



CASE REPORT / OLGU SUNUMU

War- Immigration – Flowers in The Pots: A Psychoanalytic Essay

Savaş-Göç-Saksıdaki Çiçekler: Psikanalitik Bir Deneme

Zihniye Okray¹

Abstract:

War is as old human history. War always produce unwanted economic, social, political results but the most devastating effect of war is undoubtedly its psychological damage. Long term psychological effects and the risk of developing psychopathology that produced by war were studied and documented since World War I in clinical psychology and psychoanalytic literature. Most common psychopathology that was due to war is post-traumatic stress disorder. Albeit depressive disorders, sleep disorders, anxiety disorders and substance related disorders are also very common and have high prevalence again in war inflicted psychopathologies. Not only the physical uprootedness from a familiar place due to war and displacement the psychic uprootedness can be considered as a cause of psychopathologies. Psychic pain that cannot be cured and even cannot be recognized by the victims of war and displacement may lead to develop certain patterns of behaviors, thoughts, actions, emotions and strikingly a certain life style and fears that can be again considered as common. In this manuscript two cases were presented who had two wars in their childhood and the long-term psychological effects almost exactly the same in their adulthood lives. Uprootedness and psychic pain subsided from time to time, the negative impact of war never faded. The actions developed by the patients in adulthood are the result of war neurosis and traumatic events.

Keywords: War, Immigration, Cyprus, uprootedness, psychic pain

¹Prof, European University of Lefke, Department of Psychology, Lefke-TRNC, zokray@eul.edu.tr, Orcid İd: 0000-0002-9117-4991

Yazışma Adresi: Zihniye Okray, European University of Lefke, Department of Psychology, Lefke-TRNC, E-mail: zokray@eul.edu.tr

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Öz:

Savaş insanlık tarihi kadar eskidir. Savaş her zaman ekonomik, politik ve sosyal yaşamda istenmeyen etkiler doğursa da savaşın en yıkıcı olumsuz etkisi kuşkusuz bir şekilde verdiği psikolojik hasardır. Savaşın uzun dönem psikolojik etkileri Birinci Dünya Savaşından bu yana hem klinik psikoloji hem de psikanalitik literatür içerisinde çalışılmış ve belgelenmiştir. Savaşın ortaya çıkardığı en yaygın psikopatoloji örseleyici yaşantıya bağlı gelişen gerginlik bozukluğu olmasına rağmen depresif bozukluklar, uyku bozuklukları, kaygı bozuklukları ve madde ile ilişkili bozukluklar da oldukça yaygın ve yüksek prevalanslara sahiptirler. Sadece tanıdık bir yerden fiziksel yerinden edilme değil psişik yerinden edilme psikopatolojilerin oluşumunda önemli bir neden olduğu düşünülmektedir. Savaş ve göç kurbanlarının tedavi edemediği hatta bazı durumlarda tanımlayamadığı psişik acı belirli bazı davranış, düşünce, hareket, duygu ve çarpıcı bir şekilde belirli bir yaşam tarzı ve ortak korkulara da neden olabilmektedir. Bu çalışmada erken çocukluk dönemlerinde 2 kez savaş ve göç yaşamış iki olgunun uzun dönemde savaş ve göçten nasıl etkilendikleri tartışılmıştır. Kök salamamak ve psişik acı hayatları içerisinde zaman zaman etkisini yitirip silikleşse bile, savaşın ortaya çıkardığı olumsuz etki hiçbir zaman yok olmamıştır. Olgular tarafından çalışma içerisinde de bahsedilen davranış kalıpları savaş nevrozu ve travmatik yaşantılara bağlı olarak geliştiği düşünülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Savaş, Göç, Kıbrıs, köksüzlük, psişik acı

Introduction

The concept of war is as old as eternity of humankind. Conflicts have been observed between different groups throughout human history. Sociologically, wars have emerged between groups of people for different reasons since the existence of hunter-gatherer societies (Bozkurt, 2011). Especially the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots took place since 1931, Greeks on the island have tried to implement ENOSIS, which they dream of turning Cyprus into a Helen Island. After the opposition of England on the decision of Greeks decision about the connection of Cyprus to Greece, Greek Cypriots began violent acts towards English people and Turkish Cypriots living in island. From 1954 to 1974, the Cypriots were exposed to many traumatic experiences, not only with loss of life but also with the loss of property and internal migration that effects both communities.

