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**Translation**  
Research Associate  
Natalie Grant  
Intern  
Thomas L. Burkhalter

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The East Asia Institute  
#909 Sampoong B/D  
Eulji-ro 158, Jung-gu  
Seoul 04548  
Republic of Korea

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## Interpretation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Worker's Party of Korea

Young-Sun Ha

Chairman of the EAI Board of Trustees / Seoul National University

The 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Workers Party of Korea (WPK) was the first Congress to be held in 36 years. The opening day set the scene with a commencement ceremony, followed by two days of discussions on the 70,000-word WPK Central Committee Report. The fourth and final day concluded the event by bestowing the title of Chairman of the WPK upon Kim Jong Un and lowering the curtains after the final closing ceremony.

However, it appears that the audience who watched the full four days of this rare theatrical production were left bewildered, with muddled impressions that added up to a scene not unlike the parable of the blind men and the elephant. This article seeks to read between the lines of the script rather than analyzing what happened at face value in order to clear up this lingering confusion.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, Kim Jong Un spoke at the opening ceremony, stating, "The Seventh Congress of the WPK will sum up the brilliant successes and invaluable experience our Party and people have gained during the period under review and put forward the strategic line and tasks to keep ushering in a great golden age of socialist construction and advance of our revolution." He continued, "This Congress of the WPK will be a historic occasion for setting up another milestone in the struggle for the development of the glorious Kimilsungist-Kimjongilist Party and achieving the cause of socialism."

On the third day, Chairman Kim Jong Un wrapped up the WPK Central Committee Report with the words, "Let the whole Party, the entire army and all the people go all out for the implementation of the tasks advanced at the Seventh Congress of the Workers Party of Korea to hasten the final victory of the Juche revolution! This is the slogan to be held up by our Party, the army, and the people in their struggle." He emphasized, "It is necessary to intensify the work of establishing the monolithic leadership system of the party on a high stage. It is necessary to continue to carry out the Party's strategic line of simultaneously pushing forward with economic construction and the building of nuclear weapons." He also spoke regarding the Byungjin policy, a policy that directs the government to simultaneously push for the development of nuclear weapons and the economy. "This strategic line is the most revolutionary and scientific one reflecting the lawful requirements of building a thriving socialist nation and the specific conditions of our country."

During the final day's closing ceremony, Kim Jong Un summarized the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the WPK as having "unfolded a magnificent blueprint for realizing our people's dreams and ideals by building a powerful socialist country on a full scale under the banner of modeling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. It has also advanced important tasks to be tackled in achieving independent

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unification of the country and accelerating global independence.”

Looking at Kim Jong Un’s lines, it appears that the three key parts of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the WPK were as follows: a “monolithic leadership system” as the protagonist, the “brilliant blueprint” for building a strong socialist state as the script, and the Byungjin policy as the acting guidelines.

The significance of the consolidation of Kim Jong Un’s monolithic leadership was best indicated in a speech given by First Vice Minister of the Organization Department of the WPK, Jo Yon Jun, during the 40-person panel session that followed Kim Jong Un’s reunification address. Vice Minister Jo recalled the Party activities aimed towards the achievement of monolithic leadership over the past four years and enumerated Kim Jong Un’s string of achievements during a crucial period in the Juche Revolution. He highlighted Kim Jong Un’s “exposure and crushing of a modern-day gang within the Party” as the turning point that brought about a fundamental shift in the struggle to unite the Party and establish monolithic Party leadership. He stressed that they had learned the hard lesson that a failure to establish monolithic leadership now could lead to the instillation of “tainted ideas” within the Party, having an irreversible effect on the Party and the revolution.

Kim Jong Un specifically emphasized the continuation of the monolithic leadership during his review of the past 36 years of Juche ideology and Songun politics during the opening of the WPK Central Committee Report. “The secret to the victories accomplished by the people and the Party as they carry out the Juche revolution lies within their high reverence of our Great Comrades Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and the continuation of the revolutionary feats carried out by our

leaders who struggled valiantly and brilliantly.”

