**Analysis on Political and Economic Situation in North Korea after the 8th Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea**

Li Chengri

**[Abstract]** In January 2021, the 8th Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea was held in Pyongyang. The congress fully summarized a five-year strategy for the national economic development for 2016-2020, charted out a new five-year plan for the national economic development, and further consolidated the leadership of the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The WPK identified “the People-First Principle” and the economic construction policy of “Self-Reliance”. A series of messages delivered at the 8th Congress of the WPK will determine the basic directions of the political, economic, party-building, and foreign relations policies of North Korea for the next five years.

**[Key Words]** The 8th Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea; The five-year plan for the national economic development; The People-First Principle; Self-Reliance

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The 8th Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea (hereinafter referred to as “WPK”) was held in Pyongyang from January 5 to January 12, 2021. The congress was held in the context of the stalled peace process on the Korean Peninsula since the failure of the North Korean and U.S. summit in Hanoi in February 2019, the change of the U.S. administration in 2021, and severe impact on the North Korean economy under multiple pressures such as international sanctions, COVID-19, and floods. The congress fully summarized the five-year strategy for the national economic development for 2016-2020, charted out a new five-year plan, and set domestic and foreign affairs goals. The North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended and offered guidance at the congress in person. He also delivered an important speech and made significant conclusions. A series of messages delivered at the 8th Congress of the WPK will determine the basic directions of the political, economic, party-building, and foreign relations policies of North Korea for the next five years.

1. Further Consolidate and Strengthen the Political Philosophies of “the People-First Principle” and “the People Are God” Emphasized by the Party Leadership

According to the *Rules and Constitution of the Workers’ Party of Korea*, the WPK is a great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism political party, with Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as its guiding ideology, and the maximum programme of the Party is to achieve Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism in the whole society. It is stated clearly in the rules and constitution approved in the 8th Congress of the WPK that the permanent guiding idea of the WPK is “Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism”[[1]](#footnote-1); and the “solo leadership system” should be strengthened; the rules and constitution of the WPK should be revised, and the General Secretary and the Secretariat Bureau systems should be restored[[2]](#footnote-2). All of this accentuates the absolute authority of the supreme leader Kim Jong Un.

A resolution of the 8th Congress of the WPK, *On Election of General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea*, was released. The congress fully supported and approved the courteous proposal for holding Comrade Kim Jong Un as the general secretary of the WPK.[[3]](#footnote-3) The rules and constitution of the WPK was revised to acknowledge that “Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK can discuss and decide on major political, economic and military issues” and added that they can “discuss the appointment and removal of the important party and state cadres” and that “Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK can preside over meetings of the Political Bureau under the authorization of the Head of the Party”.[[4]](#footnote-4) These revisions strengthen the leadership position of the Central Committee of the WPK and in particular further clarify the only leadership system centering around Kim Jong Un.

According to the new rules and constitution of the WPK, 139 members and 111 alternate members of the Central Committee were elected in North Korea. They include 5 members of the Standing Committee, 19 members (including members of the Standing Committee), and 11 alternate members of the Political Bureau. Of the 4 members of the Standing Committee, 19 members (including members of the Standing Committee), and 9 alternate members of the Political Bureau elected at the 7th Congress of the WPK, 2 members of the Standing Committee, 16 members, and 9 alternate members of the Political Bureau were alternated. Founding members of the Party and the state, such as Kim Yong-nam, Pak Pong-ju, Yang Hyong Sop, Kim Ki Nam, Ri Man-gon, and Thae Jong-su, were completely removed from important positions and replaced by a number of younger professional cadres such as Jo Yong-won, Kim Tok-Hun, Kim Jae-ryong, Ri Il-hwan, and O Il Jong. The alternation of cadres in the Central Committee of the WPK was basically completed. An “era of Kim Jong Un” worthy of the name was started, and the ruling foundation of the WPK was further consolidated. In addition, compared to the 719 military delegates and 423 administrative and economic delegates at the 7th Congress, there were only 408 military delegates and 801 administrative and economic delegates at the 8th Congress. This also reflected the roadmap of “concentrating on economic construction” in North Korea since the 3rd Plenary Session of the 7th Congress of the WPK in 2018.

