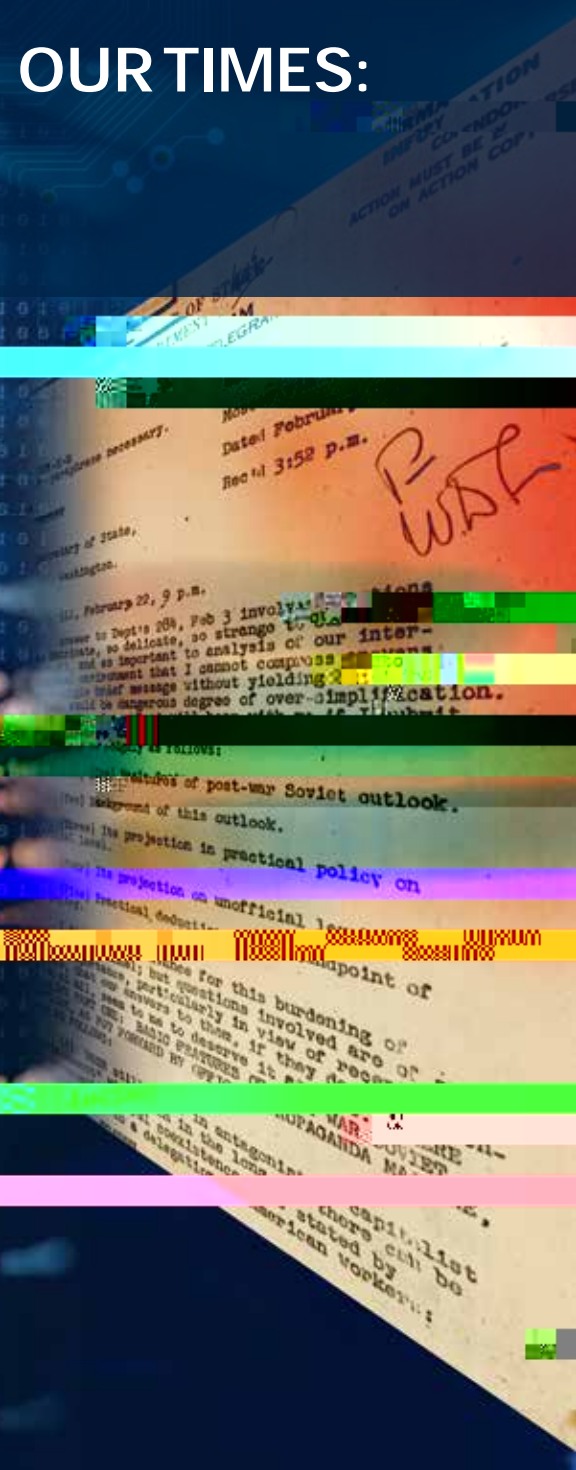


# A KENNAN FOR OUR TIMES:

```
operation = "MIRROR_X"  
mirror_mod.use_x = True  
mirror_mod.use_y = False  
mirror_mod.use_z = False  
operation = "MIRROR_Y"  
mirror_mod.use_x = False  
mirror_mod.use_y = True  
mirror_mod.use_z = False  
operation = "MIRROR_Z"  
mirror_mod.use_x = False  
mirror_mod.use_y = False  
mirror_mod.use_z = True  
ob.select = 1  
ob.select = 1  
context.scene.objects.active  
"Selected" + str(modifier)  
bpy.context.selected_objects  
data.objects[one.name].select  
print("please select exactly  
CLASSES  
types.Operator):  
X mirror to the  
object_mirror_mirror_x"  
context):  
context.active_object is not  
context):  
context.active_object is not
```



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# GEORGE KENNAN THE DIPL EGAC A IC

Jon Finer

**W**hen I became director of the State Department's Office of Policy Planning, in the second term of the Obama administration, I received two gifts from thoughtful friends. The first was an early edition of *American Diplomacy*, inscribed by its author, George Kennan, who established the office I would soon be leading. The second was a color scan of a memo from Kennan to Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, dated May 23, 1947. Its cover letter was less than a page long and replete with the sort of excuses and caveats familiar to anyone who had ever tactfully tried to lower a boss's expectations. "It is only a few days since the Planning Staff, with an incomplete and provisional complement of personnel, was able to begin to give attention to the substance of its work," Kennan wrote. "Normally I would consider this far too short a time in which to consider and make recommendations on matters of such importance. But I recognize that the need for a program of action on this problem is urgent and the best answer we can give today is perhaps more useful than a more thoroughly considered study one or two months hence."<sup>117</sup>

The subject of the memo that followed was simply stated, even understated: "it deals with the question of aid to Western Europe." Yet it proposed one of America's most successful policy initiatives. Officially called the "European Recovery Program," it is far better known as the Marshall Plan after the secretary of state who announced it to the world in a speech just two weeks after Kennan's self-deprecating missive.

