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Poetry: Bertolt Brecht, Mavai Varothayan

In Praise of Learning

Bertolt Brecht

Learn the simplest things! For you whose time has come
it is never too late!

Learn your ABC, it is not enough, but learn it!

Do not let it discourage you, begin!

You must know everything!

You must take over the leadership!

Learn, man in the asylum!

Learn, man in prison!

Learn, wife in the kitchen!

Learn, man of sixty!

Seek out the school, you who are homeless!

Sharpen your wits, you who shiver!

Hungry man, reach for the book:

It is a weapon.

You must take over the leadership!

Don't be afraid of asking, brother!

Don't be won over,

See for yourself!

What you don't know yourself, you don't know.

Add up the reckoning.

It's you who must pay it.

Put your finger on each item

ask how did it get here?

You must take over the leadership!

The JVP's understanding of the country's economic and social problems is least of all Marxist. From the outset Sinhala chauvinism guided its outlook. Its rejection of the working class even as a progressive force denied it a Marxist outlook. Its understanding of Marxism was shallow and its claim to be Marxist bogus. Its populism appealed to youth who were tired of the parliamentary left., and the JVP used Sinhala chauvinism to build a base among rural Sinhala youth. Its growth was accelerated by its promise of a quick-strike revolution, only to end in the disastrous April 1971 uprising. Then followed dubious deals with JR Jayewardene on the right and Bala Tampoe on the left. The UNP which helped its revival in 1977–79 soon turned on it and even blamed it for the 1983 anti-Tamil violence.

The JVP resorted to chauvinist opportunism again following the Indo–Sri Lanka accord of 1987, and used public resentment of Indian meddling to initiate a violent bid to overthrow the government during 1988–89. But the ruthless state destroyed the JVP by killing 50,000 or more Sinhalese youth.

Following its failed uprisings the JVP took refuge in electoral opportunism in 1994. Craving for parliamentary seats led to unprincipled alliances. All along, the only thing consistent with its past was chauvinism. It supported the war, rejected devolution of power and in 2005 flirted with the overtly racist JHU. But alliance with Mahinda Rajapaksa cost it a three-way split.

The JVP could not recover its lost support base. The Aragalaya, really its collapse, came to its rescue. It capitalised on the post-Aragalaya political chaos, staying aloof of the state suppression of the Aragalaya. The JVP had it both ways, posing as a driver of Aragalaya even after ditching it when it faced state repression. While the loss of credibility of former ruling parties benefitted the JVP, its violent and unlawful past hurt its credibility. Aware of its electoral vulnerability, the JVP initiated the NPP alliance which has since been run by the JVP. However, several factors helped its electoral success: discreditation of the Rajapaksa clan and the SLPP in 2015 by their

arrogant corruption; the failure of the rightist alliance that won in 2015; the disastrous Gotabhaya Rajapaksa presidency; and the bitter disunity of its rivals, among others.

The financial crisis that came to a head in 2022 led to the fall of Gotabhaya. But the Ranil–Rajapaksa alliance that followed acted to lock the country's destiny to the whims of the IMF. Notably, the JVP was most critical of the IMF rescue package, and firmly rejected Indian expansionist designs in 'rescuing' Sri Lanka. It also denounced US imperialism and its proxy wars and Israel's genocidal war in Gaza.

How the JVP/NPP abandoned these commendable stands after winning a huge parliamentary majority is a mystery. The JVP/NPP went back on its pledges and surrendered to the IMF which now dictates economic policy and even the planning of the budget. It yielded to Indian pressure to make trade and economic deals with India, details of which remain unknown to the public. But its recent announcement of a defence treaty with the US stunned political observers, as such a treaty even if hinted at by any other government the JVP would have filled the streets with red caps, red shirts and red flags.

It is said that the JVP had struck deals with the US and India before election to power and that is why US imperialists and Indian hegemonists have been kind to the NPP government from day one. Certainly, the JVP is betraying the people and the country while posing as principled anti-imperialist left party. This is unacceptable.

The JVP became the first Sinhalese-led political party to succeed electorally in the North and East in many decades. It achieved it by raising hopes of the Tamil minority, but it is now seen to backtrack on its pledges.

Having betrayed national sovereignty, the JVP/NPP government will fail politically and economically. Bourgeois critics will then fault socialism for it. That is a reason why the true left needs to expose the fallacy of JVP/NPP socialism and act to mobilise the masses to reverse the JVP/NPP treachery.

Educational Reforms?

The People's Struggle Alliance has called upon the government to put forward an unambiguous document on its proposed educational reforms

The National Executive Committee of the People's Struggle Alliance (PSA) in a letter (text below) addressed to the Minister of Education Dr Harini Amarasuriya, requested the subject minister to present a clear official document to the public on new educational reforms.

A controversial debate is currently underway about a serious reform that is going to be implemented in the school education system in Sri Lanka. The debate about these new reforms has arisen in a backdrop where the current NPP government has not presented a proper clear official document on the matter. Such reforms have been presented from time to time over the past few decades, and no matter how regressive they were, there was always a document that could be subjected to a clear constructive debate.

The 1981- Education White Paper, the 1988 - Kingsley Report, the 1993 - School Development Bill, the 1997 - Jayathilaka Committee Report, the 1999 - School Review Proposal (plan to close 3000 schools), the 2005- Tara Harold Report, the 2007 University Status Review Commission etc. were all proposals that have been widely debated but, have not been implemented. However, in each of the above cases, no matter how much public protest the reforms were subject to, there was a specific official document presented that could be discussed.

The current NPP administration is going to carry out these reforms based on a PowerPoint presentation prepared only in English. It has already been

seen that this will cause serious injustice and mislead all concerned parties who are willing to comment on this. Despite all these facts, such a document has not been presented to Parliament, however, a parliamentary debate has already been held on these reforms, with the President himself participating in it.

As a political party deeply concerned about this issue, the People's Struggle Alliance has been waiting for the past few weeks in the hope that your Ministry would present an official document on these reforms. But instead, the Minister of Education has been evading the central issue here, and stating that it is not necessary for the Minister to have her name on the document. What is important to the people however, is not if or not the Minister's name is on the document, but rather, what the basis of these education reforms and who prepared it.

The people of this country have seen such opaque political approaches being unmercifully criticised by the NPP, both inside and outside Parliament before they came into power. It is also important to recall the promise made by the NPP in its mandate, to introduce a new political culture to the country, and to change the 77-year-old political system, because such behavior is part of the old guard that has now been decisively defeated.

In whose interests are these educational reforms that are being hidden from the general public? Is it in the interests of retaining a loan from the World Bank? Why are you planning to implement this so suddenly in 2026, without allowing for broad public debate? Is it not very undemocratic? Can you act arbitrarily in such a matter when taking decisions about the future of the children of a country? It is true that you have received a mandate from the people, but, do not mistake it for a divine mandate.

The strong suspicion that the 'The National Education Policy Framework' which was initiated by the then Education Minister of the Good Governance Government, Akila Viraj Kariyawasam in 2018, and later

presented under the name of the Upali Sedara Report (2021), during the Gotabaya President's tenure, and presented after 2022 during the tenure of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, as an extension of the above process, is the foundational document of the education reforms presented by the NPP government, cannot be dismissed.

The above National Education Policy Framework, which was presented during the Ranil Wickremesinghe administration, about two years ago, was subject to great public criticism. Also, the Committee that prepared that report consisted of notorious businessmen of the country. It is a matter of regret that we have to remind the NPP leaders that they too were strong critics of these reforms. As a political party, we clearly acknowledge that a serious reform of the education system in Sri Lanka is needed. However, this must be done whilst protecting the foundations of free education, compulsory education up to the age of 16, and a strong academic education.

It is undeniable that new education reforms are needed to address the problems faced by the current education system, including the inadequacy and uneven provision of funds, the disparity in the school system which has resulted in parents having to bear a large financial burden on education, the dominance of private tuition classes, the unhealthy balance between life and education, the prevalence of an exam-centric education system, and the frustration and pressure felt by students.

However, when we look at the incomplete PowerPoint presentation related to the above education reform, it is clear that instead of addressing those problems, there is a desire to cut education 'per unit' costs (shutting down of schools which have few students), further increasing the burden on parents, and narrowing down the curriculum to churn out skilled workers needed for the existing market.

Finally, we emphasise that such a serious reform as education, that will affect the future of the children of our country, should not be carried out

through such haphazard documents. First, the overall education reform proposal should be placed before the country, and you must provide sufficient time for public discussion and debate.

This should not be implemented based on an arbitrary decision. We also wish to inform you that we are ready to intervene as a constructive stakeholder in such an open dialogue.

08 Aug 2025

Marxists hold that man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world. What actually happens is that man's knowledge is verified only when he achieves the anticipated results in the process of social practice (material production, class struggle or scientific experiment). If a man wants to succeed in his work, that is, to achieve the anticipated results, he must bring his ideas into correspondence with the laws of the objective external world; if they do not correspond, he will fail in his practice. After he fails, he draws his lessons, corrects his ideas to make them correspond to the laws of the external world, and can thus turn failure into success; this is what is meant by "failure is the mother of success" and "a fall into the pit, a gain in your wit". The dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge places practice in the primary position, holding that human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice and repudiating all the erroneous theories which deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice. Thus Lenin said, "Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality." The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice. Only social practice can be the criterion of truth. The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge.

Mao Zedong, On Practice, July 1937

The Education Budget: a Pre-Budget Exploration

By the Feminist Collective for Economic Justice

[Comment dated 6th November 2025 on the consequences of underfunding of public education and the growing cost of education for educational expenses and access to affordable and quality of life for the average family]

The NPP Government will be presenting its first full-year Budget for 2026 tomorrow, outlining its policy priorities for an economy continuing to suffer under severe austerity. Education has been repeatedly highlighted as a priority for the Government, with promises of an increased allocation for the sector in the upcoming Budget. Increasing public spending on education incrementally to the desired level of 6% of GDP during the Government's tenure was a promise made in the NPP's election manifesto. Sri Lanka's free public education system has contributed to achieving higher literacy, wellbeing and lower inequality for the country. Free education has ensured greater access and higher educational achievements for girls. Given that an education reform process is also underway, the allocations for public education in the upcoming Budget will be of great importance and interest to many. Thus, a closer look at the education Budget is imperative.

NPP's 2025 Budget for Education

The NPP Government presented its 2025 Budget in February this year. During the parliamentary debates that followed, it was claimed that

historically high allocations were made for education. The Government had allocated Rs 619 billion for education in 2025, with general education being the largest recipient of Rs. 456.6 billion, followed by university education (Rs. 135.3 billion) and vocational education (Rs. 15.4 billion).

A greater part of the education Budget was spent on recurrent costs such as salaries, school meal program, textbooks and uniforms amounting to a total of Rs. 520.1 billion. While salaries make up a great portion of the Budget, school teacher salaries remain low with increments stalled for more than 25 years. The teacher unions staged protests in 2021 to demand that salary increments agreed upon in the Subodhini Report be paid out in full. This is yet to be implemented. Teachers were also excluded from recent salary revisions for the public sector.

Rs 98.9 billion was allocated as capital expenditure, mainly focused on infrastructure development. A larger portion of the education Budget was distributed to schools through the provincial councils, while some Budget lines such as pre-school meals, teacher allowances and season tickets were administered through other ministries.

These Budget allocations do not reflect actual expenditure into education for the year. However, it provides us with an understanding of areas the Government has prioritised within the sector. As of 2025, the Government appears to be prioritising pre-school education, which is a welcome initiative.

Contrary to the Government's claim, the education allocation for 2025 did not amount to a historically high figure. Based on Budget predictions for Sri Lanka's GDP growth in 2025, this allocation of Rs. 619 billion is a mere 1.86% of GDP. During the 1960s and 1970s, public spending for education on average reached 4% of GDP and in the last decade, the highest spending for education was in 2016 with 2.1% of GDP.

Historically high allocation for Sri Lanka's public education, of 5.16% of GDP occurred decades ago in 1972. Far from being historically high, this allocation is in line with the gradual slump in education spending since

the 1977 shift in economic policies. In fact, the increase in the 2025 Budget from the previous year was only 0.1% of GDP. If the Government is serious about its promise to raise education spending to 6% of GDP, the annual increase in the education Budget will need to be significantly higher.

Misconceptions about the Education Budget

Misconceptions about the education Budget often led to taunts such as “tax-payers’ money being wasted on education”. These then lead to arguments favouring the privatisation of education. However, a closer look at the education Budget reveals that the allocations for education have been dismal compared to spending in other sectors in Sri Lanka and when compared with other countries globally.

