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Idiocy That Makes History: Mental Conditions In Certain Leaders

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Abstract

An attempt is made here to analyze mental conditions of selected politicians. Physical maltreatment was described in biographies of Vladimir Putin. Child abuse is associated with various psychiatric and related conditions including paranoia. A paranoid call may sanction destruction of supposed enemies. Putin formulated aims of his military operation, one of them being protection of Russian-speakers from genocide. It is known that ethnic Russians have not undergone genocide. Apparently, this idea is delusional. Certain war instigators are paranoid in their tendency to present themselves as prophets or world saviors. Some of them are aggressive against delusional goals. Mentally healthy people can be susceptible to psychotic appeals, a predisposing condition being fear of strangers and projection of hatred upon them. Some ethnically non-Russian subjects within and outside the Federation may be interested in a continuation of the Ukraine war; and there are concerns that Putin has come under their influence. The most important topic in this connection is the inter-ethnic difference in the birth rate and migrations, which is avoided by Russian media and officials these days. Potential mental conditions of some other politicians and ideologists are briefly analyzed here.

Keywords: Political Psychology; Child Abuse; Paranoia; Delusion; Vladimir Putin

Introduction

Psychiatric abnormalities are not uncommon among politicians [1-3]. Clinical insights may help to understand their suboptimal decisions and behaviour [4]. Apparently, the need to warn the public overrides the duty of confidentiality [5]. Several Soviet leaders had mental abnormalities [6]. The psychopathological approach to politics might be successful provided that it identifies politicians or ideologists with limited mental competence [7]. If a leader is psychotic or neurotic, while other functions are more or less intact, he can preserve abilities to remain in a position of power. Grave consequences occur when paranoid ideas persist in a dictator along with rationality and efficiency, so that delusions are brought into reality [8].

Child abuse is associated with psychiatric and related conditions including depression, paranoia, bipolar and post-traumatic stress disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, possibly schizophrenia, as well as low self-esteem, deficient communicative skills, anxiety and anger [9-13]. Several studies have demonstrated associations of physical abuse with psychotic symptoms [14]. The latter research provided additional evidence: child abuse but not neglect was associated with positive symptoms of psychosis [14]. Recent reviews confirmed association of physical abuse in childhood with psychotic symptoms and/or disorders [15-17]; although weakness of some evidence and large degree of heterogeneity across the studies has been noticed [18-20]. Furthermore, child abuse was reported to be a risk factor for borderline personality disorder [21]. The latter condition was discussed within the scope of trauma spectrum disorders [22]. Besides, child abuse is related to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). A significant association was found between past trauma and compulsions, but not obsessions [23].

Vladimir Putin

Physical abuse was described in biographies of Vladimir Putin. His father is said to have physically maltreated the boy [24-29]. Presumably Putin's early childhood experience of physical maltreatment was recapitulated at school, where he was bullied. His

saying "If a fight is [perceived as] inevitable, you must strike first" could have originated from reminiscences of bullying. He is perhaps re-enacting his traumas in conditions of an intergenerational traumatic chain [25,30]. Thanks to this case of child maltreatment there is a "danger of blundering into a nuclear war" [31]. Indeed, Putin has hinted at the tactical use of nuclear weapons [32]. Such attitude has been interpreted as narcissistic dynamics and exaggerated defence overcompensating for underlying insecurity [33].

Apparently, it was not so much the Russian population who perceived external threats, as it was their leader, re-enacting his puerile fears. This supposition does not contradict the hypothesis that Putin has hubris syndrome (HS), potentially enticing him to adopt immature coping mechanisms [34]. The symptoms of HS have been described by Lord Owen [35]; since then, the condition has been supposed to be present in various politicians [36,37]. HS describes individuals with excessive confidence and pride. People having this type of personality tend to use immature coping mechanisms that might lead to the underestimation of a crisis, particularly when facing unpredictable results [36]. The overconfidence in leaders may prevent collaboration with global agencies and limit ability to learn from the experience of other nations [38]. In some of its aspects HS is close to narcissistic, antisocial and histrionic personality disorders [39]. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Vladimir Putin felt "that his personal clock was ticking", that his health gives him less time to achieve the goal of placing himself in the pantheon of Russia's great, state-building heroes [40]. So far, the potential place is not far from that of Leopoldo Galtieri (1926-2003) and Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). However, moral judgments are avoided here. There is a well-known Russian expression, literally translated as "winners are not judged". The meaning is that one can get away with cutting corners, provided one actually achieves the goals. In other words, "the ends justify the means, so long as you actually achieve the ends". As mentioned above, he acts in Ukraine and on the international arena in the interests of some non-European agent(s), as de facto did Hitler and some initiators of the World War I. European economies were adversely affected by the wars, contributing to industrialization of Asian countries [41], followed by decolonization and population explosion. Cui bono? Putin's policies go on in the same direction. Wars within Europe implicate bravery of soldiers but gutlessness of some supreme commanders and heads of state. Winners of such wars are those who stay outside. History of the 20th century has proven that.

