

# Issue Brief, The Summaries

Vol. 2021, No.13

## Analysis of Revisions to the Workers' Party Rules Addressed in North Korea's 8th Party Congress

Geedong Lee (Senior Research Fellow, INSS)

**INSS**

INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY  
국가안보전략연구원

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The full text of the Rules of the Workers' Party of Korea, which was amended during the Eighth Party Congress, has been released. The revised rules can be characterized as follows. First, while maintaining the ideas of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as the ideological basis for governance, the rules defined people-first politics as a basic political framework, and this appears to be a core ruling principle of the Kim Jong Un era. This outcome reflects Kim Jong Un's will toward development as well as his compromise on matters of succession and development. Second, the Party's theory of waging a revolution against South Korea (or "Party's theory of revolutionizing South Korea") was modified by eliminating the "Democratic Revolution for National Liberation and Democracy." This change reflects Pyongyang's acknowledgement of the reality that it is no longer viable to characterize South Korean society as a post-colonial U.S. colony. Third, the revisions reset the goal of realizing communism. Given that Kim Jong Un's regime has pursued "a road to socialism" and the construction of a standard socialist system," it is a logical consequence to resuscitate communism as the ultimate goal.

Fourth, the "Party's monolithic leadership system" phrase was revised to the "Party Central's monolithic leadership system." The "Party Central" is a title referring to General Secretary

Kim Jong Un. It will be important to identify the future relationship between the Supreme Leader and the Party Central Committee. Fifth, the General Secretary was empowered to have the right to organize the whole party. Although it is true that General Secretary has served as a party organizer up to now, the fact that this was stipulated in the revised party rules can be interpreted as the intent to institutionally strengthen Kim Jong Un's monolithic leadership. Sixth, Pyongyang created a new position of the First Secretary of the Party Central Committee. This revision might be intended to institutionally guarantee Kim Jong Un's mandate, or to minimize a potential power vacuum created in a future contingency. Whether or not he will be appointed as the first secretary will be a barometer of this interpretation.

Seventh, the power of the Party Central Military Commission appears to have been strengthened. According to the revised party rules, the Commission has been positioned as “the highest military organization” and newly authorized to command and control the military in addition to its powers of supervising defense projects. These changes seemingly indicate a weakening of the Party Central Committee's leadership over the Party Central Military Commission. This is because the existing “organization” authority has been shifted to the “election” authority. Finally, the status of the General Political Bureau of the People's Army has also declined. The previous description of it as “a power equal to the department of the Party's Central Committee” was removed in the revised Party rules. Moreover, the authority and status of the Party Committee of the People's Army, a body above the General Political Bureau, was newly

delineated as the same level as a “provincial party committee.”

Overall, the revised party rules can be summarized as follows. The rules have institutionalized the strengthening of party leadership and its control over the military, reinforced the conception of people-first politics, and strengthened Kim Jong Un’s monolithic leadership system, which has been consistently implemented since he seized power. With respect to South Korea policy, however, it is too early to judge the extent to which the deletion of the “red-communization of South Korea” theory, that is, “Democratic Revolution for National Liberation and Democracy,” is indicative of a shift in North Korea’s communization policy. This is because the communization policy has multiple facets and North Korea itself clarified in a Choson Shinbo publication on June 7 that it has never abolished the theory of revolution against the South.

Keywords: Rules of the Workers’ Party of Korea,  
Party Central Committee, Party Central,  
Party Central Military Commission, General Political Bureau,  
Democratic Revolution for National Liberation and Democracy