

= George F. Kennan =

George Frost Kennan (February 16 , 1904 ? March 17 , 2005) was an American diplomat and historian . He was known best as an advocate of a policy of containment of Soviet expansion during the Cold War on which he later reversed himself . He lectured widely and wrote scholarly histories of the relations between USSR and the United States . He was also one of the group of foreign policy elders known as " The Wise Men " .

During the late 1940s , his writings inspired the Truman Doctrine and the U.S. foreign policy of " containing " the Soviet Union . His " Long Telegram " from Moscow during 1946 and the subsequent 1947 article " The Sources of Soviet Conduct " argued that the Soviet regime was inherently expansionist and that its influence had to be " contained " in areas of vital strategic importance to the United States . These texts provided justification for the Truman administration 's new anti @-@ Soviet policy . Kennan played a major role in the development of definitive Cold War programs and institutions , notably the Marshall Plan .

Soon after his concepts had become U.S. policy , Kennan began to criticize the foreign policies that he had seemingly helped begin . Subsequently , prior to the end of 1948 , Kennan became confident that positive dialogue could commence with the Soviet government . His proposals were discounted by the Truman administration and Kennan 's influence was marginalized , particularly after Dean Acheson was appointed Secretary of State during 1949 . Soon thereafter , U.S. Cold War strategy assumed a more assertive and militaristic quality , causing Kennan to lament about what he believed was an abrogation of his previous assessments .

During 1950 , Kennan left the Department of State ? except for two brief ambassadorial stints in Moscow and Yugoslavia ? and became a realist critic of U.S. foreign policy . He continued to analyze international affairs as a faculty member of the Institute for Advanced Study from 1956 until his death at age 101 .

He was a member of the Founding Council of the Rothermere American Institute at the University of Oxford .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Kennan was born in Milwaukee , Wisconsin , to Kossuth Kent Kennan , a lawyer specializing in tax law , a descendant of dirt @-@ poor Scotch @-@ Irish settlers of 18th @-@ century Connecticut and Massachusetts , who was named after the Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth (1802 ? 94) , and Florence James Kennan . Mrs. Kennan died two months later due to peritonitis from a ruptured appendix , though Kennan long believed that she died after giving birth to him . The boy always lamented not having a mother ; he was never close to his father or stepmother , however , he was close to his older sisters .

At the age of eight he went to Germany to stay with his stepmother in order to learn German . He attended St. John 's Military Academy in Delafield , Wisconsin , and arrived at Princeton University in the second half of 1921 . Unaccustomed to the elite atmosphere of the Ivy League , the shy and introverted Kennan found his undergraduate years difficult and lonely . After receiving his bachelor 's degree in 1925 , Kennan considered applying to law school , but decided it was too expensive and instead opted to apply to the newly formed U.S. Foreign Service . He passed the qualifying examination and after seven months of study at the Foreign Service School in Washington he gained his first job as a vice consul in Geneva , Switzerland . Within a year he was transferred to a post in Hamburg , Germany . During 1928 Kennan considered quitting the Foreign Service to attend college , but was selected for a linguist training program that would give him three years of graduate @-@ level study without having to quit the service .

In 1929 Kennan began his program on history , politics , culture , and the Russian language at the University of Berlin 's Oriental Institute . In doing so , he would follow in the footsteps of his

grandfather 's younger cousin , George Kennan (1845 ? 1924) , a major 19th century expert on Imperial Russia and author of *Siberia and the Exile System* , a well @-@ received 1891 account of the Czarist prison system . During the course of his diplomatic career , Kennan would master a number of other languages , including German , French , Polish , Czech , Portuguese , and Norwegian .