Several psychiatric or related conditions may belong to a continuum around HS: adult ADHD, hypomania and paranoid syndrome [35,42]. Paranoia is another potential sequel to child maltreatment. Research has demonstrated significant associations between adverse childhood experiences, including physical abuse, with paranoia [43]. An association between brain injuries and paranoid syndrome was suggested [44]. Presumably, the worse the treatment of a child, especially by his father, the more frequent are paranoid ideations in the child's later life [45]. The association between paranoia and violence is known. A paranoid call may sanction destruction of supposed enemies [46]. Vladimir Putin formulated the aims of his military operation, one of them being protection of Russian-speakers from genocide. It is known that ethnic Russians have not undergone genocide. This idea may therefore be seen as delusional. The difference between delusions and strongly held ideas is seen in the degree of conviction despite contradictory evidence [47], irrespective of logic and the "way of the world" [48]. Andrei Snezhnevsky and some other Soviet psychiatrists could diagnose sluggish schizophrenia on the basis of such symptoms [49]; details and references are in the preceding article [50]. Another ex-Soviet psychiatrist, Anatoly Smulevich, discussed paranoia (apart from its "soft" form) within the scope of schizophrenia [51]. By the way, the last genocide of ethnic Russians since the Stalin's time has been the Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign and its sequels, when the average life expectancy in males decreased down to 58-59 years; more details are in [52].

Grave consequences can occur when paranoid or delusional ideas coexist in a dictator who otherwise is rational and efficient, but may be influenced by mentally disordered advisors. Paranoid rulers tend to promote abnormal individuals and rely on their opinions [53], which may distort appreciation of reality. An example is the ideologist Aleksandr Dugin, called the "Putin's Brain" [54], discussed below. Moreover, behaviours of paranoiacs may include arrogance, presumption of privilege and exploitation of weaknesses [55], which is recognizable in some politicians.

Dmitry Medvedev

Below are several citations. Offensive and obscene terms, ad hominem attacks and threats, used by Dmitry Medvedev and known from the media, are not cited here or replaced in the following quotes by dots (…): "Our weapon is the truth. That is why our cause is right"; "Our main task to inflict a devastating defeat on all enemies – the Ukronazis, the US, (…) NATO including (…) Poland, and other Western (…)"; "UK, our eternal enemy" [56]. In the author's opinion, the utterances by Medvedev and some other politicians are compatible with HS. Hubris denotes over-confidence and exaggerated pride. The misuse of alcohol tends to accentuate the features of HS [57]. Nemesis, sometimes discussed in the context of hubris, denotes destruction that can follow in the wake of hubris [58].

Aleksandr Dugin

As mentioned above, paranoid rulers tend to promote abnormal individuals and rely on their opinions [53]. An example is the Eurasianist ideologist Aleksandr Dugin, who preaches westward expansion of the Russian Federation (RF). Here follow several citations from his works (verbatim translations): "To close down America is our sacred duty" [59]; "Anti-Americanism is a Creed. The prohibition of war propaganda is pharisaic. You can't get away from the war and you shouldn't try" [60]; "Only a traitor would wish peace today" [61]; "We must forget about the nightmare that is called political correctness, liberalism and human rights. We must forget this terrible nonsense" [62]; "We make the war. It originates in our heart. We give birth to the war" [63]. Dugin's delusion-like or overvalued ideas include the "Western plot to undermine Russia" and "Eternal struggle between Land and Sea" [64], probably a reminiscence of the novel "1984" by George Orwell. Taking into account the above and his other utterances, Dugin was considered to be a mental patient, albeit a widely read and influential one [65]. Alexandr Dugin was born into a family of a Soviet colonel-general [66]. The former party and military functionaries (so-called Numenklatura) promoted

