



Psychological analysis of public figures: Ethical challenges and prospects

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Abstract. In the modern world, there is a growing risk of inappropriate leadership caused by psychological flaws in individuals who aspire to power. Therefore, society's caution against granting power to politicians who demonstrate psychological signs of dangerous personality traits is becoming increasingly relevant. The article aimed to identify the conceptual basis for resolving the main ethical dilemmas regarding the expert evaluation of the psychological characteristics and states of political figures. The article examined the ethical contradictions associated with public commentary by psychologists and psychiatrists on the personality traits and mental state of political leaders without informed consent and direct examination. The focus was on the Goldwater Rule, which prohibits professionals from commenting on the mental health of public figures based solely on publicly available information. The position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) on the strict prohibition of commenting was analysed, as were the arguments of critics of this position, who point to the transformation of the professional role of specialists and the civic duty to warn of danger. It was shown that the debate between supporters and opponents of the Goldwater Rule is based on a conflict between two basic ethical principles: non-maleficence (avoidance of harm) with regard to the individual politician as a vulnerable client, and beneficence (creation of good) with regard to society as a collective client that must be informed about potential threats from leaders. At the theoretical level, the conflict was extrapolated to the contradiction between utilitarian and deontological ethics. The need for ethical pluralism as a way of resolving this conflict is highlighted. Thus, in the modern context, strict adherence to Goldwater's Rule does not always serve the public good. Ethical regulation should be based on weighing principles, contextual assessment of threats, and professional responsibility to both the individual and society. The results of this work can be used by professional communities of psychologists, psychiatrists, ethics committees, and media experts to develop regulations that balance the ethical responsibility of professionals to society and public figures in the evaluation of the psychological risks of political leadership

Keywords: Goldwater Rule; ethical dilemma; mental health; public danger; inappropriate leadership

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Introduction

Assessing the personality, mental states and behaviour of public figures, especially politicians and statesmen, is as much in demand as it is controversial from an ethical point of view. In political psychology, there is a strong tradition of exploring the psychological roots of political upheavals and catastrophes, including world wars, through the prism of the psychopathology of leaders and their followers (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Arendt, 1963; Fromm, 1973). This tradition has been actively developing in the current conditions of political turbulence and actualised military threats (Hogan *et al.*, 2021; Uysal *et al.*, 2022).

According to S. Kamara *et al.* (2024), M. Maskor *et al.* (2021) and M. Hassan *et al.* (2022), the need to use psychological knowledge to overcome the consequences of political crises caused by inappropriate (or openly destructive) leadership, and ideally to prevent their occurrence, seems quite obvious. Meanwhile, the risks of uncontrolled and irresponsible use of expertise on the psychological suitability of a particular politician in a dishonest struggle for power were no less obvious (Sanchez & Dunning, 2023). The contradiction between the public need for proper leadership and the vulnerability of modern societies to the manipulation of important information remains fundamentally unsolvable. One way to resolve this dilemma is through ethical regulation of the activities of mental health professionals in providing expert assessments of public figures. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association added Section 7.3 to its Ethics Code. This clause, better known by its unofficial name, the “Goldwater Rule”, has been the subject of heated debate in the American professional community and far beyond due to concerns raised by Donald Trump’s presidency among psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (Lee & Glass, 2018). This debate is still far from over.

In Ukraine, no such systematic discussions take place, although regulating the circulation of information about the mental state, personality and behavioural manifestations of political

leaders and other public figures (in particular, war heroes) is extremely relevant. The psychological fitness of the country’s military and political leadership in a full-scale war can be a factor in the resilience or, conversely, the vulnerability of society to hostile information attacks, and at the same time, a component of the collective ability to accurately assess the challenges and threats associated with inadequate leadership. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals actively express their assessments of the personality traits and psycho-emotional state of the leaders of Ukraine and other countries, including the aggressor country, to the general public (Lashchenko, 2019; Sokyrchuk, 2021; Kmetyk, 2024). The Ethics Committee of the National Psychological Association (NPA) also receives relevant inquiries from time to time. At the same time, within the Ukrainian professional community, the ethical acceptability of such statements is not clearly defined or agreed upon. Therefore, the aim of this article was to identify the main ethical dilemmas in the professional activities of psychologists related to the expert evaluation of the psychological characteristics and states of politicians and other public figures, as well as to determine the conceptual basis for resolving such dilemmas.

