The Uses of Territories in Conflicts
A psychological perspective[1]

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ABSTRACT

The course of events in the former Soviet Union and in the Balkans has strengthened the rationale for studying destructive forms of territoriality, such as ethnic cleansing, territorial expansionism and aggressive nationalism. Mainstream analyses regard territoriality as a strategy to exercise control over resources and people. In this essay, I present a phenomenological approach for analysing the psychological roots of destructive territorial behaviour. The processes of establishing, stabilizing, and defending coherent individual and collective identities are used as starting-points for discussing the relationships between individual identities, collective identities, and territoriality. I emphasize the role played by the fragility and vulnerability of identity systems, and the need to use external supporting structures for stabilizing the sense of a coherent identity. This perspective is especially relevant in chaotic and threatening circumstances, such as in escalating social conflicts. The concepts of "benign" and "malign" territoriality are introduced in order to facilitate a differentiated analysis of territoriality in violent conflicts. From a psychological perspective, territoriality may play a constructive role by providing "safe spaces" that enable conflict parties to engage in mature modes of conflict management. Finally, I suggest five research issues related to the psychological aspects of territoriality in conflicts meriting further study.

1. *Territoriality in social conflicts*

The recent geopolitical upheavals in the former Soviet Union and in the Balkans have painfully reintroduced the theme of human territoriality to the awareness of us Europeans. Several state formations have disintegrated because various types of movements have striven to establish more ethnically homogeneous states. In cases where these processes have led to civil war, we have witnessed a wide range of horrible forms of territoriality: forced resettlement, ethnic cleansing, territorial expansionism, militant separatism, stereotyped enemy images, and the establishment of new, rigorously controlled boundaries. The period of geopolitical stability in Europe from World War II until the late 1980's led to the sense that peaceful integration had definitely superseded the violent territorial conflicts of earlier periods. Unfortunately, malign forms of territoriality are still key phenomena in contemporary international and ethnic conflicts; therefore we need a good theoretical insight into the role of territoriality in violent conflicts.

Territoriality can be studied from several different perspectives. In the social sciences, territoriality is usually seen as a political phenomenon, i.e. as a strategy to exercise control over resources and people (Sack, 1986). From this perspective, the central unit of analysis is the state, and the analysis seldom surpasses the institutional level. In political geography the establishment and the transformations of the system

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of territorial states are regarded as forms for solving problems at the macro level, hence the use of concepts like class interests, regulation of the economic systems, and ideologies (see e.g. Taylor, 1989). This approach is appropriate for analysing the structure and dynamics of the international system of states. However, it is less well suited for explaining territorial behaviour at the individual level, e.g. why Serbian (or Croatian) men arm themselves in order to kill or expel their Croatian (or Serbian) neighbours in the same village. This essay will present a theoretical framework for analysing the motivation behind the support of individuals for collective territorial behaviour in conflict situations. We must therefore discuss the fundamental roots of territoriality in the human being.

Some scholars, especially those with a background in ethology, contend that there is a genetically inherited behavioural pattern that incites us to delimit, mark, and defend territories (Malmberg, 1980). Territorial behaviour in animals is a well-studied subject.[1] Few scholars now support the notion of a genetically inherited *drive* to establish territories in humans, but the notion of territoriality as a genetically inherited "behavioural program" elicitable by a specific set of circumstances is quite widespread (Bailey, 1987). Another approach to territoriality is to view territories as expressions of the fundamental social nature of human beings. As conscious beings, we are composed of linguistic structures; we live in language. We are human beings through our participation in social systems based on communicative action (Habermas, 1981). From this perspective, territories are the spatial manifestations of shared systems of meaning (Weichhart, 1990). The biological and the sociological approaches both in their fashion contribute valuable insights into the nature of territoriality. However, I believe that an additional, and crucial, insight into the motivation for territorial behaviour in conflict situations can be achieved by using a psychological perspective. In the following pages, I will present an approach to the analysis of territoriality in conflicts based on a psychological identity concept. Thus, territoriality will be interpreted here as a part of the defense of coherent individual and collective identities.

A psychological interpretation of territoriality in conflicts might contribute toward an understanding of the motivation of the parties involved in intensive conflicts. An insight into the psychological role of territoriality can, hopefully, help develop a differentiated view of territorial strategies and claims, thereby contributing toward effective communication in negotiations and mediations. One conclusion of the analysis is that territoriality may in fact play a constructive role in a process of social evolution, which leads to an increased ability to sustain peaceful relations in a culturally diverse world society.

The essay comprises six parts. This introduction is followed by a section dealing with a few characteristic features of psychological approaches and with several concepts fundamental for the subsequent discussion. In the next three parts, the relation of territoriality to three different aspects of identity formation and stabilization is discussed. In the final section, conclusions are summarized and suggestions for further research are made.[2]

2. *Approach and basic concepts*

2.1 *Psychology as a social science approach*

In the academic world, psychology is primarily known as a behavioural science in the strictest sense, i.e. as the study of how organisms behave. Hermeneutically oriented psychology (psychoanalysis, analytic psychology, object relations theory, etc.) has not been able to achieve the status of a legitimate scientific discipline within the positivistically oriented academic community, because of the difficulties in living up to requirements for objectivity, reproducibility, and quantification. These difficulties are directly related to the focus on subjective aspects. Hermeneutical psychology does not focus on behaviour per se, but rather on the emotions, fantasies, impulses and cognitions that animate the internal world of the individual. To the extent that these aspects of the inner life are unconscious, they can only be discovered through a hermeneutical approach. In spite of its stringency, the behaviourist approach is not well suited for analysing issues involving the motivation and meaning-making of individuals, particularly if subconscious and emotional components are expected to play a central role. The approach used here is derived from the synthesis of psychoanalytically oriented psychology (Freud and successors) and cognitive-developmental psychology (Piaget and successors) that has evolved during the last two decades. Human development is a central concern for this branch of psychology, using concepts such as "ego development" or "evolution of consciousness structures." Several scholars have developed models comprising well-defined stages of psychological development, ranging from the undifferentiated consciousness structure of the infant, to levels of cognitive and emotional maturity which few adults ever attain (Wilber, 1980; Loevinger; 1976; Kegan, 1982).[3] The great contribution of psychoanalysis is the discovery of the subconscious and the role of emotions in human motivation. The contribution of Piaget consists in a detailed analysis of the stages in human cognitive development.

Since phenomenological approaches to research issues and concept formulation are still unfamiliar to many social science scholars, it might be helpful to point out some implications of adopting a phenomenological perspective in the present context. For convenience, I will refer to hermeneutically oriented psychology (for which the subconscious is a central concept) as "depth psychology," hereby making a distinction in relation to behavioural psychology. The most important object of analysis in depth psychology is the *subjective experience*, rather than an external material reality that can be observed, measured and analysed by a detached observer. Depth psychology pays a lot of attention to how the individual handles his or her own emotions. For example, if a person becomes involved in a conflict, his or her behaviour is not only influenced by the conclusions of a rational analysis of the situation and of the interests involved, but also by how the person handles the emotions of frustration, fear, anger, confusion, etc. that appear in the conflict situation. A sophisticated analysis of this dimension of human motivational structures might be an important contribution of depth psychology to the social sciences.

In depth psychology, the concepts used in analyses of social processes are consistently defined from a subjective perspective. The concept of "identity" is a good example of this. From the depth psychology perspective, the most important

aspect of identity is the *experienced* identity, the subjective experience of who one is and how one reacts, rather than a set of "objective" features (such as sex, native language, skin colour, creed, etc.). The internal perspective has better prospects than an external perspective in understanding the motivation of an individual. Consequently in a depth psychology approach, "territoriality" is also given a definition based on a subjective perspective.[4] In this essay, the concept "territoriality" is defined as the wish of a subject (an individual or a group) to delimit a territory within which the subject believes that it has a legitimate claim to define rules, e.g. of access and of resource use ("this territory is mine/ours"). The territory is usually associated with a sense of familiarity, attachment and safety. The individual may identify with a territory in the sense that the association with a particular territory (neighbourhood, city, country) is regarded as a central aspect of the individual's self-definition.

