TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
THE LESTER AND SALLY ENTIN
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
THE SHIRLEY AND LESLIE PORTER
SCHOOL OF CULTURAL STUDIES

אוניברסיטת תל-אביב
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
ע"ש לסטר וסאלי אנטין
בית הספר למדעי התרבות
ע"ש שירלי ולסלי פורטר

TEL AVIV אוניברסיטת
UNIVERSITY תל אביב

Politically Incorrect: Self-Presentation Strategies of Presidential Candidates in France and the United States

Summary

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE "DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY" BY

Maria Saltykov

This work was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Ruth Amossy

Summary

This thesis focuses on a contemporary trend in electoral campaign discourse in Western democracies. In the context of enduring geopolitical and economic crises, this unconventional method of self-presentation is characteristic of presidential candidates. We have called this discourse, and the ethos based on it ***politically incorrect***, implying the strategic intentions of such politicians to distance themselves from standardized and generally accepted patterns of self-presentation. It is based on a deviation from the accepted generic and ethical norms, harsh criticism of the standard political discourses, hate speech towards the political and ideological opponents, taboo topics and inappropriate language, and provocations that attract the attention of the electorate and the media. However, if we consider the elections' results, this provocative discourse turns out to be, paradoxically, very effective. Its statistically provable electoral success was the reason for our interest and the criterion for selecting the corpus of our study – the electoral speeches of the presidential candidates in France (2016-2017) and the United States (2015-2016).

Our main goal was to understand the essence of the success of politically incorrect discourse and the strategies based on it, to analyze why the violation of generally accepted and balanced norms causes admiration instead of resentment and brings electoral votes instead of a damaged reputation.

To understand the phenomenon, we closely examined the concepts of politically correct and *incorrect* to conceptualize thereafter operative notions. Focusing on the recent electoral periods, we attempted to describe the mechanisms of politically incorrect campaign discourse through the discursive and argumentative analysis of a corpus.

Through the examination of particular cases, we attempted to identify the functional and socio-political issues of an ethos construction that breaks with tradition and disputes the rules and values of the society in which it functions.

At each stage, we relied on and supported our research with relevant theoretical developments in different areas: discourse and argumentation analysis (mainly the French tradition—Amossy 1999, 2010, 2017; Charaudeau 2001, 2013; Maingueneau 2006, 2015 and

other authors), political discourse analysis (Alduy 2017, Benoit 2007, Denton, Trent & Friedenberg 2011, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2017, among other authors).

Part I – Conceptual part

1. The genre of the presidential campaign discourse

We began our research by examining the enunciative circumstances - namely, the presidential campaign discourse, considered a discursive genre, which is distinguished by a clear regulation, chronology, and ritualization of the process. Based on Bakhtin's (1984) definition of the genre, we determined that within the framework of the presidential campaign, there is determinacy and stability at all levels: the stages of the campaign are formalized, and its events are ritualized and predetermined; the topics and issues discussed are quite stable and predictable; and in the speech of the candidates, constants of verbal style and expected discursive ethical standards are traced.

The correspondence of these features gave us the prerequisites to consider the discourse of the presidential campaign as a separate genre and to determine the subgenres that are included in it and that are present in the corpus of each presidential candidate from our sample.

2. The definition of the political (in)correctness

It should be noted that *political incorrectness* is a formula (in the sense of Krieg-Planque 2009) that functions in the public space (English and French-speaking), but it does not have a relatively stable definition and was not studied at the time of our research.

Due to the lack of an exhaustive study of both the phenomenon and formula of *political incorrectness*, as well as of its functioning in different contexts (including in political and electoral discourse), we set ourselves the task of a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the studied phenomenon. We used several complementary approaches for this and relied mainly on scientific sources devoted to the topic of political correctness in various spheres of social life (Banning 2014, Bock-Côté 2019, Cameron 2012, Conway, Repke & Houck 2017, Fairclough 2003, Friedman & Narveson 1995, Mangeot 1997, Toolan 2003, Western 2016 and other authors).