In 1931 Kennan was stationed at the legation in Riga , Latvia , where , as third secretary , he worked on Soviet economic affairs . From his job , Kennan " grew to mature interest in Russian affairs " . When the U.S. began formal diplomacy with the Soviet government during 1933 after the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt , Kennan accompanied ambassador William C. Bullitt to Moscow . By the mid @-@ 1930s Kennan was among the professionally trained Russian experts of the staff of the embassy in Moscow , along with Charles E. Bohlen and Loy W. Henderson . These officials had been influenced by the long @-@ time director of the State Department 's division of East European Affairs , Robert F. Kelley . They believed that there was little basis for cooperation with the Soviet Union , even against potential adversaries . Meanwhile , Kennan studied Stalin 's Great Purge , which would affect his opinion of the internal dynamics of the Soviet regime for the rest of his life .

Kennan found himself in strong disagreement with Joseph E. Davies , Bullitt 's successor as ambassador to the Soviet Union , who defended the Great Purge and other aspects of Stalin 's rule . Kennan did not have any influence on Davies 's decisions , and the latter even suggested that Kennan be transferred out of Moscow for " his health " . Kennan again contemplated resigning from the service , but instead decided to accept the Russian desk at the State Department in Washington . By September 1938 , Kennan had been reassigned to a job at the legation in Prague . After the occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic by Nazi Germany at the beginning of World War II , Kennan was assigned to Berlin . There , he endorsed the United States ' Lend @-@ Lease policy , but warned against displaying any notion of American endorsement for the Soviets , whom he considered to be an unfit ally . He was interned in Germany for six months after Germany , followed by the other Axis states , declared war on the United States in December 1941 .

In September 1942 Kennan was assigned as a counselor in Lisbon , Portugal , where he begrudgingly performed a job administering intelligence and base operations . In January 1944 he was sent to London , where he served as counselor of the American delegation to the European Advisory Commission , which worked to prepare Allied policy in Europe . There , Kennan became even more disenchanted with the State Department , which he believed was ignoring his qualifications as a trained specialist . However , within months of beginning the job , he was appointed deputy chief of the mission in Moscow upon request of W. Averell Harriman , the ambassador to the U.S.S.R.

= = = Cold War = = =

= = = The " long telegram " = = =

In Moscow , Kennan again felt that his opinions were being ignored by Harry S. Truman and policymakers in Washington . Kennan tried repeatedly to persuade policymakers to abandon plans for cooperation with the Soviet government in favor of a sphere of influence policy in Europe to reduce the Soviets ' power there . Kennan believed that a federation needed to be established in western Europe to counter Soviet influence in the region and to compete against the Soviet stronghold in eastern Europe .

Kennan served as deputy head of the mission in Moscow until April 1946 . Near the end of that term , the Treasury Department requested that the State Department explain recent Soviet behavior , such as its disinclination to endorse the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank . Kennan responded on February 22 , 1946 , by sending a lengthy 5 @,@ 500 @-@ word telegram (sometimes cited as being more than 8 @,@ 000 words) from Moscow to Secretary of State James Byrnes outlining a new strategy for diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union . At the " bottom of the

Kremlin 's neurotic view of world affairs is the traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity " . After the Russian Revolution , this sense of insecurity became mixed with communist ideology and " Oriental secretiveness and conspiracy " .

Soviet international behavior depended mainly on the internal necessities of Joseph Stalin 's regime ; according to Kennan , Stalin needed a hostile world in order to legitimize his autocratic rule . Stalin thus used Marxism @-@ Leninism as a " justification for the Soviet Union 's instinctive fear of the outside world , for the dictatorship without which they did not know how to rule , for cruelties they did not dare not to inflict , for sacrifice they felt bound to demand ... Today they cannot dispense with it . It is the fig leaf of their moral and intellectual respectability " .

The solution was to strengthen Western institutions in order to render them invulnerable to the Soviet challenge , while awaiting the mellowing of the Soviet regime .

Kennan 's new policy of containment was that Soviet pressure had to " be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points " .

This dispatch brought Kennan to the attention of Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal , a major advocate of a confrontational policy with regard to the Soviets , the United States ' former wartime ally . Forrestal helped bring Kennan back to Washington , where he served as the first deputy for foreign affairs at the National War College and then strongly influenced his decision to publish the " X " article .

