

LIFE-THREATENING EXPERIENCES, POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, AND ADAPTATION IN LITHUANIAN MEN 17 YEARS AFTER MILITARY SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE USSR

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A sample of 268 Lithuanian men who served in the Soviet Army in 1979–1989 was investigated on the average 17 years after the service; the questionnaire was completed focusing on life-threatening experience, posttraumatic stress reactions, and adaptation variables. The prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder was 30% in the group of the men who served in Afghanistan and 2% in the group of the men who served in various places of the USSR. Lithuanian Afghanistan war veterans experienced significantly more service-related and non-service-related traumatic events and conditions, and their adaptation after the service and nowadays were poorer than in the men who served in the USSR. Life-threatening experience, PTSD and adaptation were correlated in both groups.

Key words: PTSD, traumatic events, adaptation, Lithuanian Afghanistan war veterans.

The war in Afghanistan in 1979–1989 was fought between Muslim partisans (the Mujaheddin) and Afghanistan pro-Soviet Government which was “supported” by the Soviet army. Lithuania was

part of the USSR till March 1990, therefore more than 5000 men from Lithuania were conscripted and participated in the Afghanistan war. The majority of Lithuanians had to go there

against their own will. Some of the conscripted used to find out the destination of their journey, i. e. Afghanistan, only being on their way already. All of these Lithuanian men became victims of the USSR political system, which initiated the war and was aimed to enhance and keep the influence in Afghanistan. Ninety-one men were killed and 98 seriously wounded („Užmirštas“ karas, 2003). These data were obtained at the end of the eighties after evaluating the damage caused by the war. But that was it, nobody was concerned with the further destiny of the Afghanistan veterans. At present, there is no information about the number of Afghanistan veterans in Lithuania, nobody knows how many died or committed suicide.

Indifference to the “Afghans” can be related to some factors. The “hidden” ideology of the former Soviet Union, its subsequent fall, and social problems after Lithuania regained the independence should be taken into account. The politicians of the former Soviet Union were reluctant to inform society about any losses or catastrophes. The Afghanistan war was an illustration of such a political defeat. Many young men were killed and a large number were injured, billions of dollars were spent in this decade-long war, which resulted in a total defeat. Later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world acknowledged that war as a political mistake. However, in post-Soviet Russia the assessment of this heritage is rather ambivalent. The negative attitude towards this war had the same negative effect on its soldiers. Soon Lithuanian independence was restored, and the “Afghans” were considered to be the heritage of the Soviet Union. At that time Lithuania had many social problems of its own to be solved, leaving the Afghanistan war soldiers to stand for themselves alone. In 1997, independent Lithuania reviewed the consequences of the Soviet and Nazi occupations and adopted the Law of the Juridical Status of

the Lithuanian Citizens Who Had Incurred Suffering from the Occupations in 1939–1990. Afghanistan war veterans were not included and recognized as victims (Valstybės žinios, 1997). Therefore, the process of evaluating the war was disturbed from the very beginning.

From the aspect of assessing sense the war experience, Afghanistan war veterans are similar to Vietnam veterans. The latter returned in defeat and witnessed antiwar marches and protests (Goodwin, 1987). However, in contrast to Afghanistan veterans, Vietnam veterans were recognized by society and received some help.

Studies report long-lasting effects of war experience. National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (conducted in the late 1980s) found out that PTSD continued to haunt many Vietnam veterans, with 6-month rates of 15.2% for males (Schlenger et al., 1992). PTSD lifetime rates were reported to be 30% for male Vietnam veterans (Goodwin, 1987; Weiss et al., 1992). 67% of Vietnam veterans who were wounded during the war developed PTSD (Goodwin, 1987).

Afghanistan war veterans have been investigated very poorly. We succeeded in finding only a few studies that had assessed after-effects of the participation in this war. For example, the study of Byelorussian Afghans (Пушкарев, 1999) showed that 62.3% developed different levels of PTSD symptoms. Only 32% of Byelorussian Afghans assessed themselves as “quite well”, the others were often or chronically ill or became handicapped. In a Russian study (Зеленова и др., 1997), PTSD was reported to be 17% for Russian Afghans, and separate PTSD symptoms manifested themselves in 21.1% of the group. The present paper the first study of Lithuanian Afghanistan war veterans.