**Table 1 List of Members of the Standing Committee and Members of the 8th Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK**

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|  | Name | Position |
| Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau | Kim Jong Un | General Secretary of the WPK, Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the WPK, and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission |
| Choe Ryong-hae | Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly and First Vice President of the State Affairs Commission |
| Jo Yong-won | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and Member of the Central Military Commission |
| Ri Pyongchol | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and Marshal of the People’s Army |
| Kim Tok-Hun | Premier of North Korea |
| Members of the Political Bureau | Pak Thae-song | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
| Pak Jong chon | Chief of the General Staff and Marshal of the People’s Army |
| Jong Sang Hak | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and Chief of the Central Inspection Commission |
| Ri Il-hwan | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and the Head of the Workers and Social Organizations Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
| Kim Tu Il | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and Head of the Economic Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
| Choe Sang Gon | Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and the Head of the Science and Education Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
| Kim Jae-ryong | Head of the Organization and Guidance Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
| O Il Jong | Head of the Military Government Guidance Department of the Central Committee of the WPK and Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK |
| Kim Yong Chol | Head of the United Front Department of the Central Committee of the WPK |
|  | O Su Yong | Chief of the Second Economic Committee of the Central Committee of the WPK and Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK |
| Kwon Yong jin | Director of the General Political Bureau of the North Korean People’s Army, Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK, and General of the People’s Army |
| Kim Jeong Gwan | Minister of National Defense, Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK, and General of the People’s Army |
| Jong Kyong-thaek | Minister of State Security, Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK, and General of the People’s Army |
| Ri Yong Gil | Minister of Social Security, Member of the Central Military Commission of the WPK, and General of the People’s Army |

Source: 《Rodong Shinmun》reported on January 11, 2021

At the same time, different from the 7th Congress of the WPK in 2016, the organizational structure and heads of central ministries were made public for the first time, and heads of some functional departments in the Party were added or made public. The heads of the Economic Department, the Military Government Guidance Department, the Central Discipline Investigation Department, the Justice Department, and the Central Economic Policy Office of the Central Committee of the WPK made a debut in the reports after the 8th Congress of the WPK. Obviously, compared to the 7th Congress, the 8th Congress of the WPK disclosed much new information and became more and more transparent. This was a new change in North Korea after Kim Jong Un came to office in 2011.

In addition, the WPK regards the continuous improvement of people’s living standards as the supreme principle of its activities and “making all possible efforts for the people” as the basic point of its work. At the 8th Congress, the WPK secured “the People-First Principle” as its basic political philosophy. In his concluding report at the 8th Congress, Kim Jong Un stated clearly, “The people-first principle is a fundamental issue and a basic political philosophy decisive of the survival or ruin of the Party and the victory or failure of socialism and should be vigorously and consistently unfolded. The People-First Principle should be secured as a firm political climate of the state and as a Party climate and national climate.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Under “the People-First Principle”, improvement of people’s livelihood will be a major issue for North Korea during the new five-year plan period. Kim Jong Un stressed that “It is the unshakable determination of the Party to make a breakthrough in solving the people’s food, clothing and housing problems at any cost and effect tangible changes and innovations, which will benefit the people in reality, in the new five-year plan period.” To this end, the 8th Congress of North Korea set a series of goals to improve the people’s livelihood, including the plans for building 50,000 flats in the Capital Pyongyang and 25,000 houses in the Komdok area, Hamgyungnam-do, and 8 million tons of cement production in the building materials industry.[[6]](#footnote-6) All of this fully reflected the political philosophies of “the People Are God” and “the People-First Principle” of the WPK.

1. Fully Summarize the Achievements and Deviations Since the 7th Congress, Chart out a New Five-Year Plan for National Economic Development, and Emphasize the Self-Reliance Policy

Concerning the issue of economic and social development, a new five-year plan for national economic development was charted out at the 8th Congress of the WPK. Kim Jong Un further indicated in a report at the 8th Congress that the WPK carefully reviewed the achievements and deviations at the 8th Congress in order to further accelerate domestic economic construction, and he also admitted in public for the first time some objectives of the five-year strategy for the national economic development for 2016-2020 that fell a long way short of implementation. Kim Jong Un admitted in his opening address at the 8th Congress that “Though the period of implementing the five-year strategy for the national economic development ended in 2020, almost all sectors fell a long way short of the set objectives.”[[7]](#footnote-7) He also criticized that the past five-year strategy for national economic development had not been properly set on the basis of scientific calculation and grounds, science and technology failed to actually play the role of propelling the economic work of the country, and the work of readjusting and reinforcing the irrational economic work system and discipline was not properly done. It was historically rare for a North Korean leader to admit in public an economic failure and its reasons. Since Kim Jong Un took office, it has been often reported in North Korean media that the North Korean leader criticized in public some problems in the country, and this is an important new change in North Korea that has occurred since he assumed the top leadership position. At the same time, the public admission of an economic failure and its reasons by the North Korean leader also reflected the strong will of North Korea to make active endeavours to improve things.