The goal of his policy was to withdraw all the U.S. forces from Europe . The settlement reached would give the Kremlin sufficient reassurance against the establishment of regimes in Eastern Europe hostile to the Soviet Union , tempering the degree of control over that area that the Soviet leaders felt it necessary to exercise .

Meanwhile , during March 1947 , Truman appeared before Congress to request funding for the Truman Doctrine to fight Communism in Greece . " I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures . "

== " X " ==

Unlike the " long telegram " , Kennan 's well @-@ timed article appearing in the July 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs with the pseudonym " X " , entitled " The Sources of Soviet Conduct " , did not begin by emphasizing " traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity " ; instead it asserted that Stalin 's policy was shaped by a combination of Marxist ? Leninist ideology , which advocated revolution to defeat the capitalist forces in the outside world and Stalin 's determination to use the notion of " capitalist encirclement " in order to legitimize his regimentation of Soviet society so that he could consolidate his political power . Kennan argued that Stalin would not (and moreover could not) moderate the supposed Soviet determination to overthrow Western governments . Thus ,

" the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be a long @-@ term , patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies ... Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points , corresponding to the shifts and manoeuvres of Soviet policy , but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence . "

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Kennan further argued that the United States would have to perform this containment alone but if it could do so without undermining its own economic health and political stability , the Soviet party structure would undergo a period of immense strain eventually resulting in " either the break @-@

up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power " .

The publication of the " X " article soon began one of the more intense debates of the Cold War . Walter Lippmann , a leading American commentator on international affairs , strongly criticized the " X " article . Lippmann argued that Kennan 's strategy of containment was " a strategic monstrosity " that could " be implemented only by recruiting , subsidizing and supporting a heterogeneous array of satellites , clients , dependents , and puppets " . Lippmann argued that diplomacy should be the basis of relations with the Soviets ; he suggested that the U.S. withdraw its forces from Europe and reunify and demilitarize Germany . Meanwhile , it was soon revealed informally that " X " was indeed Kennan . This information seemed to give the " X " article the status of an official document expressing the Truman administration 's new policy toward Moscow .

Kennan had not intended the " X " article as a prescription for policy . For the rest of his life , Kennan continued to reiterate that the article did not imply an automatic commitment to resist Soviet " expansionism " wherever it occurred , with little distinction of primary and secondary interests . The article did not make it obvious that Kennan favored employing political and economic rather than military methods as the chief agent of containment . " My thoughts about containment " said Kennan in a 1996 interview to CNN , " were of course distorted by the people who understood it and pursued it exclusively as a military concept ; and I think that that , as much as any other cause , led to [the] 40 years of unnecessary , fearfully expensive and disoriented process of the Cold War " .

Additionally , the administration made few attempts to explain the distinction between Soviet influence and international Communism to the U.S. public . " In part , this failure reflected the belief of many in Washington " , writes historian John Lewis Gaddis , " that only the prospect of an undifferentiated global threat could shake Americans out of their isolationist tendencies that remained latent among them " .

In a PBS television interview with David Gergen during 1996 , Kennan again reiterated that he did not regard the Soviets as primarily a military threat , noting that " they were not like Hitler " . Kennan 's opinion was that this misunderstanding :

" all came down to one sentence in the " X " article where I said that wherever these people , meaning the Soviet leadership , confronted us with dangerous hostility anywhere in the world , we should do everything possible to contain it and not let them expand any further . I should have explained that I didn 't suspect them of any desire to launch an attack on us . This was right after the war , and it was absurd to suppose that they were going to turn around and attack the United States . I didn 't think I needed to explain that , but I obviously should have done it . "

The " X " article meant sudden fame for Kennan . After the long telegram , he recalled later , " My official loneliness came in fact to an end ... My reputation was made . My voice now carried . "

= = = Influence under Marshall = = = =

Between April 1947 and December 1948 , when George C. Marshall was Secretary of State , Kennan was more influential than he was at any other period in his career . Marshall valued his strategic sense and had him create and direct what is now named the Policy Planning Staff , the State Department 's internal think tank . Kennan became the first Director of Policy Planning . Marshall relied heavily on him to prepare policy recommendations . Kennan played a central role in the drafting of the Marshall Plan .

