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**THE DILEMMA OF SURVEILLANCE:  
PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF THE SURVEILLANCE STATE**

A thesis presented

by

Jade Medrano

to

The Political Science Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Honors in Political Science

Trinity College  
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Thesis Advisor

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*With gratitude to Reo Matsuzaki, my professor, advisor, and editor, my husband and parents for their continual encouragement, and to everyone who offered their advice and support throughout this project.*

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction – What Caused State Collapse in East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union?**

What is the role of surveillance in modern states and how does it affect stability and security? Policymakers generally believe that increased security through heightened surveillance will increase stability because the more the state is able to see and know about its citizens and adversaries, the better it will be able to prevent challenges to authority. However, in the case of East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union, increased surveillance was seemingly unable to forestall regime collapse. In particular, in the Soviet Union and Romania, the problem of preference falsification led to the citizens hiding their true feelings from the regime and state collapse. In the case of East Germany, the extensive surveillance capabilities of the Stasi gave the regime a false sense of security that led to uprising and failure. Because of these three cases of collapse despite extensive security, two questions are raised: first, did these regimes fall because of dilemma of surveillance or were there other reasons that hastened their demise? And second, does knowing more really increase state stability?

The dilemma of surveillance is a theory that explains why East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union were unable to accurately see how their people felt, which eventually led to protest and collapse. By the dilemma of surveillance, I mean the inability of states with extensive surveillance systems to accurately see how their citizens feel about how they are governed, the economy, their political rights, etc. because people change how they act or lie about their feelings once they know they are being watched and reported about.

As David Tucker states, “We see what people do but not what they think. While they may act in a way that suggests they are friendly, they may be entertaining unfriendly thoughts ... visible bodily actions may provide cover for unfriendly invisible thoughts.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, theorist James Scott states, “Backed by state power through records, courts, and ultimately coercion, these state fictions transformed the reality they presumed to observe, although never so thoroughly as to precisely fit the grid.”<sup>2</sup> As the localities were observed, the people changed to fit the “grid” delineated by the state. As they sensed that they were being observed, they changed their actions to show the state what it wanted to see. This problem creates a false sense of security and prevents the ability of the state to realize what is wrong with the regime and create change.

Additionally, the problem of preference falsification is one introduced by Kuran that refers to the act of misrepresenting one’s wants under perceived social pressures; preferences respond to social influence.<sup>3</sup> Social pressures could be from an outside actor as from one state’s government to another, from the government to the people, or from people to other people. Additionally, preference falsification came from the people, as citizens “routinely applauded speakers whose message they disliked, joined organizations whose mission they opposed, and signed defamatory letters against people they

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<sup>1</sup> David Tucker, *The End of Intelligence: Espionage and State Power in the Information Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (2014): 14.

<sup>2</sup> James C. Scott. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Hew Haven: Yale University Press (1989): 24.

<sup>3</sup> Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. (Harvard University Press, 1997): ix.

admired.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, the people gave the regime the impression that they were supportive, docile, and happy,<sup>5</sup> while discontent was rising beneath the surface.

In the first chapter of my thesis, I will introduce the question of whether state collapse in Eastern Europe was due to the inability to collect accurate information, the inability to analyze this information, or the inability of regime leaders to use information collected to their advantage and implement reforms to ensure stability. Based on historical research of the three Eastern European states and their surveillance systems, I will test the following hypotheses: First, the agents and the state were unaware of the unhappiness that led to uprising. Second, that they were aware of the unhappiness but were unable to see how it could translate to revolution. And third, that the agents were aware of the unhappiness and how it could lead to uprising, but the regime chose to focus on other areas of the state that needed improvement. Although I focus mainly on the second hypothesis, I want to explore how important this dilemma was in contributing to regime collapse. I will also explore competing theories that look to explain why these three states collapsed, and will argue that while the theories of economic decline, political corruption, and the theory of contagion all played a role, they do not take into account the surveillance systems in place meant to foresee and prevent protest and collapse.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I will go through the formation and purpose of the three surveillance systems, the Stasi, the Securitate, and the KGB. I want to examine whether failure in surveillance has to do with the agents' inability to read how their

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<sup>4</sup> Timur Kuran, “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution,” in *World Politics*, vol. 44, no. 1 (October 1991): 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

people were feeling and collect accurate data, the failure to interpret accurately collected data, or the failure in the regime leaders to listen to the systems' reports. In the third chapter, I will answer the question of whether these states collapsed due to failure of their leaders or due to the dilemma of surveillance, before focusing on China in the fourth chapter and looking to predict the future of the stability of the CCP's regime in relation to its extensive surveillance capability. It is interesting to compare the states of Eastern Europe to the CCP because the Chinese government uses surveillance of the Internet to try to ensure stability, as East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union used their surveillance apparatus to prevent the occurrence of collective action. I will look to answer the question of whether increased surveillance makes regimes more stable or whether it offers a false sense of security for regime. Finally, the thesis will answer the question of whether knowing more creates more stable countries and will conclude with some general implications of how we look at countries and stability. In addition, the information presented in this thesis will offer some inferences on how surveillance might affect world powers today.

### ***Methodology***

Using the method of difference, I will focus on East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union because while these regimes varied in terms of their intelligence apparatus, all three collapsed during or in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolutions. Mill's method of agreement shows that despite having a selection of cases with very different conditions,

the outcome in all of the cases is the same.<sup>6</sup> In this instance, despite differences in size and tactics of the surveillance systems, all three states collapsed. Romania and East Germany present a particularly interesting comparison, as both regimes collapsed primarily due to the failure of the state's security institutions to contain popular protests against the ruling party.

These states are compelling to study because despite the differences between the three regimes and their surveillance systems, they all experienced a similar outcome. The first chapter of this thesis will go in depth to the formation and the differences between the three systems, and will show that despite varying levels of penetration into society and methods of watching, all three states collapsed. One would have expected East Germany to remain stable because its system, the Stasi, was highly skilled and able to penetrate into every layer of society. For example, the Stasi did not resort to physical repression or torture, and instead watched and reported about the citizens of East Germany. Similarly, the KGB favored disinformation and propaganda and resorted to violent interrogation only when necessary. In comparison, Romania's Securitate used violent repression, physical and psychological terror, and forced home invasions to keep the citizens under control. Additionally, the size of the systems varied: the Stasi was made up of 500,000 to 2,000,000 agents, the Soviet Union employed 40,000 to 70,000 agents, and the Securitate employed 2,800 to 4,000 agents.

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<sup>6</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connective View of the Principles of Evidence and the methods of Scientific Investigation*, London: Harrison and Co. Printers (1843): 455.

These variances in methods of surveillance should have led to different outcomes, as the state with the most informers should have remained stable because of its large number of skilled agents watching over and reporting on the activities and sentiments of the people. However, despite these differences, East Germany fell just like Romania, and neither the Stasi nor the Securitate was able to foresee and therefore prevent the uprising.

The similar outcomes between East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union leave us with a puzzle: Why did East Germany fall in a similar manner and time as Romania, even though the Stasi was highly skilled at watching and the Securitate trained in violent repression? Does this indicate that despite the Stasi's sophistication and expertise, the system was unable to overcome the dilemma of surveillance? In contrast, does this mean that even if a system is able to completely penetrate all layers of society, as the Stasi was, it still might not be able to prevent regime collapse?

### ***Literature Review: Competing Theories of State Collapse***

When examining the fall of Eastern Europe, there are some theories that dominate the literature concerning state failure. These include economic decline leading to protest, corruption and inherent decay in socialist institutions, contagion hastening the spread of protest across the Soviet Bloc, and leadership failure leading to poor reforms.

### ***Competing Theories of State Collapse: Economic Decline***

Some theorists look to attribute the collapse of the three Eastern European states to economic hardship that eventually led to mass protest and revolution. In the case of East Germany, the failure of economic reform and the accumulation of foreign debt are often blamed for causing the uprising that led to collapse. Following the First World War, East Germany went through a series of agrarian and economic reforms, which required the import of raw material and new technology and resulted in heavy borrowing from other nations.<sup>7</sup> The state also relied on the Soviet Union for trade, military protection, and gas, and East Germany had to make annual payments to the Soviet Union in order to pay for those services, which certainly did not help economic growth,<sup>8</sup> as a portion of the state's revenue had to be sent to the Soviet Union in order to continue to receive protection and fuel. One communist newspaper also reported that while Germany's economy increased between 1981 and 1985 by a rate of 4.5% annually, between 1986 and 1989 that growth had slowed to 3.1%. The reason for this decline was said to be a consequence of insufficient capital accumulation and inadequate returns on investments, as well as the lack of adequate equipment necessary to continue this level of production and remain competitive.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a series of failed economic reforms and the desire to reach a standard of living equal to that enjoyed in West Germany led to collapse. While the state promised that its planned economy would be superior to the capitalist

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Norman Peterson, *The Secret Police and the Revolution: The Fall of the German Democratic Republic*. Edward N. Peterson (2002): 7-10.

<sup>8</sup> Jörg Roesler, "The Rise and Fall of the Planned Economy in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-89." *German History* vol. 9, no. 1 (1991): 49.

<sup>9</sup> "SED Disclosures of Economic Decline" (11 January 1990), in *Uniting Germany: Documents and Debates, 1944-1993*. Konrad Jarausch and Volker Gransow, eds. Oxford: Berghahn Books (1994): 98-101.

market economy that existed in West Germany, it could not keep that promise, resulting in disappointment and discontent.

The issue of perception also played a role in East Germany's failure, as citizens looked at West Germany's capitalist market economy, and unhappily compared their situation with that of West German citizens. Disappointed that it seemed East Germany would be unable to provide the same standard of living as that enjoyed in West Germany, citizens began leaving East Germany in order to settle in the West, resulting in economic downturn, as the masses of citizens leaving to West Germany led to an economic recession. Although Walter Ulbricht, the East German head of state, promised a plan to fix the economic downturn in the state in order to slow the rate of citizens leaving for West Germany,<sup>10</sup> after another economic reform that concentrated efforts in improving the metal working and manufacturing industry and invested heavily in microelectronics, greater unhappiness was reported among East German citizens as the state had once again been unable to provide the standard of living that was enjoyed in West Germany.<sup>11</sup>

When looking at East Germany, it is not necessarily wrong to conclude that the underlying causes of regime collapse were economic reforms, reliance on the Soviet Union, and the inability of the government to provide the standard of living that the citizens demanded. A centrally planned government proved to be unsuccessful when compared to the free market economy of West Germany, and the discontent that resulted from economic downturn led to citizens leaving East Germany, protest, and eventual state collapse. This said, we must also investigate the proximate cause of collapse, and why

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<sup>10</sup> Roesler, 51-53.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 59.

dissatisfaction with the economy were allowed to turn into public challenges against the state, especially given the size and strength of the East German surveillance apparatus.