According to the data released by the Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Committee of North Korea in September 2018, North Korea registered GDP of USD 30.70 billion and GDP per capita of USD 1,214 in 2017[[8]](#footnote-8), which still made it a low-income country when compared to the average GDP in the world. The severe international sanctions imposed on North Korea in recent years have significantly hindered its economic efforts and normal foreign and economic interactions. This was an objective reason why it fell short of the objectives in the five-year strategy for national economic development.

In December 2019, the 5th Plenary Session of the 7th Central Committee of the WPK adopted a “frontal breakthrough war” strategy to overcome the multiple difficulties caused by international sanctions. However, the stagnant North Korea-U.S. and inter-Korean relations and the lack of substantial progress in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula did not bring any fundamental improvement to the external environment facing North Korea. In order to secure “zero cases” of COVID-19 in the country following the sudden outbreak in early 2020, North Korea has closed the border crossings with China and and Russia since late February 2020, which basically interrupted its foreign transportation and communication, resulted in a significant reduction in foreign economic trade, and seriously affected the normal operation of its economy.

The border closure, once sustained permanently under COVID-19, will exert greater impact and may lead to serious consequences due to a shortage of raw materials, materials, food, and foreign exchanges. Therefore, North Korea needs to readjust its domestic economic policy and foreign policy and set new national development goals in the context of domestic hardships, economic difficulties, and overwhelming pressure from the international community, as well as the impact of COVID-19.

It was reported by *Rodong Sinmun* in North Korea that the new five-year plan still stands on the footholds of self-reliance and self-supporting[[9]](#footnote-9), combined with further foreign economic activities to complement and enhance economic development based on self-reliance. To this end, the 8th Congress of the WPK created the Economic Department and the Central Economic Policy Office of the Central Committee of the WPK, headed by Kim Tu Il, a member of the Political Bureau, and Jon Hyon Chol, alternate member of the Political Bureau, to coordinate and study the Party’s economic policies.

Kim Jong Un stated clearly in the concluding report at the 8th Congress, “The general orientation of the five-year plan for the national economic development is to lay solid foundations for reenergizing the overall national economy and improving the people’s standard of living by concentrating efforts on the main links in the whole chain of economic development.”[[10]](#footnote-10) The economic strategy of North Korea at the present stage is the one for readjustment and reinforcement aimed at putting its economy on a normal track to run smoothly by restoring and readjusting the economic work and the organic relations among sectors and pushing ahead with the work for cementing the self-supporting foundations. This indicates that the Party’s strategy of “concentrating on economic construction” adopted at the 7th Plenary Session of the 3rd Central Committee of the WPK in April 2018 is basically unchanged and will continue to be implemented and enforced.

In order to implement the new five-year plan for national economic development, North Korea stressed that the Cabinet, as the economic headquarters of the country, should properly enforce the Cabinet-responsibility system and the Cabinet-centred system, readjust and reinforce the irrational economic work system and discipline, improve the past ad hoc approach, and increase different investments in the economic sector, and especially make use of the important role of science and technology and human resources in economic development. In North Korea, metallurgy, chemistry, electricity, coal and railway transportation are considered the basic industries and have traditionally been the key industries that are prioritized for development. Currently, the energy, raw materials, electricity and food sectors in North Korea still fail to sustain it as a self-supporting country and thus will receive more investments in the future. Despite the existing difficulties, the WPK has put forward the spirit of self-reliance and the slogans of “Chollima Speed” and “Scientific Self-Reliance”, emphasizing the localization and independent development of raw materials and technologies and actively mobilizing people in the whole nation to move forward for the objectives of the new five-year plan for the national economic development.

1. Strengthen and Develop Party Building Work and Emphasize the Solo Leadership System of the Central Committee of the WPK and the Political Philosophy of “Single-minded Unity” of the Party

Historically, the WPK has attached importance to improving its fighting efficiency and leadership ability and has made the establishment of the only leadership system the main line of work. The Auditing Commission of the Central Committee of the WPK, as required in the Rules and Constitution of the 7th Congress of the WPK, will hold party members accountable if they violate the Party’s discipline, including violating the Party’s only leadership system or Rules and Constitution, and it will consider and deal with complaints from the committees and members of the Party. The Central Inspection Commission will inspect the financial management of the Party.