Although Kennan regarded the Soviet Union as too weak to risk war , he nonetheless considered it an enemy capable of expanding into Western Europe through subversion , given the popular support for communist parties in Western Europe , which remained demoralized by the devastation of the Second World War . To counter this potential source of Soviet influence , Kennan 's solution was to direct economic aid and covert political help to Japan and Western Europe to revive Western governments and assist international capitalism ; by doing so the United States would help to rebuild the balance of power . During June 1948 , Kennan proposed covert assistance to left @-@ wing parties not oriented toward Moscow and to labor unions in Western Europe in order to engineer a rift between Moscow and working @-@ class movements in Western Europe .

As the United States was initiating the Marshall Plan , Kennan and the Truman administration

hoped that the Soviet Union 's rejection of Marshall aid would strain its relations with its Communist allies in Eastern Europe . Kennan initiated a series of efforts to exploit the schism between the Soviets and Josip Broz Tito 's Yugoslavia . Kennan proposed conducting covert action in the Balkans to further decrease Moscow 's influence .

The administration 's new vigorously anti @-@ Soviet policy also became evident when , at Kennan 's suggestion , the U.S. changed its hostility to Francisco Franco 's anti @-@ communists regime in Spain in order to secure U.S. influence in the Mediterranean . Kennan had observed during 1947 that the Truman Doctrine implied a new consideration of Franco . His suggestion soon helped begin a new phase of U.S. ? Spanish relations , which ended with military cooperation after 1950 .

= = = Differences with Acheson = = =

Kennan 's influence rapidly decreased when Dean Acheson became Secretary of State , succeeding the ailing George Marshall during 1949 and 1950 . Acheson did not regard the Soviet " threat " as chiefly political , and he saw the Berlin blockade starting during June 1948 , the first Soviet test of a nuclear weapon during August 1949 , the Communist revolution in China a month later , and the beginning of the Korean War during June 1950 as evidence . Truman and Acheson decided to delineate the Western sphere of influence and to create a system of alliances .

This policy was realized as NSC @-@ 68 , a classified report issued by the United States National Security Council during April 1950 and written by Paul Nitze , Kennan 's successor as director of policy planning . Kennan and Charles Bohlen , another State Department expert on Russia , argued about the wording of NSC @-@ 68 , which became the basis of Cold War policy . Kennan rejected the idea that Stalin had a grand design for world conquest implicit in Nitze 's report and argued that he actually feared overextending Russian power . Kennan even argued that NSC @-@ 68 should not have been drafted at all , as it would make U.S. policies too rigid , simplistic , and militaristic . Acheson overruled Kennan and Bohlen , endorsing the assumption of Soviet menace implied by NSC @-@ 68 .

Kennan opposed the building of the hydrogen bomb and the rearmament of Germany , which were policies encouraged by the assumptions of NSC @-@ 68 . During the Korean War (which began when North Korea invaded South Korea during June 1950) , when rumors started circulating in the State Department that plans were being made to advance beyond the 38th parallel into North Korea , an act that Kennan considered dangerous , he engaged in intense arguments with Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East Dean Rusk , who apparently endorsed Acheson 's goal to forcibly unite the Koreans .

Kennan lost influence with Acheson , who in any case relied much less on his staff than Marshall had . Kennan resigned as director of policy planning during December 1949 but stayed in the department as counselor until June 1950 . Acheson replaced Kennan with Nitze during January 1950 , who was much more comfortable with the calculus of military power . Afterwards , Kennan accepted an appointment as Visitor to the Institute for Advanced Study from fellow moderate Robert Oppenheimer , Director of the Institute .

Despite his influence , Kennan was never really comfortable in government . He always regarded himself as an outsider and had little patience with critics . W. Averell Harriman , the U.S. ambassador in Moscow when Kennan was deputy between 1944 and 1946 , remarked that Kennan was " a man who understood Russia but not the United States " .

= = = Ambassador to the Soviet Union = = =

During December 1951 , President Truman nominated Kennan to be the next United States ambassador to the USSR . His appointment was endorsed strongly by the Senate .

