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# Opponent's Disqualification Strategy in Political Discourse

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***Abstract*—In this work we've studied the peculiarities of use of the opponent's disqualification strategy in the French and Georgian pre-election political discourse and also we've analyzed how much the difference between the countries in terms of the levels of development (France as the developed democratic country and Georgia as the developing, post soviet country) defines the specificity of the above strategy. We studied the discourses said by the French politicians, Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande, and the Georgian politicians Mikheil Saakashvili and Bidzina Ivanishvili in 2012. The study was based on the argumentative, contrast and interdisciplinary methods. The analysis results showed that the approach of the French politicians to the opposition is much more balanced in the French discourse and is limited by light allegations compared with the Georgian one, while the heavy allegations are heard in the Georgian discourse in respect to the opponent that is stipulated by still undeveloped democratic institutions in the country.**

***Index Terms*—opponent's disqualification strategy, political discourse, elections**

## I. Introduction

Our research aims to study the opponent's disqualification strategy in the pre-election political discourse based on the materials of the French and Georgian languages. At the same time we'll try to study how much the levels of the different development of two countries, one of which is developed, democratic state and the second one is developing, post soviet country, define the specificity of use of the above strategy.

Our researched frame is made of the discourses said by the leading politicians in front of the wide audience during the pre-election campaign. The analysis of the discourses made in such institutional environment is very interesting for the objectives of our study from the point of view that the pre-election discourse has the sharp polemic nature where the decisive importance is attached to the opponent's disqualification. In the speech addressing to the electorate the politician should be able to convince a large number of voters in his/her advantage over the opposing candidates and their wooing the final goal of which is to earn the majority of votes. As we know the politicians' professional career depends on the election results expressing the will of the electorate in the democratic world.

## II. Literature Review

The definitions of wider or narrower sense on the political discourse are mainly distinguished in the modern science.

In his article "Arguments and political discourse" Ruth Amossy (2010) provides a definition worked out by Roland Barthes where political discourse is defined in a strict sense: "Political discourse is the discourse of the politicians by which they fulfill their professional duties" (p. 14). In the broad sense any discourse is political if it concerns a public organization (Bonnafous, 2003). Considering the political discourse both in broad and narrow sense, Amossy (2010) explains "The horizon of the subject of the political discourse begins from the politicians' professional discourses and applies to any discourse concerning the social issues in the public sphere" (p. 14).

There is no doubt that the political discourse is a type of discourse which is explicitly, sharply argumentative.

Buffon (2002) believes that the frame of the political argumentation is the audience and limited discourse. The scientist divides the politician's audience in a threefold way: the electorate, the opposition, the supporters. The politician by his/her discourse should be able to keep his supporters, to disqualify the opponents and to convince the electorate in the relevance of his/her actions.

Specifically pre-election discourses are targeted for action on the numerous individuals differing from each other by age, gender, psychology, religion, profession. The politician should be able to convene such numerous and diverse audience and it is very difficult to achieve this. Studying the opponents' disqualification strategies Charaudeau (2005) notes that "The politicians should nullify the opponent's opinion by the method to prove the weakness and danger of his/her ideas by the effective arguments" (p. 71), but due to the fact that such arguments may be understood with difficulty by broad masses, therefore in politics one often applies to the argument ad hominem, which is directed not to the disqualification of the ideas of the opposing representative but to the disqualification of his/her personality. To produce both types of argumentation in discourse a politician uses different linguistic resources, such as e.g. presupposition, connotation, reading, stylistic means, etc.

## III. Study Methods

We have selected and compared with each other the below political discourses as the researched material:

1. The discourse said by Nicolas Sarkozy, the French President and simultaneously the presidential candidate for a second term, during the pre-election campaign of 2012 and the discourse said by the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili during the parliamentary pre-election campaign of 2012.

2. The discourse said by the French opposing candidate Francois Hollande during the pre-election campaign and the discourse said by the Leader of the Georgian opposition Bidzina Ivanishvili during the parliamentary pre-election campaign of 2012.

At the first stage of the research we separately analyzed the discourses of the French and Georgian politician by the argumentative approach. At the second stage of the research we studied the distinct similarities and differences between the French and Georgian discourses based on the comparative methodology. At the third stage of research based on the interdisciplinary methodology we outlined the deferent levels of impact of the development of two countries on the specification of use of the opponent's disqualification strategy in the political discourse.

## IV. Research Results

According to the research results the different strategies were identified in relation to the opponent in the French and Georgian politicians' discourses.

