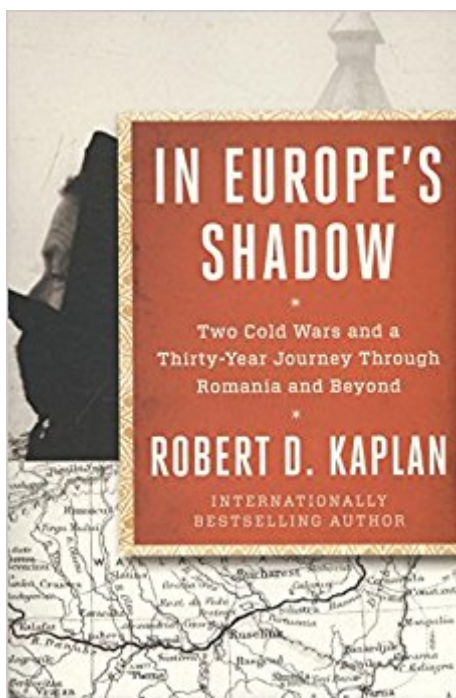


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# In Europe's Shadow



## Synopsis

From the New York Times bestselling author Robert D. Kaplan, named one of the world's Top 100 Global Thinkers by Foreign Policy magazine, comes a riveting journey through one of Europe's frontier countries and a potent examination of the forces that will determine Europe's fate in the postmodern age. Robert Kaplan first visited Romania in the 1970s, when he was a young journalist and the country was a bleak Communist backwater. It was one of the darkest corners of Europe, but few Westerners were paying attention. What ensued was a lifelong obsession with a critical, often overlooked country—a country that, today, is key to understanding the current threat that Russia poses to Europe. In *Europe's Shadow* is a vivid blend of memoir, travelogue, journalism, and history, a masterly work thirty years in the making—the story of a journalist coming of age, and a country struggling to do the same. Through the lens of one country, Kaplan examines larger questions of geography, imperialism, the role of fate in international relations, the Cold War, the Holocaust, and more. Here Kaplan illuminates the fusion of the Latin West and the Greek East that created Romania, the country that gave rise to Ion Antonescu, Hitler's chief foreign accomplice during World War II, and the country that was home to the most brutal strain of Communism under Nicolae Ceaușescu. Romania past and present are rendered in cinematic prose: the ashen faces of citizens waiting in bread lines in Cold War-era Bucharest; the Bărăgan Steppe, laid bare by centuries of foreign invasion; the grim labor camps of the Black Sea Canal; the majestic Gothic church spires of Transylvania and Maramureș. Kaplan finds himself in dialogue with the great thinkers of the past, and with the Romanians of today, the philosophers, priests, and politicians—those who struggle to keep the flame of humanism alive in the era of a resurgent Russia. Upon his return to Romania in 2013 and 2014, Kaplan found the country transformed yet again—now a traveler's destination shaped by Western tastes, yet still emerging from the long shadows of Hitler and Stalin. In *Europe's Shadow* is the story of an ideological and geographic frontier—and the book you must read in order to truly understand the crisis Europe faces, from Russia and from within. Praise for *In Europe's Shadow* “[A] haunting yet ultimately optimistic examination of the human condition as found in Romania . . . Kaplan's account of the centuries leading up to the most turbulent of all—the twentieth—is both sweeping and replete with alluring detail.” —Alison Smale, *The New York Times Book Review* “This book reveals the confident, poetical Kaplan . . . but also a reflective, political Kaplan, seeking at times to submerge his gift for romantic generalization in respectful attention to the ideas of others.” —Timothy Snyder, *The Washington Post* “A

serious yet impassioned survey of Romania . . . Kaplan is a regional geographer par excellence. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) “Kaplan is one of America’s foremost writers on the region. . . . In a series of deep dives into the region’s past • Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg and Soviet • he finds parallels and echoes that help us understand the present. [The Wall Street Journal](#) “Kaplan moves seamlessly from sights, sounds, and conversations to the resonance of history. [Foreign Affairs](#) From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

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## Customer Reviews

“[A] haunting yet ultimately optimistic examination of the human condition as found in Romania . . . The author delves into the ancient roots of Romania’s culture and religion. . . . [Robert D.] Kaplan’s account of the centuries leading up to the most turbulent of all • the twentieth • is both sweeping and replete with alluring detail. . . . The rich characters who wander through these pages . . . dispense wisdom from book-lined homes, cafes, or chapels old and new. . . . Kaplan’s Romania offers lessons on the value of malleability, and what • endures. [Alison Smale, The New York Times Book Review](#) “This book reveals the confident, poetical Kaplan . . . but also a reflective, political Kaplan, seeking at times to submerge his gift for romantic generalization in respectful attention to the ideas of others. That tension • between an aesthetic sense of wholeness and the

intellectual acceptance of complexity” is the real subject of the book, both as autobiography and as geopolitics.

