

Name of the student:	Nicolas Rouillard
Title of the thesis:	Analyzing President Macron’s Speeches: Shaping a European Narrative of “Europe de la Défense” amidst the war in Ukraine
Reviewer:	Dr hab. Magdalena Góra, prof. UJ

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The topic of the thesis is relevant and tackles the change in French discourse on EU’s defence after the Russian full-scale war of aggression on Ukraine and its attention to the role of Central and Eastern Europe. Nicolas puts two research questions: Is President Macron building a European narrative on the concept of “Europe de la Défense” through his discourses on European Foreign Policy? And is he successful in doing so, or is he merely constructing a narrative based on French interests? The research questions are relevant and timely however the student only partially was able to answer them.

Nicolas presented a concise but rather limited literature overview of the topic. The first chapter presents very briefly the French approach to European defence but does not really engage in detail (rather at the very general level) with the European institutional level. Since the topic of the thesis was often changed by the student and he departed from the original topic that covered CEE region – the current topic falls outside of my expertise. Therefore, I am unable to discuss to what extend the literature review is sufficient for covering shifts in French foreign policy.

Nicolas selected post-structuralism as the key theoretical frame for his analysis and as a logical follow-up – critical discourse analysis as a method. The theoretical chapter in very general terms but correctly frames the post-structuralist approach. However, it remains not sufficiently conceptualised how this approach will add value to analysis of speeches of E. Macron on European defence. It is not clear what is the advantage of such approach and specifically how this perspective can be instrumental in answering the second research question. It almost feels as the theoretical chapter was written on the post-structuralism in IR as such rather than on French discourse on defence and references to the thesis topic is only added at the end of some sub-parts. The theoretical chapter does not clarify how the various aspects of the approach will be specifically employed for the further analysis. Similarly, the part on CDA is very general – almost textbook like – and does not provide operationalisation. One does not know how the “the underlying power dynamics, values, and identities” (p. 21 of the thesis) will be revealed in other than purely subjective way. Similarly, Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework method that is claimed to be employed in the thesis remain described and not really used in analysis.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The student used very limited empirical basis to answer his research questions. He selected 12 speeches by French President E. Macron, but the indicators that served (allegedly) as selection criteria remain unclear. It seems that for a CDA this is sufficient basis. There is no operationalisation offered (as stated above). There are some attempts (as a table on p. 29) but it remains underdeveloped and not linked to theoretical chapter. Similarly, the student claims that there is analysis of discursive practice and social context – but that remains unclear at the analysis level.

The following part of analysis is basically describing what Macron said in subsequent speeches. It is predominantly descriptive. There is no much analytical value to this since there is no clear

operationalisation of the research as stated above. None of the three levels described in methodological part are referred to in analysis section. It only appears in conclusions and allows for some interpretation of the results. One wonders however, why the three levels were not structuring the analysis part to make it more analytical and robust. Overall, it seems that there is no clear answer to the research questions, specifically to the second one.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The conclusions are combined with some discussion of the results. They are repetitive and does not engage in any meaningful way with the research questions. It is difficult to figured what are the answers to the first and the second research question. Some of the conclusions are wrong. For instance, Nicolas claims that the location of the speeches is more diverse (meaning that they were delivered in different places) before and after 2022. But this result was drawn based on preselected speeches. One can only say so if all speeches will be analysed by the delivery place not the 12 preselected for in-depth analysis. Moreover, Nicolas claims that "Drawing from these results, it confirms the use of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework analysis" (p. 56). It is unclear – it was a framework employed to analyse speeches so it cannot be "confirmed" but rather that these dimensions were present in speeches. It remains unclear how the three dimensions (and their presence) are relevant for the research aims.

There are also some surprising statements in the conclusions such as: "The second part of the analysis covers a much more uniform social context, the war in Ukraine, explaining the little differences between the speeches" (p. 57). It seems to me that the student provides a simplistic understanding of the social context equaled with the external pressure and threats.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The language of the thesis is correct and at the proper register. The layout of the thesis is proper and clear. Citations, use of sources and bibliography is correctly applied.

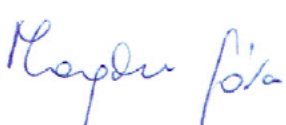
5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

This thesis is to a limited degree researched, developed and empirically substantiated. The literature review is limited, the author is using very broad theoretical perspective and does not make an effort to tailor it to the needs of own research. There is discrepancy between the general level of post-structuralist and CDA approach and the actual conceptualisation and operationalisation of the research.

The empirical basis of the thesis – 12 Macron's speeches – is sufficient for CDA. However, the analysis section does not clearly demonstrate how such critical analysis was conducted and oftentimes the analysis is very descriptive reporting what was in the speeches.

The conclusions are not really engaging with two key research questions and are very predictable in the sense that there is no much novel explanations of why (if) change happened in Macron's approach.

Grade:	D (3,5 (dostateczny plus) in Polish system)
Date:	
	Signature:
20/07/2024	Magdalena Góra

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	Range	%	Count	%	Range	%	Range	%
A (91-100)	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.