

Name of the student:	Meri Kajaia
Title of the thesis:	Democratization and Europeanization in Georgia (1991-2022). Thematic Analysis of the Political Discourse
Reviewer:	Dr hab. Jacek Kołodziej, JU professor

### 1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The author adopts liberal democracy as a normative value - a criterion for assessing the development of modern Georgia on the road to systemic transformation towards the model of European Union member states. In this context, she formulates a research question: how did the transformation path of independent Georgia between 1991 and 2022 proceed from a republic of the USSR to an independent state aspiring to the systemic model of European liberal democracy. The author assumes that this question can be answered by means of an analysis of the political discourse of Georgia's leaders. Indeed, it is one of the options. And, in light of the uncertainty about the future of European Union integration and the growing threats of militarization of international relations by Russia, this is an important research question. The thesis draws on literature of three types: documents and interpretations of modern Georgian history, studies on democratization and Europeanisation, and publications on political transition. This collection is perhaps not quite complete (the theoretical basis seems to be not well represented), but it is sufficient for the task at hand.

### 2. ANALYSIS

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

The author's periodization of Georgia's recent history is simple and convincing. On the theoretical plane, the research is grounded in simple operationalizations (five features of a democratic system, five features of states with recognized European democratic status - based on democracy audits) and Philip Cerny's classic model of political leadership. This is not a thesis offering rich reflections at the level of democratic theory, European integration or the nation-building process. The author focuses exclusively on political discourse, political narratives revealing the strategies of Georgia's political leaders - without attempting a deeper explanation of the relationship between discourse and political process.

On the methodological plane, the thesis is minimalist in a good sense. Data sampling is legitimate and correct. The rich material of political speeches, has been collected with care for the representativeness of the texts. The author has chosen the recently popular Brown's and Clarke's thematic analysis (a narrowed part of qualitative content analysis). This method was used very robustly, but the text lacks disclosure of the intermediate stage of the analysis: the collection of codes, memos and notes, their grouping and categorization, a critical discussion of how the first conclusions were reached, theoretical sampling etc. Basically, the dataset is known from the beginning and is not modified due to the dynamics of the analysis. The analysis is not crowned with a thematic framework, which would make the ground for interpretation and discussion. Instead, we have a meticulously crafted examination of the speech texts on a check-list basis, although in my opinion the author's interpretation is still very interesting.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

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

The claim of Georgia's own way of instrumentalizing Europeanisation and democracy seems interesting. The author is right when she distinguishes the key factors of this process: the leaders' desire for political distinction, the type of leadership, the context of the political moment. I find it interesting to recognize the disconnect between democratization and Europeanisation (the more nationalism or ethnocentric focus, the less Europeanisation), as well as the tendency of the current government not to respect European accession criteria, which is another argument showing the complexity and non-obviousness of a single model of European integration, and especially complicated situation of the former USSR republics.

#### 4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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

The thesis is matching academic standards in all major aspects, although critical attention could be drawn to minor carelessness - such as the inconsistent style of chapter titles or minor stylistic errors (e.g. "replaced with y o u n g , Western-educated y o u n g politicians", p. 11).

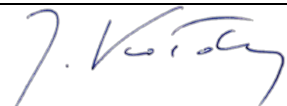
#### 5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

The author's merit is the restraint of the research design: a simple and correct operationalization of democracy and Europeanisation and a simple, correctly applied methodology of qualitative content analysis. Also deserving a good mark is the thoroughness of the analysis and the diligence in researching individual issues. This provides a weighty description of the changing political scene in Georgia and an insight into the strategies of politicians' instrumentalization of European and democratic values.

What may be somewhat lacking is a broader theoretical context, for example theories of systemic transformation of states moving away from authoritarian rule with the hope of building a liberal democracy. A certain gap can be seen at the interface between the literature review - especially the interesting discussion of democratization and Europeanisation processes - and the interpretations and conclusions, which do not contain explicit references to the models discussed. The paper would probably have benefited if the author had concluded with a discussion of a synthetic model for the transformation of the political system in Georgia, with a special role for individual leaders.

Once can be said for sure: the author is consistent – she sets her goals rather modestly, but achieves them fully.

<b>Grade (A-F):</b>	Kraków dobry plus (4.5); 81%
Date: 12. 07. 2023	Signature:
	

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	Range	%	Score	%	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'.