

Research Reports

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Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought

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"Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" (*)

North Korea is an ideological state. One of the reasons that such a peculiar nation has survived for more than 70 years is clearly its control through ideology.

There is an idiom in the ROK that goes, "hitting a boulder with an egg." It is often used in reference to stupid acts in the sense of trying something that cannot be done. The expression "an egg injected with ideology can crack rocks," however, is often quoted in Party newspapers in North Korea. In North Korea, the ideology even enables an egg to break rocks. To the outside world, such thinking seems silly. However, the reality is that such power of ideology is valued within North Korea. This is one of the reasons why we have no choice but to pay close attention to the status of ideology in North Korea if we are to take an intrinsic approach to thinking about North Korea. In this article, I would like to consider the moves surrounding "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" that has recently been emphasized in North Korea.

"Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism"

Kim Jong-un said in the "April 6th Statement" he delivered on April 6, 2012 at the start of his administration that "the guiding idea of the Workers' Party of Korea is the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism." Kim Jong-un presented "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" as his own guiding principle and formulized the Workers' Party of Korea as the "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism Party".

However, there was not enough substance at that time to answer the question of what "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" was. The ideological core of Kimilsungism was "Juche thought," and the ideological core of "Kimjongilism" was "Songun thought." The common denominator in the ideologies of his predecessors was upholding of socialism. Although Kim Jong-un formulated "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" as a guiding principle, its ideological content was nothing but "the path of independence, Songun and socialism, " the ideas of his predecessors and socialism as their common denominator.

In seeking to exercise Party leadership to guide the government, the Kim Jong-un administration had to explore ways of breaking away from the core ideological principle of Songun while still advocating Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. The 10 years since the start of the Kim Jong-un administration can be said to have been a decade of "breaking away from Songun." Upholding "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" as a guiding principle despite this should be seen as a kind of contradiction.

The "people-first principle" and the "our-state-first principle"

However, since General Secretary Kim Jong-il's "Obituary" stated that "there will be no concessions or even slight fluctuations on the path of the Juche revolution and the Songun revolution," the newly inaugurated Kim Jong-un regime had no choice but to "inherit" Songun thought while overcoming Songun thought became the challenge for Kim Jong-un.

The term "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" was also not born in the Kim Jong-un era. As Kim Jong-un himself said in his April 6th Statement, "our Party members and the people have already called Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism the combination of the President's revolutionary thought and the General Secretary's revolutionary thought." In other words, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism was a guiding principle not created by Kim Jong-un but already concocted in the Kim Jong-il era. Kim Jong-un made this clear in his April 6 Statement.

On the other hand, his April 6th Statement also emphasized that everyone must act according to the motto of President Kim Il-sung and General Secretary Kim Jong-il - "the People are god" - suggesting the germination of the later "people-first principle." It could be said that the April 6 Statement showed a parallel approach of advancing the Songun principle while improving the people's standard of living.

In Kim Jong-un's first in-person speech at a military parade on April 15, 2012, the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung's birth, he emphasized "holding high the banner of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism." He also pointed out "the path of independence, the path of Songun and the path of socialism." These were the constituent elements of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

On the other hand, he promised improvements in people's standard of living, saying "Our Party is firmly determined to ensure that our people, who are the best in the world and who have remained faithful to the Party in the face of all manner of difficulties, do not have to tighten their belts again, but enjoy all the benefits of socialism."

Kim Jong-un said at the Fourth Conference of Cell Secretaries of the Workers' Party of Korea in January 2013, "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is, in essence, a people-first doctrine."

In his New Year's address in 2015, Kim Jong-un emphasized the "people-first principle" by declaring "We should ensure that the people-first principle runs through the whole of Party work as appropriate for its nature as a motherly Party to make the climate of respecting, loving and depending on them pervade it, and that Party work focuses on improving their living standards."

Furthermore, at the 7th National Congress of the Party in May 2016, Kim Jong-un formalized the people-first principle as the Party's policy by stating, "It is important to thoroughly apply the people-first principle to the whole of Party work."

