

PERSPECTIVE

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Vietnam’s 13th Party Congress: Document Preparation and Personnel Line-up

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Communist Party of Vietnam will convene its 13th National Congress in late January 2021 to elect its leaders and to set the socio-economic course for Vietnam over the next five to 10 years.
- The Party’s Decision 90 of 2017 outlined the selection criteria for leadership positions in the Party and other leadership positions in Vietnam’s political system such as the national assembly, government, judiciary and the Party’s mass organisations.
- At the Party’s 8th plenum in 2018, five interim sub-committees were formed to draft the key documents for the 13th Party Congress.
- Starting from the lowest grassroots level up to the provincial level, the drafts are discussed by respective Party congresses which also elect members of party committees for their respective congresses. The provincial congresses will elect delegates to the national congress.
- The remaining one or two plenums will focus on finalising the key documents and the lists of delegates to the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat. Despite being a tightly-scripted process, there could still be last-minute changes to the listed delegates just before the national congress.

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INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is only a few months away from its all-important Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) National Congress, held once every five years. This Congress will set the socio-economic agenda for Vietnam for the next 10 years, from 2021 to 2030. It will also elect a fresh slate of leaders to helm the Party. For one, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong will make way for his replacement who will be selected from the current Politburo, the executive body of the Party's Central Committee. Several new faces will be elected to the Politburo as part of the leadership renewal. There will also be new members elected to the Party's Central Committee. Well before these national-level personnel changes, grassroots Party congresses were convened as early as December 2019 to start this process.

Apart from personnel matters, the 13th CPV Congress will also debate and approve a few key documents such as the political report and the socio-economic strategy. This paper will provide an overview of the key reports in terms of their process of preparation and key contents as well as the mobilisation of personnel from the grassroots level to the national congress level.

KEY PARTY CONGRESS DOCUMENTS

Drafting Institutions and Main Contents

Similar to previous party congresses, a few key documents are slated to be tabled at the 13th Party Congress. They include the: (a) Political Report of the Party; (b) Assessment Report on the 10-year Strategy of Socio-economic Development (2011-2020); (c) Strategy of Socio-economic Development (2021-2030) that includes a Roadmap and Tasks for the initial five-year period from 2021-2025; and (d) Assessment Report of Party Building and Statutory Implementation of the 12th CPV Congress term (2016-2020).

The drafting of these documents usually starts two years before the party congress begins. At the 8th Plenum of the 12th CPV Central Committee in October 2018, the Party decided to establish five interim sub-committees to prepare for the 13th CPV Congress scheduled for the first quarter of 2021.¹ They are responsible for the congress' documents, personnel matters, socio-economic issues, Party statutory and organisational work.

The 8th plenum assigned General Secretary and President Nguyen Phu Trong as Head of both the interim sub-committee on documents and interim sub-committee on personnel for the 13th Party Congress, and Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc as Head of the socio-economic interim sub-committee. Despite this seeming division of labour, Nguyen Phu Trong and the Head of Central Commission on Organisation and Personnel Pham Minh Chinh² are overall responsible for coordinating the Party's various Central Commissions and other key Party organisations to draft these four documents.

More specifically, the Standing Member of the Secretariat (Tran Quoc Vuong),³ the Head of the Central Committee on Control and Scrutiny (Tran Cam Tu),⁴ the Head of the Central Office of the Party (Nguyen Van Nen),⁵ the Head of the Central Commission on Economic Affairs (Nguyen Van Binh),⁶ the Head of Central Commission on Propaganda (Vo Van Thuong),⁷ the Chairperson of Central Theoretical Council (Nguyen Xuan Thang),⁸ and member of Politburo (Hoang Trung Hai),⁹ are directly responsible for leading their respective organisations to help draft these documents. In addition, hundreds of experts from inside and outside the Party are

tasked to contribute to the drafting, debate and discussion on various issues such as socio-economic development, national governance, public policy, political risks analysis, diplomacy and international issues that are incorporated into these documents.

