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# Reassessing Communist International Organisations: A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in relation to their Cold War Competitors

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*This article widens the analysis of international organisations by including communist organisations, in particular the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Drawing on archival research in Moscow, Bucharest, Berlin, Geneva and Rome, this article traces the origins, the evolution and the collective actorness of both organisations. Both COMECON and the Warsaw Pact went through a process of institutionalisation, reorganisation and multilateralisation and began to share many characteristics with their Western counterparts, such as the European Economic Community and NATO. Contrary to conventional wisdom these organisations thus developed into multilateral international organisations, which the other members could use to challenge Soviet unilateralism. Comparing COMECON and the Warsaw Pact with each other and with their Western counterparts, this article shows how these Eastern European international organisations contributed to shifting the balance of power within the Soviet Bloc by empowering their members as sovereign states and themselves as collective actors.*

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In March 1965 Polish politburo member Zenon Kliszko returned with great enthusiasm from the Consultative Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow. He praised the 'new modus operandi' in the conference, which showed 'full respect of the equal rights and autonomy of each party', and he celebrated the absence within the communist movement of 'an international monolithic organisation with an international directive centre'.<sup>1</sup> By doing so he did not disqualify the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) as international organisations, as a Western reader might assume. He denied instead that they were either monolithic or directive. This defies the conventional characterisation of these organisations as 'empty shells', 'Soviet transmission belts' or instruments of Soviet coercion.<sup>2</sup>

Literature on the COMECON has burgeoned over the past few years, but it is generally written from an economic point of view and the organisation is either still depicted as a failed European Economic Community (EEC),<sup>3</sup> or analysed for its bilateral relations with its members states<sup>4</sup> or the EEC.<sup>5</sup> Little attention has been paid to the grassroots analysis of its activity in Moscow.<sup>6</sup> The Warsaw Pact has been studied mainly from the perspective of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union and has received little explicit attention as a multilateral alliance.<sup>7</sup> It is often compared unfavourably with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for its alleged 'lack of mutual interest',<sup>8</sup> or considered a Soviet instrument for 'the total subordination of the smaller Eastern European governments to the Kremlin's actual aims and policy in the post-Stalin era'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Discussion at the third plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party, 7 Apr. 1965, Poland, mf 0528, 51–2, Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio Partito Comunista Italiano, Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Robert W. Clawson and Lawrence S. Kaplan, eds., *The Warsaw Pact. Political Purpose and Military Means* (Ohio: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1982), x; Andrzej Korboński, 'The Warsaw Treaty After Twenty-Five Years: An Entangling Alliance or an Empty Shell?', in Clawson and Kaplan, eds., *The Warsaw Pact*, 17; Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944–1993: Detour From the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> André Steiner, 'The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance – An Example of Failed Economic Integration?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 39, 2 (2013), 240–58.

<sup>4</sup> Ralf Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe: Die DDR im RGW. Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien 1963–1976* (Köln: Schriften des Hannah Arendt Instituts, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community: Soviet-Bloc Controversies over East–West Trade* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Godard, 'Une seule façon d'être communiste? L'internationalisme dans les parcours biographiques au CAEM', *Critique internationale*, 66, 1 (2015), 69–83; Dagmara Jajęśniak-Quast, "'Hidden Integration". RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1 (2014), 179–95.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the essays in Mary Ann Heiss and Victor Papacosma, eds., *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008), and Torsten Diedrich, Winfried Heinemann and Christian F. Ostermann, eds., *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2009). An exception in this respect is Vojtech Mastny's work, which deals with the Warsaw Pact in its entirety.

<sup>8</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Know Now* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 289.

<sup>9</sup> Jordan Baev, 'The Warsaw Pact', in Ruud van Dijk, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2008), 960.

In this article we nevertheless propose to widen the analysis of international organisations to include organisations in the communist world, in particular the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. We aim to ‘de-centre the traditional geography’ of international organisations, as other scholars have recently done with internationalism.<sup>10</sup> Despite the huge scholarly debate on the definition, agency and scope of international organisations, the organisations it concerns are always the same, mainly Western, ones, which have become models according to which international organisations are defined. By identifying the common characteristics of these Western organisations, we propose to define international organisations as multilateral bodies rather than coercive power blocs,<sup>11</sup> whose relations are regulated by commonly agreed rules.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, they consist of sovereign states, which joined voluntarily,<sup>13</sup> preferably through a treaty.<sup>14</sup> We will use these criteria as a yardstick to measure the extent to which COMECON and the Warsaw Pact developed into international organisations, that is to say also into institutions playing a role in regulating international relations.<sup>15</sup>

In shifting the focus of the analysis from the *outcome* of the functioning of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact to the *process* of negotiation that they shaped and that shaped them, we endeavour to examine how both organisations contributed to shifting the balance of power within the Eastern Bloc, by empowering both their members as sovereign states and the organisations themselves as collective actors.<sup>16</sup> Our analysis is therefore primarily empirical and relies on wide-ranging archival research in Moscow, Bucharest, Berlin, Rome and Geneva. It will, as such, also contribute to new Cold War history, which promotes multi-archival research on *both* sides of and beyond the Iron Curtain, questions conventional wisdoms and de-emphasises the role of the super powers.<sup>17</sup> Shedding a new light on COMECON and the Warsaw Pact is crucial in understanding Cold War dynamics and in reassessing the role of international organisations in the rapidly evolving system of international relations in the second half of the twentieth century.

<sup>10</sup> Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio and Dora Vargha, ‘Conclusion: Beyond Liberal Internationalism’, *Contemporary European History*, 25, 2 (May 2016), 371.

<sup>11</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ‘Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research’, *International Journal*, 45, 4 (Autumn, 1990), 732–3.

<sup>12</sup> David Armstrong, Lorna Lloyd and John Redmond, *International Organisation in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 1.

<sup>13</sup> John Mc Cormick and Jonathan Olsen, *The European Union: Politics and Policies* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>14</sup> ‘International Organizations: Introduction’, Peace Palace Library, <http://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/research-guides/international-organisations-and-relations/international-organizations/> (last visited 20 June 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Sandrine Kott, ‘Les organisations internationales, terrains d’étude de la globalisation. Jalons pour une approche socio-historique’, *Critique internationale*, 52, 3 (2011), 11; Bob Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organizations. From 1815 to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 5–16; Madeleine Herren, ed., *Networking the International System. Global Histories of International Organizations* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Lorenzo Ferrari, *Sometimes Speaking with a Single Voice. The European Community as an International Actor 1969–1979* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

An analysis of these international organisations should no longer be restricted to our knowledge of the Communist International (COMINTERN) and the Communist Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (COMINFORM), as has been the case to date.<sup>18</sup> Both of these were indeed international monolithic organisations, dominated by the Soviet Union. An analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact should, however, also include a comparison with organisations such as the EEC and NATO, with which they shared more features, at least in terms of structure and later also in terms of development.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a circulation of models of international organisations can be observed in the Cold War, which proves the convergence not only of Eastern and Western European societies and economies but also reveals a conscious effort in both COMECON and the Warsaw Pact to adopt characteristics of their Western counterparts. In fact, the 'modus operandi' of these Eastern European organisations also changed in the 1960s, and some members even began to view them as an instrument to increase their scope for manoeuvre, both within the Eastern Bloc and on the global stage. They were, as such also instrumental in contributing to their members' 'emancipation' from the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup>

Tracing the origins, the evolution and the collective actorness of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, we will show how these organisations went through a process of institutionalisation, multilateralisation, integration and foreign policy coordination. This process transformed both organisations from dormant platforms to more 'regular' international organisations, which shed most of their specifically communist features. In order to analyse this process we will concentrate on the debates and reforms of the 1960s, which is generally considered a moment of severe crisis in both organisations.<sup>21</sup> We nevertheless suggest that this crisis was pivotal for the evolution of the organisations, creating a 'dynamics of dissent', which caused both the organisations and their members to emancipate themselves to some extent from the Soviet grip.<sup>22</sup> The resolution of this crisis proves that both organisations evolved into institutions which learnt to cope with dissent and diverging national interests, and which developed the potential to operate as collective actors. They thus began to fulfil enough of the abovementioned criteria of 'international organisations' to be considered as such, however imperfectly. This in turn sheds a new light on the role of Eastern European countries in the Cold War, which, like the alliances to which they belonged, are often overlooked in historiography.

<sup>18</sup> Andrzej Korbonski, 'CMEA, Economic Integration and Perestroika, 1949–1989', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, XXXIII, 1 (1990), 47–72.

