

# Misperception and ethnic conflict: Transylvania's societal security dilemma

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**Abstract.** This article proposes that instances of ethnic violence can profitably be viewed through the concept of a societal security dilemma. It begins by arguing that the explanatory value of the security dilemma might be enhanced by shifting the focus of the concept away from its traditional concern with *state sovereignty* to an emphasis on *ethnic identity* instead. This is proposed through combining the security dilemma with the Copenhagen School's notion of societal security. In this way, the article claims that the resultant societal security dilemma is able to capture certain dynamics between ethnic groups that its traditional variant necessarily misses. The article then goes on to show how ethnic violence between Hungarians and Romanians in the Transylvanian city of Tirgu Mures can be partly explained by the societal security dilemma concept. It argues that many Romanians were mobilized on the basis of the misperception that Hungarian societal security requirements necessarily threatened their own identity. The article concludes that misperceptions on both sides were enabled by the weakness of the Romanian State; that insufficient mechanisms existed for the clear, unambiguous signalling of intentions.

## Introduction

On 19 March 1990 in the Transylvanian city of Tirgu Mures, ethnic violence broke out between Romanians and Hungarians. Clashes in the city between the two groups lasted for three days.<sup>1</sup> What many Hungarians came to refer to as the 'pogrom of Tirgu Mures' was Romania's worst outbreak of ethnic violence since the Second World War. More significantly, at the time Tirgu Mures represented the most serious such incidence throughout the whole of post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe.

During much of the 1990s, however, Tirgu Mures and the Romanian-Hungarian relationship in Transylvania have tended to be neglected as a particular point of focus for international security. It was not until 1995 that the then US Secretary of Defence, William Perry, commented that there had been a time when he had become seriously concerned about the possibility of armed conflict between Hungary and Romania.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, the often-precarious ethnic situation in Transylvania had been almost totally obscured by the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. While the Croatian and Bosnian Wars certainly came to represent a far more serious threat

<sup>1</sup> The worst of the violence took place on the second day, 20 March. Separated only by a thin police line, around 5,000 Hungarians faced 2,000 Romanians in the city's Central Square of Roses. By the end of the day, estimates put the joint casualty figure at six people dead and between 250 and 300 seriously injured. Catherine Adams, 'Six Killed in Ethnic Clashes', *The Times*, 22 March 1990; Ian Traynor, 'Emergency Clamped on Riot Town', *The Guardian*, 22 March 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Gallagher, 'Danube Détente: Romania's Reconciliation with Hungary after 1996', *Balkanologie*, 1:2 (1997), p. 85.

to both Balkan and European security alike, as Tom Gallagher points out: '[T]he Romanian-Hungarian dispute is the paradigm case of an inter-ethnic dispute in Eastern Europe'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, enmities between the two sides stretch back a great deal further than the much-emphasized historic Serbian-Croatian hatreds. For these reasons, further attention to Tirgu Mures is surely long overdue.

The purpose here is to refocus for a moment on Romanian-Hungarian relationship; to cast further light on Tirgu Mures, and to do so through the specific perspective of what can be called a 'societal security dilemma'. It will be argued that the March 1990 violence between the two communities (societies) was, to a large degree, the direct result of *misperception*; that Romanians and Hungarians alike misinterpreted the nature of the other's societal security requirements. Or, to put it in slightly different terms: the two sides came to misperceive what the other needed to be secure in terms of their identity. Consequently, certain measures were employed that brought the parties into a conflictual situation that, without this element of misinterpretation, would otherwise not have taken place. In doing so, it will be concluded that in the case of Tirgu Mures the societal security dilemma importantly illuminates the central role of identity concerns in driving forward the cycle of action and reaction towards the eventual perpetration of ethnic violence. And furthermore, that by maintaining a strict focus on identity concerns, the societal security dilemma captures a fundamental set of non-military escalatory dynamics that would not be accounted for by its more military-centric conceptual equivalent: the (state) security dilemma.

Before going on to elucidate more specifically what a societal security dilemma actually entails, it is first of all necessary to clearly lay out its wider theoretical basis: namely the 'traditional' security dilemma concept.

### The security dilemma

For the most part, the security dilemma describes a situation where the actions of one state, in trying to increase its security, causes a reaction in a second, which, in the end, decreases the security of the first. Consequently, a process of action and reaction is manifest whereby each side's policies are seen to threaten the other. Thus, at the core of the concept in this respect is an escalatory dynamic.

The security dilemma was first expounded by the British Historian Herbert Butterfield<sup>4</sup> and by the American political scientist John Herz<sup>5</sup>. Following Butterfield and Herz's original writings on the concept, the security dilemma came to play a central role in International Relations (IR). This is primarily due to the nature of the Cold War: arms racing between the US and the Soviet Union and the concomitant theoretical hegemony enjoyed by the Realist and neo-Realist Schools. And although this type of escalatory dynamic is certainly a very central feature of the security dilemma, here the greatest value will be placed on the more specific sense in which

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> See Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951). While Butterfield was describing what equated to a security dilemma, he did not actually use the term itself. Rather, he called it the 'ultimate predicament' and the 'irreducible dilemma'.

<sup>5</sup> See John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1951).

the two writers came to formulate the concept: namely that it is a 'tragedy'. The argument will be made that while the concept's other constituent elements are certainly important, the security dilemma is constituted most fundamentally by the misperception of benign intentions, or, as it will be reformulated, where there exists an illusory incompatibility between security requirements.

In a much-quoted piece from *History and Human Relations*, Butterfield argues that:

The greatest war in history could be produced without the intervention of any great criminals who might be out to do deliberate harm to the world. It could be produced between two powers both of which were anxious to avoid conflict of any sort.<sup>6</sup>

Butterfield described this as the 'Tragic Element in Modern International Conflict':<sup>7</sup> because of the security dilemma, two sides, neither wishing to harm the other, end up going to war. In the same way, Herz states that 'it is one of the *tragic implications* of the security dilemma that mutual fear of what initially may never have existed may subsequently bring about what is feared the most'.<sup>8</sup> For both Butterfield and Herz, the key to explaining such a tragedy is *uncertainty*. Butterfield describes the uncertainty that decision-makers face in trying to determine others' intentions:

It is the peculiar characteristic of ... Hobbesian fear ... that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party but you cannot enter the other man's counter fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. For you yourself know that you mean him no harm, and that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurances of your intentions that you have. As this operates on both sides ... neither side sees the nature of the predicament that he is in, for each only imagines that the other party is being hostile and unreasonable.<sup>9</sup>

Uncertainty produces a fear in both parties that the other wishes to harm them; the misperception that others harbour malign intent. Both actors fail to realize this predicament: each party is unaware that they themselves are creating insecurity in the other. This suggests that security for the two sides could be achieved if only they could come to see the nature of the situation they are in.