3. Analytical approach to the definition

We decided to start with an analytical approach. We thoroughly examined the original concept of political correctness, its history, motivation, development over time, and values. Based on the body of scientific works and media (around 60 sources, 1990-2019), we studied the different areas of application and interpretation of political correctness and the main points of its criticism.

Functioning in American discourse, both scholarly and public, since the 1960s, this formula has spread since the 1990s and has extended to European discourse. Initially, "political correctness" reflected a desire to manage the use of terms and naming that might hurt the feelings of groups considered disadvantaged. It was mainly used in the context of struggles against racism and sexism, the feminist and sexual minority rights movements, or the activities of the "American New Left" in the 1960s and 1970s (Cameron 2012).

Over time, the common meanings and perceptions of political correctness have deteriorated. Conceived as a means of contributing to harmonious communication within society and tolerance, it has taken on a negative or pejorative image in contemporary times, under the influence of massive criticism. It is associated with censorship and coercion, bureaucratic language and criticized for accentuation of differences instead of smoothing them out, communication interference, and deformation of language. Based on this, we were able to preliminarily deduce the main characteristics of its antipode - *political incorrectness*, which is, respectively, directness and *freedom* in expressing thoughts and ideas, *free* and creative flow of thought and communication based on sincerity, which allows objectivity in the representation of facts.

We observed here a dichotomy: the cult of *equality* expressed by the erasure of facts and nominations (and actions) likely to offend someone (political correctness) against *freedom* as the fundamental right to express oneself and, ultimately, to think about reality in all its dimensions, even contradictory ones (political incorrectness, respectfully).

4. *Descriptive empirical approach to the definition*

The next stage of the research was a descriptive empirical approach, with the elements of the relevant statistical data, which resulted in the discursive definition of a relatively new (emerging) formula of *political incorrectness*. We explored the nuances of usage, the context, the cotext, and the temporality (or chronology) of the formula - which are the pillars of the discursive definition of a notion (Amossy 2015, Masasa 2011). This approach allowed us to comprehensively examine the perception and functioning of the formula in the public space and to determine the values and messages implied by it.

First, we examined the scientific corpus (about thirteen sources), which mentions one of the forms of the formula *political incorrectness* (or derivatives, as non-political correctness). This generally confirmed our preliminary findings.

But more than that, we analyzed a relatively large corpus of the use of the formula in the media and social networks. For this sample, we selected the most authoritative and ideologically diverse media of France, the USA, and the United Kingdom[1]. Unlike scholarly discourse, where *political incorrectness* has been mainly considered in connection with the "mother" formula of political correctness, the media, and digital corpora make an "independent" use of it, thus manifesting an essential stage of its lexicalization.

Chronologically, the analyzed cases of nuances of usage and interpretation of the formula *political incorrectness* dated from the early 1990s to mid-2019. The amount of available and relevant articles varies from source to source, from 50-60 to almost 300 items per journal.

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[1] Le Nouvel Observateur, Libération, Le Monde, Le Figaro, Le Point, Marianne (France) ; The New York Times, The Washington Post, Newsday (USA) ; The Telegraph (UK).

The media interprets political incorrectness as a formula in contradictory ways, ranging from admiration to undisguised disgust. Contrary to expectations, this does not depend on the ideological orientation of the journal (such as "the right is the bearer of the incorrect") but rather on the section in which the formula is used. In the entire corpus, two general sections share primacy: culture and politics (which also emerge from the scholarly corpus), supplemented by social topics.

5. Usage of the expression "political (in)correctness" in the political context

Within the context of our main study, we focused on the political bloc of this corpus[2]. The chronology of the use of the formula in this context is characterized by its maximum peaks conditioned by important political events (e.g., elections) or crises (e.g., after terrorist attacks)[3].