their children sometimes irrespective of the latter's abilities and health conditions [67]. Admittedly, some recent Dugin's writings, textbooks in particular, seem to be better copyedited and contain some reasonable conclusions. Criticizing globalization, he noticed that for a large part of national bureaucracy (read: Nomenklarura) it would imply loss of status [68]. This seems to be the main motive of the anti-globalist ideology prevailing among the Russian officialdom these days.

Ramzan Kadyrov

Some individuals, maltreated during their childhood, respond by acting out fight or flight responses [30]. Defensive behaviours include attacking weaker persons and submitting to dominant ones [69]. This seems to be exemplified by Vladimir Putin's relationships with Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of Chechen Republic, who appears as a dominant personality. There has been a stereotype of "chechenophobia" in Russia [70]. Certain non-European subjects of RF may be interested in a continuation of the Ukraine war, and there are concerns that Putin has come under their influence. The same might be true as regards the newly appointed Kursk governor Alexandr Khinshtein, exemplifying the Jewish influence in the ruling spheres. The most important topic in this connection is the inter-ethnic difference in the birth rate and migrations [71], a subject which is avoided by Russian media and officials today. As mentioned above, Kadyrov has "more than 10 children" according to Wikipedia. One of his sons has been promoted and decorated after he had publicly beaten a prison inmate [72]. Ramzan argued that Chechens in Ukraine are participating in a holy jihad against the "Western Satanist ideology" [73]. It seems that Putin is ready to share power with people of non-Russian ethnicity just to preserve the privileges of the Nomenklatura, while the Ukraine war is used as distraction. Crises are often used by oligarchy to distract from internal problems [74], from shortages of the healthcare in the first place [75]. A commentary to the "Programme of Russian president V.V. Putin for the socialization of Islam in Russia" states that RF can contribute to modernization and economic growth of Islamic nations, while "RF would become a leader of the Islamic world" [76]. Of note, Chechnya regularly receives considerable federal donation (Table 1) [77]. In addition, federal funds have been purloined on a large scale in the North Caucasus [78].

Table 1: The part of the own income in the regional budget (%). The rest is the federal donation [77].

Dagestan	**19.4**
Ingushetia	11.6
Kabardino-Balkaria	23.7
Karachay-Cherkessia	20.4
North Ossetia-Alania	28.8
Chechnya	12
Stavropol province (Russia)	100

Donald Trump

We certainly have not enough information to build a professional opinion. Psychiatrists have described Donald Trump as potentially dangerous, having symptoms such as grandiosity, impulsivity, hypersensitivity to criticism, inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality; thus questioning his fitness for the responsibilities of the office. Other designations included "detached from reality, self-centred, erratic, narcissistic, manic and paranoid" [79]. Trump himself has placed a strong value on his paranoia as being one of his keys to success. Presumably, under the grandiose facade is insecurity [33]. Well-credentialed academics advised him to undergo a "neuropsychiatric evaluation by an impartial team" [79]. Furthermore, alleged narcissism led some critics to describe Mr. Trump as immature and childish [80]. Despite all that, it is possible that President Trump is a mentally healthy but somewhat reckless person. The future will clarify this: Russians will probably stay in the occupied territories; but Trump's proposals to acquire Greenland from Denmark, make Canada the 51st U.S. state, and seize control of the Panama Canal will remain empty words, serving only to create disarray among allies [81]. However, Trump is probably right in saying that "the alternative to U.S. world leadership… is autocratic, corrupt and brutal" [33]. He is also right that the paradise cannot be built worldwide for American money. After all, some populaces get what they deserve. As for the Western paradise, it might wither thanks to migrations and inter-ethnic differences in birth rate [71]. We can only hope to be at the site of civilization in the end.