Uncertainty is also at the core of Nick Wheeler and Ken Booth's thinking about the concept. They claim that a security dilemma occurs when 'the military preparations of one state create an unresolvable uncertainty in the mind of another as to whether those preparations are for defensive purposes only (to enhance its security), or whether they are for offensive purposes [(to detract from another's security)]'.<sup>10</sup> Uncertainty, then, stems from the ambiguity of others' actions; in this case, their military preparations. States usually try to increase their security by building up their arms. However, most arms which can be used defensively can also be used offensively too. For example, a tank can just as easily be used to attack your terri-

<sup>6</sup> Butterfield, p. 19–20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–36.

<sup>8</sup> Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1966), p. 241. Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Butterfield, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Nick Wheeler and Ken Booth, 'The Security Dilemma', in John Baylis and Nick Rengger (eds), *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 30.

tory as it can to defend mine. Thus, as Robert Jervis points out: 'Unless the requirements for offense and defense differ in kind or amount, a status-quo power will desire a military posture that resembles an aggressor. For this reason others cannot infer from its military forces and preparations whether the state is aggressive or not'.<sup>11</sup> This is generally referred to in the literature as the *indistinguishability between offence and defence*.

Building on this, security dilemmas are seen to operate when there is an *advantage of offence over defence*. Jervis, defines this as when 'it is easier to destroy the other's army and take its territory than it is to defend one's own'.<sup>12</sup> Where there exists an advantage of offence over defence, this serves to greatly exacerbate the situation: in addition to being unsure as to the nature of your military preparations, I now also see that you have something to gain from striking against me. Such a scenario thus brings about a worst-case assumption: I must play it safe, and thus employ counter-vailing measures.

According to the neo-Realist school, the assumption of a worst-case scenario is made certain given the *structure of the international system*. Under the condition of anarchy and self-help, states can only turn to themselves for security. Thus, as Barry Posen writes: 'Often ... [decision-makers] do not empathize with their neighbours; they are unaware that their own actions can seem threatening. Often it does not matter if they know this problem. The nature of their situation compels them to take the steps they do'.<sup>13</sup> In other words, even if actors are able to enter into the other's 'counter-fear', anarchy and self-help will ultimately force them to reciprocate and increase their own arms.

This structural imperative has been challenged, however, by those writers advocating a social constructivist perspective. Alexander Wendt, for instance, claims that there is nothing inevitable about anarchy and self-help leading directly to worst-case scenarios. State behaviour is determined by actors' conceptions of their own identities, and these identities are constructed in relation to others; they are intersubjectively established. As such, state behaviour is a product of past relations: perceptions as to others' intentions are dependent on previous relationships. Wendt's central claim in this respect is that there is nothing prior to interaction, leading him to conclude: 'We do not begin our relationship in a security dilemma; security dilemmas are not given by anarchy or nature'.<sup>14</sup>

For neo-Realists, anarchy and self-help is a 'cause' of the security dilemma, compelling actors to always assume the worst. From a social constructivist point of view though, it is simply a permissive factor. In this way, Alan Collins argues that rather than a cause, anarchy and self-help can be seen as a 'necessary condition' of the security dilemma.<sup>15</sup> And this is the viewpoint taken here: structural consider-

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma', in Richard K. Betts (ed.), *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of Peace and War* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1994), p. 315.

<sup>13</sup> Barry Posen, 'The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict', *Survival*, 35:1 (Spring 1993), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 46:2 (1992), p. 407. For a critique of Wendt concerning this particular point, see Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'A Critical Explanation of the Agent-Structure Problematique in International Relations Theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3:3 (September 1997), pp. 365-92.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Collins, 'An Intrastate Security Dilemma', Draft Paper, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1996.

ations push decision-makers into a position where they must continually make judgements as to others' intentions. In such a situation, they may or may not (mis)perceive others as a threat. In other words, given anarchy and self-help, the occurrence of the security dilemma is potential but not certain.

According to the logic of the security dilemma, the assumption of a worst-case scenario provokes an *action-reaction process* between the parties involved. For the most part, such a dynamic is seen to manifest itself as arms races: the more that you increase your arms, the more I have to increase mine if I am to maintain the same level of security. The process of action and reaction is certainly a very important part of the security dilemma in as much as it seeks to explain how a conflictual situation can escalate to the point of actual hostilities.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the greatest value of the concept lies not with the main aspects of the security dilemma discussed thus far; uncertainty, the indistinguishability between offence and defence, the advantage of offence over defence, the structure of the international system, and the action-reaction process, but with the 'tragic' element which forms the core of Butterfield's formulation. In elucidating this further, Jervis introduces the distinction between the 'spiral model' and the 'deterrence model'. The difference between the two models lies with the intentions of the actors involved. While both describe a process of action-reaction, what is actually driving them is very different in each case. In the spiral model, intentions are *benign*. By contrast, in the deterrence model decision-makers harbour *malign* intent. Thus, according to the deterrence model, by taking countervailing measures an actor is pursuing the right course of action as it is attempting to deter an aggressive state. In the spiral model, however, the very same course of action is the wrong one: it is only making matters worse by provoking a hostile response from an initial non-aggressor. Given this, Jervis argues that the security dilemma is constituted by the spiral model only.<sup>16</sup> His claim is echoed by Randall Schweller:

The crucial point is that the security dilemma is always apparent, not real. If states are arming for something other than security; that is, if aggressors do in fact exist, then it is no longer a security dilemma but rather an example of a state or a coalition mobilizing for the purpose of expansion and the targets of that aggression responding and forming alliances to defend themselves.<sup>17</sup>

In utilizing a Butterfieldian conception of the security dilemma in this way, fundamental epistemological and methodological difficulties, however, indeed exist. They concern the problem of determining benign and malign intent. In establishing actors' intentions, this seems to imply knowing what decision-makers are/were thinking; their motivations, their desires, their goals.<sup>18</sup> And this seems to place a large question mark against the operability of the security dilemma. In trying to tackle such difficulties though, a number of points can be made. Firstly, intentionality, it can be said, constitutes the core of the security dilemma. The reason for this is that if intentions are seen to be malign, the dynamics of the situation would merely represent an explanation as to *escalation*; how an existing conflictual

<sup>16</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, p. 75–80.