Sri Lanka’s education spending in the last decade has averaged below 2% of GDP, thus holding the unfortunate place of being one of the countries spending least on education as per World Bank statistics. With such low priority for education, how does Sri Lanka hope to position itself in relation to the rest of the world? Sri Lanka’s public spending on education has been the lowest in South Asia in the last several years, way below the average education spending of 2.9 % of GDP in South Asia. This may, in the near future, lead to Sri Lanka losing its position as a country with higher human development indicators in the region.

In 2025, the amount allocated to education was 12% of the Government’s projected revenue. A recent report by Human Rights Watch has highlighted the impact of the deterioration of tax revenues on education spending and how it contributes to rising inequality in the country. The report also proposed that a 3.5% wealth tax targeted at the richest 0.5% of the population can easily fund half of the education Budget.

Currently, tax revenues are raised mainly through indirect taxation, where low-income households, primarily reliant on public education, contribute a larger share of public revenue. In spite of this, the lack of political will of

successive governments has led to the crisis of funding for education. If public education is a priority for the NPP Government as it has claimed, it should take seemingly bold but commonsensical steps to finance the education Budget, such as implementing a wealth tax.

Yet another misconception about the education Budget is that it is spent exclusively on the free public education system. On the contrary, a portion of the Budget is allocated to providing no-interest loans for students in non-state higher education institutions, funding fee-levying public institutions, equity payments for public-private partnerships and for absorbing failed attempts at private initiatives such as SAIMT. In fact, the proportion of the education Budget allocated to educational institutions that charge for education is doubled from Rs. 7 billion in 2024 to Rs. 14 billion in 2025. Not only does this take away valuable support for free education, but the cost of privatisation and the dismantling of free education are being borne by taxpayers who cannot afford fees for education.

Sources of Funding for Education

How funds are raised for the Budget influences the allocations and priorities set for education. In its initial days, the free education system was largely funded through the surplus made by the export crops in the plantation sector. The dark irony was that the children of plantation workers were denied access to public education until decades later. Since the late 1980s the education Budget has been financed by both domestic and foreign financing. Even though a larger percentage was derived from Government revenue, the entry of international financial institutions has restricted the space for Governments to formulate their own policies. Foreign funders have influenced Sri Lanka's education sector to steer it towards their prescribed ideological goals of privatisation and profit.

External funders currently provide loan-based support. Among them, the World Bank (WB) has contributed the most to education sector projects

since 1989. In the 2025 Budget there was one active WB project - General Education Modernisation Project (Rs. 4.3 billion). Currently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the biggest funder in the education sector, supporting the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Program (Rs. 2.4 billion) and Science and Technology Human Resource Development Project (Rs. 12.3 billion). Other donors such as OPEC and the Fund for International Development (OFID) and bi-lateral donors such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have also contributed to the 2025 education development projects. Recently, the Education Minister confirmed that India will also be investing in teacher training and innovative education programs under the new reforms.

The timeframe for such foreign funded projects is typically 5 to 15 years with successive Governments having to implement projects, even if they rejected it when they were the opposition. The education reforms announced in July 2025 is an example of this pattern in executing education policy. These reforms are based on a process that began in 2019, sustained by successive Governments and supported by the ADB project, with an allocation specifically to operationalise the National Education Policy Framework in the 2025 Budget.

The assistance provided by multilateral and bilateral donors has been mostly in the form of loans which have to be paid back with interest. These loans from donors such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank cannot even be restructured under the debt restructuring program. The Government is mandated to pay in full, even if the projects have failed to deliver.

The underfunding of public education and the growing cost of education has led to an increase in out-of-pocket education expenses for families on boarding, private tuition, books, stationeries and transport. After the economic crisis, the number of school dropouts and absenteeism have increased. Parents are finding it hard to support their children's education due to increased food, transport and stationery costs.

Determinants of equal education goes beyond the space of the education Budget. Ensuring families have access to affordable and adequate nutrition, steady livelihoods, comfortable living conditions and a school close to their communities are all imperative to provide educational justice for all.

What are We Looking For in the 2026 Education Budget?

The education allocations for next year will be announced tomorrow with the 2026 Budget. We will be scrutinising the Budget to gauge if the Government has addressed the glaring underfunding for education by a significant increase in the percentage of GDP allocated to education to realistically address the promise of gradually achieving 6% of GDP allocations for education. Will the allocations address the inequalities within the system and include proposals to reduce the increasing burden of educational costs borne by families or will they continue to reflect the ideological priorities of the donors and International Financial Institutions? Will the Budget proposals contribute to strengthening the free education system or steer it towards more fee-levying programs and privatisation of the education sector?

(The Feminist Collective for Economic Justice is a collective of feminist economists, scholars, feminist activists, university students and lawyers that came together in April 2022 to understand, analyse and give voice to policy recommendations based on lived realities in the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka. It could be reached via email at feministcollectiveforjustice@gmail.com)

Stirring the Hornet's Nest: The NPP's Education Reforms

Niyanthini Kadirgamar

Education occupies a special place in the minds of the general public in Sri Lanka. Thanks to the visionary education reforms put forward by the Report of the Special Committee on Education in 1943 and the consequent Free Education Act of 1945, people from all walks of life have benefited from public education. Thus, no other singular reform agenda evokes such animated interest and vociferous debate as the subject of education.

Given such a context, to propose drastic changes to the public education system without extensive consultation and substantial consensus from interested parties is akin to stirring the hornet's nest. No government should know this truth better than the present National People's Power (NPP) government, with its parliamentary group consisting of a significant number of former student leaders, educationists and academics. Yet, the surprise announcement of the 'Transforming Education' reforms by Prime Minister Dr Harini Amarasuriya, who also holds the education ministerial portfolio, has caused quite the stir.

Putting the Cart Before the Horse

Following the announcement of the education reform, a series of meetings were held in July and August by the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education in different parts of the country to raise awareness of the content and timeline for the implementation of the first phase which is to begin from January 2026 onwards. Preparatory tasks

are to begin post-haste, including the production and distribution of modules and providing training for teachers on the new curriculum changes. It appears that the government has decided to steam ahead with implementation, before the reform proposals have been made public.

This undesirable approach of announcing the reforms without a White Paper being presented for deliberation has left us groping in the dark; speculating about what could be the full extent of the reform agenda, based on incomplete and contradictory interviews, statements, and remarks made by the prime minister and other government representatives at various events and in the media, and a speech made by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in parliament. It is not yet clear if the government intends to develop such a report on the philosophy, scope, and intended outcomes of the reforms in the near future.

Concerns have also been raised over the deviation in the process of developing the education reforms. Although the National Education Commission (NEC) is mandated with reviewing and recommending policy reforms, it does not appear to have spearheaded the process. With no known committee or body being explicitly identified as the authors of the reforms, there is a blatant lack of transparency in this undertaking. The dizzying pace at which the substantive changes are being adopted, the lack of accountability and the ad-hoc and fragmented supply of information have caused much bewilderment, including among educationists. Such an approach would be deplorable under 'normal' circumstances; but to attempt it on a school system surviving on a shoestring after being battered by the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis is a grave misjudgement by the new government.

Transforming Secondary Education

The dearth of solid information on the content of education reform has not hindered ongoing spirited debates which are, believe it or not, based on what was revealed in a bare-bones presentation of 33 slides. This PowerPoint file, available only in English, was leaked via social media

channels and thereafter uploaded on the Ministry of Education website is dated July 2025 and titled: “Transform Education: Transform Sri Lanka Education Reforms.”

Based on the slides, the proposed reform has five pillars, namely:

1. Curriculum Development,
2. Human Resources Development,
3. Development of Infrastructure Facilities and Education Administrative Reforms,
4. Assessment and Evaluation, and
5. Public Awareness and Promotion.

However, the presentation outlines the specific details intended to be implemented only under the first pillar – Curriculum Development. The presentation does not provide any analysis, evidence or rationale for the proposed changes to the curriculum.

Among the list of changes presented, two significant proposals stand out:

1. Tracking students into career-oriented study paths on the completion of Grade 9, when the average age of the student is 14, and;
2. Merging vocational and technical education with general education.

Introducing a modular system from Grade 6 onwards, the reforms assume that the requirements of general education – orienting students towards a holistic development of their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth – can be achieved by Grade 9, with a national assessment on numeracy and literacy.

The stated purpose of study in Grades 10 and 11 are for the “foundation of career readiness”. Thus, limiting the number of subjects for the G.C.E Ordinary Level examination to seven, the five compulsory subjects for the exam are first language, English language, mathematics, science, and religion and values education. History, geography, and aesthetics that were earlier part of the common core, have been relegated as choices for elective subjects.

Additionally, a further learning category has been introduced where students will be given a “career interest test” and assessed for the “tendency to pursue further studies in a specific field” based on psychometrics and guided into specific career-based subject streams at this early stage. A transversal module has also been proposed with the intent of developing “skills necessary for employment and life.” Students are mandated to choose two further learning subjects and one transversal subject outside of their specialised stream. Under this system, students will need to complete 35 credits per term to achieve the requirements for the Ordinary Level.

The vocational path has been introduced as the fifth stream along with science, technology, management, entrepreneurship, and business studies, and humanities and social sciences to the Advanced Level grades. Students will choose three subjects from their specialised streams and additionally offer “enrichment modules” from within their subject streams as well as “interdisciplinary modules” from other subject streams. General English and general information technology are compulsory modules.

The aim of the curriculum change was articulated by Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya as follows: “Under the new education reforms, our aim is to ensure that children identify their career path by Grade 10 and receive the necessary guidance to pursue it,” (Amarasuriya 2025) and “currently, the school system does not adequately prepare students for employment. As a result, universities are compelled to develop their soft skills. That skill development should start at the school level” (*Ada Derana* 2025).

Overall, in order to achieve such goals, the changes suggest that it is necessary to introduce the hierarchy of subject combinations with a bias for STEM and professional development modules over the humanities, aesthetics, and social sciences disciplines. However, given that currently many schools do not have laboratory or technology facilities or teachers to fulfil even the needs of the current curriculum and less than 10% of public schools in the country offer Science and Math streams at the Advanced

Level, whether such an ambitious expansion of STEM subjects at secondary schools is feasible is a pertinent question.

Yet, a serious intent to transform secondary education, by limiting its general education purposes and expanding vocational and professional oriented goals into schooling has been articulated through the curriculum changes. In the past decades, we witnessed the pressure to subordinate higher educational goals to align with the requirements of the job market, through the push for more professional degrees and “modernisation” initiatives including soft skills, IT, and English language courses under the World Bank’s projects for the Higher Education sector (Perera 2021). For the first time, and bizarrely under the leadership of the NPP, the attempt is to transform schools into job training centres.

In Sri Lanka, as is anywhere else, multiple and competing purposes of schooling exist. One may dominate over others at moments, shaping the outcomes of the system. There seems to be a growing conviction that the primary purpose of schooling should be to prepare students for employment. Even so, the success or failure of the education reforms rest on the assumptions underlying them.

The overarching assumption informing the NPP’s reforms, as also echoed in its manifesto, is that the deep economic challenges facing the country can be addressed through vocational and technical education (*The Island* 2025). Envisioning Sri Lanka’s economy as drastically transforming from an agriculture-dependent labour market to one dominated by jobs in STEM fields assumes the future labour market is stable and predictable enough to narrow the scope and make early decisions about career paths. The merits of the proposed reforms should be measured by the validity of its assumptions. Although the manifesto mentions that education should not be “solely about preparing individuals for the job market” and that its policy aims to “provide quality education that fosters a developed, humanistic, and responsible society” (NPP Sri Lanka 2024: 9), the reforms emphasise the former and not the latter.

New or Old Reforms?

The little that has been revealed of the NPP government's education reform has made it evidently clear that there is no significant departure from the reforms proposed under previous governments (David 2024).

By the Education Ministry's own admission, it is an effort to bring to fruition the reform process that began in 2019 during the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government, styled the "National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education in Sri Lanka", followed by the "Reimagining Education in Sri Lanka" report by the Presidential Taskforce on Education appointed by Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2020, and further modified in the "National Education Policy Framework" in 2023 by Ranil Wickremesinghe's regime.

Pilot testing was carried out in selected schools in 2024, and detailed curriculum frameworks were presented in the "1st Interim Report Piloting of the Curriculum Transformation". The implementation phase which was to begin in 2025 was delayed due to the change in government late last year.

Framing the crisis in education as a 'mismatch' between education and employment has dominated the policy discourse ever since the infamous "Education Reforms Proposals" of 1981 presented by then Minister of Education, Ranil Wickremesinghe, and explicitly articulated as such for the first time in Sri Lanka (Manuratne 2017).

The entry of international financial institutions (IFIs) influencing the policy landscape further entrenched the view. The World Bank, since 1989, dominated the funding for reforming the education sector. Currently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provides a greater chunk of funding for education reform, including the most recent effort which began in 2020. The description of the ADB's "Secondary Education Sector Improvement Programme" (SESIP) project plainly states its aims as follows:

SESIP is design[ed] as results-based lending (RBL) program with a total funding of \$400 million.