In many respects (to Kennan 's consternation) the priorities of the administration emphasized creating alliances against the Soviets more than negotiating differences with them . In his memoirs , Kennan recalled , " So far as I could see , we were expecting to be able to gain our objectives ... without making any concessions though , only ' if we were really all @-@ powerful , and could hope

to get away with it . ' I very much doubted that this was the case . "

At Moscow , Kennan found the atmosphere even more regimented than on his previous trips , with police guards following him everywhere , discouraging contact with Soviet citizens . At the time , Soviet propaganda charged the U.S. with preparing for war , which Kennan did not wholly dismiss . " I began to ask myself whether ... we had not contributed ... by the overmilitarization of our policies and statements ... to a belief in Moscow that it was war we were after , that we had settled for its inevitability , that it was only a matter of time before we would unleash it . "

During September 1952 , Kennan made a statement that cost him his ambassadorship . In an answer to a question at a press conference , Kennan compared his conditions at the ambassador 's residence in Moscow to those he had encountered while interned in Berlin during the first few months of the Second World War . While his statement was not unfounded , the Soviets interpreted it as an implied analogy with Nazi Germany . The Soviets then declared Kennan persona non grata and refused to allow him to re @-@ enter the USSR . Kennan acknowledged retrospectively that it was a " foolish thing for me to have said " .

= = = = Kennan and the Eisenhower administration = = = =

Kennan returned to Washington , where he became embroiled in disagreements with Dwight D. Eisenhower 's hawkish Secretary of State , John Foster Dulles . Even so , he was able to work constructively with the new administration . During the summer of 1953 President Eisenhower asked Kennan to manage the first of a series of top @-@ secret teams , dubbed Operation Solarium , examining the advantages and disadvantages of continuing the Truman administration 's policy of containment and of seeking to " roll back " existing areas of Soviet influence . Upon completion of the project , the president seemed to endorse the group 's recommendations .

By lending his prestige to Kennan 's position , the president tacitly signaled his intention to formulate the strategy of his administration within the framework of its predecessor 's , despite the misgivings of some within the Republican Party . The critical difference between the Truman and Eisenhower policies of containment had to do with Eisenhower 's concerns that the United States could not indefinitely afford great military spending . The new president thus sought to minimize costs not by acting whenever and wherever the Soviets acted (a strategy designed to avoid risk) but rather whenever and wherever the United States could afford to act .

= = = = Ambassador to Yugoslavia = = = =

During John F. Kennedy 's 1960 presidential election campaign Kennan wrote to the future president to offer some suggestions on how his administration should improve the country 's foreign affairs . Kennan wrote , " What is needed is a succession of ... calculated steps , timed in such a way as not only to throw the adversary off balance but to keep him off it , and prepared with sufficient privacy so that the advantage of surprise can be retained . " He also urged the administration to " assure a divergence of outlook and policy between the Russians and Chinese , " which could be accomplished by improving relations with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev who had wanted to distance himself from the Communist Chinese . He wrote , " We should ... without deceiving ourselves about Khrushchev 's political personality and without nurturing any unreal hopes , be concerned to keep him politically in the running and to encourage the survival in Moscow of the tendencies he personifies " . Additionally , he recommended that the United States work toward creating divisions within the Soviet bloc by undermining its power in Eastern Europe and encouraging the independent propensities of satellite governments .

Although Kennan had not been considered for a job by Kennedy 's advisers , the president himself offered Kennan the choice of ambassadorship in either Poland or Yugoslavia . Kennan was more interested in Yugoslavia , so he accepted Kennedy 's offer and began his job in Yugoslavia during May 1961 .

