

Analysis of the Methods, Effects, and Prospects of the SACP in Pursuing Socialist Policies

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Abstract: SACP has undergone many changes in its search for socialism over the past hundred years, adopting a unique combination of socialist and national revolution and a strategy of revolutionary improvement. However, introducing neoliberal policies in South Africa has led to economic inequality and social problems, and defeats have been repeated. The reasons for the ineffectiveness of the socialist construction include the interlocking of parties, corruption, interference from capitalist forces, and the weakness of the SACP and the loss of popular support. Although the future of socialism in South Africa remains uncertain, improvements such as strengthening political consensus, fighting corruption, and promoting economic recovery promise a more effective realization of its socialist claims.

Keywords: SACP, Socialist Construction in South Africa, Neoliberalism, Partisanship, Difficulties and Methods, Corruption Issues.

1. The History and Reality of the Socialist Policies Pursued by the SACP

Founded on 30 July 1921, the SACP is Africa's oldest and most influential communist party. Guided by Marxism-Leninism and democratic centralism, it allied with the ANC and COSATU to dismantle apartheid, then has continued post-1994 to pursue a socialist path tailored to South Africa.

The SACP's ideology has evolved with shifting politics, economics and social forces. Born in 1921 under Comintern influence, it preached proletarian revolution, sought to overthrow capitalism and advance workers' rights through strikes and union activism. During the anti-apartheid period, the SACP formed a tripartite alliance with the African National Congress and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. During this period, the SACP emphasized the link between racial and class oppression and advocated social change through the unification of the forces of all races. During this period, the SACP correctly recognized that South Africa was a "special type of colonialism"[1]. During this period, it correctly recognized that South Africa was a "special type of colonialism". It laid the ideological foundation for the eventual victory of the anti-apartheid movement. During the period of armed struggle, the SACP participated in the ANC-led "Spear of the Nation Movement"[2], which emphasized the overthrow of the apartheid regime by revolutionary means, and put forward the vision of a socialist South Africa, as well as the adoption of a "combination of the two theories" of revolution, and the combination of national revolution and socialist revolution. And the combination of national and socialist revolutions[3]. Post-apartheid, the SACP shifted focus to economic transformation and social justice, blending market mechanisms with state intervention to tackle poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In the 21st century, it has grown more radical than its ANC ally, pushing harder against corruption and inequality while demanding a larger role in national decision-making.

Secondly, the socialist vision of the SACP. The SACP is a

party guided by Marxism, and its vision of socialism combines Marxism with South Africa's national conditions. In the early stage of the founding of the SACP, influenced by the October Revolution, the SACP advocated the opposition to apartheid and the dictatorship of the proletariat; during the apartheid period, the SACP advocated a nationwide democratic revolution[4], no longer insisting on the non-violent way of carrying out the democratic revolution, and thus started the armed struggle. In the post-apartheid period, the SACP recognized the need for a market economy, focused on eliminating racial inequality, and made livelihood policies a core socialist goal; from the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe to the collapse of the Soviet Union to the present day, the SACP has re-conceived South Africa's peculiarly colonialist nature of the state[5], coupled with the failures of South Africa's neo-liberal economic policies and the seriousness of the problem of corruption[6], The SACP blends public ownership with market forces, insists the state keep strategic resources, and uses taxes and welfare to narrow inequality. Its socialism has always paired anti-apartheid with economic justice; though practice lags behind theory, its experience offers lessons to other post-colonial states.

Thirdly, From the outset the SACP linked socialism to action: it led the labour movement and actively built trade unions to give workers the power to push its socialist agenda. For example, the emergence and development of the huge democratic trade union movement has been one of the greatest achievements of the South African working class in recent years, and the South African Communists have fought for maximum solidarity around the daily demands of the workers for national liberation and socialism[7]. On the other hand, through the organization of strikes and protests, the SACP seeks to raise workers' awareness of socio-economic issues and to promote wider social change. For example, through the Red October Movement, the SACP organized working class struggles for the transformation of the financial sector, land redistribution, and agrarian transformation[8]. The SACP built socialism through agitation and education: its journals (African Communist) and the Freedom Charter popularized socialist ideas, while study circles taught workers how racial and class oppression intersect. It fought apartheid

alongside the ANC, and under Comintern guidance joined the Soviet-led global anti-imperialist camp to denounce Western colonialism.