• Timothy Snyder, *The Washington Post*: “A serious yet impassioned survey of Romania . . . [Kaplan’s] method is that of a foreign correspondent, firing off dispatches from the South China Sea to North Yemen to the darkest corners of Eastern Europe when it was still Iron Curtain country, and his approach has a Thucydidean texture: a gimlet-eyed realism as gathered by evidence, and guided by an understanding that the knee-jerk of history is self-interest. . . . Kaplan is a regional geographer par excellence, undeniably, whatever you think of his conclusions a big-picture man.

• *The Christian Science Monitor*: “Kaplan is one of America’s foremost writers on the region. . . . In a series of deep dives into the region’s past—Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg and Soviet—he finds parallels and echoes that help us understand the present.

• *The Wall Street Journal*: “Kaplan moves seamlessly from sights, sounds, and conversations to the resonance of history. . . . In Kaplan’s hands, Romania emerges as no mere footnote, but as a historical and political pivot.

• *Foreign Affairs*: “Kaplan’s work exemplifies rare intellectual, moral and political engagement with the political order and disorder of our world. . . . Kaplan’s writing is like the places he visits. It’s a terrain, a concentrated expression of a particular part of the world as he sees it. . . . In *Europe’s Shadow* amounts to a kind of historical anthropology plus geopolitics, a deep study of a particular country and people. . . . It shows how, at one and the same time, Romania is distinctive and a key to a broader and deeper understanding of contemporary Europe.

• *The Huffington Post*: “Kaplan’s is travel writing at its contemporary finest, weaving in the sights and sounds of a faraway land alongside interviews with its philosophers and politicians. . . . [In *Europe’s Shadow*] provides an incisive, tactile introduction to the politics and potential prospects of Central and Southeastern Europe—a region that finds itself once again caught in the headwinds of history.

• *RealClearWorld*: “A masterly work of important history, analysis, and prophecy about the ancient and modern rise of Romania as a roundabout between Russia and Europe . . . I learned something new on every page. Robert D. Kaplan is a master.

• Tom Brokaw: “A tour de force of cultural and political travel writing in which Romania’s complex past and uncertain present become vivid and newly urgent.

• Colin Thubron, author of *Shadow of the Silk Road* and co-editor of Patrick Leigh Fermor’s *The Broken Road*: “Robert D. Kaplan has the remarkable ability to see over the geopolitical horizon, and he now turns his attention to Europe’s

marchlands – the former Greater Romania – lying between the Balkans and a resurgent Russia. In a triple journey through books, landscapes, and histories, he tackles the meaning of geography, the influence of intellectuals, and the daffiness and power of nationalism. . . . Timely, insightful, and deeply honest.

Charles King, professor of international affairs, Georgetown University, and author of *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul* – “For an appreciation of contemporary Romanian attitudes, Robert Kaplan’s book has no equal. As an outsider, yet within, the author offers an analysis of Romania that combines erudition and authority. His sparkling, suggestive reflections, drawing upon history and landscape, capture the DNA of the country and its inhabitants.”

Dennis Deletant, Ion Rațiu Visiting Professor of Romanian Studies, Georgetown University, and emeritus professor, University College London – “A moving book – an illuminating and compassionate guide through the labyrinth of Romania’s immensely convoluted and often traumatic past . . . In spite of the many dark, distressing moments that no one should ignore, *In Europe’s Shadow* conveys a sense of hope, promise, and continuous renewal.”

Vladimir Tismăneanu, professor of politics, University of Maryland, and author of *The Devil in History: Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century* – “Kaplan illuminates the extraordinary journey of the people of Romania, as well as millions of other East Europeans, from the tragic Soviet despotism of the decades after the Second World War to their more hopeful and democratic future as members of NATO and the European Union. Kaplan’s ability to weave together complex histories, religion, memory, and political thought is nearly unmatched.”