In addition, in the revision of the Party rules at the 8th Party Congress in January 2021, the provision "The Workers' Party of Korea will establish Songun politics as the basic socialist political mode and lead the revolution and construction under the banner of Songun" was changed to "The Workers' Party of Korea will establish the people-first principle as the basic socialist political mode", meaning that North Korea's basic political mode was changed from "Songun" to "people-first." It can be said that Kim Jong-un had spent eight years setting up the people-first principle as "the basic socialist political mode" of the Party since the Fourth Conference of Cell Secretaries of the Workers' Party of Korea in January 2013, during which he planted the seed: "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is, in essence, a people-first doctrine."

The "our-state-first principle" first appeared in North Korea's domestic media in November 2017. In his New Year's Address on New Year's Day 2019, Kim Jong-un formulated the "our-state-first" principle as his new governing principle, stating "However the situation and circumstances may change, Party members and all other working people should cherish the 'our-state-first' principle as an element of their faith and step up socialist economic construction in our own way. They should glorify the country's great history by working with sincere devotion and a patriotic desire for developing their homeland by their own efforts before the eyes of the world, the precious land of socialism which they have defended from generation to generation." This is a result of Kim Jong-un's active pursuit of North-South, US-North Korea, and China-North Korea summits in 2018, and was also part of an attempt to raise the status of Kim Jong-un as a statesman holding summits on an equal footing with the leaders of major powers. Kim Jong-un's active diplomacy was frustrated by the collapse of the US-North Korea summit

in Hanoi in February 2019, but the our-state-first principle has taken root as North Korea's guiding principle.

In this way, the emergence of two new guiding ideologies during the Kim Jong-un era, namely, the "people-first principle" and the "our-state-first principle," indicates that he has created a framework for establishing the guiding ideology of his own era.

"Kim Jong-unism" or "Comrade Kim Jong-un's Revolutionary Thought"?

On October 28, 2021, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), the ROK's intelligence agency, reported at a meeting of the National Assembly Intelligence Committee that the term "Kim Jong-unism" had begun to be used inside North Korea, and that photos of President Kim Il-sung and General Secretary Kim Jong-il had been removed from WPK conference rooms. North Korea officially stipulates in its Party rules that the Workers' Party of Korea is "a Juche-oriented revolutionary party whose only guiding idea is the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism."

It is hard to believe that the NIS made such a report to the National Assembly without any basis, and it seems that the report was made because the term "Kim Jong-unism" was used in some internal documents. However, as far as this author has seen, the term "Kim Jong-unism" has not yet been confirmed in major North Korean media such as the *Rodong Sinmun* at the time of writing this article.

On the other hand, the phrase "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" has often appeared in the North Korean media since the beginning of 2021.

The Workers' Party of Korea held its 8th National Congress from January 5 of that year and the *Rodong Sinmun* on January 10 published a contribution by Kim Bong-seok, vice chairman of the Pyongyang Party Committee, on Kim Jong-un's report on the work of the 7th WPK Central Committee. In this piece, Kim Bong-seok said, "It was a brilliant victory brought about by the aggressive revolutionary thought and the mature and sophisticated leadership of the beloved Comrade Supreme Leader, and the desperate struggle of the entire people." He therein used the expression "aggressive revolutionary thought... of...Comrade Supreme Leader."

In addition, the 6th Conference of Cell Secretaries of the Workers' Party of Korea was held in Pyongyang from April 6 to 8 of the same year. According to the *Rodong Sinmun* (April 7), Jo Yong-won, a member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK, offered a report titled "Let's unconditionally and devotedly carry out the five-year plan set forth at the Eighth Party Congress by further boosting the militant and fighting efficiency of Party cells." In his report, Jo Yong-won repeated the phrase "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" at numerous points in this report: "Saying that the absolute worship of all the Party members, people and service personnel for the General Secretary grows more ardent as time goes by and they are making uninterrupted leaps forward towards the high peak of socialism at present, the reporter added this urgently demands that