Theoretical Review

The Goldwater Rule got its name from an incident that occurred during the 1964 US presidential election involving Republican candidate Barry Goldwater. The editors of the well-known journal *Fact* sent a questionnaire to all registered psychiatrists in the United States with a single question: “Do you consider Barry Goldwater psychologically fit to serve as President of the United States?” (Martin-Joy, 2020). Of the more than 12,000 specialists, 2,417 responded, of whom 1,189 declared Goldwater unfit for the presidency, 657 recognised him as mentally healthy, and 571 stated that they could not give an objective answer. Based on these responses, a special issue of the journal was published (Ginzburg, 1964).

The 38-page issue featured psychiatrists' opinions on the Republican candidate's psychological instability, paranoia, and narcissism, illustrated with caricatures of him (Fig. 1). The issue had a circulation of 236,000 copies and was released just before Election Day (Martin-Joy, 2020).



Figure 1. Illustration to the article “The unconscious of a conservative: A special issue on the mind of Barry Goldwater”

Source: R. Ginzburg (1964)

Barry Goldwater lost that election. And although it is impossible to establish a causal link between the publication of psychiatrists' opinions on the politician's mental state and the number of votes cast for his rival, Democratic Party candidate Lyndon Johnson, this case is considered in scientific and popular literature as an example of inappropriate and unethical interference by psychiatric expertise in political competition. Goldwater's lawyers filed a lawsuit against the editor-in-chief of the journal, Warren Buronson, and the author of the project, Ralph Ginsburg, for libel and won, securing a USD 75,000 fine against

the publication. One of the compelling arguments for the court was that Ginsburg had substantially edited the conclusions provided to him by psychiatrists to create a more convincing impression of Goldwater's psychological unsuitability for the presidency. Thus, the unethical nature of this incident is related more to the editor's position than to that of the psychiatrists, who only answered the questionnaire with a vague (or no) idea of how their answers would be used. Nevertheless, the ethical regulations for professional activity introduced as a result of this case primarily affected the psychiatric community. B. Lee (2021) points out that formally, the regulations apply only to members of the American Psychiatric Association, who are required to adhere to the Association's Code of Ethics, including section 7.3, which calls for refraining from remote diagnosis or “tabloid psychiatry”. Informally, a wider range of professionals, including those in other countries, have been guided by Goldwater's Rule in their work.

However, despite all this, Goldwater's Rule has been in a kind of “dormant” state for a long time (Lee, 2021). Psychiatrists and other mental health professionals actively participated in public discussions about the mental states and personality traits of politicians (Frank, 2011). Everything changed after the Republican Party nominated Donald Trump as its candidate for President of the United States in 2016. Mental health professionals began to express concerns about Trump's mental fitness, pointing to traits such as grandiosity and lack of empathy (McAdams, 2016; Carey, 2016). On 16 March 2017, amid heated debate about President Trump's threatening behaviour and the legitimacy of discussing it publicly (Dodes & Schachter, 2017; Herman & Lifton, 2017), the American Psychiatric Association's Ethics Committee published a commentary on the Goldwater Rule, which effectively prohibited professionals from commenting on the mental states and personality traits of public figures, even in general terms (APA, 2017).

O. Gorshkalova & S. Munakomi (2025) noted that part of the American psychiatric community

expressed categorical disagreement with the APA's position, initiating a conference dedicated to the "Duty to Warn", which obliges specialists to breach confidentiality in cases where there is a threat to the life or health of a client. That same year, a collection of essays entitled "The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Professionals Assess the President" was published (Lee, 2017). In October 2024, an open letter signed by 233 mental health professionals was published, stating that Donald Trump shows signs of malignant narcissism and poses a threat to the existence of democracy (Smith, 2024). It should be noted that at the time of writing (May 2025), the full text of the letter has been removed from public access. The debate over the ethical appropriateness of such behaviour by mental health professionals has reignited, indicating that there is no definitive consensus among the professional community on this issue.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the form of a qualitative thematic analysis of scientific, professional and journalistic sources devoted to the ethical aspects of public psychological commentary on the personal characteristics of political leaders. The scientific method underlying the study was thematic analysis, as this method allows for the identification of consistent motives, ideas and concepts of scientists and practitioners in the field of mental health who are voluntarily involved in the process of expert assessment of political and social risks associated with inappropriate leadership. Thematic analysis was used to identify the main ethical dilemmas that arise in connection with the assessment of the mental health of public figures without their consent and without personal contact. As part of this analysis, a systematic review was conducted of the official position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), in particular the Code of Ethics (APA, 2013) and statements by members of the Ethics Committee (APA, 2017); legal and professional commentary, including ethical standards and positions of

other industry associations; arguments of psychiatrists critical of Goldwater's Rule, in particular the authors participating in the collection "The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump..." (Lee, 2017) and articles in periodicals of a socio-political (The New York Times, Politico Magazine) and professional psychology (Psychology Today); philosophical-ethical and bioethical concepts, such as utilitarianism, deontology, ethical pluralism (Beauchamp & Childress, 1979), the concept of the "collective client", and client vulnerability.

