



Comparative Analysis of Kim Family Discourse

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History of NSI Research on DPRK

- SMA sponsored research
 - 2013 Quick Study of Kim Jong-un's first year of political discourse
 - 2017 Focus on 5 years of Kim Jong-un's political discourse
 - 2018 Discourse analysis of Kim Jong-un's worldview and values with respect to denuclearization negotiations
 - 2018 Post-summit analysis
 - This Study: Comparative analysis of the three Kim leaders



DPRK Cultural/Political Background

Juche Philosophy

Confucianism

Stalinist (Strong Leader)

Communism

Korean Nationalism

National Self-reliance

Personality cult focused on the Kim family

Developed by Kim Il-sung

Juche formally adopted into constitution in 1972

Songun – “Military First”

Military prioritized politically economically, socially, culturally

Songbun Caste System

3 Inherited Classes, 51 sub-classes

Core ~30% – core party members, descendants of war heroes, peasants

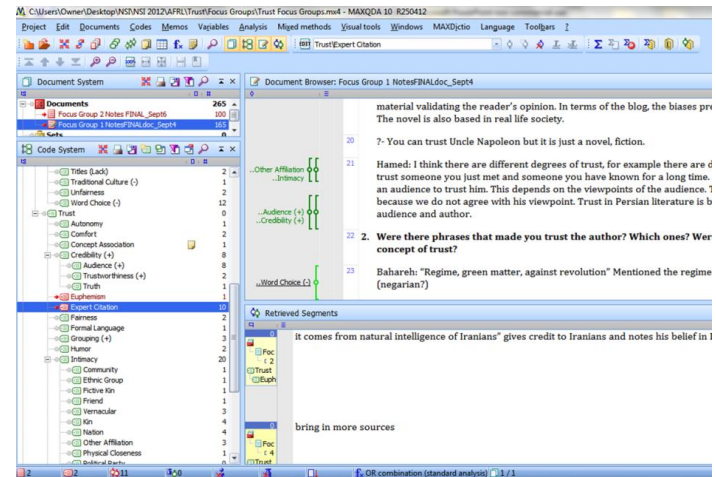
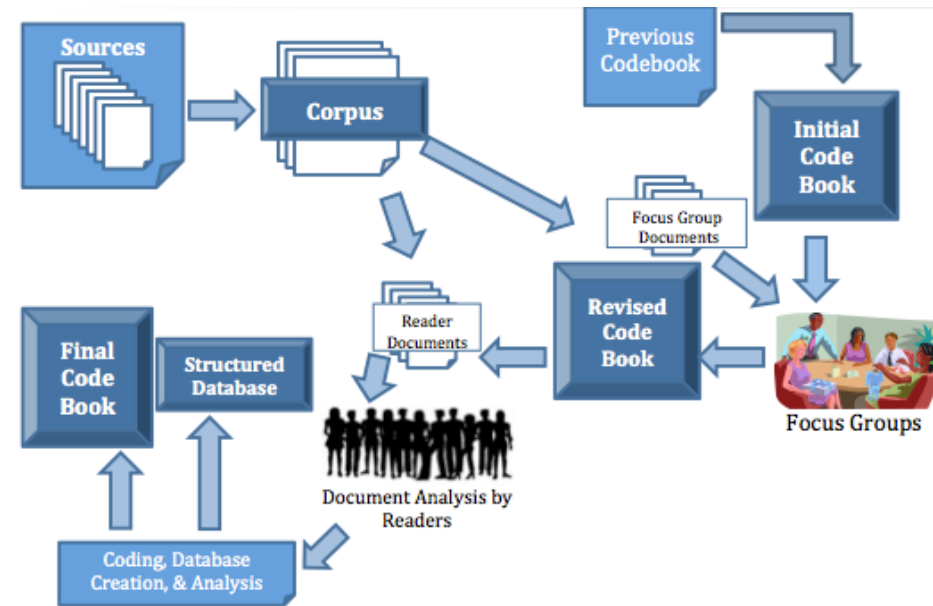
Wavering ~40% – people or relatives who lived abroad, merchants, intellectuals

Hostile ~30% – descendants of landlords, capitalists, religious, associated with hostile powers

Donju – emergent mercantile class – challenge to the state

NSI Approach to Discourse analysis

- Anthropological
- Critical Discourse analysis
- Thematic analysis
- Content Analysis
- Grounded Theory
- Semi-automated
- Beginning to build comparative data on leaders