We analyzed the dominant formulations in which political incorrectness appears and established the main associations with it circulating in Western society. Lexically, the formula was used to characterize political figures and their style and discourse, as well as the results of their activities: laws, speeches, reforms, positions, remarks, etc.

The media's attitude towards politically incorrect ethos (image) or approaches has changed (improved) remarkably over time and with the advent of the "new herald of political incorrectness[4]" Donald Trump (Le Monde, 13.03.2018).

In general, we have established that a political leader of this type is associated with the ability to take the reputational risk of appearing politically incorrect. The risk relates to the stable association of *incorrectness* with opposition to correctness and, therefore, with all kinds of discriminatory acts (racism, sexism, antisemitism, homophobia, etc.). His style is associated with rudeness and provocation (that is a conscious choice of such a style of behavior and discourse).

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[2] Although we also performed an analysis of the use of the formula in a cultural context.

[3] 2006-2009 (about 18% of recorded cases) with a peak in 2008 (more than 30% of the period 2006-2009), an increase from 2012, an increase around 2015 (9% of cases in general) and a significant peak in 2016 (more than 10% of all recorded cases), a peak in 2018 (14% of cases in general).

[4] Our translation.

Ideologically, *political incorrectness* is firmly associated with right-wing and far-right political forces.

So, what are the benefits of this political ethos, which is considered risky and unpopular (Le Figaro, 2006) at first glance and is paradoxically so invasive?

The ability to take a risk means that the leader is distinguished by courage and bravery, banal rudeness turns into the fact of *daring* to be or seem politically incorrect (Le Monde, 2007-2008 and others). This transgressive posture allows him to adopt a contrasting strategy: he can position himself as an outsider of the political establishment and even as an iconoclast of the degraded and mendacious "system."

To this end, he relies on freedom of thought and expression and enjoys "free speech" to the point of violating the rules of civility, presented as the "bureaucracy language" specific to the aforementioned "system" and to his political adversaries. We checked this data further in the analytical part of the dissertation.

It is worth noting that another association encountered was the connection of politically incorrect discourse with populism. Therefore, before moving on to the practical part of the work, we considered it necessary to consider the real political and discursive environment of *political incorrectness's functioning* in the selected timeframe, namely its connection with modern populist tendencies (2010-2020 period).

6. Political context: political incorrectness and populism

The parallel in worldviews based on a break with existing political lines is obvious. To assess the relationship between political incorrectness as a discourse and positioning, we described the main tendencies of modern populism, relying on its main and modern theories (Charaudeau 2013, Germani 1972, Laclau 2008, Mouffe 2018, Muller 2016, Perinneau 2017, Taguieff 1997 and other sources).

We clarified that both trends are chronologically and contextually determined. Among the factors behind the protest discourse of the contemporary era, we must mention the factor of the crisis of confidence in traditional democratic representation reinforced by the global financial

crisis. Security crises and instabilities add to the distrust in existing political institutions. Political scientists speak of the end of a "cycle" of stable political consensus, reached in the post-war period (World War II), aimed at maintaining political and economic balance and generally supporting liberal-democratic values.

We tried to examine the main ideological grounds of populism, as well as the motives for its criticism, the scenography that is modeled by the corresponding politicians, and its internal logic. Not depending on any of the known political ideologies, populists integrate their worldview into any of them. Their worldview is based on the irreconcilable opposition of the people - the pure and wise embodiment of the state - and the unjust and corrupt power. The people are led and represented by the only hero and leader who can return their sovereignty - a charismatic populist politician.

This opposition is quite simplified and straightforward: there is a place for pure evil and pure good. That is why any discussion with rivals of programs, ideas, and alternatives is impossible. Populism is maximalism, a politician within its framework is inclined to delegitimize his possible rivals (Muller 2016), as well as any other authorities standing between him and "his" people. He does this through a certain conflictual communication style.