Kennan was tasked with trying to strengthen Yugoslavia 's policy against the Soviets and to encourage other states in the Eastern bloc to pursue autonomy from the Soviets . Kennan found his

ambassadorship in Belgrade to be much improved from his experiences in Moscow a decade earlier . He commented , " I was favored in being surrounded with a group of exceptionally able and loyal assistants , whose abilities I myself admired , whose judgment I valued , and whose attitude toward myself was at all times ... enthusiastically cooperative ... Who was I to complain ? " Kennan found the Yugoslav government treated the American diplomats politely , in contrast from the way in which the Russians treated him in Moscow . He wrote that the Yugoslavs " considered me , rightly or wrongly , a distinguished person in the U.S. , and they were pleased that someone whose name they had heard before was being sent to Belgrade " .

Kennan found it difficult to perform his job in Belgrade . President Josip Broz Tito and his foreign minister , Koča Popović , began to suspect that Kennedy would adopt an anti-Yugoslav policy during his term . Tito and Popović considered Kennedy 's decision to observe Captive Nations Week as an indication that the United States would assist anticommunist liberation efforts in Yugoslavia . Tito also believed that the CIA and the Pentagon were the true directors of American foreign policy . Kennan attempted to restore Tito 's confidence in the American foreign policy establishment but his efforts were compromised by a pair of diplomatic blunders , the Bay of Pigs Invasion , and the U-2 spy incident .

Relations between Yugoslavia and the United States quickly began to worsen . During September 1961 , Tito held a conference of nonaligned nations , where he delivered speeches that the U.S. government interpreted as being pro-Soviet . According to historian David Mayers , Kennan argued that Tito 's perceived pro-Soviet policy was in fact a ploy to " buttress Khrushchev 's position within the Politburo against hardliners opposed to improving relations with the West and against China , which was pushing for a major Soviet-U.S. showdown " . This policy also earned Tito " credit in the Kremlin to be drawn upon against future Chinese attacks on his communist credentials " . While politicians and government officials expressed growing concern about Yugoslavia 's relationship with the Soviets , Kennan believed that the country had an " anomalous position in the Cold War that objectively suited U.S. purposes " . Kennan also believed that within a few years , Yugoslavia 's example would cause states in the Eastern bloc to demand more social and economic autonomy from the Soviets .

By 1962 , Congress had passed legislation to deny financial aid grants to Yugoslavia , to withdraw the sale of spare parts for Yugoslav warplanes , and to revoke the country 's most favored nation status . Kennan strongly protested the legislation , arguing that it would only result in a straining of relations between Yugoslavia and the U.S. Kennan came to Washington during the summer of 1962 to lobby against the legislation but was unable to elicit a change from Congress . President Kennedy endorsed Kennan privately but remained noncommittal publicly , as he did not want to jeopardize his slim majority support in Congress on a potentially contentious issue . With U.S.-Yugoslav relations getting progressively worse , Kennan tendered his resignation as ambassador during late July 1963 .

== Academic career and later life ==

During 1957 Kennan was invited by the BBC to give the annual Reith Lectures - a series of six radio lectures , which were titled Russia , the Atom and the West . For these , Kennan explored the history , effect , and possible consequences of relations between Russia and the West .

After the end of his brief ambassadorial post in Yugoslavia during 1963 , Kennan spent the rest of his life in academe , becoming a major realist critic of U.S. foreign policy . Having spent 18 months as a scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study between 1950 and 1952 , Kennan permanently joined the faculty of the Institute 's School of Historical Studies during 1956 . During his career there , Kennan wrote seventeen books and scores of articles on international relations . He won the Pulitzer Prize for History , the National Book Award for Nonfiction , the Bancroft Prize , and the Francis Parkman Prize for Russia Leaves the War , published during 1956 . He again won a Pulitzer and a National Book Award during 1968 for *Memoirs, 1925-1950* . A second volume , taking his reminiscences up to 1963 was published during 1972 . Among his other works were *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* , *Sketches from a Life* , published during 1989 , and *Around the Cragged*

Hill during 1993 .

His properly historical works amount to a six @-@ volume account of the relations between Russia and the West from 1875 to his own time ; the period from 1894 to 1914 was planned but not completed . He was chiefly concerned with :

The folly of the First World War as a choice of policy ; he argues that the costs of modern war , direct and indirect , predictably exceeded the benefits of eliminating the Hohenzollerns .