DPRK Leader Corpus

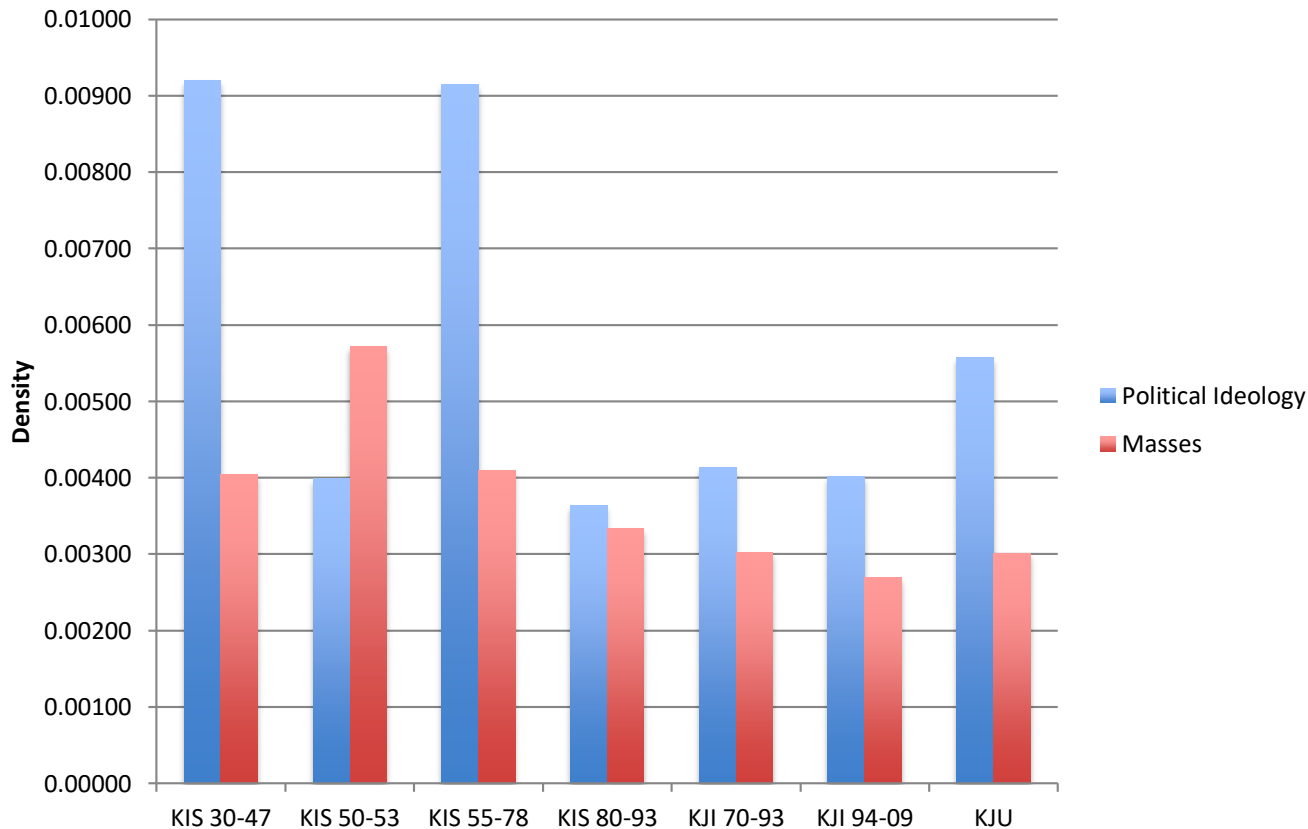
- Coded Kim Il-sung (1930-1993), Kim Jong-il (1970-2009), Kim Jong-un (2012-2018) with same codebook (133 documents)
- Divided each leader's corpus into historical periods
- Identified themes for each period that occurred statistically (.01 level and .05 level) most densely
- Compared themes and changes in themes for each leader/time period
- Key metric – **Density** - #themes/#words normalizes for comparisons

Leader	Dates	Significance	N documents
Kim Il-sung	1930-48	Revolution/Resistance	8
	1950-53	Korean War	16
	1955-78	Nation Building (most docs 68-78)	11
	1980-93	Transition to Kim Jong-il	24
Kim Jong-il	1970-93	Transition to Kim Jong-il	23
	1994-09	Economic crisis/famine (most docs 94-02)	10
Kim Jong-un	2012-18	The New Kim	41