Territories are primarily cognitive constructions. In the physical world, they can only be perceived through the markers used by people to delimit and identify them. The subjective character of territories is evident from the fact that the meaning attributed to a specific territorial unit varies strongly as individuals move from context to context. A regional identity with a marginal significance in daily life may become intensely charged with meaning and emotions in a sudden armed conflict.

The theories of the social sciences usually assume that people act rationally in order to attain certain conscious goals. Implicitly or explicitly, a simplified concept of basic human nature forms the basis for explanations for historical processes and social phenomena. The human being maximizes "utility" ("economic man"), pleasure, or power, or it strives for security, justice, equality, harmony or social communion. Such concepts are very blunt instruments for studying conflict processes. Depth psychology has two insights to offer in this context: first, the behaviour of people sometimes cannot be explained in terms of rational behaviour in order to attain conscious goals, and second, human motivation is a dynamic phenomenon that changes according to the lifeworld context and according to the level of psychological development of individuals and cultures (Habermas, 1976; Wilber, 1981).

Attempts to make psychological interpretations of social phenomena are often criticized for transferring psychological analyses of individuals onto collectives in a naive way, as if collectives (such as states or political organizations) and individuals were analogous organisms. Of course, collective action can neither be explained by simple analogies with individuals, nor by reduction to the psychological structures of the individual members of the collective. However, it would be equally false to maintain that the psychology of individuals is irrelevant to analyses of social phenomena.[5] In the following, the relation between the individual and the society will be discussed from four perspectives. *Firstly,* I will discuss how the manner in which individuals psychologically handle their developmental dilemmas influences their attitudes towards territoriality and other political phenomena (inside—>out). *Secondly,* I will discuss how social structures and cultural forms (such as territories, boundaries, symbols, archenemies) serve as supports for the psychical structures of individuals. This rather functionalist perspective assumes that an important factor in social and cultural development is the necessity to provide means for stabilizing the

psychological structures of the individuals. *Thirdly,* I will discuss how events in the environment, especially in conflict situations, influence the psychological organization of the individual, leading to changes in cognitive and motivational structures (outside—>in). *Fourthly,* the collective efforts of group members to form and reproduce a satisfying collective identity will be discussed.

2.2 *On "identity"*

The psychological aspect of territoriality is closely related to the human need to maintain a sense of having a stable identity. From a phenomenological perspective, it is as important to the individual to maintain his or her identity as it is to preserve life in a biological sense. In some circumstances, it may even seem more important to preserve the identity than to survive physically, sadly illustrated by those who choose suicide in the face of a serious identity crisis. The defense of a coherent identity is consequently a central aspect of each person's motivation, and therefore an important variable for understanding social action.

In order to discuss the relation between territoriality and identity, I will use a simplified framework of psychological development which is derived primarily from my reading of the works of Ken Wilber (Wilber, 1979; 1980; 1981; 1991; 1995; Wilber, Engler, Brown, 1986).[6] In this framework the identity system can be regarded from three different angles:

  a) the *establishment* of an identity system;
  b) the *stabilization* of the identity system when it is threatened by
     internal contradictions;
  c) The *defense* of the identity system in the face of external threats.

These three aspects and their relevance for an understanding of territoriality in conflicts will form the point of departure for the discussion in three main sections below. However, before going into the argument, a more precise formulation of the use of the concept "identity" is necessary.

From a phenomenological perspective, "identity" implies the experience of an "inside" and an "outside," separated by a more or less distinct boundary (Wilber, 1979). For the individual, the "I-feeling" is attached to the inside, whereas the outside is "not-I." According to the basic principles of general systems theory, identity systems can be discussed in the same terms as other open systems. An open system constitutes a distinct unit in relation to the environment, with an internal structure composed of parts which are related to each other in a systematic way. The open system interacts with the environment through information exchange and events. The identity system must be able to reproduce its structure, defend its boundaries, maintain its internal equilibrium, and adapt to changes in the environment.

A central feature of the experience of identity is the sense of continuous existence. The "I-feeling" is attached to, and dependent upon, the experience of having a distinct gestalt with a continuity in time and boundaries towards the environment. In other words, a separate identity. If this sense of being a distinct and continuous gestalt dissolves, the individual normally experiences a strong anxiety, (even if there is no immediate danger to physical survival) since the very feeling of existing is threatened.[7] From an experiential perspective, dissolution of the feeling of

having a coherent identity is equated with death.

All human identity systems (individual as well as collective) have a *constitutional* and a *subjective* aspect. The *constitutional* aspect of the identity of individuals is what we usually call the personality, i.e. a set of more or less permanent traits, such as typical patterns of emotional reactions, behavioural patterns, communication patterns, and characteristic nuances in individual needs. Parts of the constitutional identity are shared with other members of the same collective, e.g. language. The constitutional aspect of the individual identity changes only slowly. The *subjective* aspect of the identity is experienced through the *self-image*. The individual creates an image of his or her own identity in terms of traits, status, destiny, etc. The constitutional identity forms a point of departure for building the self-image, but it is far from synonymous with self-image, since the self-image is highly selective and sometimes includes elements with little validity. The subjective identity (the self-image) can change faster than the constitutional identity. However, the individual is usually disposed to resist changes of the self-image, since such changes threaten the familiar self-sense.

Both aspects of the identity are partly created by *identification*. When an individual identifies with a family, an ethnic group, a movement, or a country, an "in-definition" occurs. This implies that the individual internalizes the (supposed) features of the identification object, and makes them his or her own. Identification with a group also implies that the individual reacts to what happens to the group *as if* it happened to him or her personally. If someone criticizes the group vehemently, the individual group member reacts with pain and anger, even if the criticism is not directed to the individual personally. The fortunes of the group lead to individual feelings of pride, whereas misfortunes may lead to shame. This blending of individual and collective identities implies that the individual often confuses the internal world of emotions and personal meanings with the external world, without being conscious of it happening. This may, for example, lead a person who (subconsciously) is anxious about his own ability to defend his integrity to experience this concern *in the form* of a concern for the ability of the collective (e.g. one's country) to defend its boundaries against external threats. This issue will be further discussed in later sections.

Collectives (such as ethnic groups, sub-cultures, nations, political movements) also have constitutional and subjective identities. An important part of the constitutional identity of a collective is the shared system of symbols and meaning that makes communication possible (language, metaphors, gestures, signs, etc.). Other less tangible but equally significant elements of the collective constitutional identity include shared patterns of behaviour and emotional reactions, norms, values, and communication styles. These elements, assimilated by the individual while growing up, form patterns that are normal and familiar to the group members but may seem unfamiliar, incomprehensible, and frustrating to outsiders.

There is also a collective subjective identity, a collective self-image representing the shared identity. This self-image is formed in public and private communication by developing a consensus among the group members about what constitutes the collective identity. The four identity concepts discussed so far are depicted in figure 1.

	Individual identity	*Collective identity*
Constitutional identity	Personality Reaction patterns Needs etc.	Language game Shared emotional reaction patterns Shared behavioural norms Shared communication patterns Shared values
Subjective identity	Individual self-image	Collective self-image

Figure 1 Identity concepts

The distinction between the constitutional and the subjective collective identity is important, because it helps us see that *the delimitation of a collective is often a part of the subjective identity, but not of the constitutional identity*. The elements of the constitutional identity are extremely variable. There are simply no distinct boundaries clearly delimiting a group of individuals who share the same set of constitutional identity elements, because language, values, metaphors, behavioural patterns, etc. have diffuse and variable distributions among individuals and in space. However, in the *imagination* of the individuals, the collective (e.g. an ethnic group) has a distinct identity and distinct boundaries, even though it is practically impossible to define criteria that unequivocally determine which persons belong to the collective and which persons do not. We are all simultaneously members of different collectives, whose boundaries are fleeting. According to the concrete context, an individual can define his or her group membership in different ways. However, for reasons to be discussed below, we have a need to create mental gestalts of delimited collective identities.

