

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### **“MISAPPREHENDING ROMANIA” EXTORTING PEACE: ROMANIA AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract.** *This chapter examines the origins and impact of cognitive bias, organizational pathologies such as dysfunctional secrecy and compartmentalization, and intentional disinformation on US assessments of Romanian policy and behavior during the Cold War. This excerpt analyzes US dismissals of independent behavior during the mid-1950s, and the failure to share dramatic elements of Romanian policy among key stakeholders after the Cuban Missile Crisis.*

**Keywords:** *Romania, Cold War, intelligence analysis, cognitive bias, Cuban Missile Crisis.*

By the last decade of the Cold War US analysts increasingly held that the once “maverick” Romanian Communist regime was maverick no longer. Already by the middle of the decade many of the best-informed specialists on Eastern Europe were, for example, convinced that previous analyses had “overemphasized Romania’s independence within the Warsaw Treaty Organization in contrast to the ‘loyal five,’” and that exaggerated attention to apparent Soviet-Romanian differences was also “prone to exaggerate the fidelity of the rest of the Warsaw Pact.”<sup>2</sup> Romania’s “severe economic problems and dependence on Soviet economic

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from Chapter 1 “Misapprehending Romania” from *Extorting Peace: Romania and the End of the Cold War* (Bucharest, RAO, 2013), volume II of Larry L. Watts’ trilogy on *The Soviet Bloc’s Clandestine War Against Romania*.

<sup>2</sup> This citation is from Robert Hutchings at a May 1984 conference discussing the study coordinated by Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone and Christopher D. Jones for the Canadian Department of Defense — *The Warsaw Pact and the Question of Cohesion: Volume I, The Greater Socialist Army: Integration and Reliability* (1983). In fairness to Hutchings, his perception was shared by the great majority of the participants, which included 97 of the top specialists and government officials from North America and Europe. Hutchings, at the time acting Director of Radio Free Europe, was soon drafted as US National Intelligence Officer, where he coordinated the National Intelligence Estimates produced by the entire US Intelligence community during the final years of the decade. “Remarks of Robert Hutchings” in “Part II: The Warsaw Pact Forces: Fragmentation and Reintegration,” *The Warsaw Pact and the Question of Cohesion: A Conference Report*, co-sponsored by Washington, D.C., Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1985, 25. The lone voice at the conference underscoring how different Romania actually was in its foreign and security policy behavior was Christopher Jones.

support,” it was now believed, had enabled Moscow to “bribe” it “with energy supplies to gain its assent, or at least acquiescence, to Warsaw Pact decisions,” transforming it “into a more cooperative ally.”<sup>3</sup>

A few analysts insisted that Romania defiance of Moscow had been a pose all along; that instead of being a “maverick” Romania was Soviet “Trojan horse,” and that secret servitude to Moscow was the defining characteristic of the regime in Bucharest.<sup>4</sup> These analysts argued that gullible Western political and opinion leaders had been led down the primrose path by a conniving Romanian leadership, which never stopped working against US interests on behalf of the Kremlin. According to this line of interpretation, every demonstration of Romanian opposition to the USSR and every instance of admirable policy or behavior from Bucharest was part of an elaborate plot to gain undeserved Western confidence or to deceive the Romanian people.<sup>5</sup>

Within increasing frequency during the run-up to Romania’s December 1989 revolution, the country and its leader were depicted as responsible for deliberately provoking international tensions and benefiting from them<sup>6</sup>; as advocating and preparing for military aggression in Europe<sup>7</sup>; as conspiring with rogue states against the US<sup>8</sup>; as conducting covert nuclear and bacteriological weapons programs<sup>9</sup>; and as engaged in a policy of “cultural genocide” against their minorities.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Christian Nünlist, “Cold War Generals: The Warsaw Pact Committee of Defense Ministers, 1969-90,” May 2001, Courtesy of Parallel History Project on European Cooperation (PHP), [www.php.isn.ethz.ch](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch), by permission of the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich on behalf of the PHP network, (Hereafter: PHP), at [http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll\\_cmd/introduction.cfm?navinfo=14565](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_cmd/introduction.cfm?navinfo=14565).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. “The Limits of National Independence in the Soviet Bloc: Rumania’s Foreign Policy Reconsidered,” *Orbis*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 1976), pp. 701-32; Anatoliy Golitsyn, *New Lies for Old: An Ex-KGB Officer Warns How Communist Deception Threatens survival of the West*, New York, Dodd, Mead & Co, 1984; Juliana Geran Pilon, “Why Romania No Longer Deserves to Be a Most Favored Nation,” *Backgrounder* #441, Heritage Foundation, 26 June 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1989 this interpretational line has influenced some to claim that Bucharest’s explicit support for the Dubcek regime and even more spectacular denunciation of the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia was nothing but a “political masquerade.” See e.g. Vladimir Tismăneanu and Bogdan Iacob, “Betrayed Promises: Nicolae Ceaușescu, the Romanian Communist Party, and the Crisis of 1968” in Vladimir Tismăneanu, editor, *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2011, p. 257; Vladimir Tismăneanu, “Behind the Façade of the Ceaușescu Regime,” *Radio Free Europe*, 28 June 2008, at [http://www.rferl.org/content/Behind\\_Facade\\_Ceaușescu\\_Regime/1145867.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Behind_Facade_Ceaușescu_Regime/1145867.html). See also Tom Gallagher, *Theft of a Nation: Romania Since Communism*, London, Hurst & Co, 2005, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Volgyes, *The Reliability of the Warsaw Pact Armies*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1982, pp. 94-97 Volgyes is citing a policy recommendation paper by historian Charles Gati.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Kamm, “Hungarian Accuses Rumania of Military Threats,” *The New York Times*, 11 July 1989; Andrea Tarquini, “Ceaușescu is Buying Missiles to Aim at Hungary,” *La Repubblica*, 16/17 July 1989; Douglas Clarke, “The Romanian Military Threat to Hungary,” RAD Background Report/130, Radio Free Europe Radio (RFER), 27 July 1989, Open Society Archives (OSA), Box 143, Folder 4, Report 53.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, Washington DC, Regnery Gateway, 1987, pp. 99-100, 297, 300-301.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Ceaușescu Claims That Romania Could Make Nuclear Weapons,” *Romanian Situation Report*/4, RFER, 4 May 1989; Jonathan Eyal, “Romania: Looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction?” *Jane’s Soviet Intelligence Review*, vol. 1, no. 8 (August 1989), pp. 378-382. Douglas Clarke obtained a pre-publication of this article and cited it with the title originally proposed by Eyal indicating how fully persuaded Eyal was by the active measures campaign: “Romania: A Dictator Dreaming of New Mass Destruction Weapons.” Clarke (1989b), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. *Witnesses to Cultural Genocide: First-Hand Reports on Rumania’s Minority Policies Today*, New York, American Transylvanian Federation, Inc and Committee for Human Rights in Romania, 1979; Volgyes (1982), pp. 82-83; *Genocide in Transylvania: Nation On The Death Row*, compiled by the Transylvanian World Federation and the Danubian Research and Information Center, Astor, Fl., Danubian Press, 1985.