Nicholas Burns, professor, Harvard Kennedy School, and former undersecretary of state for political affairs – “A favorite of mine for years, Robert D. Kaplan is a thoughtful and insight-driven historian who writes clear and compelling prose, but what I like most about him is his political sophistication. In *Europe’s Shadow* makes you look up and think about what’s on the page – a true pleasure for the reader.”

Alan Furst – From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Robert D. Kaplan is the bestselling author of sixteen books on foreign affairs and travel that have been translated into many languages, including *Asia’s Cauldron*, *The Revenge of Geography*, *Monsoon*, *The Coming Anarchy*, and *Balkan Ghosts*. He is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a contributing editor at *The Atlantic*, where his work has appeared

for three decades. He was chief geopolitical analyst at Stratfor, a visiting professor at the United States Naval Academy, and a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board. Foreign Policy magazine twice named him one of the world's Top 100 Global Thinkers. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

When my wife accepted a position to teach in Bucharest, Romania, I went online to look for books on Romania, and at the top of the list I found Robert D. Kaplan's *In Europe's Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* (2016). I hadn't known about it, but I certainly knew of Kaplan. I'd read his *The Coming Anarchy* (2000) and *Warrior Politics* (2001) and thought very highly of them both. I'd also read parts of *The Ends of the Earth* (2001) and *Monsoon* (2010). What a wonderful discovery! I dove in, and part way through I recommended it to my wife as we were running errands on our e-bike around Suzhou. "Do you know this guy?", she asked. "Yes, I've read his stuff. He's good. He's also written books about the Indian Ocean and India, and about China, Vietnam, and the South China Sea." "Is he following us?" "I don't know!" In checking the publication dates of *Monsoon* (2010) and *Asia's Cauldron* (March 2014), I determined that we were following him. Anyone acquainted with Kaplan won't be surprised at this. He must need a new 50-page passport every couple of years just based on the published accounts of his travels. (I wonder where he vacations?) No, we're just very lucky, especially with this book. We're especially fortunate to have this book because Kaplan hasn't just passed through Romania or considered as just another piece on the geopolitical chessboard. He's been traveling to Romania since the 1970's, and he's seen it transformed from a gray, Stalinist backwater, racked by poverty and fear, into a what is now a vibrant society that holds membership in the EU and NATO. Romania seems to have found a good place for itself. As Kaplan describes it: "History surely had not ended here, but it had for the moment become more benign." Kindle Locations 3916-3917. Kaplan displays a genuine affection for this nation, and this spurs his interest in its history and its present, as well as prompting him multiple visits to contemplate its unique place in the busy world of Eastern Europe. Kaplan first traveled to eastern Europe as a student in the early 1970s, and then he came a bit later to Romania as a young reporter. Trips back included a stint just after the Christmas Revolution in 1989 that toppled the hated Ceausescu regime and led to the summary trial and execution of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena. His most recent trip back was in 2014, when he observed the changes that have occurred in Romania after it has mostly-completed the transition to democracy and a market economy. This long history of personal involvement allows Kaplan to include not only his trademark travel writing, history, and geopolitical analysis, but it also serves as a bit of a memoir.