Trump administration has curtailed the support of Ukraine but continues sponsoring Israel. Apparently, certain spheres on both sides of the Middle Eastern conflict have acted for mutual benefit in receiving foreign aid: some get it from the West, others from oil-producing countries. The Camp David Accords was an efficient instrument of obtaining foreign aid. Prior to the Ukraine war, Israel was the largest cumulative recipient of the U.S. foreign help since the World War II. After the Accords, American aid to Egypt increased considerably. The "Peace at Camp David" would not have been possible without massive economic assistance [82]. Besides, Israel receives regular financial aid from Germany. In light of the Ukraine conflict, the double standards should be stressed: no sanctions have been imposed against Israel for comparable military actions.

Russia is great and has enough resources. West Europe and North America are even greater but have not enough resources. They continue paying for the Middle Eastern oil, which is an expropriated property (concessions) of Standard Oil, Texaco and subsequently of Aramco (Arabian-American Oil Company). In the wake of Palestine conflicts, host governments gained control of the fossil fuels by 1976 (Table 2). The concessionaire companies lost their concessions together with the power that

went with them, along with a drastic oil price increase (Table 2) [83]. This had been foreseeable, being probably a hidden motive of Arab-Israeli wars. In a sense, beneficiaries outsmarted their benefactors. The Soviets have readily assisted the process.

Table 2. Middle East Oil: Host Government Share and Price, 1948-1975 [83].

	1948	1970	1973	1975
Host government share %	0	0	25	60
Posted price, dollars per barrel	2.05	1.8	2.9	12.4

The agriculture in conditions of insufficient water and energy supply is economically and ecologically unfavourable as fossil fuels are burnt for the water desalination. The water consumption and pollution in Palestine exceeds natural replenishment. It is expected that the gap between the water supply and demand will widen. As referenced in Chapter 1, in the 1860s, the number of Jews in Palestine was approximately 14,000 or 4% of the total population of 350,000. From 1948 to 2002 the population of Israel increased from 806,000 to 6.3 million (including occupied territories – 9.8 million). Combined with immigration, the population of the arid territory, largely dependent on the foreign help and water desalination, heads to 16 million by mid-century. It is hard to answer the question, why Palestinian Christians and Muslims should cede the land, immobile property and water sources to immigrants from different continents, including those who declared themselves Judaists just because it was required for the "repatriation". The existence of Israel can be justified if they participate in procurement of access for civilized humankind to the Middle Eastern energy resources i.e. final solution for the fossil oil parasitism. To facilitate this, foreign aid to the region should be discontinued until further notice. All politicians and nations mentioned here should cooperate in this noble imitative. So far, some of them have been decisive mainly in fratricidal activities. Oil-importing states have competed with each other, although a united front would help them to control the exporters [84]. However, the crowning achievement of stupidity and/or hidden external influences was the world wars. Today, the most developed countries are moving in the same direction. The leaders of both world powers are repressing essential problems of global overpopulation, ethnic, racial and corresponding power shifts, disputing instead with neighbours and relatives (Fig. 1). Displaced aggression (substitution) does not affect those who provoked it, but rather the weaker ones. States sometimes become aggressive when they have internal difficulties, which may be facilitated by neurotic leaders. Repression of pressing issues is not indicative of a strong personality, it may lead to neurosis and other deviations [85].

Workable solutions must be found by means of negotiations. The question is, however, whether there are responsible negotiating partners. In conditions of democracy, as we can see today, administration can change, and previous obligations pass into oblivion. The history of the 20th century demonstrated that European leaders sometimes took short-sighted decisions. Undoubtedly, Russians should support civilization; but it would be preferable to know that right people and right policies are supported. The main thing is to avoid a large-scale war. Consequences would be unfavourable for both sides, as it was 100 years ago, while winners will be those who stay outside.

Jacob Zuma

As in the preceding case, there is not enough information to formulate a diagnosis, if any. It has been suggested that Jacob Zuma is a narcissist personality [86,87]. Reportedly, his lacking sense of risk and concern around taking personal responsibility for prevention of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection had a trickle-down effect and impacted on public attitudes. He openly admitted to having had unprotected sex with a woman living with HIV, and remarked that he had taken a hot shower to minimize his chances of getting infected with HIV [85]. The lack of responsibility demonstrated by the President had also another effect. In the rape trial, Zuma argued that his accuser had seduced him by wearing "revealing clothes". Supposedly, this resulted in the perpetuation of harmful and toxic notions of masculinity [88]. The singing by the President of the Dubula iBhunu song with its incitements to murder should be mentioned in this connection. Analogously, excessive masculinity is propagandized in RF, especially in Chechnya, led by the "hyper-masculine" Ramzan Kadyrov [89].