Kim Jong Un stressed in the report at the 8th Congress, “The unified leadership system of the Party Central Committee was firmly established in the entire Party, the fighting efficiency and leadership ability of the Party remarkably developed, and the Party’s foundation readjusted and developed in a comprehensive and detailed way.” It was decided at the 8th Congress of the WPK to dismiss the Auditing Commission of the Central Committee of the WPK and to pass its functions to the Central Inspection Commission. As the Central Inspection Commission gains more power, so do the party inspection commissions at the province, city and county levels, accompanied by corresponding provisions.[[11]](#footnote-11) In the past, the Central Inspection Commission was only responsible for inspecting the financial management of the Party. After the Rules and Constitution of the Party was revised, it is authorized to supervise and investigate violations of the Party discipline that hinder the achievement of the only leadership of the Central Committee of the WPK and is responsible for dealing with considerations, complaints and petitions on Party discipline issues.

The new Central Inspection Commission of the WPK is headed by Jong Sang Hak, Member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK, and its deputy chief is Pak Thae-dok, alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and Director of the Central Discipline Investigation Department. This setting is aimed to further improving the supervision mechanism in the Party. Compared to the 7th Congress, the 8th Congress further highlights the determination of the WPK to emphasize and strengthen party building and supervision by appointing a member and an alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK to lead the Central Inspection Commission, which also marks an important change. In addition, the new Justice Department of the Central Committee of the WPK will be in charge of the Party’s law enforcement work and will collaborate with other national judicial departments such as the Ministry of Social Security, the Ministry of National Defense, the National Auditing Commission, the Central Court, the Central Procuratorate.

It was stressed at the 8th Congress of the WPK that the Central Inspection Commission should play an important role in “establishing rules of conduct and supervising and investigating all violations of party discipline and bureaucratic and corrupt practices that hinder the only leadership of the Central Committee of the WPK”. The WPK believes that the North Korean revolution has entered a new period of development and great changes. In order to adapt to the new period, the WPK proposes to focus its efforts on consolidating the cadres, who are the basic core of the Party and commanders of the revolution, and to complete the most important task of strengthening single-minded unity in the Party and the revolutionary forces at present. The WPK identifies the primary targets of struggle that are most important to consider as the abuse of power, bureaucracy and malpractices. To this end, the WPK intensifies criticism, ideological struggle and study within the Party, thoroughly establishes the revolutionary discipline, and greatly improves the competency and capacity of party cadres.

In his report made at the 2nd Plenary Session of the 8th Congress of the WPK held in Pyongyang from February 8 to 11, 2021, Kim Jong Un once again emphasized that “The Party organization should vigorously fight against the overbearing style, bureaucracy, and malpractices of cadres, and at the same time firmly eradicate those who shelter and assist anti-socialist and non-socialist behaviors from the rank of cadres.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Kim Tu Il, who was the newly appointed Member of the Political Bureau and Head of the Economic Department of the Central Committee of the WPK at the 8th Congress, was dismissed within one month after he took office because he failed to strictly implement the strategies and policies of the Party. He was succeeded by O Su Yong, Member of the Political Bureau and concurrently Secretary of the Secretariat Bureau and Director of the Economic Department of the Central Committee of the WPK.[[13]](#footnote-13) This showed that the WPK is paying more and more attention to the building of party discipline and party climate and is determined to fight against privilegeism and make the strict rule of the Party as a long-term political orientation to follow.

In addition, WPK attaches importance to the construction of grassroots party organizations and ideological education of party members. The first workshop for responsible secretaries of city and county party committees was held in Pyongyang in March 2021. The Six Conference of Cell Secretaries of the Workers’ Party of Korea was held in April. Kim Jong Un stressed at the conference that strengthening Party cells is fundamental and important to making the volitional unity of the entire Party rock-solid, and he also advanced ten major tasks that face Party cells and twelve major traits which their secretaries should possess.[[14]](#footnote-14) Therefore, in order to complete the new five-year plan for the national economic development formulated at the 8th Congress, the WPK has not only set up responsible agencies and reorganized the leadership team, but also fully communicated, organized and studied its strategies, guidelines and policies from central to local, trying to mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of the people nationwide. This thus fully reflects its political approach and work style of “everything for the people and everything by relying on them”.