The collective subjective identity can change quite rapidly, especially in periods of social and political turbulence. Research about nationalism in the last few decades has documented how new national identities have been constructed (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1984; Andersson, 1983). However, since the constitutional collective identities change only very slowly, there are limits to the freedom of inventing new collective self-images. Different aspects of the constitutional identity may shift and boundaries may be redrawn, but the core is resilient to change.

The constitutional collective identity can be said to have a "progressive" function, whereas the subjective collective identity has a "defensive" function. The constitutional collective identity enables communication, a social division of labour, common projects, and a stable social order. Through the constitutional collective

identity and its world of symbols, the social world may become intelligible, meaningful and predictable (Weichhart, 1990). This theme will be further discussed below, but the main subject of the essay is the subjective collective identity. It will be argued that the defensive functions of the collective identity is the key to an understanding of the psychology of territoriality in conflicts.

3. *The establishment of a separate identity*
3.1 *The formation of an individual identity*

The experience of being a separate individual evolves slowly during childhood and adolescence. The newborn infant does not have a mental image of him- or herself as a separate being. The infant lives completely immersed in his or her own perceptions and impulses, without being able to sort out what belongs to the internal, subjective world, and what belongs to the environment. Slowly, the child discovers the boundaries between the internal and the external, and starts to experience him- or herself as a separate person. This process has been studied from different perspectives by many scholars, and several models of the stages in this process have been developed.[8] Some of the models include a great number of developmental stages that range far beyond the levels of personal development reached by the majority of adults in our societies.[9]

In the early stages of development, the individual is predominantly a body-self, i.e. identified with the impulses and emotions of the body. In a later major phase, the individual is primarily identified as a group member, and defines him- or herself through roles and norms, at first in the family and among peers, later in the society. A sense of genuine individuality usually develops only in adult age (if at all).[10]

From being embedded in reflexes, impulses and emotions, and from living in fusion and symbiosis with the mother, the individual develops an identity system with distinct boundaries. This process is protracted and exacting, and the individual oscillates constantly between fusion and separation, dependence and autonomy, regression and maturity. It is a part of the basic existential condition of us human beings to be pulled alternately between *separation* and *fusion*. On the one hand we want to be sovereign individuals, and fear dependency and dissolution. On the other hand it feels empty and frightening to be separated and cut off from contact. Therefore we long for contact and communion with other people. An exaggerated delineation of the identity leads to isolation and loneliness, whereas a too strong fusion with another person, or with a group (e.g. a religious sect) leads to loss of autonomy (Riemann, 1982).

The development of a separate identity is a fragile process, marked by advances and setbacks. When a child has established an ego structure and is on its way toward creating a distinct subjective identity, there is always a danger that the still immature identity system will fall apart. Children experience this threat primarily in magic terms: they fear that a monster, a witch, or a villain will suddenly jump forth to devour them. When their cognitive development no longer allows for magical conceptions, the feeling of being threatened is attributed to more realistic threats in the environment: war, drug addicts, pollution, or communists.

A critical condition for the emergence of the individual from the symbiosis is a

favourable psychological environment for the child. The environment must offer sufficient support and protection so that the child dares to take the first stumbling steps towards a separate existence. In other words, there must be what has been called a *safe space* around the child, i.e. the subjective experience of having a secure environment. The psychologist Anthony Fry (1987) defines "safe space" as:

> a space of environment whose qualities permit certain systems to operate. A safe space is therefore not only a space where conditions are good enough for the system that occupies it, but a space that is free of any threatening or damaging process that might eventually interfere with the system's operation. (p. 33)

The parents of the child play a dominant role in providing this safe space in the early phases of development. The child sometimes cannot handle her own impulses, satisfy her needs, and cannot independently take a responsible place in the society. Therefore, the parents must provide a certain amount of safety by assuming these functions. The sense of having a "safe space" is, however, important not only during childhood, but it constitutes an important condition for psychological maturation in adults. Fry uses the concept "safe space" only as a spatial metaphor. I will argue that the need for having access to a "safe space" often translates into actual territorial strategies, especially in stressful situations.

By focussing on individual ego development, I wish to emphasize two central themes in human motivation: (1) the need to establish a stable psychic structure, a separate identity; and (2) the need to handle the fear of not being able to succeed in this task. As long as a stable identity has not been established, the individual fears *disintegration,* and tries to compensate for this vulnerability by seeking out *stable and distinct structures*. These themes have an important role in forming the individual's way of behaving as a member of the society.

3.2 *Identity establishment and motivation in the social arena*

As long as the personal identity is still vague and fragile, delimiting a distinct identity is an important motivator for the individual. The individual identity can get much-needed support by the identification with a group that has a distinct identity. Membership in a collective enables the members to establish a common identity that is more stable and powerful than the identities of the individual members on their own. The more distinct the identity of the group, the easier it is for the individual to have access to a stable identity through group membership.

Only some collectives, like states, have a decidedly territorial aspect. The territorially-defined collectives offer an additional advantage compared to other collectives, because geographical boundaries are more tangible and distinct than other types of boundaries.[11] Territorially-defined collectives may have an added attraction to persons with incompletely consolidated personal identities. The territory of the state may become the "safe space" of the adult person, the safe environment needed in order to reduce the threat to their fragile identity. Many people therefore rate issues involving the boundaries and integrity of the territories as far more important than one might expect from an analysis of concrete interests. According to this perspective, a range of political issues such as the strength of the national defense, the immigration policy, the issue of ceding national sovereignty by joining a political union (such as the EU), have two dimensions. The first is the rational

dimension, which is based on realistic interests and risks. The other dimension is the emotional charge these issues achieve by evoking the anxiety of the citizens for the stability and delimitation of their identities. To the extent that the emotional charge of political issues is strong, rational arguments lose their ability to influence the standpoints taken by the individuals, since the arguments do not address the underlying issues that mobilized the core devotion of people.[12]

Persons who have established a stable and distinct individual identity are less dependent on the collective subjective identity. Their motivation is not dominated to the same extent by the need to defend the territorial homogeneity and sovereignty of the state at any cost. The more stable the personal identities of the citizens, the greater the chances that the political debate will be based on an interest rationale rather than on subconscious emotional charges.

3.3 *The uses of the collective in supporting individual identity establishment*
The needs of the individuals to strengthen their identity systems and to psychologically handle the threat of disintegration are wide-spread phenomena, at least in a particular evolutionary phase. This means that the motivation of the individuals is not restricted to an influence on political processes, but also extends to the evolution of cultural and social structures. A society must develop forms for supporting the identity establishment of its citizens. This function is an important part of all cultures. By offering identity markers in the form of symbols and signs (e.g. behavioural patterns, typical values, special clothing, and rituals), the society provides the individual with ready-made elements for building an image of his or her identity (Volkan, 1988). The roles of a society also provide standardized patterns for personal identities. The individual only has to identify with a specific role, and to assimilate the system of behaviour expectations that the culture associates with this role. The culturally transmitted boundaries towards outgroups often play an important role in emphasizing the distinctiveness of the collective identity. By pointing out who do *not* belong to the inside, the group identity acquires sharp contours.

Cultures may also develop forms that assist the individuals in psychologically handling their fear of disintegrating identities. The *archenemy* and the *scapegoat* serve to point out sources of threats to the integrity of the identity. The vague anxiety felt by an emerging but still fragile identity can be transformed from an unfocussed and obtrusive anxiety to an intelligible reaction to the existence of a concrete external threat.

3.4 *The establishment of collective identities*
In the two last subsections, I discussed the relations between individual identity establishment and political mobilization, and the cultural forms for supporting individual identity establishment were discussed. Both of these themes presume the existence of a fully developed collective identity. During periods when new collective subjective identities are under formation, the collective identity suffers similar dilemmas as at the individual level. As long as a newly formed or redefined collective identity (e.g. a national or ethnic identity) is not fully established, stable and respected, the members of the collective will be strongly motivated to emphasize

and strengthen the collective identity. This may be expressed in strongly nationalist moods, demands for recognition and respect from the environment, and a strong emphasis on collective symbols, rituals, leaders, and values. In this situation, a tendency to overemphasize boundaries and recognize external enemies may serve the purpose of strengthening the collective identity. A weak collective identity, say through lack of recognition from the environment, may reinforce the tendency to be attracted to everything that emits an aura of strength and power, such as weapons, mass manifestations, discipline, uniforms and displays of courage and determination.

