



## **Introduction**

1. The current global conjuncture is defined by multidimensional global crises of capitalism. Weaknesses and contradictions of the global economy intersect with existential climate and broader ecological crises. These exacerbate tensions between emerging imperialist powers (China and Russia) and Western imperialism.
2. The global geopolitical situation is characterised by the emergence of a new cold war, most notable in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the unfolding genocide in Palestine, and the efforts by the USA and its allies to assert control over these regions. The rising tensions over a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan, the scramble by the USA, EU and BRICS countries for Africa's mineral wealth, especially so-called critical minerals, all point to the emergence of a new cold war.
3. Crucially, the international situation is also marked, on the one hand, by the weakness of the workers' movement and the left and, on the other hand, by the rise of the far right, often taking on new forms of fascism.
4. For the left, the advent of the 21st century promised a new beginning. The collapse of the Soviet Union and satellite states ushered in a unipolar world and the apparent triumph of liberal capitalism. However, the harsh realities of globalised neoliberal capitalism heralded the global justice movement, the World Social Forum and the possibilities for the renewal of international solidarity. Two decades later the hope of a new radicalised internationalised mass movement capable of challenging global capitalism is being suffocated.
5. All this represents some of the morbid symptoms facing our country and the region.

## **Gaza**

6. Our conference takes place in the wake of Israel's genocide in Gaza, which has the unconditional support of the USA and most Western imperialist countries. The brutality of Israel's invasion and the scale of civilian killings have been unprecedented. The response by Western imperialism has exposed its hypocrisy: while they quickly accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine, the same powers have been complicit in supporting Israel's genocide.
7. The Israeli government and defence force were shaken by the scale of the breach and the damage inflicted when forces linked to Hamas entered Israel on 7 October 2023. Furthermore, the Hamas attack has been viewed by Palestinians and Arab masses across the region as a daring form of resistance against apartheid Israel, and particularly against the suffocating siege of Gaza. For global and regional powers, it threatened to reignite the resistance of the Arab peoples in the Middle East, thus challenging the attempt by the USA to normalise relations between Israel and the ruling elites and classes in the Arab world.

8. The scale of the genocide in Gaza is not just related to internal factors of Israeli politics, although this is a significant factor driving Netanyahu's murderous campaign. In so much as the invasion of Gaza has temporarily unites a fractured Israeli society, of which a large percentage want his removal to face corruption charges, there are other calculations at play. First, the USA and its regional allies have been determined to sustain the pacification of the Middle East after Western interests were weakened by the Arab uprising (the Arab Spring). Second, Western power are deeply concerned by the growing influence of Russia and China in the region. This has become particularly troubling for the Biden regime, in the face of the energy crisis brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Israel has thus become even more important for the preservation of Western imperialist interests in the Middle East. As Biden has repeatedly said, "Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interest in the region."
9. Nevertheless, the massive demonstrations against the genocidal war in Gaza have re-awakened Palestine solidarity, in spite of unconstitutional attempts by governments in the North to suppress mass demonstrations of solidarity. This is despite many of these movements opposing the politics and methods of Hamas, which represents a religious fundamentalism intertwined with Palestinian nationalism. As the Lebanese author Gilbert Achcar notes: "Against an oppressor that is far superior in military means, the only truly efficient way of struggle for the Palestinian people is by choosing the terrain on which they can circumvent that superiority. The peak in Palestinian's struggle effectiveness was reached in the year 1988 during the First Intifada, in which the Palestinians deliberately avoided the use of violent means" (*New Lines Magazine*). Such a strategy would strengthen the global solidarity movement and the campaign for sanctions against Apartheid Israel.

## **Ukraine**

10. The unjustified and murderous invasion of Ukraine by Putin's regime in Russia has terrible ramifications for Ukraine, the wider region and across the world. Hundreds of thousands have been killed, 8 million have fled the country and massive destruction of infrastructure has occurred that will take decades to restore.
11. The left and progressive forces should be in support of efforts to liberate all of Ukraine, including Crimea from Russian control, which is different from supporting the reactionary Zelensky regime. It is not for outside forces to determine how peace can be achieved, especially in a context of a military stalemate. It is up to the Ukrainians to decide what concessions might be acceptable or not to bring about an end to this war.
12. Ukraine is not just one of many armed conflicts in the world, such as Sudan, Yemen, DRC, and more. Ukraine represents a turning point in relation to geopolitical tensions in the world, threatening an intensification of the arms race, including nuclear arms. Together with escalating tensions in East Asia around Taiwan and the South China Sea, the danger of direct wars between the emerging powers of Russia and China and the dominant Western imperialist powers increases as the new cold war intensifies.
13. Given the importance of food production in Ukraine and Russia's production of gas and oil, the war has fuelled the pre-existing cost of living crisis that plunged hundreds of millions into deeper poverty. It is only the military industrial complex, centred in the US and the major fossil fuel companies, which have benefitted from the war.

