

Neutrality, Violence and Law: A Clinical Conundrum

C. Minne¹, **R. Doctor**¹, M. De Mari¹

¹ BPAS, Psychoanalysis, London, United Kingdom

Abstract Content (EN)

Psychoanalytical neutrality is a foundational principle emphasising the analyst stance of impartiality and non-directive engagement with the patient. Neutrality aims to minimise the intrusion of the analyst's personal desires, and judgements, thereby allowing the patient's unconscious processes, and countertransference to unfold freely within the therapeutic space.

Contemporary psychoanalytic thought has redefined neutrality as a flexible, ethically informed stance rather than a rigid abstention, acknowledging that the analyst's subjectivity inevitably shapes the analytic field. However, psychoanalytic neutrality becomes particularly complex when clinical work intersects with experiences of violence and the demands of the law. Neutrality prescribes that the analyst suspends moral judgement to allow unconscious processes and transference to emerge yet encounters with patients who have suffered or enacted violence tests the limits of this principle. In such context, neutrality risks being misconstrued as indifference, while overt intervention risks collapsing analytic space into legal or moral adjudication.

Using clinical material from a supervision of a Ukrainian therapist seeing a patient, a soldier in the Ukrainian army, we hope to discuss the issues of neutrality, violence and law.