4. *Stabilization of identity systems with internal contradictions*

The need to stabilize identity systems does not end when the identity system has taken form. A distinct and fully established identity system may be threatened by disintegration as well. In this section, the *internal* threats to the coherence of the identity, like mutually incompatible elements within the identity system will be discussed. This is one of the central themes of depth psychology, which means that there are a great number of models and theories available. I have chosen to limit the discussion to one of the most relevant concepts in this context, namely *narcissism*. In the following section, *external* threats to the coherence of the identity will be discussed, particularly when the lifeworld is threatening, chaotic, and difficult to interpret.

4.1 *Internal conflicts*

The establishment of a personal identity means that the individual has developed a subjective identity, a self-image. A small child that has not yet reached this stage identifies with his or her emotions and impulses, and lives embedded in them (Kegan, 1982). The establishment of a personal identity means that the individual has gone beyond a pure body-self, and has *identified* with the newly created self-image. In the experiential world of the individual one *is* this self-image; the I-feeling, the sense of existing, is attached to the subjective self-image. This implies that a threat to the self-image is experienced as a threat to the very existence of the person. Consequently, there is not only a biological death, but also a psychological, which is just as frightening as the former. As long as a person is identified with a particular self-image, this self-image must be defended against everything that threatens its consistency and functionality.

Depth psychology maintains that the psyche consists of a conscious and an unconscious part.[13] This is valid for the self-image as well. The conscious self-image is formed by a number of (unconscious) out- and in-definitions. Some features have been accepted as parts of the conscious self-image, while other characteristics have been excluded. In order to maintain a coherent self-image and avoid cognitive dissonance, the individual denies some aspects of his or her own psyche. These elements are excluded from the conscious self-image, and land in the unconscious, as aspects of an unconscious self-image. Normally, the individual strives to maintain a positive self-image, which entails the unconscious self-image being primarily negatively charged.

The unconscious negative self-image is thus created when the individual excludes the emotions and the self-image elements from the conscious self-image that are

incompatible with a positive, coherent, stable, and socially acceptable self-image. Such emotions and cognitions may arise in different ways, both in the personal biography and as a consequence of our general existential condition. As infants we all experienced the anxiety of being totally exposed to the discretion of the environment when we were hungry, thirsty, cold, or felt lonely or fearful. These experiences led to a self-image of being dependent, weak, helpless, suffering, etc. Since it is too frightening to live with such self-images, they are pushed out of the awareness. They do not disappear but instead remain in the form of unconscious emotions and cognitions. In later phases of development, new experiences may add to the unconscious negative self-image. Through the primitive logic of the unconscious, children who don't receive the love, warmth, and care they need come to the conclusion that there is something wrong with themselves, since their parents didn't give them what they wish. In such cases the negative self-image becomes charged with feelings of inferiority.

The two mutually incompatible self-images constitute a fundamentally unstable psychic structure. The negative self-image expresses itself in various forms, e.g. as doubts about one's own value, as guilt feelings, as anxiety, or as depression. A very common "strategy" for defending oneself against the unconscious negative self-image is to create an *idealized self-image*. Starting from some positively charged elements of the constitutional identity, the individual builds an image of him- or herself as especially gifted in some field. This self-image is often characterized as *grandiose*, i.e. larger than the ordinary. The idealized self-image constitutes a counterbalance and a barricade against the negative self-image. Since the idealized self-image is not wholly realistic, but one-sided and exaggerated, it is unstable and false. This inherent instability forces the individual who has an idealized self-image to expend a great deal of energy in a continuous effort to reinforce and polish the self-image.

The psychic structure described above is called *secondary narcissism*, or just "narcissism" in depth psychology (Kohut, 1971; Kernberg, 1975; Lowen, 1983). The mainstream explanation for narcissistic personality structures points to certain typical experiences in the biography of the narcissist. However, in existentialist psychology (Becker, 1975) narcissism is regarded as a natural consequence of our basic existential condition. As separate individuals we are vulnerable, mortal, and absolutely dependent upon the environment. From a cosmic perspective, we as individuals are very small, short-lived and insignificant. To the extent that we cannot accept and contain these insights, we try to appear powerful, immortal, significant, and special, in short *grandiose*. From this perspective, narcissism is intimately related to the experience of being a separate individual. It could consequently be argued that there is no clear boundary between pathological and existential narcissism. A tendency to develop a narcissistic dynamic is inherent in our existential condition, but in some individuals it becomes highly accentuated by personal life experiences. In the following, I will assume that a discussion of narcissism is relevant for most people in the Western societies, not because we are all neurotic in a pathological sense, but because few have the strength to face our existential condition right on.

4.2 Narcissism in the social arena

Narcissistic personalities have a characteristic motivational structure, which pervasively influences the way the individual behaves in the social arena. Because of the inherent instability of the narcissistic structure, there is an urgent need to develop ways of *stabilizing* the identity system. These strategies can only be understood by adopting a phenomenological perspective, i.e. by focussing on the experiential world of the individual. In the subjective experience of the individual, the most fundamental boundary line is that between "I" (the conscious part of the psyche) and "not-I" (everything else). From this subjective perspective *both* the personal unconscious *and* the external reality belong to the "outside." In the subjective experience of the individual, there is no distinct boundary between the personal unconscious and the external world. This means that *when* elements of the unconscious make themselves felt (as moods, cognitions, images, etc.) they are very easily experienced as something which comes from the external reality. One's unconscious and the world of external objects and events are easily confused, in that negatively charged elements of one's own psyche "contaminate" objects in the environment, which are then experienced as the origins of the negative emotions. This is what psychologists mean by *projection*. The individual may have a vague feeling of the presence of negative and destructive elements, which are experienced as alien (i.e. outside the ego). Since it is very uncomfortable to live with the anxiety evoked by negative elements without being able to identify their origin, the individual will look for an external source of the negative emotions. By projection, several problems may be handled simultaneously. If an external object (e.g. an archenemy, readily provided by the culture) can be identified as the source of the threat, it is much easier for the individual to handle the situation cognitively and emotionally. An external enemy is concrete and can be fought, whereas a vague internal conflict involving unconscious elements is extremely hard to grasp. Furthermore, the grandiose self-image may be strengthened by the comparison with external "bearers" of projected self-images: "it is he/she/they who are inferior/weak/dependent/destructive, not me." The recurring self-doubts that plague the narcissist may be averted by comparison with strongly devalued others.

The narcissistic structure thus encompasses two structurally inherent tendencies: first, to keep the negative self-image at a distance; and secondly, to strengthen the idealized self-image.[14] The narcissist tends to look for *scapegoats* and *threatening enemies* in the environment. These help the narcissist to deny his own negative self-image, and contribute hereby to stabilize the identity system. The fragile idealized self-image may be strengthened by the identification with a collective (e.g. the own nation or a political movement) which represents strength, permanence, superiority, and greatness to the individual. The members of the collective may jointly create and tend a grandiose collective self-image (Bloom, 1990). By identification, the individual may take part in the strength and greatness of the collective, and may hereby be able to ignore his own insignificance.

To a considerable degree, the instability of the narcissistic structure is an issue of *boundaries*. The identity system may be preserved and stabilized by erecting distinct and impermeable boundaries. Since the individual experiences the internal conflict primarily via projection on the environment, these boundaries are sought in the

external world. Boundaries between one's own group and other groups allow an idealization of the "inside," and a devaluation of the "outside." The individual may feel relieved by the existence of a distinct boundary that delimits the good inside from the evil outside. The collective may point out a distinct enemy, and organize an impressive defense against this enemy. In the worst case, it may go so far that the group actually tries to eliminate "the evil" by trying to destroy the enemy that is the bearer of the group's projections. This psychohygienic arrangement functions much more smoothly if one's own territory is highly homogeneous. If the projection mechanisms develop along ethnic lines, "ethnic cleansing" may appear as a desirable political strategy.

