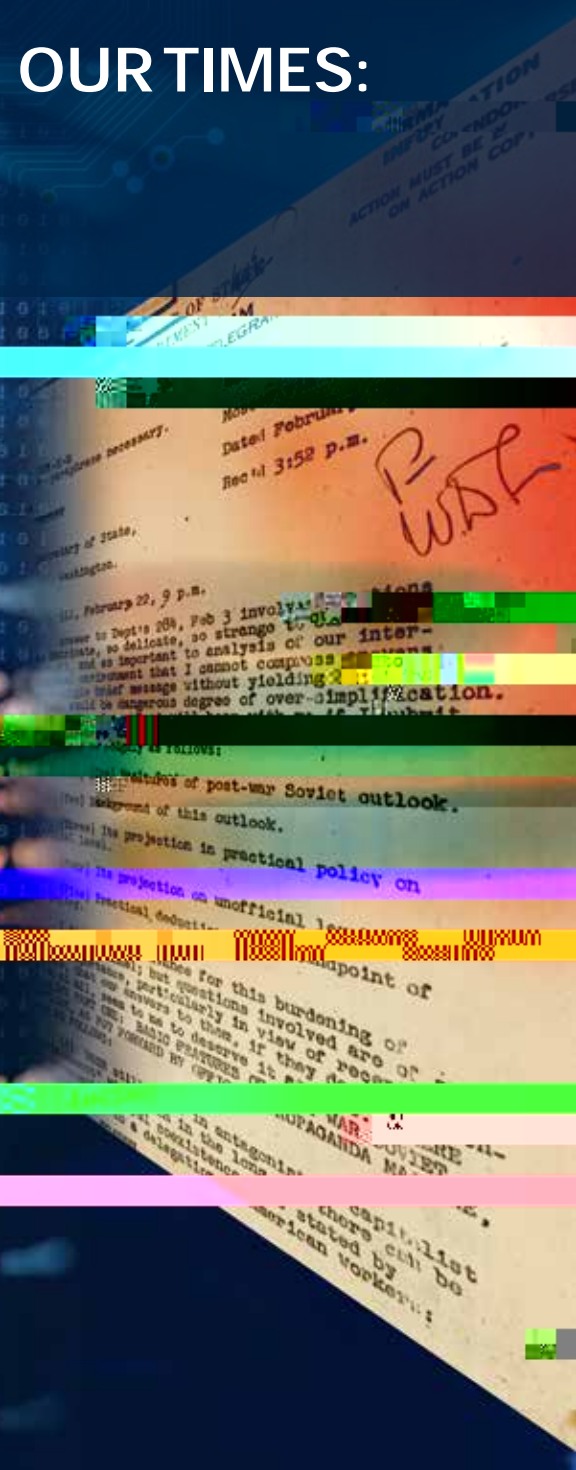


A KENNAN FOR OUR TIMES:

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mirror_mod.use_y = False  
mirror_mod.use_z = False  
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mirror_mod.use_z = True  
selection at the end of add  
ob.select=1  
ler_ob.select=1  
context.scene.objects.active  
"Selected" + str(modifier)  
bpy.context.selected_ob  
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George F. Kennan left a vast intellectual and political legacy. It would not be an exaggeration to say that we still feel his influence on international relations every time policy options vis-à-vis a growing U.S.-Russia rivalry are discussed. Kennan's intellectual impact is no less important, but in many cases scholars and politicians still underestimate its significance. Paradoxically, some of his accomplishments could be better seen if we separate the highpoint of his political influence from the highpoint of his academic achievements. In addition, a number of his most striking discoveries pertained not to understanding Russia but to American foreign policy.

Regarding Kennan's impact on U.S.- Russian relations, historians tend to focus on containment (in his " Long Telegram" from 1946 and subsequent " Sources of Soviet Conduct" from 1947); on his later criticism of the arms race and "second Cold War;" and, institutionally, on his creation of the Policy Planning division at the State Department. Certainly, the United States and the West are looking for a new containment strategy toward Putin's Russia, a catchy one-word phrase signaling the creativity of a new generation of policy planners. Amid an almost universal cry of a " new Cold War," criticism of a " second Cold War" is surely in order now. The analytical capacity of State Department policymakers is not reas

suring. Neither is the diminutive influence Russia experts have with present-day political leaders.