The following types of sources were used: academic works discussing the application of the so-called Goldwater Rule in the contemporary practice of psychologists and psychiatrists; official documents of the APA and other professional associations of psychologists and psychiatrists; articles from leading media outlets, including The New York Times; websites of professional associations and ethics committees; methodological materials on ethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 1979). No quantitative methods or tools were used in the article, but the study was based on generally accepted approaches to qualitative analysis in the field of ethics and psychology. The analysis made it possible to identify the main ethical dilemmas underlying the debate on the ethics of assessing the mental states and personality traits of public figures, as well as to outline ways to resolve these dilemmas.

Results and Discussion

As a result of studying academic, journalistic, and regulatory sources, arguments were identified both from specialists who defend the need to apply the Goldwater Rule in modern conditions, even in its stricter form, and from those who demand a substantial revision of this Rule, up to its complete abolition. The systematisation of the collected arguments made it possible to conclude that the discussion surrounding the Goldwater Rule is based on an ethical dilemma in which conflicting professional ethical precepts are manifested. The solution to this dilemma must be based on a clear understanding of the

philosophical and methodological foundations of ethical regulation of the activities of mental health professionals.

Application of the Goldwater Rule in contemporary practice: *Pro et contra*

In 2017, the American Psychiatric Association published a separate commentary with a detailed answer to the question “Can a psychiatrist express an opinion about a public figure if the psychiatrist sincerely believes that this person poses a threat to the country or national security?” (APA, 2017). The APA’s official position is that providing a professional opinion about a public figure (including generalised judgements about their emotional state, behaviour, speech or other manifestations, or even statements about the absence of any illness in that person) based solely on publicly available information, without conducting an examination, is a violation of professional ethics. The APA argues that commenting on public figures violates, first, the principle of informed consent of the client to undergo an examination. The second principle, which the APA considers to be violated, is the requirement to responsibly adhere to research procedures and protocols and to maintain high standards of professional practice. Finally, the third argument in favour of the APA’s tough stance on psychiatrists commenting on public figures is that such actions can increase the stigma surrounding mental disorders and undermine patients’ trust in professionals. In turn, mental health professionals who oppose the APA’s position consider the strict ban on public statements to be excessive and irrelevant to modern realities, citing six arguments.

1. Modern psychiatric diagnosis goes beyond personal conversation. One of the strongest criticisms of Goldwater’s Rule is based on the fact that approaches to psychiatric diagnosis have changed significantly since its adoption. From now on, attention is increasingly focused not only on personal interviews with patients, but also on the analysis of behavioural patterns, context and social information. Researchers J. Kroll &

C. Pouncey (2016) and B. Lee (2021) directly question the absolute necessity of a personal interview for making a valid diagnosis. They emphasise that there are no convincing empirical or theoretical grounds to justify such a requirement. Moreover, as A. McLoughlin (2021) points out, video recordings involving public figures, their public speeches, and official documents can be a sufficient source of diagnostic information. Thus, in an open information society, psychologists and psychiatrists have free access to significant amounts of diagnostically valuable information, which allows specialists to be no less accurate in assessments than in the case of clinical interviews. Psychiatric terminology now actively used in public discourse and journalism – it is no longer exclusively a clinical tool (Pouncey, 2017).

2. Commenting on public behaviour is not diagnosis in the narrow sense. Several authors emphasise that public assessment of a politician’s behaviour is not equivalent to a formal medical diagnosis. A. Pillay (2018) distinguishes between these concepts, emphasising that diagnosis is a clinical procedure carried out within a specific doctor-patient context, with a specific purpose (primarily treatment). If a mental health professional analyses publicly available data without establishing a therapeutic contract, this is not a medical service but social communication. A. McLoughlin (2021) supports this position: commenting on open sources does not create a doctor-patient relationship and therefore does not fall under the same ethical restrictions.