The program aims to transform the secondary education system to align with the modern global economy by 2025 by enhancing the quality and relevance of secondary science, technology, mathematics and commerce programs; strengthening provincial and school capacity to implement education reforms; and strengthening sector management capacity. (Ministry of Education 2023)

The frameworks for education reform agendas driven by IFIs are set, not by education experts, but by economists who have guarded the roost since the turn in the global education policy field towards adopting ‘Human Capital Theory’. Although the theory has been debunked (Bowles and Gintis 1975), its influence has continued via IFIs in countries in the Global South. Specifically, the World Bank’s report in 2019 titled “Sri Lanka Human Capital Development: Realizing the Promise and Potential of Human Capital”, outlines an elaborate framework for the education sector within the human capital framework (Aturupane *et al.* 2021). Its rosy forecast of growth for Sri Lanka’s economy did not even contain a hint of the worst economic crisis to hit the country soon after. It is by such shortsighted policy thinkers that our education policies are being determined.

Agreements for the loans granted by multilateral agencies for the education sector typically have project cycles that run from 10 to 15 years, locking in successive governments into agendas they often eschewed during their tenure in the opposition.

The NPP government seems to be caught in a similar trap, of having to endorse education reforms that they rightly once shunned as fit only for the “dustbin” (The Life Traveler 2024). Exacerbating the problem this time around, is the NPP’s easy embrace of the tyranny of the “experts,” where the President made a case in parliament to leave education reforms to the experts (BBC News සිංහල 2025).

Does the NPP really want to go down in history as being the Trojan horse for the achievement of Ranil Wickremesinghe’s diabolical plan?

Squandered Opportunity

There is wide consensus that a comprehensive reform of the ailing free public education system is necessary. However, as with all reform processes, competing and contradictory interests exist in the public education system. A democratic government cannot circumvent this challenge. The role of the government should be to engage the public, be transparent about its own positions and their rationale, but be flexible to seek consensus through dialogue.

No government is better placed to do so than the NPP with its overwhelming majority in parliament and popularity among the masses. The expectation that the new government will initiate wide consultations and participation to develop a new vision and policy programme for the education sector has been shattered. The disappointment that the government resorted to stealthily pass off and implement the very reforms it opposed while in the opposition is palpable. Representatives of university students, teachers, and university teachers' unions have voiced their discontent over the government's proposed reforms as well as the process adopted. The opportunity to initiate a comprehensive education reform process that is longed for by the vast majority of Sri Lankans, that can change the trajectory of the free education system towards socially just outcomes, is being squandered.

20 August 2025

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Colonial Conquest of Africa

Since the 15th Century, European powers began to claim Africa's territory, in the name of the state or as private companies. However, interest in occupying sub-Saharan Africa was minimal until late the 19th Century. Up to then their few coastal settlements were to help navigation past the continent to South and South East Asia. Most of the territorial conquest was in the last quarter of the 19th Century amid intensified push by various European countries to colonize territory.

Colonial penetration of sub-Saharan Africa differed vastly from that in most of Asia and Latin America. Colonial expansion was late to penetrate Africa and capture of territories was unlike in Asia where the powers clashed initially to control trade locations and later to take territory. It was also unlike the settler colonialism of the Americas and the Caribbean.

Trading Posts to Colonies

Portugal was the first European power to set up trading posts. In 1415, it took control of a Mediterranean port in Ceuta, near what is Morocco and held it until 1668 when Spain took over. Portugal followed it with the capture of Madeira and Azores archipelagos to the north west of Africa in the Atlantic in the 1420s to 40s. Portuguese settlement in the Guinea region (now Guinea-Bissau) in the 15th Century comprised setting up coastal trading posts and later developing the area as the colony of Portuguese Guinea. In 1446 Portugal laid claim to the region of Guinea on the west African coast and colonized the Santiago island of Cape Verde in 1462. The city of Cidade Velha was established there, making it the first

permanent European settlement in the tropics. The archipelago became a crucial hub for Portugal's Atlantic slave trade.

In around 1470, the Portuguese arrived in the uninhabited islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, which served as bases for trade with the mainland. Portuguese colonization continued through the 15th and 16th Centuries to develop an economy based on sugar and later cocoa production, backed by policies assuring a cheap labour force for Portuguese settler farmers who relied heavily on the enslaved labour. São Tomé and Príncipe went under the Portuguese crown in 1573.

The São Jorge da Mina fortress was built in the Gold Coast region (now Ghana) of western Africa in 1482, and served as the regional center of Portuguese trade in gold and, later, slaves. The Portuguese also reached the Congo River in the same year. In 1497 Spain took control of Melilla, a port on the Mediterranean coast near Morocco.

Colonial conquest and territorial expansion, however, was slow even after the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch set up trading posts and settlements around them in the 16th and 17th Centuries. The first Portuguese colony on African mainland was in Luanda, Angola in 1576. It was an extension of the colony set up on Luanda Island in 1575. The coastal colony supported Brazil's labour needs and eventually became the largest source of slaves for the Americas. Over centuries, Portugal expanded its influence from coastal forts to controlling the interior, but its control was challenged by African kingdoms.

With Spanish expansion limited to the Americas by treaty, Portugal expanded trade in Asia. By around 1500 Portugal had trading posts on the coast of what is Mozambique. Having secured coastal areas, traders and prospectors moved inland, to set up trading posts and garrisons as in Sena and Tete. Mozambique also became a source of slaves for Brazil and Indian Ocean islands. Millions were captured and sold for forced labour, while the government encouraged Portuguese immigration.

Portuguese conquest of Zanzibar island began around 1500. A trading post was set up in 1503. Mombasa and Zanzibar served as stopover points on trade routes to Asia. Zanzibar was also used for slave and ivory trades. The Portuguese incorporated Zanzibar into their empire around 1503, and held fortified control until 1698, when they were ousted from Zanzibar by Omani Arabs backed by local rulers.

In 1593, the Portuguese set up a trading post in Mombasa, a thriving trading centre on the southern coast of today's Kenya. Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer was unwelcome when he visited it in 1498, and in 1505 the Portuguese burned down the city. Amid enduring resistance, the Portuguese could capture Mombasa only in 1593. They fortified it with Fort Jesus as their regional headquarters. their presence lasted until it went under Omani rule from 1698 to 1746. The Portuguese had a brief return during 1728–29, but Mombasa became a British protectorate and Omani rule returned under British patronage. The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman nominally annexed Mombasa in 1837, but relinquished it to the British East Africa Association (later the Imperial British East Africa Company) in 1887. It went under British rule in 1895 to become the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate and sea terminal of Uganda Railway, built using workers from British India, starting 1896.

Spain took advantage of its location to capture the Canary Islands and a few North African enclaves during the 15th and 16th Centuries.

The French established a trading post near the Senegal River in western Africa in 1638, and followed it with a fort in 1659 at the present Saint-Louis in Senegal. French presence in Senegal began with trade on the Senegal River in the 17th Century and the establishment of Saint-Louis in 1659. French presence expanded in the 19th Century, and Dakar was established as a French possession and the French built infrastructure such as the Dakar–Saint-Louis railway. Senegal, a core part of French West Africa, became its capital in 1902 before gaining independence in 1960

The Dutch East India Company founded the Cape settlement in 1652 on the southern tip of Africa, which grew into Cape Town and a resting station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ships to and from the East Indies. Dutch farmers settled in the region, and the colony grew to include farms. Dutch and other European settlers followed. The settlers displaced the indigenous Khoikhoi with whom they clashed over land and resources. A slave society emerged with forced labour brought from East Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar and the Dutch East Indies.

The Dutch settlers, their descendants, and European groups like the French Huguenots, founded what became the Afrikaner culture and language in South Africa. The British seized the Cape Colony in 1795. The Dutch regained control briefly before the British retook it in 1806.

Slave Trade

Historically, slavery existed in varying forms on all continents, and slave trade was one aspect of it. However, mass scale transport of slaves across an ocean to work in mines and plantations in another continent was a phenomenon unprecedented in scale and intensity of cruelty.

By the 1480s Portuguese ships had been transporting enslaved Africans to work as labourers on sugar plantations in the islands of Cape Verde and Madeira in eastern Atlantic. Although Spaniards took slaves to the Caribbean after 1502, the transatlantic slave trade was dominated until mid-17th Century by Portuguese merchants with bases in the Congo-Angola coastal region. The Dutch followed as the foremost slave traders, with English and French merchants controlling half the transatlantic slave trade in the 18th Century. The bulk of their human cargo was shipped from the region between the Senegal and Niger rivers. In 1713 Spain and Britain agreed to grant the latter a monopoly of supply of slaves to Spanish colonies. The South Sea Company, in which the British Queen Anne held over a fifth of the stock, had the supply contract.

In the 18th and 19th Centuries, ports existed exclusively for slave trade, along what was known as the Slave Coast comprising the section of the coast of the Gulf of Guinea from the Volta River in the west to Lagos, in modern Nigeria, or, alternatively, the Niger Delta in the east comprising the current republics of Togo, Benin, and Nigeria and then stretching from today's Senegal to Angola on the west coast of Africa. While the Germans, Danes, French, Portuguese, Spaniards and Swedes had access to stations in this region, Afro-British and Afro-Dutch enterprises dominated trade in enslaved people and in various commodities.

From the 16th to the 19th Century, 12 million or more Africans were taken to the Americas across the Atlantic in the slave trade, that comprised shipping of European arms, textiles, and wine to Africa, African slaves to the Americas, and American sugar and coffee to Europe.

Demand for slave labour rose with the rise of sugar plantations in the Caribbean and tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake region (Virginia and Maryland) in North America. The number of enslaved Africans taken to the Americas during the 18th Century is estimated at nearly three-fifths of the total transatlantic slave trade.

The Human Toll

In the early years of transatlantic slave trade, the Portuguese generally bought Africans enslaved during tribal wars. But as demand grew, they ventured into the interior of Africa to forcibly take captives. As slave trade grew, Europeans buyers waited on the coast to buy captives from Africans who brought them from the interior. The captives were taken to the coast, some marching as far as 500 km, typically chained in pairs at the ankle, and held in line by ropes around their necks. Between 10 and 15% of the captives are estimated to have died during transport.

The Atlantic passage, usually to Brazil or a Caribbean island, was brutal and hundreds of African slaves were packed tightly into tiers below decks

of the overcrowded slave ships with unsanitary conditions for a voyage of about 8 000 km lasting from a few weeks to several months.

Conditions on the ship were appalling. Men secured by leg irons were packed below deck. The cramped space forced to crouch or lie down. Heat was intolerable, and overcrowding forced oxygen levels down. For fear of insurrection, the slaves were allowed to go to the upper decks daily for a few hours. An estimated 15 to 25% of America bound slaves died aboard the ships. Women and children, kept separately, had a little more freedom of movement, but vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse by the crew, despite their monetary value as payment was only for slaves delivered alive. Death rates among European captains and crew matched those of the captives. Occasionally revolting captives have seized ships.

The effect of slave trade on Africa was devastating. Economic benefits for those engaged in it caused a climate of lawlessness and social violence. Depopulation by capture and fear of capture led to economic uncertainty even in agriculture in much of West Africa. Preference of enslavers for young men and women left behind a population mainly comprising the elderly, the disabled and other dependent people so that the economic health of communities suffered by the loss of its most productive section.

Ban on Slave Trade

Import of slaves faced public resistance during the American Revolution (1775–83) in North American colonies. But demand for slaves endured in the Southern states and it took until 1808 to legislate against import of slaves. Caribbean smugglers continued the trade, and it was in 1861, during the American Civil War, that the law was enforced in the South.

Settling former slaves in Africa was attempted in the 18th Century by the British at what is now Freetown, Sierra Leone on the western coast of Africa. Around 400 enslaved Black Britons accompanied by some English tradesmen arrived in 1787.

Slavery was outlawed in the British empire in 1833. Brazil followed suit in 1850, but smuggling of slaves went on until emancipation was enacted in 1888. The impact of slavery has, however, endured with segregation and racial humiliation practiced openly for most of the 20th Century. Colour prejudice still exists and finds expression even in public debates

Acceleration of Colonial Conquest

In mid to late 1800s, European explorers found deposits of diamonds and gold in Africa, and governments and businesses rushed for political and economic control over territory by setting up colonies and companies. By early 20th Century, Europeans controlled 90% of the African continent.

South Africa

The British began their occupation of the Dutch settlement at the Cape in 1795. The Treaty of Amiens of 1802 ordered the return of the settlement to the Dutch, but the British held on until 1803 and retook it in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1814 the Dutch formally ceded the Cape settlement to Britain, who ruled it as the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, also known as the Cape Colony, with full internal self-government as granted by the British crown in 1872.