An important conclusion of this discussion is that scapegoats and archenemies are *needed* in order to stabilize fragile identity systems. If this is true, prejudice and enmity cannot be eliminated by information and education alone. The basic problem is to find ways of stabilizing the identities through means other than enmity.

4.3 *Cultural forms for stabilizing narcissistic identity systems*
In the same way as societies have developed ways to support the establishment of individual identity systems, there are also socially institutionalized forms that facilitate the stabilization of narcissistic structures. Each culture offers its members socially approved projection objects, which serve as containers for negatively charged self-image elements, as well as reservoirs for idealized and grandiose conceptions. Vamik Volkan (1988) calls this *suitable targets for externalization,* and describes how the culture supplies such targets to the new members of the collective through the parents. For example, such targets can be an outgroup that is described as unreliable, dangerous, and/or inferior, and symbols for the ingroup's shared idealized qualities, such as leaders, symbolically significant places, ceremonies, customs, etc. From the societal perspective, this type of psychohygienic arrangement serves two purposes. Besides offering the individual forms for stabilizing a conflict-ridden psychic structure, the culturally shared forms for stabilization help avoid that the destructive consequences of the narcissistic structure affect the internal system. By directing the needs of the individuals for scapegoats and enemies towards *external* objects, the social relations within the group are protected from destructive conflicts.

The culturally transmitted symbolic landscapes play a central role in the psychohygienic arrangement of the society. There must be distinct boundaries that enable identification and projection. These boundaries may have a purely symbolic character, using signs such as clothes, jargon, and style. However, as long as the boundary-making is not territorial, its psychohygienic uses are limited. The greatest feeling of safety in an identification with an idealized collective self-image is achieved when the individual is situated in a homogeneous ingroup territory. The projection of negatively charged self-image elements presupposes that the reality is not allowed to correct the biased perceptions of the features of the counterpart, a precondition which is "favoured" by the geographical separation of ingroup and outgroup. Finally, handling of the feeling of being threatened is an important part of the psychohygienic arrangements, making geographical boundaries (that physically exclude the enemy) more attractive than purely symbolic boundaries. According to

the perspective presented, the geopolitical world image of a group is influenced by two fundamentally different types of factors: first, by the actual situation in the environment; and secondly, by the psychologically conditioned need to have a political landscape divided into "in-territories" and "out-territories."

4.4 *Stabilization of collective identities*

The processes discussed above are reinforced by the existence of dualistic collective identity systems. The collective self-images have an important function as identification objects for the individuals. This means that there is a need to idealize the collective self-image. Collective experiences that give rise to negative collective self-image elements are therefore threatening and unwelcome. For this reason, collectives tend to develop the same kind of narcissistic structure as individuals, i.e. a conscious idealized self-image (entertained by the members of the collective), and a more or less unconscious negative self-image. The latter comprises such elements as memories of humiliating events in the history of the collective, such as losses in wars, aborted attempts to achieve a sovereign status, and morally unacceptable acts perpetrated in the name of the collective (such as massacres and genocide). The dualistic structure of the collective self-image makes it as unstable as the self-image of the individual narcissist. The same need for pointing out scapegoats and enemies arise at the collective level, and contribute to the consolidation of enmity relationships.

4.5 *A progressive use of territoriality?*

The previous discussion of narcissistic structures seems to imply that territoriality plays a primarily negative role. A landscape of positively and negatively charged territories may stabilize and therefore consolidate unsound psychological structures. However, one might ask if territoriality could play a constructive role in processes aiming to transform the narcissistic structure as such. The basic problem of narcissism is the negative self-image, and the inability to integrate this aspect of the self-image into the conscious self system. In a psychotherapy the psychic structure of the individual is strengthened, resulting in an increased ability to endure the painful contents of the negative self-image. The rigid internal boundary between the conscious and the unconscious is gradually allowed to become more permeable, and the negative contents may be integrated in chunks small enough to be manageable. In due time, the individual may be able to endure or dissolve the negative self-image, resulting in a reduced need for maintaining a grandiose self-image, and for projecting the negative self-image on others. However, this process is delicate, and presupposes a safe and trusting atmosphere, or a "safe space" in Fry's terms. In the framework of a therapeutic process, a psychoterritorial arrangement may consequently play a positive role because the territories may serve as containers for negative as well as positive projected contents until the individual is strong enough to contain these contents within his or her own identity system.

5. *Defense against external threats*

The last two sections emphasized how internal dilemmas related to the establishment

and stabilization of identity systems influence individual and collective behaviour in the social arena (inside—>out). In this section it will be discussed how social crises that threaten identity systems affect the motivation and social cognition of individuals (outside—>in). As previously, territoriality is here interpreted as a potential support for faltering identity systems.

As long as the lifeworld is peaceful, trustworthy, and safe (i.e. is experienced as a *safe space*), it is comparatively easy to maintain a coherent identity. In such conditions, the individual can be reasonably sure that he or she can satisfy his or her basic needs. Our existential conditions certainly include vulnerability and mortality, but these elements can be kept at bay as long as the lifeworld feels safe.

5.1 *The order of the lifeworld*
Experiencing the lifeworld as a reasonably safe space is an important precondition for personal development and maturation. It is far easier to handle conflicts in a constructive way if the situation is not perceived as an immediate threat to one's own identity. A central aspect of the adult's experience of a safe space is the sense of having a reasonable degree of *control* over one's destiny. This sense of control depends partly on the absence of acute threats to one's existence (physical security, trust in that the physiological needs will be satisfied, etc.), and partly upon the potential for meaningful and creative action in the lifeworld. The lifeworld must be experienced as intelligible and somewhat predictable, so that the individual can develop a trust in his or her own competence to act in the social networks through communicative action (Habermas, 1981). In other words, there must be a well-developed shared system of meaning, based on language, symbols, signs, metaphors, body gestures, roles (i.e. generalized behaviour expectations), and so forth. The shared system of meaning allows us to act in complex social contexts, and to create goals and meaning in life. It is also within the framework of the shared system of meaning that we develop a worldview, an interpretation of the basic order and principles of the cosmos. This worldview permits orientation in life, e.g. by pointing out good and evil, and how to proceed to avoid evil and to attain goodness. As has been alluded to previously, the worldview of the individuals is largely created on the basis of components provided by the culture. The worldview is therefore to a large extent shared in a collective, and plays a crucial role in securing the stability of the identity systems.

The individual is absolutely and inevitably dependent upon the surrounding social system. All societies with a reasonable degree of personal freedom are built on the foundation of a *mutual trust* between the citizens. It is extremely difficult to develop a complex division of labour and a differentiated culture if the individuals don't have trust in their ability to orient themselves successfully in the society. As long as we know how to avoid being physically assaulted, and how to proceed in order to satisfy our basic needs, this basic trust is sustained. As long as the trust lasts, it is comparatively easy to maintain the identity systems we have created.

Since we are all aware of our personal dependency on the continued existence of the shared systems of meaning, we are strongly inclined to defend it if we perceive it to be threatened.

5.2 *Threats to the order of the lifeworld*

Against the background of our need for a coherent and easily interpreted system of meaning in the environment, it is not difficult to understand the anxiety and resentment evoked by, for example, an extensive immigration. If one suddenly meets people in one's lifeworld who speak a language one doesn't understand, who have a body language one doesn't comprehend, and who have values one doesn't know about, it may feel as if the shared system of meaning of the lifeworld is falling apart. The same type of fear appears in relation to all kinds of deviances from the dominating system of meaning: criminals, subcultures, minorities of every kind. If the sense of safe space is threatened by the presence of deviant groups, it follows that one may try to create safe space through territoriality. One of the least destructive forms of this is housing segregation (ghettos); one of the most destructive is deportation or extermination of the deviant groups.