Of the four documents, the most important is the Political Report which is a report card on Vietnam's political and socio-economic performance under the Party's leadership over the past five years.¹⁰ It further sets out the Party's goals and objectives over the next five years. In the report, the Party reiterates the fundamentals of its Leninist socialist character and re-affirms its legacy as the only legitimate ruling political party. It further highlights the Party's achievements in fighting corruption, mismanagement and wastefulness (a campaign driven by Nguyen Phu Trong) by citing court cases that have resulted in a high indictment rate. The report vows to continue the fight against group interests and rent-seeking practices, political pluralism and multiparty practices, "peaceful evolution", "self-evolution" and the Western practice of the division of power among the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

The Assessment Report on the 10-year Strategy of Socio-economic Development (2011-2020) focuses on the achievements and challenges in Vietnam's socio-economic development under the 12th CPV Congress term. In reviewing the past 10 years, the report acknowledges that Vietnam still lags behind its 2020 goal of becoming an "industrialised country, with industry and service sectors share comprising at least 85% of GDP; and high-tech products share amounting to at least 45% of GDP." The reasons for this include the slow pace of equitisation of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs);¹¹ the lacklustre development of small and medium – sized enterprises, many of which are operating inefficiently; the lack of a quality workforce; and the slow pace of digital transformation.

Complementing the Assessment Report is the Strategy of Socio-economic Development (2021-2030) that is a forward-looking document for the next 10 years under a new Party leadership. It contains a Roadmap and Tasks to implement socio-economic development over a shorter period of five years from 2021 to 2025. The Strategy further outlines development visions – a highly industrialised country, a democracy, a just society, and a modern civilisation – for the year 2045, the centennial anniversary of the Party's founding.¹² The Strategy also sets a 2050 objective for Vietnam to be "a developed country".¹³ Overall, the Strategy advocates an incremental development approach that builds on the basis of the renovation policy or *Doi Moi* (since 1986) which essentially leverages on the strengths of a Leninist state control model with market economy practices.¹⁴

The Assessment Report of Party Building and Statutory Compliance of the 12th CPV Congress term (2016-2020) is the usual Party document that reviews the Party's activities in strengthening its overall image, position and influence in the last five years. It includes an assessment of the compliance of Party members and its affiliated organisations to the principles of democratic centralism, collective leadership, and criticism and self-criticism. The ultimate purpose is to uphold a one-party regime under the CPV.

Timeline of Finetuning

It took roughly a year for the five sub-committees to draft the four key documents, i.e. from the formation of the five sub-committees (at the 8th plenum in October 2018) to the tabling of the key documents for review (at the 11th plenum in October 2019).¹⁵ Thereafter, the drafts were sent to party congresses at lower levels for discussion (see **Table 1**). Any feedback received in the form of comments or opinions is fed upwards through the Party chain to the

database at the Central Office of the CPV in Hanoi for further review by the Party’s five sub-committees. Refinements are then made to the four key documents where applicable.

The 13th plenum of the 12th CPV Central Committee will review and provide further comments on the four key documents. Thereafter, the documents are released for feedback from the man in the street. The public consultation period usually lasts a few months, from the second half of September till end 2020. The various sub-committees will then review the feedback and valid ones are incorporated into the four key documents. Eventually, a final round of discussion and debate is held at the 13th CPV Congress. The congress is expected to spend three days to debate and approve all the key documents.

Table 1: Key Timelines

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Outcomes/Remarks</u>
Oct '18	8 th plenum of 12 th CPV Central Committee	Approved the setting up the five sub-committees
Oct '19	11 th plenum of 12 th CPV Central Committee	Reviewed the four key documents before these are sent to Party congresses at lower levels for feedback
Sep '20	13 th plenum of 12 th CPV Central Committee	Debates and endorses the four key documents before they are released for public consultation, and addresses personnel matters
Jan '20	14 th plenum of the 12 th CPV Central Committee (there is a possibility that this will be held)	Resolves any documentary and personnel matters

PARTY LEADERSHIP MOBILISATION

From Grassroots to Provincial Level

The principle of democratic centralism is applied to the planning and election of new leaders at every level. No political competition is allowed in the party cell or organisation. The upper level party organisations supervise the congress activities of the lower-level party organisations. A shortlist for the new leadership of the party organisations at each level is made by the existing leadership and must be reviewed and approved by the upper-level party organisation leadership, and only with this approval can the congress of the lower-level party organisation be held.