everyone firmly arm themselves with the General Secretary's revolutionary thought and outlook on the revolution before setting forth tasks for strengthening Party cells...He underscored the need for Party cell secretaries to bear in mind the importance of the historic duties they assume before the times and revolution, throw themselves into the sacred work for ensuring that the entire Party and the whole society breathe and move guided by the revolutionary thought of Kim Jong-un, and establish the strong revolutionary discipline and order by which everyone moves as one under his unified leadership...all Party cell secretaries should not forget even a moment their important mission of being in charge of the basic organizations of the dignified WPK and they should be the front-line combatants and vanguard fighters who are devotedly implementing the new five-year plan set forth at the 8th Congress of the WPK by upholding with loyalty the revolutionary thought and leadership of the General Secretary."

Rodong Sinmun also reported on this meeting on the following day (April 8). In an article titled "Second-day Sitting of Sixth Conference of Cell Secretaries of Workers' Party of Korea Held," it was pointed that Jo Yong-won mentioned the term "revolutionary thought of the General Secretary" again: "They expressed their firm will to strengthen Party cells, the lowest-echelon organizations of our Party, into vanguard ranks of loyalty upholding the revolutionary thought and leadership of the General Secretary single-mindedly and to make landmark progress in the struggle for implementing the decisions made at the Party Congress."

In addition, *Rodong Sinmun* reported on April 9, 2021, in an article titled "6th Conference of Cell Secretaries of Workers' Party of Korea Closes WPK General Secretary Kim Jong-un Makes Important Conclusion", that "The participants were full of high enthusiasm to definitely turn Party cells into ranks of vanguard fighters in devotedly implementing the Party's policies and thus make contributions to steadily enhancing the unity and fighting efficiency of the entire Party true to the revolutionary thought and leadership of the General Secretary." The expression "revolutionary thought... of the General Secretary" was used here, too.

It is possible that the expression "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" was used before that, but the way this word is used after 2021 clearly seems to have certain direction.

"Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" and "Comrade Kim Jong-un's Revolutionary Thought"

In addition, Korean Central Television reported during the 8pm news on November 11, 2021 on the completion ceremony held on November 10 at the hot spring resort facility "Undok Health Complex" in Unsan County, North Pyongan Province. On the news screen, the slogan "Long live the great Kimilsungism and Kimjongilism!" can be seen in red on the left side and "Long live the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un!" on the right side.

We cannot but pay attention to the fact that the "great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" and the "revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un" were presented in parallel and on the same level.

On December 17, 2021, the 10th anniversary of the death of General Secretary Kim Jong-il, a central memorial rally was held at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang, and Choe Ryong-hae, chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, made a memorial address. Choe Ryong-hae used the word "revolutionary thought" three times in his memorial address. Referring to "the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Il-sung" "the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-il" and "the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un", he mentioned the revolutionary thoughts of the three supreme leaders at the same level.

In addition, he concluded, "We will firmly arm ourselves with Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary ideology, more thoroughly establish the single leadership system of the Central Committee of the Party for the entire Party and society and serve the ideas and intentions of Comrade Kim Jong-un with single heart and mind."

This remark treats Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought as equivalent to that of both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, and can be viewed as requiring the Party and society to "serve faithfully the ideas and intentions of Comrade Kim Jong-un with single heart and mind."

"Model the whole Party and society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought"

On December 4, 2021, the 8pm news on Korean Central Television reported on the completion ceremony for the Stevia processing factory that would be producing starch syrup and other products in North Pyongan Province. Onscreen during the coverage, the slogan "Long live Kimilsungism and Kimjongilism!" was displayed on the left side, and the slogan "Long live the revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un!" was on the right side.

Furthermore, a banner bearing the slogan "Model the whole Party and society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought!" was hanging on the building in the background.

Korean Central Television reported on January 7, 2022, that a rally to implement the resolutions of the 4th General Assembly of the 8th Central Committee of the Party was held in North Pyongan Province and, at the venue of the rally, a banner was hung that read "Model the whole Party and society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought!".