From 1835 until into the 1840s, the Cape Colony Boers (descendants of Dutch, German, or Huguenot settlers) moved further inland in their 'Great Trek'. They clashed with indigenous peoples like the Ndebele and Zulu, as well as British colonialists. The Boer Republic of Natalia established by them in 1839 was annexed to the British settlement at nearby Port Natal in 1843. In 1852 the British and Boer settlers in the region of Transvaal on the north of the Vaal River guaranteed by treaty the Boer's right to self-government without British government interference. Boers soon formed the South African Republic. A similar agreement between the British and the Boer settlers in the region between the Orange and Vaal rivers in 1854 let the Boers form the Orange Free State. British efforts to take control of

Boer territory in Transvaal led to the First Boer War (December 1880 to March 1881). The victory of the Boers led to eventual independence of the South African Republic. But the British prevailed in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and brought the Boer republics under British administration.

The British annexed Basutoland (now Lesotho) in the southern interior in 1868 after Basuto's paramount chief sought British help in the face of years of warfare with the Boers of the Orange Free State. In 1885, Britain declared the Bechuanaland (modern Botswana) a protectorate. In 1897, nearly a decade after defeating the Zulu people in the Anglo-Zulu War, Britain incorporated Zululand into the Natal colony.

The South African economy transformed after the discovery of diamonds in 1867 along the banks of the Vaal River near present day Kimberley and of gold in 1884-85 in Witwatersrand and Transvaal. The Union of South Africa, founded in 1910 as a self-governing dominion within the British Empire, comprising the British colonies of Cape Colony and Natal, and the formed Boer republics of Transvaal, and Orange Free State.

Egypt and Sudan

In 1798, the French, under Napoleon Bonaparte, invaded Egypt ruled by the Mamluks as part of the Ottoman Empire. The British and Turks expelled the French in 1801. In 1805 the Albanian Ottoman commander Muhammad Ali established a dynasty that reigned until 1953, nominally as part of the Ottoman Empire. The Suez Canal was built during 1859–69 with more than half of the cost of construction financed by French investors. That and other infrastructural work nearly bankrupted the economy so that the British acquired Egypt's shares in the Canal in 1875.

Egypt, as a junior partner of Turkey directly controlled Sudan between 1820 and the Mahdist revolt in 1885. Egyptian rule was restored under an Anglo-Egyptian partnership following British conquest of the Mahdist State in 1899, until Sudanese independence in 1956.

Following violent anti-European riots in Alexandria in 1882, British forces occupied Egypt to protect the Suez Canal and British financial interests. Occupation ended in 1914 and Egypt was declared a British protectorate to spite the Ottoman Empire for siding with the Central Powers in WWI. Growing nationalism forced Britain to nominally end its protectorate and recognize independence of Kingdom of Egypt in 1922. But Britain retained much control over foreign relations, defence, and the Sudan. (King Farouk, deposed in 1952 by a military coup, abdicated in favour of his son Fuad who stepped down in 1953 on the founding of the Republic of Egypt. Negotiations ended British control in 1956.

North-West Africa

As the Ottoman Empire which expanded across North Africa and West Asia since the 16th Century began to weaken in the 19th Century, the region became vulnerable to European expansion. French conquest of Algeria began with the invasion of Algiers in 1830 that toppled the Regency of Algiers, a semi-independent Ottoman province. An estimated 825,000 indigenous Algerians were killed by 1875. Following completion of the conquest in 1903, hundreds of thousands of Europeans settled in Algeria. What was a French colony between 1830 and 1848 was made an integral part of France under the Constitution of French Second Republic from 1848 until independence in 1962 after the Algerian War (1954–1962), a liberation struggle fiercely resisted by European settlers.

The French, in order to expand influence beyond Algeria, established the French protectorate of Tunisia in 1881, through a swift military invasion despite Italian objections. Tunisian sovereignty was further undermined to benefit European settlers, mostly Italians.

Morocco became increasingly influenced by France and Spain in the 19th Century, and after a prolonged military campaign led to the Treaty of Fez in 1912, French and Spanish protectorates were established over most of the country. Although Morocco was nominally ruled by the Sultan, real

power was with the colonial administrators who controlled resources and infrastructure until Morocco regained independence in 1956. The protectorates lasted until they gained full independence in 1956, and French rule in North Africa ended with Algerian independence in 1962.

Italian Control in the North-East

Eritrea, colonized in 1890, was Italy's first major African acquisition. In 1905 Italy legitimized its colonial presence in what is now Somalia. Italy expanded into Libya by conquest in 1911. It invaded and annexed Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in 1935 to make Italian East Africa (Eritrea and Somalia).

Western Africa

The American Colonization Society, dedicated to moving former slaves and freeborn Blacks of America to Africa, obtained land in Monrovia, Liberia on the western coast of Africa in 1821. Settlement began in 1822 and Liberia declared independence in 1847.

The first British base on Africa's west coast was set up in 1816 at what is now Banjul at the mouth of the Gambia River. The British annexed Lagos (now in Nigeria) in 1861 on pretext of abolishing slave trade, and followed it by the declaration of the Gold Coast (Ghana) as a British colony in 1874.

British explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who explored the River Congo in Central Africa, undertook his next journey on behalf of Belgian King Leopold II's Association Internationale du Congo in 1879. Leopold set up the Congo Free State under his control, and with support from several Western countries, achieved international recognition for it in 1885.

German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck annexed Togo and Cameroon in western Africa and Angra Pequena (Lüderitz in Namibia) in southern Africa for Germany in 1884.

Carving Up Africa

As years of rivalry over trade, navigation, and administrative rights on and along the Congo River come to a head, twelve European countries, the International Congo Society (serving the interests of the Leopold II, King of Belgium) and the US met at the Berlin West Africa Conference (15th November 1884 to 26th February 1885) convened by German Chancellor Bismarck. The Conference enabled deals among European powers to carve up Africa without blood spill. Consensus was reached on keeping the Niger and Congo rivers as free waters, and a framework was drawn up to define and recognize any new occupation of African territory by European powers. Thus, Africa, excluding Ethiopia and Liberia, was divided among seven European powers (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the King of Belgium) at the start of WWI.

In 1886, the British and the Germans agreed a border for their East African territories. Territory to the north of the border comprising most of modern Kenya went to Britain, and Tanganyika (mainland Tanzania) on the south, secured by the German East Africa Company in 1885, went to Germany. A further deal over outstanding issues was made in 1890 whereby Germany accepted Britain's claim to the Sultanate of Zanzibar and Britain accepted German claims to Tanganyika (now mainland Tanzania), Rwanda and Burundi in return for transfer of the North Sea island of Helgoland from Britain to Germany. In 1891 the German government took over all territory seized by the German East Africa Company.

In eastern Africa, the British colonized Uganda from around 1860. Since then Britain acquired territory by the agency of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The Company consolidated control over the area in 1891 by a treaty with Buganda, then the principal kingdom of the region, and made it a protectorate in 1894, which expanded to include the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole, and Busoga.

In 1889, British financier Cecil Rhodes secured a charter with commercial and administrative rights for the British South Africa Company, which acquired territory in central Southern Africa. A provisional government for the Kingdom of Swaziland (now Eswatini) comprising Swazi representatives, Britain, and the South African Republic was founded in 1890. Power shifted to the South African Republic and then to Britain.

In 1890, Rhodes sent a “pioneer column” into Matabeleland and Mashonaland (now in Zimbabwe) to establish a colony that became Rhodesia, which expanded north of the River Zambezi to become three administrative units: Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) south of River Zambezi, North-Eastern Rhodesia and North-Western Rhodesia north of the river, which were merged in 1911 to form Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) under the administration of the British South Africa Company.

The Nyasaland Districts Protectorate, set up by Britain in 1891 and renamed British Central Africa Protectorate in 1893, is now Malawi.

In 1895, territory held in eastern Africa (modern Kenya) by the Imperial British East Africa Company was transferred to the British, to be administered as the East Africa Protectorate.

A standoff between British and French troops at Fashoda in **Egyptian Sudan** (now Kodok, South Sudan) in 1898 was settled by agreement in 1899 on borders of their spheres of influence. In the same year Britain and Egypt set up the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium to govern the Sudan.

In southern Africa, long-simmering tensions between Britain and the Boer republics (the South African Republic in Transvaal and the Orange Free State) led to the South African War (also known as the Second Boer War). The Boers lost the war fought from October 1899 to May 1902 in which they suffered utmost cruelty. The Boer republics were dissolved.

The seizure of African territory by Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium proceeded free of conflict among colonial powers. There were,

however, instances of strong local resistance, including the first crushing defeat of a European power by African forces in the colonial era when the army of Emperor Menilek II humiliated the Italian forces who tried to invade Ethiopia in 1896. But in 1889, Menilek II made a treaty with Italy, recognizing the Italian possessions along the Red Sea coast in the Horn of Africa, including the former Ethiopian province of Eritrea.

Portugal and Spain kept their old colonies, with Portugal retaining Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and Spain what is now Equatorial Guinea. At the Berlin Conference in 1885, Spain justified its colonial occupation of Western Sahara (now Moroccan-administered Western Sahara) by proclaiming a protectorate over the coastal Western Sahara, where acquisition began in 1884 through agreements with tribal leaders of the local nomadic peoples.

In northern Africa, France and Spain formally partitioned Morocco into their respective protectorates in 1912. Most of the country became the French protectorate and Spain controlled a northern zone along the Mediterranean and a southern strip bordering the Sahara. The city of Tangier, outside their arrangement, was administered internationally.

Italy's invasion of the Ottoman Empire's North African holdings (now in Libya) in the Italo-Turkish War ended in 1912, with the Ottomans ceding the provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to Italy.

King Leopold II became the sovereign of the newly constituted Congo Free State in Central Africa in 1885. However, following international outrage about King Leopold II's brutal regime in his private colony, he was forced in 1908 to transfer authority to the Belgian government, which administered it as Belgian Congo until independence in 1960.

In western Africa, the Royal Niger Company was authorized in 1886 to administer the Niger delta and the country on the banks of the Niger and Benue rivers (in modern Nigeria). Following consolidation of some British holdings in western Africa in 1899, Britain revoked the Company in 1900

and seized its holdings, adding them to existing British-held territory to proclaim the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria. In 1914 the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria were merged to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

British possessions in western African which were fewer than those of France comprised the Gambia from 1821, Sierra Leone from 1808, Gold Coast (later Ghana) from 1874, and Nigeria (including British Cameroons) acquired in stages since 1861.

Following the establishment of the Third Republic in 1871, France began its overseas expansion in Africa in 1879, starting with advancing inland from Dakar, their coastal trading outpost in Senegal. It declared a protectorate over Tunisia, expanded into the Congo Basin, and sent an army into the Sudan, creating the basis of an African empire that would encompass most of West and Northwest Africa, much of equatorial Africa, and the island of Madagascar.

In 1889, France and Britain agreed on boundaries for some of their colonial holdings in western Africa, setting the borders for modern Senegal and the Gambia.

France, having seized power in Dahomey (now Benin) by waging wars with the Kingdom of Dahomey between 1890 and 1894, proclaimed a protectorate over the Kingdom in 1892 and declared it a French colony. After making numerous treaties with local chiefs in the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) France declared it as its colony in 1893. French West Africa was made the administrative unit for its West African colonies in 1895. The Indian Ocean island of Madagascar was declared a colony in 1896.

In 1910, French Equatorial Africa became the administrative unit for the colonies of Ubangi-Shari-Chad (modern Central African Republic and Chad), Middle Congo (now Republic of the Congo), and Gabon.

WWI Redraws the Colonial Map

The First World War (July 1914 to November 1918) fought between the Central Powers and Allied Powers, affected African colonial possessions, particularly those of Germany which was the only colonial power among Central Powers while all other colonial powers in Africa fought as Allied Powers. Turkey, a Central Power partner, had by then no colonial possessions in Africa. Britain proclaimed a protectorate over Egypt in December 1914.

Following the victory of the Allied Powers it lost all influence in North Africa. Germany lost all of its colonial possessions in the process.

In western Africa, British and French troops seized and occupied the German colony of Togoland comprising Togo and part of Ghana) in 1914. This was followed by the invasion of German Kamerun by British, French and Belgian forces which took until 1916 to defeat Germany.

South Africa invaded German South West Africa in 1914 and German troops surrendered in 1915.

In East Africa, German forces defeated British forces that sought to invade German East Africa in Tanganyika in 1914, and it took until 1918 for the British to overcome German forces

In 1916 Belgian forces from Belgian Congo invaded and occupied Ruanda-Urundi (now Rwanda and Burundi) in German East Africa.

The League of Nations founded by the Paris Peace Conference (January 1919 to January 1920) decided on the colonial holdings of the Ottoman Empire and Germany, and implemented a mandate system where certain members of the Allied Powers were mandated to oversee administration on behalf of the League of Nations. In Africa, Allied countries seized the German colonies that they invaded and occupied during the war.