<sup>17</sup> Randall Schweller, 'Neorealism's Security Bias: What Security Dilemma?', *Security Studies*, 5:3 (Spring 1996), p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> This is what Martin Hollis and Steve Smith refer to as 'the problem of the other mind'. See Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 172.

situation can be heightened to the point of war. If, however, intentions come to be viewed as benign, then the situation can instead be described as a *cause* of violence and war. In other words, the security dilemma has made a conflict come about that, without its presence, would not otherwise have taken place. In a Butterfieldian formulation, violence and war is inadvertent and not deliberate. And it is in this sense that the security dilemma is of greatest value: it is an *instigator* of conflict, not simply an *exacerbator* of it. Secondly, as was noted, to employ the benign intent/malign intention distinction appears to necessitate knowing the thoughts of others. While it is recognized that motivations, desires, and goals can never be established with complete certainty, what can be determined is what is *likely*; in other words, what can be arrived at is a *probability*.<sup>19</sup> On this basis, theories can be tested and conclusions thus proposed. Indeed, Jervis's answer is that with a 'disinterested perspective' and access to sufficient evidence, some sort of judgement as to actors' intentions can indeed be reached.<sup>20</sup>

Still, the benign intent/malign intent distinction is not without its difficulties. This distinction tends to be premised on states being either 'security seekers' or 'power seekers'; the pursuit of security considered a benign goal, while the pursuit of power is inherently malign. But this may not always be the case. For some states, to be secure might need others to be insecure; for example, invading my neighbour to acquire certain resources I believe are vital for my survival. This can be referred to as 'required insecurity'. The presence of required insecurity can make operationalizing the security dilemma somewhat awkward: in effect, falling somewhere in between Jervis' spiral model/deterrence model dichotomy. Required insecurity does not fit the spiral model in the sense that I have to harm you to achieve my goal. But neither does it square entirely with the deterrence model, as my primary goal is security and not power.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Felipe Fernandez Armesto argues that although *the* truth may indeed never be known, this should not foreclose the possibility of searching and discovering not just *a* truth, but the most compelling truth. As he neatly suggests: 'Even the most dedicated subjectivists should be able to imagine what it [the truth] would be like: objectivity would be the result of compiling or combining all possible subjective points of view'. Fernandez-Armesto, *Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bantam Press, 1997), p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, p.74. In this respect, Jervis goes on to show how 'historians have seen a number of cases which fit the spiral model', using the example of the naval race between Britain and Germany prior to the First World War: 'In 1904 President Roosevelt noted that the Kaiser "sincerely believes that the English are planning to attack him and smash his fleet, and perhaps join with France in a war to the death against him. As a matter of fact, the English harbour no such intentions, but are themselves in a condition of panic terror lest the Kaiser secretly intend to form an alliance against them with France or Russia, or both, to destroy their fleet. ... It is as funny a case as I have ever seen of mutual distrust and fear bringing two peoples to the verge of war"'. Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Glaser is also critical of the security seekers/power seekers distinction which is implied by the spiral and deterrence models. He points out that Jervis's focus on intentions essentially produces two categories of actors: *status-quo* states and expansionist states. Consequently, Glaser makes the case for thinking instead about motivations, likewise noting that expansion can be motivated by either security or non-security desires. As a result, he reformulates states into four types: secure greedy, insecure greedy, insecure not-greedy, and secure not greedy. In simple terms, greedy states are motivated toward expansion, whether this be for security or non-security. Non-greedy states do not seek expansion. Insecure states 'are inclined to be insecure in the face of military capabilities that they *believe* threaten their ability to defend the *status-quo*. ... By contrast ..., secure states recognize that the defender is interested only in defending the status and would employ its military capabilities only in response to aggression. As a result, unlike a[n] ... insecure state ..., [a] secure state is not made insecure by the deployment of capabilities that threaten its ability to protect the *status quo*'. Glaser, 'The Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models', *World Politics*, 44:1 (1992).

An alternative to the benign intent/malign intent classification is that of compatible security requirements/incompatible security requirements. Rather than trying to determine actors intentions, the focus can instead be switched to what each sides believes they need in order to be secure: their security requirements. Added to this can be what Kenneth Boulding describes as 'two very different types of incompatibility':

The first might be called 'real' incompatibility, where we have two images of the future in which realization of one would prevent realization of the other. ... The other form of incompatibility might be called 'illusory' incompatibility, in which there exists a condition of compatibility which would satisfy the 'real' interests of the two parties but in which the dynamics of the situation or illusions of the parties create a situation of ... misunderstandings, which increase hostility simply as a result of the reactions of the parties to each other, not as a result of any basic differences of interests.<sup>22</sup>

Real incompatibility exists when security for two sides cannot be realized. Illusory incompatibility refers to a situation where security for both sides is possible if only they could come to see this. By combining this formulation with a focus on security requirements, the existence of a security dilemma can therefore be determined if there exists an illusory incompatibility between their security requirements. This is in keeping with a Butterfieldian conception of the security dilemma in that it is still very much premised on misperception. As Alan Collins notes: 'The essence of the Security Dilemma is the tragedy that unknown to either participant their incompatibility, while appearing real, is actually illusory'.<sup>23</sup>

This ties in well with thinking about required insecurity: if my security necessitates your insecurity, then our security requirements are clearly incompatible. And utilizing the security dilemma in this way seems to make matters easier. To return to the previous example: my security requirements; the forceful acquisition of your resources, are certainly incompatible with yours; to maintain possession of them. Between us there exists a situation of real incompatibility, and thus there can be no security dilemma.