At the beginning of his discourse Sarkozy directly mentions his rival – Hollande and criticizes him quite sharply, as well he uses against him the argument type ad hominem. Sarkozy characterizes the opposition with the metaphors such as e.g.: mentors, deceitful, hypocrite. He often assesses the opponent's actions as a shame.

Examples:

*Vous avez raison, les déclarations de ce monsieur sont une honte, c'est une honte et c'est une honte notamment sur nos compatriotes musulmans qui méritent mieux que d'avoir un homme qui parle si mal de leur culture, de leur religion et de ce qu'ils sont.*

"You are right, the statements of this mister is a shame, and it is a shame especially before the compatriot Muslims deserving more than the one who speaks so badly about their culture, religion, and about them in general."

*Donneurs de leçon, tartuffes, hypocrites, je suis venu leur dire une chose : vous ne nous ferez pas taire, parce que le peuple de France est un peuple libre et qu'il n'acceptera pas la mainmise de votre pensée unique sur cette campagne électorale.*

"Mentors, deceitful, hypocrite, I've come here to tell them one thing: you cannot silence us because French people are free people, and they will not be under the influence of your subjective judgment in this election campaign."

For the purpose of making the opponents inefficiency and political disabilities more convincing Sarkozy quotes their words and based on the criticism of their quotations he tries to increase the negative perception in the society against the opposition. Sarkozy speaks with mocking tone about Melenchon who himself was one of the presidential candidate in the first round and in the second round he took the left-wing position.

Example:

*Le premier tour a été décrit comme une poussée de la gauche extraordinaire, avec un*

*Génie, un homme très raisonnable qu'on a envie d'avoir comme voisin, monsieur MELENCHON décrivant Cuba comme une démocratie et Fidel CASTRO comme un démocrate.*

"In the first round the left-wing moved forward together with a genius, a very intelligent person whom one would like to see as his neighbor – Mr. MELENCHON who calls Cuba the democracy and Fidel Castro calls democrat."

Sarkozy pays quite great attention to the discredit of other politicians supporting Hollande. Before the voters he tries to place the French politician - Strauss-Kahn's name on the first place. The latter was suspected in numerous known cases, e.g. he was charged with sexual assault. Sarkozy recalls the scandalous cases with participation of Strauss-Kahn's name.

Example:

*Quand je pense que pendant tous les épisodes scandaleux, honteux de New York, de Lille, du Carlton, du Pas-de-Calais, ce fut l'honneur de la droite républicaine et du centre de ne pas s'en mêler, de ne pas utiliser, de se boucher le nez, de ne pas commenter, parce que commenter ces indignités c'était en recevoir un peu. Mais qu'en pleine campagne électorale, à une semaine du premier tour, monsieur STRAUSS-KAHN venant donner des leçons de morale et indiquer que je suis le seul responsable de tout ce qui lui est arrivé, trop c'est trop.*

"When I think that – the dignity of the Republican right-wing and the centrists was the fact that they did not participate, kept silent, did not expressed their opinion during all scandalous, shameful episodes - New York, Lille, Carleton, Pas de Calais, because the expression of the opinion about this dishonor would be its sharing. But when in the middle of the election campaign within one month after the first round Mr. STRAUSS-KAHN comes, points a moral and says that I am the only one responsible for what he has done, it is too much, it's too much."

Sarkozy wants to present himself as an innocent of the left-wing's allegations before the audience and to gain the electorate's sympathy. He shows the audience that the opposition compares him with the people having the worst reputation, such as the France's traitors – Petain, Laval, known swindler MADOFF.

Example:

*Qu'est -ce que je devrai penser moi quand madame AUBRY me compare à MADOFF, J'attends toujours les excuses de madame AUBRY et de monsieur HOLLANDE. Quand dans une réunion où monsieur HOLLANDE se trouve, l'un de ses partisans me compare à FRANCO, j'attends toujours les excuses de monsieur HOLLANDE. Quand le journal communiste, les communistes qui soutiennent monsieur HOLLANDE, me compare à PETAIN, j'attends toujours les excuses de monsieur HOLLANDE. Quand son ami MELENCHON, parce que vous avez les amis de la dernière minute sont toujours les amis les plus empressés, me compare à LAVAL, dois-je considérer, dois-je attendre longtemps les excuses de monsieur HOLLANDE ? Mais je vais vous dire une chose, ce n'est pas moi qui suis en cause, j'ai l'habitude de leurs injures, c'est tous les Français qui ont voté pour moi au premier tour et qui se sentent insultés par le sectarisme, la haine, le mensonge, la calomnie, l'injure de tous ces donneurs de leçons.*