Allegations of extreme chauvinism, especially among the Romanian military, were so persistent during the 1980s that US intelligence incorporated ethnic conflict and pogroms against the Hungarians in Transylvania as one of its likely scenarios should instability ensue in Romania.<sup>11</sup> According to a mid-1988 assessment, a "widespread uprising" resulting in "near-anarchy could lead to a seizure of power by the military," while domestic violence could "turn into ethnic violence directed at the Hungarian minority in Transylvania."<sup>12</sup> Within several months of the revolution this somber portrait was seemingly confirmed by an ethnic clash in the Transylvanian town of Târgu Mureș, which the international media presented as an attack by rabidly chauvinist Romanians against ethnic Hungarians, and which was then assimilated to Holocaust-era anti-Semitic pogroms.<sup>13</sup>

Post 1989 Warsaw Pact archival discoveries and investigations by US and international monitoring bodies disproved every one of these pre-1989 allegations. They also revealed that Bucharest continued to defy Moscow on "almost all agenda items" within the Warsaw Pact.<sup>14</sup> Indeed the Romanians had fallen so far afoul of the USSR by the end of the 1970s that their country had been transferred within the KGB from the department for collaboration with other fraternal socialist state security services to the department dealing with enemy NATO states (and Yugoslavia and Albania).<sup>15</sup> The KGB even regarded Romania alongside the US, West Germany and Israel as a center of anti-Soviet subversive operations targeting the peoples of the USSR.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, post-communist archival revelations and inquiries failed to confirm any aggressive military preparations by Romania against any of its neighbors — despite the often vitriolic language exchanged by Budapest and Bucharest at the end of the 80s. Nor were any weapons of mass destruction discovered on or as ever having been on Romanian territory.<sup>17</sup> Instead of a chauvinistic military chomping at the bit to launch pogroms against ethnic minorities, the Romanian

<sup>11</sup> For alleged chauvinism of the Romanian military see Volgyes (1982), pp. 41, 45, 47, 54-56, 58, 83, 94, 98.

<sup>12</sup> "Romania: Impending Crisis?" in *Soviet Policy Toward Eastern Europe Under Gorbachev: National Intelligence Estimate (NIE 11/12-9-98)*, 26 May 1988, p. 16, CIA.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1990. The original story was filed by Sky News journalist Gary Lawton Honeyford. Előd Kincses, *Marosvásárhely fekete márciusa* [Black March in Tîrgu Mureș], Püski Kiadó, Budapest, 1990, available in English as *Black Spring: Romania's Path from Revolution to Pogrom December 1989-March 1990*, Budapest-Munich, Present LTD, 1992, at [http://www.hunsor.se/dosszie/elod\\_blackspring.pdf](http://www.hunsor.se/dosszie/elod_blackspring.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Anna Locher, "Shaping the Policies of the Alliance — The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact, 1976-1990," May 2002, PHP. See also Nünlist (2001), PHP.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Andrews and Vitaliy Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, New York, Basic Books, 2005, p. 500. Romania was likewise transferred from the group of cooperating fraternal services by other Warsaw Pact intelligence services well. In the East German foreign intelligence branch of the East German *Stasi*, for example, Romania was consigned to the group of "rebel," "dissident" and "renegade" states (Group G) alongside China, Albania and Yugoslavia. Georg Herbstritt and Stejarul Olaru, *Stasi și Securitatea*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005, p. 102. See also "Ein feindliches Bruderland. Rumänien im Blick der DDR-Staatssicherheit" [An Enemy Brother-Land: Romania in the Sights of the GDR], *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik* (Berlin), no. 1 (May 2004).

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. the Soviet documents from the Moldovan archives Nos. 3, 11, 15 and 27 in Larry L. Watts, *A Romanian INTERKIT? Soviet Active Measures and the Warsaw Pact "Maverick" 1965-1989*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper #65, December 2012b, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, at [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP\\_Working\\_Paper\\_65\\_Watts\\_Romanian\\_Interkit\\_0.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_Working_Paper_65_Watts_Romanian_Interkit_0.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> See "The Romanian Nuclear Threat" in Chapter 16 below.

Armed Forces actually played a critical mediating role between peoples and states after the revolution — one that Budapest publicly acknowledged.<sup>18</sup>

The original film footage of the allegedly Romanian-provoked ethnic clash in Târgu Mureș in March 1990 — long-denied investigators — and interviews with the British director and journalist presenting the story to the West have since revealed quite the opposite.<sup>19</sup> The larger group of demonstrating ethnic Hungarians (a local majority) had attacked the ethnic Romanians and the victim of the brutal beating portrayed in international print and broadcast media as an ethnic Hungarian attacked by chauvinist Romanians was in fact an ethnic Romanian attacked by Hungarians.<sup>20</sup> The British journalists reporting the event had been provided scripts interpreting the event for them by their Hungarian interlocutors, which they were unable to submit to factual verification since they had not interviewed any of those involved.<sup>21</sup>

The burning question is how and why did the overwhelming majority of US analysts get Romanian developments and intra-Pact dynamics related to it so completely wrong? Certainly, these erroneous conclusions were rendered plausible by the logic of the situation. The domestic economic and political environment within Romania was degenerating so rapidly as to appear to be in freefall, while liberalizing reforms of any variety were rejected out-of-hand by an aging and increasingly capricious dictatorship.<sup>22</sup> Domestic irrationality was thus presumed for external behavior as well.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. *Nepszabadsag* (Budapest), 15 December 1990, as translated in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-East Europe* (FBIS-EEU), no. 243, 18 December 1990, p. 62; Lajos Für interview by Peter Marvanyi on Budapest Kossuth Radio Network, 3 June 1992, 1830 hrs GMT in “Minister Für on Military Agreements with Romania,” FBIS-EEU-92-109, 5 June 1992, p. 19. See also, Zoltan Barany and Peter Deak “The Civil-Military Nexus in Hungary” in Constantine P. Danopolous and Daniel Zirker, eds, *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc*, Boulder, Westview, 1999, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> See the interview with the program’s director, Patrick Swain, by Mihai Mincan, “Culisele manipulării conflictului româno-maghiar din 20 martie 1990” [Behind the Scenes of the Manipulation of the Romanian-Hungarian Conflict of 20 March 1990], *Adevărul*, 14 March 2010, at [http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/exclusiv-culisele-manipularii-conflictului-romano-maghiar-20-martie-1990-1\\_50ad49937c42d5a663924d61/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/exclusiv-culisele-manipularii-conflictului-romano-maghiar-20-martie-1990-1_50ad49937c42d5a663924d61/index.html). See also Dorin Suciu, “Postscriptum la o manipulare” [Postscript to a Manipulation] at <http://roncea.ro/2010/03/22/dupa-20-de-ani-post-scriptum-la-o-manipulare-dorin-suciu-prezinta-noi-dovezi-de-la-targu-mures-ungurii-au-reusit-sa-blocheze-pe-youtube-documentarul-despre-ororile-din-1990/>. Stories of the Romanian pogrom against the ethnic Hungarians in Tîrgu Mureș continue to circulate, with few asking how a “mob” estimated between 500 and 3,000-strong could launch a pogrom against a group estimated at between 9,000 and 15,000-strong, or how a pogrom could result in 135 injured among those committing it and only 33 injured among the alleged victims. Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn was the first to describe the events in Tîrgu Mureș as a “pogrom” against ethnic Hungarians at the 22-24 March 1990 Lisbon meeting of the Council of Europe regarding relations with Central and Eastern Europe. See also “Minority Situation in Romania Seen as Worst in Central Europe” and “Anti-Hungarian Attacks in Mureș County Discussed” in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service’s, *Joint Publications Research Report: Eastern Europe*, JPRS-EER-90-166, 19 December 1990, U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 1-2, 5.

<sup>20</sup> See the Romanian documentary at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=688kayw4Bq0>. See also Blaine Harden, “Hungary Protests Romanian Mob Action; Ethnic Hungarians Slain, Injured in Transylvania, Budapest Says,” *The Washington Post*, 21 March 1990; “A Bitter Blood Feud: Angry Mobs Attack Ethnic Hungarians,” *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1990.

<sup>21</sup> According to Swain, he was hired by London’s Channel 4 to direct the segment entitled “And The Walls Came Tumbling Down: Bad Neighbours,” but the project was financed and produced out of Budapest. Moreover, the film images and information regarding the identity of groups, individuals, and the nature of the actions taking place were provided by the Hungarian producer. Swain relied entirely on his partners for the interpretation of events and no Romanians were interviewed as part of the project. See Mincan (2010).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. *Soviet Policy Towards Eastern Europe Under Gorbachev* (NIE 11/12-9-88), May 1988, p. 7, annex, CIA.