To briefly sum up, then: when drawing on the existing literature, several aspects tend to be apparent (albeit to varying degrees) in constituting the concept of the security dilemma; uncertainty, the indistinguishability between offence and defence, the advantage of offence over defence, the structure of the international system, and the action-reaction. Here, however, the additional element of misperception has been afforded the greatest importance. The reason for this is that without it there would be no tragedy in the Butterfieldian sense of the word. In this way, the security dilemma was (re)defined as occurring when there exists an illusory incompatibility between actor's security requirements.

### **The intrastate security dilemma**

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, at the forefront of the move from interstate to

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Boulding, 'National Images and International Systems', in James N. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 429–30.

<sup>23</sup> Collins, p. 5.

intrastate in terms of the security dilemma has been the neo-Realists.<sup>24</sup> This has mainly been due to an eagerness to address the question of ethnic conflict. The first such writer to propose the security dilemma as an explanation for ethnic conflict was Barry Posen.<sup>25</sup> At the centre of Posen's approach is the question of anarchy. His argument is that the collapse of multi-ethnic states 'can be profitably viewed as a problem of 'emerging anarchy'.<sup>26</sup> Put simply, the absence within the state of an effective government means that a number of groups (ethnic, national, religious) are thus forced to provide their own security: it becomes a self-help situation much like that in the international system. Indeed, Stuart Kaufman, another writer concerned with the security dilemma and ethnic conflict, claims that within the state

[a]narchy can be approximated ... if ethnic groups effectively challenge the government's legitimacy and control over its territory. If anarchy reaches the point where the government cannot control its territory effectively enough to protect its people, while ethnic-based organizations can, then the ethnic organizations have enough of the attributes of sovereignty to create a security dilemma.<sup>27</sup>

A number of criticisms can, and have been, levelled at Posen's work especially. Of these, perhaps the most important concerns the question of identity.<sup>28</sup> In Posen's work, while the site of the security dilemma shifts from one level of analysis to another, the security concerns driving it have, for the most part, stayed the same. As far as the security dilemma is concerned, traditionally speaking the main security issue at the interstate level is sovereignty, or, more specifically, territorial integrity. For Posen, this remains the fundamental insecurity, and as such the military sector of security continues to lie at the very heart of his approach.<sup>29</sup>

However, and particularly in the context of Europe, ever greater prominence is being afforded to the relationship between security and identity. At the forefront of this move has been the so-called 'Copenhagen School': for the most part, the work of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver concerning societal security.<sup>30</sup>

## Societal security

The Copenhagen School's formulation is most comprehensively laid out in their 1993 book, *Identity, Migration, and the New Security Agenda in Europe*.<sup>31</sup> In it,

<sup>24</sup> Generally speaking, neo-Realism has traditionally been reluctant to afford intrastate dynamics any prominent role on the IR stage, arguing that what really tends to matter is relations between states.

<sup>25</sup> See Posen.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Kaufman, 'An "International" Theory of Inter-Ethnic War', *Review of International Studies*, 22:2 (1996), p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> Other points of contention with Posen's work are the actual way in which he has utilized the security dilemma itself, and also of employing what Josef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil call 'inclusionary control'; in simple terms, of forcing intrastate dynamics to conform to interstate logic. See Josef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Revisiting the "National": Toward an Identity Agenda in Neorealism', in Lapid and Kratochwil (eds.), *The Return of Culture in IR Theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), pp. 105–26.

<sup>29</sup> See Posen, p. 29–35.

<sup>30</sup> The term 'Copenhagen School' was first employed by Bill McSweeney. McSweeney, 'Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School', *Review of International Studies*, 22:1 (1996), pp. 81–94. Other members of the school include Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, and Jaap de Wilde.

<sup>31</sup> Hereafter referred to in the text as simply *Identity, Migration*.

Buzan's previous five-dimensional approach to international security<sup>32</sup> is reconceptualized by Ole Wæver. In addition to the five sectors of state security; military, political, economic, societal, and environmental, a duality of state and societal security is also conceived: societal security is retained as a sector of state security, but it is also a referent object of security in its own right.<sup>33</sup> In this formulation, a key word is *survival*. Whereas, according to Wæver, state security is concerned with threats to sovereignty; if a state loses its sovereignty it will not survive as a state, societal security is all about threats to identity; similarly, if a society loses its identity it will not survive as a society.<sup>34</sup>

In simple terms, the Copenhagen School sees societies as politically significant ethnic, national, and religious groups: communities which can act alongside, and often challenge, states in the international system. Thus, societal security concerns whatever threats bring the identity of such units into question. According to Buzan, this can occur through the 'sustained application of repressive measures against the expression of identity', which may include 'forbidding the use of language, names and dress, through closure of places of education and worship, to the deportation or killing of members of the community'.<sup>35</sup>

For Barry Posen's work, the implication of the societal security formulation is that he has failed to tap into fundamental insecurities that are increasingly driving security dynamics at the ethnic (meaning also intrastate) level. Posen's focus deals exclusively with 'would-be states'; ethnic groups that are struggling to achieve a state of their own (Serbs and Croats). And in this respect, issues such as territorial integrity are central. But not all struggles between ethnic groups solely derive from the attempted acquisition of statehood. Indeed, the initial bout of violence between Serbs and Croats in Croatia's Krajina in August 1990 was to a great extent caused by disputes over the constitutional status of Croatia's Serb minority and their ability to control Serbian education in the region. Only after this point was secession an express Serbian intention. In other words, violence derived mainly from a struggle concerning identity: the ability of the Serbs to maintain their 'Serbness' within a republic that they saw as being increasingly 'Croatized'.

Given this, the goal therefore is to reformulate the security dilemma in order to operationalize the concept more effectively at the intrastate level. As such, the intention is to construct a refined conception of the security dilemma that can better explain the outbreak of ethnic violence. Toward this end, Buzan promisingly recognizes that it may be possible to talk about 'societal security dilemmas', and that such dilemmas might come to explain some dynamics of ethnic conflict.<sup>36</sup> One way of thinking about this is briefly explored here.

