National Unity, headed by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and officially recognised by the United Nations (UN), or the Government of National Stability, headed by Prime Minister Osama Hamada in Sirte? These two rival governments – which have been at war with each other for many years – have paralysed the politics of the country, whose state institutions were fatally damaged by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bombardment in 2011.

The divided state and its damaged institutions have been unable to properly provide for Libya’s population of nearly seven million in the oil-rich but now totally devastated country. Before the recent tragedy, the UN was already providing humanitarian aid for at least 300,000 Libyans, but, as a consequence of the floods, it estimates that at least 884,000 more people will require assistance. This number is certain to rise to at least 1.8 million.

The WHO’s Dr Harris reports that some hospitals have been “wiped out” and that vital medical supplies, including trauma kits and body bags, are needed. Tamar Ramadan, head of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies delegation in Libya, said, “The humanitarian needs are huge and much more beyond the abilities of the Libyan Red Crescent, and even beyond the abilities of the government.”

The emphasis on the state’s limitations is not to be minimised. Similarly, the World Meteorological Organisation’s Secretary-General Petteri Taalas pointed out that although there was an unprecedented level of rainfall (414.1 mm in 24 hours, as recorded by one station), the collapse of state institutions contributed to the catastrophe. Taalas observed that Libya’s National Meteorological Centre has “major gaps” in its observing systems. “Its IT systems are not functioning well and there are chronic staff shortages. The National Meteorological Centre is trying to function, but its ability to do so is limited. The entire chain of disaster management and governance is disrupted. Furthermore,” he said, “The fragmentation of the country’s disaster management and disaster response mechanisms, as well as deteriorating infrastructure, has exacerbated the enormity of the challenges. The political situation is a driver of risk.”

Abdel Moneim al-Arfi, a member of the Libyan Parliament (in the eastern section), joined his fellow



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lawmakers to call for an investigation into the causes of the disaster. In his statement, al-Arfi pointed to underlying problems with the post-2011 Libyan political class. In 2010, the year before the NATO war, the Libyan government had allocated money towards restoring the Wadi Derna dams (both built between 1973 and 1977). This project was supposed to be completed by a Turkish company, but the company left the country during the war. The project was never completed, and the money allocated for it vanished.

Impunity

According to al-Arfi, in 2020 engineers recommended that the dams be restored since they were no longer able to manage normal rainfall, but these recommendations were shelved. Money continued to disappear, and the work was simply not carried out.

Impunity has defined Libya since the overthrow of the regime led by Muammar al-Gaddafi (1942–2011). In February–March 2011, newspapers from Gulf Arab states began to claim that the Libyan government’s forces were committing genocide against the people of Libya. The United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions: resolution 1970 (February 2011) to condemn the violence and establish an arms embargo on the country, and resolution 1973 (March 2011) to allow

member states to act “under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter”, which would enable armed forces to establish a ceasefire and find a solution to the crisis.

Led by France and the United States, NATO prevented an African Union delegation from following up on these resolutions and holding peace talks with all the parties in Libya. Western countries also ignored the meeting with five African heads of state in Addis Ababa in March 2011 where al-Gaddafi agreed to the ceasefire, a proposal he repeated during an African Union delegation to Tripoli in April. This was an unnecessary war that Western and Gulf Arab states used to wreak vengeance upon al-Gaddafi. The ghastly conflict turned Libya, which was ranked 53rd out of 169 countries on the 2010 Human Development Index (the highest ranking on the African continent), into a country marked by poor indicators of human development that is now significantly lower on any such list.

Instead of allowing an African Union-led peace plan to take place, NATO began a bombardment of 9,600 strikes on Libyan targets, with special emphasis on state institutions. Later, when the UN asked NATO to account for the damage it had caused, NATO’s legal advisor Peter Olson wrote that there was no need for an investigation, since “NATO did not deliberately target civilians and did not commit war crimes in Libya”. There was no interest in the wilful

destruction of crucial Libyan state infrastructure, which has never been rebuilt and the absence of which is key to understanding the carnage in Derna.