## **Imperialism**

14. Predictably, the USA and the NATO successfully used the gamble of the Russian regime under Putin, to expand its geopolitical positions via massive military aid and even to increase NATO's membership. Nevertheless, the Russian invasion and prosecution of war in Ukraine reminds us that there is not just one imperialism in the world.
15. There are two important implication that emanate from this understanding. First, the world order of exploitation established by US imperialism after World War II is still in place, albeit shaken by rivals: The USA is losing its dominating global power but is still acting as the policeman of the world. To reassert its dominance in the world it is attempting to contain the rise of powers that challenge its influence by encircling strategic zones with its military. And even if this is challenged – especially by China with its growing capitalist economy and its effort to expand via direct investments in Africa and other countries of the South – the USA remains in control of the world's financial system, relying on the might of the dollar. Second, if and when this changes, economically, politically or militarily, the new dominant forces represent nothing progressive. We do not need new bosses at the top of the destructive capitalist system. We need to dismantle it as such. That inter-imperialist rivalry even poses a threat of World War III bears witness to our assessment.
16. The argument of the nationalist left in South Africa that the working class and exploited masses of the world should ally themselves with the dictatorial elites of China or Russia, or their growing cooperation, to dismantle US and Western imperialism, is wrong. This view only has currency because of the loss in confidence in anti-capitalist solutions to the multi-dimensional world crisis. It is a hope rooted in our weaknesses, indeed the loss of confidence in the prospect of rebuilding independent socialist movements. There will be no liberation “by proxy”, by siding with the growing power of one capitalist camp against the other. The working classes and the left have to wage a struggle against them all: against their Extractivist corporations, their disregard for the life environment and the climate crisis; against their violation of the rights of workers, of women and indigenous people; against their control over governments' economic policy by means of debt; and against their brutal ambition to enrich the few at the expense of the many no matter if it leads to wars and destruction.
17. In this regard, China acts like the capitalist countries of the global North, exporting its capital to expand its power and deal with internal pressures from its capitalist development, taking the lead in the BRICS block and taking part in the scramble for Africa's resource wealth. It is indebtedness to Chinese banks after a huge harbour project that presently holds Sri Lanka in a debt trap.
18. The loss of hope for an independent socialist alternative has no doubt played a role when sections of the international left abandoned their principles in face of Russia's brutal violation of Ukraine's national sovereignty: In South Africa, some of them who previously took their lead from the Stalinist rulers of the old Soviet Union.

### **Economic crisis**

19. We are still living under the impact of the great financial crisis of 2008. The reassertion of neoliberalism and the globalisation of austerity policies has served to deepen the depression-like conditions, which characterise the global economy today. In this sense we can draw parallels with the great depression of the 1930s.
20. We characterise the long downturn in the global economy, stretching all the way back to the early 1970s, as an over-accumulation crisis. Rather than solving this crisis, neoliberalism and processes of globalisation has simply displaced the crisis in time and space. It has also contributed to the financialisation of the world economy, not only giving rise to the usual phenomena of regular cycles of boom and bust, but also to recurrent financial crashes. It has become increasingly clear that this mode of

capitalist operation is no longer able to guarantee capitalist growth and the profit rates guaranteed in previous periods.

21. The global economic crisis is not facing a problem of surplus value extraction. Super-exploitation of workers doesn't have many obstacles in a situation of mass unemployment. In many parts of the world workers are made to work longer under poor working conditions and with widespread violation of rights.
22. In fact, capitalism suffers from its success in squeezing the working class, even in the North. More than ever, the capitalists and their backers have destroyed the capacity of the producers and the dispossessed classes to afford the goods capitalism produces. Via the universalising of neoliberalism, which has caused an acceleration of extreme inequality and pauperisation, working class people have been driven into the credit system to purchase the things of everyday life and food, never mind affording durable goods.
23. Because of declining profit rates on the ever-increasing mass of capital in private hands and low levels of economic demand, capital has tended to accumulate in the financial sectors of the economy. A role for the finance sector to oil the productive sector by making credit available for investment, cash-flow support, help firms surviving over temporary difficulties e t c, has been subverted. With the rise of digital technology, investing in finance has become a means to rapidly accumulate.
24. In recent years, inflation has increased across the globe, aggravating the cost of living crisis, and contributing to rising debt levels for countries and corporations through the impact of increased interest rates. Triggered by the post Covid-19 situation and aggravated by the war in Ukraine war as well as the advance of nationalisms, the super-internationalised value chains are being shaken up (energy, chip production, telecommunications, bio-chemicals, food). In response, imperialist and neoliberal governments and their subordinates have launched further attacks on wages, imposed austerity and intensified the commodification of agriculture. An important consequence has been the pauperisation of the working classes, especially in the Global South.
25. Economic stagnation and the reinforcement of neoliberalism have further accelerated the concentration of capital, financialisation, public and private indebtedness, digitalisation. In turn, these processes have increased the power of major transnational companies in general and Big Tech in particular, which also exacerbate social, regional, racial and gender inequalities between and within countries.