In December 2019, the grassroots party cells began to convene congresses. By end January 2020, 14 percent of grassroots congresses were successfully completed. The outbreak of COVID-19 momentarily disrupted this process and it resumed only in early May, after a 90-day intermission. By end May, all grassroots congresses had been convened. By September, it is expected that 100 percent district-level congresses and at least 50 percent provincial congresses will have convened. The provincial congresses will elect the delegates to the 13th Party National Congress.

At Central Leadership Level

In 1986, in a move that further centralised political power, the Party abolished two non-communist parties founded in 1945, removing all semblance of the multiparty politics in Vietnam which had existed for more than 40 years.¹⁶ To date, the Party remains vigilant against what it regards as “hostile forces” that seek to promote political pluralism.

At the 7th CPV Congress in 1991, the Party devised the scheme of “collective leadership” with four top leaders, namely the Party’s general secretary, state president, prime minister and chairperson of the national assembly.¹⁷ The rule of regional origin was also raised at the 7th Congress which stipulated that the positions of general secretary, president and prime minister must be held by three separate individuals from different regional parts of Vietnam, i.e. from the North, Centre and South, and that no two individuals are to come from the same region (see Annex).¹⁸

At the 10th CPV Congress in 2006, a new rule was introduced to facilitate the selection of the top leaders, i.e. only the general secretary and prime minister need to be from different regions. This was because during the term of the 10th CPV Congress, there was only one member of the Politburo who came from the Centre, and this particular individual did not meet the criteria to become either the president or the prime minister.¹⁹

The Party’s 12th plenum in early May 2020 discussed and debated the personnel composition and initial lists of delegates to the 13th CPV Congress drawn up on the basis of Decision 214 of the Politburo of January 2020. Decision 214 further eased the conditions and criteria for selection of personnel outlined in Decision 90 from August 2017.²⁰ In terms of the numbers, the plenum decided that there would be about 200 members in the Central Committee (comprising 180 full members and 20 alternate members);²¹ about 19 Politburo members;²² and 12-14 members in the Secretariat.²³

In terms of the age composition of the incoming Central Committee members, the 12th plenum decided that those below 50 years old would comprise 15-20 percent of the total 200 members; those age between 50 and 60 years old would make up 70 percent; while the remainder 10-15 percent would comprise those 61 years old and above.²⁴ The 12th plenum further considered whether to lift the age limit of those who reach 65 years-old (by September 2020)²⁵ for the incoming Politburo members, and decided that the only individual who would be exempted from this age limit is the incoming general secretary at the 13th CPV Congress.²⁶ This means that, of the current 16-member strong Politburo, the eight members (except one) who has reached 65 years old will have to step down at the upcoming congress.²⁷

The other eight members of the current Politburo that are on the list for re-election at the 13th CPV Congress are: Pham Minh Chinh, To Lam, Pham Binh Minh, Truong Thi Mai, Nguyen Van Binh, Vo Van Thuong, Vuong Dinh Hue and Hoang Trung Hai. At the 12th plenum, the Party further came up with an initial shortlist of 24 candidates who would eventually be whittled down to around 19 members to be elected to the Politburo at the 13th CPV Congress.

At this juncture, there are two possible candidates for general secretary: Nguyen Xuan Phuc (the current prime minister) and Tran Quoc Vuong (the current permanent member of the Party’s Secretariat).²⁸ If Tran Quoc Vuong, who is from Thai Binh province in the North, becomes the general secretary, the Party will have to choose another member of the Politburo, who is either from the Centre or the South, to be prime minister. Based on Decision 214 which

stipulates that the candidate must be a Politburo member for at least one congress term, Vo Van Thuong is a strong candidate for this post if he is re-elected at the 13th Party Congress.²⁹ However, as Vo Van Thuong is not considered to be as experienced as other Southerners likely to be on the list in the incoming Politburo, he may face some resistance. Among the list of Southerners, Madam Truong Thi Mai (current Head of the Commission for Mass Mobilisation) is considered more experienced than Vo Van Thuong; she is however a very strong contender for the post of chairperson of the national assembly.³⁰