<sup>19</sup> See also Vojtech Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy: NATO as a Model of the Warsaw Pact', *Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung*, 58 (Zurich, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955–69* (London: Routledge, 2015), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Vojtech Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact: An Alliance in Search of a Purpose', in Mary Ann Heiss and S. Victor Papacosma, eds., *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008), 147; Jozef van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe. A Handbook* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 8.

### Institutionalisation

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was the first intergovernmental international organisation in the Soviet Bloc to promote and institutionalise multilateral exchanges between Moscow and the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe. The proposal for its foundation was presented as a joint Soviet–Romanian initiative and largely redrafted by Polish and Czechoslovak representatives. When it was established in January 1949 it counted only six members: the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. The Council was soon joined by Albania and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1950 and remained, until the adhesion of Mongolia in 1962, an explicitly European organisation. COMECON was created under the influence of the Cold War as a direct and political answer to the Marshall Plan. The organisation thus mirrored the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), created in 1948 to sustain European economic recovery with the help of American capital.<sup>23</sup> COMECON fulfilled its main task in helping Eastern European economies recover after the War as well as maintaining and increasing their trade relations with the West.<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to conventional wisdom,<sup>25</sup> coordinating its members' foreign trade with the West was the first mission of COMECON mentioned in its founding conference on 5 January 1949. In the difficult context of the early Cold War, trade relations with capitalist countries were the most pressing issue discussed at the COMECON bureau between 1949 and 1952.<sup>26</sup> The communist countries tried to optimise this specific trade and to use it to aid their reconstruction. After the Moscow economic conference of April 1952 Soviet interest in East–West trade decreased.<sup>27</sup> Regular information about it was still exchanged at the COMECON bureau in order to exert pressure among the member states' governments aiming at promoting East–East trade. Between 1950 and 1954 the COMECON bureau adopted the principle of free exchange of patents, agreed on clearing agreements, discussed systems of pricing negotiations and established models of international trade agreements.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Council became an essential actor in the reorientation of trade flows in Europe.

<sup>23</sup> Matthias Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth. The OCDE and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 39–58.

<sup>24</sup> Scott D. Parrish, Mikhail M. Narrinsky, 'New Evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947: Two Reports', Working Paper Number 9, Washington, Cold War International History Project, 1994, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACFB73.pdf> (last visited 26 Oct. 2017); Jozef van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe*, 8–12.

<sup>25</sup> William Kirby, 'China's Internationalization in the Early People's Republic: Dreams of a Socialist World Economy', *The China Quarterly*, 188 (2006), 875–6.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes and reports of the deputy permanent representative of the GDR at COMECON about the sessions of the bureau between 8 Dec. 1950 and 27 Nov. 1955, Bundesarchiv (BArch), Berlin, DE 1-21734.

<sup>27</sup> Mikhail Lipkin, 'Avril 1952: la conférence économique de Moscou: changement de tactique ou innovation dans la politique extérieure stalinienne?', *Relations internationales*, 147, 3 (2011), 19–33.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Kaser, *COMECON. Integration problems of the planned economies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 49.

The political urgency of its establishment and the lack of concrete economic motivation were shown by the fact that the organisation was launched by a mere press release.<sup>29</sup> No treaty elaborating in a more solemn way and at the highest political level the purpose and the legal status of the organisation was signed, and COMECON was given a very light institutional structure.<sup>30</sup> COMECON's supreme organ was the so-called 'Session', which gathered member states' delegations once or twice a year, but the day-to-day activity was originally carried out by a small permanent secretariat of twenty-eight people, associated with a bureau, which convened permanent representatives of the member states specifically designated to work with the COMECON at least once a month.<sup>31</sup>

By 1954, when the Soviet Union reactivated the official activity of COMECON, the comparison between this organisation and its Western counterparts – the OEEC and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – was clearly in favour of the latter.<sup>32</sup> However, elaborating on its weak institutional structure, its apparent lack of concrete outcomes and the fact that the session had not been convened between 1950 and 1954, Randall Stone has shown how the incoherent attitude of the Soviet bureaucracy toward the organisation benefited the People's Democracies in shaping their own development strategies.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the Soviet Union had neither the clear intention nor the necessary resources to steer and to finance the common economic development of its allies in 1949 and, as a consequence, did not consider COMECON the cornerstone of an alternative socialist economic sphere, at least until the late 1950s.<sup>34</sup> Besides, the Kremlin never unilaterally imposed its views on the organisation. Already in January 1949 the Polish and Czechoslovak governments had redrafted the first Soviet project for COMECON. Polish vice-prime minister, Hilary Minc, and Rudolf Slánský, the first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, successfully transformed the planned 'Council of Economic Coordination' (which implied binding cooperation) into a more flexible 'Council for Mutual Economic Assistance'.<sup>35</sup> In December 1950 the Polish representative to the COMECON bureau, G. Ruzanski, rejected the international coordination of the national production programmes.<sup>36</sup> Although the Soviet Union was dominant and its economic support

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Uschakow, *Integration im Rat für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> Martin Dangerfield, 'Sozialistische Ökonomische Integration. Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW)', in Bernd Greiner, Christian Müller and Claudia Weber, eds., *Ökonomie im Kalten Krieg*, Studien zum Kalten Krieg, Band 4 (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2010), 350.

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 2 of the third minutes of the first meeting of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, 28 Apr. 1949, Fonds 561 Opus 1C, D. 2, Russian State Archives of the Economy (RGAE), Moscow.

<sup>32</sup> Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, *Western Economic Warfare, 1947–1967* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968).

<sup>33</sup> Randall Stone, *Satellites and Commissars. Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3–5.

<sup>34</sup> Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Simon Godard, 'Construire le "bloc" par l'économie. Configuration des territoires et des identités socialistes au CAEM (1949–1989)', Ph.D. thesis, Sorbonne and Geneva University, 2014, appendices, 102–19.

<sup>36</sup> Minutes and reports of the deputy Permanent Representative of the GDR at the COMECON, BArch, DE 1-21734, 20–2.

very important to its allies, Moscow did not rule COMECON alone.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary: the mere existence of the organisation had provided its members with an instrument to challenge Soviet unilateralism.<sup>38</sup>

The Kremlin itself gave the impetus for a new type of multilateral cooperation by strengthening the institutional structure of the organisation in the second half of the 1950s. The secretariat received additional staff resources and in 1956 COMECON started to create a series of standing commissions dealing with specific branches of the economy.<sup>39</sup> The meeting of the permanent representatives was institutionalised in 1957 and took place at least twice a month to steer the activity of COMECON's organs. These last developments, expanding the field of activity of COMECON and paving the way for an emerging and specialised network of experts, mirrored the contemporary evolution from the ECSC to the EEC in the West.<sup>40</sup> Although it employed fewer experts and had slightly different goals, COMECON witnessed a development of its institutions in the 1950s, which was in several ways – development of the international administration, internalisation of expert resources and extension of the scope of action of the organisation – similar to the one experienced by Western European international organisations active in the field of economics.

While COMECON was coming into its own, Soviet first secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, had to find a response to another Western challenge, namely the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) admission to NATO on 9 May 1955, which had been agreed in the so-called 'Paris Agreements' of October 1954. The Soviet leadership rose to this challenge by founding its own alliance five days later during a conference with its Eastern European allies in Warsaw. Apart from integrating East Germany, this also served Soviet security. One day before concluding the Austrian State Treaty, which declared Austria neutral, the Kremlin clearly signalled that such neutrality was not an option to the prospective members of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>41</sup> This was the second intergovernmental international organisation founded under Soviet auspices, although the idea for the foundation of a multilateral alliance in the Soviet Bloc was in fact a Polish one.<sup>42</sup> The Paris Agreements and the enlargement of NATO had created a strong mutual Eastern European interest in closing ranks, and, contrary to conventional wisdom, the Warsaw Pact members welcomed its foundation and even had an input in drafting the treaty. The Romanian members, for example, considered it a unique opportunity to make their voices heard at future conferences.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Marie Lavigne, 'The Soviet Union inside COMECON', *Soviet Studies*, XXXV, 2 (1983), 135–53.

<sup>38</sup> Randall Stone, *Satellites and Commissars*.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Kaser, *COMECON*, 63–82.

<sup>40</sup> Dagmara Jajęśniak-Quast, "'Hidden Integration'", 179–95.

<sup>41</sup> Vojtech Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact as History', in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955–1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 3–4.