After the fact, the accelerated decline of the situation within Romania was often cited as motivating this paradigm shift. However, this is hardly a satisfactory explanation for why Romanian foreign and security policy was so wrongly perceived in the United States. In the first place, the shift in interpretational paradigm occurred during the first half of the 1980s, at least a year prior to the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev and his liberalizing reforms. And several years before Gorbachev finally gave up trying to resurrect the Soviet empire according to a template set out by his patron, Yuri Andropov, and started pursuing his "New Thinking" in foreign relations.<sup>23</sup> In 1984, for example, there was no political liberalization going on within the Bloc that would have qualified Bucharest as a laggard.<sup>24</sup>

During 1982-1984, for example, Soviet leader Andropov attempted to exert greater Soviet control over the other Warsaw Pact members while imposing a crackdown against dissidents throughout the Soviet Bloc.<sup>25</sup> Martial law had been implemented in Poland — and, although formally lifted in 1983, its abusive restrictions were very evident into the late 1980s.<sup>26</sup> And Bulgaria continued to practice an atrocious repression of minority identity throughout the decade.<sup>27</sup> Even Hungary was compelled to temporarily harden its line on political dissidents.<sup>28</sup> The crackdown within the USSR on dissidence was, of course, among the worst. And, as had been the case for almost forty years, the ethnic Romanian "Moldavian" majority remained the most disenfranchised of any titular nationality among the Soviet Republics.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*; Mikhail Tsypkin, "Moscow's Gorbachev: A New Leader In The Old Mold," Background #451, *The Heritage Foundation*, 29 August 1985; Ronald D. Asmus, "Gorbachev and Europe," RAD Background Report/130, RFER, 18 November 1985, OSA, Box, 101, Folder 2, Report 20; Harry Gelman, *Gorbachev's Policies Toward Western Europe: A Balance Sheet*, R-3588-AF, Santa Monica, RAND, October 1987; Harry Gelman, *Gorbachev's First Five Years in the Soviet Leadership: The Clash of Personalities and the Remaking of Institutions*, R-3951-A, Santa Monica, RAND, May 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Thus, for example post-1989 claims of various political and military figures in Romania that they were conspiring against Ceaușescu and his regime during the early 1980s in favor of liberalization rather than greater Soviet control are simply not credible. See e.g. General Nicolae Militaru and Silviu Brucan, "Adevărul și numai adevărul," *România Liberă*, January 1990. Interestingly, Ion Iliescu, the ad-interim president of the provisional authority after the revolution and Romania's first elected president and one of the pre-1989 intra-party dissidents, refused to join in the evidently pro-Soviet plotting against the Ceaușescu regime during the early 1980s.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. *Andropov's Approach to Key US-Soviet Issues* (NIE 11-9-83), 9 August 1983 (declassified 27 February 2001), pp. 19-22, CIA.

<sup>26</sup> J. F. Brown, *Poland Since Martial Law*, N-2822-RC, Santa Monica, RAND, December 1988, pp. 4, 13, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Lilia Petkova, "The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian-Turkish Relations, 1947-2000," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, vol. 1, no. 4 (June 2002), pp. 42-59; Bozhidar Zahariev, "The Treatment of Ethnic Turks by the Bulgarian Communist Party and Their Status Quo," 2003, at <http://www.ithaca.edu/hs/depts/history/docs/histjourndocs/spring04/turkishminorities.pdf>; Jeri Laber, *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Turks of Bulgaria*, Helsinki Watch, September 1987. See also Glenn E. Curtis, editor, *Bulgaria: A Country Study*, Washington D.C., Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Comparative studies of liberalization or lack thereof in the Soviet Bloc are few and tend to rely on impressionistic indicators. Available statistics on numbers of priests and dissidents arrested, imprisoned, beaten or killed, or on opportunities for education in mother tongue, language use in local administration, instances of forced name changes, dislocation, etc., suggest that Romania was not the worst offender in any of these categories.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Dennis Deletant, "Language Policy and Linguistic Trends in Soviet Moldavia" in Michael Kirkwood, editor, *Language Planning in the Soviet Union*, London, Macmillan and University of London, 1989.



The only vector along which Romania clearly had earned its categorization of the “worst” was in the standard of living. Romanians suffered beneath the triple burden of dysfunctional command economy, draconic belt-tightening introduced since 1981 in order to repay the national debt, and the lack of any Soviet (or Western) subsidies that Moscow regularly provided to all of the other Pact members in order to prevent popular dissatisfaction from threatening Communist rule.<sup>30</sup> Here as well, however, the degree of comparative difference was considerably mitigated by seriousness of the economic malaise throughout the Soviet Bloc.<sup>31</sup> It is a central contention of this study that persistent US misapprehension of Romania can best be understood not primarily as a rational response to a degenerating internal situation but as the reflection of inherent vulnerabilities of the analytical process in conjunction with purposeful misinformation that exploited those vulnerabilities.<sup>32</sup>

*Romania as Analytical Problem:  
A Legacy of Misapprehension*

[...] The basic problem was that Romania was an anomaly within the Soviet Bloc.

Romania posed such a major analytical challenge first of all because its most fundamentally anomalous characteristic — that its legitimacy and existence as a territorial state had been contested by all other Communist parties (and even Marxist-Leninist ideology itself) for two decades immediately before they took power in their various countries — was overlooked entirely by analysts in the US and in the West generally. The likelihood, indeed, the inevitability of Romania defiance at the first opportunity was therefore grossly misperceived as exactly the opposite; and analyses limited their considerations of significant variables to the existence of overwhelming Soviet coercive force (rather than Romanian interest or the limitations facing the exercise of such force).

Institutionalized analytical processes do not easily account for anomaly. The occurrence of the probable, the anticipated happening, the continuation of present trends — none of these pose any problem for analysts whatsoever. Anomalies, in contrast, constitute improbable surprises. And it is difficult to prepare for something that will by definition find us unprepared.

<sup>30</sup> Keith Crane, *The Soviet Economic Dilemma of Eastern Europe*, R-3368-AF, Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, May 1986, pp. 4-5, 19, 31, 56; J. F. Brown, *The Challenge to Soviet Interests in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia*, N-2498-FF, Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, December 1986, pp. 5, 11; A. Ross Johnson, chair, Barbara Kliszewski, rapporteur, *United States Policy Toward Poland: A Conference Report*, R-3545-FF, Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, April 1987, pp. 28, 31.

<sup>31</sup> Laura D'Andrea Tyson, *Economic Adjustment in Eastern Europe*, The RAND Corporation, R-3146-AF, September 1984, pp. 75-76, 94; F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Challenge to Soviet Interests in Eastern Europe: Romania, Hungary, East Germany*, R-3190-AF, RAND Corporation, December 1984, pp. 30-32.

<sup>32</sup> As used here, the term “internal vulnerabilities” refers to what another author has labeled “inherent enemies” — “extraordinarily resistant” and insistent limitations and dysfunctions that “grow out” of the practice of intelligence analysis and “pervade the process no matter who is involved.” Richard K. Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 12.

It is especially difficult to accept that the improbable has actually occurred when it has serious implications for our existing paradigms. We have quite an array of coping mechanisms for ignoring, dismissing or assimilating anomaly within the current framework of our understanding, even after that anomaly has planted itself directly across our path. It is extraordinary how often the elephant enters unobserved, and how few see it when it is in the middle of the room, where even the observant would rather rationalize its existence.

In large part this state of affairs can be attributed to several of the usual suspects that perpetrate error in intelligence analysis — cognitive bias, organizational pathology and intentional disinformation.<sup>33</sup> Cognitive biases are mental models misapplied. Mental models that normally enable more rapid comprehension become biases when they are inappropriate to the situation. They constitute the things already known to be true and on the basis of which new information is processed, making it easier for information confirming “known” truths to accepted and extraordinarily difficult for contrary information — or anomaly — to receive fair hearing or serious consideration.