2. Dilemmas of the SACP on the Road to Socialism

As the SACP has grown, its socialist blueprint has far outrun its concrete achievements, blocked by a tangle of internal weaknesses and external constraints; unless these barriers are dismantled, the dream of a socialist South Africa will stay frozen in theory.

Firstly, Lacking confidence to go it alone, the SACP has relied on the ANC since birth, forging a tripartite alliance. Its socialist roadmap-devised before the collapse of the Eastern bloc-envisaged two stages: national-democratic revolution first, socialist revolution second. In its 2012 draft political program, the SACP stated that the national democratic revolution is not a detour or a delay, but the most direct path to socialism in South Africa's reality[9] proves the determination of the SACP to carry out the national democratic revolution first. The SACP's two-stage plan rested on four pillars: a multi-racial united front against apartheid, universal democratic rights, economic socialization to fight poverty and inequality, and alignment with the global anti-colonial struggle for international solidarity. Yet since the ANC's 1994 victory marked the completion of the national-democratic revolution, the Party has stalled, lacking the confidence to lead a socialist project on its own and content to ride the ANC's coattails.

To take the two-step program further, the SACP (SACP) needs to have the courage to lead the socialist construction on its own. But for the time being, it is still not possible for it to fully break away from the ANC. At an extraordinary congress in late 2024, the SACP announced that it would break away from the ANC to contest the 2026 elections, a move seen as a revolt against the ANC[10]. General Secretary Solly Mapaila calls the SACP's decision an "ideological cleansing" that re-centres the party on building socialism. He insists the move is not a break with the ANC but an assertion of independence so the party can fight for the working class without being sidelined. Citing the alliance's refusal to restructure, Mapaila says the SACP can no longer afford marginalization. The party has now signaled it wants to lead alone; whether it can actually escape the ANC's shadow and steer socialism in South Africa remains an open question.

Secondly, South Africa remains one of the world's most unequal countries: inter-racial gaps narrowed after 1991, but inequality within each racial group has kept widening. Matthew McKeever found through statistical surveys that the upper class, which makes up one-tenth of the total population of South Africa, owns more than fifty percent of the social wealth of the whole of South Africa and that the majority of the South African people are in a state of poverty[11]. The South African government has also taken steps to promote the development of the South African economy, for example, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) was implemented in 1994-1996, the main objective of which was to improve the living conditions of the wider South African population through economic growth and social development, with a particular focus on supporting historically marginalized groups[12]. The Reconstruction and Development Program emphasizes investment in areas such as infrastructure development, housing, education, healthcare,

and employment. As economic pressures on the government increased from 1996 to early 2000, the government restructured its economic program and introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Plan (GEARP), which embarked on neo-liberal policies[13]. Neoliberal policy sought faster growth, jobs and fairer incomes via fiscal austerity, privatization and foreign investment, yet it delivered on none of these goals. Selling off public assets-most controversially water-has widened the gap between rich and poor.

Since 2000 South Africa has launched a string of blueprints-National Development Plan, New Growth Path, Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, Industrial Policy Action Plan-yet none has delivered tangible success.

Thirdly, The SACP and ANC remain strategic allies, yet they rarely agree: the Communists press for radical socialist measures while the ANC prefers moderate, market-friendly steps, so their shared platforms are enacted slowly or not at all.

The disagreement between the SACP (SACP) and the ANC was manifested in many ways, the more prominent of which was economic. For example, during the period 1996-2004, when the ANC pursued its neoliberal policies, the SACP rebelled against the ANC's neoliberal policies through public, written attacks on neoliberal logic; support for the South African General Workers' Union (SAGWU) campaign against Privatization; the formation of the Youth League of Communists (YCL); and campaigns around co-operatives and reforms of the financial sector[14].

The SACP has failed to derail ANC neoliberalism: its English-only, web-bound pamphlets never reach ordinary South Africans, so anti-market critiques stay trapped inside the elite. The SACP's stance on COSATU's anti-privatization drive is split: its charter demands full backing, and some leaders comply, yet others quietly enforce ANC privatization to stay inside the alliance, while the party's own reforms focus only on widening co-ops and bank access for the poor. These reforms brought only surface relief, leaving the real crises-housing, water, electricity, land, jobs and AIDS-untouched for the mass of the poor. The fact that the financial reforms were carried out without going to the heart of the matter and without a direct attack on ANC neo-liberalism is yet another illustration of the party's failure to succeed in organizing mass resistance to neo-liberalism, especially resistance organized around the most urgent and salient issues facing the working class and the poor[15].