Research on mental health outcomes of war exposure focuses heavily on its relationship with traumatic stress (McNeely et al., 2014). However, daily stresses and feelings of insecurity also assumed to have a great influence on mental health (Miller, Omidian, Rasmussen, Yaqubi and Daudzai, 2008). Stress, such as lack of food and necessary daily supplements, medical maintenance deficiencies, exposure to control points (police or soldiers) and other unpredictable events can have a tremendous impact on mental health. Not only direct exposure of those who suffered but lived through traumatic events related to war under constant threat of trauma, there may be more compared to those who are vulnerable to mental health problems feeling less threatened (McNeely et al., 2014).

Sutker, Winstead, Galina and Allain- (1991) studied cognitive deficits and psychopathology among former prisoners of war and combat veterans of the Korean conflict and they found out that psychiatric symptoms documented nearly 30 years ago are still persistent in severity and chronicity. Suspiciousness, apprehension, confusion, isolation, detachment and hostility are the most common cognitive deficits and bodily discomforts that were reported.

Sutker, Allain and Winstead (1993) studied psychopathology and psychiatric diagnoses of World War II Pacific theatre prisoners of war survivors and combat

veterans. They found out the imprisonment is a significant variable upon lifetime PTSD. In their research prisoners, 70% fulfilled the current diagnosis, 78% for a lifetime diagnosis of PTSD while combat veterans current and lifetime diagnosis of PTSD is 18% and 29% respectively.

Selmo et al. (2020) studies the prevalence and predictors of psychopathology in war-afflicted Syrian population and found out that a high level of psychological distress is indicative of psychopathology in all regions across the country. Rates were higher in areas with more intensive exposure ('hot' zones). Greater symptom severity was associated with living in a hot zone, being female, being old, the number of previous potentially traumatic events, daily stressors, and (low) perceived feeling of safety; whereas social support, religiosity, and religious coping were associated with lower levels of symptoms. The elevated levels of mental health problems and direct relationship between the level of exposure to violence and poorer mental health point to the need for mental health support.

Galea et al. (2010) found out that on a population-based representative survey in Nimba County, Liberia nearly after two decades of civil war, the prevalence of PTSD remains high even after the end of the principal conflict and that the geographical patterns of traumatic event experiences and PTSD are consistent with the best available information about the path of the violent civil conflict.

Jovanović et al (2010) studied the impact of war trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder on psychopathology in Croatian and German patients with severe mental illness and found out that individuals who were exposed to war trauma are more prone to severe mental illnesses and psychopathology.

Priebe, Jankovic Gavrilovic, Bremner et al. (2013) studied psychological symptoms as long-term consequences of war experience among individuals from former Yugoslavia after 8 years after the war was ended. The main results of the study showed the most severe symptoms of the participants were paranoid ideation and anxiety.

They also found out that older individuals with specific war and traumatic experiences are significantly related to the severity of the psychological symptoms, particularly with PTSD.

Notably, children are the most vulnerable population of war

trauma. According to Barenbaum et al. (2004) especially the needs and rights of children subordinated during the burden of war. Also, he and his colleagues added that differences in the prevalence of long-lasting post-traumatic symptoms after the war may be explained by several factors, including initial severity, psychosocial milieu after trauma, and continuing disruption, for example as a result of displacement. Laor et al. (2001) reported that persistent post-traumatic symptomatology was associated with displacement and poor-family functioning. Kuwert et al. (2006) studied post-traumatic stress symptoms and current psychopathology in former German children of World War II and found out that 13.8% reported PTSD-related symptoms after the war, and 10.8% reported current symptoms. PTSD symptoms after World War II were significantly correlated with current psychopathological distress.