Cognitive biases focus attention in particular directions and away from others. In one sense they operate like a telescope that brings enhanced clarity to a finite range of elements while blinding us to what lies beyond its field of vision. When mental models are appropriate they aid us in arriving quickly at fairly accurate understanding. When they are not, their impact resembles that of a long-distance shot that is only slightly skewed at the muzzle but miles off at the target.

Organizational pathologies include a variety of lesser biases, fallacies and dysfunctional practices inherent to the institutionalized intelligence process. Topping the list are compartmentalization and secrecy, which become pathological when critical information is not shared and therefore cannot clarify or correct analysis conducted by other compartments. Another repeat offender is “hindsight bias,” whereby analysts continue to employ previous conclusions and assessments in drawing up current assessments long after the evidence on which the previous assessments were based has been proven false, superseded by better information, or otherwise discredited.

Disinformation — the insertion of purposeful misinformation into the communications system of an adversary to mislead elites and/or publics — is not inherent to the institutionalized intelligence process but it is often designed to exploit the inherent vulnerabilities of that process.<sup>34</sup> Disinformation can seek

<sup>33</sup> For more detailed discussion of cognitive bias and organizational pathology see e.g. Richards J. Heuer, Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Washington, D.C., Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> For more detailed discussion of disinformation, how it functions, and the forms it takes see e.g. Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View*, Washington, Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985; United States Information Agency (USIA), *Soviet Active Measures in the "Post-Cold War" Era 1988-1991*, Report Prepared at the Request of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Washington D.C., June 1992, at [www.intelli.muskingum.edu](http://www.intelli.muskingum.edu). On the campaigns against Romania see Watts (2012b). See also Gheorghe Negru and Elena Negru, “Cursul deosibit” al României și supărarea Moscovei: Disputa sovieto-română și campaniile propagandistice antiromânești din RSSM (1965-1989) [Romania's “Special Course” and Moscow's Fury: The Soviet-Romanian Dispute and the Anti-Romanian Propaganda Campaigns of the MSSR (1965-1989)], volume I: 1965-1975, Chișinău, *Destin Românesc*, 2012.

to damage the relationships and reputations of entities, individuals or policies, or to enhance relationships and reputations through “prestige building” operations. It often seeks to induce action or inaction by its target against the target’s own interest. And it is most effective when specifically keyed to the cognitive biases of the target, thus confirming what is already believed. Rarely do we scrutinize closely apparent confirmations of those things we ‘know’ to be true.

*The Underlying Cognitive Bias:  
Romania as “Least Able” to Defy Moscow*

The most persistent cognitive bias driving misapprehension and giving rise to several other biases was the perception of Romania as the Soviet satellite “least able” or likely to challenge Moscow. This was already firmly established by the time the CIA was formally created in 1947, based on the first-hand observations of the brutality and pervasiveness of Soviet suppression by Office of Strategic Services personnel at war’s end.<sup>35</sup> According to a 1949 assessment, for example: Romania, where Soviet control is virtually complete, is considered least able under present conditions to break away from its Kremlin masters. ... The present trend toward complete Soviet domination of Romania is expected to continue [thus] bringing the country ever closer toward incorporation in the USSR. Defection of the Tito type is unlikely, primarily because of ample Soviet military strength in the country. Although individual Communist Party members may be replaced occasionally, such nationalistic deviationism as exists cannot be considered a threat to the stability of the pro-Soviet regime.<sup>36</sup>

The assessment continued in such a manner as to ensure that any outreach from within the Bloc would be treated as insincere (a safe bet under Stalin). The Eastern European regimes were “expected to remain basically antagonistic toward the US” in line with Soviet policy, while “any relaxation of this policy” was prejudged unequivocally as “temporary and purely for opportunistic reasons.”<sup>37</sup> If Romania was the “least able” to “break away” from Moscow, Poland was viewed as its diametric opposite and designated the “most likely” to try and shake off Soviet control (and, by the mid-1950s, Hungary was labeled as “the most troublesome.”)<sup>38</sup>

During the early 1950s, as Romania first began manifesting an ostentatious insubordination surpassing that of Poland and Hungary, analysts made sense of it by using standard coping mechanisms that did not threaten underlying biases

<sup>35</sup> Several years earlier, the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Southeastern Europe, and future head of CIA Operations, Frank Wisner, already reported that “Soviet domination of Romania was complete.” *Rumania: The How of Enslavement*, undated, CIA. Wisner’s original report is updated in 1951. See also *National Intelligence Estimate: Soviet Control of the European Satellites and their Economic and Military Contributions to Soviet Power, Through Mid-1953*, 7 November 1951, CIA.

<sup>36</sup> *Intelligence Memorandum No. 248: Satellite Relations with the USSR and the West*, 7 November 1949, pp. 1-2, 6, 8, 14, CIA.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* For Hungary see e.g. *National Intelligence Estimate: Current Situation and Probable Developments in Hungary (NIE 12.5-55)*, 29 March 1955, p. 1, CIA.



or previous assessments.<sup>39</sup> When it could no longer be ignored, Romanian defiance was viewed along a spectrum, with the points at either end and in the middle eventually becoming full-blown cognitive biases of their own.<sup>40</sup> At one end, that defiance was held to be a complete deception — a feint designed to enable Romania's infiltration behind enemy Western lines. In the middle, it was viewed as a slightly less sinister egotistical grandstanding lacking any policy-relevant significance — "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."<sup>41</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, it was viewed as a genuine but "limited" phenomenon; a closely circumscribed "semi-autonomy" or "quasi-independence." This variant usually held Romanian performance to be the showy tip of a much larger East European iceberg, where the other Pact members were involved in an even more substantial "covert opposition," quietly lending "tacit backing" and "limited support" to the Romanian drama queens.

The most convenient way of coping with unanticipated Romanian defiance was not to cope with it at all, but to ignore or dismiss it altogether, as a stunt calculated to deceive. Thus, Bucharest's periodically spectacular defiance of Moscow was interpreted as harmless in terms of Soviet policy aims and as part of a larger deception in which Romania sought to breach the defenses of the West in order to undermine it from within at Kremlin behest.

Such was the case, for example, with the "unprecedented" December 1955 approach by the Romanian party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to the head of the US Legation in Bucharest. Gheorghiu-Dej "stressed to American envoy Thayer the need to build up close cultural and economic relations between Romania and the United States" and "promised Romanian cooperation in removing the retaliatory measures which have been set up in the past."<sup>42</sup> Thayer, who paradoxically was among the first US observers to note that the Romanians were "really trying to get out" from under the thumb of Moscow, assessed this extraordinary approach as

<sup>39</sup> This may also have represented a variant of "hindsight bias" in that analysts tend to date a behaviors to the point at which they first take note of them. Thus, approaches in the early 1950s were dismissed as unserious and left unexplored and untested, and therefore non-existent. After 1958 the same sort of approach using the same language and indicating the same policy shift was taken seriously. US intelligence thus described Romanian initiatives as "beginning in 1958" rather than *by* 1958. No explanation is offered as to why sincerity was suddenly injected into the Romanian efforts. In 1953 US intelligence concluded that Romania, along with Hungary and Bulgaria, "could be expected to fight effectively" for the Kremlin in a general war while the armed forces of East Germany and Czechoslovakia were the "least trustworthy." *Probable Developments Within the European Satellites, Through Mid-1955* (NIE-87), (Supersedes NIE-33), 28 May 1953, p. 8, CIA. Poland, like Yugoslavia, was already being analyzed more closely as an entity separate from the rest of the Soviet Bloc.

<sup>40</sup> Gheorghiu-Dej's first offer of collaboration to the US in the autumn of 1953 received no response. Dan Cătănuș, "O săptămână fără precedent în istoria relațiilor SUA cu România" 4-11 August 1963 ["A Week Without Precedent In the History of US Relations with Romania"], *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană* [Studies and Materials in Contemporary History] (Romanian Academy, "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute), 2003, pp. 255-259. As a February 1957 *National Intelligence Estimate* argued, the "formation of effective pressures for change" had been prevented in Romania because it lacked the "aggressive nationalistic traditions" of Poland and Hungary and was subjected to the "intimidating presence of Soviet troops." *Stability Of The Soviet Satellite Structure* (NIE 12-57), 19 February 1957 (declassified 22 September 1993), CIA.