In addition to dissatisfaction with the ANC's neo-liberalism, the SACP is also dissatisfied with the ANC's land policy. After the end of apartheid in 1994, the ANC promised land reform, but blacks were not guaranteed land rights. The ANC's preference for land transfers through market transactions ignored historical issues and provoked dissatisfaction among the SACP. The SACP believes that the ANC's land reforms protect large landowners and do not address the historical legacy, and the ANC does not support the SACP's more radical ideas for comprehensive land reform.

President Ramaphosa's recent signing of the Expropriation Bill marks a watershed for land reform. The law sets rules for state expropriation, defines "public interest" to cover redistribution, infrastructure and social services, guarantees owners notice and a hearing, and targets historical injustice. The SACP welcomes the Bill but warns that delivery, not text, will decide its success.

Fourthly, Socialist rollout has been sluggish and largely

ineffective. Since 1994, wave after wave of well-intentioned policies has collapsed because of corruption, weak capacity, broken continuity and bloated bureaucracy. These gaps between promise and performance are national, not SACP-specific, but must be fixed if any socialist project is to move from paper to practice.

Corruption is rampant in South Africa and is the main reason socialist policies fail. In his first nine months, President Ramaphosa had to create four separate commissions just to probe the looting of state resources. These commissions of inquiry investigated the breakdown of governance and corruption in key South African institutions such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)[16]. In 2012, Reuters calls graft “a cancer” devouring the state; academics add greed, retrenchment, poverty and eco-collapse to the toll. Daily exposés of police, municipal and elite looting led former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela to warn the country has passed the corruption “tipping point.” The Zondo Commission’s revelations of wholesale state capture have further eroded the economy and public trust.

3. The Future of the SACP's Socialist Quest Remains Uncertain

Post-apartheid, the SACP has pushed socialist policies to advance justice and equality, yet progress is stunted. Internal strategic splits spawn inconsistent execution; feeble growth and mass unemployment heighten social strain; chronic ANC-SACP friction blocks coherent policy; and even sound initiatives collapse for want of effective delivery mechanisms. Lately the SACP has tried to loosen the ANC leash and go it alone, yet its bid for independence may falter while South Africa’s socio-economic crises pile up and cry out for fixes far bolder than any on offer.

The SACP both leaned on and challenged the ANC: it shaped every landmark ANC shift—the 1955 Freedom Charter, the 1961 turn to arms, the 1962 “colonialism of a special type” thesis, and the 1969 adoption of national-democratic revolution. Throughout the 1970s–1980s, most ANC National Executive Committee members were also SACP cadres, and the ANC’s armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, answered to the Party.[17].

Post-apartheid, the SACP–ANC bond evolved into a tight but tense alliance. Having fought apartheid side by side, the two parties entered the 1994 elections as one: the ANC took power and the SACP became a core coalition partner. The Communists now advance their agenda by drafting sections of the ANC manifesto, sitting in its caucuses, attending joint-secretariat meetings, and accepting ANC parliamentary and cabinet posts under a dual-membership system.

In 1996 the ANC dumped its socialist Reconstruction and Development Programme for the free-market Growth, Employment and Redistribution plan. As privatisation and commodification of water, electricity and other public goods widened inequality and pushed unemployment higher, the SACP denounced the turn to neoliberalism as a betrayal of socialist principle, plunging the alliance into open, enduring conflict.

The SACP’s decision to contest the 2024 local elections alone has jolted the ANC: the ruling party warns that the tripartite alliance could collapse, leaving the Communists isolated and opening the way for them to become a rival rather than a partner. The rupture is plausible because the two

movements are divided at the roots: the SACP wants rapid nationalisation, sweeping land expropriation and expanded welfare, while the ANC clings to market-friendly gradualism, privatisation and piecemeal land reform. Second, their economic agendas diverge sharply: the SACP pushes nationalisation and expanded welfare, whereas the ANC privileges market reforms, investment incentives and growth. This gap blocks consensus on every major policy. Third, power is lopsided. The ANC monopolises decisive levers of government and shapes policy through internal bargaining; the smaller SACP, eager for swifter, more radical change, repeatedly finds itself overruled, fuelling chronic tension.

Yet the SACP’s slender economic weight and narrow mass base make a clean break from the ANC almost impossible; for the foreseeable future the tripartite alliance will survive, with the Party simultaneously clinging to and quarrelling with its dominant partner.