Lithuanian men who served in Afghanistan have not been recognized so far as victims either legally or psychologically, though 17 years pas-

sed from the end of the war. What is the impact of this disturbed process of evaluating the war on Lithuanian Afghan's health and life? There is an opinion that we should not emphasize the Afghans because it was hard to serve in the Soviet army for everyone. Almost everyone who served in the Soviet army remembers how those soldiers who were serving for a longer time or the Army authorities sneered at them. There was a very strong hierarchical system in the Soviet army. Absurd drill, enormous physical strain and permanent hunger made the soldiers non-thinking executors of commands (Суворов, 1997). The standing principle in the Soviet army was "divide and control" (Stankus, 1993). However, Lithuanian Afghans experienced not only these things but also much more. They experienced permanent threats for their lives, hostility of native Afghans, and poor or sometimes non-hygienic conditions for weeks. Any contacts with their home and relatives were strictly limited, the soldiers were not allowed to have holidays though formally holidays were assigned (in comparison, men who served inside the Soviet Union had holidays), their personal letters were checked, soldiers were instructed on what to write (for a long time it was forbidden to mention their presence in Afghanistan) (Stankus, 1993)).

The aim of this paper is to assess whether traumatic experience, posttraumatic symptomatology and psychosocial adaptation differ within these two Lithuanian male groups – men who served in Afghanistan and men who served in various regions of the USSR where no military operations were taking place.

Methods

Participants. The data in this study were collected from a questionnaire survey with a sample of 268 Lithuanian men aged 32 to 52, who were on military duty (compulsory military service) in

the Soviet army in 1979–1989. Four regions (capital cities, cities, small cities, and country-side), with the sample allocation proportionate to the distribution of Lithuanian population, geographically stratified the sample. Of these men, 174 served in Afghanistan during the Afghanistan war (below – Lithuanian Afghans or Afghans) and 94 men served in various regions of the USSR (below – mUSSR). All the men completed the questionnaires (76% – directly by hand, 24% – by mail), yielding the response rate of 50% and 63% respectively.

As displayed in Table 1, there were no major differences between the two groups with respect to age (now and at the beginning of service) and military rank. The difference in the education (before and after service) was significant; the men who served in the USSR were more educated than those who served in Afghanistan. The men in the USSR significantly served half a year longer as compared to the men who served in Afghanistan. There was also a statistically significant difference in the combat exposure between the two groups. 94% of the Afghans participated in military operations, 24% of them in combat. On the contrary, 99% of mUSSR did not participate in any military operations (Table 1).

Procedures. The study was conducted on average 17 years after each individual had finished his service in the USSR. All the participants filled in a 15-page questionnaire containing 176 items and covering a wide range of service, mental-health, and adaptation-related issues. This paper focuses on the variables measuring possible traumatic or stressful experience during the service period and after the service and on potential harmful effects of such an experience. The following variables were investigated: a) service-related and non-service-related traumatic life-events or conditions; b) posttraumatic symptomatology and PTSD; c) psy-

Table 1. Age, marital status, education, job, change of the job and service-related variables as a function of the group

Variables	Military service in				χ^2
	Afghanistan (n = 174)		the USSR (n = 94)		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Age	39	3.69	39	5.45	
Age at the beginning of the service	19	2.09	19	1.14	14.62
Duration of the service (months)	18	5.75	24	9.3	130.35***
	N	%	N	%	
Marital status					
Married	145	83.4	84	89.5	2.56***
Single	7	4.1	4	4.4	
Widower	0	0	0	0	
Divorced	22	12.7	6	6.5	
Education before the service					
Primary	2	1.1	0	0	7.94*
High school	78	44.9	39	41.6	
Professional	89	51.2	45	48	
University	5	2.9	10	10.7	
Education after the service					
Primary	1	0.7	0	0	8.16*
High school	57	32.8	21	22.4	
Professional	89	51.1	46	49	
University	27	15.5	27	28.8	
Military rank					
Private/soldier	95	54.7	44	47.4	2.61
Sergeant	72	41.5	46	49.6	
Praporschik	1	0.7	0	0	
Officer	5	3	3	3.3	
Combat exposure					
Military operations	119	69.9	1	1.1	217.69***
Combat	41	24.09	0	0	
No	11	6.4	93	98.9	
Changing the job					
Not once	21	12.07	25	27.17	14.48*
Once	24	13.79	12	13.04	
Twice	30	17.24	13	14.13	
Three times	36	20.69	23	25.00	
Four times	22	12.64	9	9.78	
Five times	40	22.99	10	10.87	
Job now					
Leading worker	18	10.34	25	26.88	40.65***
Specialist (doctor, teacher, lawyer, etc.)	21	12.07	16	17.20	
Trained/skilled worker	44	25.29	36	38.71	
Worker without training/skills	12	6.90	2	2.15	
Farmer	2	1.15	0	0.00	
Unemployed	48	27.59	2	2.15	
Other	28	16.09	12	12.90	

*p < .05. ***p < .001.

chosocial adaptation to life after the service in Afghanistan or the USSR.