Having analyzed the possible correlation between *political incorrectness* and populism, we concluded that, despite the convergence at certain points (the ethos of outsider, violent attacks against opponents, the dramatic pathos, and the appeal to the people and other trends), these strategies are not a single whole and are independent of each other. We can talk about a conjuncture and situational correlation between *political incorrection* and populism in a given historical moment.

Politically incorrect discourse is based on a deliberate self-presentation. It is a discursive and ethotic strategy with pragmatic value in the political environment (we will see it in the metadiscourse of the politically incorrect candidates). On the other hand, the "populist" is a label that one never attributes to himself: it is an epithet attached "from the outside" - by political opponents or in the media interdiscourse - most often connoted negatively.

Having developed the theoretical premises and foundations, we proceeded to a practical analysis of the phenomenon of *political incorrectness* in politics, namely electoral discourse.

Part II – Analytical part

In the analytical part, we tried to identify, analyze, classify, and understand the argumentative essence of all possible manifestations of *political incorrectness* in the electoral discourse and the construction of the corresponding ethos with the aim of their possible generalization and synthesis.

1. Selection of the politically incorrect candidates and analysis of their speeches

To accomplish this task, we selected four presidential candidates whose campaigns took place within the same chronological framework. We have chosen to establish a certain gradation according to the criterion of the intensity of the *political incorrectness* in the candidates: from the most manifested, "violent" modalities to the more "attenuated" ones: Donald Trump (United States, campaign of 2016), Jean-Luc Mélenchon (France, 2017), Marine Le Pen (France, 2017), Bernie Sanders (United States, 2016).

The main criterion of our selection was the candidate's image: each of them had to be known for provocative discourse and statements. Another criterion was the above-mentioned statistically measurable electoral discourse success in the sense of a significant improvement in the candidate's position in the political arena within or as a result of this campaign.

This selection is also characterized by the diversity - of the candidates' cultures, ideologies, and career paths - aimed at forming the most objective possible idea of the phenomenon of *political incorrectness*.

By gradually analyzing each corpus (50 to 80 public speeches in each), we developed and supplemented the manifestations of *political incorrectness* found. We mainly adhered to a qualitative approach, turning to statistical (quantitative) data only in relevant cases—when the quantity of some manifestation was important for interpreting the *political incorrectness*.

Moving from the particular to the generalization, we first looked at the general ethos that the candidate explicitly constructs during the presidential campaign and his prior image, considering the context of an electoral campaign. Then, from these data, we identified the features of *political incorrectness*, in its various forms, present in the corpus of candidate speeches and analyzed their configurations, as well as their functions and argumentative issues in the electoral strategy. We used macroanalysis to record the discernible regularities in the corpus of each candidate and then drew a synthetic vision of the phenomenon in question.

At this stage, we will describe the general trends of modifications of politically incorrect electoral discourse that we managed to deduce, after which we will detail the strategies of each candidate and the features of their interpretation of political incorrectness

2. *Variants of the politically incorrect discourse manifestations in the electoral corpus*

We have identified several main types of *politically incorrect* expressions based on their verbal expression (formal side), functions, and roles within the framework of electoral argumentation. In brief, we have highlighted the following modifications:

- offensive (personalized) attacks

- discriminatory (group) attacks

- reduction of the language register (style)

- metadiscourse on *politically (in)correct*

- variants of "veiled" or implicit attacks ("non-politically correct" mode)

Modifications of attacks and their motives (themes) certainly differed in the strategies of different candidates depending on the specifics of their campaigns and ideology, but such basic lines of argumentation were present in each corpus.

3. Offensive political incorrectness

Attacks on political opponents – this is the point at which all lines of PI argument converge to achieve the ultimate goal of the presidential campaign: the victory of one worldview over others. We classify violent attacks on electoral adversaries as *offensive political incorrectness*.

An essential tool of attacks of this category is one of the variants of the ad hominem argument, which often takes the place of a deliberation on electoral programs and projects. To define this important argument, we have leaned on the theories of Amossy (1999), Gauthier (1995), Leff (2011), and other authors.