<sup>32</sup> See Buzan, *People, States and Fear*.

<sup>33</sup> See Ole Wæver, 'Societal Security: The Concept', in Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, and Pierre Lemaitre, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter, 1993), pp. 17–40. Hereafter referred to collectively as Wæver et al.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Buzan, 'Societal Security, State Security and Internationalisation', *ibid.*, pp. 41–58.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

### The societal security dilemma

Societal identity can be defended using military means. This is particularly the case if identity is linked to territory: the defence of the historic 'homeland'. In this way, if the threat posed by one group to another is a military one (armed attack from a neighbouring society), some kind of armed response will of course be necessary. However, for the purpose of formulating a distinct societal security dilemma this kind of scenario does not work too well. A close link between societal identity and territorial integrity would, in all probability, lead the dynamics of the concept to closely follow those of its traditional (state) equivalent: societies arm to protect their identity (territory), and thus provoke the same arms racing-type spiral. In other words, if a societal security dilemma were to be constructed primarily on the basis of territorial concerns, the end result would likely be an approach not too dissimilar to that of Posen's: one which remains firmly located in the military sector of security.

On the other hand, though, societal security may often have to be defended using non-military means. At the intrastate level, the (perceived) vulnerabilities faced by many groups may not come so much from armed aggression but from demographic processes and/or political means designed to deprive societies of certain practices vital to the maintenance of their culture. These may include the dispersion of communities within the state, or the actual expulsion of group members from the country itself. Moreover, groups may be forbidden to practice their religion freely, prevented from speaking their own language in certain situations, and deprived of the control of institutions such as schools and newspapers which contribute significantly to the process of cultural reproduction.<sup>37</sup>

In *Identity, Migration*, Wæver *et al.* recognize that:

For threatened societies, one obvious line of defensive response is to strengthen societal identity. This can be done by using cultural means to reinforce social cohesion and distinctiveness, and to ensure that the society reproduces itself effectively.<sup>38</sup>

Wæver sums this up well, commenting that culture can be defended 'with culture', adding that: 'If one's identity seems threatened ... the answer is a strengthening of existing identities. In this sense, consequently, culture becomes security policy'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the likely response to such threats is to either safeguard the maintenance of, or seek the restoration of, those means and practices which ensure the expression and continuity of group identity. In practical terms, this could take the form of demonstrations by members of the group, or the utilization of certain political channels by the group's leaders.

But where in this formulation might the element of uncertainty lie? In that which generates the assumption of a worst-case scenario in the security dilemma's traditional conception. Focusing on military insecurities between states, Charles Glaser

<sup>37</sup> Robert Hayden refers to these type of measures as 'bureaucratic ethnic cleansing': where the majority can homogenize the minority by employing bureaucratic means. See Hayden, 'Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia', *American Ethnologist*, 23:4 (1996), pp. 783–801.

<sup>38</sup> Wæver *et al.*, 'Societal Security and European Security', in Wæver *et al.*, p.191.

<sup>39</sup> Wæver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in Ronny D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 68.

refers to misperceptions resulting from 'overall national evaluative capabilities'.<sup>40</sup> He notes how in terms of the state there are certain organizations dedicated to analysing others' policies and military capabilities; 'analytical units within the government, think tanks, and universities',<sup>41</sup> for example. The quality of a country's evaluation, Glaser goes on, depends not only on the information supplied by these organizations, but on the influence that particular organizations have. In other words, states may misinterpret others' actions because: (1) their evaluative capabilities are poor; and/or (2) certain organizations dominant in policy debates provide misleading information.

Glaser argues that organizational behaviour and domestic political dynamics can be used to explain why 'states often exaggerate an adversary's hostility and overlook the threatening nature of their own policies'.<sup>42</sup> Referring to militaries, Glaser notes that there is a tendency for them to overestimate the other's capabilities, and that malign intentions are invariably imputed even when the nature of the other's military forces is ambiguous. Moreover:

Interests groups that would benefit from large investments in military capabilities and/or expansion are often in control of their state's policy; they then advance self-serving strategic arguments that exaggerate the state's insecurity and the benefits of expansion.<sup>43</sup>

Drawing on Glaser's work, misperceptions between societies might be generated through similar dynamics. Within the state, the desires of the group will either be communicated verbally and/or be presented in written form through official manifestos/memoranda. In such a context, such desires may not be clearly articulated to others, a problem which can be compounded if insufficient communicative channels exist within the state. Moreover, certain verbal and/or written pronouncements may contradict previous ones. Others could thus be thrown into confusion causing them to misperceive the group's intentions. Dominant actors may employ exaggerated threat perceptions. This will often be with the express goal of mobilizing political support in order to create or sustain national or local power bases. For each scenario, countervailing measures might then be taken, which, in turn, could result in an action-reaction process and the subsequent outbreak of ethnic violence.

To better elucidate these dynamics though, it is profitable to turn once more to the outbreak of violence in Tîrgu Mureş. Here, it will be demonstrated how a societal security dilemma came to play a central role in generating Romanian-Hungarian hostilities.

### **The societal security dilemma in Transylvania**

The Hungarian-Romanian struggle for sovereignty over Transylvania can be traced all the way to back to the beginning of the tenth century when the Magyar King,

<sup>40</sup> Glaser, p. 514.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 515–16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.

Stephen I, invaded the region. Hungarian historians claim that at the time Transylvania was deserted, Stephen thus taking it for himself and subsequently incorporating Transylvania into the Kingdom of Hungary. Only in the twelfth century, the argument continues, did Romanians begin to populate the region.<sup>44</sup> This, however, is fervently disputed by the Romanians. They contend that prior to the Magyar invasion, Transylvania was composed of a mainly ethnic Romanian people; a fusion between the original Dacian population and their Roman conquerors.<sup>45</sup> And for Romanians, Transylvania is thus the cradle of their nation.<sup>46</sup> In this way, legitimacy in the region has historically derived from the question of 'who was there first?'.<sup>47</sup>

And so the Romanian-Hungarian dispute has continued, to greater and lesser degrees, for much of the past one thousand years or so. Until 1918 and its absorption into the new 'Greater Romania', for large periods Transylvania was ruled by Hungary. In 1940, the region was wrested back by Budapest with the backing of Nazi Germany, only to be returned to Romania once more following the end of the Second World War in 1945. Under the subsequent socialist regime, and especially so in the Ceausescu period, mutual suspicion and fear between Transylvania's Romanian and Hungarian populations was only exacerbated. Assimilatory policies were widely employed by Bucharest: Hungarian-language education and Magyar cultural institutions were severely curtailed, and ethnic Magyars were resettled from Hungarian majority areas:<sup>48</sup> the Magyar Autonomous Region in Transylvania, which had originally been set up in 1953, being completely disbanded in 1968.

