



# A Corpus-Based Analysis of French Foreign Policy: Taking Emmanuel MACRON'S Speech at the United Nations General Debate as an Example

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**Abstract.** French foreign policy and its international stance have gained a lot of attention in academia. To summarize the characteristics of French foreign policy, this paper uses the Jaccard Similarity algorithm for text clustering and co-occurrence networks of high-frequency words to examine Emmanuel Macron's speech at the United Nations General Debate as a case study. The research reveals that, during Macron's tenure, France foreign policy emphasizes its independence and dedication to diplomacy via cooperation and the fortification of multilateral partnerships.

**Keywords:** Text mining · Corpus · French foreign policy · United Nations General Debate

## 1 Introduction

As Macron's presidency has coincided with a period of global turbulence, marked by the rise of unilateralism, anti-globalization, protectionism and threats to global security, it becomes increasingly clear that a new framework of global governance is urgently needed. In response to these challenges and opportunities, French diplomacy has undergone significant strategic adjustments, resulting in notable changes to its foreign policy [1]. Macron's speech at the United Nations General Debate effectively conveyed France's views and positions on global affairs. Thus, it's reasonable to take his speech as an example to analyze French foreign policy.

In fact, researchers in China are already interested in analyzing his speech. Zheng Jin and Zang Xiaojia have scrutinized Macron's inaugural address from the perspective of critical discourse analysis [2]. Shang Ying have examined Macron's speech about US's pullout from the Paris Agreement based on the Three Modes of Persuasion of Aristotle [3]. However, these studies have been limited by their qualitative nature and reliance on a single speech as their primary sources of analysis, leading to potential subjective interpretation and bias.

To address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive reflection, this study employs a corpus-based approach using all of President Macron's speeches at the United

Nations General Debate. Leveraging the software Kh Coder for systematic and structured analysis helps reduce the impact of subjective factors and enhances the authenticity and reliability of our findings.

## 2 Research Design

### 2.1 Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include the following: What are the keywords used during his speeches? What are the main topics? How do his speeches reveal France's foreign policy priorities and strategies?

### 2.2 Corpus Selection

Assuring the reliability of the data source, the corpus for this study was chosen from the United Nations' official website. A search using the terms "Emmanuel Macron" and "General Debate" turned up five speeches that Macron delivered in the UN General Debate between 2017 and 2022.

### 2.3 Corpus Management Software

Many corpus tools, notably AntConc and Sketch Engine, have been used in the field of French text mining. However, Sketch Engine's text analysis function heavily relies on its built-in corpus, making it impossible to give exact support, whereas AntConc is restricted to simpler text analysis. As a result, this study uses Kh coder, a free software that supports several statistical tasks, including word frequency analysis, correlation analysis, text clustering, and co-occurrence networks. These traits provide us a better understanding of the text's material, terminology, and main ideas [4].

### 2.4 Research Method

The study of Macron's speeches at the UN General Assembly focuses on text clustering and co-occurrence networks. Using the Freeling package, texts were first cleaned, segmented, and stemmed, yielding 26,308 tokens and 2,574 types. A co-occurrence network was then built to explore the vocabulary traits. Text clustering were employed using the sum of squares and cosine coefficient to calculate distance and determine the number of clusters, from which key words were identified for different theme classifications.

## 3 Research Results and Analysis

### 3.1 Word Frequency Analysis

As seen in Table 1, Macron underscored the need of global governance carried out by the United Nations. He frequently used words such as "pays", "international", "monde", "ensemble", "Nations Unies", and "organisation" to emphasize the value of international cooperation and the variety of global governance subjects. Moreover, he expressed his belief that France should play a crucial role in international governance, with "international" and "France" ranking second and third in the word frequency list, further reinforcing France's position and role in international governance.

**Table 1.** Word frequency list of Emmanuel Macron’s speeches at the United Nations General Debate from 2017–2022 (Top 30)

N	Words	Frequency	N	Words	Frequency	N	Words	Frequency
1	Pays	88	11	Engager	48	21	Agir	35
2	International	83	12	Crise	43	22	Bâtir	35
3	France	66	13	Nations Unies	42	23	Collectif	35
4	Paix	65	14	Lutte	41	24	Région	35
5	Monde	63	15	Action	39	25	Engagement	34
6	Droit	56	16	Peuple	38	26	Solution	34
7	Sécurité	54	17	Guerre	37	27	Souveraineté	34
8	Inégalité	53	18	Organisation	36	28	Face	33
9	Mondial	50	19	Responsabilité	36	29	Continuer	32
10	Ensemble	49	20	Accord	35	30	Construire	31

Macron pointed out the instability and risks of the current international situation. He used words such as “inégalité”, “crise”, and “guerre”, which could negatively affect the international order. He emphasized the need for governments and international organizations to take responsibility. To clarify the call for action, he used words such as “engagement,” “lutte,” “face,” “continuer,” “construire,” and “solution,” which demands greater participation and sustainability of international community.