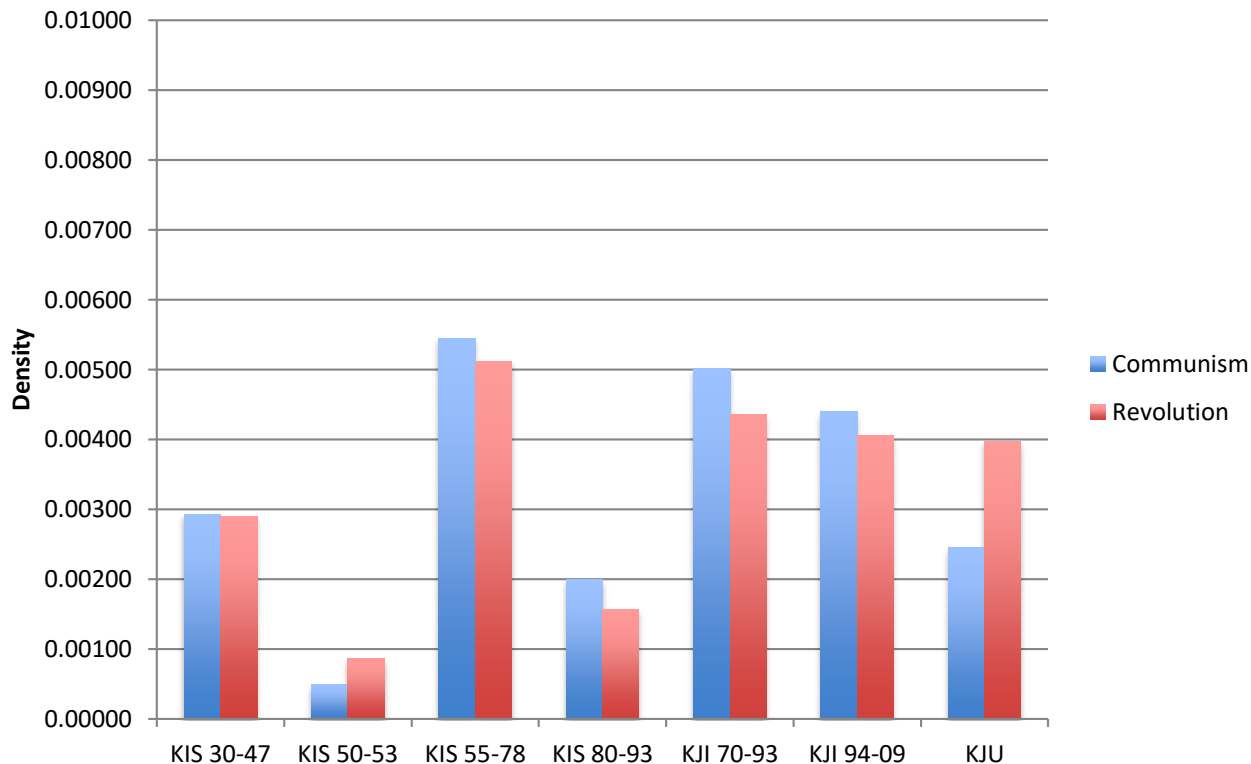
Constant Themes in Kim Discourse

- Very heavy on political ideology
- Constant appeal to, celebration of, declaration of support to **the Masses** – standard Marxist fare



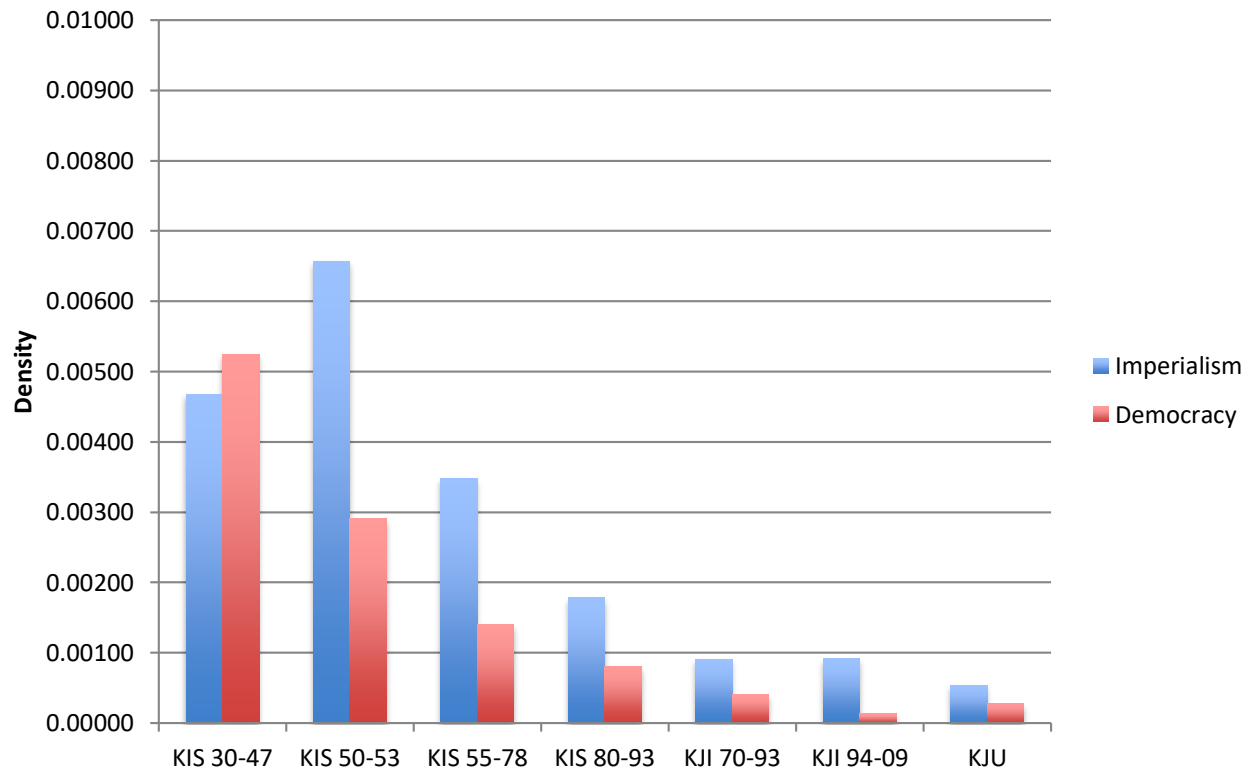
Changes in Political Ideology in Kim Discourse