Ertl, Pfeiffer, Schauer-Kaiser, Elbert and Neuner (2014) psychopathology and its mediating role on the readjustment of former child soldiers who were abducted and forced to fight in Uganda, the results of the study showed that 25% of abducted child soldiers have PTSD, 16% had suicidal ideation. They concluded that after release or flight their readjustment depends on their level of mental traumatization because it is long-lasting.

Papageorgiou, Frangou-Garunovic, Iordanidou, Yule, Smith and Vostanis (2000) studied war trauma and psychopathology in 95 Bosnian refugee children between the ages of 8-13. They found out that 23% have clinical range depression, 23% have severe anxiety, and 28% of them have PTSD.

This study aims to show that the early childhood experiences of war and displacement leads to some similar ways of coping in adulthood life. The informed consent from both cases taken during the sessions. The segments of which were presented in this manuscript written 5 years later psychotherapy sessions ended. Again in this manuscript no personal information given that can reveal the identities of the cases. The study was conducted in accordance with the Institutional Research Ethics (BAYEK008.02-03/06/2022). The two cases in which some segments of the sessions will be presented contain almost all the themes mentioned in their psychic worlds.

Case A

Case A was born in 1961 in a village in Southern Cyprus. He was born into a family of four children. After the events of 1960-1963, he experienced his first exodus at the age of 2 and states that the only thing he can remember from those years is the colour of sepia. Then, in 1974, at the age of 13, he experienced war and migration again. Describing migration from the South to the North as 'being taken from its roots', this phenomenon reveals the horror and desperation it experienced by the analogy of the morning of July 20th, 'Hell was like it on earth'. For the third time the case has deported himself is when he turns 18, he goes to Istanbul for higher education. This migration, it is not an exodus, but an exile. The exile of the case I mentioned covers 25 years. His dream, which he expressed to the therapist, means that he was ready to return to the island, was also a very meaningful dream 'the plane landed, now I am ready to go'. After this dream, he returns to the island and starts a new life he has done many times before. 'You know, I love flowers, and everywhere I go, even intent camp in 1974, I've always planted flowers around the tent. And you know what I did? I had escaped from the camp to

irrigate the flowers I had planted in the garden of our house....'

One of the sessions with the case was very remarkable. As we all know, July 20th is the day of the 'Peace Operation'. Our session with the case was on July 19th. He came to the session earlier that day than he usually came. His face was so shimmied. He almost didn't seem to be talking. He sat down on the couch. His eyes were red showing that he cried. After a deep sigh, 'I'm not okay today. It's like there's a wound, it's not shell-tied, and it's bleeding all the time, it hurts so much' he said.

Tears began to come down from his eyes. 'I don't know why I'm like this, but it hurts so much, it feels like I'm being ripped off from life..... (after a deep silence) You know what, I'm not going to do I'm at my age and I still don't have a home of my own. I had opportunities to buy a house, but I never dared. I couldn't embrace the house where my parents lived. My father cut down all the trees around the house. The house seems to be in such a vague... I'm planting flowers, not trees. Why?, after a deep silence again, 'What will the colour of the sky look like tomorrow? It was a very hot and sunny day 40 years ago, but it was dark in the daytime. Smoke and fog and sounds..... Today it hurts so much... Did you live that day? It was like an apocalypse. It was like hell on earth. Thousands of people have been ripped from their roots. Bleed.' 'Our arrival here was in the first months of 1975. We were sent to the north from the tent camps. There were boxes of biscuits left in the empty tents. Biscuits wrapped in a white paper. I can't throw anything away. I'm collecting everything. Papers, newspaper clippings, brochures of a theatre I went to many years ago, magazines... I'm walking down the street and I'm even taking it home, or the part of a rose's belly that looks like a dome with fallen leaves, or even a little dried nave. I'm turning them and doing something that belongs to me. Let me tell you something I did last week: I'm afraid of starving... I went to the store and bought beans and vegetables. You know, I am living alone, but I bought two bags. I'm going to freeze them and keep them, but I'm afraid to go hungry, so I'm saving the dining.'"