If Nguyen Xuan Phuc, who is from the Centre, were to become the general secretary, then there will be a few possible candidates for prime minister, namely, Vuong Dinh Hue (current Secretary of Hanoi Party Committee from Nghe An province in the North), Pham Minh Chinh (current Head of the Party's Central Commission on Organisation and Personnel from Thanh Hoa province in the North), Nguyen Van Binh (current Head of Central Commission on Economic Affairs from Phu Tho province in the North), and Vo Van Thuong (current Head of Central Commission on Propaganda and Education).³¹

Unlike the general secretary and prime minister, Vietnam's future president can be chosen from any geographical region of Vietnam. The possibilities include To Lam (current minister of public security) and Pham Binh Minh (current deputy prime minister and foreign minister). These two individuals are also possible candidates to be Standing Member of the Secretariat. As for the chairperson of the national assembly, the two possible candidates are Madam Truong Thi Mai and Pham Minh Chinh.³²

The 13th plenum of the CPV Central Committee in September 2020 will likely decide on the final candidate for the position of general secretary. However, if the decision is not made by then, the Party could convene the 14th plenum in January 2021, days before the 13th CPV Congress, to agree on the sole candidate for this position.³³ The 13th plenum will further decide on the shortlists of delegates to the 13th CPV Congress at the national level. It is expected to comprise 1,600 delegates, slightly more than the 1,510 delegates who attended the 12th CPV Congress in 2016.³⁴ This increased figure is due to the larger number of Party members nationwide, which currently stands at 5.2 million, up from 4.4 million a few years ago.³⁵

13th CPV CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS

So far, the Central Committee of the 12th CPV Congress has made meticulous preparations in terms of the key documents and leadership planning and line-up for the 13th CPV Congress.³⁶ The 13th plenum scheduled for September 2020 is expected to put the finishing touches to the preparations. The strict rules that guide the 12th CPV Congress term will be applied to the 13th CPV Congress in that the upcoming congress will essentially work with the documents and personnel lists submitted by the Central Committee of the 12th CPV Congress. This is the established practice.

However, no matter how tightly scripted the proceedings are, past practice also reveals the possibility of last-minute changes especially in the personnel line-up. Normally, the Party Congress will elect the members of the Central Committee, the Head of the Party Committee on Control and Scrutiny and members of this committee based entirely on the list submitted by the Central Committee of the 12th CPV Congress term. The elected Congress' delegates will then have the right to propose new candidates who were not originally on the shortlist submitted by the 12th CPV Congress Central Committee. Thereafter, the 13th CPV Congress will take a

vote for the new candidates. If a new candidate secures more than 50 percent of the votes cast by the elected delegates of the new Central Committee, the Congress Presidium³⁷ will consult with the particular candidate on whether he would like to assume the post or relinquish it.

At the 12th CPV Congress in 2016, the 14th plenum of the 11th CPV Congress served as a preparatory congress of sorts where the Congress organisers³⁸ and the Central Committee deliberated all matters related to the congress. Still, one day prior to the official opening of the 12th CPV Congress, there was a final meeting, held between the Congress organisers and the Central Committee. At this juncture, it is still unclear whether a 14th plenum will be held days before the 13th CPV Congress. It is also unclear whether there will be a final meeting between the Congress organisers and members of the Central Committee.

What is clear is that during the 1st plenum of the 13th CPV Congress, Nguyen Phu Trong,³⁹ the general secretary of the 12th CPV Congress term, will preside over the election to the Politburo and the Secretariat and eventually the election of the incoming general secretary of the 13th CPV Congress term. Only the newly-elected members of the Central Committee of the 13th CPV Congress will participate in this plenum.