During the 1980s, assimilation was stepped up, and in order to deflect criticism from his disastrous management of the Romanian economy Ceausescu assumed an increasingly nationalist posture. The terrible hardships of Romanian life were justified in the name of the nation '... defending its honour and integrity against foreign interference'.<sup>49</sup> Together with Jews and Romany Gypsies, Hungary and the Magyar minority were particularly singled-out in this respect. As Pál Bodor describes:

The mechanism for this functions in a relatively simple manner. The measures taken against the minority are bound to lead to complaints and protests by a Hungarian in Romania, let alone anything said in Hungary, will then be described as an attack on Romania. Whoever

<sup>44</sup> C.A. MacCartney, *Hungary* (London: Ernest Benn, 1934), p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Mircea Musat and Ion Ardeleanu, *From Ancient Dacia to Modern Romania* (Bucharest: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1985), p. 81; Stefan Pascu, *A History of Transylvania* (New York: Dorset Press, 1990), p. 47–8.

<sup>46</sup> The importance of Transylvania to Hungarian national identity derives from the period of Turkish rule. For approximately 150 years from the beginning of the 16th century, the Hungarian Kingdom was subject to an often-harsh process of Ottomanization. By contrast, Transylvania was granted greater autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and was thus far less subject to Turkish influence. As such, while Magyarism in Hungary proper withered, in Transylvania it was allowed to flourish: Transylvania was the site that kept Hungarian culture alive.

<sup>47</sup> Competition for Transylvania has thus become characterized as a struggle between two theories: on the Romanian side there is the 'Daco-Romanian Continuity Theory'. And on the Hungarian side there is the 'No-Mans Land Theory'; that Romanian continuity in Transylvania is fictitious and that by the time of Stephen's conquest the Romanized element had left the region.

<sup>48</sup> This was particularly pronounced following the 1956 Hungarian uprising, with the Romanian government fearing the spread of an anti-Communist revolution to the Magyar community in Transylvania.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Fischer-Galati, *Twentieth Century Romania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 195.

demands rights for the Hungarians in Romania is presented as someone who really wants to take Transylvania away.<sup>50</sup>

Following the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime on 22 December 1989, however, a new mood of optimism began to grip the country. The mistrust which had previously come to epitomize Hungarian–Romanian relations all but seemed to disappear, leading Transylvanian Magyar politician Karoly Kiraly to declare that: '[W]e are going to be free Hungarians in a free Romania'.<sup>51</sup> But the fresh sense of amity was to be short-lived. The catalyst for the violence in Tirgu Mures, and what can perhaps be seen as the starting point of the societal security dilemma, was the historically-enduring question of own-language education.<sup>52</sup>

In January 1990, under the leadership of Ion Iliescu, the provisional government of the National Salvation Front (NSF) issued a policy plan for the country which, among other provisions, included for the reorganization of primary, secondary, and higher education. For the leaders of the Magyar political party in Transylvania, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (HDUR), the proposed legislation seemed to include the following: (1) the reintroduction of Hungarian-language teaching into 'Romanian' schools, thus creating mixed educational institutions; and (2) the complete separation of others, thereby also providing for a number of solely Hungarian ones. In Cluj, however, Romanian pupils together with teachers and parents took to the streets in mass protest after being moved out of their own school building. Matters soon became worse when Deputy Education Minister, Atilla Palfalvi, declared that the city's Babes-Bolyai University was also to be divided on ethnic criteria; a League of Romanian students forming to challenge its division. In Tirgu Mures, the situation was much the same: the Medical University was also to be split, and there were similar protests as again Romanian students were pushed out of their schools.

The issue of own-language education was fundamental to Hungarian identity. In the virtual wipe-out of Magyar educational establishments under Ceausescu, in 1959 Cluj's Hungarian Bolyai was merged with the city's Romanian Babes equivalent, after which the number of Hungarian-taught subjects in the new university was sharply cut. For Transylvania's Hungarian community, the loss of Magyar educational institutions during the Socialist period was both symbolic and pragmatic. As Martin Rady explains:

Firstly, they [Romania's Magyars] were deprived of many historic institutions which had served their national community over several generations. Secondly, Hungarians ... [saw] that the loss of teaching in the native language would lead to the erosion of a special Hungarian

<sup>50</sup> Pál Bodor, 'A Minority Under Attack: The Hungarians of Transylvania', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 30:114 (1989), p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Judith Pataki, 'Free Hungarians in a Free Romania: Dream or Reality?', *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, 23 February 1990, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Since the beginning of the 19th century, the question of own-language education has been central to the Romanian-Hungarian struggle over Transylvania. For much of the 1900s, Hungary attempted to Magyarize Transylvania aided by the closure of many Romanian-language schools. Likewise, inter-war Romanian governments sought a reversal of Hungarian assimilatory policies through Romanianizing the education system in much the same way: the pattern coming to be repeated during Hungary's occupation of Transylvania during the Second World War.

identity in Romania. Hungarians have always been mindful of their precarious nationhood and have always regarded their language as the mark of their unique national character.<sup>53</sup>

In this way, the restoration of an independent Bolyai University together with the provision for Hungarian own-language education represented the revival of Magyar history and culture in Romania. And this was particularly felt in Tirgu Mures: up until the 1960s an overwhelmingly Hungarian city,<sup>54</sup> and capital of the Magyar Autonomous Region until its dissolution, Tirgu Mures had suffered from Ceausescu's assimilatory policies more than most. For the city's Hungarians therefore, insecurities as to their national identity were most profoundly felt.

