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ENTITLED George F. Kennan and Realist Political Thought

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I. Introduction

George Frost Kennan has had a major impact upon the thinking of American foreign policy, both as a writer on the subject and as one whose views have been much written about. Born in Wisconsin and raised in a Presbyterian family, Kennan attended college at Princeton and graduated in the early 1920's. Kennan entered the Foreign Service after graduation and was sent to Germany and the Baltic States to hone his knowledge of Russia. When President Franklin Roosevelt finally recognized the Soviet Union in the early 1930's, Kennan was sent to the U.S.S.R. to establish America's first embassy there. Prior to World War Two and during the first years of the war he saw service in Prague, Berlin, and Lisbon before returning to the Soviet Union. Always opinionated on the subject of the Soviet leadership, Kennan wired to Washington often at the end of the war and immediately thereafter hoping to alert decisionmakers to the realities of Soviet power.

His views on the nature of Soviet power and policy intrigued then Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal. He in turn asked Kennan to come to Washington and elaborate on his "long telegram" of February, 1946. Further impressed by his ideas, Forrestal invited Kennan to be one of the first commandants of the newly-formed National War College and granted permission for the printing of
the July, 1947 edition of *Foreign Affairs* periodical entitled, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" and was signed "X". This so-called "X" article and its idea of containment were to propel Kennan into the public spotlight as the man who had an answer to the baffling problem of how to deal with Soviet power in Europe.

Shortly after this Kennan would convey novel views on the burgeoning nuclear arms race and be sent back to the Soviet Union as the American Ambassador. Leaving his post after some embarrassment, he would devote all his time, but for a stint as the American Ambassador to Yugoslavia in the early 1960's, to commenting on American foreign policy and authoring diplomatic histories.

An accomplished and prolific writer (15 books and numerous articles at last count) and a thinker who has been praised and criticized by many, George Kennan deserves further study. Through his positions, writings, and the praise and controversy his ideas have generated, Kennan may be one of the better-known non-elected officials to write and speak on foreign affairs to the public. More importantly, he was a part of a rebirth in "realistic" political thought in America. Such men as Kennan, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger understood that after the Second World War America was the most powerful nation on earth. Having been isolated from most world problems and intrigues, for them she was ill-prepared
to step into the role of leader of the West and employ realistic analysis and policy to her foreign relations. They were the strongest advocates of realism in American foreign policy.

George Kennan, in most of his ideas on American foreign affairs is a realist, especially in his writings from the 1930's through the 1950's. After that period, though arguing for many of the same approaches as in the past, Kennan often changed the tone of his arguments for his ideas. He began to utilize more personal moral criteria in the fashion of policies like Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which Kennan adhored. This will be illustrated later when Kennan's arguments against nuclear arms of the 1940's-1950's period is contrasted with his more recent arguments as a prominent figure in the anti-nuclear movement. In the end, Kennan's realism, personal morality, and their sometimes clash has inspired commentators worldwide, and will be dealt with in some measure in this paper.
II. Kennan the Realist

Before discussing Kennan and his ideas, it may be useful to define concretely how realists and moralists view international relations. Robert Osgood in his, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations* described the realist this way,

The Realist, because he is skeptical of the ability of nations to transcend their self-interest, sees the struggle for national power as the distinguishing characteristic of international relations. He tends to view international conflict as an inevitable state of affairs, issuing from man's tenacious patriotic instincts and conditioned by relatively immutable influences, such as geography or some primordial urges, like the drive to dominate. Consequently, he is skeptical of attempts to mitigate international conflict with appeals to sentiment and principle or with written pledges and institutional devices unless they express the existing configuration of national interests or register the relative power among nations. He believes that if power conflicts can be mitigated at all, they can be mitigated only by balancing power against power and by cultivating a circumspect diplomacy that knows the uses of force and the threat of force as indispensable instruments of national policy.¹

Conversely for Osgood, the moralist,

... believes that the essence of international relations is spiritual power, which springs from the impact of thought and actions upon the supreme arbiter of all human affairs, the human conscience. Because he is convinced that man's conscience is progressively attuned to immutable principles transcending particular selfish interests, he tends to regard national egoism as a transient phenomenon, and he looks upon the struggle for national power as a kind of social aberration... he (the moralist) has an abiding faith in man's ability to direct his conscience and reason toward restraining, controlling, or overcoming the self-seeking and aggressive impulses that foul national
sentiment and conduct. Through appeals to the common interest of all men in peace and justice, through sublimating selfish interests and channeling them toward social goals, and through declarations, agreements, laws, and institutional devices the utopian (moralist) believes that nations can subordinate their interests to universal moral precepts.