Coming back to Vladimir Putin, it should be recollected that the Soviet bureaucracy, where Putin had come from, destabilized some governments in Southern Africa, supporting and arming their adversaries. Considering inter-ethnic differences in birth rates and migrations, a similar future awaits RF. Liberal theories of democracy groundlessly suppose all ethnic and confessional groups to respect ethical principles. Multiculturalists assume a safe world [90]; but, according to experiences of the Soviet, post-Soviet and some other societies, multiculturalism does not generally contribute to safety. The "grass-roots reconciliation" [91], if any, may be accompanied by inter-ethnic violence and child abuse of a different kind [92].

Discussion

Emil Kraepelin restricted the term paranoia to a group of psychoses characterized by a permanent and unshakable delusional system without hallucinations, accompanied by clear and orderly thinking, willing and acting. Since then, independence of paranoia from schizophrenia has been the object of debate [93]. The term "paranoid" used in DSM-III has been changed to "delusional" disorder in DSM-IIIR and DSM-IV, retained in DSM-5. The ICD-10 classification of non-organic atypical psychoses

contains a group of persistent delusional disorders including a "persecutory" type, compatible with paranoia. Schizoid, schizotypal and paranoid disorders are highly overlapping. The comorbidity of these conditions raises the question of whether they are gradations of severity along the schizophrenia spectrum. Of note, persecutory delusions often dominate in late-onset schizophrenia. Key experiences in the later development of paranoid psychoses are those provoking feelings of insecurity or damaging the self-image especially in sensitive personalities [93].
Paranoid individuals tend to be self-centred, arrogant and vulnerable at the same time. Their behaviours may include megalomanic defences e.g. attempts to destroy enemies through a self-destructive war [30]. Several Soviet leaders had paranoia, other mental and/or neurological abnormalities [6]. Paranoia was recognizable to some extent both in authorities and the society [94]. Certain populations subscribe to delusions at large. It is possible for a majority to be deluded and a minority not to be deluded [95]. Homogeneity of thinking is a predictor of conformism, which is conducive to dictatorship [96]. Apart from induced delusion-like ideas, political leaders' views are reiterated by aides and yes-men; while alternative views are ignored or dismissed as heretical [34]. Paranoid leaders can remain in positions of power in nations lacking appropriate checks and balances [8].

Furthermore, shame and envy contribute to hostility and aggression. Envious people blame those who make them feel ashamed by comparison. In its turn, intense shame confers vulnerability to paranoia [97]. Some functionaries are descendants of rural people who burnt mansions in 1917 and committed violent crimes out of envy [98]. Repressed shame may cause aggression [99]. Shame has been described as the affective core of paranoia [100]. At the same time, the contemporary shamelessness, in particular, that related to corporate crime or family violence, is often lamented. The latter may be rooted in traditions and ideologies [101]. Child abuse has rarely been discussed in Russia. There were several publications in the period 1990-2016 but today the topic is largely avoided; details and references are in the preceding article [92]. According to an estimate, the prevalence of family violence in RF during last decades has been 45-70 times higher than in England and France [102]. There are neither uniformly agreed attitudes nor consequent policies.

"An individual feels ashamed when some undesirable truth about one's fundamental character is revealed to the self or others" [103]. Sick and unattractive people sometimes appear as sufferers of shame [103]. Besides, the whistle-blowing is often regarded as a shameful act. On the contrary, many perpetrators of laws and mores do not experience any shame and come out as winners. This pertains to diverse phenomena: sexual and reproductive coercion, family violence, various kinds of fraud, corporate crime and professional misconduct [75,101,104]. What can be done to route the emotion of shame in the right direction, so that not victims and whistleblowers but perpetrators would be ashamed? Publications with names and references seem to be the best way [75,104]. It is easy to expose a socially unprotected perpetrator; otherwise, different tools can be used to prevent a disclosure: denial of facts and accusation of slander, threats and violence, tricks and provocations, intimidation and bribing, appeals to uphold honour and reputation of an institution, family, and nation.