3. The goal is not to diagnose illness, but to warn of danger. It is very important to distinguish between the goals of public statements made by specialists. J. Gilligan (2017) formulated a key thesis: “the problem is danger, not mental illness.” Psychologists and psychiatrists have not only a duty to treat, but also a duty to warn. This principle has long been rooted in clinical practice, but it needs to be adapted to a broader social context. B. Lee & L. Glass (2018) argue that talking about the mental state of a public leader is not an act of diagnosis, but the fulfilment of an ethical and civic mission.

4. A professional is also a citizen: restricting the right to free speech is a restriction of civil liberties. Goldwater's Rule, in its modern interpretation, does not simply restrict professional practice – it interferes with the civil liberties of psychiatrists, according to L. Glass (2018). Psychiatrists, like any other professionals, have the right to express their views on issues that concern the public good – in particular, on the behaviour of leaders who have an impact on national security, democracy and social cohesion. A. Pillay (2018) draws attention to a broader approach to the professional role: formulating public opinion on observed behaviour is part of a specialist's social contribution to society.

5. Psychologists are not psychiatrists: the ethical framework for psychologists' public activity in the political arena remains unspecified. Unlike psychiatrists, psychologists do not have clearly defined ethical standards regarding public comments about political leaders. The Canadian Psychological Association's Code of Ethics (Canadian Psychological Association, 2017) offers valuable guidance. Principle IV, "Responsibility to Society", explicitly states the obligation to act in the interests of the community. According to this principle, psychologists should provide socially relevant information to groups and individuals who have the power to influence social policy. The Model Code of Ethics of the European Federation of Psychological Associations (EFPA) establishes a broad definition of "client" that includes everyone with whom psychologists interact on a professional basis – individuals, couples, families, educational institutions, organisations and institutions (including courts). "Psychological science and practice serve the well-being of people, therefore, psychologists have a professional and scientific responsibility to society as a whole" (EFPA, 2022). In general, as noted by A. Pillay (2018), professional codes of conduct for psychologists do not yet provide direct answers regarding the possibility of ethically justified participation in public discussions about leaders, which creates a gap in regulation. This highlights the need for professional associations to publicly express their position.

6. Conflict between the duty to maintain confidentiality and the duty to warn (Duty to Warn..., 2017). Critics of Goldwater's Rule sum up the argument in a fundamental ethical dilemma: which is the greater good – maintaining confidentiality for an individual or informing society for the greater good? A. Pillay (2018) asks a rhetorical question: does an engineer have the right to silently pass by a bridge with obvious signs of dangerous damage? Similarly, mental health professionals who notice public signs of danger in the behaviour of leaders have an ethical duty to speak up, even if it goes beyond their narrow clinical role.

B. Lee & L. Glass (2018) emphasise that the mental state of the president affects the entire country. Silencing obvious threats is not a neutral position, but potential complicity in the consequences. It is worth noting that in its commentary, the APA (2017) clearly states that psychiatrists' desire to serve the interests of national security or social stability must be subordinate to the demands of the relevant official bodies, services and institutions. Anything that a psychiatrist does on a voluntary basis should not be positioned as a "professional assessment".

Ethics of a psychologist in public space: Between beneficence and non-maleficence

The classic work by T. Beauchamp & J. Childress (1979) describes four basic principles of ethics: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice. The authors insist that these principles are not hierarchically organised and may conflict with each other, requiring their careful coordination in specific moral situations. This idea is particularly relevant in the current debate surrounding the Goldwater Rule. On the one hand, the principle of non-maleficence obliges the specialist not to harm a specific person, in this case a public figure (politician), who may suffer reputational or psychological damage as a result of a public psychiatric assessment carried out without his/her consent and examination. On the other hand, the principle of beneficence calls for action for the common good, in particular to warn of the

potential harm that a politician with certain psychopathologies, such as impulsiveness, aggressiveness or lack of empathy, may cause to society.

T. Beauchamp & J. Childress (1979) do not give clear priority to any of the principles, but recognise that moral argumentation must be based on contextual weighing. In the case of Goldwater's Rule, this means that in a situation of threatening behaviour by a leader that has the potential to cause mass harm (e.g., launching military action, violating democratic order), preference may be given to beneficence as a reasonable duty to society. A similar logic is presented by the authors of the book "The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump..." (Lee, 2017), for whom the duty to warn society about danger in a specific context (the presidency of Donald Trump) is a more compelling ethical basis than the duty to maintain confidentiality regarding a specific politician and to value his autonomy and dignity. At the same time, one should not forget about the danger of the unscrupulous use of professional information in political competition, as well as the unconscious influence of political biases on the objectivity of professional judgements, which can significantly reduce or completely negate the ethics of beneficence (Samuels, 2021). Thus, the contradiction between the two principles in this case is not a defect of ethics, but rather demonstrates its function as a mechanism for the moral resolution of complex and often tragic dilemmas. In this sense, the balancing and specification model developed by T. Beauchamp & J. Childress (1979) in their theory provides a useful tool for justifying the positions of both those who support the Goldwater Rule and those who question it for the sake of the public good. The debate over the ethics of applying the Goldwater Rule also clearly reveals a conflict between the rights of two types of mental health professionals' "clients": the public politician as an individual and society as a collective entity.