Measures. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions about age, family status, education (before and after the service), job, changing of the job, and service-related issues (military rank, beginning and duration of the service, combat exposure).

Then in the questionnaire, the list of 25 life-threatening experiences adopted from the first part of Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ-I) (Mollica et al., 1992) was used for life-time (service-related/non-service-related) traumatic events and condition measures. Each question offered a possibility of answering according to direct or indirect exposure (i. e. witnessing an event by himself or by a close person who experienced an event). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Lithuanian version of HTQ-I was .66-.86 (Gailienė ir Kazlauskas, 2005).

The Lithuanian version (Domanskaitė, 1998) of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire-Part IV (HTQ) (Mollica et al., 1992) was used as a measure for self-reported posttraumatic stress symptomatology. The HTQ consists of 30 items, 16 of which correspond to the PTSD

symptoms. The items are scored on a four-point Likert scale. It is also a measure of the intensity of the three core symptom groups (intrusion, avoidance, and arousal) of PTSD according to DSM-IV. A sub-clinical level of PTSD is gained if the respondent meets two criteria out of three and satisfies the first criterion (Schützwohl and Maercker, 1999). The subscales were scored separately. This instrument has previously been shown to have a good internal consistency (Domanskaitė-Gota, 2000). In this study, the internal consistency of the scale was good, as Cronbach's alpha was .95 for the HTQ total scale and .76, .84 and .77 for the intrusion, avoidance, and arousal subscales, respectively. The inter-item coefficients for the subscales were correspondingly .38 for the total scale, and .44, .40, and .40 for the subscales, indicating a good discriminatory power.

Five variables describing the psychosocial adaptation to life, covering divorce, changes in education, education after the service, job now, change of job (displayed in Table 1), were used to create an *Adaptation Now Index* with the score ranging from 0 to 11. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this index was .56. Also, the men were asked to assess the adaptation to life after the service with the score ranging from 0 to 5 (Figure 1).

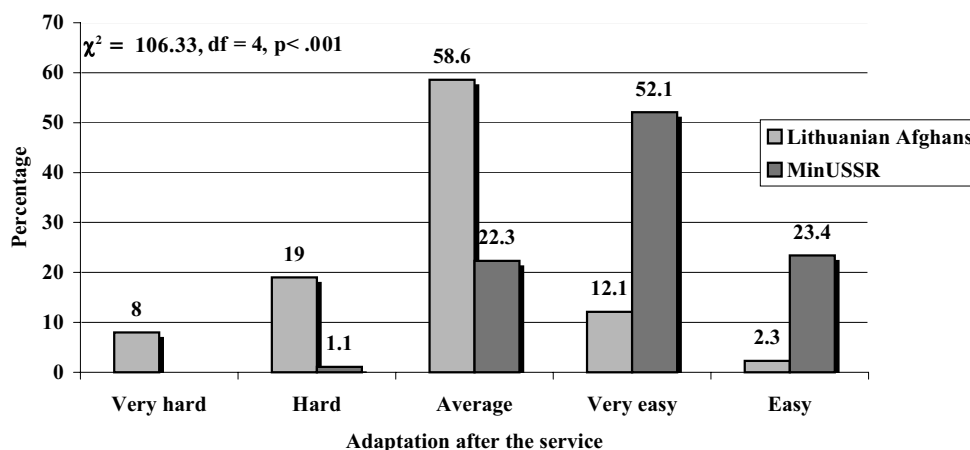


Figure 1. Adaptation after service in Lithuanian Afghans and mUSSR

Results

Life-threatening experience

The Afghans reported significantly more lifetime traumatic events. The average number of traumatic events per man in those who served in Afghanistan was 10.24, and 6.06 (range 1–36) for those who served in the USSR (df = 266, $p < 0.000$). The average number of direct exposure events per Afghan was 6.6, and 4 (range 1–18) for mUSSR (df = 266, $p < 0.000$). The average number of indirect events per Afghan was 3.7 (range 1–24) and 2 (range 1–18) for mUSSR (df = 266, $p < 0.002$). The mUSSR group experienced more traumatic events during the recent year than Afghans, 8.9% and 7.1% (n.s. difference) respectively.