In general, candidates use this method to denounce politically incorrectly the professional incapacities or personal defects of their competitors that prevent them from becoming worthy of the presidency. In line with populism, candidates tend to associate their opponents with one of the interpretations of the "system" (caste, elite, presidential monarchy, etc.) outside of which they prefer to position their own candidacy. The grounds for accusations may vary depending on the candidate's ideology or cultural background.

4. Discriminatory political incorrectness

Discriminatory *political incorrectness* occurs when the candidate systematically attacks entire groups (political, ideological, professional) that he considers "hostile" or individuals based on their membership in these groups or on the traits of these groups.

We characterize the discriminatory modification as *political incorrectness* "at first degree." This underlines the reference to the original meaning of political correctness: inclusive anti-discriminatory language (anti-racism, anti-sexism, etc.), supposed to treat all with equal respect. Technically, unlike political correctness (euphemistic language, attenuating divergences), discriminatory mode is formed by using expressions/phrases/qualifiers/nominations that reflect the strongly negative stereotypes of groups or subjects related to these groups.

The motives for such attacks also depend on the ideology of the candidates (for example, immigration issues for representatives of the political right-wing and predominantly economic issues for the conventionally left-wing movements).

5. *Language register reduction: politically incorrect style*

The politically incorrect discursive register is reflected in the use of "vernacular" vocabulary, the spoken lexicon, and syntax, which contrast with the formal vocabulary and elegant style associated with presidential candidates. It includes the use of obscene, taboo lexicon, and "low" language. But also, we classify in this category the extraverbal manifestations of *political incorrectness*, such as the tone of voice, overly emotional facial expressions, gesticulation, exclamations, and interjections that demonstrate the speaker's lack of restraint and self-control, desired in the context of political discourse.

This mode can be used by candidates to create an effect of proximity with the target audience, which is composed of "ordinary people." The politician thus transposes his discursive behavior onto the pragmatic domain: I speak like you, that is why I am like you; I understand your needs and share your anxieties.

Within this subcategory, we observe a culturally conditioned distinction. On the one hand, less conventional language is more characteristic of American politicians, while French leaders adhere to a more refined style. Instead of lowering the intellectual register of political discourse, they tend to inflate its emotional tone to demonstrate their "imbalance" (exploited by the media and their adversaries) by deviating from the principles of noble restraint.

6. Metadiscourse on the political (in)correctness

The metadiscourse of candidates is the *political incorrectness* explained "firsthand": a valuable resource for understanding their electoral strategies. In the context of metadiscourse, candidates express themselves on *political (in)correctness* directly or paraphrastically (indirect metadiscourse), using synonymous notions or expressions (such as "langue de bois" (French), censorship, etc.). They appropriate *incorrectness* and the values associated with it, attributing the opposite to their rivals.

In the metadiscursive interpretation, *political (in)correctness* takes on a pragmatic value: politically incorrect discourse, with its attributes and corresponding ethos, is transposed to the (often prospective) acts of the presidential candidate.

The candidate assumes that he speaks truthfully, precisely, and bitingly, without rigid conventional/professional formulas, tricks, mitigations, and without taboos. He is, therefore, a courageous, energetic, realistic leader, bearer of common sense (rationalism) – he alone perceives and reports the facts of reality clearly and adequately. He dares to relate the truth (the main value of *political incorrectness*) and, therefore, will not hesitate to take the serious decisions that will be necessary to reform the "system" and improve the lives of people in the country.

7. The candidates' strategies

The candidates' enunciative situations were very different, involving important strategic nuances. Each candidate's case enriched our understanding and allowed us to uncover new nuances and elements of *political incorrectness* in the presidential campaign. It is necessary to summarize the strategy of each candidate in order to understand the conditions and logic for the development of *political incorrectness* in it.