- Revolution/Communism stressed by Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un
- These are anachronistic ideological constructs *to us and most of the world*
- **Perpetual revolution** is still a rallying point

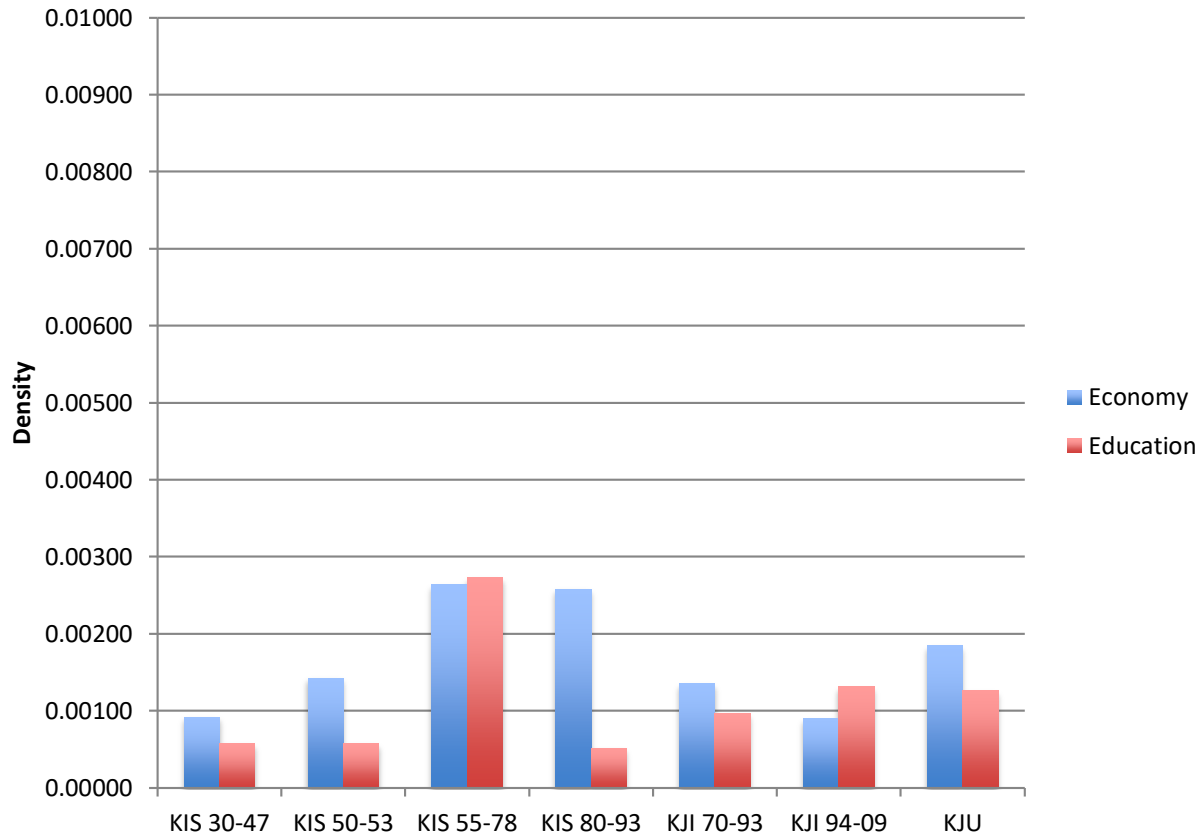


Political Concepts that Die Out in Kim Discourse

- Imperialism is an early concept
- Democracy diminishes in importance as DPRK matures as a totalitarian regime