"What do I think when Mrs. AUBRY compares me with MADOFF, I'm still waiting for an apology from Mrs. AUBRY and Mr. HOLLANDE. When at one of the meetings attended by Mr. Hollande one of his supporters compares me with FRANCO I'm still waiting for an apology from Mr. HOLLANDE. When the communist newspaper, communists having been Hollande's supporters compare me with PETAIN I'm still waiting for an apology from Mr. HOLLANDE. When his friend, MELENCHON who became his friend the last minute and now being the cordial friend compares me with LAVAL should I wait for an apologize from Mr. HOLLANDE for a long time? But I'll tell you one thing, the conversation is not about me, I've got used to be abused from them who voted for me in the first round and who feels themselves abused by the mentors intolerance, hatred, lies, charges, injustice."

SARKOZY introduces to the population of the country the specific facts showing that Hollande is politically passive and inert, his political views are not well defined. Doing this Sarkozy is trying to make the population to lost the confidence to Hollande, as a reliable, experienced politician.

Examples:

*Figurez-vous que lorsque j'ai proposé ce texte, que des parlementaires ont voté courageusement, le candidat François HOLLANDE n'a pas dit oui, il n'a pas dit non, il n'a pas participé au vote.*

"Imagine when I introduced this text which was freely voted by the parliamentarians, the candidate Francois Hollande said neither yes nor no, he did not participate in the voting."

*Le journaliste David PUJADAS lui a posé une question : J'ai une question à vous poser, répondez simplement, y a-t-il trop d'étrangers en France, ou pas assez ? Cinq reprises, il a refusé. Dois-je considérer que celui qui prétend vouloir être président de la République n'a donc, à moins d'une semaine, un peu plus d'une semaine, du 6 mai, aucune idée sur ce que devra être la politique migratoire qu'il conduira dans les cinq ans s'il était élu ? Aucune?*

"The journalist David PUJADAS asked him one question: I have one question for you, answer me simply, in France are there too many foreigners or few? The question was repeated 5 times, he did not answer. It turns out that a person claiming to the presidency of the republic, just a week before May 6, or even more than a week before, do not have any opinion about what should be the immigration policy which he will pursue for 5 years if elected? None?"

The opponents discredit strategy is very interesting in Saakashvili's discourse. If Sarkozy actually repeats and criticizes the surname of the rival politician in his discourse, Saakashvili, contrary, does not even mention his main opponent – Ivanishvili - in the elections. At the same time he rarely directly names the members of Ivanishvili's team. In his discourse we can find the surname of Tamazashvili, the representative of the opposing team only twice in negative context.

Example:

*თუ გსურთ, რომ ეკა ზღულაძე, გიორგი ტუღუში, ვანო მერაბიშვილი, ზურაბ ადეიშვილი ჩაანაცვლოს ვინმე კრიმინალმა თამაზაშვილმა, რომელიც კავშირში იყო*

*ბევრ დანაშაულთან, მათ შორის, იმ დანაშაულთან, რომლის ჩადენა ჩვენი დაუდევრობით და ჩვენი უწყებების ცუდი მუშაობის შედეგად გახდა შესაძლებელი?*

*ვინ უფრო დაიცავს თქვენს უფლებებს? ტუღუში, ზღულაძე თუ თამაზაშვილი?*

"Do you want Eka Zguladze, Giorgi Tugushi, Vano Merabishvili, Zurab Adeishvili to be replaced by someone criminal Tamazashvili who was associated with many crimes, including the crime the committing of which became possible due to our negligence and bad work of our institutions? Who will protect you rights better? Tugushi, Zguladze or Tamazashvili?"

The opposition discredit strategy chosen by Saakashvili is as follows: the government's pre-elective campaign served to present to the society the Saakashvili's main opponent – Ivanishvili – as a person conducting pro-Russian orientation and Russian interests. So as the leader of the opposition is associated with Russia Saakashvili, in his discourse, expresses the opponent's disqualification strategy with the sharp criticism in respect to Russia. The President of Georgia presents the Russian policy towards Georgia as a maximum dangerous, with metaphors, recalls the unfavorable situations from the past having the negative attitude of the population towards Russia, considers the people wishing his defeat as pursuers of the Russian policy and charges the opposition for hampering of the countries security, country's development.