In the case of Romania, economic downturn, due to policies pursued by Ceaușescu, and a decline in living standards is also commonly seen as the cause of the regime's violent demise. Under Ceaușescu's leadership, Romania had the lowest standard of living in the Eastern Bloc and the citizens experienced chronic shortages of necessities.<sup>12</sup> Like East Germany, Romania employed a command economy, in which "all transactions were politically determined by plan" and both supply and demand and international and domestic market forces were ignored.<sup>13</sup> In addition, because the state was more concerned with collecting and controlling resources than with allocating them to the people, an "economy of shortage" was created and discontent grew. The state attempted to pay back high levels of foreign debt accumulated under Ceaușescu by exporting the best of Romania's agricultural output and by the 1980s, the state was exporting up to ninety percent of its produce.<sup>14</sup>

Of the three states, Romania was doing the worst economically prior to collapse, although its economy had originally flourished during the early 1970s. Between 1950 and 1979, economic growth was impressive and industrial output increased by an average of 12.9% each year. However, because resources were concentrated in the industrial sector, the agricultural and consumer goods sectors suffered, even as more than a quarter of the

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<sup>12</sup> Minton F. Goldman, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*. New York: M. E. Sharpe (1997): 271.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*. Ithica: Cornell University Press (2007): 31.

<sup>14</sup> Goldman, 271.

working population was engaged in farming.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the country accumulated much foreign debt, and, in order to pay this off as soon as possible, Ceaușescu imposed an austerity program and began to export as much as possible in order to stimulate the economy while simultaneously cutting imports. These measures caused food rationing and created shortages of gasoline, electricity, and basic necessities.<sup>16</sup> The inflexibility of Ceaușescu's economic policies and the concentration of power in his hands made meaningful reform impossible, and instead resulted in what Siani-Davies terms "simulated change" and overall dissatisfaction.<sup>17</sup> Inflexible economic policies combined with a disruption in Romania's oil exports, adverse weather conditions, and years of agricultural neglect led to short falls in domestic and export markets, which contributed to the economic downturn.<sup>18</sup> Finally, as in East Germany, large amounts of foreign debt, unchanging economic policies pursued by Ceaușescu, and the inefficient use of resources resulted in falling public standards and discontent in Romania that eventually, as many have argued, resulted in uprising and state collapse.<sup>19</sup>

When looking at the Soviet Union and its own economic crisis, scholars also note the effect that the central planning had on economic downturn. For the Soviet Union, central planning of the economy discouraged innovation, and planners were unwilling to decentralize to allow the state to easier respond to the needs of the economy. In addition,

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<sup>15</sup> "The Economy," in *Romania*, U.S. Library of Congress.

<sup>16</sup> "Economic Structure and Dynamics," in *Romania*. U.S. Library of Congress.

<sup>17</sup> Siani-Davies, 32.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to point out here that Siani-Davies notes that for a while, citizens did not attribute economic hardship to state failure. Rather, the people saw the inability to provide for themselves and their family as a personal failure.

it is hard to ignore the effect that the cost of maintaining the Soviet army had on the state's economy. According to a KGB official who defected to Great Britain, at least one third of the state's total output was going to support the military in order to compete with the United States' military growth at the start of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup> The increase in spending to fund the military caused a decline in the rate of growth of the Soviet Union's economy, followed by a plateau.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the adherence to outdated and inflexible economic practices prevented progress, and, in combination with a growing sense of cynicism about the efficacy of the state, led to discontent and eventually, as the argument goes, mass uprising.<sup>22</sup>

Others argue that the economic problems in the Soviet Union were due to the pace Gorbachev's economic and political reforms. Gorbachev attempted to restructure the Soviet system by allowing multi-party elections with secret ballots, reducing government subsidies to non-profitable factories, and giving private farmers the ability to contract with the government and sell their outputs to retailers, but the pace at which he made these reforms was too rapid and led to little improvement.<sup>23</sup> While Gorbachev did attempt to implement reform throughout the Soviet Union, he misread the popularity of these

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*. 1st ed. Harper Collins (1992): 607.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Chirot, "What Happened in Eastern Europe in 1989?" *Praxis International* vol. 10 no. 3 (October 1990): 283-284.

<sup>23</sup> Marshall I Goldman, "'Gorbachev and Economic Reform in the Soviet Union.'" *Eastern Economic Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1988): 331-335.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40325233>

actions, as surveys showed that only thirty percent of workers supported his economic reforms.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, economic decline cannot alone explain why these three states all fell around 1989 because of the diversity in the economic conditions across the three countries. For example, East Germany is often noted as having the most successful economy in the Eastern Bloc, and shifted its resources away from heavy industry towards a consumer-oriented economy, while Romania had one of the worst, and relied on a command economy and on heavy industry. The problem East Germany faced was its inability to meet rising demands from consumers and workers for more goods and for higher wages,<sup>25</sup> while in Romania crisis arose after Ceausescu's economic austerity programs. In the Soviet Union, despite previous years of prosperity, the economy had taken a turn for the worse and between 1989 and 1991, Soviet GDP had fallen by approximately forty percent.<sup>26</sup> Because of the differences between the three Eastern European states in terms of performance and attempted reform, economic conditions alone cannot explain why all three states collapsed.

Additionally, this theory is unconvincing because during the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet Union went through a process of economic change that did not result in regime collapse. During the 1920s, the Soviet Union pursued a mixed money economy, where

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>25</sup> John Feffer, "Why North Korea Today is Not East Germany 1989," *Asian Institute for Policy Studies*, 11 February 2014. Accessed 20 April 2015. <http://fpif.org/north-korea-today-east-germany-1989/>

<sup>26</sup> Mark Harrison, "Are Command Economies Unstable? Why did the Soviet Economy Collapse?" 19 February 2003, accessed 20 April 2015.

the market was partially under private control and partially under state control.<sup>27</sup> This system allowed the Soviet Union's economy to recover to its pre-World War I level, but foreign trade failed to recover and the agricultural market declined, amounting to only one quarter of the pre-war level.<sup>28</sup> Next, the state went through a series of five year plans with the goal of industrialization and continued economic growth. By 1932, both the agricultural and industrial sectors had failed to meet production targets, and by 1938, a sudden shift to producing armaments resulted in worsening conditions.<sup>29</sup> The agricultural sector continued to fall, and although the state had become industrialized, the economy overall had deteriorated. Despite economic failure however, the regime did not fall.

More broadly, many authoritarian countries, such as North Korea, have withstood decades of poor economic conditions and have remained stable, despite heavy reliance on another country,<sup>30</sup> as was the case in East Germany. In short, while poor economic conditions may be an important underlying cause of regime failure, this alone cannot explain the collapse of Eastern European regimes.

### ***Competing Theories of State Collapse – Corruption***

In East Germany, corruption within the Socialist Unity Party, or the SED, created unhappiness as politicians abused their power and took land and houses away

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<sup>27</sup> Robert William Davies, Mark Harrison, and S. G. Wheatcroft, eds. *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*. Cambridge University Press (1994): 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> "Transformation and Terror" in *Russia*, U.S. Library of Congress.

<sup>30</sup> "Deprive and Rule", *The Economist*. September 17, 2011. Accessed 14 December 2014. <http://www.economist.com/node/21529063>.

from the people or used state resources for their own gain. For example, in the coal industry, there were many incidences of officials using cars and gas in order to make trips to West Germany to stock up on black-market goods to sell.<sup>31</sup> Although many members were expelled from the party because of their involvement in corrupt activities, many still remained in the party's ranks. This type of nefarious activity led to increased distrust of and unhappiness with government, which some argue led to uprising and eventual collapse. Similarly, in the case of Romania, corruption ran rampant throughout Ceaușescu's government, and it is thought that he may have hid more than \$1 billion in foreign bank accounts while his people lived in squalor.<sup>32</sup> Following Ceaușescu's removal from power, it was discovered that he and his family had been living in luxury while the rest of the state experienced shortages of food, power, heat, and light.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, in order to ensure that the Communist party remained in power in Romania, Ceaușescu surrounded himself relatives. Ceaușescu's brothers oversaw the armed forces while his brother-in-law ran the state's trade unions.

In the case of the Soviet Union, corruption for both private and bureaucratic gain was widespread prior to the collapse of the state. The most common types of corruption for personal gain in the Soviet Union consisted of bribery and embezzlement, especially

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<sup>31</sup> Gareth Pritchard, *The Making of the GDR, 1945-53*. Manchester: Manchester University Press (2004): 171.

<sup>32</sup> William Plummer and Margie Bonnett Sellinger, "After the Revolution, a Shocked Rumania Discovers the Luxuries of its Rulers." *People*, vol. 33, no. 2 (January 1990): n.p. <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20116541,00.html>

<sup>33</sup> Goldman, 270-271.

in the housing sector, which experienced a shortage of housing in urban areas.<sup>34</sup> Public officials often used illegal measures to obtain housing for themselves and for their friends and family, often embezzling funds from the state in order to pay for their homes.<sup>35</sup> In addition, citizens also bribed public officials in order to be assured they would have a home during the housing shortage, and many parents bribed admissions officials in order to ensure their children would be accepted into universities.<sup>36</sup> In terms of bureaucratic corruption, bureaucratic officials often falsified performance data in order to stockpile resources which could be used to trade with other businesses should a supply shortage develop.<sup>37</sup>

Especially in the Soviet Union, the opportunity and incentive to resort to corruption were high because of the country's central planning system, which made the state the primary employer, regulator, and distributor of rents. Because public officials worked for the state and were involved with the tasks of employment, regulation, and distribution, they were presented with the opportunity to engage in illegal activities. The officials had the incentive to provide for the consumer needs of the people by any means possible, especially because funding the Soviet Union's army used the majority of the state's resources.<sup>38</sup> In addition, corruption regularly occurred because of the abundance of administrative regulation in the highly centralized Soviet economic system. Adherence to these rules would make running a business difficult for business administrators and

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<sup>34</sup> Kramer, John M. "Political Corruption in the U. S. S. R." *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 30 (June 1977): 213.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

many resorted to bribery in order to avoid production delays.<sup>39</sup> In the case of the Soviet Union, corruption for private and bureaucratic gain created extreme distrust of and unhappiness with the government, which led to uprising and the demand for a change.

In general, scholars such as Valerie Bunce have attributed the collapse of regimes throughout the Eastern Bloc to failure in the institutional design of socialism that made these regimes prone to competition among elites for securing declining economic resources through illegal means.<sup>40</sup> Because the state remained in control over resources with discretion exercised by officials to allocate them, the opportunity for corruption was present and often taken by government officials. Additionally, Bunce theorizes that socialist institutions throughout the Eastern Bloc fell because of institutional decay and the inability of the states to implement change in order to keep up with new environmental circumstances.<sup>41</sup> As the states' economies began to fail, elites became more autonomous from the state, and the party's hold over the distribution of resources began to unravel as goods became more and more scarce. This meant that the state had two choices: to reform, and destroy the socialist system, or put off reform and soothe dissatisfaction with economic benefits,<sup>42</sup> which speaks to the self-undermining nature of socialism; the state could either reform and lose control, or stay the same and fall because of unhappiness due to the lack of resources. The states chose to placate dissent with economic benefits rather than implement meaningful and lasting institutional reform; but

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>40</sup> Valerie Bunce, "Subversive Institutions: The End of the Soviet State in Comparative Perspective." *Post Soviet Affairs* vol. 14, no. 4 (2013): 336.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>42</sup> Siani-Davies, 36.

this led to heightened corruption, as officials generally distributed scarce resources to those seen as most loyal to the state. In this way, collapse of Eastern European countries was inherent to the design of socialist systems.