However, the restoration of separate Hungarian educational establishments was also seen by many Romanians as a challenge to their own national identity. From the nineteenth century onwards, the Romanian language has been a significant marker of identification for a people who, until 1919, were scattered throughout three separate empires, the Habsburg, the Ottoman, and the Romanov. Thus, its primacy was believed to be fundamental to national cohesion. Hence, the proclamation by the Romanian nationalist/cultural body *Vatra Romaneasca* (Romanian Cradle) as to the organization being '[an] expression of the identity of all those who feel and speak Romanian in that part of the country [(Transylvania)]'.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, Romanian politicians, including leading members of the NSF, were keen to stress the unitary character of the Romanian State. The splitting of schools and universities throughout the region would, it was feared, create a separate Magyar cultural and political elite, especially in those counties such as Covasna and Harghita where ethnic Hungarians constituted an overwhelming majority.<sup>56</sup> Such decentralization, it was claimed, would not only lead to the beginning of federalist structure, but also in the end to the outright secession of Transylvania from Romania itself.

Considered in the context of a societal security dilemma then, what was seen in the Hungarian community as something vital to the preservation of Magyar national identity, the provisional of own-language education, was subsequently viewed by many Romanians as an unequivocal danger to theirs. As a result, Romanian opposition to school separation in Transylvania was met by ever stronger Hungarian calls for the reimplementing of educational reform. And this in turn led only to greater Romanian obduracy. In other words, a clear action-reaction process had become manifest. For example, on 8 February 1990, some 5,000 Romanians attended an anti-Hungarian rally in Tirgu Mures. On the same day, 10,000 Hungarians marched in Gheorghini demanding separate Magyar schools. And two days later on 10 February, tens of thousands ethnic Hungarians again took to the streets in Tirgu Mures, Sfintu Gheorghe, and several other Transylvanian towns.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Rady, *Romania in Turmoil: A Contemporary History* (London: IB Taurus, 1992), p. 146.

<sup>54</sup> According to Romanian census figures, of Tirgu Mures' inhabitants in 1948 nearly 75 per cent were Magyar, this compared to just barely 50 per cent at the time of Ceausescu's demise.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Tom Gallagher, 'Vatra Romaneasca and Resurgent Nationalism in Romania', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15:4 (October 1992), pp. 574–5.

<sup>56</sup> In Covasna County over 75 per cent of the population is Magyar, while in Harghita County the figure is closer to 85 per cent.

Up until this point, escalation between the two sides was marked largely by a period of demonstration and counter-demonstration: the action-reaction process for the most part being devoid of actual hostilities. However, on 15 March enmities were significantly heightened following celebrations throughout the Magyar community commemorating the anniversary of the 1848 Hungarian War of Independence.<sup>57</sup> In Satu Mare, Oradea, and Tirgu Mures scuffles were reported, and charges were made that Magyars from Hungary proper had hoisted the Hungarian flag on public buildings, vandalized monuments of Romanian national heroes, and that official Romanian place names had been replaced with their Magyar equivalent.<sup>58</sup> From this moment on, violence began to replace peaceful protest. In Tirgu Mures the following day, a group of Vatra supporters set upon Hungarians in the streets. On 17 March, during demonstrations organized by the Romanian Student League in the city, anti-Hungarian slogans were chanted, and skirmishes took place between Romanian and Hungarian students. Two days later, and mobilized primarily by Vatra, ethnic Romanians from the surrounding Gurghiu valley began to mass in Tirgu Mures.

As has been shown, two aspects of a societal security dilemma were therefore present prior to the Tirgu Mures violence: one, measures taken by ethnic Hungarians to increase their societal security being interpreted by members of the Romanian community as a threat to their own identity; and two, the assumption of a worst-case scenario on the Romanian side consequently provoking an action-reaction process. Nevertheless, the applicability of a societal security dilemma to the Transylvanian case firmly rests on presence of the concept's core element: misperception. In short, in reacting with hostility to the implementation of school separation, did those on the Romanian side *misperceive* the security requirements of the region's Magyars? And it is this question which is now addressed.

At no point from the overthrow of Ceausescu to the violence in Tirgu Mures did Transylvania's Magyars express any desire to secede from the Romanian State. Indeed, the HDUR's first official statements on 24 and 25 December 1989 were keen to stress that the 'Union pledged to respect the territorial integrity of Romania'.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, on 11 January its leader Geza Domokos sought to assure Romanians that the HDUR 'sets out to achieve the rights of Hungarians with due respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of ... Romania'.<sup>60</sup> In this way, the security requirements of the region's Hungarian community were without question misinterpreted by their Romanian neighbours: while the HDUR sought only the restoration of independent Magyar cultural and educational institutions within Romania, on the Romanian side the implementation of school separation was widely viewed as merely a prelude to Hungarian irredentism. So what specific factors caused this misperception?

<sup>57</sup> In the 1848 War, Hungarian revolutionaries had sought independence from the Habsburg Empire. Importantly, during the insurrection Hungarian soldiers fought ethnic Romanians who, in turn, had declared their autonomy from Magyar control over Transylvania.

<sup>58</sup> See Michael Shafir, 'The Romanian Authorities' Reaction to the Violence in Tirgu Mures', *RFEIRL Report on Eastern Europe*, 1:15 (1990), p. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Pataki, p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Gallagher, *Romania after Ceausescu: The Politics of Intolerance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 78.

Firstly, on the Hungarian side the HDUR simply miscalculated the genuine extent of post-Ceausescu amity. As Martin Rady explains:

The Hungarians of Transylvania proceeded incautiously in tabling their demands and in precipitately taking over educational establishments. On the whole they believed that anti-Hungarian feeling was something uniquely created by Ceausescu and that with his death they could immediately achieve a restoration of their rights in an atmosphere of tolerance ... [T]hey could not conceive that their actions would be [misinterpreted] by either the Romanian population or the new government.<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, and added to this, is the speed with which the Hungarian community began to implement school separation. The mere fact that Hungarians were actively pursuing such splits was most disquieting for many Romanians. In their haste, leaders on the Magyar side had not taken sufficient time to explain their goals. As a result, many Romanians in Transylvania had started to ask themselves why mixed schools, and in a more general sense mixed communities, were suddenly unacceptable to their Hungarian neighbours. Nationalist elements were able to provide a simple and fiduciary answer to their question. That the Hungarians were inherently secessionist made sense; after all, had they not always wanted Transylvania for themselves?