For instance, his observations and assessment of the brutality and waste of the Ceaucescu regime prompted him to support the Iraq War, a judgment that he reports that he has come to regret. (A pointed reminder of the limits of historical analogy for decision-making.) As he notes, he didn't foresee the subsequent Sunni-Shia civil war that would break out after Saddam's demise. Romania is a fascinating country, and Kaplan's draws on the distant past, the recent past, and the present to create his portrait of this country. Romania is a Western outpost in eastern Europe. Romanian is a Romance language, closely related to Italian and Spanish (and, I'm thrilled to report, not very difficult to learn). Romania identifies with the West, yet the thread of culture passes via the Romanian Orthodox Church, anchored in the tradition of Byzantium and the cultural heritage of Orthodoxy. Also, the Ottoman, Russian, and Hapsburg empires have exerted influences on this land through which the Danube flows to reach the Black Sea. Kaplan explains that the intellectual class, including prominent figures that reached maturity in the 1930s, such as Mircea Eliade and E.M. Cioran, were attracted to the political Right, not the Left, unlike most western European intellectuals. Romania suffered the influence of the Iron Guard, a fascist movement that helped prompt Romania to ally with Hitler in the early period of war. Its authoritarian (but not truly fascist) leader, General Antonescu, both protected some Jews (Romanians) and helped ship others to the death camps. Romania committed over a half-million troops to Hitler's war against the Soviet Union. But before the end of the war, Antonescu led Romania to switch sides and aid the Soviets against the Nazi regime. All of this intrigue didn't do Antonescu much good. He was executed immediately after the war. Through Kaplan's efforts in ancient, medieval, and modern history, we obtain a sense of the complexities of this culture and its political fortunes. His tour of the country, as well as neighboring Moldova (also Romanian speaking) and a foray into Hungary (now under a regime administering a "diet of low-calorie Putinism") gives us a further historical perspective. But also, in the tradition of great travel writing, Kaplan provides an intense sense of the present. (Among the several travel writers he mentions, Patrick Leigh Fermor gets a special mention, "that craftsman of irreducible godlike essences whose every sentence belongs in a time capsule". Kindle Locations 732-734). I've now begun Fermor's *Between the Woods and the Water*--just the prompt that I needed to uncork this campaign of travel writing.) From churches and monasteries to castles and homes, we get an engrossing sense of these places and the people who inhabit them. When my wife and I travel in Romania, we'll consult my Kaplan as much as our Lonely Planet. In all, the publication date of this work (February 9, 2016) could not have been better timed or more welcome. Kaplan's complex layering of history, personal observation, and geopolitical analysis creates the perfect primer for anyone wanting to explore this fascinating nation and its environs. Or it's a treat for anyone who

simply wants to enjoy the work of a master of observation and analysis. As Kaplan writes of Fermor, so I would of Kaplan: "to call him a mere travel writer is to diminish him." Id.

It's about Romanian geography, history, culture, politics, geo-politics... Also a very personal travel memoir. Tucked in there, as if you could fit more into the same pages, there's a great review of travel memoirs about Romania, and a gloss over the history of Europe in the 20th Century. What Robert D. Kaplan brings out is the incredible diversity packed into a small country that is still working to discover itself and its place in the mega-globalized world of today. For Romania to find itself, having fresh eyed perspective from the outside is essential, and Mr. Kaplan provides that. His book, in other words, may help outsiders understand Romania, and also helps Romanians understand Romania... But the best part, I think, and what stitches it all together is the very personal touch present throughout the book. The narrator describes not only what he sees but how he is touched and changed by what he's seeing, all painted onto a canvass of other past things he experienced or read - in short, a true intellectual journey, at once personal as it is universal in its reach and in its message.

I've learned to turn to Kaplan for deepening my understanding of current geo-political realities by his illuminating comments and detailed descriptions of the past. I postponed reading *In Europe's Shadow* until I had first read *Balkan Ghosts*, his first examination of the Balkans with a special emphasis on Romania. I strongly recommend reading *Ghosts* first as doing so helped me put today's Romania in perspective. I was surprised by what I learned of Russia's current and on-going efforts at weakening Romania and other states that are on the West's border with Russia.

Robert Kaplan's book helped me to understand why my grandparents and family left Romania to come to Canada for free land in 1905 or so. An uncle remained there and in 1946 my father tried to arrange for him to come here but was told not to communicate with him any more as he was under pressure from government police to end the contact. Stories about the terrible treatment his family endured under the dictator and reasons for that were explained by the book. Many stories about life in the Balkans countries have been written but few about Romania. My son who is in his 50's and travels to Turkey and other countries on business has questions about Romania that I cannot answer and the old folks are gone so I will pass this book on to him. The book is easy to read and understand and fills a void in my understanding of the history of the country.



Planning a cruise of the lower Danube which includes several days in Romania led me to purchase a travel guide on Romania which recommended this book for further reading. What a fascinating and insightful commentary on Romania and Moldova is shared by Kaplan in this volume. He visited Romania in the worst days of the tyrannical Ceausescu dictatorship, then again shortly after the tyrant's fall and then in 2013-14 after Romania had joined NATO and entered the European Union. Connecting with the country over an extended period of dramatic change gives Kaplan unique insight. He obviously loves Romania and its people and is optimistic about its future. I found Kaplan's book to be a delightful read which leaves me yearning to visit Romania myself.

This is an interesting book but if you're looking for a history text there are likely better options. I'm roughly 20% of the way through the Kindle version and while Kaplan's writing is superb, the book seems to be almost exclusively about Kaplan's thoughts and emotions while travelling. It's an interesting and wonderful book but not nearly as informative on Romania as the title would suggest. That being said, I will update after I'm finished the entire book.

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