The men who served in Afghanistan much more often than the men in the USSR witnessed other people injured or killed (73%, 34% respectively), experienced lack of food and water (72%, 22% respectively), came close to being injured or killed (68% and 17% respectively), a serious illness (45%, 17% respectively) and struggled for their existence (60%, 31% respectively). The Afghans experienced more persecution by others (11%) and mental diseases inside their families (5.7%) as compared to the mUSSR group (8% and 0% respectively). Besides, the Afghans had a greater number of attempted suicides (12%) in comparison to mUSSR (2%). As regards indirect exposure, the Afghans witnessed serious illnesses, other people injured or killed, attempted

suicide, witnessed death of a close person, physical assault, robbery and theft, came close to being injured or killed, experienced the lack of food and water, torture, sexual abuse and rape significantly more often than the mUSSR group.

Posttraumatic symptomatology

Lithuanian Afghans are more traumatized than the mUSSR group. Of the Afghans, 16% have PTSD versus to 0% in the mUSSR group. The sub-clinical level of PTSD reached 14% in the Afghans and 2% in the mUSSR group members (Table 2). The results revealed a significantly higher level of HTQ-total in the Afghans group (M = 52.81, SD = 18.39) as compared to the mUSSR group (M = 40.37, SD = 6.80); and on all subscales: intrusion (M = 6.64, SD = 2.98), avoidance (M = 13.47, SD = 4.96), hypervigilance (M = 10.54, SD = 3.71) in the Afghan group as compared to the mUSSR group (M = 4.77, SD = 1.29; M = 9.80, SD = 2.46; M = 7.99, SD = 3.99 respectively). All of the t test comparisons of means are significant at $p < .001$.

Adaptation to life after the service

The Adaptation Now Index (ANI) consists of five variables: divorce, change in education, education after the service, job now, changing of job. The Lithuanian Afghans' ANI is significantly poorer than in the mUSSR group ($t = -5.07$, $df = 259$, $p < .001$). Twice as many Afghans are divorced, 13% and 6% respectively. There was

Table 2. PTSD prevalence in Lithuanian Afghans and mUSSR

	Military service in				χ^2
	Afghanistan N = 154		the USSR N = 90		
	N	%	N	%	
No PTSD	108	70,1	88	97,8	27.87***
Subclinical PTSD	21	13,6	2	2,2	
PTSD	25	16,2	0	0	