### 3.2 Co-occurrence Network Analysis

In this figure, different colors represent different subgraphs, with circles indicating words and their sizes the frequency of occurrence. The lines connecting the circles represent the co-occurrence between words, with the color depth reflecting their intensity. It contains 47 cercles and 60 lines, forming 9 subgraphs. Among them, 5 subgraphs have a relatively large proportion and requires special attention (Fig. 1).

In the green subgraph, “souveraineté”, which serves as the keyword, is connected to “international”, “principe”, “respect”, “russie” and “guerre”, reflecting France’s view that respecting national sovereignty is an internationally recognized norm. It also demonstrates France’s opposition to war because it violates its values of freedom. In this regard, France is particularly concerned about Russia’s actions. In the yellow subgraph, “Nations Unies” and “organization” have a large proportion and are linked to “africain” and “soutenir”, indicating that France aims to take a more active position in international organizations, with a particular focus on Africa and European Union. In the orange subgraph, “durable” is connected to the most other words, including “continuer”, “solution”, “politique” and “region”, highlighting France’s geopolitical foreign policy. On the one hand, this policy seeks to address regional issues. On the other hand, it aspires to continue combating local terrorism and maintaining regional security. In the purple subgraph, “sécurité” is connected to “force”, “collectif”, and “paix”, proposing that

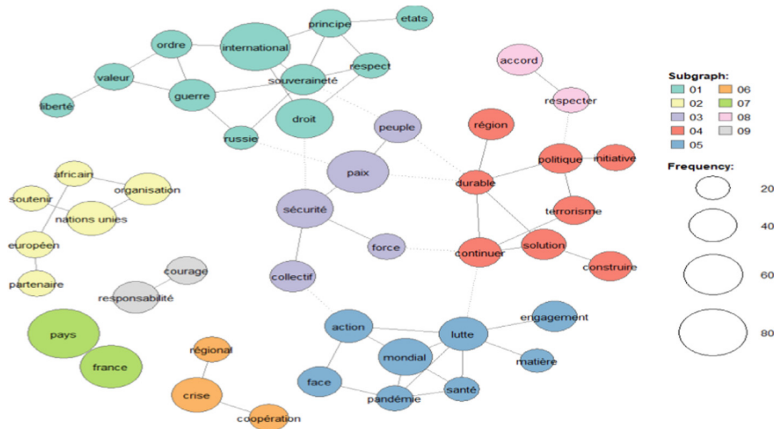


Fig. 1. Co-occurrence network of Emmanuel Macron’s speeches at United Nations general debate from 2017 to 2022

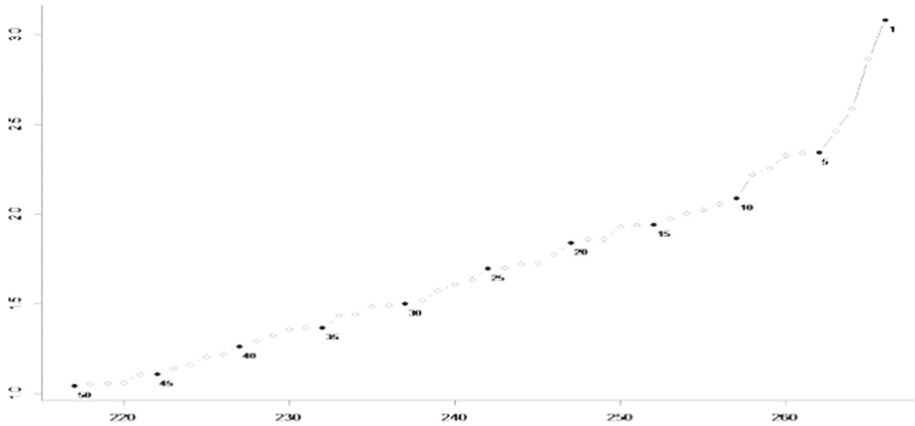
international security and peace are intertwined and requires joint efforts from the international community. In the blue subgraph, “mondial” is linked to “lute”, “action”, “santé” and “pandémie”. This shows that global public health emergencies require a reform of the global public health governance system to encourage worldwide collaboration in tackling shared dangers to human health [5].

### 3.3 Text Clustering

Cluster analysis is a method of data mining that groups data objects into distinct categories based on their similarities. In this study, we use the sum of squares of deviations to calculate the distance and determine the optimal number of clusters. Figure 2 illustrates various agglomeration stages, where the x-axis represents different stages, the y-axis signifies dissimilarity and the numerical values in the plot indicate number of clusters at each stage.