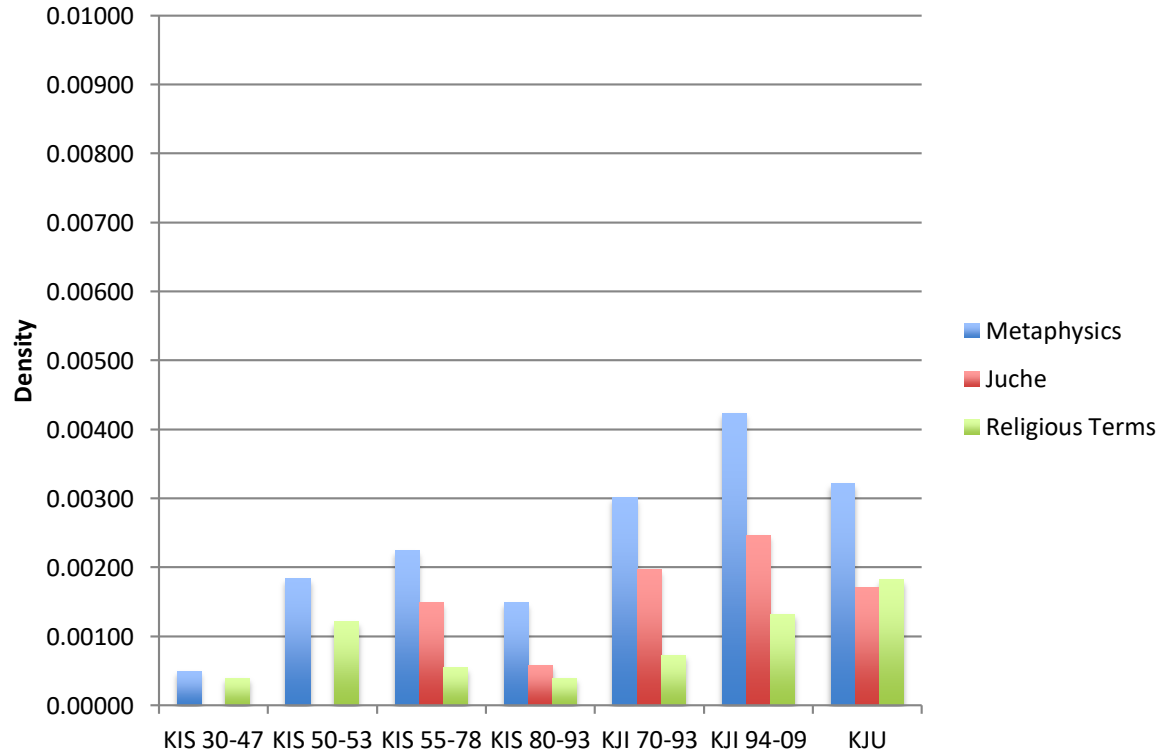


- **Economy** decreases in importance for Kim Jong-il, **increases for Kim Jong-un**