The politician as a vulnerable client: researchers should take into account the particular vulnerability of political elites, viewing them not as omnipotent subjects, but as subjects who may

be exposed to serious risks from unlawful interference (Naurin & Öhberg, 2019; Chaplinska & Kravchenko, 2020; Traianou, 2024). In this context, public politicians are similar to all groups that are traditionally considered vulnerable due to the possibility of unethical influence or stigmatisation. As A. Traianou (2024) notes, "ethical challenges arise precisely when a researcher (or expert) resorts to assessments without the consent of the subject, even if that subject occupies a privileged position in the social hierarchy". Obviously, it was almost impossible to obtain the consent of such a client to disclose psychological or psychiatric assessments that are potentially extremely sensitive to political reputation.

Society as a client: at the same time, society can also be viewed as a client, especially in the context of psychological responsibility for protecting the public good. For example, the EFPA Code of Ethics (2022) emphasises that psychologists are responsible not only to individual clients but also to society when there is a potential threat to the safety or rights of others. A similar position is taken by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), which states that sometimes a professional has the ethical right (and sometimes the duty) to breach confidentiality or disregard consent when it comes to preventing serious harm to others (CPA, 2017). In this case, the difficulty lies in the fact that society does not have a single mechanism for referring to mental health professionals with a request for an assessment of political leaders. This makes it difficult to obtain "informed consent" from the collective client. Psychologists are forced to act at their own discretion, risking violating one of the basic principles - either non-maleficence towards the politician or beneficence towards society.

Some theoretical approaches to resolving ethical conflicts

Thus, in the context of Goldwater's Rule, not only an ethical dilemma arises, but also a conflict between two systems of loyalty - to the individual client and to the public interest. Contemporary

ethical literature does not offer a clear solution to this conflict. The contradictions between avoiding harm to an individual politician and creating good for society, as well as the problem of distributing professional responsibility between the “individual” and “collective” client – can be partly interpreted within the framework of utilitarian ethical theory, although it also contains elements of a deontological approach (Rachels & Rachels, 2018).

Utilitarianism evaluates the morality of actions based on the consequences – in particular, whether a particular action contributes to maximising the well-being of the greatest number of people. Public disclosure of a leader’s potential psychopathological danger may harm a specific person (politician), but at the same time prevent much greater harm that his decisions may cause to society – war, authoritarianism, social disintegration, etc. Thus, beneficence in the form of protecting public welfare may prevail over non-maleficence when it comes to preventing mass risks (Glass, 2018). In contrast, the deontological approach emphasises the immutability of moral obligations, regardless of the consequences. From this perspective, refraining from public diagnosis without consent is a categorical imperative linked to respect for personal autonomy. Even if a politician has power and publicity, they do not lose their status as a person with the right to privacy, protection of reputation and fair treatment. As A. Traianou (2024) points out, the political elite is a vulnerable group, given the public visibility, constant scrutiny and political competition. This means that non-contractual diagnosis can violate their dignity.

The aforementioned contradictions between the two ethical theories are subject to reconciliation through the principles of ethical pluralism. Ethical pluralism (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019) recognises that none of the principles has absolute priority and that professional ethics involves weighing them up depending on the context. In this approach, the individual client (politician) has the right to non-maleficence – that is, protection from psychiatric or psychological assess-

ment that could damage their reputation without good reason. The collective client (society) has the right to beneficence – that is, to receive information about the potential danger from a leader who exhibits malignant personality traits. Depending on the degree of threat to society, priority may temporarily shift from the individual to the collective client, but only if the expert is transparently identified as a specialist; the position is well-reasoned and based on evidence rather than political assessments; and the wording is balanced and cautious, without stigmatisation.