IV. Further Expand and Develop Friendly Relations with Socialist Countries, Improve Foreign Relations, and Transform the External Environment More Powerfully

With independence, peace and friendliness as the basic philosophy of its foreign policy, the WPK develops foreign relations under the principles of full equity, independence, mutual respect, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and mutual benefits. It develops good-neighbourly and friendly relations with other countries, strengthens alliances with independent forces opposing imperialism, and resolutely opposes imperialist aggression and war instigation.[[15]](#footnote-15) In September 1991, North Korea officially joined the United Nations. Currently, it has established diplomatic relations with more than 160 countries and organizations.

Genera Secretary Kim Jong Un of the WPK stressed in the concluding report at the 8th Congress that the general direction of the external work at present is to comprehensively expand and develop the foreign relations as befitting the strategic position of the state and thus provide reliable political and diplomatic guarantees to socialist construction.[[16]](#footnote-16) The current foreign policy and stand of North Korea is strengthening friendship and solidarity with all the countries in the world respecting its sovereignty and achieving genuine international justice to further increase its international authority and influence. To this end, North Korea stressed the need for the field of external work to expand further and develop relations with socialist countries.

Kim Jong Un indicated particularly in his concluding report at the 8th Congress, “By prioritizing the long-standing and special North Korea-China relations, our Party developed the friendly relations with China as required by the new century and opened a new chapter in the North Korea-China relations of friendship with socialism as its core.”[[17]](#footnote-17) In March 2018, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un paid the first visit to China, which was the first overseas visit he made since he assumed the supreme leadership position of North Korea in 2011 and a friendly visit to China by the top leader of North Korea after a seven-year hiatus. Later, he visited China three times, making China the most visited country to him. In June 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping visited North Korea, which was the first official visit of a Chinese leader to North Korea after a 14-year hiatus and the fifth meeting between the two leaders in less than a year and a half. The two leaders deepened strategic communication and mutual understanding, enhanced trust between the two parties, and opened a new era of friendly relations between China and North Korea with socialism as a core through a variety of means, including summit talks, exchange of congratulatory telegrams and personal letters, and the sending of delegations to visit each other.

After the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a letter of sympathy to General Secretary Xi Jinping immediately, showing his resolute support for China’s fight against the epidemic. He also explicitly supports China on the Xinjiang issue and Hong Kong issue. These actions have further consolidated and developed the traditional friendly and cooperative relations between China and North Korea.

During the opening and closing of the 8th Congress of the WPK, General Secretary Xi Jinping wasted no time sending congratulatory messages to General Secretary Kim Jong Un, who also immediately replied to express his gratitude to the Chinese leader. This demonstrated the strong vitality of traditional friendly and cooperative relations between China and North Korea.

At the same time, North Korea strengthens its traditional friendly relations with Russia, Vietnam, Cuba and Laos. In April 2019, Kim Jong Un officially visited Russia for the first time since he took office. Through the summit talks, the leaders of North Korea and Russia further consolidated the traditional North Korea-Russia relations and developed friendly and cooperative ties between the two countries, laying the foundation for further expansion and development of friendly relations between North Korea and Russia. In addition, North Korea enhanced and developed bilateral relations with Cuba and Vietnam into special comradeship and strategic relations through the Pyongyang summit with the head of state of Cuba and the Hanoi summit with Vietnam, which strengthened its solidarity with the socialist countries.

In June 2018, North Korea and the United States held their first summit talks in Singapore and reached a consensus on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, establishing a peace mechanism on the Peninsula, and building a new type of North Korea-U.S. relations. After the failure of the Hanoi summit in February 2019, the stagnant peace process on the Korean Peninsula has seriously affected the improvement of North Korea-U.S. relations. Kim Jong Un stressed at the 8th Congress that the WPK should orient external political activities with the main emphasis put on the United States, the principal enemy and that the key to establishing a new North Korea-U.S. relationship lies in the US withdrawal of its hostile policy toward North Korea. He also solemnly clarified North Korea’s stand that it would approach the United States on the principle of power for power and goodwill for goodwill in the future. Since the new Biden administration remains uncertain in its policy toward North Korea and the framework of past policies still lingers on, it will be difficult to see a breakthrough in North Korea-U.S. relations in the short term if the United States refuses to its hostile attitude toward North Korea.