German South West Africa went under South Africa's administration as a Class C mandate (i.e. as an integral part of its own territory) in 1920.

The British got to administer German East Africa's main component Tanganyika, in 1922 as a Class B mandate (requiring oversight by mandatory powers, Britain, France and Belgium in this case).

The German colony of Kamerun went under British and French administration as a Class B mandate in 1922, with France overseeing most of the territory (now in Cameroon) and Britain overseeing two smaller portions (one now in Nigeria, the other in Cameroon).

The German colony of Togoland also went under British and French administration as a Class B mandate in 1922, with France overseeing most of the territory (which is now Togo) and Britain overseeing a smaller portion (that is now part of Ghana).

The German colony of Ruanda-Urundi was granted to Belgium as a Class B mandate in 1922 delayed until after Belgian Parliament ratified it in 1924 following accession of Belgium to the League of Nations in 1923.

Post-WWI Developments

In 1923, the British South Africa Company transferred control of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to Britain to become a self-governing British colony controlled by white settlers. **In 1924**, British South Africa Company transferred control of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to Britain.

In 1935, Italy launched the Italo-Ethiopian War by invading Ethiopia. The war ended in 1936 with Italian forces taking Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and Emperor Haile Selassie I went into exile. Ethiopia was merged with Eritrea and along with Italian Somaliland became Italian East Africa.

The Impact of WWII

World War II which began in September 1939 affected Italy's colonies in particular, as Italy fought on the side of the Axis powers against other colonial powers that were with the Allies. African soldiers were enlisted to fight in Africa and abroad. Italy once in the good books of the Allies and

at liberty to expand in northern and north-eastern Africa was expelled from its every possession the way Germany was during WWI.

In January **1941**, British forces invaded Italy's colony of Libya. Despite initial success, thanks to German intervention, territory changed hands throughout the conflict. At the end of the war, Libya's Cyrenaica and Tripolitania provinces went under British administration, and Fezzan under French administration. German and Italian forces entered Tunisia in late 1942 but were forced to surrender by May 1943.

Also, in January 1941, British forces began their successful invasions of Italian-held Eritrea and Italian Somaliland following and, Italian invasion of all of British Somaliland in the summer of 1940. British counter-attack in Spring 1941 drove deep into Italian East Africa comprising Ethiopia Eritrea and Somalia. In May 1941, Haile Selassie I returned to Addis Ababa to reclaim his throne and by November, Italian military resistance came to an end. However, some Italians persisted in guerrilla resistance until Italy surrendered to the Allies in September 1943.

The end of WWII in September 1945 did not end colonial rule, which went on with the blessings of the newly founded United Nations.

The functions on the League of Nations were transferred to the UN on its formal disbanding in 1946. Almost every mandate in Africa became a trust territory of the country that oversaw the former mandate and was monitored by the UN Trusteeship Council. South Africa, however, refused to allow UN authority over South West Africa.

In 1950 Italian Somaliland, which was under British administration since occupation in 1941, became a UN trust territory administered by Italy, whereas Eritrea, under British administration since 1941 was joined with Ethiopia in a federation in 1952.

Ending Colonial Rule

Freedom from colonial rule in Africa was slower to arrive than in Asia.

France, repeated its historic error of Indochina in Algeria, as its settler community resented transfer of power to the natives. Algeria freed itself in 1962 after a bloody revolutionary war. However, France, which jointly with Britain seized Libya from Italy in 1943, freed it in 1951, and declared Morocco and Tunisia independent in 1956, Guinea in 1958 and all its African colonies in 1960, but for three of four islands of the Comoros to the east of Africa, which were released in 1975. Based on a referendum in 1974, France still holds to Mayotte as an overseas territory.

France also found ways to prolong economic and political control. The CFA franc created in 1945 was pegged to the French franc (and now to the euro). Six member states from Central Africa operate under the Bank of Central African States and eight of Western Africa under the Central Bank of West African States use the CFA franc by agreement. France has used the CFA all along to undermine monetary sovereignty of member states and hinder economic growth.

Despite the pegging of CFA franc with the French franc and euro in anticipation of reliable export markets, African member states remain economically backward. They have for decades been sources of primary products and mineral sources for France.

Territories under British mandate had gained independence since 1951, while colonies took longer. Ghana in 1957 became the first colony to win independence. The Suez crisis of 1957, in which Egypt humiliated Britain, France and Israel, accelerated the independence process so that most British colonies won independence between 1960 and 1968.

British settlers in Kenya, South Africa and Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) resented transfer of power to Africans and resisted independence. In Kenya the bloody Mau Mau rebellion (1952–1960) cost Britain heavily to

continue colonial rule. A deal was made with the conservative nationalist Jomo Kenyatta, who soon pursued a pro-Western policy.

White racist rulers held power in South Africa, which was granted Dominion status in 1910 and independence in 1931. Blacks, Coloureds and Indians were denied the right to elect government. After declaring a republic in 1961, South Africa legitimized racist segregation by making apartheid (separate development) a state policy legalizing racial discrimination. Decades of mass struggle and international sanctions ended apartheid, despite imperialist help for the regime to cheat on sanctions. Formal democracy in 1994 too was a compromise with White capitalists and international capital.

Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) exposed the racism of the British government. When the White minority regime of Ian Smith declared unilateral independence of Rhodesia in 1965, Britain ducked responsibility by not dismissing the Smith government and enabling transfer of power to the natives. Whatever pressure on the racist regime was half hearted and undermined by the apartheid regime in South African. It cost 15 years of civil war to dislodge the illegal government. Power transfer to the true leaders was delayed by shady power transfer deals. The Lancaster House Agreement of December 1979 paving the way for democratic election carried it with conditions ensuring the land rights of White settlers. The West has punished Zimbabwe politically and economically since for steps to make the native people the owners of what was their land.

Italy, unlike Germany, was forgiven in the post WWII era and allowed control Somalia under UN Trusteeship, shared with Britain until 1960.

Belgium freed its colonies only in 1960. Freeing **Rwanda and Burundi**, (colonies which it captured from Germany in 1916 and formally awarded trusteeship by the League of Nations in 1924 and the UN in 1946) was easier than losing the Congo which it had plundered since **1869**. In its desire for control over the mineral rich Congo, it left Congo educationally

backward and with poor infrastructure. Belgium had a hand in the assassination of the elected Prime Minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba in 1961 as did the entire West, which later meddled in the Congo to keep it under corrupt dictators loyal to it, most notorious of them being Joseph Mobutu.

Portugal was reluctant to part with its colonies. Liberation struggles in Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique led to independence for Guinea Bissau in 1973 before the fall of Portugal's rightist dictatorship and Angola and Mozambique in 1974 after the fall. Angola also suffered the agony of a civil war as rival liberation movements clashed with each other and South Africa meddled in the conflict.

Spain held Spanish Sahara (now West Sahara) until it withdrew in 1975 amid international pressure. Invasion by Morocco and Mauritania in 1976 led to armed conflict with the indigenous Sahrawi people, led by the Polisario Front fighting for an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Mauritania retreated in 1979. War with Morocco ended after a UN brokered ceasefire in 1991. But Morocco still occupies two-thirds of the territory, and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic controls the rest.

South Africa held on to South West Africa (now Namibia) which it governed between 1920 and 1990 under a League of nations mandate that continued under the UN. SWAPO founded in 1960 led the resistance to South African rule. A long-running armed struggle gathered momentum leading to a peace agreement in 1988 and with independence in 1990.

Decolonization in Africa did not, however, mean economic independence of the former colonies. Africa, which relies on export of raw materials and primary products for economic survival, was as a whole, denied industrial and infrastructural development throughout the colonial era and keeping Africa backward has helped the imperialist purpose of retaining Africa as a source of minerals and other raw materials. This pattern had persisted throughout the 20th Century.

Colonial to Neocolonial Control

Neo-colonialism refers to the retaining of the contents of colonial rule even after its formal ending. The term initially addressed the postcolonial relationship between European colonial powers and their former colonies and is now used in a wider sense to refer to unequal political and economic relations between two countries where a powerful country economically and politically dominates over the other by using the rules of imperialist global order.

Freedom from colonial rule in Africa came with a heavy price tag. Colonial African economies had been cemented with those of their masters during the long colonial rule under which the economies of the colonies defined their role as the suppliers of minerals and agricultural products to their colonial masters and their partners.

The emergence of neo-colonialism was recognized through experience in former colonies. Africa recognized it before Asia where colonies had won independence a decade earlier than in Africa.

Nkrumah coined the term neo-colonialism when he was president of Ghana, based on his study of the African experience. The term was widely accepted by the All African People's Conferences (AAPC) in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and was further researched and explored in detail by anti-imperialist theoreticians such as Franz Fanon and Samir Amin. Notably, Mao Zedong endorsed in the title "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism" of his comment in 1963 critical of Soviet moves to placate US imperialism amid anti-colonial revolutionary armed struggles.

The Colonial Heritage

Neo-colonialism arrived in its present form in the 1960s as colonialism faded out. Colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa had a seemingly endless

source of industrial raw materials. While neo-colonialism encouraged Asia to industrialize slowly to serve its interests, it denied industrialization to sub-Saharan Africa, except for chosen sectors in South Africa. Imperialist attitudes need to be seen in the context of racial and colour prejudices, built on centuries of slave trade and slavery. Notably, legal segregation by colour in the US came before apartheid in South Africa and Nazi ideology.

France cunningly implemented a transition of its colonies to neo-colonies using the concept of “*Françafrique*” thereby identifying itself as a home to freedom and human rights and a friend of Africa. African partners helped in creating bonds that ensured French domination in Africa. France took advantage of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of African countries to impose French as the sole official language in ten African countries and a shared or semi-official language in ten others.

France transformed fifteen African countries into its neo-colonies. Control over strategic resources was to France a higher priority than trade in Africa, as the latter possessed most of its strategic metals (all uranium ore, 90% of bauxite and 76% of manganese ore and 59% of cobalt ore). State-owned Elf got 70% of its petroleum from Africa. Seven of nine West African Francophone states used the CFA Franc, pegged to the Euro.

French interventionism was backed by the West throughout the Cold War. France had free rein to intervene in its African sphere, and intervened militarily to protect French nationals, prevent coups, crush rebellions, restore order or back chosen African leaders in fifteen African countries between 1967 and 2011. Until recently, it was France that decided who was in office in much of Francophone Africa by means similar to what the US used in Latin America even in the post WWII years.

But things began to change since 2020. Popular military coups ousted pro-French regimes in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. Efforts of France and the pro-Western ECOWAS alliance to intimidate the coup government of Niger had backfired to persuade Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to sign a

mutual defence pact to collaborate against external threats, and leave the five-member military alliance G5 Sahel, designed to fight Islamist rebels. The three countries have also put the 15-member ECOWAS alliance in a quandary by announcing plans to quit. While coup in Gabon in 2023 did not hurt ties with France, Senegal in 2024, pulled out of its political crisis to elect a new president Bassirou Faye who has asserted Senegal's will to be rid of French domination. France, although being ousted from many of its former colonies, is likely to its bases in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Gabon, Djibouti and Chad for some time.

Britain, even in the neo-colonial era, uses a colonial approach to keep its grip on agricultural production in former colonies. A bond of economic dependence had evolved where former colonies depended on the purchase of their crops by Western capitalists for the subsistence of their people. To sustain the agricultural commodity economy built under colonial rule a neo-colony has to maintain a steady supply of produce to imperial powers despite depreciating returns caused by their weak bargaining power. Britain upheld the imbalance in bargaining power by ensuring that world market prices of primary agricultural goods held low or slid down while prices of industrial goods, mainly those using advanced technology, rose. Former colonies remained victims of the whims of the monopolists. Even after ownership of plantations was restored to a former colony, agency houses intervened to collect large commissions and freight charges.

The industrial backwardness of former African colonies was no accident, and persists, unlike in Asia where countries like India strictly controlled the import a variety of goods in order to encourage their local production. Yet it took decades to be globally competitive. Even now, products like motor vehicles, made under foreign licence or in partnership, incur large fees as licence and royalty.

Britain's equivalent of the *Françafrique* was the enlarged British Commonwealth of 1926, renamed the Commonwealth of Nations in 1949 to include all former colonies but republics, which were later accepted as

several member states sought to become republics. Since 1995 even states that were not British colonies were enrolled. The Commonwealth lost out to rising US global dominance and is now a residual colonial institution with links enduring in sectors like the legal and parliamentary systems.

English was ahead of French as a link language or even official language in former colonies; and British cultural influence held strong among the elite. Of the colonies. However, the US soon usurped these benefits to assert its place as the prime global economic, commercial and technological force. Now even British English is being supplanted by American English as the global standard for English. Linguistic challenges of French in international affairs and Russian and German in science and technology too receded as the US became the preeminent capitalist super power.