Saakashvili has chosen this strategy for the reason that Ivanishvili's identity before entering politics was associated in the society with a number of charities due to which at that time the negative mention of his name would invite

aggression in a lot of Georgians. Therefore Saakashvili prefers to blame and criticize Russia explicitly which implicitly means Ivanishvili's criticism, but in a way which does not offend quiet a large part of population.

Examples:

*ჩვენ ძალიან კარგად ვიცით რა ხდება, არც ერთი არ ვართ ბრმა და კარგად ვიცით, რომ ძალიან დიდი რაოდენობის რუსული ფული იხარჯება ამისთვის, რუსულ მეთოდებს იყენებენ, კომპრომატების ომითაა შემოსული საქართველოში.*

"We know very well what is happening, none of us are blind and we know very well that great amount of Russian money is spent for this, they use Russian methods, entered Georgia with sleaze war."

*იმ პირობებში, როდესაც შემოსულია რუსული ფული, რუსული კომპრომატების ომი, რუსული მეთოდები, რუსეთის არმია აურაცხელი რაოდენობით დგას ჩვენს საზღვრებთან და ატარებს ძალიან საშიშ მანევრებს; იმ პირობებში, როდესაც ჩვენი ტერიტორიის ოკუპანტს მტკიცედ აქვს გადაწყვეტილი, 2008 წელს ვერდამთავრებული საქმის ბოლომდე მიყვანა, რა თქმა უნდა, სურს ამ არჩევნების გამოყენება.*

"Under the conditions when Russian money is entered Georgia the Russian sleaze war, Russian methods, countless Russian army stands at our borders and conducts very dangerous maneuvers; Under the conditions when the occupant of our territory determined to finish the job uncompleted in 2008, of course desires to use this election."

*მათ უნდათ, რომ ამ არჩევნებმა საქართველო დააბრუნოს იქ, მოუსვლელში, საიდანაც ჩვენ ყველანი ვცდილობთ გაქცევას.*

"They want by means of this election to return Georgia there, nowhere, from where we're all trying to escape."

*ძალიან კარგად ვიცი, რომ ორგანიზებული დანაშაული საქართველოს წარსულში დაბრუნებას ცდილობს.*

«I know very well that organized crime tries to get Georgia back to the past."

*გავაკეთებთ ასევე ყველაფერს იმისთვის, რომ ჩვენს ხალხს სრული ინფორმაცია ჰქონდეს იმის თაობაზე, თუ რა შეთქმულებებს აწყობდნენ და რა მეთოდებით აპირებენ საქართველოს რელსებიდან გადაყვანას და ისევ ჩიხში შეყვანას.*

"Also we'll do everything to ensure that our people have the full information about what kind of conspiracy they make and what methods they are going to put Georgia off the rails and to lead it into deadlock again."

Thus if Sarkozy conducts his argumentative strategy against his rival explicitly, in his discourse Saakashvili criticizes the opposition indirectly.

It should be noted that unlike Sarkozy, Hollande, in his discourse, does not directly mention the opponent's name but he always refers to him as the outgoing candidate emphasizing the end of his presidential term of the incumbent president. Hollande blames his rival for failing to fulfill promises and for disrespect of the truth. To prove the reliability of his blames against the president of the country he refers to the specific numerical data relating to the unemployment.

Examples:

*Il avait promis — il en a tant dit — que le chômage devrait être ramené à 5 % de la population active. Eh bien c'est venu, ça arrive, ça vient ! Le chômage est à 10 % de la population active, 23 % pour les jeunes, 35 % dans un certain nombre de quartiers, 40 % en Outremer!*

"He promised, talked so much about the fact that unemployment rate of active population would be reduced to 5 percent. And now it has happened, is happening, the unemployment rate of the active population is 10%, of young people - 23%, in some areas - 35%, in the oversea department - 40%."

*Mais quand on est président de la République encore pour sept jours — sept jours! -, le premier devoir, c'est de respecter la vérité. La campagne du candidat sortant, finalement, est le reflet de ce qu'il a été comme président.*

"But when you are the President of the Republic still 7 days, 7 days! The first responsibility is to respect the truth.The outgoing candidate's campaign is the final reflection of what he was as a president."

In his discourse Ivanishvili shows very negative attitude towards the incumbent president. He criticizes sharply both the Saakashvili's team and directly the President of the country. And in the discourse said during the same pre-election campaign Saakashvili completely avoids to mention the specific opponent as we have seen.