<sup>42</sup> Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact in 1955', [http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/coll\\_pcc/into\\_VM.html](http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/into_VM.html) (last visited 20 Feb. 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 6–7, Romanian Workers' Party Central Committee, Chancellery, Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale ale României (ANIC), Bucharest.



Although its members were identical to those of COMECON, the ‘Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance’ was closely modelled after the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 and emphasised the ‘principles of respect for the independence and sovereignty of states and of non-interference in their internal affairs’.<sup>44</sup> The Warsaw Pact members immediately realised that this formula could reinforce the ‘independence and sovereignty’ of individual members and deliberately turned it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>45</sup> The Warsaw Treaty, did, however, substitute the terms ‘friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance’ for the ‘principles of democracy’ and ‘individual liberty’,<sup>46</sup> using semantics developed earlier in COMECON’s founding documents. This reflects the different *internal* political structures of the members of the respective alliances, but the treaties were identical concerning the way in which they were supposed to function as a multilateral alliance between *states* rather than *parties*.

In contrast to COMECON, the Warsaw Pact initially only consisted of a Political Consultative Committee (PCC), apparently analogous to NATO’s North Atlantic Council, and lacked any other institutional infrastructure, such as a secretariat or a body of civil servants. In the first PCC meeting in 1956 it was decided that a secretariat and a committee of foreign ministers should be established, but in fact this never materialised.<sup>47</sup> The military dimension of the Warsaw Pact, with which it is usually associated, was, in fact, ‘separate from the treaty’, and it would lead a largely parallel existence.<sup>48</sup> This aspect of the alliance was far more centralised under the guise of the ‘statute of the Unified Command’, which was founded several months later, and supervised by a Soviet supreme commander.

The lack of a secretariat within the Warsaw Pact would prove a highly contested issue in the 1960s, at the time when COMECON’s administrative staff expanded. However, the Warsaw Pact had a clear founding document, which resembled the Atlantic Treaty to such an extent that the Warsaw Pact members would use it in the future to expand their room for manoeuvre, whereas COMECON was given a vague charter only in 1959 and was never officialised by an international treaty. Both organisations did, however, witness an apparently latent existence in the first five years of their existence, when their characterisation as ‘empty shells’ seems to some extent understandable. The Warsaw Pact’s PCC only convened every other year in this period and apart from that the organisation was largely inactive. Since COMECON was founded six years before the Warsaw Pact, it began to gain momentum before the Warsaw Pact did.

<sup>44</sup> The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, Warsaw, 14 May 1955, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), [http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll\\_pcc/wapa\\_treaty.cfm](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/wapa_treaty.cfm) (last visited 20 June 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Mastny, *Learning from the Enemy*, 9–10.

<sup>47</sup> Communiqué on the Session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Powers, 28 Jan. 1956, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17533&navinfo=14465> (last visited 21 June 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955, ANIC RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 6.



Eventually these institutionalisation processes show how both COMECON and the Warsaw Pact were primarily founded in response to a development in Western Europe and *not* out of the Soviet desire to control its satellites, as is often assumed.<sup>49</sup> In fact, their members consented to join and even had input in the founding documents. Moreover, both organisations were *interstate* rather than *interparty* organisations, which clearly distinguishes them from both COMINTERN and COMINFORM. This is an important qualitative difference, which implied a ‘normalisation’ in communist international relations, according to Western standards. This also meant that neither COMECON nor the Warsaw Pact were founded on the basis of Marxist-Leninist ideology. As responses to Western developments, both organisations mirrored their respective *alter ego* in the West. Their institutionalisation and the professionalisation of their agents reinforced the member states’ sovereignty. It was after all in the geopolitical interest of the Soviet *regime*, as alliance leader, to promote a cohesive image of the Socialist Bloc. This often came at the expense of the Soviet *national* interest as member state of both organisations, but it worked in favour of the other member states.<sup>50</sup>

### Multilateralisation

In the first half of the 1960s the stakes for both organisations were particularly high. At the international level, the Soviet Union had to deal with the second Berlin crisis from 1958–1961 and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, which led to a defensive closing-off of the bloc that affected its member states’ economies. At the same time the incipient Sino-Soviet split was a great blow to communist solidarity and raised the importance of closing ranks at any price. During this period the Soviet Union gave a second impetus to international economic cooperation in the framework of COMECON, in order to promote closer collaboration aiming at the coordination not only of foreign trade but also of production itself. The concrete outcome of this attempt to revitalise COMECON was twofold. First, the organisation’s institutions were officially strengthened by the transformation of the bureau into an Executive Committee in 1962 and by the merging of all standing commission’s secretariats, disseminated all over Eastern Europe, with the secretariat in Moscow. Most importantly, the member states agreed in 1962 on a first ambitious common programme called ‘basic principles of the socialist international division of

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Christopher Jones, *Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe: Political Autonomy and the Warsaw Pact* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), ix.

<sup>50</sup> The regime’s interest is defined at Bloc level as the collective interest of the communist parties, considered as elements of a global socialist world system. The national interest is embodied by each member state’s government and defined at the national level. Considering their dual entanglement at the international and the national level, the communist parties took advantage of any discrepancy between the two types of interest to shape room for manoeuvre for national development strategies, while advocating communist international solidarity. See also Sari Autio-Saraso and Katalin Miklóssy, ‘Introduction: The Cold War from a New Perspective’, in Sari Autio-Saraso and Katalin Miklóssy eds., *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011), 7.

labour'.<sup>51</sup> The 'basic principles' promoted specialisation of the production as a new goal for COMECON. This implied a closer coordination of production plans at an international level and a COMECON-wide division of labour, which would increase Soviet influence, at least on the surface.

In this vein, Khrushchev mentioned for the first time his wish to see the establishment of a 'unified planning organ' for the whole bloc in a speech delivered in November 1962 to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> COMECON members – except Romania – initially endorsed Khrushchev's proposal, but the debate rapidly escalated into open conflict. Since the international closing-off of the bloc enforced by Moscow constrained their foreign policies, the governments of the People's Democracies regarded Khrushchev's proposal as a useful *faux pas*, of which they could take advantage. Indeed, in mirroring the economic cooperation organised at the OEEC and the EEC, COMECON was a showcase of the international Cold War competition. Western observers monitored its activity in order to find arguments proving that the organisation was a mere Soviet transmission belt and to delegitimise the discourse on the solidarity of the socialist world. The Soviet Union could accordingly not afford public dispute and deadlock in the negotiations with its partners.

Romania took advantage of this limitation of Soviet influence and rephrased Moscow's proposal as describing a 'supranational' planning organ. This polemical concept, which Soviet representatives had always avoided in public discourses, was taken up by the other members in the debate. It allowed them to transform the debate from a technical issue about economic rationality, which was promoted by Soviet representatives, into a political issue related to the concept of sovereignty asserted by COMECON's founding documents. The rejection of any supranational evolution of COMECON by Romania was another element of the 'national communism' developed by the country in the 1960s.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to France's strategy of the 'empty chair', used to oppose any supranational evolution of the EEC in 1965–1966, Romania participated in all COMECON projects between 1962 and 1964. According to the 'principle of interest', unanimous approval was required since 1949 within COMECON, and Bucharest was thus able to veto every proposal. Romania had a very legalistic approach and claimed to act according to commonly adopted principles of socialist cooperation. Bucharest's permanent representative at the COMECON, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, repeatedly referred to the founding communiqué, the charter or the 'basic principles', to legitimise his opposition, based on the analysis by the Romanian first secretary, Nicolae Ceaușescu, according to which 'the socialist world-system unfolds as a system of national economies'.<sup>54</sup> Confronted with this strategy and unable to impose its views, the Soviet Union withdrew from the debate and

<sup>51</sup> Van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe*, 66–71.

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the COMECON, 12 Jan. 1963, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch), Berlin, DY 30–3407, 95–6.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Zwick, *National communism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983).

<sup>54</sup> Development of the work at the COMECON, 1964–1969, BArch, DC 20–19575, 19.

allowed its partners – particularly Poland and the GDR – to conduct the debate with Romania.