It is interesting to consider what background exists for the slogan "Model the whole Party and society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" to have made one appearance after another in North Pyongan Province.

On December 5, 2021, the *Rodong Sinmun* published an editorial titled "The comprehensive development of our style of socialism is a new revolution in the three major areas of idea, technology, and culture." It said, "Modeling the whole Party and society on the revolutionary thought of Comrade

General Secretary is the most important task of today's ideological revolution. When the ideological education for conviction and constitution of Comrade General Secretary's revolutionary thought is carried out more aggressively without interruption for a moment and the mental strength of the masses is continuously increased, a new upsurge will occur on all fronts of socialist construction, and miraculous results will continue to be achieved" underscoring that "modeling the whole Party and society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" is "the most important task of today's ideological revolution."

In addition, the Workers' Party of Korea held the 4th Plenary Meeting of the 8th Party Central Committee from December 27 to 31, 2021, and announced the results as "news coverage" on New Year's Day 2022. The reporting stated, "The People's Army should steadily intensify the work of modeling the whole army on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee and developing it into the revolutionary army of the Party that remains faithful and obedient to the guidance of the Party Central Committee, and direct all efforts to maintaining the training-first principle, preparing weapons and equipment for recurring mobilization and establishing the firm military discipline."

The "coverage" announcing the results of the plenary session of the Party Central Committee asserted that "the army should steadily intensify the work of modeling the whole army on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee". Since the "Party Central Committee" refers to "General Secretary Kim Jong-un," this can be interpreted as a request to "model the entire military on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un."

The Workers' Party of Korea held a Party convention in January 2021 and, at the convention, the Party rule stating "The Workers' Party of Korea is a Juche-oriented revolutionary party whose only guiding thought is the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" was modified as follows: "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is an encyclopedia of revolution and construction systematized in an integral way based on Juche thought, and a revolutionary and scientific idea whose truth and vitality have been proven in the practical struggle for realizing independence of the popular masses. The Workers' Party of Korea is a Juche-oriented revolutionary party whose only guiding thought is Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. The Workers' Party of Korea holds modeling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the supreme program of the Party." In other words, the WPK provided an explanation of what Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is and purposely added that "modeling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" was "the supreme program of the Party."

However, the phenomenon occurring at the end of 2021 was that, rather than Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism serving as "the only guiding thought", "the revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un" made its appearance, with the aim being not to "model the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" but instead to "model the whole Party and society on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un".

"Modeling" literally refers to one idea, but the phenomenon that is currently occurring in North Korea is that Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought seems to be rapidly coming to the forefront even though Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism remains the central thought.

It is possible that Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism has become pure ideal and the "revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un" has emerged as practical thought, but this is a bit

unnatural.

Juche thought was first born as a guiding principle for North Korea, and General Secretary Kim Jong-il turned Juche thought into Kimilsungism to transform the guiding principle into a governing principle. Juche thought was pure ideology from the beginning, and Kimilsungism was introduced as a governing principle by General Secretary Kim Jong-il to create his own successor system.

When the Kim Jong-un administration started, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism was positioned as the guiding principle, but there was no ideological core to Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. For this reason, the ideological core has been replaced by concepts such as independence, Songun, and socialism.

Generally speaking, the ideological core of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism comprises Juche thought and Songun thought. However, the past decade of the Kim Jong-un era has been characterized by a departure from Songun. Songun was an ideology of "emergency" peculiar to the era in the 1990s called the "Arduous March period". Therefore, when the nation is normalized, the ideology must also be normalized, freed from the ideology of emergency. Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is an ideology that includes the Songun that the Kim Jong-un regime is already trying to "historize" as a thing of the past. In other words, the Songun, equivalent to Kimjongilism, is no longer necessary for the present regime.

Furthermore, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is the thought not of Kim Jong-un himself but rather of his grandfather and father. Kim Jong-un must create his own ideological core. Perhaps it will be the people-first principle.

In addition, the Kim Jong-un regime advocated the our-state-first principle but, when formulating it, Kim Jong-un did not, and indeed could not, reject the our-people-first principle advocated by General Secretary Kim Jong-il. The method taken by the Kim Jong-un regime was to define the our-state-first principle as a sublimation and development of the our-people-first principle.