NATO’s destruction of Libya set in motion a chain of events; the collapse of the Libyan state; the civil war, which continues to this day; and the dispersal of Islamic radicals across northern Africa and into the Sahel region, whose decade-long destabilisation has resulted in a series of coups from Burkina Faso to Niger.

Migration

This has subsequently created new migration routes toward Europe and led to the deaths of migrants in both the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea as well as an unprecedented scale of human trafficking operations in the region. Add to this list of dangers not only the deaths in Derna, and certainly the deaths from Storm Daniel, but also casualties of a war from which the Libyan people have never recovered.

Just before the flood in Libya, an earthquake struck neighbouring Morocco’s High Atlas Mountains, wiping out villages such as Tenzirt and killing about 3,000 people. “I won’t help the earthquake,” wrote the Moroccan poet Ahmad Barakat (1960–1994). “I will always carry in my mouth the dust that destroyed the world.” It is as if tragedy decided to take titanic steps along the southern rim of the Mediterranean Sea last week.

A tragic mood settled deep within the poet Mustafa al-Trabelsi. On September 10, before being swept away by the flood waves, he wrote, “We have only one another in this difficult situation. Let’s stand together until we drown.” But that mood was intercut with other feelings: frustration with the “twin Libyan fabric”, in his words, with one government in Tripoli and the other in Sirte; the divided populace; and the political detritus of an ongoing war over the broken body of the Libyan state.

“Who said that Libya is not one?” Al-Trabelsi lamented. Writing as the waters rose, he left behind a poem that is being read by refugees from his city and Libyans across the country, reminding them that the tragedy is not everything, that the goodness of people who come to each other’s aid is the “promise of help”, the hope of the future.

*The rain
exposes the drenched streets,
the cheating contractor,
and the failed state.
It washes everything,
bird wings
and cats’ fur.
Reminds the poor
of their fragile roofs
and ragged clothes.
It awakens the valleys,
shakes off their yawning dust
and dry crusts.
The rain
a sign of goodness,
a promise of help,
an alarm bell.*

Tricontinental

Venezuela programme to reduce poverty with support from China

Maduro says it's 'an equality and happiness mission'

Andreína Chávez Alava

THE VENEZUELAN government has announced a new social programme focused on fighting poverty and inequality, which will be supported by China's International Poverty Reduction Centre.

During his weekly TV programme, President Nicolás Maduro said that the "social equality and happiness mission" was "almost ready" to be launched and its main purpose was to "optimise the fight against inequality, against poverty and to build a more harmonious country."

Although Maduro did not give details, he stressed that the social programme will work alongside the Chinese anti-poverty centre. The Chinese government led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been responsible for lifting more than 850 million people out of poverty in the country since 1980.

"In 1981, almost 90 percent of the Chinese population was below the absolute poverty line as measured by the World Bank," the Venezuelan leader went on to explain in his national broadcast, "but in 2019 the figure did not reach 1 percent, and by the end of 2020 the Chinese government announced poverty eradication in the country."

Alliances

China's success story in reducing poverty has been recognised worldwide as it has gone hand-in-hand with sustained economic growth and rapid industrialisation. Beijing has also created alliances with countries from the Global South to help advance socioeconomic cooperation.

Venezuela's new social programme follows President Maduro's recent trip to China, where he met with President Xi Jinping to establish an "all-weather strategic partnership" and signed 31 cooperation agreements. The main ones included China's support for Venezuela's special economic zones (SEZs), poverty reduction efforts, and boosting the country's national electric grid and public healthcare system.

Maduro clarified that the Chinese experience will be adapted to the Caribbean country's reality, its culture and people's most important necessities.

Currently, Venezuela does not have official data regarding poverty and inequality rates. In 2014, the government stopped publishing numbers as the country entered an economic crisis after oil prices plunged globally and hyperinflation crushed working-class



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people's purchasing power. The situation was aggravated by the imposition of unilateral coercive measures by Washington and its allies as part of a regime change strategy.

The sanctions levied against the Caribbean nation have targeted every key sector of the economy, especially the oil industry, the country's main source of foreign revenue. In 2017, the US Treas-

ury imposed sanctions against state oil company PDVSA followed by an oil embargo in 2019. Washington likewise banned diluent and fuel imports exacerbating fuel shortages affecting electricity generation and agricultural production.