Organizations such as Vatra Romaneasca were at the forefront of articulating irredentist explanations, accusing the HDUR of harbouring federalist goals.<sup>62</sup> But it was not only Vatra that was voicing its concern. In an address of 25 January, Ion Iliescu spoke of what he called 'separatist trends' provoking unease between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania.<sup>63</sup> Due to the historical record, and this now introduces the third factor, accusations of Hungarian irredentism were easily able to take hold. Many of those susceptible to such propaganda were those Romanians whose families had lived in Transylvania since before the Second World War. For these villagers, the same such Romanians that arrived by the bus-load in Tirgu Mures, talk of Magyar secessionism awoke painful memories of the often-brutal period of Hungarian occupation in the region between 1941 and 1945.

In this way, misperception on the Romanian side was to a great extent determined by deeply held historical suspicions. In addition, however, such suspicions were greatly exacerbated by structural considerations. Following Ceausescu's demise, Romania was in a state of total political and economic chaos. Iliescu and other political leaders emerged from a time where there had been no rules for the peaceful resolution of conflict.<sup>64</sup> For the State's Romanian and Hungarian populations alike, a democratic political culture was still a foreign thing. Thus, in the main the two sides were largely without the skills needed to articulate their desires more effectively. On top of this, in order to secure a readily-available base of support, political parties on the Romanian side especially turned to using extremist, nationalist rhetoric. Its effect was to alienate Hungarians from the political process, thus exacerbating the country's existing lack of societal cohesion. In this context, the only stable reference point was ethnicity. The language of identity was the easiest to understand: when

<sup>61</sup> Rady, p. 148–9.

<sup>62</sup> See Rady, p. 151–2.

<sup>63</sup> See Gallagher, *Romania after Ceausescu*, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

everything was chaotic and alien, identity provided a framework that was innately ordered and familiar. To think in exclusivist terms provided some sense of security at a time of enormous change.

## Conclusion

By direct analogy with the traditional security dilemma concept, a societal security dilemma suggests the following dynamic: the measures that one side takes to defend its societal security (strengthen its identity) are *misperceived* by another as a threat to its own identity. Consequently, countermeasures are employed, thereby weakening the societal security of the first side. And so this process of action and reaction may continue, which, if not negated, can lead to the perpetration of ethnic violence and conflict.

The intention here has been to show how such a concept might operate. In particular, a focus has been maintained on the manifestation of non-military dynamics; where the (perceived) threats to societal identity are non-military in nature, and where the responses to those threats are also devoid of military insecurities. In this way, and specifically in terms of the Tirgu Mures violence, concentration has rested on the implementation of bureaucratic measures concerning the fundamental issue of own-language education; how Hungarian societal security requirements in this respect were misperceived by the Romanian community, thus provoking an escalation of enmities through a period of demonstration and counter-demonstration.

On the Hungarian side, the restoration of own-language education within Transylvania was seen as vital for the maintenance of Magyar culture and identity within the region. For many Romanians, however, such a move was not only viewed as eroding the primacy of the Romanian language but, and far more dangerously, as also a prelude to federalism and eventual outright secession.<sup>65</sup> As Rady neatly surmises: 'In the minds of many, cultural pluralism was confused with territorial fragmentation and educational autonomy with political separation'.<sup>66</sup> And it is this misinterpretation which, more than anything else, was responsible for mobilizing those Romanian villagers toward arming themselves and attacking the Hungarian crowd in Tirgu Mures' central Square of Roses. Indeed, in Hodac the villagers' inhabitants were advised by their local Orthodox Priest to make their way to the city in order 'to stop the Hungarians taking Transylvania away'.<sup>67</sup>

Certainly, structural factors were important in generating misperceptions. As Gallagher notes: 'Iliescu and [Petre] Roman [the interim prime minister] emerged

<sup>65</sup> However, it should also be noted that considerations of identity and territorial integrity were not the only ones driving the process of action and reaction forward. In a major respect, economic factors were also highly important. The splitting of educational establishments meant that many ethnic Romanian school teachers would be out of a job. Indeed, any restoration of Hungarian cultural autonomy within Transylvania would inevitably be at the expense of eroding the dominance enjoyed by Romanians in local institutions and government. Having said this, the most direct link to the outbreak violence in Tirgu Mures is nevertheless still the question of Hungarian irredentism.

<sup>66</sup> Rady, p. 149.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Rady, p. 155.

from a period in which there were no rules for peaceful resolution of conflicts because socialism had led to the abolition of all but the most secondary of disputes'.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the weakness of the state meant that there was no one, dominant voice speaking on behalf of society. This meant that organizations such as Vatra were easily able to compete with the NSF in articulating particular insecurities. In trying to reclaim the voice of Romanian society, the NSF, therefore, was forced to ascribe the Hungarian community with more malevolent goals. In this way, uncertainty was created by the very nature of the political debate taking place within Romanian society. Importantly, this suggests that societal security dilemmas might be transcended through the process of creating stronger, more democratic political structures; ones in which dominant voices within society speak with genuine legitimacy, and where sufficient transparency exists within political debate whereby extremist, nationalist voices can effectively be challenged.

The societal security dilemma is a very new concept, and its applicability to the occurrence of ethnic violence and conflict still needs to be explored in much greater detail. What has been demonstrated here, however, is that a societal security dilemma can indeed be successfully operationalized at the intrastate level. Its value is that by concentrating specifically on the question of identity, the concept is thus able to illuminate crucial dynamics otherwise missed by its more traditional, military-centric equivalent. In this way, the societal security dilemma should be considered as a vital addition to the 'security dilemma and ethnic conflict' body of literature.

<sup>68</sup> Gallagher, *Romania After Ceausescu*, p. 75.