Although 40 years have passed, he did not throw away the suitcase they used when he migrated from South to North, and he keeps it in his house with the name of the village they had deployed. He says, "It reminds me of there and everything." In another session, he was very tired and quietly sitting on the seat opposite me. After waiting for a certain amount of time, 'yes,' I said "yes, didn't you bring me anything today?" on which the fact 'do you know? I went to my village at the weekend with my friends, to the South... But we stirred the road and stopped by a field by the sea. It was like a light hill and then the sea. I walked up that hill and I froze. And since then, it's like time doesn't flow. Froze. That field was dull, it was green, but it was sepia-coloured. It was frozen, it wasn't flowing. Do you know where it was (a long stillness)? The tent they held until they sent us north was the field of the city. Dull, colourless, lifeless, empty and buzzing. I've been frozen ever since....' I said freeze, the fact is 'yes, as I've been frozen for 40 years? You know, the ingredients I prefer to use in my paintings need to freeze and dry. There's supposed to be layered. (Again a long silence) Off, I'm so cold here..... (The session held in late May, the weather were hot enough).

After this interview, the case began by saying that there was a new occupation and that it was very good for him. I've got a new occupation now. It's not that far from me, i.e. as a profession. Now I'm taking photographs. I'm taking a photograph of something that caught my eye. So it just stays there when it's nice or interesting to me. I'm perpetuating at that moment. On the other hand, I can see details I don't see,

and when I look at them. (laughing loudly) How bad isn't it?' Photography, capturing the moment, immortalizing it, immobilizing it, freezing it...

Case B

'It's a long hallway. The walls are white. I'm following the path we've taken in that long hallway in a man's lap. My back is upside down in the direction we're going. Another moment is a girl crying alone in a big room in a cradle...' These are the sentences of a two-year-old who emigrated to the North with her family in 1974. The case was born into the family as a fifth sister. She was the last child of the family with too much disparity in age from her former siblings. She was raised to be the perky little girl of the house. The mother was a strong woman and constantly highlights rational and logical behaviours. The father who was older than the mother and was a very well-off family in the South, but lost almost all his assets and earnings after he migrated to the north, and therefore exhibits depressing characteristics from the presence of the case.

The case has a health problem while she was 2 and had been treated alone for a long time in a hospital in the British Bases Area. The parents were not admitted to the hospital as escorts. This is the memory of the first forced migration from the house of the case. Her expression of this experience at this moment as a dream, but in later sessions, it turned into a memory, she realized that it was not a dream. During the war, they were sent from their home in the South to a tent city, and after a winter they stayed there and then migrated to the North as part of the population exchange in the first months of 1975. Among the case's memories 20-30 sheep were given to his father after immigrating to the North and a house almost outside the village. Case B lived and grew up in this new village. During the session, she never called this new place like home or my village

After the high school, she goes to Turkey for the first time to study in university, passing the exams to the department she wants to study in a year later. She stays much longer than a normal university period education in Istanbul. As if she didn't have a home to come back to. The duration of her stay in Istanbul was approximately 15 years. The mother told her not to come back to Cyprus if she is studying at the department she wanted, and the fact that she did not even plan to come back because she admits it and respected, she said that in later sessions. But when she wants to come back, her mother says, 'Of course I'll look after you. Come' This sentence become very meaningful for her about 2 years after starting the sessions. After living with her mother for a short time, the case rents a small flat and moves in. She's been in the same house for years, but her thoughts about buying this house or any other house haven't happened until recently.