<sup>41</sup> From William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5.

<sup>42</sup> "Romanian Leader Promises Co-operation to Improve Relations with US" in *Current Intelligence Bulletin*, 4 December 1955, Special Collections, „Best of Crest,” CIA.

unserious, recommending that it not be followed up with concrete action on the American side.

Thayer's dismissive recommendation was eloquent testimony to the strength of cognitive bias. The Romanian prime minister had approached him on the same topics the month before; the very public and lengthy December discussion with Gheorghiu-Dej included the same prime minister, a former prime minister, and the foreign minister.<sup>43</sup> And Thayer even acknowledged that the stress by Gheorghiu-Dej on the "build-up [of] close personal, cultural and economic relations" with the West was the "official Romanian slogan with all Western diplomats during the evening."<sup>44</sup>

The strength of bias partly explains the dismissive rationale given for manner in which the Romanians ostentatiously ignored the efforts of Soviet Ambassador Andrei Epishev "to break up the two-hour conversation."<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, the CIA commented, the Romanians had already been showing a similar "lack of respect" for Epishev's predecessor at the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest.<sup>46</sup> On the other, Epishev was characterized as a "career party hack" and assessed as being of lesser importance than Mark Borisov Mitin, the Soviet chief editor of the increasingly moribund COMINFORM journal based in Bucharest (soon to be moved to Prague and renamed *Problems of Peace and Socialism/World Marxist Review*).<sup>47</sup> As Thayer reported back to the State Department: Soviet Ambassador throughout did everything possible break up conversation, which lasted about two hours, but was ignored by Rumanians. Western diplomats report unusual lack of respect shown by Rumanians for Soviet Ambassador but warn this should not be taken as indication Rumanian independence but merely due weakness particular individual. They comment Yugoslav party first time top Rumanian officials willing have relaxed conversations with West.<sup>48</sup>

However, Epishev was something more than a "party hack" and very far from a "weak individual." Described by other East European military officials as "one of the most sinister Soviet officials" in their acquaintance, General Epishev had been head of Cadres in the CPSU CC after the war and then Deputy Minister for State Security (MGB, one of the KGB's immediate predecessors) shortly before

<sup>43</sup> *Telegram From the Legation in Romania to the Department of State*, Bucharest, November 20, 1955 - 9 a.m., Document 149, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume XXV, *Eastern Europe*.

<sup>44</sup> A Department of State memorandum noted that the experience left virtually no impression on Thayer as indicating independence. Instead Thayer insisted "that there are no signs of Rumanian leaders breaking away from the Russian type of Communism or from Soviet control of their basic policies." *Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Secretary of State*, Washington, December 27, 1955, Document 42 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume XXV, *Eastern Europe*.

<sup>45</sup> "Romanian Leader Promises Co-operation to Improve Relations with US" in *Current Intelligence Bulletin*, 4 December 1955, CIA. The CIA was unaware of Epishev's leadership role in Soviet security intelligence at the time.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* Mitin's journal was shut down entirely in 1956. In 1958 a new Soviet Bloc ideological journal — *Problems of Socialism/World Marxist Review* — was launched in Prague.

<sup>48</sup> *Telegram From the Legation in Romania to the Department of State*, Bucharest, December 1, 1955 - 3 p.m., Document 149, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume XXV, *Eastern Europe*. One wonders who the "Western diplomats" advising Thayer against taking Gheorghiu-Dej seriously were, and whether the bases for their judgment was limited to a manifestly erroneous underestimate of Epishev's importance.

his appointment to Bucharest.<sup>49</sup> A specialist in the political control of both civilian and military cadres, Epishev was also a member of the Soviet leadership's "Moldovan Clan," and had served as political commissar under Generals Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the Ukraine during the war and then in the occupied Romanian territories that became the Moldavian SSR when Khrushchev was imposing a brutal *Russification* on the people and the province at the end of World War II.<sup>50</sup>

The circumstances of his appointment also were entirely exceptional. Immediately after Gheorghiu-Dej requested the withdrawal of Soviet troops in August 1955, Epishev was suddenly made a diplomat and appointed Soviet Ambassador to Romania. His appointment was so precipitous as to require the early withdrawal of the currently serving ambassador, L.G. Melnikov — himself an infamous *Russifier* and former Ukrainian party leader.<sup>51</sup>

After more than five years in Bucharest, and another two in Belgrade, General Epishev became head of the Soviet military's Main Political Administration; the political watchdog over the entire Soviet armed forces and over all of the armies of the Warsaw Pact. He held this post for twenty-three years, from 1962 until his death in 1985. As MPA chief his primary concern was the political reliability of the officer corps and "the corresponding ethnic problem" in the Warsaw Pact, so it is hardly surprising he became an enduring critic of Romania's independent defense strategy as threatening the cohesion of the alliance.<sup>52</sup> He also served as an invasion "storm petrel," leading the last reconnaissance by senior level officers of Czechoslovakia immediately prior to its invasion in August 1968, and again in Afghanistan prior to its invasion in December 1979.

[...] In any case, Thayer's advice was heeded and Bucharest's offers were not seriously taken up by Washington until after his departure. Meanwhile, Gheorghiu-Dej launched his campaign to remove Soviet troops from his country at the beginning of August 1955, incurring Khrushchev's wrath and a three-month freeze in Soviet Romanian relations.<sup>53</sup> Echoes of this effort that reached the CIA and State

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. Jan Sejna, *We Will Bury You*, London, Sedgwick and Jackson, 1982, p. 42. For Epishev's background see e.g. Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 141. Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of the Soviet Military Politics*, Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 23-25, 28, 67, 100, 112, 104, 198. Robert Slusser, "Alexei Alexeevich Yepishev," in George Simmonds, editor, *Soviet Leaders*, New York, 1967, p. 142; Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, pp. 141, 171.

<sup>50</sup> On Epishev's influence in Romania, see Sergiu Verona, *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops in Romania 1944-1958*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1992, pp. 135-137. One analyst noted of Epishev's later appointment that, as a "close associate of Khrushchev, with a long career in the security organs and a deep involvement in political control activities, Epishev was clearly the man to break the officer corps' resistance, and his appointment suggested that a showdown was imminent. Roman Kolkowicz as cited in Christoph Bluth, *Soviet Strategic Arms Policy Before SALT*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 144.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security 1933-1953*, Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1996, pp. 303-304.

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Jones, "Reflections on Mirror Images: Politics and Technology" in Emily O. Goldman and Leslie C. Eliason, editors, *The Diffusion of Military Technology and Ideas*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 143.

<sup>53</sup> Strobe Talbot, editor, *Khrushchev Remembers*, Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1970, p. 514; Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri. Mărturii despre stalinizarea României* [Maurer and the World of Yesterday: Witnessings of the Stalinization of Romania], 1995, p. 264. See also Ioan Scurtu, coordinator, *România*.