Annex

Regional Origins of Vietnam's Top Three Leaders since 7th CPV Congress

7th CPV Congress (1991-1996) – the general secretary, president and prime minister has to be from different regions of Vietnam

General Secretary Do Muoi is a Northerner
President Vo Chi Cong is from the Centre
Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet is a Southerner

8th CPV Congress (1996-2001)

General Secretary Le Kha Phieu is a Northerner (took over from Do Muoi from December 1997)
President Tran Duc Luong is from the Centre
Prime Minister Phan Van Khai is a Southerner

9th CPV Congress (2001-2006)

General Secretary Nong Duc Manh is a Northerner
President Tran Duc Luong is from the Centre
Prime Minister Phan Van Khai is a Southerner

10th CPV Congress (2006-2011) – only the general secretary and prime minister need to be from different regions

General Secretary Nong Duc Manh is a Northerner
President Nguyen Minh Triet is a Southerner
Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung is a Southerner

11th CPV Congress (2011-2016)

General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong is a Northerner
President Truong Tan Sang is a Southerner
Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung is a Southerner

12th CPV Congress (2016-2021)

General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong is a Northerner
President Tran Dai Quang is from the Centre (2016-2018); Nguyen Phu Trong is a Northerner (since 2018)
Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc is from the Centre

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- ¹ “Party Central Committee’s 8th plenum concludes”, Voice of Vietnam, 6 October 2018, at <https://english.vov.vn/domestic/party-central-committees-8th-plenum-concludes-384775.vov>.
- ² Pham Minh Chinh is a member of the Politburo and the Secretariat. He is also deputy head of the sub-committee on personnel, an interim body that oversees personnel matters for the 13th CPV Congress.
- ³ Tran Quoc Vuong is a member of the Politburo and the Secretariat. The Secretariat essentially supports the is a body that has less power than that
- ⁴ Tran Cam Tu is a member of the Secretariat.
- ⁵ Nguyen Van Nen is a member of Secretariat. He is a strong candidate to the Politburo of the 13th Party Congress.
- ⁶ Nguyen Van Binh is a member of the Politburo and the Secretariat.
- ⁷ Vo Van Thuong is a member of the Politburo and the Secretariat.
- ⁸ Nguyen Xuan Thang is a member of the Secretariat. He is a strong candidate to the Politburo of the 13th Party Congress.
- ⁹ Hoang Trung Hai was also former Secretary of Hanoi Party Organisation. Hai was issued a warning by the Politburo in January 2020 for his wrongdoings and shortcomings in overseeing the implementation of the second phase of state-owned steel company Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel when he was deputy prime minister. See “Politburo takes disciplinary action against Party officials”, Vietnam News, 10 January 2020, at <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/570988/politburo-takes-disciplinary-action-against-party-officials.html>. Hai, however, still remains in the running as Politburo member for the 13th CPV Congress.
- ¹⁰ A review of Vietnam’s foreign policy and what to expect for the next five years form part of the Political Report.
- ¹¹ Equitisation is a buzzword for privatisation of SOEs where the state would reduce its share in these enterprises to as low as 51%, which allows it to still retain control. For a sense of the pace of equitisation, please see “Vietnam’s SOE equitisation progress is ‘very slow’”, Vietnamnet, 11 December 2019, at <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/business/vietnam-s-soe-equitisation-progress-is-very-slow-598168.html>.
- ¹² Vietnam declared its independence from France on 2 September 1945.
- ¹³ More precisely, a “socialist-oriented developed country”. However, the term “socialist-oriented” has yet to be explicitly explained by the CPV.
- ¹⁴ Officially, Vietnam is in a transitional period towards socialism although what this entails and how long such a transition would last have been deliberately left vague by Party leaders and theoreticians.
- ¹⁵ “Striving to victoriously realise 12th Congress’ resolution and successfully organise local Party congresses towards 13th National Congress”, *Nhan Dan*, 13 October 2019, at <https://en.nhandan.org.vn/politics/editorial/item/8013202-striving-to-victoriously-realise-12th-congress%E2%80%99s-resolution-and-successfully-organise-local-party-congresses-towards-13th-national-congress.html>.
- ¹⁶ The two non-communist parties that were abolished were the Democratic Party and Social Party.
- ¹⁷ That ensures a division of power among the four top positions so that no one position is omnipotent. Since the 7th CPV Congress, among these four positions, interactions between the two most important, i.e. the general secretary of the Party and the prime minister, have largely shaped the political landscape in Vietnam.
- ¹⁸ During the 7th CPV Congress term (1991-1996), General Secretary Do Muoi was a Northerner, President Vo Chi Cong was from the Centre, and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet was a Southerner. During the 8th CPV Congress term (1996-2001), from December 1997, General Secretary Le Kha Phieu (like his predecessor Do Muoi) was a Northerner, President Tran Duc Luong was from the Centre, and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai was a Southerner. During the 9th CPV Congress term (2001-2006), General Secretary Nong Duc Manh was a Northerner, President Tran Duc Luong was from the Centre and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai was a Southerner (see **Annex**).