(1) Donald Trump positioned himself as an experienced businessman and an outsider in politics. He boasted of his financial success without shame, violating the ethical norm of modesty.

His version of *political incorrectness* was distinguished by its frankness and rudeness, an abundance of vernacular, simplified and even obscene vocabulary, categorical judgments, and radical accusations. His discriminatory statements against nations and peoples, even countries, also stood out for their violent and xenophobic spirit.

He was "officially" named politically incorrect in the sense that we found numerous media notes and articles that explicitly connected his name to this formula, for example: "He has been politically incorrect to the point of rhetorical viciousness" (Newsday, 12.08.2015); "Trump politically incorrect, unpredictable, loudmouth and sometimes clownish"[5] (Le Point, 22.07.2016), etc.

As for the campaign subgenres, Trump became known for his caustic and offensive short tweets, which, at his incitement, became text memes functioning in the public space. Very often, his main rival, the Democratic candidate and experienced politician Hillary Clinton, was subjected to such attacks within the framework of *offensive PI*. Candidate Trump launched a large-scale "campaign within the campaign" against her.

In these attacks, he used various argumentative constructions based on the ad hominem argument. Thus, he addressed both her professional incompetence for the presidential position, exploiting her professional failures as a politician ("past deeds"[6]), and her personal "flaws", appealing to the weakness of her character, lack of inner strength, of leadership qualities, and even intellectual insufficiency. Another important motive for criticism was the criminalization of Clinton, namely, an appeal to her corruption and venality as a politician (lobbies, unfavorable contracts for the country, "bought" media, etc.), as well as to a high-profile email scandal that arose during the campaign, concerning the sending of state secret information via personal email. As part of the PI campaign, Trump called for her criminal responsibility and even incarceration ("Lock her up!" - was one of the recurring slogans chanted during his large rallies).

The fierce criticism of Clinton's past actions, specifically of the "disastrous" results that crowned her years of presence in politics as Secretary of State and wife of a former president, served as the basis for another modification of the *political incorrectness* - its *discriminatory* version. Thus, Trump accused her and systemic politicians of erroneous international (foreign) and immigration policies, the results of which were a significant deterioration in the economic and

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[5] Our translation of : "Trump politiquement incorrect, imprévisible, grande gueule et parfois clownesque".
[6] Benoit 2007.

security climate in the country. Further in his argumentation, he moved on to a xenophobic, racist, and definitely politically incorrect discourse concerning both internal national minorities in the country (Muslims, Mexicans, and other nationalities) and entire countries that, in his opinion, threaten the national interests of the United States (Mexico, China, Arab states and other).

In addition to nationalistic insults, he waged a real "war" against dissenting media, insulting both the entire group of journalists united under the name of "Fake News Media" and its individual representatives.

Trump used politically incorrect discourse extensively and took the first step towards revising the generic "norm": the normalization of *political incorrectness* in political discourse. He consciously and publicly condemned the standardized political sociolect (political correctness) in his metadiscourse and stressed the need for a direct and uncompromising discourse that highlights all the painful problems of society and designates the guilty.

In his metadiscourse, he adhered to three main "hypostases" of *political incorrectness* (as a discourse and positioning): *PI* as a guarantee of truth, broadcast into the public space ("I'm a truth-teller"), as a guarantee of action in contrast to empty talk ("Politicians are all talk, no action"), and also as one of the weapons in the fight against terrorism: it is necessary to clearly and politically incorrectly designate the enemy in order to defeat him ("Name the enemy").

We assume that Trump's radical and provocative style may have set the trend *for political incorrectness* in political discourse.

(2) It should be noted right away that the 2016-2017 campaign was a great success in the long career of the French socialist[7] candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon. Towards the end of the campaign he took a leading position both due to external contextual factors and, of course, the persuasiveness of his politically incorrect argumentation.