*** $p < .001$.

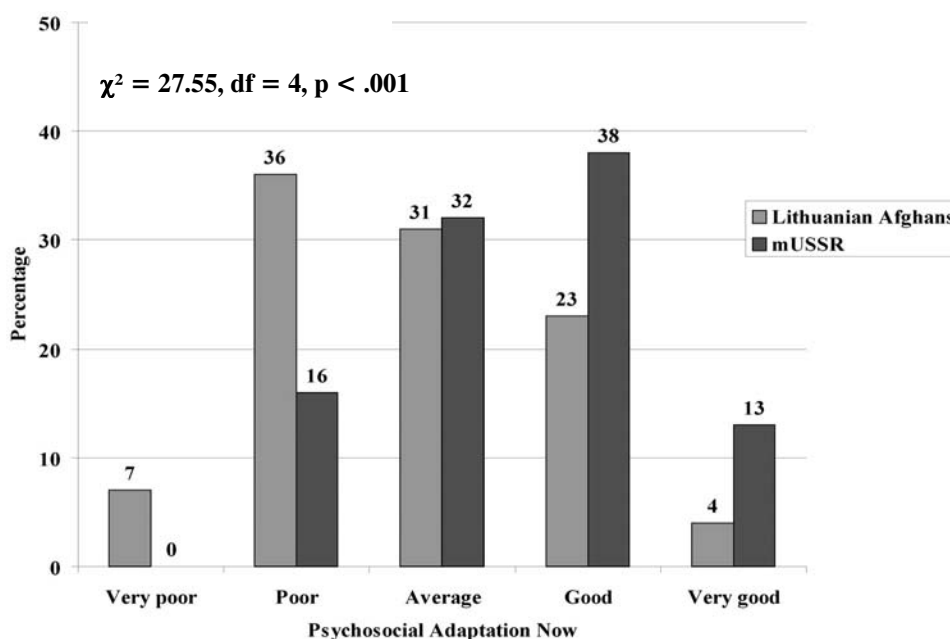


Figure 2. Psychosocial adaptation now in Lithuanian Afghans and mUSSR

a statistically non-significant tendency for the mUSSR group to improve their education after the service than for Afghans, 26.6% and 19% respectively. Half of the men in both groups have professional education. Another half of the men are more educated in the mUSSR group; 28.8% of the mUSSR group members have university education versus 15.5% in the Afghan group. Significantly more mUSSR men have a better working position, and this position is much more stable than in the Afghan group. 56% of the Afghans changed their job after their service three times, 23% of the Afghans – five or more times versus 46% and 11% in the mUSSR group. 27% of the mUSSR had never changed their working positions after their service versus only 12% of the Afghans. 28% of the Afghans are unemployed versus only 2% of the mUSSR group members (Table 1). For the Afghan, adaptation to life after the service (subjective measure) was harder than for the members of the mUSSR

group. In 27% of the Afghans the adaptation was *very hard* and *hard*, 59% *average*, while 76% of the mUSSR members adapted *easily* and *very easily* ($\chi^2 = 106.33$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$) (Figure 1). In the Afghans, the psychosocial adaptation now is poorer than in the members of the mUSSR group: 53% of the Afghans are adapted to life *very poorly* and *poorly* versus 28% in the mUSSR group. On the contrary, in 54% of the mUSSR members the adaptation is *good* and *very good* versus 24% of the Afghans ($\chi^2 = 27.55$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$) (Figure 2).

Relationship between traumatic events, posttraumatic symptoms, and adaptation (Table 3)

Higher scores on PTSD were associated with a greater frequency of personally experienced events, harder adaptation after the service and higher scores on HTQ total in the Lithuanian

Table 3. Correlations between PTSD, posttraumatic symptoms, adaptation (after the service and now) and traumatic life-events or conditions in Lithuanian Afghans and mUSSR

	Lithuanian Afghans N = 170	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	PTSD	.76**	-.10	-.40**	.26**	.04	.08
2	HTQ total		-.17*	-.34**	.28**	.08	.12
3	ANI			.24**	-.06	.06	-.12
4	Adaptation after service				-.24**	-.15*	-.16*
5	Personal events					.40**	.32**
6	Witnessing events						.23**
7	Recent events (< 1 year)						
	mUSSR N = 91						
1	PTSD	.54**	.07	-.03	-.02	.10	.25*
2	HTQ total		-.07	.01	.23*	.31**	.32**
3	ANI			-.05	-.28**	-.15	-.15
4	Adaptation after service				-.10	-.07	.08
5	Personal events					.60**	.20
6	Witnessing events						.36**
7	Recent events (< 1 year)						

Note. ANI = Adaptation Now Index, HTQ = Harvard Trauma Questionnaire.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

Afghans. In the mUSSR group, higher scores on PTSD were associated with a greater frequency of recently (<1 year) experienced events and higher scores on HTQ total.

The harder adaptation after the service was associated with the poorer ANI (adaptation now index), higher scores of HTQ total and the greater frequency of all event categories: personally, recently (< 1 year) experienced and witnessed in the Lithuanian Afghan group. In the mUSSR group, the better psychosocial adaptation now (higher scores on ANI) was associated with a lower frequency of personally experienced events.

The higher frequency of witnessed events in both groups was associated with a higher frequency of personally and recently (< 1 year) expe-

rienced events. The greater frequency of personally experienced events was associated with the greater frequency of recently (< 1 year) experienced events in the Lithuanian Afghan group. The greater frequency of all event categories – personally, recently (<1 year) experienced and witnessed – was associated with higher scores of HTQ total in both groups.

Discussion

The Lithuanian Afghans experienced more life-threatening events and conditions, they had a more significant posttraumatic symptomatology, and their adaptation to life was poorer than in the Lithuanian men who served in the USSR group.

R. C. Kessler et al. (1995) studied 5,877 U.S. citizens aged 15 to 54 years and found that 61% of the men had been exposed to at least one traumatic event. Young Lithuanian people aged 16 to 28 years experienced on the average three traumatic events (Domanskaitė, 1998). The Lithuanian men who served in Afghanistan and the USSR had been exposed to more traumatic events (on the average 10 and 6 respectively).