Although the work has only just begun and the direction is not clear, it seems possible that North Korea is trying to sublimate and develop Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism into Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought. Sublimating Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism into Kim Jong-unism might be understandable, but seeking to sublimate and develop it into Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought would be strange. This approach may be taken to avoid creating the impression that Kim Jong-unism rejects and replaces Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. By using the phrase "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought", it seems that North Korea aims to avoid an impression that this thought clashes with Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

"Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" is often expressed as "the revolutionary thought of Comrade General Secretary" or "the revolutionary thought of the Central Committee of the Party". This is probably to make it easier to coexist with Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

The dilemma of the "people-first principle"

The frequency with which North Korean media such as the WPK's newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* use the term "Suryong (supreme leader)" for General Secretary Kim Jong-un has changed over time. For North Koreans, their "Oboi (meaning parent) Suryong" or "Suryong" is still President Kim Il-sung. Even

when watching interviews with residents on Korean Central Television, this author has yet to confirm that there are people who use the term "Suryong" for General Secretary Kim Jong-un. North Koreans seem to be more familiar with terms such as "Great Comrade" and "Comrade General Secretary" in reference to Kim Jong-un.

On January 11, 2022, the *Rodong Sinmun* published an editorial titled "Let's achieve further victory with the invincible power of single-minded unity, where ten million people are firmly united around the Party Central Committee." The editorial appealed to the country to unite around the leader, with particular emphasis on the Suryong among the editorials of this period: "It is a proud characteristic of Juche Korea that all the people are firmly united around the Suryong and faithfully follow the leader's thought and guidance. Because of the great power of solidarity in which we have absolute trust and obedience to the Suryong alone and share the same thoughts, aspirations, and steps as the Suryong, our revolution was able to push through the untrodden snowy yards of history and to continue to rise without giving up. It is a noble truth taught by the long history of the Korean revolution that there is no formidable enemy that cannot be defeated and no great cause that cannot be accomplished for the people who follow the Suryong's leadership and fight like hell for the victory of the revolutionary cause."

It added, "We must be well-armed with Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought. Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought is the great code of practice for the revolution and construction of our time." The editorial continued, "With the iron-steel conviction that our victory is certain because of Comrade General Secretary's revolutionary thought and great program of struggle, we must move forward and forward in the direction indicated by the party," and "We must establish a single leadership system for the Party Central Committee more thoroughly for the entire Party and society, and make our revolutionary ranks into one living entity that shares thoughts, aspirations and actions with Comrade General Secretary."

Furthermore, the "Symposium on the Greatness and Exploits of Respected Comrade Kim Jong-un" was held in Pyongyang on January 25, 2022. This is believed to be the first time that a study and debate event on Kim Jong-un's ideological approach has been held.

The presenters, Ri Il Hwan, secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Kang Yun Sok, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, Han Chang Sun, president of Kim Il Sung Military University, Kim Sung Chan, president of Kim Il Sung University and minister of Higher Education of the Education Commission, Sim Sung Gon, president of the Academy of Social Sciences, and Ri Song Hak, vice-premier of the Cabinet, took part.

During the discussions, the presenters said that Kim Jong-un had "formulated the revolutionary thought of the great leader (Chairman Kim Il-sung) and the great general (General Secretary Kim Jong-il) as Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism," and praised him for having "made uniting the entire society into Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the highest program of our Party and the government of the DPRK, and clarified the path toward the ultimate accomplishment of the cause of the Juche revolution by launching the overall direction and overall goal of building the socialist state."

They emphasized the significance of Kim Jong-un's people-first principle and our-state-first principle. In addition, they defined the relationship between the people-first principle and the our-state-first principle by saying "the our-state-first principle era is a new era of the Juche revolution ushered in by Comrade General Secretary, who upheld the people-first principle as the political principle of the Party and the nation, and made our republic a shining country of dignified people, a country of one mind and one heart, where ideological unification has been realized."

