

---

**RELEASE EMBARGO DATE: April 23, 2014 at 9:00 AM**

**Panel:** On North Korea (Plenary Session IV)

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, April 23, 2014 / 14:00-15:15

**Talking Points for:** Chun Yungwoo, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Kim Jong-un may be more reckless, ruthless, erratic and dangerous than his late father. However, one must be cautious in underestimating his staying power and the resilience of the North Korean regime. In two years after his father’s passing, Kim Jong-un has managed to gain a firm grip on the veins of power and has established himself as the unchallenged supreme secular leader of NK and the chief priest of the theocracy he inherited. He has been successful taming the military through a series of leadership reshuffles and bringing the military under the party control. He has also deprived the military of the material basis of its power by transferring the most lucrative enterprises under the military to the cabinet. Having consolidating his power base through a series of purges and a reign of terror, he can count on a short-term stability and may have fended off a regime collapse for the time being. However, in the longer-run, the multidimensional and complex existential crisis engulfing NK will only deepen with mounting economic and ideological failures. Kim Jong-un’s policy of pursuing the parallel goals of nuclear armament and economic development is doomed to failure. NK’s obsession with nuclear armament stands in the way of obtaining outside assistance significant enough to jumpstart the North Korean economy. More serious than economic failures is a crisis of faith in the Juche ideology, a state religion which is falling into irrelevance as the gap keeps widening between the tenets of the theocracy and the realities of life in NK. The seeping truth about NK and outside world is the most deadly virus that destroys the faith of the true believers in the teachings of the Kim’s. The fate of the regime will be determined by how Kim Jong-un fares in his battle to control the access of his subjects to the truth. His fears of information influx will also circumscribe the scope and speed of his reform and openness to the outside world.

---

\* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.