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This study is devoted to the analysis of psychological defence mechanisms in psychodynamic psychotherapists working under wartime conditions, with a particular focus on their role in **preserving and destabilising psychic integrity.**



Based on observations, an author-designed questionnaire, self-observation, and supervisory reflections, the study explores the dynamics of emotional, bodily, and identificatory reactions, including hypervigilance, dissociation, regression, and splitting.



The findings demonstrate that primitive defence mechanisms perform a paradoxical function: they simultaneously provide short-term affect stabilisation and support functioning under conditions of threat.



Two trajectories of therapists' adaptation were identified — a dynamic trajectory characterised by oscillations between disorganisation and recovery, and a stable trajectory marked by the preservation of professional identity and relative affective balance.



Countertransference reactions are considered a borderline phenomenon functioning both as a defence and as an instrument of clinical understanding.

“Between Defence and Holding: Flash-Container in the Work of Psychotherapists

Table 1. Trajectories of Psychotherapists' Adaptation During Wartime

Parameter	Dynamic Type	Stable Type
Emotional dynamics	Intense fluctuations (fear > hope > helplessness)	Relative stability
Physical symptoms	Pronounced (sleep disturbances, tension, nightmares)	Moderate
Professional identity	Fragility > fragmentation > recovery	Preserved
Defence	Variable defensive patterns	Stable defensive style

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the introduction of the **Concept of the Flash-container** as a borderline form between defence mechanisms and the function of containment. The flash-container is defined as a short-term, situational act of psychological holding that emerges in moments of acute threat and allows an individual to temporarily endure unbearable affect. Unlike stable forms of containment, it has an episodic character and may operate outside the therapeutic setting.

The conceptualisation of the flash-container opens a new perspective for understanding micro-processes of regulation under conditions of mass trauma and highlights the necessity of developing practices of short-term psychological holding both in clinical work and within the broader social context. At present, we continue to investigate the idea of the flash-container in order to understand whether it functions exclusively within therapeutic processes or may also exist beyond them.

Table 2. Comparative Characteristics of Flash-Container Functioning

Criteria	Presence of Psychological First-Aid Skills	Absence of Psychological First-Aid Skills
Emotional reaction after the event	Relatively stable	Exhaustion
Retraumatization	Lower	Higher
Nature of defences	Flexible and dynamic	Rigid
Affect	Integration of experience	Disturbance of emotional stability



Currently, we are examining how the function of the flash-container influences psychological stability in response to collective trauma.

We conducted a survey involving two groups of participants:



The first group

had psychological education and skills in psychological first aid.

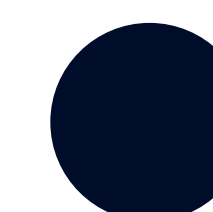


The second group

had neither psychological education nor first-aid skills.



We concluded that the flash-container function is accessible to any individual prepared for the process of containment during extreme situations. However, among individuals with psychological education and first-aid skills, this experience does not lead to significant disruption of emotional stability.



In contrast, among individuals without psychological first-aid skills, the functioning of the flash-container is more frequently accompanied by emotional exhaustion and signs of retraumatization.



The function of the flash-container is accessible not only to professionals but also to individuals without psychological training. At the same time, psychological education and psychological first-aid skills reduce the risk of retraumatization and contribute to better integration of traumatic experience.

These observations demonstrate that war activates the earliest and most primitive defence mechanisms necessary for short-term survival, yet capable of becoming sources of retraumatization in the long term.

The findings confirm the ambivalent nature of psychological defence mechanisms during wartime: they simultaneously promote survival and create conditions for retraumatization.