Quasi-Religious Concepts in Kim Discourse

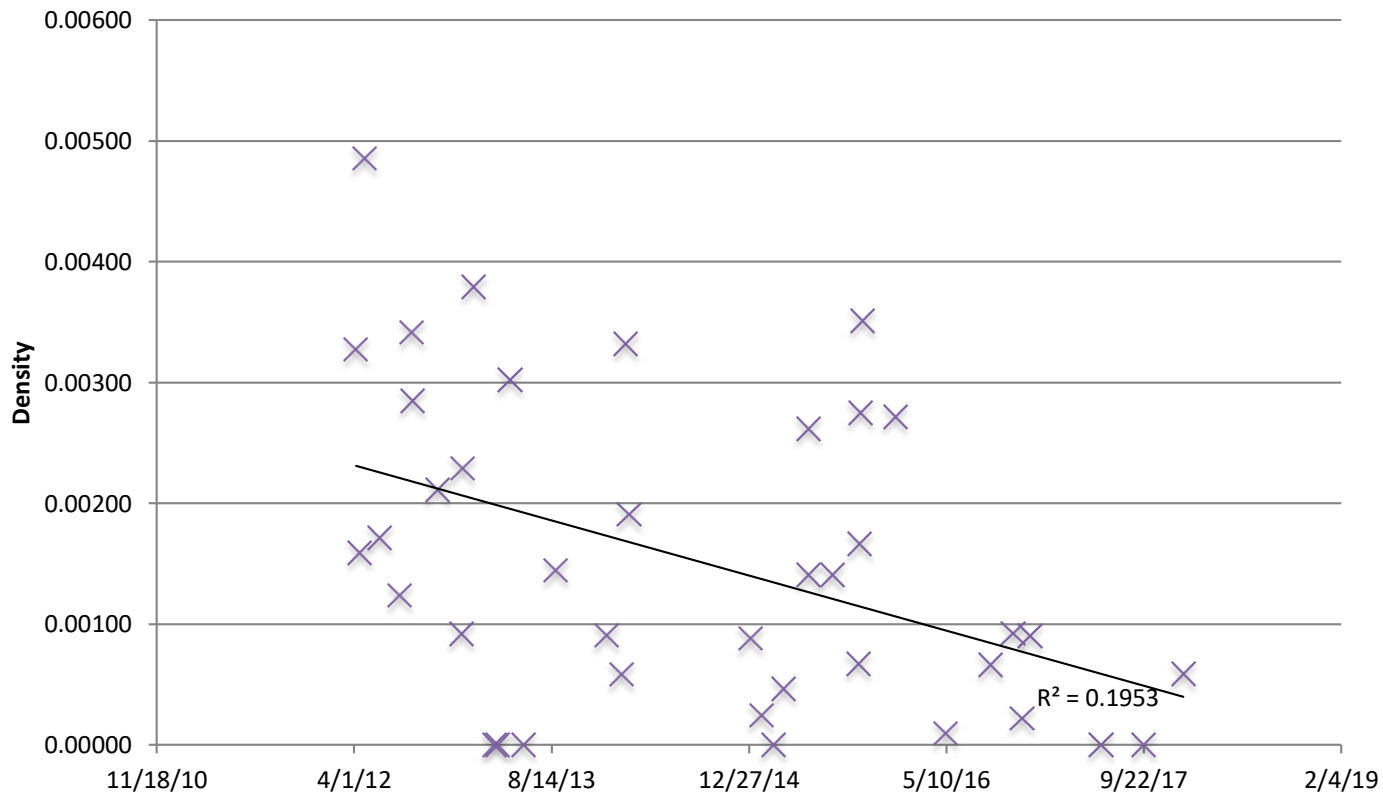
- Most important for Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un
- Kim Jong-un moves away from Juche, but it is still important
- Constant increase in more abstract religious concepts since Kim Jong-il
- Introduction of Juche in 1955 marks beginning of totalitarianism, enshrined in constitution by Kim Jong-il in 1974, grows, today remains around 1980s levels



Changes in Kim Jong-un's Quasi-Religious Discourse

- While maintaining a heavy ideological framework Kim Jong-un is **moving away from it**
- “What If?” video appealed to very abstract metaphysical themes (destiny, eternity), which are still relevant to Kim Jong-un