The ineffectiveness of summit diplomacy , with the Conference of Versailles as a type @-@ case . National leaders have too much to do to give any single matter the constant and flexible attention which diplomatic problems require .

The Allied intervention in Russia in 1918 ? 19 . He was indignant with Soviet accounts of a vast capitalist conspiracy against the world 's first worker 's state , some of which do not even mention the First World War ; he was equally indignant with the decision to intervene as costly and harmful . He argues that the interventions , by arousing Russian nationalism , may have ensured the survival of the Bolshevik state .

= = = Realism = = =

Political realism formed the basis of Kennan 's work as a diplomat and diplomatic historian and remains relevant to the debate over American foreign policy , which since the 19th century has been characterized by a shift from the Founding Fathers ' realist school to the idealistic or Wilsonian school of international relations . According to the realist tradition , security is based on the principle of a balance of power , whereas Wilsonianism (considered impractical by realists) relies on morality as the sole determining factor in statecraft . According to the Wilsonians the spread of democracy abroad as a foreign policy is important and morals are valid universally . During the Presidency of Bill Clinton , American diplomacy represented the Wilsonian school to such a degree that those in favor of the realism likened President Clinton 's policies to social work . According to Kennan , whose concept of American diplomacy was based on the realist approach , such moralism without regard to the realities of power and the national interest is self @-@ defeating and will result in the decrease of American power .

In his historical writings and memoirs , Kennan laments in great detail the failings of democratic foreign policy makers and those of the United States in particular . According to Kennan , when American policymakers suddenly confronted the Cold War , they had inherited little more than rationale and rhetoric " utopian in expectations , legalistic in concept , moralistic in [the] demand it seemed to place on others , and self @-@ righteous in the degree of high @-@ mindedness and rectitude ... to ourselves " . The source of the problem is the force of public opinion , a force that is inevitably unstable , unserious , subjective , emotional , and simplistic . Kennan has insisted that the U.S. public can only be united behind a foreign policy goal on the " primitive level of slogans and jingoistic ideological inspiration " .

Containment during 1967 , when he published the first volume of his memoirs , involved something other than the use of military " counterforce " . He was never pleased that the policy he influenced was associated with the arms build @-@ up of the Cold War . In his memoirs , Kennan argued that containment did not demand a militarized U.S. foreign policy . " Counterforce " implied the political and economic defense of Western Europe against the disruptive effect of the war on European society . Exhausted by war , the Soviet Union posed no serious military threat to the United States or its allies at the beginning of the Cold War but rather an ideological and political rival .

During the 1960s , Kennan criticized U.S. involvement in Vietnam , arguing that the United States had little vital interest in the region . Kennan believed that the USSR , Britain , Germany , Japan , and North America remained the areas of vital U.S. interests . During the 1970s and 1980s , he was a major critic of the renewed arms race as détente was ended .

During 1989 President George H. W. Bush awarded Kennan the Medal of Freedom , the nation 's greatest civilian honor . Yet he remained a realist critic of recent U.S. presidents , urging the U.S. government to " withdraw from its public advocacy of democracy and human rights " , saying that the " tendency to see ourselves as the center of political enlightenment and as teachers to a great

part of the rest of the world strikes me as unthought @-@ through , vainglorious and undesirable " . These ideas were particularly applicable to U.S. relations with China and Russia . Kennan opposed the Clinton administration 's war in Kosovo and its expansion of NATO (the establishment of which he had also opposed half a century earlier) , expressing fears that both policies would worsen relations with Russia . He described NATO enlargement as a " strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions " .

Kennan remained vigorous and alert during the last years of his life , although arthritis had him using a wheelchair . During his later years , Kennan concluded that " the general effect of Cold War extremism was to delay rather than hasten the great change that overtook the Soviet Union " . At age 98 he warned of the unforeseen consequences of waging war against Iraq . He warned that attacking Iraq would amount to waging a second war that " bears no relation to the first war against terrorism " and declared efforts by the Bush administration to associate al Qaeda with Saddam Hussein " pathetically unsupportive and unreliable " . Kennan went on to warn :

Anyone who has ever studied the history of American diplomacy , especially military diplomacy , knows that you might start in a war with certain things on your mind as a purpose of what you are doing , but in the end , you found yourself fighting for entirely different things that you had never thought of before ... In other words , war has a momentum of its own and it carries you away from all thoughtful intentions when you get into it . Today , if we went into Iraq , like the president would like us to do , you know where you begin . You never know where you are going to end .