¹⁹ In the 10th CPV Congress term (2006-2011) and the 11th CPV Congress term (2011-2016), the prime minister and presidents were both from the South, i.e. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, President Nguyen Minh Triet and President Truong Tan Sang.

²⁰ The Decision 214, of 2 January 2020, was intended to ease the conditions and criteria outlined in Decision 90 of August 2017. For example, in Decision 90, it was stipulated that the quality of the candidates for each post has to be “exceptionally outstanding”. However, in Decision 214, it was stipulated only as “good”. In this regard, while Decision 90 was a call to strive for excellence, Decision 214 outlines an actual set of criteria that is more in line with current realities. See “Quy định số 90-QĐ/TW ngày 4/8/2017 của Bộ Chính trị về tiêu chuẩn chức danh, tiêu chí đánh giá cán bộ thuộc diện Ban Chấp hành Trung ương, Bộ Chính trị, Ban Bí thư quản lý” (Decision No. 90/TW of 4 August 2017 by the Politburo on the assessment criteria for cadres belonging to the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat, Communist Party of Vietnam, 4 August 2017, at <http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/he-thong-van-ban/van-ban-cua-dang/quy-dinh-so-90-qdtw-ngay-482017-cua-bo-chinh-tri-ve-tieu-chuan-chuc-danh-tieu-chi-danh-gia-can-bo-thuoc-dien-ban-chap-3459>. See also “Quy định số 214-QĐ/TW, ngày 02/01/2020 của Bộ Chính trị về khung tiêu chuẩn chức danh, tiêu chí đánh giá cán bộ thuộc diện Ban Chấp hành Trung ương, Bộ Chính trị, Ban Bí thư quản lý (Decision No. 214-QĐ /TW of 2 January 2020 of the Politburo on the assessment criteria for evaluating cadres belonging to the Central Committee, the Politburo, and the Secretariat), Communist Party of Vietnam, 2 January 2020, at <http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/he-thong-van-ban/van-ban-cua-dang/quy-dinh-so-214-qdtw-ngay-02012020-cua-bo-chinh-tri-ve-khung-tieu-chuan-chuc-danh-tieu-chi-danh-gia-can-bo-thuoc-dien-ban-6021>.

²¹ The number of members of the Central Committee of the 13th CPV Congress is almost equivalent to the number of members to the 11th and 12th CPV Congresses. The current Central Committee has a total of 202 members, comprising 176 full members and 26 alternate members. See “Vietnam Party Central Committee meets to identify successors”, Vietnam Express, 11 May 2020, at <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-party-central-committee-meets-to-identify-successors-4097508.html>.

²² The same as the number of members of the Politburo of the 12th CPV Congress. In the 12th CPV Congress term, the elected number of Politburo members is 19. However, as President Tran Dai Quang has passed away, as Politburo member Dinh The Huynh is on medical leave due to his illness, and as former Politburo member Dinh La Thang was dismissed, the size of the current Politburo is just 16.

²³ The same number as that of the 12th CPV Congress term.

²⁴ This age scheme is basically the same as that applied at the 11th and 12th CPV Congresses.

²⁵ Directive 35 of 30 May 2019 on age limits <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/bo-may-hanh-chinh/Chi-thi-35-CT-TW-2019-dai-hoi-dang-bo-cac-cap-tien-toi-Dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-XIII-417004.aspx>

²⁶ This age limit was set at the 10th CPV Congress.

²⁷ The existing eight members are Nguyen Phu Trong, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Ngo Xuan Lich, Nguyen Thien Nhan, Tong Thi Phong, Tran Quoc Vuong and Truong Hoa Binh. As suggested, either Nguyen Xuan Phuc or Tran Quoc Vuong will be elected as general secretary of the 13th CPV Congress term.