Second, growth has stayed sluggish. Once neoliberalism fell short, Pretoria rolled out the National Development Plan, Industrial Policy Action Plan, Economic Transformation Strategy, Infrastructure Development Strategy and more—yet none has delivered convincing results.

South Africa’s economy remains trapped in low gear. Joblessness—especially among the young—drains dynamism; extreme inequality, widened by decades of neoliberal policy, depresses domestic demand; heavy reliance on mining and raw-material exports leaves the country exposed to global price swings; and chronic gaps in power, transport and digital infrastructure deter investment and disrupt everyday business. Sluggish growth and persistent high fiscal deficits are unlikely to reverse soon, leaving South Africa without the economic base needed to finance ambitious socialist development.

Third, South Africa has been unable to cure corruption-driven paralysis. Scandals have haunted every post-apartheid administration and ANC leadership tier, steadily eroding public faith in democracy. Graft now routinely strangles policy execution, yet institutional weaknesses leave the roots of the problem untouched.

The first reason is that South Africa does not have an effective system of separation of powers. The lack of formal separation of powers, whereby each institution cannot oversee the others or hold each other accountable for their misdeeds regularly, has led to serious weaknesses in the system to the extent that the executive agencies themselves are subject to external authority[18]. Secondly, because South Africa’s accountability mechanisms are primarily located in Parliament, there is no accountability for the President himself. The judicial authorities stipulate that the judiciary can only rule on the constitutionality of laws or acts, but the Department of Justice cannot hold MPs and the executive accountable for their actions, which contributes to a climate of corruption.

Fourthly, South Africa’s multi-party system makes it difficult for the SACP (SACP) to lead the construction of socialism independently.²⁰²⁴ Although the SACP was a member of the Tripartite Alliance, the SACP was not the most influential party in South Africa, and there were other parties in South Africa as a multi-party country. South Africa’s political system has been presented in an African National Congress (ANC) -dominated model since the country’s first democratic elections in 1994. However, over the past decade or so, the ANC has failed to maintain its dominance, and South Africa has gradually moved from one-party rule to

multi-party rule. By now there are many parties in South Africa, including: the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the SACP (SACP), the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Confederation of Trade Unions (COSATU), the Party of National Liberation (PAC), the Freedom Faction Party (FF+), as well as other smaller parties[19]. The ANC, SACP, and COSATU are still the ruling party and form a tripartite coalition to make decisions on state affairs. However, there is not as much unity within the tripartite coalition as it seems, and due to the complexity of the parties, there is a serious crisis of mistrust within the tripartite coalition, which is increasing due to corruption and factionalism within the parties, and it is becoming more and more difficult for the ANC to hold its position of dominance. It has become increasingly difficult for the ANC to hold on to its dominant position. The Economic Freedom Struggle (EFS) is the main opposition party, targeting the ANC's governance of the country, with a particular focus on land reform, economic inequality, and corruption.

Based on the results of the South African elections and the socio-political form of South African society, it is likely that multi-party rule will become a permanent political model in South Africa. Whilst multi-party rule is generally praised for contributing to good democracy, power sharing, and consolidation of different policies that move the country forward, it may pose many challenges to the overall governance of the country[20]. These challenges include: lack of unity within the government; political opportunism, where different political parties look after their interests rather than the good of the country as a whole; and the lack of experience in governance and understanding of how the country is governed by some of the political parties leading to support for the wrong policies, amongst others.

Fifth, the SACP (SACP) is unable to fully represent the interests of the working class. Since its inception, the SACP (SACP) has claimed to represent the interests of the working class, yet its actual performance has fallen significantly short of this claim. Firstly, the SACP's historically close co-operation with the African National Congress (ANC) has limited its access to many key policies. Despite its important role in the anti-apartheid struggle, after the ANC came to power, the SACP failed to effectively promote policies that were genuinely favorable to the working class, and instead, in many cases, supported the ANC's economic policies, which very largely served the interests of capitalism, and were of little help to the wider black population. For example, during the period when the ANC was pursuing its new economic policies, although both the SACP (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) were dissatisfied with the neo-liberal policies, they nevertheless assisted in pursuing the neo-liberal policies out of their support for the ANC[21]. Secondly, South Africa's economic policies have been heavily influenced by globalization and the market economy, and the SACP has lacked a clear voice of opposition in this process. The SACP advocates nationalization and social welfare, but in practice, it is still unable to prevent many important economic decisions from tending to be market-oriented, and the interests of the working class cannot be guaranteed. For example, in response to the layoffs and wage cuts in South Africa, the SACP has had no concrete and effective policy opposition, other than condemning some of the companies that have reduced wages and cuts and opposing the policies of the ANC, and the Congress of South African