Former colonies of Portugal retain Portuguese cultural influence, but the rise of US imperialism has weakened the political and economic influence of Portugal which is no more an economic power.

The few former colonies and semi-colonies grew into moderately strong capitalist economies did not grow into imperialist powers, while the limited sovereignty of neo-colonies as a whole further shrank after the fall of the Soviet Union

Despite different manifestations of neo-colonialism, its control over neo-colonies is essentially economic or monetary, with economic penetration assisted by aid programmes and trade agreements besides subversion of regimes or even armed intervention.

While colonial rule curbed economic growth of the colonies and impeded competition, neo-colonialism converted some former colonies into sources of cheap labour. Greed for profit made imperialist capital outsource labour intensive manufacturing to poorer countries. That, rather than help poor countries economically, made them sweatshops for foreign capital. Meantime, soaring debt and weakening economy bonded the neo-colony with imperialism more closely. Imposed consumerism made the neo-

colonies dumping grounds for non-essential goods. Price fixing of primary goods, and imperialist control over financing of development projects hurt balance of payments and aggravated the debt burden.

Socio-cultural control continued to condition society through the urban elite. The entertainment industry, mass media and now the Internet thrust imperialist values on the Third World. Meantime, sectarian identity politics is promoted by agents of imperialism to divide the people.

Above all, economic control needs political control, and imperialism has a network of subversive forces such as aid agencies and NGOs to do its dirty work of stirring civil unrest to destabilise disobedient governments.

Dependence on Export of Raw Materials

Africa holds 30% of all mineral reserves of the world, including the bulk important minerals like 98% of the world's chromium, 90% of cobalt, 90% of platinum, 70% of coltan, 70% of tantalite, 64% of manganese, 50% of gold, and 33% of its uranium, besides a significant share minerals such as bauxite, diamonds, tantalum, tungsten, and tin. It also has 12% of world's known oil reserves and 8% of natural gas, besides 65% of the arable land.

In 2012, the UN estimated that natural resources accounted for 77% of total exports and 42% of total government revenue in Africa. Reliance on export of raw materials made African countries rely on foreign capital. This dependency, created under colonial rule, was mainly based on the extraction of minerals and cultivation of crops for sale to the countries of their rulers under colonial concessions. This mechanism is still upheld by post-colonial elites, who derive rents from it. African states have thus been reduced to reliance on revenue from the export of raw materials, aid programmes from Western governments, and institutional aid.

Dependency helps foreign governments with a permanent interest in Africa to manipulate African governments by using the natural resources as security to receive aid with little regard for how the aid serves the

country. Terms of the aid leech countries of revenue that could be used to diversify the economy, build infrastructure, and uplift standard of living. Economic dependency narrows political options and make governments increasingly subordinate to foreign interests, and weaken political will to resist foreign military presence in the form of foreign bases and allowing foreign armed forces to use the country in intervention elsewhere.

It is not for lack of awareness on the part of African states that imperialist domination is allowed to continue. Various pan-African platforms have emerged in the past several decades to rectify this dependency, and urge the need to break the reliance on raw material exports, greater control over contracts signed with multinational companies, and use export earnings to improve quality of social life, but have failed to realize.

Failure to harness resources to deliver people-centred development has led to social conflict, including insurgencies refracted along ethnic and religious lines, and to migration within Africa and to Europe. They make pretexts for the US and France to establish military bases in Africa.

Neo-colonial Methods and Means

Neo-colonialism uses passive methods to keep neo-colonies in line and resort to aggression, occupation, domination, interference and hegemony when seemingly passive methods fail.

Economic control comprises exploitation of market and cheap labour by private sector investment, manipulated exchange value for traded goods, economic 'aid' and grants with harsh conditions, credit at high interest rates, and dumping of surplus produce. It also involves sustaining technological disparity to make neo-colonies rely on foreign investment for industrial development by limiting transfer of technology to prevent neo-colonial products getting competitive. African countries are denied independent choice by conditions attached to development assistance and debt relief programmes.

Social control operates through domination of mass media, curricula designed and monitored by imperialism, creation of an alienated elite through systems of rewards, and propaganda to promote neo-colonial socio-political values. Control of mass media is also prevalent even in the imperialist countries to keep their populations disinformed if not uninformed on global issues.

Cultural control in neo-colonies is an extension of the colonial legacy of subversion of native languages, cultural and ethical values and directing education to conform to neo-colonial norms.

Political control combines strategies like meddling in internal affairs, inducing political instability through subversive agencies, regime change, creation of client states, creation of subordinate military alliances and military bases, placing members. Interestingly, the recent pattern of coups in West and Central Africa have taken a different pattern. In contrast to the regime changes imposed by the West that led to client states in Libya, Iraq and now Syria, the popular coups have not created client states but instead states daring against the neo-colonial order.

New Challenges

Military foothold. The US gained foothold in Africa at the expense of former colonial powers. It too viewed Africa as a mere source of minerals, denied it development and forced Africa into deeper debt.

Of late, many African countries, aware of their plight under neo-colonial domination have sought trade and development partnerships outside the imperialist West. Most notable is the rise in influence of China not only in trade but also infrastructural and industrial development.

The US set up the AFRICOM as a strong African military footprint. But unlike similar US military commands its headquarters are outside Africa, in Stuttgart, Germany. The US has fewer bases in Africa than elsewhere as the African continent itself does not have many foreign military bases. The

US has proper military bases in Djibouti. Kenya, Niger, Senegal and Uganda besides formal and informal defence facilities including small, secretive, inaccessible facilities called lilypads with limited numbers of troops, basic amenities, and weaponry and supplies as appropriate.

The US military footprint on Africa exceeds that of any other non-African country and its military presence and activities aim to defend US interests in Africa and challenge competition to its control of resources and markets. The core task of the US military in Africa was initially to be, jointly with its allies in the NATO, be the guarantor of Western corporate interests and defender of capitalism against the communist threat. This role increased in importance with the rise in reliance of Western industries on primary materials that come from Africa. The visible purpose was to maintain unimpeded shipping of goods through established channels.

The rise of China as a manufacturing and trading power allowed China to outbid the West as well as overcome US pressure and become by far the biggest trade partner of Africa. It is bound to further expand in both trade and investment through its B&R initiative and the growing clout of BRICS. The US not only faces the challenge of China but also that of Russia as a force strengthening the defiance of the West by African countries.

US military involvement in Africa has been justified based on protecting US interests at the time when the US had very little investment in Africa, except perhaps South Africa. It subverted the independence of Congo in 1960. The communist threat was the pretext for US meddling in Africa, while the purpose was to safeguard the economic interests of former colonial masters and potential investors. The US stepped up its military presence, partly in partnership with France which had a strong presence in what it called Francophone Africa, after the Cold War formally ended in 1991. Since then, the US has increasingly involved itself in African civil wars on one pretext or the other, with Islamic militancy, especially that of ISIS and al-Qaeda, and indulged in regime changes.

After its military engagement in Somalia failed, it made Ethiopia its proxy. Its meddling in Sudan facilitated secession and destabilized Sudan. Most tragic has been its role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since it overthrew Lumumba. The US has used its financial and military muscle to create and sustain a pro-Western state against popular resistance. The US had full control over DRC for the duration of its client Mobutu in power, and even after his fall in 1997, enabled by the US. The DRC is in internal conflict to this date, thanks to the US using Uganda and Rwanda as proxies and its more direct role since 2010 through AFRICOM after it saw China securing a foothold in trade with the DRC.

With US interests in Congo linked to access to critical minerals, even the recent US brokered fragile 'peace deal' between Congo and Rwanda after decades of US training and backing of foreign armies and rebel forces came after Rwanda and its proxy M23 increased their territorial control in eastern DRC. The deal serving US mining interests rewards Rwanda for decades of pillaging Congo's mineral resources

Notably DRC President Félix Tshisekedi recently proposed a deal with the US for support to combat the M23 rebel group in exchange for mining opportunities. The US, in this context, also signed an MoU with the DRC and Zambia to develop a supply chain for electric vehicle batteries.

Migration and Military Bases. Arguments of conflict prevention and migration management are used to justify military expansion and interference. But the real reason is that the military presence is to defend the economic interests of the West.

Migration became a pretext for military intervention in the Sahel, after Libya was destabilized following the elimination of Gaddafi. Until then Libya helped in restricting migration to Europe across its territory. In February 2014, France created the G5 Sahel Initiative comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. But, following military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the G5 wound up in December 2023. In

August 2024, the new government of Niger ordered the closure of the large drone base built between 2016 and 2019 by the US in Agadez in Niger to provide aerial surveillance of migration in the region.

IMF-driven austerity programmes compounded the failure of African states to use export earnings to improve quality of life of the people and defend economic autonomy. Failing economies and social conflict led to a flood of migrants. A good part of those displaced by violence sought to migrate to Europe, while others relocated within the continent.

The New Cold War

The Chinese Threat. By 2006, the US realized China's potential to militarily stand up to it with modern military technologies. Although China's military capacity is mainly defensive and China has pledged that it will never seek global hegemony, the US projects China as a military threat to justify blocking China's rise as a commercial and political force.

The China-Africa Cooperation Forum comprising China and forty-four African was initiated in 2000. Now 53 of the 55 African countries have relations with China, and all but Eswatini (former Swaziland) accept the People's Republic as the sole legitimate government of China.

China's role in infrastructural development has been enhanced by the Belt and Road Initiative and by Chinese aid, which unlike IMF aid, Western development assistance, is free of debilitating conditionalities.

Rather than develop humane development aid policies to benefit the African people and thereby wean Africa away from China, the US has opened up a 'new cold war' against China in Africa. Besides initiating AFRICOM in 2007, the US and allies have expanded military bases in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere are part that Cold War.

This New Cold War counts on an information war that portrays China's role in Africa as China's new 'colonialism' comprising debt trap

diplomacy to coerce countries into handing over their resources at low prices. Such claims although proven false are still repeated by Western media as part of their disinformation campaign.

US and allies also accuse China of building up its military presence in Africa. In fact, China founded its only overseas military base in Djibouti, which also houses US, French and other military bases, as part of anti-piracy manoeuvres in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1816 (2008), asking UN member states to provide the transitional government in Somalia with 'all necessary means to repress acts of piracy and armed robbery'.

AFRICOM commander General Townsend in 2021 made a groundless claim that China was planning to expand naval capacity along the west coast of Africa. In fact, China's African military presence is negligible before the Western military footprint. Interestingly, in the militarised region of the Horn of Africa, the Chinese government financed the \$4 billion Ethiopia–Djibouti electric railway project, and the China Export-Import Bank provide over \$300 million to finance a potable water pipeline from Ethiopia to Djibouti. What is important about Chinese involvement in infrastructure-led economic development in Africa is that it contrasts with Western military activities of gendarme functions and armaments.

The Russian Threat. Russian military presence in Africa dwindled after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was rebuilt as the state-controlled Africa Corps in 2023, by absorbing the remnants of the disbanded Wagner Group. Russia plays an advisory role and supports military training for local forces and defence of key infrastructure, mainly in the Sahel states of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the Central African Republic and Libya. It has military-technical cooperation agreements with over 40 African countries.

The Russian purpose includes access to valuable natural resources such as gold and diamonds as well as curtailing Western influence in the region,

especially French. Russia's efforts to establish a strategic foothold in Africa against the West needs to be seen in the context of US and NATO driven efforts to isolate Russia since early this century.

The Changing Scenario

Economy. Even in this Century, the US and its allies see in Africa only an abundance of industrial minerals, secured for them by compliant heads of state. They wanton neglect of industrial development of Sub-Saharan Africa, made Africa as a whole lag in economic growth, but for South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Morocco and a few others.

Chinese economic support without strings appealed to African countries as it offered technology transfer and infrastructure building unlike demands of the West for stronger governance and an investor-friendly environment. The West charges that China's non-interference would prop up corrupt regimes, forgetting that it was with the blessings of the West that the likes of Mobutu of Congo, Bongo of Gabon, Eyadema of Togo, Abacha of Nigeria, Mubarak of Egypt and Ben Ali of Tunisia thrived for decades.

Chinese investment in manufacturing is mainly market driven, and covers textiles, processed leather, building materials, metal smelting and mineral processing among others. Prominent among infrastructural investment is the development of railway. The Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway in Ethiopia and the Mombasa–Nairobi in Kenya also mark the transition from the narrow-gauge railway of the colonial era to modern standard-gauge. This, besides enhancing trade and industrial development capacity, also points to railway connectivity for the whole of East Africa. If Chinese initiatives could only persuade the West to help industrialize and modernize Africa in an inclusive way even to wean Africa away from China, it will be a welcome change.