These gifts were the first of many ways I came to understand how much the lessons of George Kennan's life and work motivated, inspired, but also overshadowed and humbled, those of his many successors. I suspect this has been the case for virtually every American diplomat and particularly those fortunate enough to follow in his professional footsteps. Since Kennan established it in the aftermath of World War II, the Office of Policy Planning has been providing the "best answer(s)" it could to the nation's greatest international challenges often in a matter of days, when months would make for an easier task.

To say that Kennan was a tough act to follow does not do him justice. On more than a few occasions I joked (admittedly with some genuine concern) that the trajectory of Policy Planning from Kennan's tenure to my own was among the clearest examples of American decline.

But there were also extraordinary benefits to succeeding George Kennan. In particular, he left myriad invaluable blueprints for how to approach the job. In a federal government that can be obsessively focused on the day-to-day, or, these days, on the minute-by-minute, the Policy Planning staff was intended to be and has remained a rare oasis of strategic discourse. George Marshall summed this up best in his characteristically pithy advice to Kennan: "avoid trivia."

That is easier said than done. Policymaking ultimately boils down to setting, articulating, and implementing priorities. Inherently, this involves a tug-of-war between what President Eisenhower termed

the "urgent" and the "important."

servants, and political appointees from outside the government—to be entrepreneurs and evangelists for their work, building relationships around the State Department and across agencies, particularly among those who would have to carry out our best-laid plans.

A second lesson drawn from Kennan is that S/P, as it is known inside the Department, has the luxury to not only take a step back from the day-to-day, but also to take a step back in time, ensuring that a sense of history, of triumphs and failures in the past, informs and provides context for our policymaking and for the secretary's speeches. As a graduate student, my advisor was Yuen Foong Khong, whose *Analogies at War* chronicled the use and misuse of history by 20<sup>th</sup>-century foreign-policymakers.<sup>119</sup> Khong's analysis built on that of Ernest May and Richard Neustadt, two Harvard professors whose *Thinking in Time* both offered lessons on how to integrate history into policy analysis and recounted "horror stories" about how badly that is often done.<sup>120</sup>

In the pantheon of great diplomats, Kennan is one of the few who was also an accomplished historian. It is clear that each of his vocations informed the other. In a 1995 essay for *Foreign Affairs*, Kennan resurrected and explicated a relatively obscure 1821 speech by then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, whose thinking on foreign affairs Kennan had long admired. Adams's admonition that the United States "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy," which Kennan often cited, had provided some of the historical and theoretical underpinning for two of his most celebrated stances—opposing the expansion of the Vietnam War and the invasion of Iraq.<sup>121</sup>

Contemporary policy debates involve frequent appeals to history, employed both to help win internal arguments and, most importantly, to get the answer right. In the administration in which I served, the dominant historical paradigm was the invasion of Iraq. We were led by a president who had been elected in no small part because,

like Kennan, he was an early opponent of it. Barack Obama's 2002 speech labeling the prospect of invading Iraq "a dumb war... a rash war" months before the invasion was the most important substantive distinction between his candidacy for president six years later and that of his main Democratic primary opponent, Hillary Clinton, and general election opponent, John McCain.<sup>122</sup> As president, Obama drew important lessons from the U.S. experience in Iraq. He concluded that difficult adversaries should be engaged, not just confronted; that the United States is stronger as part of a coalition than when acting alone; that adhering to international law matters; that military quagmires can swallow a presidency, particularly in the Middle East. These lessons informed many of our major initiatives, from



eighth floor, for a dinner with Secretary Kerry to discuss the return of the Russia challenge. We sought to channel his insights when drafting a memorandum mimicking what we believed would have been President Putin's guidance to his own policy planners, laying out his worldview. And we developed detailed strategic plans for reorienting our approach to the Russia relationship, with the goal of handing off a more manageable situation to our successors.

We were soon confronted by a third dispute with Russia—one that Kennan would have likely found far less shocking than many in our administration did: Moscow's use of stolen and disseminated information, as well as disinformation, to successfully intervene in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. My staff, which included Russia experts from inside and outside the government, fixated on this problem as soon as it emerged and before it was acknowledged publicly. We sought, largely unsuccessfully, to push the Department and the administration to more quickly consider stricter sanctions and make a strong public statement about what we knew. As a last-ditch effort, we produced a memo for the president from Secretary Kerry calling for a bipartisan commission, modeled on the 9/11 Commission, to investigate what had happened and to make recommendations about how best to protect the country. Never approved, this idea looks wiser in hindsight.

To see how clearly Kennan's own thinking anticipated virtually all of these challenges, one need look no further than the most famous of his writings, the so-called "Long Telegram" of 1946.<sup>124</sup> Its five concrete recommendations, borne of his deep alarm about Josef Stalin's creeping authoritarianism, prove similarly prescient as the United States slowly came to terms with the threat posed by President Vladimir Putin's Russia. "Our first step," Kennan wrote in the telegram, "must be to apprehend, and recognize for what it is, the nature of the movement with which we are dealing. We must study it with same courage, detachment, objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with



which doctor studies unruly and unreasonable individual.”<sup>125</sup> By the time Russia had reemerged long after the end of the Cold War as a critical foreign-policy challenge, the Russia expertise that the U.S. government had developed over decades had atrophied, in favor of trendier regional specialties like the Middle East and East Asia. Russian linguists and cultural sages were in short supply at the State Department as well as in the military and intelligence community. It is a deficit we are still working to rectify.