Furthermore, they said that Kim Jong-un "led the rapid development of self-defense construction with bold courage and outstanding leadership that no one can match and gave us the absolute power to firmly guarantee the eternal security and future of our country." They went on to praise Kim Jong-un's "iron-stone will to build a strong national defense force and protect the peace of our country at any cost".

Looking at the contents of this symposium, it can be understood that North Korea will not be immediately turning to Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought or Kim Jong-unism, and for the present will still advocate Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as its top doctrine.

There appears to be a framework in which the people-first principle and our-state-first principle, as the ideological and theoretical products of Kim Jong-un's 10-year reign, are set as actual principles like the two pillars of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. It is also notable that the "strengthening of national defense capabilities" is cited as the greatest achievement of the decade in support of that framework.

Among the major implications of the 8th Party Congress in January 2021 are that Kim Jong-un assumed the position of Party General Secretary, the same position held by his father and grandfather and "forever vacant" until that time, and that he stood in a position of leadership similar to that of his father and grandfather. Around the same time, Kim Jong-un assumed the position of Suryong while still alive in his late 30s. Assuming the position of Suryong means that a "new thought" framework is needed. While maintaining the supreme program of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism for the time being, Kim Jong-un is seemingly trying to systematize "Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought" and establish the people-first principle and our-state-first principle as its two pillars. The question is how far this effort will go before the 9th Party Congress scheduled for 2026. During his ten years in power, Kim Jong-un has succeeded in consolidating absolute power by establishing a unified Party leadership.

On the other hand, North Korea still officially maintains Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as its guiding principle. The work to replace it with Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought has just begun and is still ongoing. Formalization will take time.

The efforts made to transform Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought into a deeper thought are still insufficient. How will the people-first principle and the our-state-first principle, the tenets of Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought, and the strengthening of national defense capabilities be connected? How will they be positioned and deepened as pro-people ideas? These tasks will still take some time.

Above all, "improvement of the people's standard of living" has not yet been realized. Replacing Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism with Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought will probably be closely related to the question of how much improvement of the people's standard of living will be realized. This is because the main ideological foundation of Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought is the people-first principle. The new ideology of the Suryong cannot be realized solely by strengthening national defense capabilities. The most important proposition of "people first" is improvement of the people's standard of living. Only when this is realized will Kim Jong-un be able to break away from the ideological framework of his father and grandfather, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, and formulate his own revolutionary thought. It would not be impossible to use force to do so, but without improving the people's standard of living, the people-first principle will not gain the true support of the people.

On March 27, the WPK paper *Rodong Sinmun* published an editorial titled "Let's fully arm ourselves with the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee and implement it thoroughly." The editorial stated, "It is essential to fully understand and thoroughly embody the thought of the Party Central Committee in order to more thoroughly establish the unified leadership of Comrade General Secretary for the entire Party and society." It then argued that mastering Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought is an essential requirement for establishing Kim Jong-un's "unified leadership." The editorial added, "Comrade General Secretary's revolutionary thought is an immortal outline for the all-round development of our style of socialism and a textbook for our people's life and struggle."

On March 28, Kim Jong-un sent a missive to the participants of the First Workshop of WPK Officials in the Information Field. The workshop, which was held for the first time by gathering activists from the Party's information sector, showed the importance of ideological education for the North Korean regime. Kim Jong-un criticized the Party's Publicity and Information Department, responsible for propagating the Party's ideology, as being slow to act. In this letter Kim Jong-un said, "The main mission of our Party's ideological work is to model the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee. This means, in a word, making the Party Central Committee's ideas and intentions dominate the struggle and life of all the members of society." Thus, Kim Jong-un himself referred to the importance of "modeling on the thought of the Party Central Committee (Kim Jong-un)". In addition, he emphasized that "the cause of modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee urgently requires a great revolution in ideological work" demanding "modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee." This letter also emphasized the importance of the people-first principle and the our-state-first principle.