The fact is that when she went to the village where her mother lived for a long time, she carried water for her flowers. I asked how many flowers you had during a session. 'There's quite a lot,' she said. After a few sessions, she came back counting all the pots in her house and said, "150 pots." In another session, she came seemed to be very irritated, not willing to speak. Suddenly she starts to cry. After she takes her time, she starts talking. 'Last weekend I went to my village and our house is gone.... Nothing left behind.... I freeze in the middle of the street trying not to break bits and pieces... It took me some time to realize that time is still flowing....while I was wandering around to see something familiar I found a broken root of a tree, standing alone and isolated on the ground... Guess what I did? I took

it and bring it with me. Now a got a root.....'.

Discussion

It is possible to reach a large number of articles about post-traumatic stress disorder during the war and after. However, it is not possible to access the publication about individuals who have experienced war and migration several times since their childhood or who have experienced vague memories during their childhood. Due to its special geopolitical position and political turmoil related to it, Cyprus has attracted a lot of immigration and emigration, both inside and outside Cyprus throughout history. Almost all the people living on it have fought and migrated throughout their history. The wars, the migrations, especially the fact that after 1974, it was thought that having to start all over again maybe a different reflection of the neurosis of war in the two cases. Ferenczi, Abraham, Simmel and Jones (1921) say that neurotic symptoms after the war are nothing more than the revival of old traumas and those neuroses experienced after the war are just like the time of peace. The authors observed that during the war, individuals who experienced war tend to regress to childhood and react childishly. Almost both cases have suffered a regression. In the presented cases, it was thought that these traumatic events, they experienced at the very early stages of their lives, may have created some experiences, such as uprooting in their psychic worlds and being prepared as if they were going to leave at any given moment. In both presented cases some similarities caught to attention one of the common feature of these two cases is that both of their older sisters have established a life for themselves abroad. Perhaps these two cases may have completed their exile by returning to the island in some way, but the families' deportations have not yet ended. What they all have in common is getting away from the memories of uncertainty, despair and terror on the island?

Staczyk (2018) discussed the Polish refugee children of World War II who exile from their homeland far away to Persia, India, Mexico and Africa. In her seminal paper about Polish refugee children, concluded that; if refugees are welcomed and seen as guests from God their healing can be more positive. With international negotiation, the population changes made in Cyprus and Turks resettled to North and Greeks are resettled in South Cyprus. Although Cyprus is just an island and Cypriots just resettled from North to South and vice versa the new place is not familiar. There always been a longing for the left behind land. Although the above-given cases have different objects that are reminders of immigrated villages from South Case A has a suit-case and Case B have a tree root. This two objects can be both reminders of old lives that they forced to left behind but also a try to adopt and oriented to new life situations? Or can be interpreted as a nostalgic longing for distant land, for life before immigration, the life before war. Dowd (2019) implies that from her clinical practice she always found links between the experience of displacement with loss of coherent-body image, severe anxiety levels, feeling of uncanny, unnameable absence. The absence cannot be either named or mourned. She also stated that the absence is related to the absence of a familiar sense of environment. When a human being uprooted from their familiar environment -especially if it was a forced one- the sense of continuity and sense of belonging breaks its normal flow. This uprootedness from the familiar environment cannot be replaced, the absence never goes away and psychic pain although can be faded in time never disappears. Both of the cases in this article were talking about uprootedness. Never belong to somewhere, a house, a partner, a city and so on. Their early life experiences about war and displacement rapture their sense of belonging and security that make them uprooted in their psychic World with a psychic pain that they

can never name or mourned. Although they have economic circumstances to buy a house for their own but they prefer to live in a hired flat. Also, their families offered them to live with them but they both rejected this offer. Not having or living in their family houses can be interpreted as not preferring to being rooted again because it can bring a danger of being uprooted again?