Using these definitions of realist and moralist thought, the change in Kennan's rhetoric from a primary concern with concrete power relationships in the 1940's and 1950's to more frequent use of amorphous concepts of peace and morality in his recent arguments, especially on the nuclear arms race can be seen.

It was Kennan's famous article in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs* where his idea of containment of Soviet power was made public. He surmised that the "sources of Soviet conduct" arose from their ideology and the circumstances of three decades of rule. Since the Soviet leadership was in reality a dictatorship, it needed police organizations and its armed forces to preserve its control. Soviet leaders needed reasons to justify this huge security force, and found it in Communist ideology. They maintained that since many had been leaders of the 1917 Revolution and all were the heirs to leadership of the Communist Party in Russia and the world revolutionary movement, their word was infallible. To Kennan, this gave them the ability to make anything they said the truth.

While this important for the Soviet's internal control of politics and the world revolutionary movement,
Kennan believed ideology played a crucial role in understanding long-term Soviet goals. Marxist ideology taught that at some point in history, the proletarian revolution would occur worldwide and bourgeoisie institutions would be replaced by communist ones. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Revolution in Russia, added the idea of Soviet leadership in this inevitable movement.

This explanation of Soviet policy alarmed Western Europe in the late 1940's. Hundreds of Red Army divisions remained long after hostilities ended, and to many seemed poised to overrun the remainder of the continent. Kennan saw a way to bolster the political confidence of the war-torn nations of Western Europe, however. Since the world revolution was believed to be inevitable, as the capitalist world would do more to destroy itself than communists could, Soviet leaders were under no timetable for action against Western Europe or any other non-communist area. As Russian history, the writings of Lenin, and the Soviet experience in power indicated, Russia should move cautiously in expanding its power, moving in only where there was little concerted opposition to it.

It seemed clear to Kennan what the West's, and specifically the United States' role should be. If the West could create obstacles for Soviet expansion and pressures applied to areas where the Soviet Union wanted to spread its institutions, the cautiousness of the Soviet
leadership would cause it to back off and wait for better opportunities. By providing military aid to Greece in 1946 to battle internal communist insurgents; by providing economic aid to Western Europe in the form of the Marshall Plan in the late 1940's; and by providing psychological aid in discussing common interests and goals of the United States and Western Europe, which culminated in the NATO agreement in 1949.

Kennan supported these policies for another reason—they were within America's interests and capabilities. In Greece, the amount of aid needed was economically in our capability to deliver. Greece was also a strategic area in controlling the Dardanelles and the Eastern Mediterranean. There was, in addition, the possibility that Turkish-Soviet relations would degenerate in favor of the Soviets, and Greece would then make a useful base of operations. The Marshall Plan and the discussions on common interests were useful because according to Kennan psychological strength would be needed in the following months and years in war-torn Western Europe. The Marshall Plan especially could help in this area by reviving the capitalist economic potential of Western Europe and so stave off the cries of communists there for anti-capitalist changes. While Kennan believed the Soviet threat to be more political than military, he still acknowledged the need for an American military presence in Western Europe,
if only to reduce the unfounded fears of the Europeans themselves of a Soviet attack.

When "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" was published, Kennan was probably the most visible advocate of realism in foreign relations. Immediately following the Second World War, Kennan supported a spheres-of-influence policy for Soviet-American relations. The criticisms of the Yalta agreement shortly after the war seemed foolish to him, as the United States could hardly expect to have much influence in areas already occupied by the Soviet Union. The fact that large Soviet forces were arrayed along the Oder-Neisse line, along with the traditional desire of Russia for more territory to increase the security of its borders meant the Soviets felt it was their right to establish hegemony over it. Kennan found an explanation for this while at the National War College when he observed: that there was "... no previous American literature devoted to war and politics, only peace and politics." 

Kennan's argument was supported even by Americans with less distrust of Soviet power. Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Commerce under President Harry Truman, wrote the President in July, 1946 complaining of the double-standard American and Soviet actions were given by Washington. Using a historical basis of argument as Kennan did, did, he felt that after 25 years of isolation, Russia believed she had achieved the status of a major power and
should be recognized as such. He wrote,

Our interest in establishing democracy in
Eastern Europe, where democracy by and large
has never existed, seems to her (Russia) an
attempt to reestablish the encirclement of
unfriendly neighbors which was created after
the last war and which might serve as a spring-
board of still another effort to destroy her.