Communist Parties (COSATU), although it has always been working in the interests of the working class, did not give its full support to its allies when the COSATU was powerless to resist the large-scale corporate campaigns of wage cuts and layoffs.[22]. Furthermore, the influence of the SACP in the labor movement has gradually waned. Although the party had maintained close links with the trade unions, the representation and influence of the SACP gradually declined as divisions within the trade unions and working-class dissatisfaction with politics took hold. The working class is becoming more and more uneasy. In a democratic society, the working class wants to use the votes in their hands to elect for themselves political parties that can truly represent the interests of the working class[23].

In the future, the prospects of the SACP (SACP) in representing the interests of the working class remain worrying. As the socio-economic situation changes and the needs and expectations of the working class evolve, the SACP may not be able to respond effectively to the new needs of workers if it continues to adhere to its old ideology and tactics. In addition, the rise of new political forces and social movement organizations may further weaken the influence of the SCP among the working class, which may turn to more representative forces and seek political options that are more in line with their interests.

Sixthly, the SACP lacked a large mass base. The SACP was initially founded on the ideology of building a socialist state with Marxism-Leninism as its guiding philosophy, but with the establishment of the Tripartite Alliance in 1994, the South African public suspected that the SACP had departed from its original socialist intentions. The reasons for the change in the ideology of the SACP are manifold, firstly, after the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, there emerged a world driven by capitalist institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which did not support Marxism-Leninism and refused to fund communist countries, so it was difficult for socialism to flourish in the South African state[24]. Secondly, SACP members accumulate wealth as they become involved in the politics of the country; they were originally capitalists, and when they accumulate wealth, they stop thinking about the people and think more about themselves. Thirdly, after SACP members became involved in national politics, they put more emphasis on politics than on SACP organization and looked more like the ANC. The SACP's slogan, "build socialism now", was no different from the capitalist ANC in its actions, and the majority of blacks in South Africa did not benefit from the leadership of the ANC government. The majority of black people in South Africa have not benefited from the leadership of the ANC government, and democratic South Africa has become the most undemocratic of societies. All this has led to a great deal of popular discontent with the SACP, which has few supporters, although it has attempted to become the ruling party in South Africa through elections.

4. Prospects for the Path to Socialism in the SACP

The current situation in South Africa can be described as a "crisis", and in his 2023 State of the Nation Address (SONA) in the South African National Assembly, President Ramaphosa even used the word "crisis" several times to describe the current situation in South Africa, suggesting that it is an "existential crisis"[25]. This "crisis" refers to the fact

that the situation of the majority of South Africans is not favorable due to current South African policies. South Africa has one of the largest inequalities and unemployment, high levels of corruption in the public and private sectors, and ineffective policies due to the indifference of those in power, which have exacerbated the crisis in the country. South Africa could transform the current situation into a correct and efficient path of socialist construction, but it would be difficult to achieve that goal.

First, South Africa needs a socialist workers' party that can govern. The construction of socialism in South Africa needs to be promoted by a socialist workers' party, which requires a ruling party that can represent the interests of the proletariat. Coupled with South Africa's economic problems, which have led to an increase in unemployment and a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa, the South African people are in dire need of a political party that can, through its collective action and organizational strength, promote the unity of the working class and fight for a wider range of justice and democratic rights, which can only be achieved by a strong ruling party of the working class.

For the time being, with South Africa's limited socialist offerings outside of the Tripartite Alliance and the failure to activate other socialist parties, the prospects for socialist political or policy reform remain weak. While many South African Africans yearn for a socialist-leaning vehicle to support, there are no political parties willing as well as able to step forward to provide such a vehicle[26].

Secondly, South Africa needs an effective economic policy. South Africa has introduced a series of economic policies since neo-liberalism, but they have not yielded the desired results. In response to the country's wide gap between the rich and the poor and its low GDP growth rate, South Africa urgently needs an effective economic policy that promotes industrial diversification, creates employment opportunities, improves the quality of public service delivery, and improves infrastructure to enhance the standard of living and the well-being of the population. President Ramaphosa has put economic growth and job creation at the center of his government's priorities in his 2025 State of the Nation Address. "Our most urgent task is to grow our economy so that we can create jobs, reduce poverty and improve the lives of all South Africans," he said, setting a GDP growth target of 3 per cent as a key milestone. However, this target may be difficult to achieve given existing economic constraints[27].