### **Africa in the crisis**

26. It is not as if the theatre of operation for imperialism is just in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Latin America and Africa lie in the cross-hairs of imperialism and inter-imperialist rivalries. Elite rivalries have intensified the scramble for the resources in Africa and elsewhere in the global South, provoking regional wars and threats of more wars. They are key sources of political instability.
27. In the aftermath of the C-19 pandemic, particularly the energy and the cost of living crises caused by the war in the Ukraine, Africa is again sinking in debt, conflicts, wars and coups. However, the decline in commodity prices, which the continent is so dependent on, has been a key source of the deepening crisis. After all, it was after the commodities boom that the false narrative of "Africa Rising" was prompted.
28. For some time, we are witnessing the new scramble for Africa, which are fuelling a wave of conflicts across the continent – from Sudan to Mozambique. While many of these conflicts are related to new oil and gas finds, an increasing focus is the race to control and extract rare earth minerals and other critical

minerals (cobalt, copper, lithium, platinum) for low carbon technologies needed for the ‘green economy’. The push for these minerals is supposed to drive the energy transition. However, neoliberal climate policy that relies on the private sector, profit maximisation and the imperative of growth in any production controlled by that sector is resulting in an energy expansion, which leaves fossil fuels in place as the dominant energy source. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Every year they are greater than the year before.

29. The countries of the North refuse to pay reparations to make up for their responsibility for the underdevelopment of the Global South and for the ecological and climate debt their development model has accrued. Although globalisation has moderated the international division of labour, most of the countries in the Global South remain suppliers of cheap labour and cheap raw materials. It is this relationship that mostly accounts for the persistence of the so-called “Third World debt crisis.” The international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank and WTO) serve to reinforce the relationship of subjugation of the countries of the Global South to the advanced capitalist countries.
30. This is why, in spite of its natural resource wealth, Africa remains in debt and faces a new debt crisis. The average debt ratio in sub-Saharan Africa has almost doubled in just a decade – from 30 percent of total domestic production per year (GDP) at the end of 2013 to almost 60 percent of GDP by end-2022. Repaying this debt has also become much costlier. According to the IMF, the region’s ratio of interest payments to the revenues of the governments – a key metric to assess debt servicing capacity and the risk of a fiscal crisis – has more than doubled since the early 2010s. It is now close to four times higher than in rich countries.
31. Debt costs have also risen substantially in the face of global interest rate hikes, and forced several African countries to default or placed them on the verge of debt defaults; i.e. not being able to repay the interest or the principal of their loans. A new wave of structural adjustment programmes now follows. They no longer just aim to open these countries to transnational capital. They also aim to ensure access to Africa’s so-called critical minerals and energy resources and assets (publicly owned utilities). In this sense, we can talk about Green structural adjustment and extractivism as posing a threat to natural resources and energy sovereignty across the African continent.
32. The international financial institutions, instead of being the source of public finance for heavily indebted countries in the form of debt cancellation, grants and reparations, they offer rebated credits, on conditions of austerity, privatisation and corporate tax cuts. The resulting cuts in public sector financing – hitting public health, education, social welfare and jobs – have created unbearable levels of impoverishment and deprivations. To the urgency of fighting the climate crisis, the urgencies of hunger and exclusion are in this way added.
33. It is therefore not surprising that there is a rise of armed conflicts tearing the region apart. We have had nine military coups in Africa since 2020. The recent military coups in former French colonies in Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) reflect the deep social and political crisis in that region. The military took power with hardly any local resistance. They took advantage of the total discredit of the political institutions and the widespread rejection of the French imperialist presence, particularly among the youth. That rejection was clearly expressed in Senegal during the social movements of 2021. However, the new military regimes offer no alternative to imperialist policies and the neo-liberal model – much in the same way as the Islamists, who came to power through elections in Tunisia and Egypt in one of the post-Arab Spring phases.
34. Sixty years after the start of de-colonialisation in Africa, we have not been further away from the dream of Pan African unity than what we are today. The national liberation struggles inspired new socialist

thinking and organisation, but these has been almost completely wiped out. Authoritarian neoliberal capitalism is the dominant mode of regulation across the continent.

35. Nevertheless, there are important mass struggles. And new left political initiatives that are beginning to root themselves, in the incipient peasant, women's, youth and labour movements that are struggling to free themselves from elite-capture and the historical parties of 'liberation'.

### **Internationalism**

36. In this context, what we do in South Africa is important. Through principled solidarity we need to support these struggles and movements. We have to fight against authoritarian governments and for democratic rights, for people's general right to care, against the discrimination suffered by women to dispose of their own bodies and their own lives, for the right to abortion, for wage and income equality, against structural racism that discriminates both black people, indigenous populations and other racialized ethnicities, as well as the conservative homo- and transphobia that attacks the global LGBTQI community.
37. All these struggles have to be brought together to overthrow the regimes of exploitation and oppression, and to augment the international struggle against capitalism.
38. All these tasks and war-threats induce the need for a new internationalism. Through the various cycles of mass movements and social mobilizations, we need to rebuild internationalist links and initiatives, and mobilise campaigns to gather the left and social movements in order to galvanise forces around common demands.
39. The seriousness of the situation dwarfs the catastrophes that hit humankind during the First and the Second World Wars. Never before have we been in such a need to end the capitalist system.