Warsaw and Berlin also turned this conflict into a learning moment and defeated Bucharest with its own weapons, by using legal arguments to refute the Romanian opposition to any evolution of COMECON. Both countries were very active in defining more precisely the ‘principle of interest’,<sup>55</sup> so that a country that did not really want to participate in a common project could not block the agreement achieved by its partners. In 1966 Polish first secretary Władysław Gomułka referred to the fourth article of the COMECON statute to argue in front of his counterparts that ‘no country has a veto right. The attitude of the socialist Republic of Romania implies a revision of the statute’.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, the Polish permanent representative at COMECON, Piotr Jaroszewicz, informed his Czechoslovak and East German counterparts that he had threatened the Soviet Union with a withdrawal of Poland from COMECON if the organisation ‘did not satisfy the legitimate interest of the majority of its countries’.<sup>57</sup> This legal guerrilla warfare gave the final blow to the ‘unified planning organ’ in 1964, before Alexei Kosygin, a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, chairman of the Council of Ministers and father of the 1965 Soviet economic reform, acknowledged in 1966 that ‘COMECON is not a supranational organ’.<sup>58</sup>

The governments of the People’s Democracies managed to shift the balance of power in their favour. Despite the economic failure of the organisation, they established COMECON as a multilateral forum in which they could resist Soviet concepts of international economic cooperation and push the Soviet Union to compromise. At the same time Moscow showed Western observers how debate was tolerated at COMECON. Indeed, not only did the secretary of the Council positively respond in 1959 to a British publisher willing to include a section on COMECON in its 1960’s edition of a *Europa Yearbook*,<sup>59</sup> but the Soviet Union and its partners were warned by their own representatives at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) about the necessity to communicate common economic achievements. In 1962 the Soviet director of the ‘steel, engineering and housing’ division of the ECE, Ivan Iliushenko, urged COMECON representatives to participate in the ECE publications.<sup>60</sup> This East–West flow of information was established in the early 1960s by COMECON and the ECE for Western observers. It gained momentum in the 1970s, following the publication in Geneva and Vienna in 1964 and 1965 of books about COMECON written by its secretary Nikolai Fadeev, and the cross

<sup>55</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the COMECON, 1966, SAPMO-BArch DY 30-3435, 18–9.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 25–8.

<sup>57</sup> Meetings of specialised bodies of the COMECON, 1966–1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 3023-795, 100–6.

<sup>58</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the COMECON, 1966, SAPMO-BArch DY 30-3435, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Organisation and working methods of the COMECON, Letter from Fadeev to Steinwand, 19 Nov. 1959, BArch DE 1-18325.

<sup>60</sup> ECE-General, Letter from Winzer to Leuschner, 8 Nov. 1962, BArch DE 1-49429.

participation of experts in both organisations' technical meetings, until NATO started to convene annual academic meetings about COMECON and its evolution in 1977.<sup>61</sup>

The side effect of the multilateralisation of COMECON was a clear strengthening of its administrative organs. Confronted with the obvious inability of the organisation to develop international cooperation projects, several members did not hesitate to take Western international organisations as models. In 1957 the Soviet permanent representative, Sergei Pervushin, already stated that 'the situation at COMECON is such that if the secretaries were to die, nobody would notice. The secretariat should take Myrdal and his secretariat in Geneva as an example, see how exemplarily it works, whereas we do a bad job.'<sup>62</sup> This reference to the ECE and its secretary general was replaced in the second half of the 1960s by a more frequent reference to the EEC model. Western European organisations active in the field of economics were thus officially criticised on a political basis but unofficially analysed as economical and institutional successes, which COMECON and its members had to take into account in conceptualising the goals and means of their collaboration.<sup>63</sup>

While discussing whether or not COMECON should develop into a supranational planning commission, its members implemented a radical transformation of its institutions. The secretariat of the organisation was centralised in Moscow between 1962 and 1968, in a new dedicated building, and organised in thematic divisions corresponding to the fields of activity of the standing commissions. The staff of international civil servants employed by COMECON increased quickly from seventy-two experts in 1957 to 156 in 1962 and 645 in 1967.<sup>64</sup> The international organisation, embodied by the permanent secretariat, became able to develop its own economic expertise and relied less on input from the governments. This technical autonomy, as well as the consecutive development of a bureaucratic culture specific to the secretariat of COMECON, were crucial elements of the multilateralisation of the organisation. The secretariat of COMECON indeed became a new actor with its own voice, participating in the debates between the governments of its member countries.

From 1960 onwards the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact also began to change. Although both organisations have always been studied separately, the Warsaw Pact's evolution followed a similar pattern to that of COMECON. Under pressure from both the Sino-Soviet split and the second Berlin Crisis, the Kremlin's interest in maintaining a united front was soon exploited in the early 1960s, first by the Albanian first secretary, Enver Hoxha, who chose to leave the alliance *de facto*, and then by the East German first secretary, Walter Ulbricht, who convened the Warsaw Pact in early August 1961 to legitimise the building of the Berlin Wall. The Warsaw Pact as an organisation remained the same in this period, but the relations between the Soviet superpower and the smaller allies became less asymmetrical. The non-Soviet Warsaw

<sup>61</sup> NATO-Directorate of Economic Affairs, *COMECON: Progress and Prospects* (Brussels, 1977).

<sup>62</sup> Working methods of the Council's organs, 1956–1959, BArch, DE 1-21257, 1–13.

<sup>63</sup> Vladislav Zubok, 'The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev', *Journal of European Integration History*, 2, 1 (1996), 85–98.

<sup>64</sup> Godard, 'Construire le "bloc" par l'économie', 142.

Pact members began to appropriate former Soviet prerogatives, such as proposing to convene meetings and setting the agenda. In contrast to COMECON, the Warsaw Pact's actual *practices*, rather than its *institutions*, changed.

The first factual change to the Warsaw Pact proceedings was at a PCC meeting in July 1963, when Mongolia's leader, Yumjagin Tsedenbal, who had joined COMECON a year earlier, applied to join the Warsaw Pact to gain Soviet protection against Chinese territorial claims. Both before and during the meeting the Romanian first secretary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and the Polish foreign minister, Adam Rapacki, opposed the Mongolian application, which was strongly supported by the Kremlin. Appealing to the treaty's focus on Europe, they argued that it would shift the Warsaw Pact's emphasis from *European* security to a global conflict, by fuelling the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>65</sup> Khrushchev ultimately relented and the Romanian leadership compared this victory to its 'very big success' at COMECON, where they had 'succeeded in making [the Kremlin] retreat' in terms of the 'common planning organ', which would have 'implications concerning sovereignty, independence etc.'<sup>66</sup> The development within COMECON began to have an impact on the Warsaw Pact. Its members even used the same legalistic arguments to defy Moscow. In this case, too, closing ranks was more important to the Kremlin than coercion. This increased the member states' room for manoeuvre, while decreasing the Soviet capacity to impose its will.

After the Mongolian episode the PCC did not convene until January 1965, although this, too, was mainly the responsibility of the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members. In contrast to COMECON, the institutional structure of the Warsaw Pact did not expand during this period; on the contrary, even the PCC seemed paralysed. There was, however, a push behind the scenes for a reorganisation of the Warsaw Pact as a political alliance.<sup>67</sup> Berlin in particular strove to create a secretariat and a foreign ministers committee, as well to agree on more regular PCC meetings.<sup>68</sup> These proposals were supported, but not initiated, by the Kremlin and vetoed by the Romanian leaders, who regarded them as an encroachment on their sovereignty. This process indicates that the Warsaw Pact members increasingly assumed influence within the organisation, and that the Soviet Union could not simply impose its will unilaterally. As in COMECON, the Kremlin withdrew from the debate, and the disagreements between primarily the East German and the Romanian party leaders led to a stalemate until Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964.

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum by the Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki, 20 July 1963 (PHP), <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17905&navinfo=14465> (last visited 20 June 2016).

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the RWP CC Politburo meeting of 18 July 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 39/163, 117.

<sup>67</sup> See Laurien Crump, 'The Warsaw Pact Under Pressure: An Analysis of the Dynamics of Power in an Alliance in Crisis', in Gheorghe Cliveti, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Adrian Vițalariu, Ionuț Nistor, eds., *Romanian and European Diplomacy: From Cabinet Diplomacy to the 21st Century Challenges* (Iasi/Trieste, 2012), 395–411.

<sup>68</sup> Information about the organs of the Warsaw Pact, Berlin, 19 Nov. 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 192–3.