During difficult societal crises, such as civil war, economic misery and escalating criminality, the sense of having access to safe space gets lost (or cannot appear at all). The control over one's basic conditions of life is lost, which has pervading consequences for an individual's motivation:

> Under extremely difficult life conditions certain motives dominate: protecting the physical well-being of oneself and one's family and preserving one's psychological self, including self-concept and values; making sense of life's problems and social disorganization and gaining a new comprehension of the world, among others. It is difficult, usually, to fulfill these aims by improving the conditions of life. Instead, people often respond with thoughts, feelings, and actions that do not change real conditions but at least helps them cope with their psychological consequences. These include devaluing other groups, scapegoating, joining new groups, and adopting ideologies – all of which may give rise to the motivation for, and diminish inhibition against, harming others. (Staub, 1989: 4-5)

Staub points out that in crises, it is at least as important to maintain one's psychological grasp of the situation, as it is to attain a minimum of material security. The cognitive and emotional worlds of the individual may change in a drastic way in threatening environments. These changes are best understood as results of gradual escalation processes (Glasl, 1992).

5.3 *The influence of conflict escalation on ego structures*

Under favourable conditions like safe space, supporting and stimulating social environment, the individual may develop increasingly mature psychological structures. Some of the features characterizing a mature person include the ability to take the perspective of other persons, the ability to sustain differentiated images of oneself as well as of others (i.e. recognizing the simultaneous existence of positive and negative features, emotions and wishes), identification with universalistic values (e.g. that each human being has some inherent rights, independent of group membership), the ability to endure uncertainty, and insight into the relativity of one's own worldview.[15]

In escalating conflicts, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain these exacting cognitive abilities (Glasl, 1992). During the early phases of the escalation process, the counterpart is increasingly experienced as an obstacle. When the conflict

continues to escalate, one loses the hope that the counterpart is subject to rational arguments, and resorts to tactical feints in order to manipulate the situation. The parties feel that they are gradually losing control over important conditions for their functions. The range of issues involved in the conflict increases, and it becomes more and more difficult to interpret and predict the situation. Since they can no longer handle the increasing flow of complex and ambiguous information, the parties are threatened by a cognitive overload while at the same time suffer considerable emotional stress. One of the most important instruments for keeping a sense of orientation under such conditions is *complexity reduction*. By simplifying the image of the environment and its causal relations, the feelings of disorientation and vulnerability can be reduced. Conscious reflection and evaluation retreat in favour of more stereotyped forms of cognition (Spillmann and Spillmann, 1991). The features characterizing a mature consciousness structure become ineffective, and it becomes increasingly difficult for the parties to imagine how the counterpart experiences the situation. In conflicts, complexity reduction occurs through the attribution of the frustrations experienced to the actions of the counterpart, while idealizing one's own side and motives. The counterpart is made responsible for all the difficulties one suffers; the ability to see the situation from a holistic perspective decreases radically. In chaotic situations the cognitive stress motivates the parties to try to attain ease of interpretation within the ingroup. All persons who appear to threaten the smooth working of the shared system of meaning (persons having deviant values, language, interpretations) are subjected to pressure to conform to group norms, or to disappear.

During crises, a strong tendency to intensified group identification appears. One source of this is the individual's intensified perception of his or her own vulnerability and powerlessness in a turbulent and threatening lifeworld. By a stronger identification with a collective, the individual is not so much a separate individual, but more a part of a collective. In stressful situations, the individual will seek out collectives that can offer:
– Collective strength and a reassuring defense capability
– A positively charged and grandiose collective self-image
– An intelligible and seemingly sensible interpretation of the situation, where the causes of the difficulties are identified in the form of a concrete enemy, and a plan for dealing with the difficulties is pointed out, e.g. to annihilate the enemy.
– Distinct delimitations against the "outside" through obvious identity markers. Anatomic similarities and dissimilarities are attractive because they are "reliable" and easily recognizable.
– Ease of verbal and non-verbal communication within the group, a homogeneous constitutional collective identity. Deviant persons and dissidents within one's own ranks are therefore persecuted with great energy.
– A mobilizing myth that points out the collective's destiny, provides cohesion and directs the collective energy.

5.3 *The uses of territoriality in escalating conflicts*
Territorial behaviour may be a part of rational strategies to pursue concrete interests, such as physical security and control over resources. The discussion in this essay, however, focusses on another source of territorial behaviour in conflicts: the

emotionally motivated need to maintain a sense of having control over the situation. Rationally motivated territoriality presupposes a realistic analysis of the environment, of one's own interests, and how these could best be defended. Since the need for complexity reduction leads to a systematic bias in the interpretations of the counterpart, the situation, and the role of one's own party, the psychological stress affecting the individual in intensive conflicts blocks the ability to analyse the situation in a rational fashion.

From a psychological perspective, territoriality may serve as an instrument to maintain one's ability to orient oneself and to reduce the sense of an immediate threat. The restoration of the lost safe space is an important priority in threatening situations. This entails a strong tendency to create (a) a *homogeneous territory,* by (b) *externalizing the perceived threats* to (c) the other side of a *distinct boundary,* facilitating (d) an *organized fight against an external enemy*. The individuals try to sort out the chaotic environment into comprehensible categories, in order to attain at least a cognitive order. Membership in an ingroup with a clearly delimited territory is one of the most attractive options for maintaining an ordered world image, capable of offering orientation and security. In order to maximize the cognitive congruence in the group, leaders as well as ordinary group members tend to develop a strong group conformity. Those who do not comply with common values, interpretations and stereotypes are threats against the shared system of meaning and its reassuring uniformity. They must therefore be eliminated by marginalization, conversion, or exclusion.

The geographical boundaries acquire a strongly charged symbolic and emotional meaning in territorial conflicts, because the parties experience the geographical boundaries as the boundary between order and chaos, safety and threat.

6. *Conclusions*

6.1 *The uses of territories*

The main argument of this essay is that territorial behaviour in conflicts is motivated by both a rationally motivated defense of individual and collective concrete interests, and a psychologically motivated need to defend individual and collective identity systems. While the interest-related rationality has been analysed comprehensively in social science studies of various kinds, the psychological motivation of territoriality has received little attention in empirical case studies.[16] In my opinion, empirical analyses of territoriality in social conflicts should be based on a multidimensional analysis of the uses of territorial strategies. A one-sided emphasis on either the rational or the psychological perspective probably leads to a weak explanation value in most cases. In table 1, an effort is made to differentiate various uses of territoriality in conflicts on the basis of fundamental human needs. With some simplification, four levels can be discerned:

– On the *physical level,* territoriality serves as a strategy to ensure personal security.

– On the *economic level,* territoriality serves as a way of delimiting cohesive economic systems, capable of providing material goods and services.

– On the *social level,* territories are units for reproducing the shared system of meaning, a key precondition for the satisfaction of a range of needs.

Table 1 *The uses of territories*

Basic needs	Derived needs	Fears	USES OF TERRITORIES *defense of*	USES OF BOUNDARIES *defense against*	
Material needs Physical security	Order, control, membership in division of labour	Chaos, pain, death Hunger, thirst, injury	Limited resources, wealth Safe space, social order Economic system Cohesion	Competitors Disruption Death, pain	Enabling control of competitors Delimiting cohesive system Conflict-reducing institution
Sensual pleasure	Social order, intelligibility	Deprivation, pain, boredom	Limited resources, wealth Social order Social division of labour	Chaos, competitors	Enabling control of competitors Delimiting cohesive system Conflict-reducing institution
Preserving "I-feeling"	Identity, control Integrity, positive self-image	Dissolution, pain, death	Identity, stability Safe space	Chaos, threats, dissolution Typhonic impulses	Defines inside and outside Divides order and chaos Allow out-group projection
Belongingness	Membership of in-group	Isolation	Collective identity Safe space	Chaos, destructiveness Isolation, exposedness	Create conflict-reducing tresholds
Self-esteem	Acknowledgement	Loss of self-esteem, shame, guilt	Collective self-image	Negative self-image	Allow out-group projection
Meaning	Membership in culture	Depression	Culture, meaningful order Language game/communicative rationality	Chaos	Delimit cultural system of meaning
Self-expression	Intelligibility, freedom from constraints	Constraint, necessity	Language game/communicative rationality Ease of action, intelligibility	Chaos	Delimit systems of meaning

– On the *psychological level,* territories serve as identity-stabilizing mechanisms.