Second, Kennan warned that, “we must see that our public is educated to realities of Russian situation. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this. Press cannot do this alone. It must be done mainly by Government, which is necessarily more experienced and better informed on practical problems involved.”<sup>126</sup> As our government’s policy focus shifted away from Russia, the American public also stopped paying as much attention to Russia as it should have. This helps to explain why Russia’s interference in our election was so incomprehensible—even unimaginable—to many Americans. They no longer remembered, if they had ever known, that Moscow had relentlessly engaged in lower-tech, less successful attempts at interference in American politics throughout the Cold War.

Kennan also wisely held up a mirror to American society by arguing that we are most vulnerable to Russian meddling when our domestic affairs are in relative turmoil. He wrote in his telegram,

Much depends on health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is point at which domestic and foreign policies meets. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués. If we cannot abandon fatalism and indifference in face of deficiencies of our own

society, Moscow will profit—Moscow cannot help profiting by them in its foreign policies.”

That Moscow’s successful 2016 intervention came amid—and sought to exacerbate—a time of great domestic division in the United States would have come as no surprise to Kennan and those familiar with his work.

In his fourth piece of Russia-related advice, Kennan anticipated what is among the defining foreign-policy questions of our current moment. This is how to modernize and restore confidence in liberal democracy as a governance mode and in the norms, legal regimes, and institutions that comprise the international system established after World War II. With Europe and the United States in degrees of disarray, fueled by Russian interference, we can no longer take for granted that our way of life—the “power of our example,” in Bill Clinton’s famous phrase—will remain more compelling to the world than the autocrat’s bargain of greater order and diminished freedom. This, too, is something Kennan saw coming, writing in his telegram:

We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians ssaith Eurr5inly5inlygo--ey

authoritarians than with our fellow democrats around the world and willing to compromise core values, such as freedom of the press and the independence of political institutions, like the judiciary and intelligence community: " We must have courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. After all, the greatest danger that can befall us in coping with this problem

But it is also clear that Kennan's life after government wasn't easy, a comforting realization for anyone struggling to find fulfillment amid the disorienting transition away from the front lines of public service. As Frank Costigliola, who edited Kennan's diaries, recounts, his faculty appointment was initially opposed by the Institute's mathematicians, who questioned his scholarly credentials. He contemplated a run for the U.S. Senate from New Jersey but was dissuaded by Oppenheimer, who insisted Kennan would have to give up his Institute appointment should he pursue elected office. And despite his subsequent ambassadorships in Belgrade and Moscow, Kennan's biographers describe an alienation from Washington's foreign policy establishment, whose foundation he had helped build but which misappropriated his ideas in support of approaches he rejected. Kennan wrote and spoke often of isolation, even loneliness.<sup>130</sup>

In important ways, Kennan remained, to the end of his 101 years, an unabashed optimist: he believed in the necessity of remaining engaged in the public debate and in the power of sound policy thinking to avoid unnecessary war. At key moments in the history through which he lived, Kennan refused to yield to the inevitability of armed conflict, even as it seemed to be taking on a momentum of its own. For example, in his December 1957 Reith Lectures, delivered at Oxford University and broadcast worldwide by the BBC, he warned of an overemphasis in the West on military alliances and escalation at the expense of softer foreign policy tools, like diplomacy. Amid the global obsession with Moscow's purported preeminence in military technology and the arms race spurred by the launch of the Sputnik satellite just two months earlier, he argued:

To me it is a source of amazement that there are people who still see the escape from this danger in the continued multiplication by us of the destructiveness and speed of delivery of the major atomic weapons. These people seem unable to wean themselves from the belief that it is relative changes

in the power of these weapons that are going to determine everything. They evidently believe that if the Russians gain the slightest edge on us in the capacity to wreak massive destruction at long range, they will immediately use it, regardless of our own power of retaliation. Conversely they seem to feel that if we can only contrive to get a tiny bit ahead of the Russians we shall in some way have won; our salvation will be assured; the road will then be paved for a settlement on our terms.... I scarcely need say that I see no grounds whatsoever for these

could only have deepened his sense of solitude. At least that is what his words, inscribed on the sculpture at the Institute for Advanced Study, seem to suggest:

True scholars often work in loneliness, compelled to find rewards in the awareness that they have made valuable, even beautiful contributions to the cumulative structure of human knowledge, whether anyone knows it at the time or not.

That may be true, to a point. But the “valuable, even beautiful” contributions of George Kennan, who passed away in 2005, were well known throughout his time. And they continue to guide those fortunate enough to learn from them.