Shortly after Khrushchev was ousted the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members resolved the stalemate by agreeing to convene the deputy foreign ministers instead of the PCC in December 1964. This was a compromise between the East Germans and the Romanians.<sup>69</sup> The latter considered this a way to have a stake in the preparation of the PCC meeting that would take place a month later, thus forestalling many East German or Soviet initiatives. Yet the very fact that the Warsaw Pact's deputy foreign ministers met was a turning-point in itself. It reemphasised the interstate nature of the organisation and showed how the decision-making in the alliance became increasingly multilateral, with the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members taking the initiative. Some of them, primarily the East Germans and the Poles, nevertheless preferred the Warsaw Pact to act more as one body, representing the Soviet Bloc. Ulbricht therefore pushed again for the reorganisation of the alliance at the PCC meeting in January 1965, and proposed to finally establish the secretariat and the committee of foreign ministers that had been agreed on in 1956. He was backed by the new Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, who seemed more willing than his predecessor to assume the initiative, and who even proposed establishing a committee of defence ministers too, just like in NATO. Brezhnev's prediction that the new organs would 'already be formed in 1966' proved wildly optimistic.<sup>70</sup> The ensuing debates lasted more than a decade.

In this period the alliance was not reformed *de jure*, but certainly transformed *de facto*. Instead of the very sporadic PCC summit meetings in the first ten years of its existence, its members convened regularly at different levels of representation in order to discuss the reorganisation of the Warsaw Pact. Virtually all members, apart from the Romanians, were striving to mirror the Warsaw Pact still more after NATO and decried the fact that the Warsaw Pact did *not* have a headquarters, a secretariat or a committee of foreign or defence ministers.<sup>71</sup> Brezhnev even stated explicitly that he wanted to turn the alliance into a 'genuine, rather than a formal counterpart of NATO'.<sup>72</sup> The Romanian leader, Nicolae Ceauşescu, was, ironically, the only one to point out that NATO was, after all, a '*capitalist*' alliance and that communist equality should not be based on a wide range of organs which curtail sovereignty.<sup>73</sup> As in COMECON, Bucharest again discredited attempts to further streamline the organisation. This time it found itself isolated. All other members agreed with the Poles, who argued that the Romanian leaders were threatening 'to paralyse the alliance and transform its organs into noncommittal discussion clubs'.<sup>74</sup> The zeal to institutionalise the alliance prevailed over Marxist-Leninist rhetoric.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Ulbricht to Gheorghiu-Dej, 24 Nov. 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 201–2.

<sup>70</sup> Brezhnev to Ulbricht, 7 Jan. 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 43–4.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 Feb. 1966, ANIC, Romanian Communist Party CC, C, 17/1966, 13.

<sup>72</sup> Brezhnev cited in Vojtech Mastny, '"We Are in a Bind": Polish and Czechoslovak Attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956–69', in Christian Ostermann, ed., *Cold War Flashpoints*, (Washington: Cold War International History Project Bulletin 11, 1998), 232.

<sup>73</sup> 'Protocol no. 4 of the meeting of the RCP CC Permanent Presidium', 2 Feb. 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966.

<sup>74</sup> Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Marian Naszkowski cited in Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy', 22.

The Romanian foreign ministry composed a careful analysis of the Warsaw Pact in 1966 to counter this tendency. This analysis imported the terms from the simultaneous crisis within NATO (thus also using NATO as a point of reference), by arguing that decision making within the Warsaw Pact should take place in an intergovernmental manner and that 'the creation of a supranational organism', such as a foreign ministers committee, was 'unacceptable'. This also meant that all its organs should be consultative rather than deliberative, leaving it up to the 'government in question' to decide on its foreign policy.<sup>75</sup> The Romanian delegation to the Warsaw Pact was even instructed that the proposed reforms contradicted 'the Warsaw Treaty and the principles on which the relations between sovereign and independent states are based'.<sup>76</sup> This analysis compelled the other Warsaw Pact members to scrutinise the functioning of the organisation and greatly embarrassed Leonid Brezhnev. However, by 1969 the Kremlin and all Warsaw Pact members agreed on the establishment of a defence committee on intergovernmental terms. The Romanian delegates nevertheless continued to veto the foundation of a foreign ministers' committee.

These developments in the Warsaw Pact are remarkable, since similar debates had already taken place within COMECON in the first half of the 1960s in opposition to the 'supranational planning organ'. Moreover, within COMECON a consensus was emerging at the same time, under Polish leadership, on abolishing the right of veto. The Warsaw Pact's model remained a capitalist international organisation, rather than a communist predecessor, such as COMINFORM, which is never mentioned in the Warsaw Pact documents, or even a communist contemporary, such as COMECON. Most of the Warsaw Pact members wanted the organisation to become as much like NATO as possible, apart from the Romanians, who ironically had the closest relations with NATO members. In their attempt to thwart the reforms, which they regarded as an impingement on their sovereignty, the Romanians contributed considerably to its transformation by increasing the self-consciousness of its members and by triggering a debate on the purpose of the organisation, the manner of decision making and the role of sovereignty.<sup>77</sup>

Although Romanian opposition often sparked dissent among other members, all members began to instrumentalise the international organisation and the debates about its activity and usefulness in order to obtain some room for manoeuvre from the Soviet Union in defining their foreign policy. In fact, the archival records show that the Romanian leaders often regarded the attitude of the other small member states, mainly Poland and the GDR, as a greater impediment to furthering their national interest than the Kremlin.<sup>78</sup> The Romanian negotiating tactics were certainly more aggressive than those of other members, but the increased assertiveness vis-à-vis

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum on the Romanian Stance, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966, 15–9.

<sup>76</sup> Directives for the Romanian delegation, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966, 20–3.

<sup>77</sup> Laurien Crump, 'The Balkan Challenge to the Warsaw Pact', in Svetozar Rajar, Konstantina E. Botsiou, Eirini Karamouzi and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, eds., *The Balkans in the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 151–71.

<sup>78</sup> Meeting between Maurer, Bodnars and Liu Fan, 27 Jan. 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 43.



the Kremlin was certainly not a Romanian prerogative, as is generally assumed.<sup>79</sup> Romanian opposition did, however, often trigger the dynamics of dissent. As a consequence, the other members started to reflect critically on the nature of both organisations, which in turn contributed to their transformation into increasingly multilateral organisations.

In the early 1960s both COMECON and the Warsaw Pact began to develop from empty shells into functioning international organisations. Although the institutionalisation of COMECON was by no means matched within the Warsaw Pact, both organisations started to function in a more sophisticated manner. In both cases the smaller members started to use the institutional infrastructure as an opportunity to counteract asymmetrical bilateral relations with the Soviet Union and tried to turn the Soviet Bloc's economic and foreign policy into a joint venture. The mere existence of these international organisations began to normalise relations within the Soviet Bloc, giving the so-called 'satellites' an input in decision making within the Bloc. The resistance to Soviet proposals created a conflict that eventually benefited both Eastern European governments and the organisation itself.

The Kremlin tolerated this increased assertiveness for two reasons. First, neither of the organisations were intended as coercive instruments. Second, closing ranks and promoting the organisations as showcases of communist solidarity had become the Soviet priority in the face of increasing international tensions. Stressing that 'we must find solutions for strengthening unity', Soviet politburo member Yuri Andropov even conceded to several Romanian demands about the Warsaw Pact and COMECON in 1963.<sup>80</sup> The mutual interest in this united front created room for dissent. Although in appearance Soviet monoliths, both organisations had evolved into increasingly multilateral organisations, which their smaller members could use as instruments for asserting their national interests and defining their sovereignty, provided they had learned how to play by the specific rules of the international organisation. The first half of the 1960s thus witnessed the empowerment of smaller members. The Kremlin's desire to foster the image of cohesion within the Soviet Bloc facilitated the multilateralisation of both organisations.

### Integration and Foreign Policy Coordination

The second half of the decade witnessed further emancipation of the smaller members and of the organisations themselves. Even though the practical outcomes of multilateral cooperation always remained meagre, the analysis of the process of negotiation reveals the progressive and incomplete, but real, empowerment of both organisations, either by further integration or by foreign policy coordination. These are, in fact, different sides of the same coin, since in both cases there was an increased acceptance of some new central authority, which was neither synonymous

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Elena Dragomir, 'The Formation of the Soviet Bloc's Council for Mutual Economic Assistance: Romania's Involvement', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, 1 (2012), 34–47.

<sup>80</sup> Note of the talks with Andropov, 3 Apr. 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 13/1963.

with the Soviet Union, nor imposed by force, but which represented the Bloc towards the outside world.<sup>81</sup> In the case of COMECON, this manifested itself in a certain amount of integration of the national economies, whereas there was a drive towards further foreign policy coordination within the Warsaw Pact. The process of multilateralisation thus culminated in a degree of ‘multilateralism’, defined as ‘the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states’.<sup>82</sup> This is also an important element of an international organisation, which in the cases of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact had mostly political and diplomatic aspects and was unrelated to the weak economic and military results of both organisations.