Ri Il Hwan, secretary of the WPK Central Committee, presented a report at this workshop stating "it is the basic mission and general goal of our Party's ideological work at present to model the entire Party and the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism," and urging "the Party's information workers to become vanguard fighters in carrying out the sacred cause of modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the respected General Secretary."

This report asked the activists of the Party's information sector "to model the entire Party and the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" as a basic task, simultaneously "carrying out the sacred cause of modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the respected General Secretary". Based on this trend, it seems that there is an intention to promote "modeling on the revolutionary thought of General Secretary Kim Jong-un" in accordance with Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, rather than contrasting Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism and "the revolutionary thought of General Secretary Kim Jong-un."

This workshop ended on March 30, and the *Rodong Sinmun* reported on March 31 that "The workshop called for regarding it as the general orientation and target of the Party ideological work to model the entire Party and the whole society on the respected Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought." The article concluded that the workshop "referred to the essential content and importance of the work for modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the respected Comrade Kim Jong-un, who formulated the essence of the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the people-first principle through his outstanding ideo-theoretical activities and, on this basis, expounded in an overall way the theoretical and practical matters arising in building an ideal society for the people."

In other words, the workshop described Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought as "expounding in an overall way the theoretical and practical matters" to build up the "people-first principle," which is the essence of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. It also confirmed that the Party's ideological work would take the direction of "modeling... on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un."

The article continued with "the ideological work of our Party is to arm all the people with the revolutionary ideology of the Suryong, to consolidate the socialist political and ideological front, and to raise the mental strength of the people to a high level," and noted that the workshop "gave a detailed explanation on the principles and tasks to be maintained and carried out in the Party ideological work at present."

Furthermore, the article stated, "To make the whole country a single living entity that shares ideology, aspirations, and actions with the Party Central Committee, we must concentrate all of the Party's ideological activities, formulate concrete step-by-step plans for this purpose, and thoroughly embody these efforts in all processes and opportunities." This is an argument that overlaps with the "socio-political organism" theory that was once advocated by General Secretary Kim Jong-il.

The article then concluded: "The First Workshop of Information Officials of the WPK, held in the historic year of the 10th anniversary of the promulgation of the programme of modelling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, has become an important turning point of epoch-making significance for fundamentally reforming the ideological activities of the Party and forcibly promoting the victorious advance of the Juche revolution in line with the demands of the new stage of development of socialist construction."

Looking at these reports, it becomes clear that the immediate goal of the Workers' Party of Korea is to "model the whole Party and society on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un", but it seems that this work is being done within the framework of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism at present.

"Let us arm ourselves firmly with the revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un!"

On April 4, 2022, the *Rodong Sinmun* posted a photo of a slogan on the top of its front page that read, "Let us arm ourselves firmly with the revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un!" and published an editorial titled, "There is nothing impossible when fully loaded with the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee." It is believed that this was the first time that the *Rodong Sinmun* had published a photo of this slogan about Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought on the top of the front page.

This article suggested that this slogan had become ubiquitous in North Korea at this point, stating "Let us arm ourselves firmly with the revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un!" and continuing that "The slogan of this conviction that can be seen anywhere in the country where the struggle for the prosperity of our great nation and the bold offensive battle for the comprehensive development of socialist construction are being vigorously waged."

The editorial said, "During the past ten years of overcoming trials and achieving nothing but miraculous victories, the revolutionary thought of the great Central Committee of the Party has flowed into the hearts of ten million people like drops of blood." It claimed that they had been able to overcome the ordeal "in such a difficult situation and environment" because of the "revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un." In addition, the editorial stated, "The revolutionary thought of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un is a shining lighthouse and an almighty treasured sword that create existence from nothing, tame adversity into prosperity, and make it possible to move forward vigorously only on the path of victory and glory."