In response to the US-led blockade, the Venezuelan government implemented a hybrid economic liberalisation programme and a

nationwide de facto dollarisation while advancing efforts to diversify the economy and increase non-oil revenues. As a result, the economy began to grow again in 2021 after seven years of contraction. Inflation receded to the lowest levels in nearly a decade and small-scale private enterprises expanded.

However, some analysts have pointed out that the economic re-

forms have contributed to a significant increase in inequalities due to growing private sector benefits, the de-regularisation of labour and stagnated public sector workers' wages. Venezuela's minimum salary currently stands at 130 bolívars (around US\$5).

President Maduro has not directly addressed complaints about low wages and the loss of social benefits from public sector work-

ers, particularly in the education sector, who have staged several protests alongside workers from the industrial sector. The administration is likewise engaged in dialogue with trade unions regarding salary adjustments with mediation from the International Labor Organisation (ILO).

Recently, the Venezuelan government has been primarily focusing on resolving quality-of-life issues by remodeling deteriorated schools and hospitals and attending to public service problems through the so-called "1×10 System". The initiative allows people to denounce issues within their communities using a digital app, breaking away from the bureaucratic processes to receive a rapid response.

According to the latest report, almost 1.5 million cases have been attended through the app-based programme since its launch. The issues mostly relate to water, electricity, roads, internet connection and cooking gas supply.

During the Hugo Chávez government (1999-2012), Venezuela's household income poverty reduced from 42 percent in 1999 to 27.3 percent in 2013. Meanwhile, structural poverty fell from 29.3 percent in 1999 to 19.6 percent in 2013. The achievement responded to a series of social programmes, some of them in cooperation with Cuba.

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French ambassador, troops to leave Niger

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron says his country will withdraw its ambassador and troops from Niger in the wake of the July coup that overthrew democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum.

"France has decided to withdraw its ambassador. In the next hours our ambassador and several diplomats will return to France," Macron said in a televised interview.

He added that "military cooperation was over" and that 1,500 French troops stationed in the country would withdraw in "the months and weeks to come" with a full pullout "by the end of the year".

France's exit comes after weeks of pressure from the military and popular demonstrations. Thousands of people have protested in recent weeks in the capital Niamey, including outside a military base housing French soldiers.

Niger's new rulers, who had been demanding France's exit after Macron refused to recognise the July 26 coup, welcomed the French president's announcement.

"We celebrate a new step towards the sovereignty of Niger," they said in a statement read out on national television. "This is an historic moment, which speaks to the determination and will of the Nigerien people."

The development comes as France's troops have also been asked to leave its former colonies Mali and Burkina Faso.

"This is definitely a small victory for the government in transition, and perhaps an embarrassment for the French who have seen Mali, Burkina



Members of the French Operation Barkhane air force squad at an air base in Niamey, Niger

Faso and now a third country in the Sahel where it is being asked by the government in place to leave the country," Al Jazeera's Nicolas Haque said, reporting from Senegal's capital Dakar.

"He [the French ambassador] has essentially been held hostage inside the embassy. The Niger security forces wouldn't let anyone in or out. He has been surviving on food rations inside the embassy."

Macron said Bazoum "was targeted by this coup d'état because he was carrying out courageous reforms and because there was a largely ethnic settling of scores and a lot of political cowardice".

Macron noted that France's military presence in Niger was in response to a request from Niger's government at the time.

Niger's military rulers ended military cooperation with France

following the coup after claiming that Bazoum's government was not doing enough to protect the country from the armed rebellion in the country's west, which is part of the semi-arid Sahel region.

In the last decade, the Sahel region that stretches to central Mali, northern Burkina Faso and western Niger has become the epicentre of violence by armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS).

Defence

The three Sahel countries – Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, which have all witnessed coups in recent years – formed a mutual defence pact, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), on September 16 against possible threats of armed rebellion or external aggression.

AES was formalised with the signing of the Liptako-Gourma Charter, named after the regional border in which the three countries converge. The alliance signifies a new development in regional political and defence cooperation independent of the ECOWAS regional bloc and other instruments of US and French influence.