The core of the psychological approach presented can be summarized in the following simplified theses:

1. The human individual needs a coherent identity.

2. The identity is a fragile system that is established and stabilized through a gradual process.

3. The fragility of the identity is experienced as vulnerability and as a vague sense of feeling threatened.

4. The culture and the society have developed structures and mechanisms which serve the purpose of supporting the individual establishment of identities, for example:

    a. Roles, which provide stereotyped and socially institutionalized identities;

    b. Identity markers and identification objects, which allow the individual to experience a strong and stable identity through identification with a group;

    c. Socially transmitted scapegoats and common enemies, who can be used by the individual as projection targets for the perceived threats.

5. Territoriality supports identity systems by:

    a. contributing to the definition of a distinct (collective) identity;

    b. offering clear boundaries that facilitate projection of psychic elements that cannot be integrated;

    c. contributing to the sense of having access to a safe space.

One consequence of this psychological framework is the hypothesis that there is a complementary relationship between internal (psychic) and external (social) structures. An individual with a stable, differentiated and well-integrated psychic structure is less dependent on identifying with and relying on external structures, such as stereotyped roles, membership in collectives, or emotionally charged territories. On the other hand, an individual with a vague identity is more dependent upon the support of such external structures, and is therefore more strongly motivated to strengthen and defend these external structures. Furthermore, the framework postulates that the motivation for territorial behaviour is strengthened during periods of social crisis when the identity and the sense of safe space are being threatened. From this perspective, the propensity to territorial behaviour is consequently related to two variables: the stability of the identity systems, and the extent of perceived safety or threat in the lifeworld.

    The framework also postulates several features which make a specific territory suitable from the perspective of the psychological uses discussed above. In order to serve as identity-stabilizing, a territory should:

– Have distinct and respected boundaries;

– Offer a satisfying degree of control over the permeability of the boundaries;

– Offer a well-functioning shared system of meaning and a collective interpretation system. The former guarantees smooth communication, whereas the latter offers a system for fast and easy interpretation of situations and events in the environment. Culturally homogeneous territories may seem attractive in this regard;

– Offer a coherent and distinct cognitive gestalt by having a stable geographical identity. This may include historical continuity and an established legitimacy in the eyes of the environment;
– Offer a high degree of congruence between the collective constitutional identity, the collective subjective identity, and the institutionalized geopolitical formation (e.g. as a state).

These criteria may change over time. For example, a territory that earlier served its psychological uses well, may lose the features that formed the basis for its suitability in this regard. Yugoslavia is a current example of this, since the geopolitical formation Yugoslavia lost its legitimacy as a territory when the East-West conflict dissolved. The citizens were then forced to develop new collective identities which were based to a large degree on ethnic criteria. These are felt as a distinct and permanent basis for the creation of collective identities. Since the redefined states were not experienced enough to offer a satisfying degree of homogeneity, and did not satisfy the psychological requirements, a range of actors tried to *create* homogeneous territories through forced migration and genocide.

6.2 *Benign and malign territoriality*
Territoriality has a complex function in psychological processes. On one hand, territoriality is one of several external structures that support identity establishment, and may therefore play a progressive role in development. On the other hand, territoriality may be used to stabilize psychological structures that impede further psychological development. This means that the role of territoriality in both escalating conflicts and in conflict resolution processes cannot be determined *a priori*. In order to facilitate the analysis of territoriality in conflicts, it might be useful to conceptually separate *benign* from *malign territoriality*.

Benign territoriality is the use of territories and boundaries for maintaining a sense of having access to a safe space and a distinct identity, *without* creating impermeable boundaries that restrict communication with outgroups to a minimum (which facilitates the development of stereotypes and projection). This definition has a direct equivalent in marriage counseling, where good relationships are considered to be characterized by distinct personal identities, delimited by clear, but permeable boundaries (Willi, 1975). Benign territoriality is a favourable precondition for psychological maturation, e.g. by offering a safe environment for the development of the ability to assume the roles and perspectives of other people. This means that benign territoriality also is a favourable condition for conflict resolution processes.

Malign territoriality is the creation of homogeneous territories with rigid and impermeable boundaries that enable dissociation and projection. Therefore malign territoriality strengthens the development of unrealistic self-images and enemy images. Malign territoriality reinforces the escalation mechanisms in conflicts by reducing the communication between the opposing parties. This reduces the possibility of developing a differentiated image of causal relations and insight into the perspective of the counterpart. Concrete expressions of malign territoriality are ethnic cleansing, the creation of rigid and rigorously controlled boundaries, and the

development of stereotyped enemy images attached to "out-territories." Malign territoriality is a direct obstacle to conflict resolution.

Between the two poles of benign and malign territoriality, there is a form of territoriality that primarily preserves the status quo. This is the classical archenemy relationship, where the forms of enmity are so strongly ritualized, that the aggression is channeled into non-lethal forms. The establishment of an "in-territory" and an "out-territory" allows the stabilization of one's own identity by projection outwards and grandiosity inwards. The cold war between the USA and the Soviet Union is one example of this type of territoriality. Further conflict escalation and development of more mature and integrated psychic structures are blocked.

From the perspective of the third part, the conflict resolution process is a fragile balance between multiple sources of failure. Insight into the role of territoriality in supporting threatened identities may potentially contribute to the development of creative strategies for creating favourable preconditions for conflict resolution efforts. If the conflict parties have at least a limited access to what is experienced as safe spaces that guarantee the continued existence of their identities, it is much easier to develop an openness to the perspective of the counterpart than if a safe space is completely absent. Creative territorial arrangements to secure at least provisional safe spaces could play a crucial role in critical phases of conflict resolution processes. Such arrangements would have to be seen as a dynamic process related to identity issues, i.e. the form and function of territorial arrangements would have to change according to the phase of de-escalation and according to the psychological situation of the conflict parties.

6.3 *Suggestions for future research*

In this essay I have outlined a psychological framework for analysing and interpreting the role of territoriality in social conflicts. The framework presented here has primarily a heuristic character, i.e. its purpose is to contribute toward generation of research topics and to provide a point of reference for more detailed interpretations of concrete cases. I do not believe that it is possible to make legitimate claims for having found the "truth" about issues such as human motivation in territorial conflicts. However, a heuristic model may be a valuable starting point for formulating and exploring concrete research issues. As a conclusion, I would like to sketch a few issues for further research, based on a psychological interpretation of territoriality in conflicts:

The phenomenology of territoriality in conflicts. Considering the limited range of empirical studies of human territorial behaviour in conflicts, a comprehensive inventory of territorial strategies and territorial themes in the discourse of conflict parties would be valuable. Thorough case studies of, for instance, civil wars, with focus on the territorial strategies of the parties involved are needed in order to build a solid empirical basis for analyses of causal relations. The investigations should target different levels of analysis, from the level of individuals and households, to political movements and states.

National identities in crises and malign territoriality. A broad comparative study of the relations between collective identities in crisis, and malign territoriality would

provide some basis for an empirical test of the psychological framework presented here. A range of case studies on conflicts characterized by malign territoriality should be compiled, and analysed with a focus on the role played by collective identities. A comprehensive documentation of the events of the conflict process, with a special focus on the role of collective symbols would form the core of such case studies. The perhaps most interesting cases are when collective identities that have been stable for an extended period rapidly lose their legitimacy (Yugoslavia, USSR, GDR).