Department were dismissed as a Kremlin-initiated propaganda move lacking any significance.<sup>54</sup> In October 1956, one week before the Hungarian revolt, Bucharest initiated a still-born effort with Belgrade to establish non-intervention in domestic affairs as an essential principle between socialist countries.<sup>55</sup> The month before, Gheorghiu-Dej had offered to assist an interested Mao Zedong in approaching the US to resolve outstanding economic claims left over from World War II.<sup>56</sup>

On the eve of the Soviet intervention, 31 October 1956, Bucharest set out its lobbying strategy within the Warsaw Pact for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops and advisers, using arguments that were applicable across Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup> In what may have been the combined consequence of cognitive bias and intentional disinformation, US intelligence perceived the Romanian leadership as doing very much the opposite, predicting “that the Romanian regime will resist popular pressures for removal of Soviet troops” when, in fact, the regime was busily lobbying for that very result.<sup>58</sup>

*Retragerea trupelor sovietice. 1958: Culegere de documente* [Romania. The Withdrawal of Soviet Troops 1958: A Collection of Documents], Bucharest, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1996, pp. 221-222; Hlihor and Scurtu (2000), pp. 172-175; Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia, 1968*, Iași, Center for Romanian Studies, 2000, pp. 18-20.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. *National Intelligence Analysis: Probable Evolutions of the European Satellites Up To 1960*, 10 January 1956, NARA, Washington D.C., Record Group (RG) 263, CIA/NIE, box 3, folder 86, p. 14, CIA. This attitude may have been partly motivated by overestimations of the degree to which the recent signing of the Warsaw Pact represented accomplished fact in terms of Soviet control. A decade later, for instance, *National Intelligence Estimate No. 11-14-63* (8 January 1964) stated that since “May 1955, Soviet and European Satellite forces have been part of a unified military command established under the Warsaw Pact” placing the latter “under the ultimate control of the Soviet High Command” in wartime and leaving the joint command with “little or no operation role. The “manner and extent” Satellite forces would be employed, the assessment continued, was “probably determined by the Soviet estimate of their reliability and effectiveness, and by the availability of supporting elements.” Thus, the policy and behavior of the Satellite states was inconsequential to their employment in offensive operations, and Soviet military control was deemed to exist at a level it not achieved until the late 1970s — and never achieved over Romania.

<sup>55</sup> Hlihor and Scurtu (2000), p. 179. In this regard, Soviet and Hungarian insistence that Romania offered to intervene militarily in Hungary in 1956 should be treated with skepticism in the absence of confirming Romanian archival evidence. Although possible given the complicated push-and-pull over Transylvania in Romanian-Hungarian relations, such a position was unlikely given parallel Romanian initiatives at the time.

<sup>56</sup> Romulus Ioan Burdura, *Politica de Independență a României și relațiile Româno-Chineze 1954-1975: Documente* [Romania's Policy of Independence and Romanian-Chinese Relations 1954-1975: Documents], Bucharest, Arhivele Naționale ale României [Romanian National Archives], 2008, volume I, Document no. 2, pp. 95-96.

<sup>57</sup> On 31 October 1956, the Political Bureau of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) Central Committee (CC) instructed its delegates to Warsaw Pact conferences to “discuss the problem of the stationing of Soviet troops in Romania with the government of the Soviet Union. ... the Romanian government does not consider the stationing of Soviet troops on its territory to be necessary, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of the RPR would deprive the opposition forces, both internal and external, of the opportunity to create anti-Soviet agitation. At the same time, RPR governmental delegations should raise with the government of the Soviet Union the problem of recalling Soviet advisors working for various institutions.” Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan, eds, 1956. *Explozia: Percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria* [1956. The Explosion: Romanian, Yugoslav and Soviet Perceptions on the Events in Poland and Hungary], Bucharest, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1996, p. 148; Hlihor and Scurtu (2000), p. 179.

<sup>58</sup> *Current Intelligence Bulletin: The Hungarian Situation (Information as of 1700, 6 November 1956*, 7 November 1956 (declassified 6 October 1997), p. 13, CIA. The potential for disinformation regarding Romanian intentions to influence CIA assessments increased if Hungarian sources were involved, which was presumably the case for a report on the Hungarian situation. US State Secretary John Foster Dulles underscored Department of State belief that Poland pressed for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary in 1956 while Romania supported their presence. *Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions*, Washington, November 2, 1956 - 10:16 p.m., Document 157 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*,

In reaction to the Soviet military suppression of the Hungarian revolt US intelligence downgraded the possibility of any defiance within the Bloc (with the partial exception of Poland). A *National Intelligence Estimate* of mid-February 1957 concluded, for example, that "Soviet control over the Satellites is virtually complete and is unlikely to diminish or to be successfully challenged from within during the period of this estimate."<sup>59</sup> This assessment was reified with even greater force the following year by identifying popular revolt and defiance on particular issues as equally improbable for any of the Satellites: "We believe that the recurrence of popular revolt or of an attempt by a Satellite Communist party to defy Moscow on vital issues is unlikely at least over the next few years."<sup>60</sup>

The impact of this correlation can be seen in a February 1958 *National Intelligence Estimate* that first identifies Romanian independent trends and then assimilates them to the cognitive bias that held Romanian independence to be unlikely: Since the Hungarian revolt, the Romanian regime has in some ways gone farther than the other orthodox satellites in the general direction of post-Stalin reform. It appears, for example, to be making sizeable efforts to improve living standards and to increase trade with the West. Further, Romania's relations with Yugoslavia have consistently been better than those of other orthodox satellites and it has renewed its pre-Hungary campaign to improve relations with the US.<sup>61</sup>

The same assessment then dismissed confirming information from other East European sources and insisted that there had to be a better explanation — i.e. one conforming to the prevailing cognitive bias — for Romanian behavior: Some optimistic Yugoslav and Polish observers suggest that Romania is gradually attempting on its own initiative to move toward autonomy. We believe that the factors cited in support of this thesis can be explained more satisfactorily in other terms — including a real need for expanded trade with the West, internal economic improvement, and an apparent regime desire to identify itself with the policies of Khrushchev. We believe that if, in fact, the Romanian regime is to gain notably greater autonomy, this would be accomplished slowly and cautiously and under Moscow's auspices.<sup>62</sup>

Volume XXV, *Eastern Europe*. On the contrary, Gomulka insisted that Soviet troops remain both in Hungary and in his own country while Gheorghiu-Dej avoided the topic in order not to compromise his own efforts to remove Soviet troops from Romania, underway since 1955. See e.g. Sergei Khrushchev, editor, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Statesman, 1953-1964*, Volume 3, Philadelphia, Penn State Press, 2007, pp. 652, 670-672, 705-709.

<sup>59</sup> *Stability Of The Soviet Satellite Structure (NIE 12-57)*, 19 February 1957 (declassified 22 September 1993), 14 pp., CIA. The *Estimate* covered the next five years.

<sup>60</sup> *Soviet Capabilities and Policies 1958-1963 (NIE 11-4-58)*, CIA.

<sup>61</sup> *Outlook For Stability In The Eastern European Satellites (NIE 12-58)* (Supersedes NIE 1957), 4 February 1958, pp. 6-7, CIA. Priority of place for Poland and Hungary regarding positive attitudes toward Belgrade was for a while maintained by formulating assessments in such a way that Romania was not distinguished by the fact that it did not criticize Belgrade at all while both Budapest and Warsaw did. Thus, Hungary was depicted as "conciliatory" towards Yugoslavia, even though it condemned its party for "anti-Marxist views" and justified "the 1948 resolution expelling Belgrade from the Cominform" as "essentially correct," whereas Romania was depicted "like Hungary," as avoiding "direct involvement in the dispute," although it did not criticize Belgrade or justify its exclusion. "Satellites Differ on Yugoslav Question," *Central Intelligence Bulletin: Daily Brief*, 24 May 1958, p. 2, CIA.

<sup>62</sup> *Outlook For Stability In The Eastern European Satellites (NIE 12-58)* (1958), pp. 6-7, CIA. Not surprisingly, Romanian efforts to purchase 100 million USD worth of industrial equipment at the end of February, before the Soviet troop withdrawal, was widely interpreted as Soviet-initiated and in the service of Moscow's political aims and economic needs. *New York Times*, 25 February 1958.