Military Presence. Western military dominance faces setbacks in Africa, with changes in government by coup d'état in former French colonies where France, besides its economic dominance, maintained a military role in its

former colonies for decades using various agreements. French presence comprised enduring bases established by agreement in the 1960s and 1970s, and a more focused counterterrorism push beginning in 2013 with Operation Serval to overcome Islamist rebels in Mali, which expanded in 2014 into Operation Barkhane involving the armed forces of G5 Sahel countries. France failed to overcome the Islamist rebels and was asked to leave Mali.

French troops have also been asked to leave Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad, and withdrawals have been announced in Senegal and Ivory Coast, marking a significant reduction in France's military presence. The remaining French bases are in Djibouti, which could last for some time in the context of instability in the North east of Africa and in Gabon as a shared training facility but the likelihood is that the French presence will decline in keeping with regional trends.

The armed forces of the US in Africa arrived in the neo-colonial era and mostly in the context of 'counterterrorism'. Of the five countries in which US established bases, Djibouti has the most significant, Camp Lemonnier, founded in 2002 and has the declared role of counterterrorism and counter-piracy operations in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. In Kenya, US operates from Manda Bay, a coastal location developed as an airfield in 2006 to expand personnel, aircraft, and mission capability. It had been overrun by the al-Shabab militants of Somalia in 2020 in response to the military role of the US in Somalia. It continues operations in collaboration with Kenya. Niger has asked the US in 2024 to leave its bases in Niger in the wake of its order to French forces to leave.

In Egypt, US forces are stationed in the Sinai Peninsula and contribute troops to the Multinational Force & Observers created to enforce the 1979 Israel–Egypt peace treaty.

In Cameroon, US troops are stationed in the Contingency Location Garoua, to counter violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin and support Cameroonian defence forces with training, surveillance, and intelligence

sharing, as part of broader US engagement against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

The faith of African countries in the West as a force to defend them against Islamist terrorism and local insurgencies is fading so that prospects are weak for the US to expand its footprint in Africa through AFRICOM.

Seeing China as its main challenge in Africa, the US is desperate to develop strategies to counter China's economic and political influence. The rapid decline of France as a major neo-colonial force does not auger well for the US as Russia has stepped in to defend countries breaking free from their former colonial master from attacks from France and its partner, the US.

A Concluding Note

African people are growing aware of the detrimental role of imperialism in Africa. But leaders of most African countries remain spineless to stand up to imperialist domination, unlike the remarkable exceptions in the 1960 and 70s. But there is welcome change in attitude in former French colonies. Sustaining this trend relies entirely on the African masses of the rest of Africa.

African anti-imperialism has some way to go in mobilizing Africa against neo-colonialism. The anti-capitalist spirit of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist leaders of the era of anti-colonial struggle of the 1960s and 70s needs revived. It is nevertheless the bounden duty of all left forces of the world to support the rising spirit of pan-Africanism as part of the anti-imperialist campaign.

There are lessons for all left and revolutionary forces to learn from the actions of the dogmatic left in this century whose hostility towards the governments of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Ecuador among others only helped US imperialism and its lackeys in Latin America, and reverse some of the gains of the Left in South America

Palestinian Resistance: Our People's Steadfastness Forced a 'Partial Achievement'

Joint Statement of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (the Three Powers)

O our noble Palestinian people:

In light of the announcement of the first phase of the agreement to stop and end the war of genocide and the marathon negotiations that the factions undertook to reach this national achievement, the three powers extend a salute of honour and reverence to the masses of our great people, especially our people in the Gaza Strip, who faced the most heinous Zionist crimes with legendary steadfastness and resolve.

We also salute all the martyrs and prisoners, their families, the families of the missing and every child, girl, mother, young man, elder and displaced person who stood firm on their land despite the tragedies, genocide, starvation, massacres, the suffering of displacement and the agonies of living amidst the destruction of the basics of daily life. We affirm that their steadfastness is a living symbol of our people's will and unbreakable determination and proof that their will is stronger than any Zionist machine of destruction.

The resilience of the resistance fighters and all our people — including medical, ambulance and civil defence crews, journalists, the displaced and others — has thwarted the plans for displacement and uprooting and has recorded an immortal lesson in steadfastness and defiance that will remain

engraved on the brightest pages of Palestinian history. The awe-inspiring scenes of our displaced people returning to Gaza City and the massive gatherings in its streets, camps and destroyed alleys are but an embodiment of the will of a people who reject forced migration and insist on returning and living on their land despite the immense destruction.

We also praise the heroism of the resistance, which stood tall and proud amidst the rubble, withstood the destructive machine of the occupation, broke the enemy's morale and inflicted heavy losses upon it through its specific operations. This confirms that the will of our people and the heroes of the resistance are stronger than all attempts at oppression and destruction and that the enemy, for over two years, could not break the steadfastness and will of this resistance, despite all the weapons and the massive, lethal war machine it possesses.

The three powers also extend a salute of pride and honour to the support fronts in Yemen, Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, who stood by our people and their resistance and offered martyrs on the path to Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa.

The three powers also express their deep appreciation for the tremendous efforts made by the brotherly mediators (Egypt, Qatar, Turkey) and all who supported this path, calling on the American side and all mediators to continue applying pressure to ensure the occupation's commitment to all clauses of the agreement and to prevent any deviation from them in the slightest.

We highly value the unprecedented global solidarity movement that stood by our people, raising its voice to reject the genocide and to prosecute the occupation's crimes. We affirm that the solidarity of free peoples with Palestine and Gaza is a powerful message that our people's cause is a global political and humanitarian issue. This global support represents a significant moral boost for our resisting people and confirms that the

occupation is a rogue entity that has become isolated and besieged, a state which must be increased and escalated.

A Partial Achievement in Ending the Suffering

The powers clarify that, despite the occupation's persistent attempts to derail the negotiation process and obstruct the agreement and Netanyahu's efforts to prolong the war and quash any chance to stop the aggression, the Palestinian negotiating delegation kept the demands of our people to stop the war of genocide at the forefront of its concerns. It has so far reached an agreement to implement the first phase of this path, which is a fundamental step toward our people's urgent demand: the final cessation of the criminal war, an end to the aggression on Gaza, the withdrawal of the occupation and the lifting of the siege.

What we have achieved represents a political and security failure for the occupation's plans and a shattering of its goals to impose displacement and uprooting. It is a partial achievement in ending the suffering of our people and freeing hundreds of our heroic female and male prisoners from the occupation's jails, in a step that expresses the strength of the resistance, the unity of the national position, and our people's insistence on achieving their freedom and dignity.

When we engaged in this negotiation process amidst a war of genocide, our eyes were fixed on the suffering of our people, who are facing unprecedented horrors of killing, destruction, genocide and starvation. We acted with the highest sense of national responsibility, despite the level of bias in favour of the occupier, in order to open a new horizon for life in Gaza and for our steadfast people rooted there. The negotiation path and the mechanism for implementing the agreement still require high national vigilance and precise, around-the-clock follow-up to ensure the success of this phase. We will continue to work with high responsibility with the mediators to ensure the occupation is bound to what protects our people's rights and ends their suffering.

We have made great and strenuous efforts to release all female and male prisoners and the leaders of the national prisoners' movement. However, the occupation, as is its habit, thwarted the release of a significant number of them.

Despite this, we chose to proceed with implementing the agreement to ensure the halt of the war of genocide against our people and to prevent the enemy from continuing its collective extermination. We pledge to our people and the families of the prisoners that the issue of freeing all of them will remain at the top of our national priorities, and we will never abandon them. We also congratulate our people on the freedom of this blessed group of our prisoners and heroes.

We Affirm Continuing the Resistance in All its Forms'

Our steadfast people, this stage represents an opportunity to enhance social solidarity within the Gaza Strip by supporting affected families, securing the necessities of daily life and activating frameworks of cooperation between factions, society and relevant local and international institutions, creating a resilient and unified environment capable of facing all challenges and preserving our people's steadfastness.

We renew the call for unity and national responsibility, to embark on a unified national political path with all powers and factions. We are working in cooperation with gracious Egyptian efforts to hold an urgent and comprehensive national meeting for the next step after the ceasefire to unify the Palestinian position, formulate a comprehensive national strategy and rebuild our national institutions on the foundations of partnership, credibility and transparency.

We also stress our categorical rejection of any foreign guardianship and affirm that determining the form of governance for the Gaza Strip and the foundations of its institutions' work is an internal Palestinian matter to be jointly decided by the national components of our people. We are prepared to benefit from Arab and international participation in the areas of

reconstruction, recovery and development support, in a way that promotes a dignified life for our people and preserves their rights to their land.

In conclusion, at this decisive historical moment, we renew our loyalty to the martyrs, prisoners, wounded and resistance fighters. We affirm our unwavering adherence to our people's rights to their land, homeland, holy sites and dignity and our insistence on continuing the resistance in all its forms until all our rights are achieved, foremost among them the removal of the occupation, self-determination and the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent state with Al-Quds as its capital.

Posted by Resistance News Network on 10th October 2025.

<https://t.me/PalestineResist/82612>

The decline of capitalism might open the way for a long transition toward socialism, but it might equally well put humanity on the road to generalized barbarism. The ongoing US project of military control over the planet by its armed forces, supported by their NATO lieutenants, the erosion of democracy in the imperialist core countries, and the medievalist rejection of democracy within Southern countries in revolt (taking the form of 'fundamentalist' semi-religious delusions disseminated by political Islam, political Hinduism, political Buddhism) all work together toward that dreadful outcome. At the current time the struggle for secularist democratization is crucial for the perspective of popular emancipation, crucial for opposition to the perspective of generalized barbarism.

Samir Amin, An Arab Springtime? August 25, 2011

<https://monthlyreview.org/articles/an-arab-springtime/>

October 7th

Anniversary of the US and NATO Military Invasion of Afghanistan

*A Marxist-Leninist Comment on Afghanistan today by Left
Radical of Afghanistan (LRA)*

October 7, 2001, marks the beginning of the bloody military invasion of Afghanistan by the United States and its NATO allies under the pretext of a "war on terrorism". This date symbolizes the start of two decades of occupation, devastation, massacre, and plunder of a nation that had previously, during the Cold War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, already fallen victim to the strategic goals and interests of the US and the West through the creation, funding, and arming of fundamentalist Islamic parties and Al-Qaeda. The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the USA and its allies was not a "counter-terrorism operation", but a manifestation of the bloodthirsty, hegemonic, and exploitative nature of modern-day imperialism.

The United States invaded Afghanistan with false claims of fighting terrorism, establishing democracy, and restoring women's rights. However, after twenty years of occupation and the expenditure of trillions of dollars, it not only failed to achieve any of these goals but made the situation considerably worse. Today, not only has terrorism not been eradicated, but the number and variety of active terrorist groups in Afghanistan has increased. At the end of the occupation in 2021, power

was handed over to a group that the West and the United Nations themselves designate as terrorist and misogynistic.

The USA and NATO occupiers, through the bombing of cities and villages, the use of advanced weapons including the "Mother of All Bombs" (GBU-43/B MOAB), and conducting "night raids", massacred hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. The USA and its allies, while claiming to defend human rights, committed war crimes and egregious human rights violations during their twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan.

Immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the USA handed over power to corrupt forces and warlords. These fundamentalist Islamic warlords had previously been used as proxy forces by the US and its allies against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Individuals such as Marshal Fahim, Marshal Dostum, Sayyaf, Ismail Khan, Abdullah, Qanuni, Karim Khalili, Mohaqiq, and others, who were accused of war crimes and widespread human rights violations, were once again installed in positions of power. The puppet governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani were primarily composed of these Taliban-like mindset, corrupt, human-rights-violating forces accused of war crimes.

The claim of defending women's rights was a propaganda cover for the USA and its allies to justify the occupation. During twenty years, women's rights were limited to a small segment of society in major cities and under the dominion of that very corrupt warlord system, the majority of Afghan women lived in poverty and deprivation. Today, the catastrophe of the Taliban's return and the systematic erasure of women's rights is a direct result of the policies of the US and NATO, which not only failed to dismantle the semi-feudal and patriarchal structures but, by strengthening fundamentalists and misogynistic forces, created the material conditions for this regression.

Since 2021, the international community, led by the very same occupying powers, have been paying the Taliban tens of millions of dollars per week under the title of "humanitarian aid". This action is not to help the deprived people of Afghanistan, but to maintain a minimal level of stability for their

own geopolitical interests and to prevent the country's complete fall to forces opposed to the US and Western interests. This policy is a continuation of the same colonial approach that views the people of Afghanistan as a tool for advancing its own goals.