During February 2004 scholars , diplomats , and Princeton alumni gathered at the university 's campus to celebrate Kennan 's 100th birthday . Among those in attendance were Secretary of State Colin Powell , international relations theorist John Mearsheimer , journalist Chris Hedges , former ambassador and career Foreign Service officer Jack F. Matlock , Jr . , and Kennan 's biographer , John Lewis Gaddis .

= = = Death and legacy = = =

Kennan died on March 17 , 2005 , at age 101 at his home in Princeton , New Jersey . He was survived by his wife Annelise , whom he married during 1931 , and his four children , eight grandchildren , and six great @-@ grandchildren . Annelise died in 2008 at the age of 98 .

In an obituary in the New York Times , Kennan was described as " the American diplomat who did more than any other envoy of his generation to shape United States policy during the cold war " to whom " the White House and the Pentagon turned when they sought to understand the Soviet Union after World War II " . Of Kennan , historian Wilson D. Miscamble remarked that " [o] ne can only hope that present and future makers of foreign policy might share something of his integrity and intelligence " . Foreign Policy described Kennan as " the most influential diplomat of the 20th century " . Henry Kissinger said that Kennan " came as close to authoring the diplomatic doctrine of his era as any diplomat in our history " , while Colin Powell called Kennan " our best tutor " in dealing with the foreign policy issues of the 21st century .

During his career , Kennan received a number of awards and honors . As a scholar and writer , Kennan was a two @-@ time recipient of both the Pulitzer Prizes and the National Book Award , and had also received the Francis Parkman Prize , the Ambassador Book Award and the Bancroft Prize . Among Kennan 's numerous other awards and distinctions were the Testimonial of Loyal and Meritorious Service from the Department of State (1953) , Princeton 's Woodrow Wilson Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Nation 's Service (1976) , the Order of the Pour le Mérite (1976) , the Albert Einstein Peace Prize (1981) , the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (1982) , the American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal (1984) , the American Whig @-@ Cliosophic Society 's James Madison Award for Distinguished Public Service (1985) , the Franklin D. Roosevelt Foundation Freedom from Fear Medal (1987) , the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1989) , the Distinguished Service Award from the Department of State (1994) , and the Library of Congress Living Legend (2000) . Kennan had also received 29 honorary degrees and was honored in his name with the George F. Kennan Chair in National Security Strategy at the National War College and the George F. Kennan Professorship at the Institute for Advanced Study .

Historian Wilson D. Miscamble argues that Kennan played a critical role in developing the foreign policies of the Truman administration . He also states that Kennan did not believe in either global or strongpoint containment ; he simply wanted to restore the balance of power between the United States and the Soviets . Like historian John Lewis Gaddis , Miscamble concedes that although Kennan personally preferred political containment , his recommendations ultimately resulted in a policy directed more toward strongpoint than to global containment .

= = = Cultural views = = =

Noting the large @-@ scale Mexican immigration to the Southwestern United States , Kennan said in 2002 there were " unmistakable evidences of a growing differentiation between the cultures , respectively , of large southern and southwestern regions of this country , on the one hand " , and those of " some northern regions " . In the former , " the very culture of the bulk of the population of these regions will tend to be primarily Latin @-@ American in nature rather than what is inherited from earlier American traditions ... Could it really be that there was so little of merit [in America] that it deserves to be recklessly trashed in favor of a polyglot mix @-@ mash ? " Mayers argues that Kennan throughout his career represented the " tradition of militant nativism " that resembled or even exceeded the Know Nothings of the 1850s . Mayers adds that Kennan also believed American women had too much power .