Paranoid individuals may dismiss disconfirming evidence and sanction a destruction of supposed enemies [46]. Some of them are belligerent against delusional goals. A belief that others intend harm contributes to aggressiveness. Such leaders are constantly on alert against supposedly ever-present danger. In a crisis, they have a strong preference for what is seen as pre-emptive action. The paranoid may precipitate a crisis out of the belief that preventive action is necessary. Negotiations and diplomacy are viewed by them as either efforts to ratify the military status quo or exercises in deception. Another feature: overreliance on historic analogies such as World War II [105]. This is what we observe in Russia today.

As for HS, differential diagnosis and exclusion of other conditions is difficult, because persons with HS do not usually collaborate in examinations [106]. On the contrary, politicians tend to conceal mental disorders [1]. Since hubristic leaders are contemptuous of the advice of others and reckless in strategic choices, early identification and prevention of HS is important [106]. It can be reasonably assumed that ruling classes with experience of leadership, especially royal families that have been in the public attention for centuries, have smaller risks of HS than unknown individuals promoted by bureaucracy.

Mental derangements in politicians are dangerous and must be diagnosed by psychiatrists on the basis of speech, language corpora, drawings and behaviour (Fig. 1). A language (speech) corpus is a large sample or collection of texts that can be subjected to analysis, sometimes leading to unexpected insights [107]. Admittedly, studies of Putin's publications may be of limited value because they seem to be written at least in part by his assistants. Plagiarism has been found in his dissertation [108], which is unavailable in libraries despite the existing regulations. Published interviews may be edited [109]. An attempt to analyze drawings by Putin's own hand has been made in the preceding paper [110].

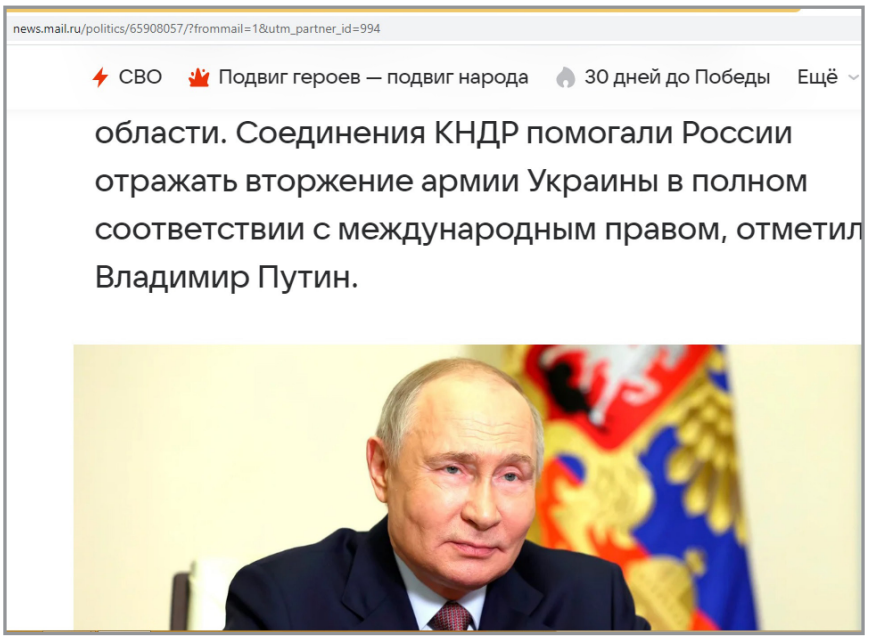

Figure 1: Vladimir Putin (Pinyin: Fulajimier Pujing) thanking North Koreans for participation in the war against Ukraine. Idiocy that makes history.

Conclusion

Child abuse has been thoroughly studied in developed countries. This evil has not been sufficiently counteracted in RF [111]. In 2017, Vladimir Putin signed a new law decriminalizing some forms of domestic violence [112,113]. Physical maltreatment was described in his biographies. Physical abuse in childhood and adolescence can induce psychiatric abnormalities, among others, persecutory delusions. Many people subscribe to delusions at large. It is possible for a majority to be deluded and a minority not to be deluded. Mental derangements in politicians are dangerous and must be diagnosed by psychiatrists on the basis of speech, language corpora, drawings and behaviour. More expert opinion is needed in this area.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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