On the second day of the Congress, Kim Jong Un, who is the third generation of Kim to appear on stage as leader after his grandfather, Kim Il Sung, and his father, Kim Jong Il, presented the WPK Central Committee Report, laying out in full-scale the “brilliant blueprint” that was hinted at during his New Year’s Address. However, the feature presentation showed us nothing we hadn’t already seen in the preview. As expected, Kim Jong Un first praised Kim Jong Il’s Songun policy and Kim Il-Song’s Juche ideology based on the “three revolutionary capabilities,” which have formed the historical landscape of North Korea’s leadership. He then outlined his blueprint for the future of the nation, the four stages of which can be divided as follows; building a strong socialist state, independent unification, global independence, and strengthening the development of the Party.

#### **The Four Stages of Kim Jong Un’s Blueprint**

In an effort to complete the first stage, building a strong socialist power, North Korea is working hard on expanding on the plans outlined in the New Year’s Address. The leadership’s top priority is to make North Korea a power in the fields of science and technology and adopt the cutting-edge technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They will also push to become a civilized power, with a strong focus on culture, the arts, education, physical education, and health; a political military power, with a socialist system of governance and a strong military; and an economic power, by adopting a new 5-Year Economic Development Plan from 2016 to 2020.

The second stage of the plan is to build a unified world power. Rather than pushing for a new unification plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the

*“For the sake of great national solidarity, North Korea must no longer cling to the hollow unification system of the past that does not align with North Korean ideals, but should instead work towards joint unification founded on federalism, which actually has the capacity to succeed.”*

focus will be on pursuing the “Three Principles of National Unification”, which were first outlined in the joint statement issued by North and South Korea on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1972. These principles implement North Korean federalism, great national solidarity, a peace guarantee, and sovereignty. However, for the sake of independence, Pyongyang criticized South Korea, calling upon the South to rid themselves of their subservience to the US and cast off the humiliating “Follow America Policy,” as well as to stop “ganging up with the US to engage in hostile acts against North Korea,” which is harmful for both Koreas. North Korea also claims that in order to guarantee peace, the US should recognize the change in North Korea’s strategic status as a nuclear power, the US should abandon its anachronistic “Hostile Chosun Policy,” the current armistice should be converted to a peace treaty, and South Korea should withdraw troops and military equipment and put an end to war exercises and thoughtless military policy provocations. For the sake of great national solidarity, North Korea must no longer cling to the hollow unification system of the past that does not align with North Korean ideals, but should instead work towards joint unification founded on federalism, which actually has the capacity to succeed.

The third stage of the blueprint is to become an international world power. In order to achieve this aim, North Korea will continue to follow the Byungjin line to counter the nuclear threat posed by imperialist nations and strengthen nuclear self-defense capabilities. In addition, North Korea will use nuclear weapons as a deterrent and will endeavor not to launch the first strike while pursuing global denuclearization as long as it does not infringe on the autonomy of North Korea. Furthermore, the country will strive to develop

friendly, cooperative ties with developed countries with whom relations were previously hostile, respect the autonomy of nations, and normalize and better relations with friendly countries.

The fourth and final stage emphasizes the importance of the establishment of Kim Jong Un’s monolithic leadership by detailing how this would “raise high the revolutionary banner of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.” Monolithic leadership would “unify (the banner) again and again as the pillar of the Central Committee of the WPK, strongly move forward for the sake of socialist construction, strengthening the advancement of the Party, implementing global independence, and our nation’s independent unification.”

#### **A Better Strategy?**

In order to actualize his “brilliant blueprint” despite the current harsh reality, Kim Jong Un has promised to fight for and adopt the Byungjin line to make North Korea an economic and nuclear powerhouse. Kim Jong Un made it clear that, “the Byungjin line is not merely a temporary countermeasure, but rather a permanent measure that will reward us with the most revolutionary profit. This strategic path will solidify the impregnable defense capabilities of our nation by focusing on nuclear weaponry. It is also the most revolutionary and just path for the rapid construction of a strong socialist state by even further revitalizing the building of our economy.” Also, while informing the audience of the revisions to the “Rules of the WPK” on the last day of the Congress, Kim Jong Un emphasized the strategic and revolutionary need for monolithic leadership and the construction of a strong socialist state that has superior science and technology, a strong economy, which is

*“The prospects for successfully using his “brilliant blueprint” to make his vision for North Korea a reality during the 21<sup>st</sup> century via the strategic selection of the Byungjin line are looking rather bleak.”*

civilized, and has a political military as matters of grave national concern.