However, the theory that collapse was caused by corruption throughout government is not one that can be applied to explaining collapse in states with a strong coercive and surveillance apparatus. For example, regimes like North Korea experience rampant corruption throughout the state, and collapse has not occurred. In the case of North Korea, corruption throughout the Kim dynasty has created an economy of shortage similar to that in Romania, where the leaders are living in relative luxury and the people are starving without access to food or electricity. Additionally, in the case of China, the communist party has found a way to ensure the survival of its regime without succumbing to inherent decay. Hence, when Eastern European cases are examined within a broader comparative perspective, regime collapse cannot be contributed to corruption in government or to institutional deterioration alone.

### ***Competing Theories of State Collapse – Contagion***

Additionally, when looking at the collapse of states that are in close vicinity to each other, it is impossible to rule out the role that “contagion” of revolutionary activity played in influencing, inspiring, and driving mass uprising. The idea of contagion, also known as diffusion, refers to the rapid spread of ideas between people with a sense of commonality, such as shared history, culture, common institutions, or similar economic

policies.<sup>43</sup> People in nearby countries learn by example, and as they see others succeeding, they are motivated to act similarly,<sup>44</sup> even if they face threat of punishment or death.<sup>45</sup> Although this theory of contagion has largely come out of recent events in the Middle East – that is, the Arab Spring – it is applicable to the fall of Eastern Europe because of the close proximity between the three Eastern European states because of how quickly anti-Communist sentiments and protests rapidly spread through the Eastern Bloc and because of shared history, culture, and similar identity of people living in these countries.<sup>46</sup> While danger was inherent in acting and participating in protest, the Eastern European states fell quickly in succession.

The collapse of the Eastern European Bloc started with Poland in March of 1989, and quickly spread to Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. All these states were satellite states that were closely tied to the Soviet Union, and although this paper only focuses on East Germany and Romania, it is interesting to examine how the overthrow of Communist spread throughout Eastern Europe and eventually ended with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

When assessing the role of contagion, in the cases of East Germany and Romania, it is also important to examine the relationships the states had with the Soviet Union. Specifically, East Germany relied on the Soviet Union for trade, military protection and

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<sup>43</sup> Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring.” *Comparative Politics* (2012): 140-141.

<sup>44</sup> Kuran, “Now Out of Never,” 17-25.

<sup>45</sup> Bellin, 141.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-142.

for the provision of fuel, while Romania tried to establish a more independent relationship, but still relied on the USSR for trade.<sup>47</sup> Because of the close relationships between the three states, the similar economic conditions, the Soviet Union's communist influence, and the commonalities in the dissatisfaction the citizens felt, it is easy to see how contagion could have helped spread ideas of change once the borders between the states opened, leading to collapse. As Bunce writes, "Changes in the Soviet Union, whether in policy or personnel, tended to spread rapidly to Eastern Europe – whether the Soviets wanted that to happen or not and ... in a form and level of intensity ... neither expected nor welcomed."<sup>48</sup> As change occurred within the Soviet Union, it was spread and magnified throughout the satellite states; as protest and regime failure occurred in one region, it magnified and spread throughout the Eastern Bloc, leading to total regime collapse.

However, authors such as Lucan Way argue that a state can resist and withstand protests due to contagion if it has a strong ruling party, control over wealth, and a well-trained coercive apparatus.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in the case of Romania, regime collapse followed Ceaușescu's loss of control over his military. When he ordered protests to be stopped in December of 1989, his soldiers actually joined in with the opposition rather than end the

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<sup>47</sup> Siani-Davies, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*. Cambridge University Press (1999): 40.

<sup>49</sup> Lucan Way, "Resistance to Contagion: Sources of Authoritarian Stability in the Former Soviet Union," in *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World*" eds. Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss. Cambridge University Press (2009): 230-234.

demonstration occurring.<sup>50</sup> But in general, the contagion theory has difficulty explaining the collapse of Eastern European regimes due to the strength of the very types of institutions that allows an authoritarian regime to withstand revolutionary pressures. In the cases of East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union, the states maintained well-funded surveillance systems, which should have responded to and prevented opposition. However, the Stasi was unaware of the magnitude of the unhappiness that was growing throughout the districts, Ceaușescu was uninformed of the problems throughout his state, and Gorbachev, while informed, chose to focus on growth in other sectors rather than on preventing uprising. We must therefore look to explanations beyond the size and capacity of the coercive institutions – especially the surveillance apparatus. As I argue, state collapse in these three regimes can be better explained through the dynamics of preference falsification and the dilemma of surveillance.

### *Competing Theories of State Collapse – Leadership Failure*

Finally, it is necessary to examine whether or not the leaders of these three states were aware of the unhappiness that existed throughout their states. In the case of East Germany, the government was aware that unhappiness that was building throughout the state, but did not believe that it had the potential to lead to revolution. Even until the night before the state collapse, the Stasi was reporting that everything in the state was

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<sup>50</sup> Siani-Davies, 90.

quiet and secure,<sup>51</sup> and observed that there was no unordinary or radical activity among the people; no additional surveillance had been initiated, and the number of citizens leaving the district to go to West Germany while rising, was not out of the ordinary. In fact, the Stasi assumed that it was well equipped to prevent and stop protest should it ever arise,<sup>52</sup> and were taken by surprise when mass demonstrations arose and led to state collapse. This indicates that regime collapse in East Germany was due in part to the inability of the Stasi to interpret the information they had gathered on the citizens; the Stasi simply underestimated the willingness of the people to engage in protest against the regime.

In contrast, Ceaușescu was similarly unaware of the unhappiness of his people. Because Ceaușescu filled government positions with sycophantic family and friends and surrounded himself with his supporters, no one informed him about what was really going on in his state or of the discontent that was growing.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Ceaușescu failed to establish a riot police out of the belief that those living in his regime genuinely liked him.<sup>54</sup> When riots broke out late in 1989, Ceaușescu was convinced that the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact allies had infiltrated the country in order to create unrest and instigate a coup d'état.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, when protests broke out while Ceaușescu was delivering what was to be his final speech in 1989, the look of surprise that plastered his

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<sup>51</sup> Gary Bruce, "'In Our District, the State Is Secure': The East German Secret Police Response to the Events of 1989 in Perleberg District." *Contemporary European History* vol. 14, no. 2 (2005): 244.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>53</sup> Chirot, 291.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution*. Taylor & Francis (2000): 55-56.

<sup>55</sup> Siani-Davies, 65.

face proves that he was completely unaware of how unpopular he had become.<sup>56</sup> He was unaware that the unhappiness that existed throughout his regime was due to his rule and the poor living conditions the people experienced, and because of this, Ceaușescu was caught by surprise when demonstrations arose.

In the Soviet Union, scholars argue that Gorbachev was aware of the unhappiness that existed in the Soviet Union, but chose to ignore it to focus instead on building the economy and increasing the size of the military. Gorbachev chose to focus on the glasnost and perestroika reforms because he did not understand the true demands of the population. Additionally, although Gorbachev promised that economic and political reform would lead to prosperity, this did not immediately occur, further increasing the unhappiness throughout the regime.<sup>57</sup> There is also proof that later on, Gorbachev was aware of discontent because he, in cooperation with Poland, developed a plan to allow semi-free elections and economic reform; in addition, he called for change in East Germany, stating that the Soviet Union would not stand in the way of reform.<sup>58</sup> While Gorbachev might have been aware of the unhappiness that was growing throughout the Eastern Bloc, he chose to focus on other things, like military strength and economic growth; the Soviet Union, unlike East Germany, was not taken by surprise when Eastern Europe fell.

These differences in the responses of the states' leadership points to the theory that the state that was aware of unhappiness should have been able to reform and ensure

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<sup>56</sup> "Video of Ceausescu's Last Speech, December 1989", Making the History of 1989, Item #696, (accessed 16 April 2015). <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/696>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 287-289.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 290-291.

stability, while the state that was unaware of dissent should have collapsed. In this sense, one would have expected stability in the Soviet Union and East Germany and instability in Romania. However, all of the states collapsed during or following the 1989 Revolutions, although both Gorbachev and the German Socialist Party were aware of the unrest that was brewing under the surface of society.

### *Conclusion and Implications*

Despite the focus of the existing literature on economic conditions, corruption, and contagion as explanations for the collapse of Eastern European regimes in general, in East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union in particular, these arguments provide us with an incomplete picture. The theory of economic decline is not convincing because in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s, economic hardship did not cause regime turnover. The theory of corruption in government also cannot be used to explain the fall of the Eastern Bloc because many states have experienced corruption and have remained stable, and it was not until late in 1989 that revolutions began in East Germany and Romania. Additionally, the theory of contagion cannot alone explain why the Eastern Bloc fell because these three states had well trained coercive and surveillance apparatuses that should have acted when protest broke out and helped to collapse. Despite this, revolution spread throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was forced to disband.

Finally, leadership failure does not by itself explain why these states fell because Gorbachev was aware of the discontent felt throughout the state and attempted to enact reform; however, his glasnost and perestroika reforms only served to weaken the state. Had these three states been able to accurately understand the demands and aspirations of their citizens, meaningful counter-measures could have been taken to prevent collapse; the state could have reformed or enacted increased repression and surveillance. However, because the states were unable to prevent protest despite their surveillance apparatuses, one can conclude that regime failure across the Eastern Europe was due in part to the dilemma of surveillance, the failure of the systems to properly analyze and utilize the information collected to ensure stability, or to the problem of preference falsification and the inability of the regime leaders to use the information collected by their security systems to enact reform that could have saved the Soviet Bloc.

## **Chapter 2 – The Stasi, the Securitate, and the KGB**

In this chapter, I will be exploring the histories and formation of the three surveillance systems, the Stasi, the Securitate, and the KGB. In doing so, I will demonstrate that the collapse of the three states, East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union, was due in part to the failure of the regimes to overcome the dilemma of surveillance, the inability of the surveillance systems to accurately learn how the people were feeling because the citizens changed their actions once they realized they were being watched and reported on. In addition, while preference falsification played a role in the fall of the Soviet Union, it does not alone explain why the KGB was unable to accurately read and understand the unhappiness the citizens felt and their desire for further democratization. Therefore, in these three states, the dilemma of surveillance plays an important role in explaining why these regimes fell without variation, despite their coercive and surveillance systems meant to prevent collapse.

This chapter will go through the formation and tactics of the three systems, the Stasi, the Securitate, and the KGB. It will describe how and why they were formed and what methods and tactics they used in order to control the people of the three states. Investigation of the backgrounds of these three surveillance systems will allow me to prove that despite extensive observation, the systems could not accurately assess the people's true feelings about the regimes, did not realize the extent of the people's unhappiness, and could not prevent regime failure, analyze the information gathered in order to enact reform, or convince the leaders that the unhappiness should be addressed.