The secretariat of COMECON, which represented the international organisation on the global stage, attempted to showcase the success or the failure of socialist international integration. The more room for manoeuvre it enjoyed, the more it normalised the image of the Soviet Bloc’s international relations in the eyes of Western observers. The secretariat benefited from COMECON’s position in the Cold War symbolic competition and from the supranational crisis of 1962–1964, which fragmented the political system of the Bloc and increased the scope for bureaucratic autonomy.<sup>83</sup> It established itself as a collective actor in front of its member states’ governments in the second half of the decade and overstepped its administrative prerogatives to act increasingly politically, embodying the international organisation towards its member states’ governments as well as Western institutions. This helped legitimise socialist economic cooperation in front of parallel processes of regional integration, such as the economic and political integration of the EEC countries. The secretariat was not supranational, since it had no power to impose its decisions on the member states. However, its staff had turned it into an autonomous reservoir of expertise on international economic cooperation.<sup>84</sup> Working for COMECON also became a distinctive characteristic among diplomats. COMECON agents repeatedly asserted a specific professionalisation and refused to be equated with diplomats working in embassies.<sup>85</sup>

Since the late 1950s the secretariat of COMECON, supported by the Soviet government, officially took the United Nations ECE, rather than the EEC, as its example. Being the sole pan-European forum for economic cooperation and a strong

<sup>81</sup> See for the definition of ‘integration’: Ernst Haas, ‘Regional Integration’, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Thomson Gale: 2008), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/international-integration> (last visited 20 Feb. 2017).

<sup>82</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ‘Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research’, *International Journal*, 45 (Autumn 1990), 731.

<sup>83</sup> Antonis Ellinas, Ezra Suleiman, *The European Commission and Bureaucratic Autonomy. Europe’s Custodians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>84</sup> Simon Godard, ‘Creative Tension: The Role of Conflict in Shaping Transnational Identity at the COMECON’, *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, forthcoming (2018).

<sup>85</sup> Simon Godard, ‘Le CAEM et la construction d’une diplomatie économique parallèle dans l’Europe socialiste (1962–1989)’, in Vincent Genin, Matthieu Osmont and Thomas Raineau, eds., *Réinventer la diplomatie. Sociabilités, réseaux et pratiques diplomatiques en Europe depuis 1919* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2016), 171–87.

supporter of East–West compromises,<sup>86</sup> the ECE remained for a long time the only international organisation that COMECON *formally* considered a model, although the EEC *informally* functioned as such. In March 1970 the secretary of COMECON even officially asked his counterpart at the ECE for information about the organisation of the international administration in Geneva.<sup>87</sup> This circulation of administrative models and best practices between COMECON and the ECE helped the former achieve international recognition.

The references to the Western model of integration seem to suggest a certain amount of convergence between Eastern and Western Europe. Western actors even promoted the circulation of ideas by offering scholarships to Polish or Hungarian economists to study in the United States or in the United Kingdom.<sup>88</sup> COMECON representatives acknowledged this circulation of models of regional integration but rejected the idea of a convergence between international organisations. COMECON secretary, Nikolai Fadeev, stated in 1963 that ‘the “integration”, which is happening in European capitalist countries, has again exacerbated the differences within, as well as between, economic groupings’.<sup>89</sup> Like the member states’ party leaders, Fadeev claimed that COMECON was diverging from the EEC mainly in its practice of economic cooperation. Fadeev thus simply supported the narrative about two alternative development models – the capitalist and the communist one – which the communist regimes developed during the Cold War competition.

However, within the Bloc itself, the member states’ governments clearly regarded it in the economic interest of their national development to adopt the same goals at COMECON level, which the EEC pursued. Thus, paradoxically, the empowerment of the Council as a collective actor mainly came from the introduction of the EEC model as an *informal* reference in the second half of the 1960s.<sup>90</sup> Khrushchev mentioned for the first time in 1963 the important economic results achieved by the EEC in a speech held at COMECON. Gomułka used the same reference in 1966 to urge his partners to engage in closer cooperation if they did not want to be left alone in their negotiations with Western European countries,<sup>91</sup> who were increasingly represented by the sole EEC Commission in trade negotiations.<sup>92</sup> The

<sup>86</sup> Örjan Appelqvist, *The Political Economy of Gunnar Myrdal* (London: Routledge, 2014), 50–67.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from V. Constantinescu, deputy secretary of the CMEA to A. I. Alexandrov, acting executive secretary of the ECE, 23 Mar. 1970, Cooperation with CMEA, Archive of the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Geneva, ECE-GX-10/2/2/54.

<sup>88</sup> Igor Czernecki, ‘An Intellectual Offensive: The Ford Foundation and the Destalinization of the Polish Social Sciences’, *Cold War History*, 13, 3 (2013), 289–310; On Hungarian economists, see: Information from the GDR Embassy in Hungary, Cooperation with the COMECON, 1965–1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 3023-802, 204.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from Fadeev to Leuschner, 5 April 1963, BArch, DE 1-61411, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Christian Domnitz, ‘National separation, Controlled Cooperation: How State-Socialist Elites Communicated Economic Openings’, *European Review of History*, 21, 2 (2014), 201–17.

<sup>91</sup> Development of the work at the COMECON, 1964–1969, BArch, DC 20-19575, 25–8.

<sup>92</sup> Angela Romano, ‘Untying Cold War Knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the long 1970s’, *Cold War History* 14, 2 (2014), 153–73; Angela Romano and Federico Romero, ‘European Socialist Regimes Facing Globalisation and European cooperation: Dilemmas and Responses – Introduction’, *European Review of History*, 21, 2 (2014), 157–64.

discursive parallel with the EEC, the emergence of the concept of ‘common interest of the member states’<sup>93</sup> in COMECON debates and the growing importance among its member states’ governments of the discourse on COMECON’s embodiment of the socialist ‘community’, indicate its progressive empowerment.

Indeed, this evolution served the national interest of the People’s Democracies. Like Western international organisations, COMECON became ‘a resource place for political leaders aware of the economic vulnerability of their country’.<sup>94</sup> This explains the Polish and Hungarian delegations’ strategy between 1968 and 1971 at COMECON, which, unlike in the 1950s, linked the strengthening of international cooperation with the reinforcement of their national development strategies. Both countries thus promoted, and achieved, a new reform of COMECON. The organisation was assigned the task to implement the ‘integration’ of its member states’ national economies and, *de facto*, to promote the establishment of a common socialist market mirroring the economic integration shaped by the EEC in Western Europe. According to Rezső Nyers, Hungarian permanent representative at COMECON, ‘the integration, which is unfolding before their eyes in other parts of the world – particularly in Western Europe – represents a force to which the smaller socialist countries can only oppose an equivalent economic potential if they cooperate more intensely than before with each other and with the Soviet Union’.<sup>95</sup>

Strengthening COMECON was part of a national strategy for second-rank economic powers to gain room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis their partners and Moscow in implementing their plans for national development.<sup>96</sup> According to Warsaw and Budapest, COMECON countries had no choice but to entrust the organisation with the introduction of market incentives in their economic relations, in order to meet the challenge of the common market. Thus the countries, which had introduced liberal economic reforms in 1968, legitimised their national non-orthodox economic models via a COMECON-detour.<sup>97</sup> This was crucial at a time when the repression of the Prague Spring had overruled the tolerance for market socialism in the communist parties’ international rhetoric. Eventually, strengthening COMECON met the interests both of the Soviet Union – as the alliance leader – and of the communist regimes at a global level. It proved its partners’ internationalist outlook to the Soviet Union and served the national economic interests of the People’s Democracies’ governments in their global, East–West, development strategies.

<sup>93</sup> Marc Abélès and Irène Bellier, ‘La Commission européenne. Du compromis culturel à la culture politique du compromis’, *Revue française de science politique*, 46, 3 (1996), 431–56.

<sup>94</sup> Sandrine Kott, ‘Par delà la guerre froide. Les organisations internationales et les circulations Est–Ouest (1947–1973)’, *Vingtième Siècle*, 109, 1 (2011), 149.

<sup>95</sup> Letter of the Hungarian permanent representative in the executive committee, 4 June 1968, Cooperation with the COMECON. 1968–1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 3023–804, 249–50.