Kim Jong Un seized the opportunity presented by the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the WPK to proclaim to North Korea and the rest of the world that his monolithic leadership had been realized. Despite this, the prospects for successfully using his “brilliant blueprint” to make his vision for North Korea a reality during the 21<sup>st</sup> century via the strategic selection of the Byungjin line are looking rather bleak. The June 2010 East Asia Institute publication *The Future of North Korea 2032: The Co-evolutionary Strategy for Advancement* provides further insight. This publication, co-edited with Jo Dong-Ho, provides a blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that would be capable of brightening North Korea’s otherwise bleak future. From 2008 to 2011, North Korea would need to pull away from the Songun policy. Then would come the first phase, during which North Korea would reform via a co-evolutionary strategy for advancement from 2012 to 2021, followed by a second phase involving a complicated matrix of co-evolutionary strategy for advancement from 2022 to 2032. We also recommended that the North Korean authorities refer to our blueprint to properly design a strategy for their survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, if Kim-Jong Un’s vision for a brilliant and splendid 21<sup>st</sup> century North Korea is to be implemented, then an immediate effort must be made to change his blueprint and his Byungjin line to adhere to the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both on a national and international level. First and foremost, rather than focusing on the excessive national security plan of the economic and nuclear path that is ill-matched with the current era, North Korea needs to shift towards a more appropriate national security plan that does not hinge on

the pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The above-mentioned path rests squarely in the global politics of 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism. However, the US is not trying to push for more 19<sup>th</sup> century style imperialism. If one were to say that the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time that dreamed of freedom, then the 21<sup>st</sup> century is moving toward a time of joint unity. Yet, rather than creating an unrealistic and imaginary enemy deserving of America’s “hostile policy toward North Korea,” and pushing for the implementation of the Byungjin line which has thus far accomplished nothing but excessive economic sanctions, North Korea should follow a 21<sup>st</sup> century path that promotes security and prosperity via conventional weaponry. The longer North Korea takes to make this shift, the more deeply issues surrounding the ‘monolithic leadership’ will intensify.

North Korea needs to turn over a new leaf while keeping in mind the domestic and international realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which are rapidly shifting away from the dreams of a unified power under the “Three Principles of Unification” that acted as the base for the revolution for the past half century. North Korea must do away with the legacy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which included a federalist reunification plan that would be accomplished through strengthening North Korea’s revolutionary capabilities, and the “Institutional Unification Theory”, which is built on the premise of the collapse of North and South Korea. Instead, North Korea must design and then implement a full-scale unification plan built around a cooperative network and suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As the EAI publication, *Future of North Korea 2032: The Co-evolutionary Strategy for Advancement*, suggests, North Korea must again restructure its four-faceted focus on

*“North Korea should engage in a collaborative and co-evolutionary effort with South Korea and other neighboring countries.”*

superior science and technology, a strong economy, becoming civilized, and having a political military. This strategy is a complicated mix of creating a 21<sup>st</sup>-century union of states and a wealthy and powerful country reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to bring it in line with the three steps of the co-evolutionary strategy for advancement.

If North Korea makes this effort, we may see an 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in the near future. In the case of such an event, we would expect a new blueprint to be laid out showing the brilliant future that North Korea could yet have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order for this to become a reality, however, North Korea should engage in a collaborative and co-evolutionary effort with South Korea and other neighboring countries. ■

— *Young-Sun Ha* is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the East Asia Institute, and also a professor emeritus at Seoul National University. He currently serves as a member of President Park Geun-hye’s civilian National Security Advisory Panel. Dr. Ha received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Washington.