Jenny Jun
"An 'Omnipotent Sword'? The Promises and Limits of North Korea's Cyber Power"

According to a 2013 National Intelligence Service (NIS) briefing to the ROK National Assembly, Kim Jong-un had called cyber warfare an "Omnipotent Sword" for North Korea – but do destructive cyber operations indeed contribute to increasing a state's power? This presentation discusses the advantages and limits of using cyber capabilities to coerce an adversary. After an examination of North Korea's attempts at coercion through the cyber attacks on Sony Pictures Entertainment and the Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power (KHNP), the presenter argues that because a successful malware-based destructive cyber operation depends on secrecy and unique targeting, it is often not suited for coercion. If North Korea wants to rely on cyber means for coercion in the future, it would need to either invest in other cyber attack methods that don't require secrecy or unique targeting, or use a malware-based cyber attack as a means to enhance the credibility of another type of threat.

Mintaro Oba
"Moving beyond the ROK-Japan 'Comfort Women' Agreement"

What were the U.S., Korean, and Japanese interests that drove the December 2015 "comfort women" agreement? And how can we characterize the subsequent increase in U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation? The presentation discusses these questions, long-term prospects for further historical reconciliation and cooperation, as well as recommendations about what the United States must do to facilitate this process. Emphasizing that ROK-Japan tensions stem from deep-seated ideational issues in which Japan's role as the "other" is a key part of Korean identity, the presenter discusses the need to go beyond government-to-government reconciliation toward a long-term renegotiation of identity for true reconciliation. The presentation concludes with a focus on ROK-Japan and U.S.-ROK-Japan relations in a strategic context.

Kayla Orta
"Espionage and 'Knowability': East Germany and North Korea"

Archival research in historically communist countries can reveal information about North Korea past and present. It is an invaluable way to know a place most people think is unknowable. Analyzing declassified East German secret police espionage reports, the presenter argues that there are distinct continuities in North Korea's behavior over the decades and discusses the lessons to be learned about socio-cultural and political engagement with the DPRK. Through the first-hand accounts of an East German spy, this research explores East German-North Korean relations in the 1980s. Codename "Bergmann" finds herself serving, politically and culturally, as an indispensable bridge between East Germany and North Korea, with additional access to enemy states, West Germany and South Korea. Her reports offer insight into a 1980s' North Korea deep in legitimacy wars with South Korea over the 1988 Olympics, in the midst of shifting leadership within the Kim Regime, and conspicuously insecure, even within the Communist sphere, of whom to trust.