### *The Stasi*

In 1947, Soviet authorities created a system within the German police in order to keep an eye on minor officials in sensitive branches of the East German state.<sup>59</sup> The Ministry for State Security was small at first, comprised of only thirty members, and was responsible for domestic political surveillance, foreign espionage, counterintelligence against the west, the suppression of any remaining traces of Nazism, and the apprehension of former officials who fled the country.<sup>60</sup> From 1950 until 1952, the Stasi worked to counter the politically active bourgeois who threatened the Socialist party's ability to implement change and eliminate any political opponents in anticipation of the election set to be held in October of 1950.<sup>61</sup> The Stasi also worked to deport "undesirables," those who lived along the border between East and West Germany, and pushed to build socialism throughout the German Democratic Republic.<sup>62</sup> While the Stasi targeted and arrested or tortured several competing party leaders around this time, they were still unable to completely eliminate political opposition and anti-Socialist pamphlets continued to circulate during the October elections.<sup>63</sup> Although the Stasi started with few

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<sup>59</sup> Gary Bruce, "The Prelude to Nationwide Surveillance in East Germany: Stasi Operations and Threat Perceptions, 1945-1953." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

numbers, the number of agents between 1950 and 1952 increased from only 30 to 2,700 in 1950, to 4,500 in 1951, and to 8,800 in 1952.<sup>64</sup>

In 1953, the Stasi faced its first crisis when workers rose across East Germany to protest against the living conditions and the repressiveness of the party. Hundreds of towns experienced unrest in the form of strikes or demonstrations in protest against the collectivization of agriculture, restrictions placed on private business members, and the persecution of church leaders during the regime's push to spread socialism throughout the state.<sup>65</sup> The Stasi was unable to stop the incident, and the workers were only brought under control when the Red Army intervened, which demonstrated the extent to which the Socialist Party relied on the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> In addition, this showed the party's failure at winning the support of the population, and led to arrests throughout the state and the expansion of the Stasi's powers. The party called for an increase in systems of monitoring and control and factory militias and motorized police units were created.<sup>67</sup> Also during this period, the Stasi worked primarily against defined targets rather than working to oversee the population as a whole, and did so with poorly equipped surveillance apparatuses; therefore, it is not surprising that the system was unable to foresee and prevent uprising in 1953.

Later, between the years of 1957 and 1989, the Stasi was further developed by the Soviet Union out of the continued desire to control the establishment of socialism in East Germany. The Soviet Union and East Germany remained closely related, and until 1990,

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<sup>64</sup> Gary Bruce, *The Firm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2010): 34.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

the Soviet Union maintained KGB headquarters in all of the Stasi directorates.<sup>68</sup> Under the direction of Erich Mielke, the Stasi became a highly effective organization that sought to infiltrate every institution of society and every aspect of daily life. By 1989, the Stasi was made up of 500,000 to 2,000,000 collaborators and 100,000 employees who worked to maintain information on 6,000,000 East German citizens.<sup>69</sup> The Stasi operated through a system of Personal Surveillance Operations (OPKs) and Operational Cases (OVs), which, along with telephone and mail monitoring, formed the backbone of their surveillance activities.<sup>70</sup> OPKs refer to a basic information report that were began when information was introduced that stated that an individual was negatively inclined towards the state and contained addresses, license plate numbers, and an assessment of the individual's morality, while OVs entailed a greater degree of monitoring and a shift from passive to active monitoring.<sup>71</sup> The majority of Stasi agents monitored the people through observation and investigation, phone tapping, and postal control, while the rest were involved in administration, medical service, food and labor hygiene, and transportation and services. Koehler writes, "Like a giant octopus, the Stasi's tentacles probed every aspect of life ... Stasi officers knew no limits and knew no shame when it came to 'protecting the party and the state' ... Absolutely nothing was sacred to the secret police.

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<sup>68</sup> John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*. Boulder: Westview Press (1999): 74.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>70</sup> Bruce, *The Firm*, 111.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

Tiny holes were bored in apartment and hotel room walls through which Stasi agents filmed their 'suspects' with special video cameras. Even bathrooms were penetrated."<sup>72</sup>

Additionally, records show that one of every 180 people was a full time Stasi agent and one of every 90 individuals was an unofficial secret informant. Other scholars believe that the Stasi had closer to 102,000 agents to watch a population of 17 million, which equated to one secret informer per every 166 citizens. However, when regular non-Stasi informers are added, the ratio decreases: including secret and regular Stasi informers, there would have been at least one Stasi spy watching 66 agents, and, if part-time, non-Stasi agent informers are added, the ratio decreases again, to one spy for every 6.5 people.<sup>73</sup> As a result, the people were unable to trust even their own friends and family, as it was impossible to tell who might be an informant.<sup>74</sup>

The Stasi watched and regulated citizens through tactics of social control but did not torture or resort to other acts of physical repression. Instead, the organization employed a system of normalization, where dissent or standing out was discouraged, but violent tactics were not employed. This system of normalization meant that an East German citizen could be tailed simply for looking or dressing differently or for taking part in a group activity; rather than arouse suspicion, therefore, citizens would simply refrain from dressing or cutting their hair in a manner different than the majority of the population. As a result, the people began to hide how they truly felt and acted in a way

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<sup>72</sup> Koehler, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Koehler, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Gary Bruce, "'In Our District, the State is Secure': The East German Secret Police Response to the Events of 1989 in Perleberg District." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 14 no. 2 (2005): 220.

that would avoid the arousal of suspicion. Additionally, agents were skilled at disguising themselves, which enabled them to move throughout society and observe and report on the everyday lives of East German citizens. Agents were taught how to change their features using wigs and fake facial hair and often dressed like tourists carrying large bags or briefcases with hidden cameras inside.<sup>75</sup> In this way, agents were able to pervade every layer of society and were indiscernible from other citizens, which, in theory, should have increased stability and prevented collapse.

Instead, although the Stasi was able to infiltrate every layer of society via their tactics of surveillance and were aware of the happiness the people felt, they were unable to predict the fall of East Germany and were unprepared when thousands of East Germans demanded exile to the West.<sup>76</sup> The Stasi and the Socialist Party had no reason to believe that the state would fall in 1989, and up until the night before protests began in the Perleberg District, agents were reporting that all was quiet.<sup>77</sup> The Perleberg District is especially intriguing to study because it was an ordinary district; it was not located on the border of West Germany or West Berlin, and it did not have sites of potential unrest, such as universities or sensitive industries.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, it is especially surprising that protests arose in this district.

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<sup>75</sup> Karen Schulze, "Spy Games: Photos Reveal the Stasi Art of Disguise." *Spiegel Online International*, (2013), accessed 12 December 2014. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/stasi-photos-simon-menner-book-documents-east-german-disguises-a-920140.html>

<sup>76</sup> Richard Popplewell, "The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989." *Contemporary European History* 1, no. 1 (March 1992): 56.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce, "In Our District," 234-236.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce, *The Firm*, 3.

In 1989 when municipal elections were held, activists urged citizens to vote against the Socialist Party or to cross out the entire ballot. When the results were tallied, the results showed that more than ninety-eight percent of the people had voted for the Socialist party – a suspiciously high number suggesting considerable electoral fraud.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Bruce notes that the Stasi spent much time to ensure that the elections resulted in the Socialist Unity Party winning office. The agents, especially those in the Perleberg district, watched and reported about those individuals who planned to protest the elections, and were able to gather information on about one third of those who did not vote.<sup>80</sup> In East Germany in particular, the corruption of supposedly free elections led to increased levels of discontent and protests began to spring up across the state, demanding the legalization of competing political parties and elections free of government control. However, as noted before, corruption of socialist institutions alone cannot explain why East Germany fell, as this theory does not answer why the Stasi was unable to use the extensive information gathered to convince the regime leadership that the unhappiness throughout the regime had the potential to create chaos and needed to be addressed. The government of East Germany did not attempt to enact reform until after protests had begun, and by then it was too late; demonstrations continued to erupt throughout the state and citizens continued to flee en masse.

In sum, scholars often look to attribute the collapse of East Germany to the growing discontent concerning the falling living conditions throughout the state. While it is true that the people experienced poor economic conditions, the most important factor

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<sup>79</sup> Bruce, 221.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

that led to collapse is the inability of the state to use the information gathered by the Stasi that reported that the people were unhappy with the regime and its inability to provide a similar standard of living as that enjoyed in the West; because of this, the state was unable to enact meaningful reform, and the Socialist Party and its surveillance agents were unprepared when protests arose.

### *The Securitate*

In the state of Romania, the surveillance apparatus was modeled after the KGB and utilized a system of police terror to eliminate political opponents and ensure compliance with the Socialist regime.<sup>81</sup> During the first half of the system's existence, the Securitate worked to crack down on dissenters, carry out disinformation campaigns, and ensure compliance using a variety of methods, "only some of which were allowed even by communist legal standards."<sup>82</sup> Once the state came under the rule of Nicolai Ceaușescu and split from the Soviet Union, the focus of the secret police shifted from overt terror to making the regime more popular in the eyes of the population; rather than jail dissenters, the Securitate looked to re-educate citizens, and tactics of psychological intimidation accompanied ones of physical terror. Although this system of re-education

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<sup>81</sup> Lavinia Stan and Rodica Milena Zaharia. "Romania's Intelligence Services: Bridge Between East and West?" *Problems of Post-Communism* vol. 54, no. 1 (February 2007): 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

suggests that Securitate agents would use non-violent tactics to ensure compliance, physical torture and brainwashing were commonly parts of the program.<sup>83</sup>

The second half of this era was also marked by the organization of a campaign to rid the country of dissent. The system manipulated the population by spreading disinformation, publicly denounced and humiliated dissenters, toughed censorship of the press and the state's intelligentsia, and, in extreme cases, silenced dissent through the use of assassins.<sup>84</sup> For example, during the 1970s, the regime attempted to kill a former general who defected to the United States, and the Securitate attempted to eliminate expatriates like Monica Lovinescu and Vlad Georgescu, both of whom spoke out against the regime.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to this system of re-education, the state continued to advance a system of terror, and it is believed that one out of every forty-three citizens was a regular informer for the Securitate. This increased the fear of being watched among citizens and made them more willing to report dissenters to the Securitate and attempt to lead normal lives. In addition to citizen informers, the Securitate employed roughly 2,800 to 4,000 regular agents, and often several agents tailed the same person in order to create the complete portrait of a subject.<sup>86</sup> These files typically included letters apprehended in the mail, informers reports, observations made by multiple agencies, records of public opinions, writings, trash, transcriptions of conversations and the subject's intonation and

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<sup>83</sup> Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd. (1995): 30-31.

<sup>84</sup> Stan, 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>86</sup> Vatulescu, Cristina. "Arresting Biographies: The Secret Police File in the Soviet Union and Romania." *Comparative Literature* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 246.

gestures, photographs, interrogation records, detailed transcriptions of daily activity such as teeth brushing, and a synthesis of the subject that placed them in the category of spy, counterrevolutionary, or terrorist.<sup>87</sup> This constant observation and the incessant threat of physical violence aided in the remolding of the individual and served to remind citizens that all of their actions, criminal or not, were known and seen.<sup>88</sup>

The Securitate was also quite skilled at “breaking the self” and reassembling the people “to fit in its [own] ideological scenarios.”<sup>89</sup> The people arrested by the Securitate were not just written about or written on by Securitate agents; instead, they became authors of their own files and were forced to internalize the ideology of the secret police and confess to a crime they had not committed in order to avoid corporal punishment. To challenge this confession would mean increased physical punishment or death.<sup>90</sup> In this way, “the {Securitate’s} ideology became embodied and as such re-organized the victim’s structure of feeling and perception. The secret police’s ... reeducation of the socialist man was thus well underway.”<sup>91</sup> In this way, the Securitate was able to mold the actions of the Romanian citizens and aided in the creation of an apparently devoted society. In addition, the Securitate’s actions isolated dissenters, made opposition clandestine and conspiratorial,<sup>92</sup> made it appear as if those who opposed the regime were alone in their actions within a population that was completely loyal to Ceausescu, and

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 249-250.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Andrew Hall, “Theories of Collective Action and Revolution: Evidence from the Romanian Transition of December 1989,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52, no. 6 (September 2000): 1071.

made dissent a “solitary gesture, unlikely to generate demonstrations of solidarity or new expressions of dissent.”<sup>93</sup>

In order to separate those who opposed the regime from the rest of the population, the Securitate relied on a variety of extralegal tactics, including petty harassment, threats, and physical beatings, and individuals were often fired from their jobs to be prosecuted and imprisoned for parasitism, or for receiving benefits but doing no work in return, although they were denied all job opportunities. Additionally, in order to isolate dissenters from others who shared their views, from Western diplomats, and from media representatives who could bring international attention to their plight, the Securitate denied them residence permits that were required before they could move to and live in major cities. The state also cut off all mail and telephone services, put the individuals under house arrest and constant surveillance, publically vilified them as traitors or spies, and pressured them to emigrate if international attention was raised.<sup>94</sup> Because of this, the Securitate was lulled into a false sense of security, and the organization was caught by surprise when violent protests suddenly arose throughout the state.

