In these pages...

THE INTERTWINING OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVENTS IN THE CHANGING WORLD

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I would like to thank Giselle Galdi for inviting me to edit this Special Issue, which concludes the 75th Volume of the *AJP*, on the effects of cultural, ethnic, national, religious, political events and massive traumas, especially those at the hand of the “Other,” on individuals’ internal worlds and societies. We also wish to illustrate how such external events influence our clinical work.

Beginning with Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysts have ventured beyond the couch and have written about myths, religions, wars and related topics. Nevertheless, until a few decades ago, psychoanalysts did not place much focus on how external events impact the psychopathology of individuals they were treating. They followed the tradition that originated with Freud’s giving up the seduction theory in his early efforts to develop psychoanalytic theories. The idea of the sexual seduction of children coming from the external world was relinquished in favor of the belief that stimuli that came from the child’s own wishes and fantasies resulted in the formation of psychopathology. Thus, classical psychoanalysis placed less emphasis on actual seduction coming from the external world on the developing child’s psyche, and this was generalized to include de-emphasizing the psychic impact of external events. Freud also left another legacy that discouraged his followers from pursuing political and diplomatic processes in their daily clinical practices. In his letter to Albert Einstein, he expressed pessimism about human nature and the role of psychoanalysis in preventing wars or war-like situations (Freud, 1932). Although Arlow (1973) later recognized some optimism in some of Freud’s writings on this subject, Freud’s

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pessimism played a role in limiting psychoanalytic contributions to the fields of politics, diplomacy and international conflicts. There were, of course, exceptions (Glower, 1947; Fornari, 1966; Walder, 1971; Mitscherlich, 1971; Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, 1975).

Generally speaking, the focus in *the clinical setting* was on exploring psychic reality only: an analysand's unconscious conflicts, resistances against exploring them, development of transference neurosis and their resolution. The emphasis on the unconscious, to a great extent, screened out the influence of external events and traumas associated with those events. Decades ago, as it is today, there were multiple psychoanalytic schools, but most seemed to bypass the influence of traumatizing external historical events. For example, Klein (1961) did not pay much attention to the war when she treated a ten-year-old boy named Richard in 1941. During Richard's analysis, the terror of the Blitz, under which Klein and Richard lived, was minimized, in favor of a focus on internal processes.

Loewenberg (1995) and Rangell (2003) remind us that some aspects of external historical events induce anxiety. For example, Blum (1985) describes a Jewish patient who came to him for reanalysis and informs us that the patient's first analyst, who was also Jewish, failed to "hear" their large group's shared trauma at the hands of the Nazis in his patient's material. As a consequence, mutually sanctioned silence and denial pervaded the entire analytic experience, leaving unanalyzed residues of the Holocaust in the patient's symptoms. German-speaking psychoanalysts have also explored the difficulties of "hearing" Nazi-related influences in their German and Jewish patients (Grubrich-Simitis, 1979; Eckstaedt, 1989; Jokl, 1997; Streeck-Fischer, 1999; Volkan, Ast and Greer, 2002).

Brenner (2014), a leading contemporary psychoanalyst who studies the effects of trauma, described in his Foreword (Brenner, 2002) to *The Third Reich in the Unconscious* (Volkan *et al.*, 2002) how he started his work in this area by becoming a member of the Group for the Psychoanalytic Study of the Effects of the Holocaust. One of the co-chairpersons of this Group, Kestenberg (1982), already had coined the term "transposition" to describe how survivor parents were transmitting their trauma, unconsciously, to their children. Brenner tells the story of one of his analysands, a Jewish man, who was entangled with the law and jailed when he was the very age that his father had been during his hiding, escape, and subsequent capture by the Gestapo. Brenner presented this case to members of his Group and to outsider psychoanalysts to illustrate how it was imperative for his analysand to pay attention to the link between his current activities—behavior that put him in jail—and his parent's Holocaust experience. Brenner tells the story of how a number of "very talented 'outsider' analysts" challenged him by arguing that "analysis deals with the realm of psychic reality only" and that Brenner and his colleagues "were introducing an unnecessary element that

only ‘muddled the waters’ and was unnecessary for successful treatment” (p. xiii). The majority of psychoanalysts notoriously minimized, if not ignored, the significance of the Holocaust in the analyses of survivors, and later in the children of survivor analysts (Prince, 2009).