Melenchon's electoral corpus presents a very specific strategic configuration. In the context of reworking his previous "scandalous" ethos, the candidate claims a philosophy of appeasement, which in fact comes into conflict with his discursive practice and politically incorrect way of presenting his argument.

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[7] in terms of ideological beliefs, not party affiliation.

Within the offensive politically incorrect discourse, he attacked various instances, both collective "power" in a country and individual figures belonging to the "system" for which the candidate coined the special denunciatory neologism "presidential monarchy." However, he showed himself to be particularly caustic with two serious candidates: his ideological enemy, the right-wing Marine Le Pen, and the "young" candidate of that presidential race, Emmanuel Macron.

Mélenchon challenged both of his rivals on the independence of their candidacy and judgment. In the case of Marine Le Pen, he sought to highlight the origins of her ideology from the brutal and marginal old leader of the National Front party and her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the case of Macron, he emphasized his past actions within the government of the ineffective President Hollande and his lack of independence as a separate political figure. While arguing for both rivals' links to the old, thoroughly corrupt system, candidate Mélenchon directly called for a "popular" revolution and the establishment of a "new," "progressive" political regime in the country.

Alongside his revolutionary appeals, his attacks on his opponents and ideological "enemies" were brutal enough but more sophisticated in the argumentative sense compared to the discourse of his American counterpart. This particularly applies to his fierce counter-discourse with the media (which, as our corpora show, is commonplace in electoral politically incorrect discourse), which we have classified as *discriminatory* attacks on the group of media. While Trump directly and personally attacked "hostile" journalists, Mélenchon appealed, more subtly, to their lack of respect for the deontological standards of journalism.

Not only the politically incorrect discourse but also the extraverbal aspects came into play in his discourse, thus demonstrating the extent of the politically incorrect manifestations. Mélenchon's tone was strongly (or excessively) emotional. His speech was filled with shouts, rhetorical questions, emotional exclamations, and interjections. Even his facial expressions manifested his indignation when he demanded the abolition of the power in place and called for popular revolution. Within the studied genre of the presidential campaign, there are unspoken rules of restrained behavior, respectability, and self-control expected from the candidate (Le Bart 2018). However, in this case, we believe that the argumentative stake was made both on demonstrating the sincerity of the emotional candidate and (in particular) on his aforementioned "proximity" to the "people" and their problems (the candidate cannot contain his emotions, worrying about their fate, and also behaves as one of the "people", and not of the political system).

(3) As for another French candidate, Marine Le Pen, a serious reworking of her previous ethos and the image of her party Front National (National Front)[8] has also been observed in her electoral corpus. According to experts (Alduy & Wahnich 2015), she has managed to overcome associations with the marginalized extreme right while preserving the essence of the National Front doctrine in order to maintain the trust of the party's supporters.

The *political incorrectness*, in her interpretation, is realized mainly in the discriminatory programmatic elements aimed at institutionalizing the ethnocentrism of the French state and expelling foreign elements (which she considers enemies), and caustically criticizing the political forces that hinder her national(istic) project.

Particularly, within the framework of discriminatory politically incorrect attacks, she makes efforts to polarize French society, insulting both the entire group of immigrants and singling out a separate "French civilization", as well as specific national and religious movements. The main target is Muslims, whom Le Pen, without any reservations, through discursive amalgam, classifies as terrorists threatening not only the security of France (and the whole world) but also their national identity and culture.

As for those responsible for the catastrophic situation in the country for the candidate, she logically concentrates her politically incorrect offensive rhetoric on her opponent Emmanuel Macron. Developing a wide range of variants of the ad hominem argument, she makes claims, among others, against his dependence on his previous "boss" President Hollande, and the "system" itself, his ideological lack of independence and inconsistency (in contrast to herself), his venality and willingness to sacrifice the interests of France for the sake of his personal gain (betrayal of France), and also - against his eloquent manner of speaking, which she disparagingly calls "empty words."