The fall of the state of Romania began in 1981 when Ceaușescu began an austerity program in order to repay the country’s national debt. In order to accomplish this, basic goods were cut and the supply of gas and heat was reduced; overall, the standard of living for citizens in Romania was severely affected by Ceaușescu program,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1072.

<sup>94</sup> John Pike, “Department of State Security,” *Ceausescu.org*. Updated 05 September 1998, accessed 16 April 2015.  
[http://www.ceausescu.org/ceausescu\\_texts/department\\_of\\_state\\_securi.htm](http://www.ceausescu.org/ceausescu_texts/department_of_state_securi.htm)

although he was able to eliminate the regime's debt.<sup>95</sup> Yet, despite the falling standards of living, there were few protests against the regime until November of 1989. Additionally, Ceaușescu was convinced that he was loved by his people, and was convinced that the 1989 uprisings, which toppled his regime, were due to a plot by the Soviet Union to infiltrate the country and oust him from power.<sup>96</sup> In addition, Ceaușescu had filled his government with family members and friends, who had been recruited "according to patriarchal relationships of kin and loyalty."<sup>97</sup>

Beginning in late 1989, sudden and spontaneous protest broke out in the Timisoara region of the state in response to the government's attempts to evict a Hungarian pastor.<sup>98</sup> Because the country was so skilled at controlling society, the regime was left vulnerable to spontaneous outbursts of anti-regime collective action; because the government lacked open institutions in which citizens could participate and by penetrating society with Securitate agents and creating a climate of fear among the people, spontaneous actions became the only possible opportunity for dissent.<sup>99</sup> Hall notes,

The myth of 'total control' serves the regime because it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: when citizens believe this myth, they are less likely to engage in ... attempts at dissent. But, paradoxically, this myth ... undermines the regime's ability to exert effective control, and especially its ability to respond to anti-regime collective action ... because it inevitably creates a climate of over-

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<sup>95</sup> Stephen D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution*. Taylor & Francis (2000): 55-56.

<sup>96</sup> Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*. Ithica: Cornell University Press (2005): 65.

<sup>97</sup> Henry F. Carey, *Romania Since 1989: Politics, Economics, and Society*. Oxford: Lexington Books (2004): 354.

<sup>98</sup> Siani-Davies, 64, 69.

<sup>99</sup> Hall, 1074.

confidence and complacency among regime officials. In a sense, the success of their myth of 'total control' is so powerful that the authorities are structurally vulnerable to being 'taken by surprise.'<sup>100</sup>

Although eventually quelled, riots continued to spring up throughout the country with protesters demanding the removal of Ceaușescu from power; since the regime lacked a military police, the Romanian army was sent to establish order.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, protests continued to spread across Romania despite military intervention.

In late December, Ceaușescu addressed the public in the capital city of Bucharest to condemn the protests in Timisoara and to justify the brutal crackdown.<sup>102</sup> Thousands of workers and military units were taken to Timisoara and directed where to stand, when to clap, and when to sing. The speech was an annual event meant to show support of the regime and to give the appearance of popular support.<sup>103</sup> A few minutes into his speech, chaos broke out as factory workers began chanting "Timisoara," and the rally meant to garner support of Ceaușescu and his regime turned into protest.<sup>104</sup> Demonstrators took to the streets and eventually the state's Security forces joined with the protesters.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Ceaușescu lost the support of his military following the death of Ceaușescu's Minister of Defense Vasile Milea, as rumors swirled that he had been murdered by the regime for refusing to order his soldiers to fire on protesters.<sup>106</sup> Later,

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 1075.

<sup>101</sup> Siani-Davies, 63.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 82-84.

<sup>103</sup> "Video of Ceausescu's Last Speech, December 1989", Making the History of 1989, Item #696, (accessed 16 April 2015). <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/696>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 90.

the Ceaușescu family fled the country, but were apprehended and sentenced to execution on Christmas day in 1989.

Although the Securitate attempted to reeducate and transform individuals, dissent and unhappiness continued to bubble beneath the surface of society. For all their ability at tracking and observing Romanian citizens and isolating dissenters, the Securitate agents were unable to overcome either the dilemma of surveillance or the problem of preference falsification; they did not understand that people were actually unsatisfied with the poor living standards and repression they experienced. The Securitate and the regime were also lulled into a false sense of security as it was thought that all dissenters had been isolated from each other and from those who agreed with them, or had been dispelled from the country; similarly, because the Securitate believed it had effectively restructured and remolded the Romanian population, the state was caught by surprise when spontaneous protests arose.

In addition, until the end of his regime, Ceaușescu believed that he was beloved by his people and that unrest was due to Soviet infiltration, and his government, filled with loyal family members and friends, convinced him that the protests that began in Timisoara were a terrorist diversion organized by Hungary with the support of the United States and the USSR.<sup>107</sup> Even when delivering his final speech in Timisoara, minutes before protest broke out, Ceaușescu firmly believed that the 100,000 people who had been gathered to listen to his speech completely supported him. When jeers and boos erupted throughout the crowd, Ceaușescu looked stunned and confused, and tried to

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 65.

placate the people by offering a wage increase and student scholarships, all the while praising the actions of the regime.<sup>108</sup> The confusion that Ceaușescu exhibited proves that he was unaware of the unpopularity of his regime, and indicates that the fall of Romania was due in part to the inability of the state to properly read the sentiments of the people because of the problem of preference falsification and the dilemma of surveillance.

### ***The KGB***

The Soviet Union first established its surveillance system in 1917; originally known as the Cheka, this system was granted permission to beat and shoot citizens mercilessly, and held extraordinary extralegal powers.<sup>109</sup> In fact, between its creation in 1917 and its renaming to the State Political Administration, or the GPU, in 1922, the Cheka was responsible for over 500,000 Russian citizens deaths.<sup>110</sup> In 1954, the Cheka officially became the KGB, the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or the Committee for State Security, with the purpose of protecting the state against foreign spies and agents, exposing political and economic crimes committed by citizens, protecting the states' borders, and ensuring the security of state secrets.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "Video," 8:01.

<sup>109</sup> John J. Dziak, *Chekisty: A History of the KGB*. New York: Ballantine Books (1988): 15.

<sup>110</sup> Brian Freemantle, *KGB – Inside the World's Largest Intelligence Network*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (1982): 22.

<sup>111</sup> Steven Aftergood, "Intelligence Resource Program – Committee for State Security." Accessed 12 December 2014.

<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/kgb/su0514.htm>.

The KGB was divided into six directorates and employed between 390,000 and 700,000 officials.<sup>112</sup> These directorates were responsible for intelligence gathering, control of citizens and foreigners living within the Soviet Union, military counterintelligence, internal security, surveillance of foreigners, and maintenance of telephone and radio lines.<sup>113</sup> In order to extract information from the people of the Soviet Union, the KGB employed tactics of propaganda and disinformation, but were willing to use violent interrogation methods when necessary. In addition, similar to the Securitate, the KGB employed a tactic of reeducation in order to change what and how a citizen thought. In the Soviet Union, reeducation involved long hours of questioning and lectures about Soviet achievements, combined with sleep deprivation and threats to the family of the interrogated. This system of reeducation completely transformed the behavior of the citizens of the Soviet Union and helped to control how they acted in public.<sup>114</sup> Additionally, the KGB assassinated and kidnapped opponents such as citizens, émigrés, and foreign nationals, and became skilled at covering up any involvement in the disappearance of a citizen.<sup>115</sup>

The demise of the Soviet Union began in 1985 when Gorbachev initiated two reforms, glasnost, a freeing of speech and media, and perestroika, a program of economic

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<sup>112</sup> Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story*. New York: Harper Collins (1990): 652.

<sup>113</sup> Amy Knight, *The KGB – Police and Politics in the Soviet Union*. Winchester, MA: Allen & Unwin, Inc. (1988): 122-124.

<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Hein, Getting to Know You: Stanford Scholar Examines Domestic Surveillance in the USSR.” *Stanford Report*. October 2012. Accessed 12 December 2014. <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/october/kgb-domestic-surveillance-100212.html>

<sup>115</sup> "Soviet Use of Assassination and Kidnapping". CIA. Accessed 12 December 2014.

reform, and continued as he pushed for greater liberalization. At the same time, the regime was involved in the Cold War with the United States, and while Gorbachev was aware of the unrest in his state and initiated economic reforms to try to placate dissenters, change did not occur quickly enough and the population remained dissatisfied. The freeing of speech also allowed dissent to flow through the state, and hastened the spread of anti-communist sentiments. In 1987, seeking to strengthen socialism, Gorbachev suggested a policy of democratization throughout the regime, and in 1989, elections were held throughout the state for the first time since 1917.<sup>116</sup> Although Gorbachev sought to modernize and decentralize the state through his series of reforms, the people demanded further democratization and freedoms. While Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika reforms were supposed to strengthen the control of communism throughout the Soviet Union, in reality, he intensified the people's desire and demands for democratization, and as a result, Western ideals flowed throughout the regime. The republics of the Soviet Union began to call for separation, and in 1991, Gorbachev officially disbanded the Soviet Union and ended communist rule.<sup>117</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union can be attributed in part to failures committed by Gorbachev himself because archives show that the government was aware of the economic and social problems that existed throughout the state, but Gorbachev was unwilling to address it. At the end of his regime, Gorbachev donated thousands of

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<sup>116</sup> "Gorbachev's Role in 1989 Turmoil", *BBC*. April 1, 2009. sec. Europe. Accessed 14 December 2014. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7972755.stm>.