In addition, inter-Korean relations are affected and restricted by North Korea-U.S. relations. Although North Korea and South Korea issued the *Panmunjom Declaration* and the *Pyongyang Joint Declaration in September*, many agreements have not been fulfilled. North Korea advocates a full cessation of hostile acts against the other side as well as the serious and honest implementation of a series of declarations between the two sides. So far, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has come to office for less than a year. If South Korea does not seize the opportunity actively, the agreements and consensus reached between the two sides in the past are likely to become mere scraps of paper.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the *Internationale* was heard at the closing ceremony of the 8th Congress of the WPK[[18]](#footnote-18). The song was not heard at the closing ceremony of the 7th Congress in 2016, and there have been few reports about it in North Korean media in recent years. This showed that the WPK, as a socialist party, attaches importance to the convention of socialist countries and will further strengthen friendly and cooperative relations with China, Vietnam, Cuba, Laos and other countries to enhance the overall strength of the socialist block.

V. Conclusion

The 8th Congress of the WPK was another important landmark congress since the 7th Congress of the WPK in 2016.[[19]](#footnote-19) The 7th Congress of the WPK was the first congress of the Party after Kim Jong Un took office and after a 36-year hiatus since the 6th Congress in 1980. It marked the opening of “the era of Kim Jong Un”. The 8th Congress of the WPK was held in the context when the objectives of the five-year strategy for the national economic development set at the 7th Congress fell short due to the serious impact of international sanctions, COVID-19, and floods. New objectives in the next five-year plan for the national economic development were set at the congress as well. The 8th Congress of the WPK marked the birth of institutionalized and mechanism-based political approach in the era of Kim Jong Un.

In order to overcome the difficulties facing North Korea, the WPK put forward the slogans of “The People Are God”, “Self-Reliance”, and “Single-minded Unity” and emphasized “the People-First Principle”, which fully embodied the political nature of the ruling socialist party. In order to complete the objectives in the new five-year plan for national economic development, North Korea created the Economic Department and the Central Economic Policy Office of the Central Committee of the WPK to coordinate and study the Party’s economic policies, thereby continuing to promote the national development roadmap of “concentrating on economic construction” since the 2nd Plenary Session of the 7th Congress of the WPK.

In addition, it was decided at the 8th Congress of the WPK to merge the Auditing Commission and the Central Inspection Commission of the Central Committee of the WPK as the new Central Inspection Commission responsible for discipline and financial supervision of the party, with a member of the Political Bureau as the chief, to strengthen and enhance the role of the party’s internal supervisory body. At the same time, the new Central Discipline Investigation Department is assistant to the Central Inspection Commission to further improve the internal supervision mechanism and thus strengthen the construction of the party.

At present, the situation on the Korean Peninsula remains uncertain. Amid the intensifying game between China and the United States, North Korea has proposed to fully expand and develop its foreign relations and especially gives priority to the consolidation and development of relations with socialist countries, in order to adapt to the evolving situation. To consolidate and develop traditional friendly and cooperative relations between China and North Korea is a long-term policy for both parties and a long-standing wish of the two peoples. In the future, based on the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, North Korea and China will further expand and develop friendly and cooperative relations between the two peoples.

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[Editor in Charge: Xiao Huan]

1. “서문은 김일성 - 김정일주의는주체사상에 기초하여 전일적으로 체계화된 혁명과 건설의 백과전서이며 인민대중의 자주성을 실현하기 위한 실천투쟁속에서 그 진리성과 생활력이 검증된 혁명적이며 과학적인 사상이라는데 대하여 정식화하였 다. ”《조선로동당 제8차대회에서 조선로동당규약개정에 대한 결정서 채택》, 《로동신문》2021년1월10일. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “당기관뿐아니라 정권기관, 근로단체, 사회단체를 비롯한 정치조직들의 책임자직제가 모두 위원장으로되여 있는것과 관련하여 최고형태의 정치조직으로서의 당의 권위를 철저히 보장할수 있게 각급 당위원회 위원장, 부위원장직제를 책임비서, 비서, 부비서로 하고 정무국올 비서국으로, 정무처를 비서처로 고치였다 . ”《조선로동당 제 8 차대회에서 조선로동당 규약 개 정에 대한》, 《로동신문》2021년1월10일. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “조선로동당 총비서는 전당을 대표하고 령도하는 당의 수반이다. 혁명하는당에 있어서 당의 수반은 전당의 조직적 의사를 체현한 혁명의 최고뇌수이며 령도의 중심, 단결의 증심이다. ”, 《조선로동당 제8조선로동당 제》, 《로동신문》2021년 1월11일. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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5. “On Report Made by Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un at the 8th Congress of the WPK - Great Programme for Struggle Leading Korean-style Socialist Construction to Fresh Victory”, http://www.kcna.kp/kcna.user.special.getArticlePage.kcmsf. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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