Ira Brenner’s case presentation took place before September 11, 2001. It is fair to say that since then a majority of psychoanalysts in the United States have given up the attitude of the “outsider analysts” who were present at Brenner’s case presentation. After September 11, 2001 the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) formed the Terror and Terrorism Study Group. Norwegian psychoanalyst Sverre Varvin chaired this study group that lasted for several years (Varvin and Volkan, 2003). The IPA also established a committee on the United Nations. The theme of the 44th Annual Meeting of the IPA in Rio de Janeiro in the summer of 2005 was “trauma,” including trauma due to historical events.

It is beyond this brief Introduction to review significant psychoanalytic contributions during the last couple of decades that directly examine the intertwining of internal and external worlds (for a review, see: Fromm, 2011; Volkan, 2013). My own contributions in this area primarily focus on how historical, religious, cultural, military events, terrorism and political and ideological leaders’ personality organization influence societies, sometimes with the most tragic consequences. I have been developing a large-group psychology in its own right and illustrating how shared psychological thoughts and affects initiate specific large-group processes in specific locations of the world (Volkan, 1979, 1988, 1997, 2004, 2006, 2013, 2014a). My term “large group” refers to tens, hundreds of thousands, or millions of people, most of whom will never meet yet who share tribal, ethnic, national, religious or ideological sentiments. I also have presented some examples of how external events play a role in structuring individuals’ personal psychology throughout generations (e.g., see: Volkan, 2014b).

Change in the 21st century is occurring at an unprecedented pace and on a monumental scale. Major advances in communication, global awareness, world-wide economic links, and the availability of rapid travel, interact with climate disasters, resource limitations, women’s roles in society, fundamentalism, migrations, viral epidemics, and terrorism, in unpredictable and often violent ways. All of these factors have made psychoanalysts pay serious attention to the external world events, cultural norms, massive traumas, and past historical events when shared feelings and thoughts about them are re-activated due to current social, political conditions, or massive traumas. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the International Psychoanalytical Association and some other psychoanalytic organizations, began teaching psychoanalysis in Russia and Eastern European countries, which previously had been under the influence of communism. Psychoanalytic teachings and

psychoanalytic institutions are evolving in other places as well, including Turkey, China, and South Korea. Many psychoanalysts from the Western World began supervising psychoanalytic candidates' cases from various locations without knowing their native language, large-group history and customs. Meanwhile, increased migrations (Volkan, 1993; Akhtar, 1999) have required that psychoanalysts need to examine and learn their immigrant patients' large-group histories and the psychological processes that such histories might initiate—especially those of persons who have been forced to leave their own countries due to oppression by “Others.” Only by examining how such patients' internal worlds were intertwined with external events could a psychoanalyst prevent very strong resistances to the development of workable therapeutic processes.

When I was given the opportunity to edit this Special Issue I got in touch with psychoanalysts who came from different cultures and religions. Their contributions, which appear below, are examples of *various types* of external events and societal/political changes that are examined from a psychoanalytic angle.

The first paper deals with a cultural tradition, the Indian caste system, which still exists today. Madhusudana Rao Vallabhaneni tells us the history of this caste system and illustrates membership by birth, prejudice, segregation, untouchability, oppression and humiliation within the population in India. He explains this situation with an extensive review of the psychoanalytic literature on this topic. He asks questions such as: “How does the caste system enter the clinical chamber of individual psychoanalysis? What if both members of the analytic dyad are Indians or individuals belonging to the same caste? What if they are from different castes?” He goes beyond the couch and, following Akhtar (2014), another psychoanalyst originally from India, recommends social strategies for diminishing the mental pain of lower castes in India. Vallabhaneni's important contribution illustrates a model for exploring our psychoanalytic work with individuals coming from low socioeconomic conditions.

The next paper is by Erdem Beyoğlu, a well-known child psychiatrist in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and a defender of children's rights. He has been exposed to ethnic conflict between Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks all his life. The two large groups on the island have lived side by side since 1571 when the Ottomans conquered the island. The ethnic conflict between the groups during the last four decades, however, resulted in dividing the island into northern Turkish and southern Greek parts in 1974. Beyoğlu studies hundred-year-old Cypriot Turkish fairy tales from a time when two communities on the island with different religions and languages were living in harmony. His paper, besides examining fairy tales from a psychoanalytic angle, illustrates how large groups living side by side evolve customs that allow them to have friendly relationships while maintaining and protecting

their large-group identities. Beyoğlu's contribution expands our knowledge of "border psychology" (Volkan, 2003).