The psychoterritorial arrangements of peaceful societies. The psychological approach may formulate a range of testable hypotheses on the relations between identity and territoriality in peaceful societies. Peaceful societies display an absence of malign territoriality because (i) the collective identity is stable, distinct, and respected by the environment; and/or (ii) there is a well-functioning psychoterritorial arrangement of the conserving type, i.e. a ritualized enmity relationship that allows for projection and grandiosity in non-destructive forms; and/or (iii) the citizens have a high average level of psychological maturity, and therefore a reduced need for using territoriality to stabilize their identities.[17] Case studies would soon reveal if the hypotheses are relevant or not.

Strategies for creating safe space in societies marked by widespread violence and insecurity. People living in regions plagued by intensive conflicts (such as civil war) may develop strategies in order to create safe spaces. Such examples of small-scale safe spaces or islands of peace could serve as seeds for a gradual spread of peace to larger areas in war-ravaged countries. How can such safe spaces be established? Suitable case studies would be Bosnia, Caucasia, Mozambique, Northern Ireland and Somalia. Investigations of this issue require the possibility of conducting field interviews.

Case studies of the role of territoriality in successful conflict resolution. This study would consist of a focussed study of the role or territoriality on the lifeworld level in cases where difficult conflicts seem to have reached a stable resolution. The study should be conducted in the field by means of interviews (or participating observation), in order to capture the perspective of the individuals. A main objective would be to identify valuable patterns for future conflict resolution strategies.

NOTES

1. A search on the keyword "territoriality" in the database Psyclit yielded several hundred references to studies of territoriality in animals, but only a handful on human territoriality.

12. In this essay I take the freedom of delineating a framework without mentioning all the reservations that could be made. This is a stylistic decision, not an attitude.

13. The three authors mentioned synthesize insights from a comprehensive literature within each of the two branches, e.g. Erikson, 1980; Kohut, 1971; Mahler et al., 1975; Kernberg 1975, Blanck and Blanck, 1974; (psychoanalytic psychology); and Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1969, 1971, 1976; Selman, 1980 (cognitive-developmental psychology). Important contributions to this perspective have also been made by Jü rgen Habermas (1976; 1983). However, Habermas emphasizes the cognitive aspects, and gives little attention to psychoanalytic aspects.

14. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility of using the concept differently in other contexts, as in a political science or an ethological approach.

15. A range of scholars have developed different theoretical conceptions for the relation between

individual psychology and societal development. See e.g. Habermas, 1976; Eder, 1980; Bloom, 1990; Volkan, 1979, 1988; Staub, 1989; Mansfield, 1982; Mentzos, 1993; DeMause, 1982; Stein, 1980.

16. With a basis in a Piagetian approach, Ken Wilber has integrated a large number of theoretical models from Western as well as Eastern psychology. The framework presented here in no way does justice to Wilber's comprehensive theory.

17. Of course there are several exceptions. Our self-sense dissolves in different ways during sleep, intense sexual experiences and in what Abraham Maslow called "peak experiences." However, in these instances, the dissolution of the self-sense is expected to be transitory.

18. See, for example: Piaget, 1932; Erikson, 1980; Neumann, 1969, 1990; Kohlberg, 1969, 1971, 1976; Blanck and Blanck, 1974; Kohut, 1971; Mahler et al., 1975; Kernberg 1975, Selman, 1980.

19. Wilber, 1980; Loevinger; 1976; Kegan, 1982; Washburn, 1994.

[1]10. In the Appendix, I enclose a short summary of six stages of ego development, based on Kegan, 1982, 1994; Wilber, 1980, 1981, 1991; and Spillmann and Spillmann, 1991.

[1]11. It is, of course, the *idea* of there being a territorial boundary, rather than the actual boundary, that is significant. Most people have very dim notions of the actual boundaries of their states.

[1]12. This implies also that political leaders may be able to mobilize the anxieties of the citizens into a powerful political movement, by using an appropriate rhetoric (Bloom, 1990).

[1]13. An excellent discussion of the unconscious can be found in Wilber, 1980, in chapter 11.

[1]14. Volkan (1988) has arrived at a similar conclusion, but without directly referring to narcissism theory. His approach is object relations theory, which emphasizes the difficulties of the individual to cognitively integrate negative and positive experiences.

[1]15. See Appendix for a short description of some important features of ego development.

[1]16. However, see Volkan, 1979; Shalit; 1987; Schnell, 1993.

[1]17. Methods for measuring level of psychological maturity have been developed by, for example, Kohlberg and associates (see Colby, et al., 1983), Loevinger and associates (see Loevinger and Wessler, 1970), and Kegan and associates (see Lahey et al., 1988).

Appendix: **Stages in ego development***

1. Sensorimotor (Piaget), Incorporative (Kegan), Sensori-physical (Wilber)
The self is identified with reflexes. No sense of self/other differentiation, no boundaries between inside and outside. Consciousness constitutes a stream of sensations and actions, but there is no sense of past and future.

2. Preoperational (Piaget), Impulsive (Kegan), Phantasmic-emotional (Wilber)
The self is identified with impulses and perceptions (a body-self). Beginning sense of inside and outside: inner sensations are differentiated from perceptions of the environment. The evaluation of perceptions tend to be extremely simple: persons and events are experienced as "good" or "evil." Unfamiliar objects easily evoke anxiety. No ability to differentiate between one's own perceptions of an object and the actual properties of the object. Recognizes that other persons exist independently of oneself, but cannot recognize that other persons have their own independent purposes. Cannot assume the perspective of another person.
    The motivation is dominated by the pleasure-displeasure principle in the immediate present.

3. Concrete-operational (Piaget), Imperial (Kegan), Representational (Wilber)
Emergence of a mental self, identification shifted from body to mind. Identification with needs, interests and wishes. Can postpone impulse gratification in order to pursue other interests. Ability to differentiate between own perceptions and actual properties of objects, thus beginning ability to reflect on the relativity of one's own perceptions. Causal relations are seen in concrete terms, no ability to reason hypothetically. Can recognize that other people have a perspective different from one's own, but no ability to consider and compare own perspective and perspectives of others simultaneously. Feelings of others are not relevant to one's own well-being, apart from the fear for concrete punishments. Cannot construct enduring role expectations that define a mutual relationship. Social relations are seen as concrete transactions, leading to a tit-for-tat moral (retribution, direct reciprocity).
    Motivation dominated by self-preservation and egocentric pursuit of individual interests.

4. Early formal-operational (Piaget), Interpersonal (Kegan), Rule/role mind (Wilber)
The self is identified with the rules and roles provided by the social context. Emerging ability to reflect on own thinking. Ability to think about hypothetical possibilities. Can create mental conceptions of enduring relationships based on mutual expectations (roles), thus subordinating individual interests to shared concerns. Cannot differentiate self from interpersonal relationships, therefore restricted ability to reflect on conventions. Commitment restricted to persons with whom one has direct relationships.
    Motivation dominated by need for belonging to a group, hence a strong tendency to conformism.

5. Formal operational (Piaget), Institutional (Kegan), Formal-reflexive (Wilber)
Differentiation of role personality and true individuality, thus acute sense of being a separate individual. Ability to reflect on basic principles and to test propositions against evidence, thus ability to take a critical stand on societal norms and development of universalistic values (e.g. all human beings have intrinsic rights independently of group membership). Ability to recognize the existence of mixed motives and feelings in self and others. Tolerance of ambivalence and cognitive dissonance.
    Motivation dominated by need to sustain self-esteem, i.e. to live up to self-evaluated standards.

6. Interindividual (Kegan), Existential (Wilber)
The exclusive identification with a separate mind-self is expanded by integrating the spontaneity of the body and interindividuality (the self is identified with the network of relationships). Expanded ability to recognize the relativity of all discourses, including one's own. Ability to move between incompatible worldviews, and recognize merits in each.
    Motivation dominated by the need to achieve a sense of meaning in life.

Sources: Compiled from Kegan, 1982, 1994; Wilber, 1980, 1981, 1991; Spillmann & Spillmann, 1991.
*: Wilber's framework goes far beyond the "existential" stage into the realms of spiritual development.

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