Marine Le Pen's metadiscourse on *political (in)correctness*, like Donald Trump's metadiscourse, draws a parallel between, firstly, the willingness to make public the unpleasant (politically incorrect) truth and the determination to act in the direction of resolving the voiced problems. In particular (this concerns politicians of the right flank), such a transposition concerns

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[8] Rassemblement National from 2018.

the problem of the (non)proliferation of terrorism and the fight against it: for Le Pen, as for Trump, the courage to expose terrorists ("terrorist nations") is a guarantee of the courage to defeat them.

However, the initial strategic task of "normalizing" the FN party has been at the origin of the special modifications of the *incorrectness* found in the corpus of Le Pen, which we have called "non-politically correct". Using linguistic tools, sentence structure, truncated or veiled elements, allusions, and dysphemisms, in some cases, she managed to convey politically incorrect discriminatory meanings without resorting to direct offenses.

(4) It was also interesting to analyze the politically incorrect communication tactics of the socialist politician, the American Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders. He made a very precise assessment of his target audience, without referring to the classic model of the presidential candidate. One of the factors of his electoral success (he was called one of the most popular American politicians at that time) was the so-called reassessment of socialism as an ideology within American society. The candidate's main focus was on those for whom socialist postulates seemed new and his ideas captivating: young people.

Sanders managed to become an idol of young voters not only because of the "revision" of socialism but also thanks to his sharp, flamboyant, and definitely politically incorrect way of communicating his vision. His fans were delighted with his accentuated disregard for any external norms – be it a pleasant and respectable appearance or verbal "tricks" and polite formulas. He did not try to please anyone, and thanks to this, he seemed to be the most authentic candidate.

For his part, Sanders also uses the implicit ("non-politically correct" mode) in his politically incorrect strategy. This use is conditioned not only by considerations of a "positive" image (on the contrary, he insists on the fact that he neglects commonly accepted conventions) but also by the political situation. His electoral campaign was developing within the Democratic Party against Hillary Clinton, which considerably limited his arsenal of *political incorrectness*. Claiming a doctrine similar in some respects to his rival, he only allowed himself from time to time direct offensive attacks, giving preference to quasi-"impersonal" allusions and generalizations concerning her political trajectory (mainly her inefficient "past deeds," corruption, use of super

PACs funding for her campaign, etc.). Thus, in one such direct attack (in interdiscourse with her), Sanders challenged Clinton's competence for the highest government positions.

As for his ideological rival and representative of the opposite party Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders felt that "his hands were untied." From the position of a convinced socialist, he viciously attacked the successful businessman Trump for his status as a billionaire (not forgetting to mention his own "commoner" origins), for his racist remarks, and for what Sanders qualified as a lie ("pathological liar") - Trump's manner of presenting facts in a favorable light for himself.

Within such a confrontation, it seems all the more surprising that within the framework of his direct metadiscourse, Sanders advocated for the harsh and politically incorrect speech of Donald Trump (and at the same time supported his ideological opponent on this point).

8. General conclusions

It seems obvious to us that politically incorrect discourse is not limited to breaking the codes of language. It symbolizes an ambition to break the rules of the game. Politically incorrect leaders question the axiological system traditionally attributed to the ethos of a "conventional" politician (in democratic countries). The drastic revision requires a finely premeditated argumentation in the favorable context (e.g., the crisis of confidence in traditional representative politics) based on a specific ethos legitimized to undertake risky actions.

Politically incorrect argumentation must be understood on the temporal axis. This is not a stable and sustainable strategy: an alternative is only required in conditions of profound geopolitical, ideological, and cultural changes.

Politically incorrect public discourse and correspondent ethos aim to distinguish its bearer and differentiate him from other actors in the public space. The argumentative force of political incorrectness is activated by juxtaposing the two worlds – that of rigid and mendacious convention and that of the freedom of unbiased, critical thinking. Irreverence is transformed in this way into authenticity, social polarization into the objective requirement of our time.