Conclusions

Goldwater’s Rule undoubtedly has historical and professional value. However, contemporary practice, science, social needs, and the civil rights of specialists require a critical rethinking of it. Contemporary ethical discourse has revealed a fundamental dilemma between two principles: non-maleficence (avoiding harm to an individual politician) and beneficence (creating good for society). This contradiction is not a sign of weakness in ethics; on the contrary, it requires its application as an instrument of moral deliberation. In complex conditions of high social risk, priority may temporarily be given to beneficence, but only on the condition of reasonableness, professional integrity and avoidance of stigmatisation. Also at the centre of the debate is the conflict of interest between the individual and collective “client” of the mental health professional. As a public figure, politicians need protection from non-contractual interference, but society also has the right to reasonable information in cases of potential danger. This conflict requires not strict prohibitions, but ethical flexibility and regulation. The analysis concluded that ethical decisions faced by mental health professionals in connection with their public participation in assessing the behaviour and mental state of political leaders are complex and ambiguous. The discussion of the Goldwater Rule intersects several dimensions – professional ethics, civil law, politics, and media communication – each of which carries both risks and opportunities.

On the one hand, professionals cannot neglect moral obligation to act in the interests of public safety, especially when leaders show signs of posing a potential threat to democracy, public order or international stability. On the other hand, the uncontrolled use of psychological expertise in the political arena can easily become a tool for manipulation, stigmatisation or the destruction of a political opponent's reputation. Contemporary ethics requires not strict prohibitions or unlimited freedom, but a balanced model of professional responsibility that recognises both the value of confidentiality and the duty to warn of danger. Such a model should take into account the context of the situation and the level of public threat; the form and content of public statements; the professional status of the speaker; the presence or absence of an agreed collective assessment mechanism; and the degree of public demand for such expertise.

In the future, there will be a need to create institutionalised, transparent and collegial formats for ethical expertise on the psychological characteristics of public leaders in crisis situations. It is also necessary to expand scientific research

that will study the impact of public psychological assessments on public opinion, democratic trust and political behaviour. At the same time, professional codes of ethics must clearly recognise society as a legitimate beneficiary of psychological science and practice. Thus, the discussion of the public role of psychologists is not reduced to a choice between silence and stigmatisation. It is about finding a responsible way to be useful – professionally, thoughtfully and with dignity.

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Психологічний аналіз публічних діячів: етичні виклики і перспективи

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Анотація. У сучасному світі зростають ризики неналежного лідерства, спричинені психологічними вадами осіб, що претендують на владу. Отже, застереження суспільства від надання влади політикам, які демонструють психологічні ознаки небезпечної особистості, набуває дедалі гострішої актуальності. Стаття націлена на ідентифікацію визначення концептуальних засад розв'язання основних етичних дилем щодо експертного оцінювання психологічних характеристик і станів політичних діячів. У статті було досліджено етичні суперечності, пов'язані з публічним коментуванням психологами, психіатрами особистісних рис і психічного стану політичних лідерів без інформованої згоди та безпосереднього обстеження. У центрі уваги – «правило Голдватера», яке забороняє фахівцям висловлюватися щодо психічного здоров'я публічних осіб на підставі лише загальнодоступної інформації. Проаналізовано позицію Американської психіатричної асоціації (APA) щодо жорсткої заборони на коментування; та аргументи критиків цієї позиції, які вказують на трансформацію професійної ролі фахівців та громадянський обов'язок попередження небезпеки. Показано, що в основі дискусії між прихильниками і супротивниками правила Голдватера лежить конфлікт двох базових етичних принципів: non-maleficence (уникнення шкоди) щодо індивідуального політика як вразливого клієнта та beneficence (створення блага) щодо суспільства як колективного клієнта, що має бути поінформованим про потенційні загрози з боку лідерів. На теоретичному рівні конфлікт екстрапольовано на суперечність між утилітаристською та деонтологічною етикою. Актуалізовано потребу етичного плюралізму як способу врегулювання зазначеного конфлікту. Отже, у сучасному контексті жорстке дотримання правила Голдватера не завжди служить суспільному благу. Етичне врегулювання має ґрунтуватися на зважуванні принципів, контекстуальній оцінці загроз і професійній відповідальності як перед індивідом, так і перед суспільством. Результати цієї роботи можуть бути використані професійними спільнотами психологів, психіатрів, етичними комітетами та медіаекспертами для розроблення регламентів, які врівноважують етичну відповідальність фахівців перед суспільством і публічними особами під час оцінювання психологічних ризиків політичного лідерства

Ключові слова: правило Голдватера; етична дилема; психічне здоров'я; суспільна небезпека; неналежне лідерство