²⁸ Tran Quoc Vuong was formally appointed standing member of the Party’s Central Committee Secretariat in March 2018, replacing Dinh The Huynh who is on medical leave. See “Tran Quoc Vuong appointed as Secretariat’s permanent member”, *Nhan Dan*, 5 March 2018, at <https://en.nhandan.org.vn/politics/item/5899302-tran-quoc-vuong-appointed-as-secretariat%E2%80%99s-permanent-member.html>. Vuong is concurrently the Secretary of the Party’s Central Committee.

²⁹ Although Vo Van Thuong was born in Hai Duong in the North, he is not considered a Northerner. This is because his father’s village is in Vinh Long in the South, and Thuong himself has been politically active mainly in the South.

³⁰ Madame Truong Thi Mai was born in Quang Binh province in central Vietnam. But as she has been politically active in the South, she is among the list of Southerners.

³¹ The CPV's working definition of the personnel and organisational regions are different from the geographic regions of Vietnam. Based on this definition, the North consists of all the Northern provinces down to Ha Tinh Provinces; the Centre stretches from Quang Binh Provinces southwards down to Phu Yen Province (including all Central Highland provinces); and the rest forms the South. In this regard, Nghe An and Ha Tinh are considered part of the North, and not geographically of the Centre.

³² The Party's 12th plenum in May 2020 further identified the composition and number of deputies of the national assembly (i.e. the members of parliament) to be elected in May 2021. In addition, the plenum elected the National Election Council of the national assembly for the May 2021 elections and its chairperson. (Madame Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, the current chairperson of the national assembly, was elected chairperson of the National Election Council of the National Assembly for the May 2021 General Elections). According to the 2013 constitution, the national assembly is the highest representative body of the people and the highest body of state power between two general elections. Under the one-party political regime in Vietnam, the CPV is omnipotent – it exercises political leadership over the national assembly. The plenum also issued directives for the elections of the People's Councils at various levels (i.e. the local legislative bodies) below the national level.³²

³³ This had happened in 2016, when the 14th plenum of the 11th CPV Congress term was convened to resolve a number of issues that included personnel matters concerning the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat. See "Communist Party of Vietnam kicks off preparatory session of 12th National Congress", China.org.cn, 20 January 2016, at

http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2016-01/20/content_37619917.htm.

³⁴ "12th National Party Congress opens in Hanoi", *Nhan Dan*, 21 January 2016, at

<https://en.nhandan.com.vn/politics/domestic/item/3969102-deputy-pm-examines-noi-bai-airport-before-tet.html>.

³⁵ "Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam hiện có 5,2 triệu đảng viên" (The Communist Party of Vietnam currently has 5.2 million members), PHAPLUAT, 25 December 2019, at <https://plo.vn/thoi-su/chinh-tri/dang-cong-san-viet-nam-hien-co-52-trieu-dang-vien-879702.html>.

³⁶ "Phát biểu bế mạc Hội nghị Trung ương 12, khóa XII của Tổng Bí thư, Chủ tịch nước Nguyễn Phú Trọng" (Closing Speech by General Secretary and President Nguyen Phu Trong at 12th Plenum), *Bao Chinh Phu* (Vietnam government news), 14 May 2020, at <http://baochinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Phat-bieu-be-mac-Hoi-nghi-Trung-uong-12-khoa-XII-cua-Tong-Bi-thu-Chu-tich-nuoc-Nguyen-Phu-Trong/395584.vgp>.

³⁷ The Congress Presidium consists of almost all members of the Politburo of the 12th CPV Congress, with the general secretary of the 12th CPV Congress term serving as president of the Congress Presidium. The Head of the Central Committee on Control and Scrutiny (currently Mr Tran Cam Tu) also sits on the Congress Presidium. Tu is concurrently a member of the Secretariat.

³⁸ Congress organisers are all the members of the five interim sub-committees that look into preparations for the 13th CPV congress mentioned on page 2.

³⁹ This is on the assumption that Nguyen Phu Trong's health holds up. In 2021, Trong will be 77 years old. He has been general secretary for two consecutive terms, i.e. 10 years since 2011, and he has been ill since April 2019.

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