An April 8 article in the *Rodong Sinmun* titled "The revolutionary thought of the Respected Comrade General Secretary is a great power to open a New Era of Victory and Prosperity" pointed out that Kim Jong-un had referred to "the path of independence, Songun and socialism" in his speech on the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung's birth. However, as the great ideas presented over the preceding decade, the article listed the "path of independence" and "the path of socialism" and excluded "the path of Songun." The editorial touched on Kim Jong-un's formulation that "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is, in essence, a people-first doctrine" and, with regard to his people-first principle, praised Kim Jong-un because "a unique idea was born that can transform our nation into an undefeated power, a miraculous country that will transcend the ages and achieve a change for the centuries to come."

The editorial praised Kim Jong-un's "achievement in constantly enriching the treasure house of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism with his profound thinking and inquiry, energetic ideological and theoretical activities" and suggested the existence of a structure in which Kim Jong-un's activities both fill the "treasure house of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" and at the same time fall within the framework of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

"Model on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un" as a slogan of belief

On April 10, 2022, a "National Meeting to Commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Respected Comrade Kim Jong-un's Election as the Top Party and State Leader" was held in Pyongyang. A large portrait of Kim Jong-un was displayed at the April 25 House of Culture. There were no portraits of Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un did not attend.

Choe Ryong-hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, delivered a report titled "Let us complete the cause of the Juche Revolution to the end armed with the thought and guidance of the great Comrade Kim Jong-un."

He said, "Dear Comrade General Secretary proclaimed the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the eternal guiding idea of the Party and the modeling of the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the top programme of the Party and established unchanging guidelines for the construction and activities of the WPK, and has extended the bloodline of the WPK for thousands of years." This means that making Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism the "eternal guiding idea" and making "modeling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism" the "top programme of the Party" were positioned and honored as achievements of Kim Jong-un.

Choe Ryong-hae noted, "Kim Jong-un defined the essence of the great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the people-first principle," and stated, "our Party has been further strengthened and developed into a Party that has deeply rooted itself in the hearts of people and has become one with them."

He said that Kim Jong-un had "finally accomplished the great, historic cause of perfecting the national nuclear forces" through the new Pyongjin Line of simultaneous military and economic development.

He also pointed out, "beloved Comrade General Secretary has reestablished relations with major powers through a bold course change and exquisite and aggressive diplomatic strategy based on the great victory of the Pyongjin Line and has made even hostile countries respect our nation and people. It is an immortal achievement that will amaze the world," praising the achievements of Kim Jong-un's summit diplomacy since 2018.

On top of that, Choe Ryong-hae declared, "We must hold high the slogan of belief that we will model the whole Party and society on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un, and must unite the Party and revolutionary ranks into an ideologically pure body and organizational unity that share thought, aspiration, and breath with Comrade General Secretary," urging the whole Party and

society to "model on the revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un" and unite into an "organizational unity."

He then concluded, "we must promote the political and ideological superiority and popular character of our socialism and, under the banner of self-reliance and self-help, we must sustainably improve overall economic construction, and we should vigorously push forward with activities that will enable the people to lead a prosperous and civilized life and make the our-state-first era shine throughout the world."

On April 19, the *Rodong Sinmun* ran an editorial titled, "Let's develop a strong ideological offensive for modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee" and called for modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the "revolutionary thought of Comrade Kim Jong-un."

The editorial pointed that Kim Jong-un has set out "modeling the entire Party and the whole society on the revolutionary thought of the Party Central Committee (Kim Jong-un)" as "the main mission of the Party's ideological work" through his missive to the First Workshop of WPK Officials in the Information Field.

Looking at these developments in North Korea, the country currently appears to be maintaining its thesis of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism but, within that thesis, the push to model the entire Party and the whole society on Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought seems to be gaining momentum. Whether this will lead to the historicization of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism in future and whether Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism will be replaced by Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought or Kim Jong-unism are still unclear. For the time being, North Korea is expected to gradually strengthen the Kim Jong-unist hue of its ideology leading into the 9th Party Congress expected to be held in 2026. It can be said that a replacement with Comrade Kim Jong-un's revolutionary thought and Kim Jong-unism depends on whether circumstances can be created in which North Korean residents feel an improvement in their standard of living as mentioned above.

(This is an English translation of a Japanese paper originally published on June 22, 2022)

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