<sup>117</sup> "The End of the Soviet Union; Text of Declaration: 'Mutual Recognition' and 'an Equal Basis.'" *The New York Times*, December 22 1991, sec. World. Accessed 14 December 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/22/world/end-soviet-union-text-declaration-mutual-recognition-equal-basis.html?ref=azerbaijan>.

documents to the Gorbachev foundation including personal archives of his foreign policy advisors.<sup>118</sup> The papers include recommendations of advisors to Gorbachev, memorandums advising the leader on how he should deal with Jews seeking to emigrate, and a report on why he should refuse to meet with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader at the time.<sup>119</sup> Most importantly, the donated documents contained reports from informers within the East Germany Communist Party “describing how bad conditions were in East Germany,”<sup>120</sup> as well as ones from his own KGB agents that documented that “farmers and miners alike were rebelling and intellectuals were demanding democratic elections.” In addition, the documents detailed how “the people of the Baltic states, the Georgians and the Moldovans were revolting against the Russians, while the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine – the Soviet Union foreign policy that countries could not leave the Warsaw Pact – was looming in Eastern Europe.”<sup>121</sup> Despite this knowledge and rather than heed the advice of East German party members and Soviet Union KGB agents and crack down on dissenters, Gorbachev chose to focus on increasing the size of the military, despite the Soviet Union’s stagnant economy; in 1989, the start of the Cold War, Gorbachev announced a military budget of 77.3-150.6 billion rubles, an increase from 21 billion rubles the year before.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Christian Neef, “The Gorbachev Files: Secret Papers Reveal Truth Behind Soviet Collapse.” *Spiegel Online International*, 11 August 2011. Accessed 14 April 2015. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-gorbachev-files-secret-papers-reveal-truth-behind-soviet-collapse-a-779277.html>

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> “Russian Military Budget,” *Federation of American Scientists*. 7 September 2000. Accessed 14 April 2015. <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/mo-budget.htm>.

Although the KGB became quite skilled at penetrating society, instilling fear, and molding the minds and actions of Soviet citizens, the system failed to overcome the problem of preference falsification and convince Gorbachev that the unrest detected after the implementation of his glasnost policy had the potential to cause revolution and lead to regime failure and should be addressed. Instead, Gorbachev continued to focus on increasing the military strength of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the KGB was unable to predict and prevent a coup that contributed to the stepping down of Gorbachev from his position of power. The coup was attempted by a group of hard-line supporters of the Soviet Union's communist party who were opposed to Gorbachev's glasnost, perestroika, and decentralization reforms. Participants in the coup included members of the Ministry of Defense, the KGB, and the Vice President of Russia, which shows that despite extensive knowledge of citizens and the goal of ridding the state of internal threat, the system was unable to properly foresee and prevent uprising. Following this coup, Gorbachev enacted a series of reforms that led to the disbanding of the Soviet Union and the end of communist rule.<sup>123</sup> When the Soviet Union officially ended in 1991, the KGB was disbanded, and later, smaller organizations like the Foreign Intelligence Service were created in its place.

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<sup>123</sup> Ebon, Martin. *KGB – Death and Rebirth*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (1994): 7, 55.

### *Conclusion*

The Stasi, Securitate, and KGB were all established with the goal of protecting their states from uprising and collapse, and worked to penetrate society, remold and re-educate citizens, discourage dissent, and accurately uncover how the people were feeling so that these sentiments could be changed. Through their extensive networks of agents and informants, these organizations were successful at infiltrating throughout every layer of their country's populations, but failed to permanently change how the people felt in their private lives. As Poppelwell writes, knowledge that a surveillance system was present and watching "served to atomize society, preventing independent discussion in all but the smallest groups."<sup>124</sup> In addition, in his *Seeing like a State*, Scott writes, "Backed by state power through records, courts, and ultimately coercion, these state fictions transformed the reality they presumed to observe, although never so thoroughly as to precisely fit the grid."<sup>125</sup> In public, the citizens may have put on the façade of happiness and satisfaction with the regime and may have changed their thoughts and actions to fit Scott's grid; in private, however, unhappiness continued to grow, and the surveillance systems became unable to properly respond to and prevent protest when it arose. Because of this, the East German government was unable to see the revolutionary potential that unhappiness throughout the regime held. In addition, in Romania, the Securitate and Ceaușescu misread the sentiments of the people and believed that the socialist regime was beloved; in the case of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev was aware of dissent throughout

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<sup>124</sup> Poppelwell, 41.

<sup>125</sup> James Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press (February 1999): 24.

the country but was unable to respond to it properly. It is because of this, the inability of the three systems to foresee dissent, properly respond to opposition, and prevent protest, and their incapability to convince the regime that discontent should be addressed, that protests and demonstrations spread throughout the states and contributed to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.

### Chapter 3 – China and the Role of Internet Surveillance

#### *Surveillance in the Twenty-first Century*

In the contemporary period, there exist only a few states with surveillance systems as extensive as those in the Soviet Union, Romania, and East Germany. The third chapter of this thesis will focus on one; it will look at China's system of statewide surveillance, and will examine how the state uses surveillance of the Internet to its advantage to try and ensure regime stability, and how it allows the state to escape the dilemma of surveillance and the problem of preference falsification. The importance of examining surveillance in this comparative context is twofold: first, it allows us to see exactly why the regimes in the Soviet Bloc collapsed despite their extensive security systems. And second, it allows us to compare the fates of these historic states to the possible end of modern states, and lets us hypothesize what might lead to their downfall. A comparison between China and the Soviet Bloc is a compelling one to make because all of states employ[ed] extensive surveillance systems; China is ruled by an authoritarian government similar to those in the three Eastern European states, and has had some relationship with the Soviet Union, similar to East Germany and Romania. In particular, China and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations in 1924, which continued until the late 1960s. However, unlike the states of Eastern Europe, China has withstood revolutions and protests and has remained a stable country; but can this continue?

First this chapter will explain why modern states might choose Internet surveillance in order to ensure regime stability. Next, will discuss how the state of China watches its people, focusing on the tactics China employs in order to monitor the Internet.

Finally, it will discuss how China thus far been able to overcome the dilemma of surveillance and preference falsification through overseeing the Internet.

### ***Why Internet Surveillance?***

In the modern era, technology is hard to avoid. The majority of citizens across the globe have laptops, cell phones, and access to the Internet, unless they live in highly restrictive regimes such as North Korea. In general, however, people are connected to each other and to citizens in other states; this allows information to flow across borders and gives citizens a private venue to express their opinions on aspects of their lives or of others. While some states try and restrict this flow of information, others use it to their advantage and are able to adapt new policies in response to the demands that citizens make on blogs or public forums on the Internet.

In order to control the use of the Internet, states utilize proactive and reactive strategies. Proactive strategies work to guide Internet development and usage in order to promote the states' own interests and priorities. These strategies include the distribution of propaganda over the Internet and hacking into certain websites and spreading viruses. Reactive strategies, on the other hand, involve direct efforts to counter the potential challenges the state may face when it limits Internet use; strategies include key-word

filtering, limiting access to the Internet, blocking access to websites, or prohibiting Internet use entirely.<sup>126</sup>

The Internet also allows citizens to express unhappiness, and lets governments respond to their needs. Although East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union attempted to use their surveillance systems to uncover unrest and respond to it, because of the threatening nature of their methods, the citizens hid their unhappiness regarding how the state was running. Additionally, political change could not occur in Eastern Europe because any citizen who criticized the state was swiftly punished. However, when states are able to oversee their citizens without creating a sense of fear of punishment, then they can accurately observe how people feel and respond to their needs. Without the sense of fear accompanying being watched, citizens are unafraid to speak their minds because they do not fear guaranteed arrest, interrogation, or punishment. The state is also able to better identify and punish those who may become an enemy of the regime, therefore ensuring stability. Additionally, citizens do not need to pretend to favor one outcome over another because they are able to hide being an online user. In this way, citizens are able to express their true concerns and dislikes about various functions, something that citizens of the Soviet Bloc were unable to do, and the state can respond to implement change and ensure happiness and stability.

While citizens in China are aware that they are being watched, they are not afraid to speak their mind because there is no imminent threat for doing so. Unless they are

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<sup>126</sup> Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, "The Internet and State Control in Authoritarian Regimes: China, Cuba, and the Counterrevolution," in *First Monday*, vol. 6, no. 8 (August 2001). Accessed 5 March 2015.

perceived as an enemy of the state, the people are free to criticize the regime and government officials; the government, in turn, learns from and uses the information gathered from Internet monitoring to make changes to ensure stability and avoid uprising.

### *Internet Usage and Surveillance in China*

Today, China offers the best example of a state that has resisted the call to democratize. In addition, the government's surveillance of the Internet has led to regime stability because it is better able to respond to criticism and complaints without the looming threat of punishment and it is able to delete posts that may lead to collective action and instability. In this way, the government's Internet surveillance has led to regime stability because the state permits dissent if it does not have the potential to lead to uprising. It is this distinction that is key: the CCP permits criticism and uses it to its advantage, but censors writing that might incite collective action.

The use of the Internet and of blogs began in China in 2005; by the end of the year, there were around 36.82 million blogs in existence in China alone.<sup>127</sup> Prior to the blog explosion of 2005, citizens used BBS, which were forums and bulletin boards; while blogs have only one author and the government is generally more able to track down the owner, BBS had a free-for-all structure, which made tracking down authors more difficult. Additionally, because the volume of posts on the BBS is much larger than on blogs, it took longer for them to be censored and shut down if users posted politically

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<sup>127</sup> Rebecca MacKinnon, "Flatter world and thicker walls? Blogs, censorship and civic discourse in China." *Public Choice* vol. 134, no. 1-2 (January 2008): 35.

sensitive information.<sup>128</sup> BBS's were the website of choice for frustrated journalists or politically minded people to hold debates or discussions, and, because of this, the government began to crackdown on the BBS and established new rules and regulations such as making users subscribe with their real names or only letting university students post.<sup>129</sup>

Today, there are more than 329 million active blog sites in China,<sup>130</sup> and bloggers write about their feelings, emotions, and opinions, and share photos, jokes, and sports and entertainment news.<sup>131</sup> In order to ensure stability, China monitors and censors blogs and their content; the country has two ways of surveying the Internet: via cyber police, that screen online content, and via punishment to ensure self-censorship.<sup>132</sup> Some blogs are censored by their blog-hosting businesses, such as MSN, Blogbus, or Sina,<sup>133</sup> and these companies are given the responsibility to figure out how to monitor posts to the government's satisfaction,<sup>134</sup> with the threat of fines, shutdown, or criminal liability if they do not comply.<sup>135</sup> Some use automated censorship systems, that prevent the user from posting certain words or phrases, some delete blogs with sensitive content within a

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>130</sup> James Leibold, "Blogging Alone: China, the Internet, and the Democratic Illusion?" in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 70, no. 4 (November 2011):1023.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1026.

<sup>132</sup> Jongpil Chung, "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea: The Internet and the Political Regime." In *Asian Survey*, vol. 48, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 734.

<sup>133</sup> Mackinnon, 37-38.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>135</sup> David Bamman, Brendan O'Connor, and Noah A Smith, "Censorship and Deletion Practices in Chinese Social Media," in *First Monday*, vol. 17, no. 3 (March 2012). Accessed 4 March 2015.

few hours, and others replace sensitive words or characters with asterisks.<sup>136</sup> For example, a test blog tried to publish a post that mentioned the religious movement Falun Gong but was unable to do so, and received a notice that stated that the content contained sensitive terms and these should not be used, for the sake of healthy development.<sup>137</sup> Also, a study by Bamman et. al. looked at the deletion of posts containing terms that could incite collective action, and noticed that posts containing phrases like “Ai Weiwei,” “anti-society,” and democracy movement” were frequently blocked or deleted.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, these private blog-hosting businesses are expected to hand over any information, personal or otherwise, that authorities might be interested in, which enforces the idea of self-discipline:<sup>139</sup> in order to avoid having one’s politically sensitive posts given to the government for examination, it is better to not write them at all.