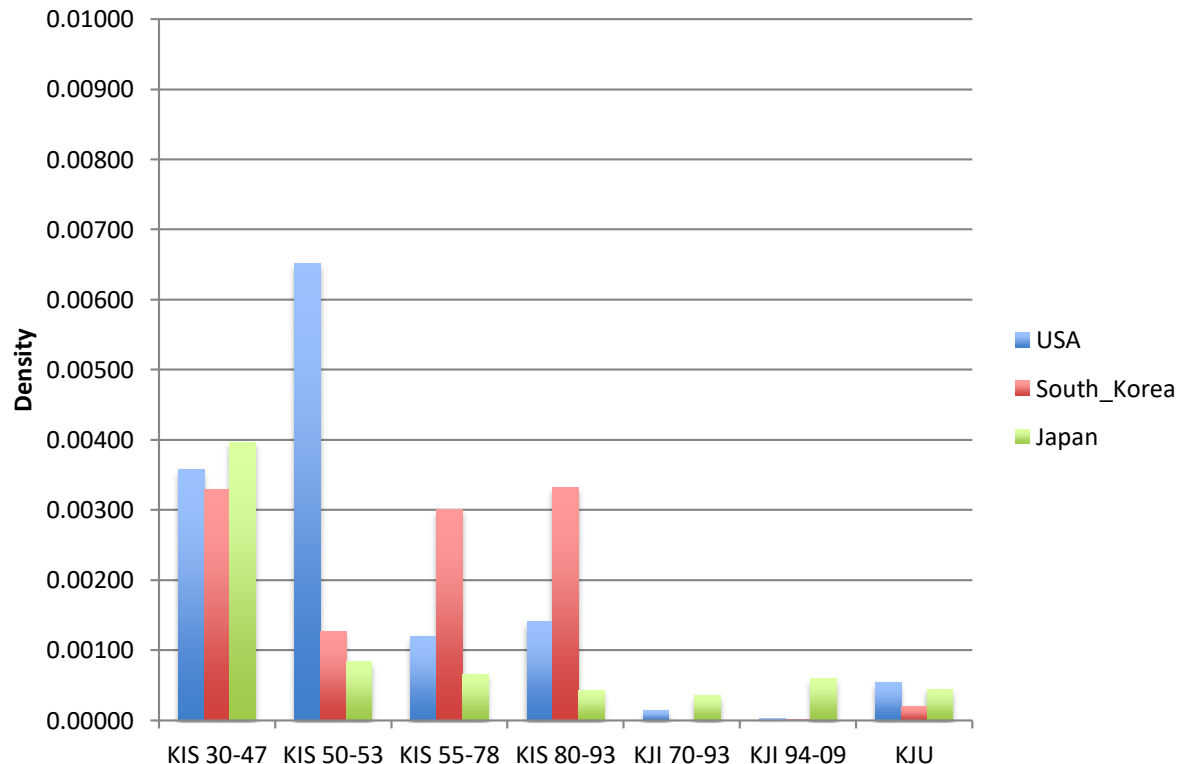
Metaphysical Terms





Who Do The Kim's Talk About?

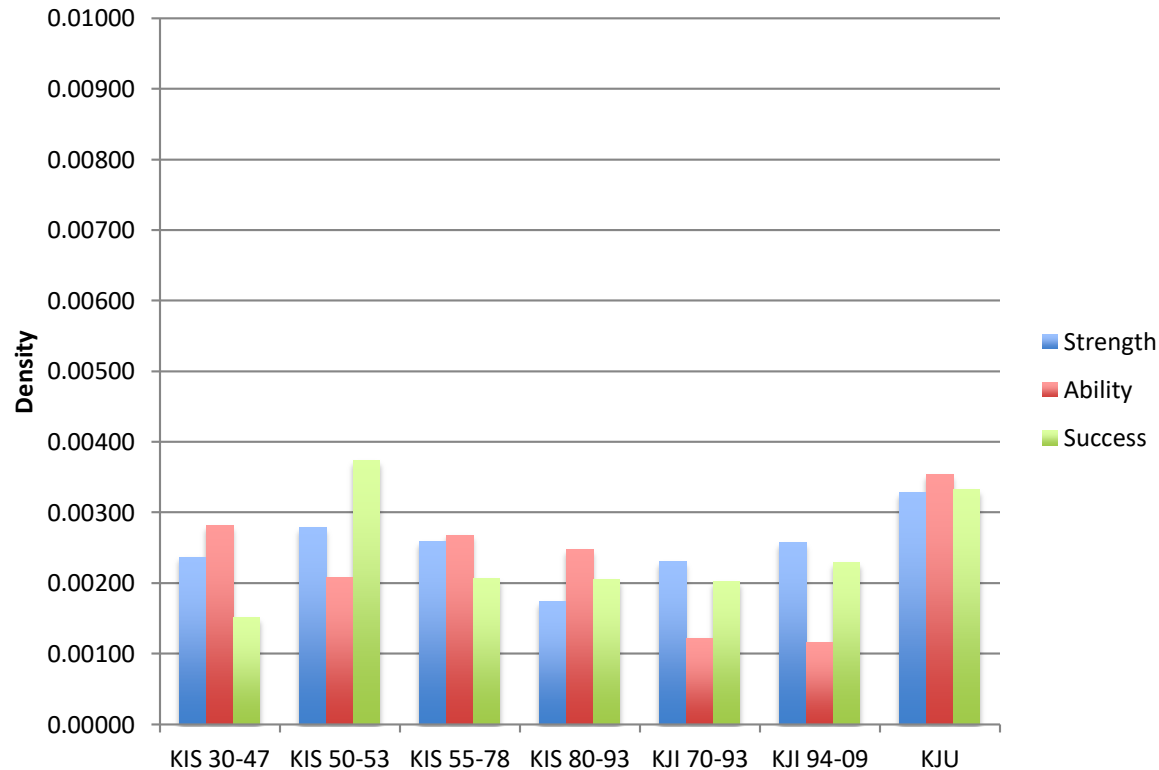
- **Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un have a strikingly myopic and insular perspective** - never mention anyone else; only US, South Korea and Japan, and even then not much
- Kim Il-sung had a global perspective. Mentioned Japan, South Korea and US when relevant, and briefly mentions many other polities when relevant