Both of the cases lived war trauma and displacement very early in their lives. Benjet, Axinn, Hermosilla et al (2020) studied exposure to war conflict in childhood and psychological consequences in older ages and they found out that the early exposure to war conflict in early childhood results in especially depressive disorders and anxiety in older ages. They also emphasize that the younger the age of children during war exposure they become more prone to mental illnesses in their later life and they are at a major risk. Again, both of the cases were at early ages of their development when the exposure to war and displacement which this experience makes them more prone to mental illnesses. Conzo and Salustri (2019) emphasized the war is forever for children especially when they exposed war between the ages of 0-6. In their research, they found out that those exposed to war trauma between those ages have lower trust and lower social engagement in their adult life. Our cases live alone, do not have a partner even not intended to have one and both live a relatively isolated life on their own.

Another research was done by Havari and Peracchi (2017) on children and adolescents who grow up in wartime and found out that war exposure experience is more important for females but hunger is more important for males. Especially in Case A the most important issue and fear of the case are hoarding food. He was grown up in wartime and this behaviour and fear of him can be verified with Havari and Peracchi's work. Also, we can add another research done by Rizkalla, Mallat, Arafa et al. (2020) they studied Syrian refugee mothers and the one of the major fear that appeared again is the fear of starving. They both are single and living alone. Collecting (hoarding) nearly everything. Food, old newspapers, brochures, clothes, old furniture. Can this hoarding behaviour interpret as a defence from not being starving or out of goods from war and immigration experiences?

Kulish (2011), described childlessness as a lack of continuity with one's past and future; the extension of oneself in the future through one's children is a way of softening the inevitability of death. Both of the cases choose to be childless. Unreserved mourning for the lost environment and the unconscious fear of transgenerational transmission of trauma may be made them choose to be childless. Being single and choose to be childless can be interpreted as an unconscious desire to prevent transgenerational transmission of trauma to their offspring to stop the psychic pain?

In its most general sense, tree symbolism refers to the life of the universe (its consistency, growth, reproduction, productive and regenerative processes); it means inexhaustible life and is therefore equivalent to the symbol of immortality. Also, it symbolizes the individuation of a

human being (Jung, translated: Babaoğlu, 2007). Both of the cases prefer to plant flowers in the pots although they have the chance to plant trees. The preferences about how plants disconnected them from inexhaustible life and immortality and if this commonality between two cases accounted with the choice of childlessness, they may be trying to disconnect themselves from their immortality. Also, these preferences can be a defence against the uprootedness.

According to Lakoff (1996), photography has two functions. Photographs enacted and legitimize the subjects past and they froze the time to create a memory piece with proof. A photograph that archived the past can be visible and real after decades. Although Case A's profession is related to painting, he starts to take photographs. Case B stated that when she went back to the old village, she was trying to produce a mental photograph of her torn away from the old house and she was freeze in time. The freezing time analogies that were used by two cases can be related to their past that they were disconnected. Maybe last but not limited the frozen time and freezing the moment analogies can be interpreted again the unspoken traumatic events trying to escape from them by making them freeze in their memories and act as if they never happened by denying them? Maybe trying to suppress the emotions that they produce.

Conclusions and Further Questions

Akhtar (1984) describes immigration as an intrinsic process which takes place within an individual with uprooting, transportation, replanting and development. The presented cases uprooted and transported first South Cyprus to North Cyprus, then they uprooted and transported themselves to İstanbul and then the same uprootedness and transportation took place for the third time back to Cyprus again. But throughout their life time till now replanting and development phases cannot be reached yet. Could the cases have the courage to die or live by not taking root, talking about being torn off and bled all the time, living their lives on the edge of life, in other words, between war and peace? Do the wars, migrations and the lack of a solution still keep us at the border? As in the cases, between going and staying, between life and death, between happiness and sadness....

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Before starting the study, ethical approval was obtained from Lefke European University Ethics Committee with the decision dated 03.06.2022 and numbered 008.02.

Consent For Publication

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authors' Contribution

The author worked as the primary responsible in all areas of the study, read and approved the final version of the article.

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