The US imperialism has not learned from its disgraceful defeat in Afghanistan. While the wounds of the people have not yet healed, and the pain and suffering from the crimes of the USA and NATO during the twenty-year occupation have not been forgotten by the Afghan people, the warmongering administration of Donald Trump periodically hints at a military return to Afghanistan and the re-occupation of Bagram Airbase. However, it must be stated clearly that the world of today is not the world of twenty-five years ago. The United States is facing a relative decline in its global power, and its traditional allies also view such costly adventures with skepticism. In contrast, new powers have emerged in the region and the world that are not willing to witness a cost-free repetition of imperialist aggressions.

The people of Afghanistan, despite all the suffering and calamities they have endured, will never submit to foreign occupiers and their domestic agents. Any effort to re-occupy this country will be met with fierce resistance and a defeat far more severe and disgraceful than in the past. History will deliver its final judgment, and the crimes of the US imperialism and its NATO accomplices in Afghanistan will be forever recorded in the memory of nations.

October 7, 2025

Afghanistan

Commendation by the Political Bureau of the New Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Comrade SK Senthivel Steps into the Sixtieth Year of Full-Time Communist Political Work

Comrade SK Senthivel, a senior revolutionary political activist of Sri Lanka's left movement and the present General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party, began his full-time political work on August 25, 1965 with the then Revolutionary Communist Party. On this very date, he commences his sixtieth year of dedicated service.

Although he first joined the party in 1963 at the age of 17 or 18 through its student and youth organizations and was active in communist politics, it was in 1965 that he took up full-time political work.

It is significant that during this period Comrade N Sanmugathasan served as the party's General Secretary. Comrade Senthivel had repeatedly applied the Northern leadership to be accepted as a full-time cadre. After considering his request, the party approved it in 1965 and sent the confirmation letter from Colombo to Jaffna.

He received the letter from Comrade Karthikesan (Manickavasagar), who was then serving as the Northern Regional Secretary. At that time, Comrade KA Subramaniam, who was serving as the Northern Youth Movement Secretary, was also present with Comrade Senthivel.

In 1978, Comrade Senthivel, together with Comrade KA Subramaniam, played a key role among those who broke away due to ideological differences from the party led by Comrade Sanmugathasan to establish the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left).

Together with his comrades, Comrade Senthivel has accomplished the invaluable task of creating, nurturing, protecting, and handing down to the next generation a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party rooted among Sri Lanka's working masses.

For his full-time political service, the party provided only a monthly allowance of 60 rupees. Simplicity has always been the hallmark of communists. Comrade Senthivel has often acknowledged that he learned the practice of simple living directly from Comrade VA Kandasamy. To this day, he continues to live with the same simplicity. Without seeking wealth or property for himself or his family, he has remained steadfast in the conviction that communist politics is the path to liberation for all.

It is noteworthy that, under his leadership, the New Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party identified class contradiction as Sri Lanka's fundamental contradiction and the contradiction among nationalities (the national question) as the main contradiction. Accepting the right to self-determination, the party fights based on the policy that the solution lies in achieving a United Socialist Sri Lanka through completing the New Democratic stage.

Drawing from Comrade SK Senthivel's political experiences, advancing Sri Lanka's revolutionary struggle to the next phase has become the main responsibility of Marxist-Leninists working among the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Hill Country Tamil nationalities and all working people.

Comrade Senthivel, together with other comrades, played a principal role in the party's longstanding declaration of the Hill Country Tamil people as a distinct nationality.

While several of his contemporaries abandoned the left movement and turned away from Marxism, Comrade Senthivel remained steadfast. From the day he became a full-time cadre until today, he has consistently and resolutely walked the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist path, defending the party organization through collective action.

On behalf of the party and the working masses, we extend our revolutionary greetings to Comrade SK Senthivel as he steps into his sixtieth year of full-time political work.

Political Bureau, New Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

25 August 2025

Call for Genuine Educational Reforms

The Central Committee of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party has demanded that genuine educational reforms should be established.

The government claims that it will implement its New Educational Reforms in the coming year. We are compelled to discuss the matter under conditions where no source document has been published about the New Educational Reforms. The reforms are said to concern vocational education, changes to curricula and evaluation, technical education and digital education among others.

Many presentations are being made using PowerPoint software among parliamentarians, trade unions, the Mahanayakes and others. But many critics have objected to PowerPoint as inadequate and called for the release of the source document.

School Teachers and Principals trade unions and several university academics have pointed out that the understanding of the Minister of education has deficiencies, and the NDMLP agrees with their stand.

It is unacceptable that with only a short time to go for the new year, the reform proposals are explained using PowerPoint presentations alone with the source document remaining unpublished. The Party urges that the source document is made accessible urgently to everyone in printed form.

A glance of the claimed contents of the new educational reforms gives the impression that the educational reforms of Minister of education Harini

Amarasuriya consist of the contents of the National Education Policy Framework put forward in 2023 by Susil Premajayantha, Minister of Education in the Ranil Wickremasinghe government and reforms proposed by Dr Upali Sедера in 2016 under the heading Educational Reforms of the 21st Century. Hence, the NDMLP questions how this educational reform claimed to be put forward by the NPP government could be a new educational reform.

The new government is taking the same part as earlier governments along the neo-liberal capitalist road of privatization and liberalization. Its educational reforms will accordingly adapt to those policies. Which implies that the reforms have the principal aim of selling a workforce to serve industrial sectors with private investment.

We accept that the country needs vocational education. At the same time, we reject and oppose an educational reform that will create human robots that lack concern about social values, humanitarian thinking and the environment. without interest in art and literature and lacking in character.

We are inclined to believe that the background to the removal of history from the list of core subjects and placed among elective subjects concerns the creation of a new generation that lacks in social outlook and is ignorant of the socio-cultural values of the past. But it is notable that there certainly is need to make changes in the course objectives and course content of subjects like history.

With only a few months to go for the year to end, we should not allow children entering the first and sixth years of school be made guineapigs for educational experiments. Implementation of reforms hastily and in shocking fashion will have adverse side effects.

The NDMLP proposes that a mechanism should be created that could make a final program by compiling the findings of advisory panels set up at the ministry level and regional and divisional levels comprising

educationalists, psychologists, school principals, teachers, university professors and lecturers, university students environmental enthusiasts and intellectuals who have keen interest in developing educational reforms to conduct extensive discussions. It also called for educational reforms to give primacy to national interests and be free of intervention by organizations like the World Bank and Asian Development bank that lend money for the education sector.

Ours is a country whose principal sector is agriculture, and it is necessary to integrate economic activities such as fisheries, production of food crops, dairy farming and small industries with education and our workforce. Progress comprises the use and protection of our resources and natural environment.

The Party emphasizes that educational policy and practice should besides have as its aim is the creation of a human society which endorses genuine ethnic coexistence and is culturally developed to accept and respect human differences and able to live in unity.

Central Committee of the NDMLP
14/8/2025

NDMLP: 47 Years of Political Activity

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party founded on 3rd July as the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) marked its 47th anniversary on 3rd July 2025.

The Party, throughout its history, has conducted itself based on the ideology of Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought that has guided its theory, policies and practice. It has thus far held seven All Island Party Congresses and consistently rejected the parliamentary path to socialism and urged the path of revolutionary mass struggle and thereby bringing about fundamental social change.

The lesson offered by the failure of the leftist parties, beginning from the LSSP and CPSL up to the JVP, who took the parliamentary path is that it is impossible to establish the power of the working people by taking the bourgeois parliamentary path. It is the experience of the country and the people that the present constitution and power centres including the state apparatus that are guided by it have been incapable of achieving justice, fair play and rights to the working people who comprise the vast majority of the population or to the oppressed nationalities and other minorities. Besides, we have also seen that throughout the country's history, colonialists and imperialist have acted to enable the present neo-colonial order and that the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim ruling class elite forces aid the neocolonial order.

The Party, by adopting a Marxist Leninist stand, historically and through practice, had concluded that class contradiction is the fundamental contradiction of the country and that the national contradiction is its main contradiction. The Party has put forward as its basic policy that mobilizing the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as a working class force will enable them to secure and maintain state power. The Party has acted to unite forces oppressing the working people based on class, ethnicity and gender at various levels based on a National Democratic Programme.

Forces of imperialism, regional hegemony and other powers are taking advantage of the neo-colonial social environment of the country where residual feudal practices endure. The Party works bearing in mind its aim of mobilizing the entire working people to establish people's power through a revolutionary mass uprising against these forces. The Party is conscious that the task is arduous and prolonged.

But the Party is firm and clear in its belief that there is no alternative to it if we are to liberate the working people, establish an independent and autonomous Sri Lanka and achieve People's Democracy. The Party

continues to act with friendship and in unity with all left, democratic and progressive forces in this essential journey.

The Party Central Committee and all members of the Party reaffirm on this day that the Party is a party of the entire working people and that it will travel along the path shown by Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong thought amid any number of challenges firmly holding high the Party banner and the red flag without dipping.

Central Committee of
the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party
03. 07. 2025

Red Salute of the NDMLP to Comrade Valliammai Subramaniam

Comrade KA Subramaniam lived an exemplary life in the history of the Sri Lankan communist movement. Comrade Valliammai joined Comrade Subramaniam as his partner in married life by free will, transcending the conservative social hierarchical structure.

The role played by Comrade Valliammai and her contributions to their family life, social life and political life were unique. She learned much in her daily life intellectually and through practice. She had experienced much pleasure and pain in her life, and based on her experiences she authored a book titled "Encounters in the life of a communist couple".

They had three children to whom they provided education as well as social life through their practice. It is no exaggeration to say that Comrade Valliammai was the supporting force for their being a home to communists and party comrades to whom they provided revolutionary confidence and support amid many crises and difficulties.

Until she passed away aged 87 years, she remained most alert and enabled the establishment on the KA Subramaniam Library named after her life partner. That was an illustration of her character.

At the same time, she showed great affection respect towards party policies and party comrades. Her ageing and departure were in course of nature, and her memories will stay forever fresh in our minds. There is much for the comrades and their families to learn from her life.

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party pays its final red salute to Comrade Valliammai.

Central Committee of the NDMLP
30/6/2025

Anura Government's Brutal Attack on the People of Mannar

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDMLP issued the following statement on behalf of the Party denouncing the brutal attack on the people of Mannar by the NPP Government.

The NPP government headed by President Anura Kumara Disanayake has demonstrated in deed that it will pay no heed to the demands and protest demonstrations of the people of Mannar but instead remain loyal to the Indian regional hegemon, Adani's big business and US imperialism which enabled it to come to power through its brutal attack on the people of Mannar who have been campaigning for more than 55 days protesting against the wind power program and the mineral sands mining scheme.

Following President Disanayake's announcing amid the background of the continuous struggle of the people of Mannar that the wind power and mineral sands mining programs are temporarily suspended and that a decision will be taken after the views of the people are heard, a team headed by the Minister of Energy had visited Mannar to inspect the wind

power sites. The people of Mannar had expressed their strong objection to the wind power program. They had also recently protested opposite the Presidential Secretariat to make their demands clear to the whole country.

Ignoring all such objections, Ministry personnel had taken the turbo generators and blades to Mannar island last night. The police forces of the Anura government unleashed disgraceful violence against the women, youth and clergy, assaulting and injuring them.

The statement strongly condemns the police action and points out that the government is not on the side of the people.

He added that attempts to transfer monopoly over the electrical power sector to criminal groups like that of Adani and plunder the people by raising electricity tariff should be stopped.

All popular forces should join hands with the people of Mannar who are struggling to stop the wind turbine project.

27 September 2025

Celebrating 50 years of Socio-Political Activity

The 65th Birthday of Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Jaffna Regional Secretary of the NDMLP was celebrated **on** 1st November in the Puththur Kalaimathi People's Auditorium in appreciation of his 50 years long dedicated political and social activity in service of the community and as a communist militant who has been an eminent leader of the people of the Kalaimathi village.

The meeting chaired by Comrade S Thavarasa was addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, David Suren, N Pratheepan, V Mahendran, P Prashanthini, P Murugesu, K Jinthesan, K Seelan, A Sasikumar, K Mahadevan, Ratheesvary Satkunam and Calista Guna.

Two poems by Mavai Varothayan

Peace

Mother Earth
waits patiently
in the hope that the Nobel Prize for patience
will be awarded to her

16.5.2003

Vain hope

I am searching for
humanitarianism
in the darkness of independence
I search with my hands
for love for humanity
that went missing
unseen by eyes
unheard by ears
and unperceived by the nostrils—
like a blind man
in vain hope that
it may be captured in by feeling

1994

To the Students of the Workers' and Peasants' Faculty
Bertolt Brecht

So there you sit. And how much blood was shed
That you might sit there. Do such stories bore you?
Well, don't forget that others sat before you
who later sat on people. Keep your head!
Your science will be valueless, you'll find
And learning will be sterile, if inviting
Unless you pledge your intellect to fighting
Against all enemies of all mankind.
Never forget that men like you got hurt
That you might sit here, not the other lot.
And now don't shut your eyes, and don't desert
But learn to learn, and try to learn for what.

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