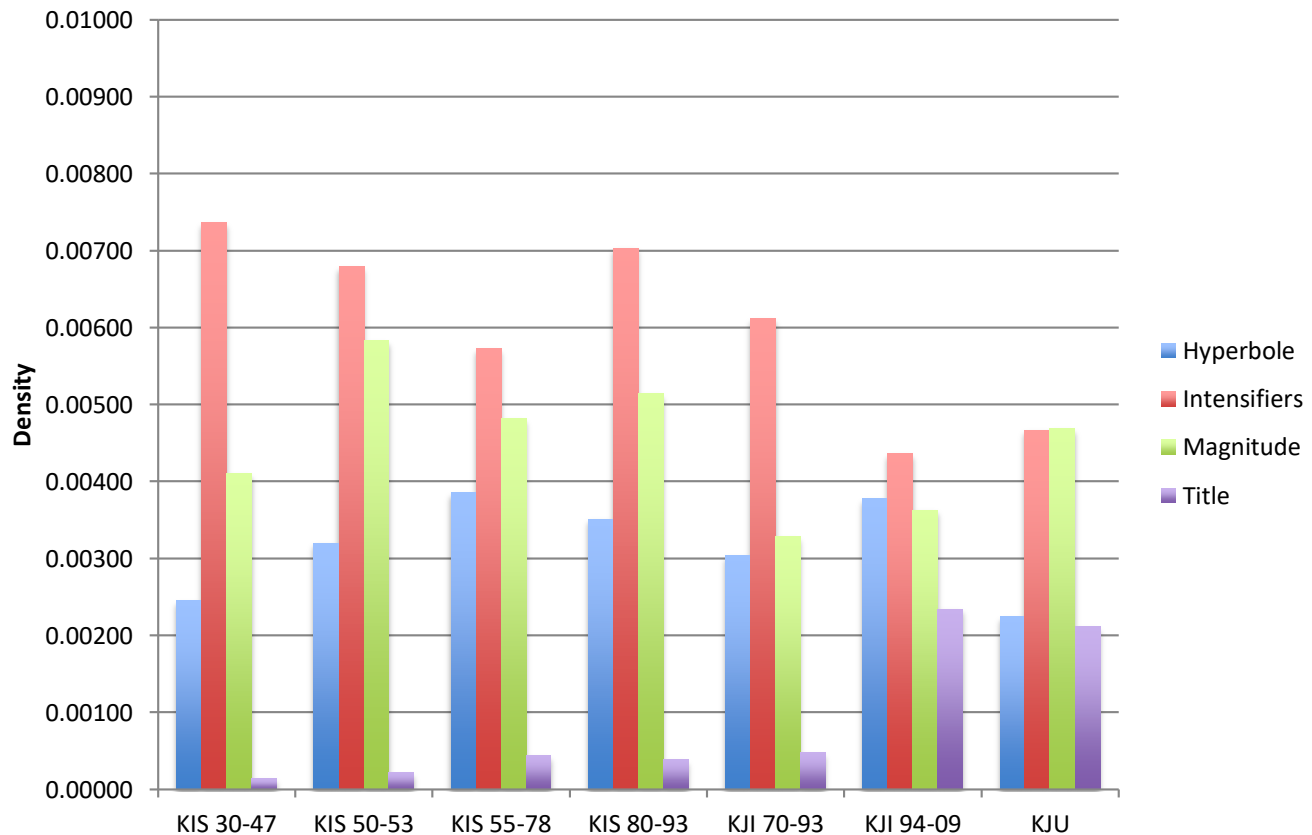
Emotive Themes Expressed by Kims

- Themes mostly reflect **capability**
- These pass the .05 threshold only for Kim Jong-un
- “What If?” video stressed these themes



Rhetorical Devices Deployed by Kims

- They all are very emotive
- They speak like politicians - surprise





When Do Themes Change in Kim Discourse?

- Looked at # themes that change to or from statistical commonality (measure of prominence of a theme)
 - 0.05 and 0.10 levels used as thresholds, threshold did not influence basic findings
- **Kim Il-sung** changes over half of his prominent themes every period – he **changes with the times**
- There was a substantial change from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-Il (Kim Jong-il more ideological)
- **Kim Jong-il rigidly** kept sending the same message despite changing conditions
- Half of the prominent themes change in the transition from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un (more focus on ability and economy)
- No periods for Kim Jong-un, but correlation with time indicates he has changed little. Rigid like his dad?

Transition	Themes Same	Themes Changed	Percent Change
Kim Il-sung All Periods	33	37	52.9%
Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-Il	9	15	62.5%
Kim Jong-Il All Periods	9	1	10%
Kim Jong-Il to Kim Jong-un	8	8	50%

Take-aways

- Political ideology, the Masses, Revolution fairly constant themes, especially since 1950s
- DPRK anachronistic, unique – beware of mirror-imaging
- Kim Jong-un is rigid so far, but moving away from Juche & Communism, toward abstract religion and economy
 - His rigidity indicates **little room for successful negotiation, but indicators of change open a door of possibility** – probably a long and very uncertain road
- Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un have a myopic focus on the Peninsula – reinforces restricted worldview and low cognitive complexity?
- Kim Il-sung was more pragmatic and adaptable
- Kim Jong-il was absolutely rigid – no wonder he never responded to the 90s crises effectively
 - Caveat: We do not have a good sample for the post-crisis (post 2002) years – fill in gap in the future?