<sup>96</sup> Suvi Kansikas, ‘Acknowledging economic realities. The CMEA policy change vis-à-vis the European Community, 1970–3’, *European Review of History*, 21, 2 (2014), 311–28.

<sup>97</sup> Wanda Jarzabek, ‘Polish Economic Policy at the Time of *Détente*, 1966–78’, *European Review of History*, 21, 2 (2014), 293–309; Pal Germuska, ‘Failed Eastern Integration and a Partly Successful Opening up to the West: the Economic Re-orientation of Hungary During the 1970s’, *European Review of History*, 21, 2 (2014), 271–91.

Although the EEC's existence was only officially acknowledged by the Soviet Union in 1972, it worked in fact earlier as a paradoxical driving force for the integration of COMECON.<sup>98</sup>

There was no similar process of integration within the Warsaw Pact, which, as a military–political alliance, lent itself less to integration, even though COMECON's integration of its *military* industries was, according to recent findings, the most successful.<sup>99</sup> There was, however, a push towards foreign policy coordination, which also implied the capacity to act collectively. The Romanian members were, however, so anxious to prevent being subjected to a Warsaw Pact foreign policy, that they had successfully blocked any attempt to create a secretariat within the Warsaw Pact exactly to avoid a development similar to the one in COMECON. For the same reason the Romanian leadership had thwarted the proposals to create a committee of foreign ministers, which was explicitly modelled after NATO practice. The Hungarian party leader János Kádár even considered it a 'crying shame' that the Warsaw Pact did not manage to 'get together and consult' the way 'NATO countries' did.<sup>100</sup> The sharp division between Romania and the rest (also called 'the one' versus 'the six' in the archives) is remarkable for two reasons: on the one hand it proves that a medium-sized country like Romania could veto proposals that were supported by all other Warsaw Pact members, including the Soviet Union, and on the other hand it shows that all other states were keen to transfer some of their sovereignty to the Warsaw Pact in order to turn it into a collective actor.

As in COMECON, there was accordingly a push for the Warsaw Pact to become more similar to its Western *alter ego* by functioning as a collective actor. The internal momentum of the Warsaw Pact was such that the Romanian leadership could not prevent this drive *de facto*. The increase in self-awareness, the growing sense of identity and, ironically, the joint opposition to Romania had already contributed to a sense of common purpose. In 1965 most Warsaw Pact members therefore considered the alliance a useful instrument to present the Warsaw Pact's draft of a non-proliferation treaty (NPT) in the UN in October 1965. Presenting this treaty in the name of the Warsaw Pact would enable its members to present a united front to the rest of the world and thus to exert more influence on the negotiations with the United States. The Romanian delegation nevertheless vetoed approving the non-proliferation treaty so as to prevent the Warsaw Pact from acting as a supranational organisation, which could impinge on Romanian sovereignty.

The first step towards the Warsaw Pact acting collectively was nevertheless made: the Kremlin had involved its members in the decision making. There was an

<sup>98</sup> Mikhail Lipkin, 'The Soviet Union, CMEA and the Question of First EEC Enlargement', XIVth International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, 2006, 3, <http://www.helsinki.fi/iehc2006/papers3/Lipkin.pdf> (last visited 17 June 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Pál Germuska, *Unified Military Industries of the Soviet Bloc: Hungary and the Division of Labor in Military Production* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 269.

<sup>100</sup> Polish Minutes of Discussion at the PCC Meeting in Warsaw, 20 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17921&navinfo=14465> (last visited 21 June 2016).

urgent push for a common foreign policy, which ultimately proved irresistible to the Romanians too: referring to the meetings on the NPT within NATO, the Romanian leader Ceaușescu convened the PCC in March 1968 in order to discuss the NPT. The fact that a Romanian leader actually wanted to convene the alliance was unprecedented. NATO practices had, by now, circulated within the Eastern Bloc and become an example to the Romanians. By the time the treaty was signed in July 1968, the Romanian leadership was so satisfied with its input that it voluntarily decided to sign the NPT, which indeed contained a few Romanian proposals, together with its allies. The Warsaw Pact had thus eventually become more unified than NATO, which had failed to rally the FRG and France behind the treaty.<sup>101</sup>

In 1966–1967 the Romanian government nevertheless still succeeded in undermining the Warsaw Pact's capability to act collectively. Openly professing its lack of commitment to the alliance, Ceaușescu initially breached Warsaw Pact policy on the Vietnam War, by supporting the Chinese rather than the Soviet stance, establishing diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany behind the back of its allies and siding with Israel rather than Palestine in the Six Day War in 1967. The Romanian dissidence was such that the Kremlin explicitly left the option of withdrawing from the alliance's military structures open to the Romanians.<sup>102</sup> This option was analogous to the French withdrawal from NATO's military structures, and the Romanians were indeed in close touch with the French throughout the process.<sup>103</sup> Warsaw took a still tougher stance and even proposed to expel Romania from the organisation (instead of threatening to leave the alliance itself, as it did in COMECON).<sup>104</sup> The Romanian leaders preferred to keep a finger in the pie by attending all meetings instead and thwarting most of them, thus indirectly acknowledging the merit of the Warsaw Pact.

The Romanian leaders began to realise that the Warsaw Pact paradoxically provided them with a useful instrument to further their own interests. Rather than paralysing the alliance they could use it as a forum for their own proposals. Confronted by the dual threats of the potential nuclearisation of the FRG and the Sino-Soviet split, all Warsaw Pact members had a vested interest in closing ranks on the theme of European security. Between 1965 and 1969 many Warsaw Pact meetings were convened to form a common front on the issue of a European Security Conference, which was originally a Polish proposal. Finally agreeing to stimulate on the one hand a normalisation of relations with Western European countries and on the other hand

<sup>101</sup> Laurien Crump, 'Non-Proliferation under Pressure: The Nuclear Debate in the Warsaw Pact, 1965–1968', in Roland Popp, Liviu Horowitz and Andreas Wenger, eds., *Negotiating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origins of the Nuclear Order* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>102</sup> 'Document No. 49: Report to Nicolae Ceaușescu on the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Sofia, June 3, 1968', in Mastny and Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle*, 264–9.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Information about the visit of the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville to Romania from 25–28 Apr., Bucharest, 6 May 1966, SAPMO-Barch, DY 30/IVA2/20/365, 11.

<sup>104</sup> Report to the Hungarian Party Politburo and Council of Ministers on the PCC Meeting, 9 March 1968, PHP, [http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/17967/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/a0717aba-e742-4508-b232-10948a0780a2/en/Report\\_Hungarian\\_Politburo\\_1968\\_en.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/17967/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/a0717aba-e742-4508-b232-10948a0780a2/en/Report_Hungarian_Politburo_1968_en.pdf), last visited 25 Oct. 2017.



striving after the recognition of the GDR and of the Polish–German border, the Warsaw Pact countries presented a proposal on a European Security Conference to NATO in March 1969. The dynamics of dissent had been an important learning moment: all members had begun to realise that negotiating and compromising could best serve their interests. This was the first time that the Warsaw Pact operated as a collective actor, and it represented a breakthrough in terms of European security, too.

The Warsaw Pact's evolution into a collective actor was a turning point in the Cold War. It facilitated the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975 and the ensuing Helsinki Process, and it created a certain balance in the Cold War with the Warsaw Pact as a counterweight to NATO, which was an important aspect of *détente*. The CSCE did not facilitate increased scope for manoeuvre of the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members, as is often assumed, but the other way around. The multilateralisation of the Warsaw Pact had enabled the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members to autonomously agree on a Declaration on European Security and to present a united front vis-à-vis NATO. This first feat of the Warsaw Pact as a collective actor was immediately successful, since NATO ultimately accepted its proposal for a European Security Conference. The fact that NATO took the Warsaw Pact seriously as its Eastern counterpart was unprecedented.

Like COMECON, the Warsaw Pact developed into a 'resource' for its smaller members. Lacking a secretariat and a committee of foreign ministers, the Warsaw Pact's empowerment as a collective actor was not as formally enshrined as in COMECON. It was, however, all the more potent in facilitating and legitimising the foreign policy goals of its members. The process that led to the Warsaw Pact proposal of the European Security Conference had already enabled an increased amount of East–West trade and contacts between Warsaw Pact and NATO members, who could now move independently from the Soviet Union on the global scene. The most striking example was the GDR, which was for the first time *de facto* recognised when NATO accepted the Warsaw Pact proposal for a European Security Conference, according to which East Germany was a 'sovereign' member of the Warsaw Pact. This culminated in the GDR's participation as sovereign country in the negotiations preceding the CSCE. The recognition of the GDR by the UN in 1973 formalised its recognition and confirmed the growing tendency to regard the GDR as an autonomous actor.