[...] The same anticipated lack of any defiance on the part of Bucharest led US observers to conclude that the actual withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania in May-July 1958 had no strategic significance whatsoever. Added only at the tail end of the CIA's *Daily Brief* for the White House and several other federal departments as a "late item," the Agency stated simply that the Soviet withdrawal of "all its forces from Romania and one division from Hungary is primarily intended to make Moscow's stand on disarmament issues appear more conciliatory" and "to reinforce Moscow's argument against discussing Eastern Europe" at the upcoming summit.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Romania's singular rejection of any supranational authority over its economy at the immediately preceding Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) meeting (the two meetings were back to back during 22-24 May 1958), was perceived by the CIA only as a "mutual rivalry and unwillingness" among the Satellites resulting in a generalized reluctance "to go along with various economic specialization schemes purporting to aim at a rational division of labor within the bloc."<sup>64</sup>

Again, the impact of cognitive bias is evident in the insistence with which any military or strategic import was denied the Soviet troop withdrawal.<sup>65</sup> A 1959 *Estimate* likewise buried mention of it in the fourth sentence of a paragraph on "military developments," stating simply that "Soviet divisions stationed in Rumania since World War II were withdrawn, and Soviet forces in East Germany and Hungary reduced — moves which had little if any military significance."<sup>66</sup> It was some years before US intelligence generally recognized the importance of Soviet "boots on the ground" for influencing Eastern European behavior, and how little very real but not immediately present military power was able to influence that same behavior. As the CIA later recognized: Nothing has testified to the efficacy of Soviet military power as a direct instrument of control quite so eloquently as the consequences of its removal from Yugoslavia, Romania, and, after a long delay, Czechoslovakia. The mistake of withdrawal is not likely to be repeated in the foreseeable future.<sup>67</sup>

### [...] *Organizational Pathologies.* *The Cuban Missile Crisis and Enemy-Imaging*

Along with cognitive bias, organizational pathologies deriving from the need to maintain the secrecy of information and sources as well as from the tendency to

<sup>63</sup> "The Communist Bloc: Bloc economic integration," *Central Intelligence Bulletin: Daily Brief*, 27 May 1958, pp. iv, 9, CIA.

<sup>64</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. i.

<sup>65</sup> Washington considered the withdrawal "unimportant" and "of no significant impact." Verona (1992), p. 143. See also pp. 80-85, 144-148.

<sup>66</sup> *National Intelligence Estimate: Political Stability in the European Satellites* (NIE 12-59), 11 August 1959, p. 5, CIA.

<sup>67</sup> *Instability and Change in Soviet-Dominated Eastern Europe: An Intelligence Assessment* (EUR 82-10124), 1 January 1982, p. 18, CIA. US intelligence was very clear on the greater importance of actual physical compulsion over mere intimidation in keeping its empire together. The Soviets "have had to resort to military force to hold on to three East European states (East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia), and in instances where force was not used they have seen the departure from the Bloc of two countries (Yugoslavia and Albania) and the partial departure of one more (Romania)." *The USSR and the Changing Scene in Europe* (NIE 12-72), 26 October 1972, p. 10, CIA.

rely on the conclusions of former analyses in making current assessments (i.e. hindsight bias) even after the intelligence on which those assessments were based has since been disproven, discredited or superseded by better intelligence also bedeviled US understanding of Romania.<sup>68</sup> Pathological secrecy and compartmentalization were clearly at work in US assessments of Romania's potential participation in a Soviet-provoked offensive against the United States and NATO.

During the Berlin and Cuban crises of 1961-1962, Moscow ordered the Romanian armed forces to alert status without informing the RCP leadership, prompting Bucharest to end the Soviet training of their military personnel and to purge their officer corps. In the aftermath of Cuba, Romania launched three foreign and security policies that it would pursue up to its revolution in December 1989: (1) mediation and negotiation as the only permissible response to international tensions; (2) military disengagement and disarmament; and (3) Warsaw Pact reform towards genuine coalition. The primary purpose of all three was the constraint of Soviet military power so that Moscow could not provoke a war, especially a nuclear war, into which Romania could be drawn.

The first manifestation of these new policies was in a highly classified October 1963 message from Gheorghiu-Dej to President John F. Kennedy, carried by the Romanian Foreign Minister and hand-delivered to the US Secretary of State.<sup>69</sup> Gheorghiu-Dej announced to Washington that Romania was neither informed nor approved of the Soviet missile deployments in Cuba; that Romania would not join the USSR in any offensive attack against the US; that Romanian armed forces were fully under national control (and therefore should not be considered an addendum to Soviet military strength); and that Romania did not and would not host Soviet nuclear weapons on its territory.<sup>70</sup> On this last point, US teams were invited to conduct their own verification on Romanian territory, easily the most intrusive confidence-building measure to which any Warsaw Pact member had agreed up to that point.

This was political dynamite. Romania was declaring its neutrality in any war provoked by the USSR against the West, which held the potential not only for serious Soviet-Romanian tensions but even for Soviet military intervention if leaked to Moscow. Such a stance also presented the possibility of security cooperation with the US — beginning with the Romanian-proposed confidence-building measure of voluntary security transparency regarding nuclear weapons.

<sup>68</sup> Heuers (1999), pp. 161-172.

<sup>69</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *A Journey Through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment and Coexistence*, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institute, 2001, pp. 140-151; Raymond L. Garthoff, "When and Why Romania Distanced itself from the Warsaw Pact," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 5 (Spring 1995), p. 35.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* Garthoff learned of this communication at the time from Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He re-confirmed its contents and circumstances in 1990 with Rusk and with former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy. Garthoff's interlocutors expressed their belief that no paper record of the exchange was created or filed. A very similar account is related by former Foreign Minister Corneliu Mănescu who delivered the message to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. See Lavinia Betea's interview with Mănescu, "Convorbiri neinterminate cu Corneliu Mănescu" [Unfinished Conversations with Corneliu Mănescu] in Lavinia Betea, *Partea lor de adevăr* [Their Side of the Truth], Bucharest, Compania, 2008, p. 501. Mănescu's account coincides with that given in the journal of Gheorghiu-Dej's chef de cabinet. Paul Sfetcu, *13 ani în anticamera lui Dej* [Thirteen Years in Dej's Anticamera], Bucharest, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2000, pp. 83-91.

By November 1963 Bucharest launched its official policy of mediating international tension between all states, including the capitalist ones, which it further underscored as a “sacred obligation” in its April 1964 “declaration of independence.”<sup>71</sup> By December 1964 echoes of Romanian proposals for democratizing alliance procedures and representation were appearing in the international media as calls for “new ways of decision-making within the Warsaw Pact.”<sup>72</sup> The heart of these “new ways” included the rotation of all command posts — a Soviet monopoly — to non-Soviet members; an East European say over the use of Soviet nuclear weapons deployed on their territories (akin to NATO’s “two-key” arrangements); and collective decision-making on any combat use of the Pact’s Unified Armed Forces. As explained to *The New York Times*, the Romanians wanted “to avoid a situation like the Cuban crisis of 1962 in which foreign missiles could be fired from our territory without our consent.”<sup>73</sup>

At the Warsaw Pact summit in January 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej spectacularly refused to support Soviet calls for a military build-up to respond to alleged US and NATO arms escalation (in connection with the newly-announced Multilateral Nuclear Force that would place US nuclear missiles in West Germany) with the counterproposal that the Warsaw Pact members engage in negotiation and disarmament, including unilateral reductions, as the most appropriate response.<sup>74</sup> This policy insistence on military disengagement and disarmament was the basis for Romania’s obdurate “obstructionism” in every subsequent Warsaw Pact encounter, including and especially those during the various heights of the Soviet “war-scare” later pressed by Yuri Andropov.<sup>75</sup>

Unfortunately, cognitive bias and disinformation combined with the organizational pathologies of secrecy and compartmentalization to conceal the October 1963 message not only from America’s NATO allies but also from US intelligence services, the message remaining from one head of state to another

<sup>71</sup> Maurer (1963), pp. 11-22, Document 3 in Larry L. Watts, *Romanian Security Policy and the Cuban Crisis*, Cold War International History Project e-Dossier no. 38, Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, March 2013 (forthcoming), at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication-series/cwihp-e-dossier-series>. The April declaration also proclaimed that there was no “leading center” or super-ordinate and subordinate (“father” and “son”) parties, but all had equal rights and powers and should cooperate with each other and with other actors in the international system on a non-ideological basis. *Scântea*, 23 April 1964. The declaration was considered the death knell of supranational CMEA economic integration by both US intelligence and academic researchers. *Changing Patterns In Eastern Europe* (1964), p. 11; William E. Griffith, *Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-1965*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1967, pp. 32, 269-296.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. Max Frankel, “Rumanians Widen Independent Line: Seek ‘Spiritual’ Tie to West - Even Hint at Claim to a Soviet Border Area,” *New York Times*, 19 December 1964.

