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*In Europe's Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* is an evocative and thought-provoking account of Robert D. Kaplan's past and present ventures into Romania, the Balkans, and the peripheries of Eastern Europe. The book can be thought of as a sequel to his 1993 work, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, written in the same settings, methodology, and style of *In Europe's Shadow*, except that they take place over 30 years apart. It is a unique publication in which the personal experiences of the author are intertwined with historical events, geographical surveys, contemporary issues regarding politics, culture, religion, social tensions, and economics. All wrapped up in a geopolitical framework which gives the book its structure. Its primary purpose is to inform the readers about the contemporary domestic and international state of affairs of Romania, noting the very significant differences between current Romania and communist Cold War-era Romania. Robert Kaplan's unique writing style and highly personalized eyewitness accounts of the regions he visits truly make his arguments that much more compelling and entertaining.

*In Europe's Shadow* contains a wide variety of material that covers almost everything about the Romanian nation-state including many of its important historical events and figures, the great diversity of its peoples and cultures that reside within its historical borders, the past and present tensions and disputes with its neighbors, its conflicting interests with various old empires and their successors, interviews with local citizens and groups, maps of the various shapes the territory has taken, and most importantly its geography's effects on its society. The thesis of the work is very clearly laid out in many parts of the book: geography is always one of the biggest motivators behind the actions taken by governments, which the author uses to provide excellent explanations of Romania's track record of governments, alliances, incursions into other territories, invasions suffered at the hands of empires, cultures, and economic successes and failures.

The book begins with Kaplan's momentous decision to embark on journalistic ventures in Romania back in 1981 after his service in the Israeli Defense Forces. The first chapter gives us a glimpse of the titular nation. Drab, Stalinist-era and Soviet style buildings in Bucharest complemented the struggles that Romanians were going through in the 1980s, "a decade that would be among the worst in Romanian history" where average Romanians "had been 'reduced... to an animal state, concerned only with the problems of day-to-day survival'" (pg. 5). Fast forward to 2013 shows a world of differences in the same city. Orthodox hymns, spirituality, and celebrations fill the streets during Easter and other religious holidays, modern day shops and restored buildings dot the cityscape, and a cosmopolitan culture reminiscent of cities such as New York or Paris is dominant. The rest of Kaplan's work explores much of the country outside of the capital, describing places like the Carpathian Mountains, the Black Sea coastline, the flat plains of the south, and many of the border regions Romania shares with neighboring countries. The ousting of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and the fall of the Soviet Union brought about one of the most dramatic shifts in
Romanian history, allowing for a blossoming of Romanian self-determination and development without dictatorial hindrances. Much of the primary focus of *In Europe's Shadow* is already well covered within the first few chapters.

The author takes it upon himself to cover as many of the characteristics that define Romania as possible, taking great care to link twenty-first century Romanian society with the consequences of actions taken during the twentieth century and earlier. Those same actions that have affected Romanian history are deeply influenced by the terrain itself. For example, while visiting the Baragan steppe in the Wallachian plain, Kaplan describes the wide open terrain as "infinitely invadable" (pg. 81), listing a large number of groups that have invaded Romania through that terrain. Examples include the Romans, Goths, and Central Asian tribes such as "Huns, Visigoths, Avars, Cumans, and Pechenegs" (ibid.). With the transfer of the Roman capital from Rome to Constantinople in 330 A.D., the easily invadable land of southeastern Romania promptly fell to the military might of the Byzantine Empire and its predominantly Greek Orthodox culture. With that invasion complete, the "fusion of Roman Latinity and Greek Orthodox Christianity" occurred, which allow "ancient Rome and Greece to live on" in Romanian culture (pg. 83). It is particularly evident nowadays because Romanians simply want to reject the twentieth century Soviet ideologies and belief systems. Examples of the influences include a predominantly Latin language being spoken by most Romanians while the Byzantine Empire "provided Romania with a cultural and religious identity... has also proffered the Romanian people stores of spiritual beauty, aesthetic abundance, and geopolitical inspiration" (ibid.), all simply because some flat, fertile terrain to their southeast allowed invaders to enter with ease.

*In Europe's Shadow* has a vast amount of sources used to talk about every single detailed claim made in the book. The thesis of the book, which is a geopolitical analysis of the influences that have shaped Romanian culture and history, is amply supported by all sorts of materials including, but not limited to, historical journals and volumes, encyclopedias, news articles, firsthand accounts, interviews, university publications, literature, and geopolitical entries. There is no shortage of sources because there are dozens of them, and just about all the sources used are of substantial quality. Every important statement and claim made by Kaplan is always accompanied by sources and notes to support it.

Robert D. Kaplan has a long history of contributing to the field of geopolitics and international relations with his extensive travels, countless hours spent researching and reading, and incredible analyses of the countries he visits. The contribution of *In Europe's Shadow* is quite substantial in that it does an excellent job of explaining the logic, reasoning, and explanations behind historical decisions and events that have affected the lives of millions of Romanians. Kaplan uses sufficient primary and secondary sources to support his arguments in a very eloquent manner. The author never makes assumptions about anything as just about every claim is supported with sources and evidence. He does not assume that everyone is as knowledgeable of all the topics written in the book as he is, and provides plenty of clarity and assistance to guide readers, so much so that any newcomer into geopolitics would not have a difficult time delving into his works. Kaplan filled the book with maps, precise locations, detailed historical narratives, and language that is easy to understand. The author remains objective in his detailed accounts of history and political actions, always making the effort to understand the reasoning behind every action taken by leaders and communities. No important information is ever omitted for the sake of reinforcing any argument he makes since Kaplan goes all out in giving full details on everything he writes about. He does cover secondary literature sufficiently with extensive references that relate to the issues and topics being discussed.

*In Europe's Shadow* is a fantastic publication that does a wonderful job taking us on a journey to discover the grand amounts of history, culture, and contemporary society that Romania and its neighbors have. Kaplan has raised the bar on geopolitical analyses with his travels and personalized research methods that will be difficult for almost anyone to recreate. The book does raise new questions regarding future research, such as "Will other publications on similar topics have to provide as much detail and as many
sources of information as this book?" *In Europe's Shadow* would benefit just about anyone that is developing an interest in foreign affairs and international relations. It is built on the foundation of realism, a practice that accepts given facts and makes no ideological arguments for anything. In order to properly study geopolitics and international relations, one must retain an objective and realistic outlook on issues and this book is an excellent example of how to analyze other countries and their relations with others. Overall, it is a text that ought to be read and analyzed thoroughly for the sheer amount of useful information it provides and the style it presents it in.