The men in various regions of the USSR served half a year longer than the men who served in Afghanistan. However, the Lithuanian Afghans had a harder military service experience than the mUSSR group members. Almost all Lithuanian Afghans participated in military operations, 24% of them in combat. On the contrary, not a single member of mUSSR participated in any military operations (D. W. King et al., 1995) stated that the definition of “war-zone stress” should be somewhat expanded to include such factors as climatic, nutritional, hygienic, and sleep problems. Thus, the Lithuanian Afghans experienced twice as many traumatic events and conditions personally and by witnessing than the members of the mUSSR group. The men who served in Afghanistan witnessed other people injured or killed two times more often, experienced the lack of food and water three times more often, came close to being injured or killed four times more frequently, had a serious illness almost three times more often, and struggled for their existence two times more frequently when compared to the members of the mUSSR group. Besides, the Lithuanian Afghans had a six times bigger number of attempted suicides in comparison to the mUSSR group. The latter figures reflect the hardness and obviously address the effects of the traumatic events and conditions experienced by the Lithuanian Afghans.

When comparing PTSD prevalence figures from different studies, we should bear in mind

that such estimates are based on different methodological approaches to the definition and identification of PTSD cases. The Byelorussian study (Пушкарев, 1999) reporting high figures and the Russian study (Зеленова и др., 1997) reporting relatively low prevalence figures in Afghanistan war veterans, give no clear account of their methodological approach, and thus it is difficult to compare their data with the figures from the present study. PTSD prevalence figures in this study are rather similar to Vietnam veterans' PTSD prevalence (Goodwin, 1987; Schlenker et al., 1992; Weiss et al., 1993), though it seems safe to conclude that PTSD arises rather frequently in Afghanistan war veterans. Furthermore, this study supplies new knowledge about the long-term course of PTSD, showing that such symptoms and disorders are prevalent even within 14–23 years after the service in Afghanistan. In addition, A. I. Ena et al. (2000) has reported a direct association among PTSD, various psychosomatic disorders and the duration of being in an active military operation zone. Being there longer than for six months is indicated as a critical boundary. The Lithuanian Afghans spent on the average one year and a half in the zone of active military operations, and this period exceeded the critical boundary three times.

The differences in the PTSD prevalence in both groups may be explained by the following two factors. Firstly, these men had different experiences after the service. Their acceptance by society helps to give a meaning to the difficult experience of the war as well as to reduce the post-war effect intensity. C. Classen and Ch. Koopman (1993) reported a higher prevalence of posttraumatic disorders among Vietnam war veterans than among veterans of other wars. This is considered to be influenced by the unpopularity of the war and the society's hostility toward soldiers during the war and at the end of it. The men who served in Afghanistan also experien-

ced ill-will of the society. Secondly, Lithuanian Afghans personally experienced more service-related traumatic events and conditions. This relates to higher scores on PTSD and a bigger amount of posttraumatic symptoms. On the contrary, the posttraumatic stress symptomatology for the men who served in the Soviet Union is related to non-service-related traumatic events and conditions. Therefore, the greater posttraumatic symptomatology is related to the higher frequency of service-related traumatic events and conditions in the Lithuanian Afghan group.

Their experience in Afghanistan has left an indelible mark that many of them may never erase. At home they were faced with peacetime reality. They had not only to readjust but also to anchor in their lives. On the one hand, they were faced with the society's incomprehension and condemnation. On the other hand, they were building their own lives, their families, their careers, and continuing their education. The vast majority of Afghanistan veterans had a much more problematic readjustment to the civilian way of life in comparison to their contemporaries who served in the Soviet Union. This was due to the issues discussed above. In addition, now the Lithuanian Afghans' psychosocial adap-

tation is poorer than their contemporaries' who served in the Soviet Union, and this is related to the adaptation after the service. Their adaptation after the service is related to hard service experience and its after-effects – PTSD and overall posttraumatic symptomatology in the group of Lithuanian Afghans.

Conclusions

1. The Lithuanian men who served in Afghanistan experienced significantly more life-threatening events and conditions than did those Lithuanian men who served in the USSR.
2. After seventeen years almost one third of the Lithuanian men who served in Afghanistan have PTSD, versus 2% of the Lithuanian men who served in the USSR group.
3. Adaptation to life *after the service* and *nowadays* is poorer among the Lithuanian men who served in Afghanistan than among those who served in the USSR.
4. Life-threatening experience, PTSD and adaptation are correlated in the Lithuanian men who served both in Afghanistan and in the USSR.