By 1975 the negotiations on European security also resulted in the establishment of the hotly contested committee of foreign ministers, which had as its primary aim the coordination of Warsaw Pact policy during the CSCE. Although the Warsaw Pact was still less empowered as a collective actor than COMECON *de jure*, it had developed a stronger impetus on that score *de facto*. The Romanian leadership had learnt a lesson from COMECON and succeeded in preventing the establishment of a secretariat within the Warsaw Pact. COMECON had integrated still further in the second half of the 1960s, but the Warsaw Pact had at least stopped from disintegrating further. That in itself was an achievement, especially with the concurrent crises in NATO and the EEC in mind. Both Western organisations were struggling to come



to terms with the Gaullist challenge in particular.<sup>105</sup> The fact that the dynamics of dissent was at work in organisations on both sides of the Iron Curtain in itself proves that COMECON and the Warsaw Pact had developed important characteristics of international organisations.

### Conclusion

In this article we have challenged a teleological analysis of a progressive collapse of communist alliances, allegedly unable to reform and disintegrating from conflict to conflict. We have, instead, offered an interpretation which shows that these organisations institutionalised, multilateralised and enhanced rather than undermined the sovereignty of their members, while providing them with an unprecedented scope for manoeuvre. These developments allowed both COMECON and the Warsaw Pact to turn into collective actors and also facilitated the appearance on the global stage of their individual members.

The first striking aspect in the institutionalisation and reorganisation of both organisations is that they explicitly used Western international organisations as their point of reference. This in itself points to a normalisation of interstate relations, as well as an attempt to enter into a dialogue with the West. The communist regimes and the Soviet Union – as the ideological leader of the Bloc – had a geopolitical interest in COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, since they embodied the rhetoric of socialist internationalism. However, they did not function as mega-politburos in which democratic centralism and Moscow alone defined the rules, such as in COMINTERN or COMINFORM. Unfamiliar with this new kind of interstate relations, their members tested the waters in the first decade of the existence of both organisations and gradually discovered how these organisations could enhance their scope for manoeuvre and even promote their national interest on the international arena.

Thus the Soviet Union, considering its role as a superpower, had to condone compromises within both organisations, even though they were not in its interest as a member state of the alliance. The tension between the Soviet Union as a global actor in an ideological struggle and as a European state created room for manoeuvre for the smaller People's Democracies in the Eastern Bloc.<sup>106</sup> The reorganisation of both organisations was accordingly to a large extent a joint venture, in which the Western concepts of 'supranationalism' and 'integration' were contested and redefined in the interest of the other members. The dynamics of dissent contributed to the

<sup>105</sup> See on the crisis in the EEC: N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Suvi Kansikas, 'Room to Manoeuvre? National Interests and Coalition-Building in the CMEA, 1969–1974', in Sari Autio-Sarasmä and Katalin Miklóssy, eds., *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011), 193–209; Sonja Schmidt, 'Nuclear Colonization? Soviet Technopolitics in the Second World', in Gabrielle Hecht, ed., *Entangled Geographies. Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 125–54.

multilateralisation of both organisations in Eastern Europe as it did in Western Europe at the same moment: faced with crises in all these organisations the superpowers on both sides of the Iron Curtain were compelled to acknowledge the input of the other member states, while occasionally sacrificing their own national interest in the process.

Meanwhile, the contested evolution of both organisations made their member states increasingly conscious of their roles in each organisation. Even the most reluctant countries had to deal with the fact that a new forum of international relations existed in which they had to interact with their partners according to specific rules. Contrary to the existing historiography that characterises these organisations as passive diplomatic forums, we argue that there is a performative dynamic of the international discourse shaped in COMECON and in the Warsaw Pact. This dynamic transformed each organisation into an agent of the international relations' system in the Eastern Bloc. Learning to play by its rules, even in order to limit the powers of the organisation, was a way for smaller countries to resist Soviet influence over their national sovereignty, particularly in the field of foreign policy. The unexpected output of the awareness of the member states towards each organisation is, accordingly, a reinforcement of their sovereignty, rather than its restriction. The persistent assumption that neither COMECON nor the Warsaw Pact were 'regular' international organisations, because they did not consist of sovereign states, should therefore be turned on its head: their mere existence enhanced the sovereignty of their members, which in turn reinforced the functioning of each organisation as an international interstate organisation, and, simultaneously, as a collective actor.

COMECON and the Warsaw Pact fulfil *enough* criteria of a fully-fledged international organisation to be studied as such and for their own merit. Conflict was neither their weakness nor a sign of malfunction of an imperial system, but their strength, and as such can be considered a learning moment, which made them resemble their Western counterparts.<sup>107</sup> This claim goes beyond a new insight in both organisations, since it actually teaches an important lesson about the Cold War as such. From the 1960s onwards Soviet Bloc economic and foreign policy was no longer a sole Soviet prerogative, but also to some extent a joint venture. Facilitated by the existence of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, the former 'empire of coercion'<sup>108</sup> moved into a more enlightened direction, which contributed to a normalisation of international relations on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

However, one must not overlook the irreducible differences between organisations functioning in two radically different contexts. One of the main limits of comparison between 'regular' and communist international organisations lies in the fact that communist international organisations did not have the same *raison d'être* as the Western organisations. They were not created 'for themselves', to fulfil the task of

<sup>107</sup> Anna Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold. NATO and France, 1963–66', in Andreas Wenger, Christian Nuenlist and Anna Locher, eds., *Transforming NATO in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2007), 121.

<sup>108</sup> Laszlo Bohri, 'Empire by Coercion: The Soviet Union and Hungary in the 1950s', *Cold War History* 1, 2 (2001), 47–72.

promoting an always stronger integration of their member states. Vojtech Mastny's claim about the Warsaw Pact's perennial 'search for a purpose' thus also applies to COMECON.<sup>109</sup> They were both created in reaction to 'others' and relied on confrontation with the outside world to legitimate their existence. Created as agents of Cold War competition, COMECON and the Warsaw Pact had to deal with the Western World. This empowered them and opened, at the same time, the black box of international communist cooperation, which finally weakened both organisations until they completely disappeared in 1991. The economic and military-political cooperation fostered by COMECON and the Warsaw Pact had little interest in itself and was not attractive enough to keep going after the fall of the Berlin Wall, unlike NATO and the EEC. Paradoxically, the Cold War was a condition for their existence and simultaneously an element of their progressive disqualification.

The fact that COMECON and the Warsaw Pact collapsed half a year before the Soviet Union did, on 28 June and 1 July 1991 respectively, does, however, not vindicate their depiction as a mere façade. If both organisations collapsed together with the Soviet Bloc and the communist system, it was not because they were intrinsically communist. It was, instead, because they were copying a more successful prototype. In the second half of the 1980s there was even a push in both organisations to adopt still more characteristics from their Western counterparts, such a 'common COMECON market' within COMECON<sup>110</sup> and the shift 'from an offensive to a defensive strategy' within the Warsaw Pact.<sup>111</sup> A solution for the increased pressure on the socialist system was sought outside the system. The gradual 'normalisation' of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact and their increased contacts with the West since the 1970s thus inadvertently challenged the socialist model. The more they strove to function as 'regular' international organisations, the more they diverged from the communist master narrative, which should have prevailed in the end. The attempted convergence with their Western competitors paved the way for their own collapse.

The fact that both organisations borrowed so much from the West shows the intrinsic weakness of the communist system. With hindsight this also explains why virtually all members of the Eastern European international organisations, apart from the Soviet Union itself, ultimately joined their more successful Western counterparts, such as the EEC and NATO. There are, accordingly, lessons to be drawn from approaching COMECON and the Warsaw Pact as 'regular' international organisations. Considering the *process* rather than the *outcome*, we can conclude that international relations in Eastern Europe from the 1960s onwards were not as anomalous as has been assumed to date. The fate of both organisations also teaches us that the existence of an international organisation cannot be taken for granted, something which is acutely relevant today. As soon as its *raison d'être* disappears or is perceived to disappear, it is susceptible to collapse.

<sup>109</sup> Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact: An Alliance in Search of a Purpose', 156.

<sup>110</sup> Germuska, *Unified Military Industries of the Soviet Bloc*, 247.

<sup>111</sup> Mastny, 'Learning From the Enemy', 39.