Ivanishvili blames the government for a number of grave and violent crimes: people's beatings, torture, abuse, violence, deprivation of life, attempt of mutual confrontation of the population of their own country, desire to fraud elections, unlawful arrest, enslaving the citizens.

Ivanishvili calls the law enforcement authorities being under the jurisdiction of the government and carrying out its criminal orders as executioners, violent divisions.

Examples:

*სამაგიეროდ, ყველა ხერხით აყალბებდნენ ყველა არჩევნებს თავის სასარგებლოდ და ამით გზას უხსნიდნენ ჯალათებს ადამიანების საწამებლად.*

"However they falsified the elections in their favor by all means and thus opened the way for people's torture by the executioners."

*ესენი წლების განმავლობაში სწორედ ამ სისტემას აშენებდნენ, აშენებდნენ გირგვლიანი გაიხსენეთ, რობაქიძე გაიხსენეთ, ვაზაგაშვილი გაიხსენეთ , გამცემლიძე გაიხსენეთ, გაიხსენეთ ქუჩებში დახვრეტილი*

*ბიჭები, გაიხსენეთ სიღატაკეში ჩავარდნილი ავადმყოფი მოხუცები და ბავშვები, რომლებსაც უფულობის გამო მკურნალობა არ უწერიათ და სასიკვდილოდ არიან განწირული! გაიხსენეთ აგვისტოს ომში ამ ხელისუფლების უუნარობისა და ლაჩრობის გამო დაღუპული ასობით ჯარისკაცი და პირდაპირ ბედის ანაბარა მტერს შეტოვებული ჩვენი უმწეო მოსახლეობა.*

"These people have been building and building this system for years. Remember Girgvliani, remember Robakidze, remember Vazagashvili, remember Gamtsemlidze, remember guys shot in the streets, remember ill elderly and children in the poverty who are not able to be treated due to the lack of money and are doomed to death! Remember hundreds of soldiers died due to the disability and cowardice of the government and our poor people left for the whim of the fate in the war of August."

*ნათლად ვხედავთ საკაშვილის ბოროტ განზრახვას, რომ ძალაუფლების შესანარჩუნებლად როგორმე ორად გაყოს ხალხი და სამკვდრო-სასიცოცხლოდ გადაჰკიდოს ერთმანეთს ადამიანები, თავისი მომხრეები და მოწინააღმდეგეები.*

"We can clearly see Saakashvili's evil intents to divide the people into two parts and to create hostility among people, between his supporters and opponents in order to maintain power."

Considering the fact that the democratic West is the most important public image and model for the Georgian people the leader of the opposition highlights their loss of trust in Saaklashvili.

Examples:

*იმისათვის, რომ ადამიანებს დასაჭერად საბაბი გამოუნახონ, ნარკოტიკს უგდებენ უტიფრად ან რაიმე სხვა შარს მოსდებენ ხოლმე, რადგან არ აწყობთ ჰყავდეთ პოლიტიკური პატიმრები დასავლეთის დასანახად. ესენი ხომ დემოკრატობანას თამაშობენ, მაგრამ მათი უკვე აღარც დასავლეთს სჯერა.*

"In order to find the reason for arresting the people they put drugs in the people's pockets or find other faults because it is not convenient to have political prisoners who may be seen by the West. They are playing democracy but even the West believes them no longer."

*ახლა მაინც ხომ საბოლოოდ დაინახავს დემოკრატიული დასავლეთი, თუ რას წარმოადგენს საკაშვილი, აქაური ,,დემოკრატიის შუქურა".*

"Least now the democratic West will see what is Saakashvili, the local "Beacon of democracy".

As we can see in their discourses both-languages opposing politicians pay great attention to the neutralization of the opponent. Although Hollande's allegations compared with the allegations of the Georgian politician are much less brutal in respect to the opponent politician.

## V. Conclusion

Thus the difference outlined as a result of the comparative analysis of the Georgian and French political discourses relating to the opponents' disqualification strategy and where it is clearly shown the different levels of development of France and Georgia comprises from the fact that the French politicians' approach towards the opposition is much more balanced. It is neutralized against light allegations, basically it is an avoidance the duties, incompetence, failure to fulfill promises, baseless accusations against each other, disrespect of the truth when in the Georgian discourse there are a lot of sharpest allegations and threats in respect to the opposition. Georgian politicians are accusing each other directly or indirectly for criminal offenses, violence, oppression, support in enslavement of the country to the enemy, intensiveness, etc. The above difference in respect to the opponent is stipulated by the fact that the democratic institutions have not been yet finally established in Georgia.

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