It shows that there is a significant dissimilarity between text data when merged into 9 clusters versus 10 clusters. However, as the number of clusters exceed 10, the dissimilarity becomes smaller. Thus, the ideal number of clusters is 10. The Jaccard coefficient was employed to determine the keywords of each cluster, and the results are presented in the Table 2.

These topics reflect three fundamental characteristics of France’s foreign policy. First, France advocates for an independent policy centered on the European Union. [6] This idea is rooted in the cultural tradition, which has historically pursued freedom and democracy. It also inherits the diplomatic principle during the Charles De Gaulle era. At its core, this policy seeks to maintain France’s independence in great power politics. To achieve this goal, France has emphasized the promotion of the European integration. The close proximity, intertwined histories and cultures, and shared ideology have created a strong sense of psychological identification. [7] The development and strengthening of the EU can, in turn, support France’s position on the international stage. [8] As such,



**Fig. 2.** Agglomeration Stages (last 50)

**Table 2.** Keywords of clusters

N	Theme	Words
1	Middle Est	région, politique, accord, Iran, respecter, continuer, durable, arme, régional, utile
2	Europe	paix, sécurité, courage, Russie, guerre, bâtir, Ukraine, conseil, soutenir, voie
3	Multilateral Relations	organisation, africain, initiative, union, états, investir, nations unies, européen, articulation, continent
4	Public Health	matière, lutte, engagement, éducation, mondial, santé, paludisme, tuberculose, partenariat, reconstitution
5	Unbalanced Development	inégalité, pays, pauvre, lutter, difficulté, accès, davantage, agir, riche, agenda
6	Environmental Protection	réponse, vivre, climatique, enfant, Sud, humanité, financier, planète, personne, corne
7	Risks	défi, face, contemporain, multilatéralisme, collectif, acteur, climatique, terrorisme, monde, sécurité
8	Actions	agenda, engager, objectif, développement, aide, collectivement, ensemble, coalition, changer, fixer
9	National Image	valeur, histoire, liberté, ordre, monde, France, responsabilité, combat, mondial, protéger
10	Principles	droit, international, people, respect, coopération, souveraineté, principe, respecter, soutenir, décider

France aims to deepen political mutual trust among EU member states, actively explore new areas of cooperation, and enhance the overall strength of the EU. While France inevitably relinquished some sovereignty in this process, it simultaneously strengthened

its leadership within the EU. By leveraging the power of the EU, France can enhance its voice in international affairs, better safeguard its own interests, and realize its aspiration of becoming a great power.

The second characteristic is its pluralistic approach based on cooperation. Today's globe is plagued by ongoing local conflicts, deteriorating ecological environment, looming terrorism and frequent global public health emergencies. These issues pose great threats to human survival and development, necessitating significant action on the part of the international community in multidimensional and multi-subject cooperation. Regarding public health, France expanded its aid for healthcare in Africa's underdeveloped regions and started initiatives to fight common ailments like malaria and tuberculosis. In terms of ecological protection, France actively collaborates with the Global South, providing them with economic aid and technical support to help reduce their energy consumption and pollution emissions. In matters of national security, in order to provide a stable and secure environment, France coordinated with various governments and international organizations to combat terrorism [9]. Additionally, France promotes collaboration to lessen conflict and amicably resolve unstable issues like the Iranian nuclear issue [10].

The third characteristic is its reform policy. The current tendency is being resisted by the emergence of anti-globalization, protectionism, and the repression of the multipolar development [11]. Developing nations and emerging powers are rising quickly, and the current system of global governance is unable to keep up with their development. The system has to be altered in order to respect the interests and concerns of all nations. In conformity with the UN Charter and international law, it is essential to update the system while retaining the UN's primary position in world affairs. This should entail supporting the development of a more just and equitable international order and improving the global governance structure, along with the cooperative drafting of international standards. By preventing any country from threatening others with power politics, this can aid in achieving collective decision-making in international affairs and provide up opportunities for the growth of other nations.

## 4 Conclusion

This study employed co-occurrence network to explore the lexical patterns. It also applied cluster analysis to identify topics and enumerate the characteristics of France's foreign policy. The results indicate that under Macron's leadership, France has upheld its commitment to safeguarding its national interests, cooperating to tackle global issues, and promoting the reform of global governance. The use of quantitative methods offers an objective presentation of the research findings and overcomes the limitations of previous studies. However, we solely use Macron's speech at the UN General Debate as the research data, and the corpus could be further expanded. Despite these drawbacks, this study offers valuable insights for future research.

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