In the future, South Africa can move away from austerity and put the state at the service of the well-being of the South African people by, for example, investing more in public facilities, providing funds to help young South Africans get jobs, and using fiscal policy to promote the mobilization of sufficient public investment to deal with the cross-cutting crises that South Africa is facing.[28]. Investments in the public sector may seem to increase the burden on the government, but they will increase the desire of South Africans to consume and invest, reduce unemployment, and generate more revenue for the government. Cutting public investment can lead to higher public debt, undermine development pathways and democracy, and lead to instability[29]. Adopting a quick-fix approach will not promote economic growth instead.

Thirdly, South Africa needs strong measures to eradicate corruption. Corruption not only undermines the efficiency of public services but also leads to wastefulness and inequality of resources and exacerbates poverty and social divisions.

Eliminating corruption, on the other hand, can attract foreign investment and promote economic growth, thereby improving the standard of living of the population as a whole. Fighting corruption is therefore key to achieving sustainable development in South Africa. How to tackle rampant corruption while steering the country through political transformation is a challenge faced by many countries. South Africa can target corruption by, for example, strengthening independent institutions such as the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA); building alliances between reformist factions so that prosecutions do not destabilize the political environment; establishing specialized and independent anti-corruption agencies to investigate high-profile cases of corruption to play a role in combating corruption at the highest levels; working with international partners and organizations to leverage the pressure of international institutions to promote the fight against corruption; establishing protection mechanisms to safeguard the public from corruption; and establishing an effective and efficient anti-corruption system. Work with international partners and organizations to leverage pressure from international institutions to promote the fight against corruption and establish protection mechanisms to shield anti-corruption agencies from political interference by the political elite to curb rampant corruption in the country.[30].

The political situation in South Africa, which is a multi-party system, is difficult to change, and the lack of unity among the parties has led to a deep-rooted corruption problem that is difficult to address. In addition, corruption in South Africa involves multiple levels of officials and businesses, resulting in a slow reform process. Declining public trust in the government has also resulted in insufficient support for anti-corruption initiatives. Therefore, the complete eradication of corruption requires strong political will and broad social participation.

Fourthly, the SACP needs to expand its popular base. Firstly, the SACP (SACP) has been committed to social welfare policies but has not been able to implement them. At its Central Committee plenary meeting in the wake of the Red October 2024 campaign, the SACP proposed a series of policies on the theme of "responding to the cost-of-living crisis," such as increasing government investment in key economic infrastructure; fundamentally changing the mandate of the Savings Bank to address unemployment and promote high-quality, inclusive Growth; Public Development Finance Institutions (PDFIs) to take ownership of the economy by strengthening their role in promoting industrialization and supporting investments in state-led infrastructure development to dismantle monopolies; and measures to combat crime and gender-based violence, among others.[31]. The implementation of these measures will greatly enhance the prestige of the SACP. Secondly, as a relatively small party with a small number of members and insufficient power, it needs to expand its membership and recruit black elites to strengthen its power of action, and it should further strengthen its cooperation with the Congress of the Communist Party of South Africa (CCP). Thirdly, as the party has lost its voice due to its over-reliance on the ANC, it needs to reduce its dependence on the ANC to gain the trust of the people, and its pledge to run independently in the local government elections in 2026 is a positive sign.

In the history of the SACP since it came to power, the SACP has always been more theoretical than practical, and its own limited capacity is a very important reason. The SACP

still has a long way to go in order to broaden the base of the party and improve the implementation of its policies as well as its own prestige.

5. Summary

Over more than a century of exploration, the South African Communist Party (SACP) has forged a distinctive path that fuses socialist revolution with national-democratic struggle, exercising influence through its participation in the Tripartite Alliance. Yet the translation of its socialist agenda into practice has been repeatedly constrained by fractures within the alliance, the legacy of neoliberal economics, systemic corruption, and the Party's own organisational weaknesses. The result has been modest policy gains and a steady erosion of public trust. Looking ahead, if the SACP is to break through South Africa's deep-seated socio-economic crisis it must: strengthen its political autonomy and reduce its excessive dependence on the ANC; advance fairer, more effective economic policies that tackle inequality and unemployment; and take decisive steps to root out corruption and rebuild credibility. Although the road is fraught, a renewal of the Party's socialist project remains theoretically possible—provided it deepens its ties to the masses, consolidates its class base, and pursues reforms that stay true to a socialist orientation.

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