Catherine Schmidt-Löw-Beer, Moira Atria and Elisha Davar's paper explores how 70 years of Communist rule and its collapse in the 1990s have influenced large groups and individuals. The authors describe their 1996/1997 empirical study, which compared the personality structures of adolescents from Russia and Austria and they evaluate their findings in light of current political events. They illustrate that the collapse of a totalitarian regime, followed by uncertainty and an unpredictable future, is traumatic. Living under a totalitarian regime forces individuals to give up their individuality and develop what the authors call the "impersonal self," a mask that aims to protect the "real self." This way they can tolerate the demands of highly organized institutions. When communism collapsed, the Russian society developed a "denial mode" which illustrated a defensive reaction to trauma and served as a protection against anxiety, confusion and loss of structure. This paper is an important contribution in helping us to expand psychoanalytic considerations of the relationship between the individual and society.

After a nation or large group emerges from crises such as the break-up of a political system, or drastic revolutionary change, or war, a period of re-stabilization typically ensues. During this time of reassessment and redefinition, a large group, in a sense, collectively asks, "Who are we now?", "How do we define our large-group identity now?", or "How are we different from the 'Other' now?" and attempts at "purification" (Volkan, 2013, 2014a). Purification modifies the large-group's identity by shedding its unwanted aspects and by solidifying its borders. It might drop certain words considered "foreign" from everyday use, as Greeks did following their independence from the Ottoman Empire, or the group might erase symbols of other cultures by, for example, destroying churches or mosques. These are instances of purification. Large-group purification activities involve a spectrum of practices, policies, and ideologies ranging from benign (purifying language) to malignant (ethnic cleansing).

When a large group wonders, "Who are we now?" the personality of the political leader or the new leader, after a revolution, becomes an important factor in the scenario—one that has considerable influence on societal and political processes. The leader may tame or inflame large-group sentiments; he or she may lead the large group toward peaceful coexistence with the Other, or fuel a war-like atmosphere, even playing an actual role in starting a war. Severe societal split or fragmentation may occur in the affected society. Leaders can be reparative or destructive (Volkan, 2006).

Changes in Africa, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, and other world events, especially those now taking place in the Middle East, have increased the number of large groups asking the question "Who are we now?" The fourth paper in this journal, by Miguel Angel

Gonzalez-Torres and Aranzazu Fernández-Rivas from the Basque Country, Spain, tells us that we now live in a world overrun with the stresses of identity and that nationalist movements are emerging everywhere in the world. They also focus on the fact that many such movements exhibit a negative attitude toward sexuality, especially female sexuality. Watching or reading about some world affairs today give all of us examples of this attitude. Miguel Angel Gonzalez-Torres and Aranzazu Fernández-Rivas remind us that "One of the first laws elaborated by the Nazis referred to marriage, limiting or prohibiting so-called mixed marriages, comprised of an Aryan and a person of another 'race'", and that the rape and capture of women of the enemy has been happening throughout human history, as it occurred in Sudan, Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria and other places during recent decades. These authors present a very significant psychoanalytic theory, with extensive references to relevant literature, in that "the vision of womankind and her sexuality is fundamental to understanding nationalist identity." They are opening a new door for us in the investigation of some ugly aspects of our changing world.

The last paper in the journal deals with clinical issues related to immigration. In 1970, only one in every hundred persons living in the Commonwealth of Virginia, where I also live, had been born outside the United States. In 2012, the figure was one in nine. It is estimated that the current number of foreign-born Virginians is just shy of one million, out of a total population of 8.26 million. Immigration in a global context, whether forced or voluntary, has become a huge and very complicated part of our changing world.

Annette Streeck-Fischer presents three cases from Germany that illustrate how being an immigrant influences identity formation during adolescence. The first patient is the 15-year-old son of a Polish-German mother and a Turkish father, both of whom came to Germany as adolescents. The teenager's maladjustment to being an immigrant included his glorification of militant ideologies of his father's native country. The second patient is one year older than the first one; she lived in Moscow with her parents until she was 11 years old, where she experienced increasing anti-Semitism in her native Russia. Through her symptoms and actions in a hospital setting she managed to make her caretakers feel as if they were Nazi torturers or concentration camp guards. The third patient is the fifteen and a half-year-old daughter of a German mother and a black African father. In her case, boundaries between her parents' disparate cultures were blurred creating severe confusion and difficulty in reality testing.

The number of papers presented in this Special Issue (Volkan, 2015) is limited due to page constraints. Those included, however, illustrate a variety of external events, societal and individualized responses to them, and the

need to explore all these issues psychoanalytically. I hope that this special issue will encourage future publication of similar papers in this and other psychoanalytic journals and help to expand our psychoanalytic horizon.

NOTE

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