<sup>73</sup> “Rumania Opposes Soviet on Control of Armies” in *The New York Times*, 18 May 1966.

<sup>74</sup> *Speech by the Romanian Head of State (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, 19 January 1965, PHP.*

<sup>75</sup> According to one analyst, the stance adopted by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965 “marked a turning point in the history of the Eastern alliance” by making Romania “a serious obstacle to any coordination of policy within the Warsaw Pact” for the rest of the Cold War. Douglas Selvage, “The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Non-Proliferation 1963-1965,” April 2001, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper Series, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, p. 21. For the very diametrically opposite stances of Andropov and Ceaușescu in 1983 see Larry L. Watts, “Romania and the Wartime Statute,” paper presented at Woodrow Wilson Center event “Warsaw Pact: Wartime Statutes — Instruments of Soviet Control,” 5 April 2011 at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Watts%20-%20Romania%20%26%20Statute.pdf>, pp. 9-10.

for thirty years, until it was first revealed in 1993.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, and bearing in mind the pre-existing image of Romania as the "least likely" to seriously challenge Moscow, US intelligence continued to conclude the very opposite. Every single declassified CIA assessment and community-wide *National Intelligence Estimate* from 1963 through 1989 held that Romania would participate in a Soviet military offensive against the United States and NATO.<sup>77</sup>

The furthest extent to which US intelligence was willing to go — in 1965 and 1966 — was to list Romania along with Hungary and Bulgaria as probably showing reluctance before inevitable acquiescence.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, US intelligence neither sought nor perceived confirming evidence of such a rift between Moscow and Bucharest, and Soviet complaints that Romania had broken off intelligence collaboration with the USSR in 1963 and 1964, or Moscow's exclusion of an uninterested Romania from the Warsaw Pact's offensive war planning in 1965, went unrecorded by US agencies.<sup>79</sup> A decade later, shortly after US

<sup>76</sup> Garthoff (2001), pp. 149-151. There remains the possibility that the message was shared with some of the heads of agencies but then dismissed or downgraded by them. More likely, broader knowledge of the message fell victim to a combination of heightened secrecy and the confusion accompanying the unexpected death of a chief executive after Kennedy's assassination a month later.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO* (NIE 11-14-75), 4 September 1975 (declassified 13 March 1996), pp. 32-33; *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO* (NIE 11-14-79): Volume I - Summary Estimate, 31 January 1979, pp. 63-68; *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO* (NIE 11-14-81), 7 July 1981, pp. 27-28, 30; *Military Reliability of the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact Allies* (NIE 12/11-83), 28 June 1983, pp. 3-5, 7, 14. US assessments held to this conclusion even though it was "unclear" what role Romania would play since it "balked at any participation" in offensive operations. *Employment of Warsaw Pact Forces Against NATO* (NI IIM 83-10002), 1 July 1983, p. 9, CIA (See also pp. 3-4, 8).

<sup>78</sup> According to a 1965 *National Intelligence Estimate*, "If the USSR should order mobilization, their responses would probably differ, ranging from immediate compliance by the East Germans to recalcitrance on the part of the Romanians. ... In a particularly threatening situation, Romania and possibly others might procrastinate in an attempt to remain neutral and might communicate privately with the other side." However, the *Estimate* concluded, "Because of strict discipline, party indoctrination, careful screening of officers and key troops, and the very nature of military organization, the better East European divisions could probably be relied upon to take part, at least initially, in [offensive] military operations in conjunction with Soviet forces." *Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Pact* (NIE 12-65), 26 August 1965, p. 5, CIA. A year later the US intelligence community concluded that in a Soviet attack on the West, "the governments of East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would probably feel compelled to go along, perceiving no alternative and, in this instance, their troops would prove unreliable, at least initially. The behavior of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria would be more uncertain, but Soviet planning would probably require no more of them than increased readiness to defend their own territories." *Reliability of the USSR's East European Allies: Special National Intelligence Estimate* (SNIE 11-15-66), 4 August 1966, pp. 2-3, CIA.

<sup>79</sup> Soviet leader Nikolai Podgorny stated on 11 July 1964 that "Beginning in 1963, the Romanian intelligence organs had in fact ended any sort of collaboration with our intelligence organs. This is the factual state of affairs." *Transcript of Conversations Between Delegations of the RWP CC and the CPSU CC, Moscow, July 1964, Meeting of 11 July 1964*, Document 7 in Watts (2013); Document 4 in Vasile Buga, *O vară fierbinte în relațiile româno-sovietice: Convorbirile de la Moscova din iulie 1964* [A Hot Summer in Romanian-Soviet Relations: Conversations in Moscow during July 1964], Bucharest, Romanian Academy, National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 2012, pp. 4-197. The KGB chairman later confirmed to a *Stasi* colleague that "beginning in 1963 there were no longer any official representatives of the two secret services, the so-called liaison officers, in Romania or the Soviet Union," and "only sporadic exchanges of intelligence" occurred. Markus Wolf, *Conversation with the Committee for State Security that took place between 3-6 April 1967 in Moscow*, BStU, MfS, SdM 1432, S. 2, 8; Herbstritt and Olaru (2005), p. 94. See also "New Evidence on Soviet Intelligence: The KGB's 1967 Annual Report, with Commentaries by Raymond Garthoff and Amy Knight," *CWHP Bulletin*, no. 10 (March 1998), pp. 215, 218, CWHP. For detail on the Romanian-Soviet intelligence breach see Watts (2010), especially Chapter 8, "Shutting Down Soviet Intelligence Networks, 1956-1963." For Romania's exclusion from Pact war planning see Imre Okváth, "Hungary in the Warsaw Pact: The Initial Phase

intelligence reiterated its conclusion that Romania would be compelled to fight on behalf of the Warsaw Pact in a general war provoked by the USSR, the Warsaw Pact Commander-in-Chief announced that the “troops from the Army of the Socialist Republic of Romania were excluded” from operational “plans for joint action by United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty” precisely because Moscow proved unable to compel their participation.<sup>80</sup>

Aside from reflecting the dysfunctional effects of pathological secrecy and compartmentalization, the dogged inclusion of Romania as a participant — even if unenthusiastic — in a Soviet offensive against the US bore the hallmarks of “hindsight bias.” Throughout the 1970s, the CIA’s asset on the Polish General Staff, Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, repeatedly drew attention to Romania’s singular behavior within the alliance that confirmed important aspects of the 1963 missive to President Kennedy.<sup>81</sup> However, Colonel Kuklinski’s intelligence was also so highly classified (*COSMIC*) and so closely held that it had no impact on the military enemy-image of Romania that continued to be perpetuated by a large part of the US intelligence community — and through them to the decision and opinion-makers with access to their assessments — throughout the rest of the Cold War.

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<sup>80</sup> *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO* (1975), p. 33; *Iakubovskii Report on the State of the United Armed Forces*, 31 December 1975, Document no. 77 in Mastny and Byrne (2005), pp. 395-396.

<sup>81</sup> See e.g. the Kuklinski documents in the CIA’s “Special Collection,” *Wartime Statute — Instrument of Soviet Control* at <http://www.foia.cia.gov/wartime-statutes.asp>. See also Colonel (retired) Ryszard J. Kuklinski, “Insiders View of the War Against the Nation,” *Kultura* (Paris), no. 4/475 (April 1987), pp. 3-57; and Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Colonel, His Covert Mission, And The Price He Paid To Save His Country*, New York, PublicAffairs, 2005, pp. 151-152, 156, 171, 174, 178, 183-184.



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