Whether or not the pro-West ECOWAS alliance will follow through on its threat to invade Niger is still an open question. But certainly it has not lifted the unjustly imposed sanctions on the country.

Niger has reported a severe shortage of medical supplies that are a direct result of ECOWAS sanctions. Much of the country's medical supplies travel through the neighbouring country of Benin, but 60 containers of desperately needed supplies

have been blocked at Benin's port of Cotonou or the border between the two countries.

This suffering is typical of how the major imperialist powers impose brutal and deadly sanctions on countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that assert their independence. After decades of severe exploitation and unilateral sanctions, there is growing desire around the world for a different economic order that supports the development of all nations.

Countries in West Africa and around the world now have alternative economic partners. China has recently been providing substantial debt forgiveness to African countries. The Russia-Africa summit held in late July revealed renewed or new opportunities to boost mutual cooperation economically, politically and technologically. These efforts are very much a work in progress, but there is greater readiness to confidently engage in a new direction.

The governments of Europe and the United States claim to be concerned with democracy, human rights and the rule of law. But if left up to them and neo-colonial puppets in ECOWAS, Nigeriens would die of preventable disease, starve and suffer.

The three Sahel countries are charting a new path that establishes cooperative structures outside the imposition of Western-backed African institutions. But there are major challenges ahead.

Although French troops are now scheduled to leave Niger, the threat of an invasion still looms.

Al Jazeera and Liberation



URGENT ACTION NEEDED ON COST OF LIVING BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

WE WELCOME the bold, confident and honest observation from the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) on the cries of the general public regarding the continued increase in the cost of living in the country.

Last week, CCZ General Secretary Fr Joseph Chikoya issued a statement in which he said, among other things, that the 15 percent price increase of fuel will adversely affect the most vulnerable, especially low-income citizens, who are already grappling with the high cost of essential commodities, such as mealie meal, cooking oil and increased transport costs.

Fr Chikoya called for urgent interventions to be made to help cushion the lives of the most vulnerable Zambians by providing policy directions that will see a more manageable cost of living. He further noted that the cries of the general public were genuine and deserved the government's urgent attention.

We agree with the Council of Churches in Zambia's reflections on the prevailing hardship in the country, and we are deeply concerned about the impact of the cost of living, particularly on families and communities. The rapidly increasing price of essential commodities and services is causing severe challenges for our people.

They are already poorly paid and this, coupled with the unstable and ever escalating price of essential commodities and services, is melting their incomes at a very fast rate. In essence, the poor and vulnerable, who are the majority of our population, are suffering a double punishment from Mr Hakainde Hichilema's corrupt puppet regime's directionless and anti-poor policies.

Many of our people today are struggling to meet the rising cost of literally everything, especially mealie meal. There is no doubt that the increase in the cost of living is also having a huge impact on consumption patterns. And this situation is negatively affecting most families. It is making once decent families resort to formulating desperate coping strategies to make ends meet that in the long run ends up destroying them irretrievably.

The social crisis that many families in Zambia face today owing to the rapidly increasing and unbearable cost of living is; firstly, taking away their dignity and self-respect. And secondly, the unbearable cost of living and inability to provide is affecting the mental wellbeing of most family providers, which in extreme cases can lead to depression or death. It is becoming clearer each day that many families in our communi-

ties are unable to handle or deal with the continuing economic shock.

What is even more saddening, is that the interventions or efforts to address this desperate situation from Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime are highly disproportionate.

Instead of being desperate and in panic mode by holding staged public meetings in the urban constituencies of Lusaka, we advise Mr Hichilema to come up with workable interventions that will immediately assist the vulnerable to keep pace with the rapidly increasing cost of living. Additional rhetoric, lies, and promises of an egg, a potato, and so on – like he did at one of the public meetings last week – will not sort out the hunger and anger prevailing in most homes nationwide.

Let Mr Hichilema know that these low-level, pick-pocket tricks he is attempting to fool our people with will not only backfire but will also fail to close the yawning gap of poverty and squalor that is increasing on a daily basis.

We therefore call for urgent action to help the suffering majority of this country before things get out of hand.

One bad term doesn't deserve another, aleya!

Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President

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EQUITY
PEACE**

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