An additional recent study by King et al. noted that through the use of keyword filtering, the government is able to censor anything that could lead to mass uprising against the state. People are permitted to blog about the government, even in a negative tone; however, if too many citizens begin to write about a topic that has the potential to lead to collective action, the government notices the spike in activity and immediately begins to censor and remove posts.<sup>140</sup> In their study, King et. al. noticed that there were posts left online that make scathing critiques of the Chinese government, of the One

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<sup>136</sup> Mackinnon, 38.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>138</sup> Bamman et al.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>140</sup> Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts, “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” in *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2 (May 2013): 12.

Child Policy, and of government officials; in contrast, posts that favored the state and its policies but had the potential to lead to collective action, even if they were written in support of the state, were censored.<sup>141</sup> For example, one post that was deleted concerned bombings in Fuzhou in 2011. It stated,

The bombing led not only to the tragedy of his death but the death of many government workers. Even if we can verify what Qian Mingqi said on Weibo that the building demolition caused a great deal of personal damage, we should still condemn his extreme act of retribution.... The government has continually put forth measures and laws to protect the interests of citizens in building demolition. And the media has called attention to the plight of those experiencing housing demolition. The rate at which compensation for housing demolition has increased exceeds inflation. In many places, this compensation can change the fate of an entire family.<sup>142</sup>

While this post praised the government's action in the aftermath of the incident, it had the potential to lead to collective action because the author called for the condemnation of Mingqi's "extreme act of retribution." Because of this, the post was quickly deleted. Additionally, Bamman et. al. looked at posts that were deleted by censors, and noticed that posts containing politically sensitive terms were deleted 50-100% of the time they appeared. These terms included "Ministry of Truth," a reference to state propaganda, Falun Gong, a banned spiritual group, and "two meetings," a term that is used as a code word for "planned protest."<sup>143</sup>

Other authors like Bambauer note that the monitoring system in China is multilayered and the state rarely admits that it plays a role in controlling and monitoring

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>142</sup> King et. al, 14.

<sup>143</sup> Bamman et. al.

information.<sup>144</sup> Bambauer argues that Internet users in China are not informed when they are prevented from reaching prohibited material, while in a country like Saudi Arabia, users receive a “block page” that informs them that the ban was deliberate.<sup>145</sup> In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congressional Hearing before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, it was revealed that rather than receive a block page, as in Saudi Arabia,

Users making requests for banned information receive an error message on their Web browser making it appear as if the information is not available or there is something wrong with their Internet connection. In other words, users in China trying [to] access banned content do not receive a blocked page as is customary in some other countries that censor the Internet.<sup>146</sup>

Despite these undisclosed blocks and monitoring tactics, civil society in China is cultivated via the blogosphere. Although large-scale gatherings are prohibited, citizens are able to express their views on politically charged issues like resource distribution or gay rights without fear of punishment or retribution. In his book, scholar Goubin Yang states that civil society and online activism, which he considers to be any form of Internet-based collective action that promotes, contests, or resists change, are mutually constitutive and that civil society generates online debate, while debate activates civil society and boosts its development.<sup>147</sup> Yang gives the example of the website [www.hxzq.net](http://www.hxzq.net), a site launched by former educated youth that started as an online bulletin

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<sup>144</sup> Derek E. Bambauer, “Cybersieves,” in *Duke Law Journal*, vol. 59, no. 3 (December 2009): 391

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

<sup>146</sup> House Commission on United States-China Economic and Security Review, *Access to Information and Media Control in the People’s Republic of China: Hearing before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 18 June 2008, 77.

<sup>147</sup> Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online*. New York: Columbia University Press (2009): 38.

board, which continues to attract members of the same generation. The website is a space for social interaction, personal and artistic expression, online publishing, and political debate, and shows how civil society and the Internet have co-evolved.<sup>148</sup>

Because China entertains and encourages disapproval and does not punish for opposing views, citizens are satisfied with expressing their thoughts and do not feel the need to gather in collective action. Additionally, the government can use the criticism and complaints of the people to learn about problems that need to be addressed. The government uses criticism to see how local cadre leaders are performing, and does not take punitive action against critics like it does against those who participate in collective action. Hachigian writes,

Criticism of China's environmental policy and of corrupt officials also appears regularly in the chat room of the official People's Daily and on university bulletin boards on-line. On-line conversations can be very politically charged, most likely because censors are overwhelmed and unable to delete sensitive content quickly enough. Yet police rarely shut down such chat rooms -- perhaps because they offer officials who lack the benefit of a free media a way to discover what citizens are thinking or because they give elites a sanctioned place for fairly free speech ... The anonymous, fast, and relatively inexpensive communication allowed by the Internet places an unprecedented tool in the hands of the few Chinese now dedicated to political change.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Guobin Yang, "The Co-Evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China," in *Asian Survey*, vol. 43, no. 3 (May/June 2003): 418-421. Accessed 5 March 2015.

<sup>149</sup> Nina Hachigian, "China's Cyber-Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* vol. 80, no. 2 (March 2001): 118-133.

Similarly, blogs in China “may be a catalyst for long-term ... change because they are helping to enlarge the space for ... conversation on subjects not related to political activism or regime change.”<sup>150</sup>

In addition, the government can use monitoring and censorship of the Internet in a positive way and is able respond to concerns and investigate and implement change. For example, Yang describes how in May of 2007, a television station showed a short program that looked at the kidnapping of young boys for slave labor, and the experiences of parents trying to find their sons. The program did not receive national attention, however, until June 6 2007, when a woman published an anonymous letter on a blog online about the issue. By June 18<sup>th</sup>, the letter had attracted 300,000 hits; it was then cross-posted and attracted 580,000 hits. Responses to the letter demanded the punishment of all those involved, and called for the establishment of emergency funds to help parents find their abducted children, for the exposition of the slavery by international media and religious organizations, and the intervention of the national government. Soon after, the central government sent officials to the region to investigate, and the suspects were found and prosecuted in July.<sup>151</sup> Although only one example, this scenario illustrates how government monitoring of the Internet can positive change, and how the Internet has helped to cultivate civil society. Although physical collective action is prohibited in China, the people are able to band together via the Internet and connect over issues, like human rights, in order to demand change.

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<sup>150</sup> Mackinnon, 31.

<sup>151</sup> Yang, “The Power,” 20-21.

In the case of China, Internet use and government surveillance are able to create a more stable state because any critical voices easily become lost among the numerous sports and photo sharing blogs. As Liebold writes, “the Internet now provides Chinese netizens with even more diverse and far more engrossing ways to distract and dampen any subversive thoughts and actions.”<sup>152</sup> Because they are sidetracked by sports or celebrity gossip, some argue, Chinese citizens do not participate in government criticism. Additionally, Chinese Internet users have found ways around techniques like keyword filtering or blocked or shutdown blogs and websites; for example, some replace characters in blocked words with similar characters to create words that may mean the same thing but appear to be nonsense, while others find it easy and cheap to start a new blog if one has been blocked or shut down.

The use of the Internet has created a more transparent, responsive, and accountable government; criticism of the state over websites and blogs has forced the government to “reconsider its policies and re-evaluate the actions of its agents at provincial ... levels and below.”<sup>153</sup> In addition, the state has had to consider and react to demands made concerning policies, corruption, and violations of rights. In doing so, the Chinese Communist Party is able to implement positive change while it remains in control and ensures that collective action does not occur.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 1028.

<sup>153</sup> Ashley Esarey and Xiao Qiang, “Digital Communication and Political Change in China,” in *International Journal of Communications*, vol. 5 (2011): 304. Accessed 5 March 2015.

***Overcoming the Dilemma of Surveillance and the Problem of Preference Falsification***

In modern surveillance states, the problem of preference falsification and the dilemma of surveillance can both be overcome through citizen use of and government monitoring of the Internet. In brief, the dilemma of surveillance is when people hide their true feelings, making accurate surveillance impossible, while the problem of preference falsification states that because of some social pressure or influence, people express wants or preferences that differ from what they really want.<sup>154</sup> In the case of the Soviet Bloc the Stasi, Securitate, and KGB were either unable to accurately report on how the people felt or could not convince the state leaders that discontent had to be addressed over other issues, such as economic reform in the case of Gorbachev and the Soviet Union, which made it impossible for the regimes to prevent protest when it arose.

In modern states like China, through surveillance of the Internet, a regime is able to see how its people feel about policy issues or government officials and can act to implement change before protest arises; the citizens are able to express their true feelings because of the anonymity the Internet provides, and if the state sees that enough people are discussing an issue online, it can react in order to create positive change. Most importantly, because no one is pressuring the people to write on one topic or another, the problem of preference falsification can be avoided. These posts may be censored, but people are not being told what they can and cannot post and share online. Additionally, because bloggers can hide their identities behind usernames and false IP addresses,

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<sup>154</sup> Timur Kuran, "Preference Falsification, Policy Continuity, and Collective Conservatism," in *The Economic Journal*, vol. 97, no. 387 (September 1987): 642-643. Accessed 5 March 2015.

people can express their true feelings without fear of harsh punishment, and the dilemma of surveillance can be prevented.

But does this mean that Internet monitoring and censorship will ensure the stability of the Communist Party's regime? The implications of these conclusions will be addressed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 – Predicting the Future of China and other Modern States**

Based on our comparisons of the three Eastern European states and their extensive surveillance systems, this thesis will now turn to predicting the future of states that exist today that employ high degrees of surveillance. Although the KGB, Securitate, and Stasi were able to penetrate every layer of society and watch over every action of the people, they were unable to accurately analyze and inform the state of the discontent dwelling within the Soviet Union, Romanian, and East German societies. Therefore, how can modern states like Iran and China remain stable? What will become of the United States, another state that heavily surveys its people? Does surveillance really ensure stability?

This chapter of this thesis will focus on looking at the future of China and of other states that watch the Internet activity of their people. Using the findings from this examination, it will attempt to create a broad theory concerning the relationship between surveillance and state strength, and will conclude that surveillance, of the Internet or otherwise, does not ensure regime stability.

### ***Does Surveillance Work?***

Modern states justify the use of surveillance by stating that it creates safer and more stable societies by increasing security and allowing states to become more responsive to their citizens. Many scholars argue that a states' primary duty is to ensure the protection of its people from threat; in regards to the hierarchy of political goods that a state must provide, Rotberg writes,

None is as critical as the supply of security, especially human security ... the state's prime function is to provide that political good of security – to prevent cross-border invasions and infiltrations, and any loss of territory; to eliminate domestic threats to or attacks upon the national order and social structure; [and] to prevent crime and any related dangers to human security.<sup>155</sup>

In particular, surveillance helps states provide security because it allows governments to collect information on their enemies, both in and outside of the nation's borders, and makes them better able to respond to threat when it does arise. If, as Rotberg states, the provision of security is the prime function of the state, then surveillance is one tool that allows states to do so.

However, as we have seen, surveillance does not always create more stable states, as in the cases of East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union. Because the Stasi, Securitate, and Soviet Union were unable to accurately see how the people they were observing felt *and* could not convince the leaders of the states that the unhappiness observed should be addressed, these three states all collapsed despite the extensive surveillance systems that operated within their borders. These systems were unable to eliminate domestic threats or attacks upon the national order and social order, and the states that made up the Eastern Bloc experienced mass protests that lead to collapse; the Berlin Wall was torn down, Ceausescu and his wife were arrested and executed, and Gorbachev began to dismantle the Soviet Bloc.

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<sup>155</sup> Robert Rotberg “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators,” in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*” ed. Robert Rotberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2003): 3.