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LIETUVOS VYRŲ TRAUMINIS PATYRIMAS, POTRAUMINIO STRESO SUTRIKIMAS IR ADAPTACIJA PRAĖJUS 17 METŲ PO KARINĖS TARNYBOS AFGANISTANE IR SOVIETŲ SĄJUNGOJE

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Santrauka

Tikslas. Įvertinti, ar skiriasi trauminis patyrimas, po-trauminė simptomatika ir prisitaikymas gyvenime dviejų Lietuvos vyrų grupių – tarnavusių Afganistane ir Sovietų Sąjungos teritorijoje, kur nebuvo karo veiksmų.

Metodika. Tyrimo dalyviai yra 268 vyrai, atlikę privalomąją karinę tarnybą sovietinėje armijoje 1979–1989 metais. Jie sudaro dvi grupes: 174 vyrai, tarnavę Afganistane – Afganistano karo metu, ir 94, atlikę karinę tarnybą SSRS teritorijoje. Tirti šie kintamieji: trauminis patyrimas *tarnybos metu ir po jos*, po-trauminė simptomatika *šiuo metu* (Harvardo traumos klausimynas (Mollica, 1992)) ir psichosocialinė adaptacija *sugrįžus po tarnybos* Afganistane ar SSRS *ir šiuo metu* (*adaptacijos šiuo metu indeksas* sudarytas iš 5 kintamųjų: ištuokų paplitimo, išsilavinimo po tarnybos ir jo

pokyčių, darboviečių keitimo rodiklio ir dabartinės darbinės padėties).

Rezultatai. Lietuvos vyrai, tarnavę Afganistane, patyrė beveik dvigubai daugiau traumuojančių įvykių. Vidutiniškai Lietuvos vyrai, tarnavę Afganistane, patyrė po 10 traumuojančių įvykių, o vyrai, tarnavę SSRS – šešis ($df = 266, p < 0,000$). 16 proc. Afganistane tarnavusių vyrų turi PTSS (po-trauminio streso sutrikimą), o SSRS tarnavę vyrai – neturi. Subklinikinio lygio PTSS turi 14 proc. Lietuvos afganų ir 2 proc. – tarnavusiųjų SSRS. Lietuvos afganų psichosocialinė adaptacija *dabar* yra prastesnė nei vyrų, tarnavusių Sovietų Sąjungoje. 53 proc. Afganistane tarnavusių vyrų prisitaikę gyvenime *labai prastai ir prastai*, tarnavusiųjų SSRS – 28 proc. Priešingai, 54 proc. Sovietų

Sąjungos teritorijoje tarnavusių vyrų prisitaikę gyvenime *gerai ir labai gerai*, o afganų tik – 24 proc. ($\chi^2 = 27,55$, $df = 4$, $p < 0,001$). Tarnavusių Afganistane prisitaikymas gyvenime *iš karto po tarnybos* (subjektyvus vertinimas) buvo sunkesnis nei vyrų, tarnavusių Sovietų Sąjungoje. Net 27 proc. vyrų, tarnavusių Afganistane, prisitaikyti gyvenime po karo sekėsi sunkiai ir labai sunkiai, 59 proc. – vidutiniškai. Vyrams, tarnavusiems SSRS, sekėsi kur kas lengviau: 76 proc. po karinės tarnybos prisitaikė gyvenime lengvai ir labai lengvai, sunku buvo tik vienam žmogui ($\chi^2 = 106,33$, $df = 4$, $p < 0,001$).

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Išvados. Po septyniolikos metų beveik trečdalis Afganistane tarnavusių vyrų turi potrauminio streso sutrikimą; tarnavusių SSRS tik – 2 proc. Afganistane tarnavę vyrai patyrė kur kas daugiau traumuojančių įvykių ir išgyvenimų nei vyrai, tarnavę Sovietų Sąjungoje. Afganistane tarnavusių vyrų adaptacija sugrįžus po tarnybos ir dabar yra prastesnė nei vyrų, tarnavusių Sovietų Sąjungoje. Traumuojantis patyrimas, PTSS ir adaptacija koreliuoja abiejose vyrų grupėse.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: PTSS, traumuojantys įvykiai, adaptacija, Lietuvos Afganistano karo veteranai.