The complicated legacy of Kennan sheds new light upon pre-existing and current problems in bilateral relations and on foreign-policy decision-making in general.

cious knowledge as to the extremely low level of the Russia-related expertise in the State Department at this time. An anecdote that Kennan was proud of helps to tell this story. In 1936, Kennan, then a secretary of the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet Union, discovered dispatches in the embassy's archives that Neill Brown, an American

ard Stoeckl, the Russian diplomat who served in Washington at the same time Brown was in St.

use different language, employ different causation, and react differently to international challenges. In this text, Kennan had something of

unreasonable individual" and called for the "health and vigor of our own society." He pushed the U.S. government to

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.¹⁰⁴

Kennan gave that advice at a moment when the United States was moving beyond its century-old role as an example of democracy and beacon of freedom and trying to be a creator of international order in a new world of global challenges. The U.S. diplomat in Moscow found or coined the word that the world needed, identifying the Soviet Union as the core threat to global security.

By articulating security in this way, Kennan was responding to the crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations. Less obviously but no less importantly, he was responding to the identity crisis that Americans themselves faced: their state's rapid rise to superpower status left Washington policymakers intellectually unarmed and politically vulnerable. Kennan sketched a worldview and a plan of action. The word "containment" was never used in "The Long Telegram." It first appeared in Kennan's *Foreign Affairs* article, summing up the policy that the United States needed to implement.

Contrary to Kennan's intentions, "The Long Telegram" and "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" did less to explain what the USSR was doing and less to provide a new "positive and constructive picture of sort of the world" than to shape a course of action for the U.S. The understanding of others' and one's own actions are not the same; they may not even be determined by one another.

In his seminal work *The Conquest of America* (1984), French-Bulgarian scholar Tsvetan Todorov stressed the relative independence of knowledge, judgement, and action in the relations between different cultures. An increase in knowledge, for instance, does not necessarily make the other's values more attractive or alter one's wish to change it. He writes that "knowledge does not imply love, nor the converse; and neither of the two implies, nor is implied by, identification with the other."¹⁰⁵ Kennan certainly had information and knowledge about Russia to impart to his compatriots. That information, however, was not the main factor in the Washington decision-making. Kennan did criticize Russia as a country that rejected such notions—dear to Americans—as liberty and democracy; but common values are not necessarily a prerequisite for rapprochement, just as divergent values do not lead inevitably to conflict. Kennan's policy recommendations were taken seriously and the U.S. policy toward the USSR shifted, as did U.S. policy globally. Kennan had hit the bull-

bearing his own experience of the mid-1940s in mind: "There is, let me assure you, nothing in nature more egocentric than the embattled democracy...The idea of people wasting time and substance on any *other* issue seems to them preposterous. This explains why Allied statesmen were simply unable to comprehend how people in Russia could be interested in an internal Russian political crisis when there was a war on in the West." ¹¹⁰ A diplomat, Kennan understood that the

tance.¹¹² Yet Kennan's thought was wider and more versatile than any single political theory.

He published

achieving real, and desperately needed, results in our relations with others." ¹¹⁴ In 1960, Kennan had lamented that a world public could

Years later, Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power,” paying tribute to Kennan's vision. In his words:

Containment led to success in the Cold War not just because of

Since Alexis de Tocqueville's book, *Democracy in America*, the weakness of democracies in foreign affairs has been a matter of academic and political debate. Kennan added his strong opinions to the list of arguments skeptical of a democratic foreign policy. Even if Kennan exaggerated the problems that a democratic foreign policy creates, his characterization of these problems is cogent and salient. Politicians often understand domestic pressures and construct foreign threats in a manner relevant to domestic political pressures. The skillful diplomat, however, seeks to balance domestic pressures with international challenges and to find ways of preserving international order in concert with the domestic political realities.

Kennan's story was one of marrying his knowledge of Russia with his understanding of American politics. His success was based on his policy recommendations. Conventional American opinion that Kennan "explained what Stalin would do" and recommended the appropriate countermeasures presumes that Kennan was right about the USSR's plans and capacities. However, contemporary analyses of political history reveal that even in the Soviet Union, plans for the future were not so clear; they were always in the making. In