### ***Creating a General Theory of Surveillance***

The comparison drawn between China and the states of the Soviet Bloc allow us to make a general theory regarding the relationship between surveillance and regime stability: ***If a state monitors the actions of its people but does not punish for dissent and uses the information gathered to its advantage to create change in policy, government, or elsewhere, then it will remain stable. In addition, those states that monitor the action of its people, brutally represses them, and are unwilling or unable to make change in accordance with the people's wants are more likely to collapse, violently.***

From this theory, we can begin to further understand why the states of the Soviet Bloc fell. In the case of East Germany, the Stasi infiltrated every level of society and watched and reported on even the most banal of actions. Because of this, the citizens were unable to talk about how they truly felt about how they were governed or about their quality of life. Their needs and wants were ignored, the state did nothing to ensure their happiness, and beneficial change did not occur. In the case of Romania, while the Securitate attempted to accurately collect information regarding how the people felt, they too punished for dissent, attempted to reeducate citizens, and did not report the tensions observed to the government. The state was unable to enact positive change that could have placated the people, although it possessed information that said that such a change was necessary. In the Soviet Union, the KGB penetrated society and employed tactics of reeducation, assassination, and kidnapping to mold the minds of the people and prevent the expression of dissent. However, in 1985 when Gorbachev initiated *glasnost*, the freeing of speech and the media, the population was allowed to express dissent of the

regime, and anti-communist sentiments, Western ideals, and the call for democratization spread throughout the region. Because the government was preoccupied with expanding its economic and military strength, the KGB could not convince Gorbachev that the unhappiness spreading through the state after the passing of *glasnost* should be addressed; because of this, Gorbachev could not create policy change that might have led to stability and was instead forced to disband the Soviet Bloc and end communist rule in Eastern Europe.

### ***Predicting the Future of China***

Using this theory of surveillance and state stability, the question now turns to what the future of China will be. Can the state remain stable because its tactics of surveillance and Internet monitoring are different than those that were used in the Soviet Bloc? Additionally, because China uses the criticism it receives to make policy change, will the state remain stable in comparison to East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union, three states that brutally punished citizens for the expression of dissent?

The state of China faces threats similar to those in Eastern Europe that resulted in regime collapse. For example, as a player in the international trade market, China is exposed to Western notions and principles. As these ideals spread throughout the regime, the state must find a way eliminate collective action that might call for democratization, and therefore ensure stability and survival. In addition, the state controls areas such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Tibet, and frequently must act to control the call for independence and democracy in these regions. Despite these threats, the state is likely to

remain stable because it entertains and encourages criticism in China and uses it to enact meaningful policy change. In comparison, the states of the Soviet Bloc violently punished or killed for the expression of dissent, established a system of normalization, and resorted to physical torture and brainwashing tactics in order to attempt to ensure stability. The state does not completely prohibit the flow of democratic ideas or dissent and only censors Internet posts that could inspire collective action. There are other reasons why the people of China might organize in protest, but based on this theory of surveillance alone, it is likely that the CCP would remain stable if the state continues to recognize the views of its people and enact change to respond to their needs.

### *Examining the Futures of Other Surveillance States*

The nation of China is the best example of a state that uses surveillance to its advantage and will remain stable despite internal and external threats and pressures. Because it does not violently punish for dissent, and instead encourages and uses it to create policy change, the state is able to ensure that its people are relatively happy and that their views and wants are recognized. The people are satisfied with being able to express themselves honestly online, and because of this, are not motivated to join in collective action. They understand that their opinions will be recognized and change is likely to occur. This relationship between monitoring and change is key to ensure regime stability.

However, surveillance, of the Internet or otherwise, does not always ensure stability; if the state lacks a sophisticated monitoring system and cannot detect and delete

posts that may spur collective-action, then monitoring is unlikely to work. In addition, if the state simply controls all usage of the Internet making the people unable and unwilling to express their thoughts freely, then surveillance will fail. The best example of these situations can be seen from an examination of the state of Iran. Iran is a regime that is least likely to remain stable, despite attempts at monitoring the Internet usage of its people, because the state punishes for dissent does not utilize criticism in order to enact policy change that could better the lives of the citizens. The state employs similar methods of key-word filtering, Internet speed throttling, and website shutdowns in order to monitor the Internet activity of its citizens; the people attempt to express themselves anonymously on online blogs, but the state quickly discovers and shuts these sites down, and those responsible can be severely punished. The regime justifies its actions by claiming that it does so in order to protect Islamic ideals and anything that would cause social harm, such as sites containing pornography, information on other minority faiths, or references to illegal drug and alcohol usage.<sup>156</sup>

However, the state has not been entirely successful at its monitoring efforts, as illustrated by the events of the Arab Spring. Some scholars, like Howard, argue that sites like Facebook and Twitter played a crucial role during the protests that characterized the Middle East because of their ability to organize collective action and schedule protests and their locations despite government attempts at censorship.<sup>157</sup> In both the Green

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<sup>156</sup> Derek E. Bambauer, "Cybersieves," in *Duke Law Journal*, vol. 59, no. 3 (December 2009): 390

<sup>157</sup> Philip N. Howard and Aiden Duffy and Deen Freelon and Muzammil Hussain and Will Mari and Marwa. "Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social

Movement and the Arab Spring, the Internet was heavily used in order to organize and spread awareness of protests to Iranian and international supporters. Sites like Twitter were used to quickly spread information on where protests were happening and when, and, as during the Arab Spring, allowed citizens to talk with people across geographical borders.

In the case of Iran, social media has played a central role in forming political debates and spreading democratic ideas across international borders because it provided citizens with a form of anonymous dissent that was able to quickly spread across geographical borders.<sup>158</sup> The state has been unable to prevent the collective action that the CCP is so skilled at weeding out and does not respond positively to dissent, and, because of this, the regime is likely to experience instability and possibly collapse.

Similar to Iran, the country of Ethiopia is also one that is likely to experience instability due to its strict censorship of the Internet. Although the country is the second most populated in the African continent, the Internet has barely penetrated the country; despite this, however, the government has maintained strict control of the Internet and other information and communication technologies,<sup>159</sup> and, following the Arab Spring in 2011, the Ethiopian government strengthened and increased its censorship tactics and technologies.<sup>160</sup> In order to remain in control of the flow of information through the country, the government throttles connection speeds, shuts down Internet and cybercafés,

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Media During the Arab Spring?" ICTlogy.net (2011): 2.  
<http://ictlogy.net/bibliography/reports/projects.php?idp=2170>.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>159</sup> "Ethiopia: Freedom on the Net 2011," *Freedom House*. 2011.  
[https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2011/ethiopia#.VQWmkWTF\\_pA](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2011/ethiopia#.VQWmkWTF_pA)

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

slows connection speeds so that although sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are available, videos cannot play, and blocks websites such as Blogger that may create the opportunity for people to gather in collective action. For example, the night before a planned anti-government demonstration in 2011, the Internet was completely cut off for a least half a day.<sup>161</sup> Based on studies by the OpenNet Initiative and by Freedom House, it was revealed that government blocking of websites is sporadic and inconsistent, but tightens before political events that could create collective action. There is no list of blocked websites, or criteria for why a site might be blocked, and, like in China, users receive an error message when they try to access a blocked page.

From 2011 to 2014, the Freedom House scored the country in terms of freedom on the Internet, obstacles to access, and limits on content. In 2011, on a scale of 1-100 with 100 being the worst, the country scored 69 in terms of freedom on the Internet. On a scale of 0-25 in terms of obstacles to access with 25 being the worst, Ethiopia scored 21, and on a scale of 0-35 in terms of limits on content with 35 being the worst, the state scored 26. In 2014, these scores worsened and the state scored 80, 23, and 28, respectively. In addition, from 2013 to 2014, the six bloggers were arrested on charges of terrorism, the government launched surveillance malware against online journalists, a government agency was given the right to inspect private online activities without oversight, and Internet service interruptions worsened.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> “Internet is down through out Ethiopia – update,” *Ethiopian Review*, May 26, 2011. <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/33165>.

<sup>162</sup> “Ethiopia: Freedom on the Net 2014,” *Freedom House*. 2014. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2014/ethiopia>

In the case of Ethiopia, the state's Internet monitoring tactics are likely to create instability because the state prohibits collective action, punishes bloggers on the grounds of terrorism, and drastically slows Internet connection speeds or revokes access in times of political change. However, actors outside the country in the Ethiopian diaspora are active in attempting to create change in the country; while the citizens within the state's borders are wary of acting against the government, calls for protest come from people who have left the country.<sup>163</sup> The state differs from China and Iran, however, because this instability is likely to be started by an outside actor, rather than from an internal group. Based on our theory of the relationship between Internet monitoring and state strength, one can infer that Ethiopia will not remain stable and that increased Internet censorship will result in instability.

### *Conclusions*

In this thesis, we have examined the collapse of three Eastern European states: the Soviet Union, Romania, and East Germany. We have concluded that these three states fell because of some inability of their surveillance systems, the KGB, the Securitate, and the Stasi, respectively, or a failure by the leaders of the states. Although these systems were able to penetrate deep into the societies of their nations, they were unable to overcome either the dilemma of surveillance or the problem of preference falsification. The agents could not accurately report on the true feelings of the people because at first, as the citizens saw they were being observed, they changed their actions to fit what the

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

regimes wanted to see. Later, the systems were unable to convince the leaders that the unhappiness that was building throughout the states was important and should be addressed; instead, the leaders focused on development in other areas or were completely ignorant to the problems growing in their states, and were caught by surprise when protests arose and the states collapsed.

In addition, we compared the surveillance systems of the three states of the Soviet Bloc to the system of Internet monitoring and censorship that China uses today. Using various methods of censorship including keyword filtering, website blocking, and Internet speed throttling, the CCP is able to ensure that people can express their opinions on the state and local government, even if they are less than approving, but prevents its citizens from gathering in mass demonstration that could prove to be fatal for the regime.

From this examination of the CCP and its Internet monitoring system, we have noticed a general theory concerning the relationship between stability and surveillance: If a state monitors its people and is able to use the information gathered to its advantage to enact change, then it will remain more stable than a regime that watches and brutally punishes its people. Based on this theory, China, a state that use Internet monitoring to make policy change or to ensure the safety of the people from internal and external threats is most likely to remain stable, while states like Iran and Ethiopia, ones that prevent collective action and violently punish citizens for dissent, are most likely to experience instability. In addition, one can assume, therefore, that a country like the United States, which uses the information gathered via surveillance and monitoring to its advantage to enact change and ensure the safety of its people, will be more likely to

remain stable because it is better able to mediate the wants of the citizens and ensure that every voice is heard. In contrast, a state like Iran that prohibits and punishes for dissent is more likely to fall because of this inability to use complaints to enact change.

In this way, Internet monitoring can create stability or weakness, based on their reaction and response to criticism. If regimes want to remain stable, therefore, it is necessary that overly restrictive states attempt to allow and utilize critiques received in order to enact change and ensure the continued happiness of their people.

While these hypotheses are not perfect, this theory concerning the relationship between state strength and stability and surveillance or Internet censorship can serve as a stepping stone to predicting the future of today's more authoritarian regimes. Will these states remain stable, aided by their monitoring systems, or will they fall in a manner and for reasons similar to the collapse of East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union? While this question cannot be definitively answered at this point, the interaction between surveillance and stability is one to be considered as time progresses and as today's authoritarian states are forced to respond to the demands of their people.

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