For Wallace, there could be no "one world" unless America
and the Soviet Union could live peacefully together.
This could be accomplished by respecting her influence
in Eastern Europe as America expected to be acknowledged
in Western Europe and the Pacific. Although more sym-
pathetic to the Soviet Union than Kennan, Wallace agreed
with Kennan in the necessity of recognizing spheres-of-
influence.

At this point in his career Kennan considered power
and its limits as having major effects on the ability of
America to conduct its foreign policy. He shared this
view with some of the most prominent realists of the period.
One of these men was Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr first
reached intellectual prominence through his call for the
abandonment of capitalist society and the creation of a
communist system of economic distribution during the early
1930's. He admired the Soviet Union for bringing more
"equality" to its society, but as the 1930's and 1940's
progressed, he became disillusioned with the Soviet regime.
The purges and the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 brought
Niebuhr to a more realistic view of the Soviet Union as
a great political and military power. As his views changed, he developed a political stance known as Christian-realism.

Christopher-realists abandoned the orthodox Christian belief that mankind should love each other and work together peacefully to solve its disputes. Niebuhr came to believe that events like the appeasement of Hitler at Munich and the "appeasement" of the Soviet Union at Yalta were ultimately harmful to the Christian's attempt to bring stability and justice to society. Because men were sinners at heart, justice could be achieved only through coercion and resistance to coercion. In the end, war and conflict were inevitable, even for Christians. Niebuhr described it more allegorically in his 1944 book, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. In it, the children of light, often naive and sentimental, were told to be on guard for the cunning, deceiving children of darkness. The children of light would also have to learn some of the ways of the children of darkness to protect their way of life.

By war's end, Niebuhr was calling for the acknowledgement of political and power realities in reshaping the world order, not unlike Kennan. He felt the establishment of justice depended on a durable international order which corresponded to the realities of power. The ideal situation for him would have had a Soviet-Anglo-Saxon world
hegemony, with Britain as the "power broker" between the Soviets and Americans. In the early post-war period Niebuhr and Kennan were of a similar opinion regarding the recognition of power and its necessity for the maintenance of stability and order in international politics. In fact, Niebuhr and the Americans for Democratic Action were strong supporters of Kennan's containment idea, though Kennan became dismayed by the stress on military containment, especially in the Truman Doctrine, at the expense of political containment. In the thoughts of Hans Morgenthau even greater similarities exist.

Morgenthau's 1952 book, *In Defense of the National Interest* concerned itself with the need for nations, in particular the United States, to conduct foreign policy on the basis of a realistic recognition of the world political situation. He drew upon American history as an illustration of the way in which America should have run its foreign policy. For Morgenthau, Alexander Hamilton embodied the heritage of the realistic approach to foreign relations. Hamilton's refusal to allow America to honor its treaty with France when she was attacked during the Napoleonic Wars due to the lack of assistance America could give and the reality of British control of the seas was for Morgenthau the epitomy of realistic foreign policy thinking and acting in terms of power.

In more contemporary policies Morgenthau also looked
at power relationships. In both World Wars, he argued America entered not because of violations of neutrality laws by the belligerents but because she, like Great Britain, did not want the balance of power in Europe disrupted to the advantage of one nation. By the beginning of World War One, moralism had come to be an important factor, culminating in Woodrow Wilson. A number of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, such as an end to "secret diplomacy", "Secret treaties", and national self-determination; ignored the realities of the usefulness of the former and the untenability of the later in cases like Eastern Europe. Kennan, considering the historical context also felt that, "...we lost sight of the importance of the power factor in our foreign relations", by the end of the nineteenth century.

Morgenthau believed power held priority over morality in American foreign policy because,

In the absence of an integrated international society, the attainment of a modicum of order and the realization of a minimum of moral values are predicated upon the existence of national communities capable of preserving order and realizing moral values within the limits of their power.

Commenting on the call for disarmament agreements in 1957 Kennan had a similar response,

These (arms) agreements are only kept, if they are kept, because of political gain or necessity, not simply for the outcome itself.

Like Kennan, Morgenthau called for American realization
and use of power in post-war period to achieve an acceptable world order. As many Americans falsely believed times of strife were uncommon to global society, Morgenthau felt they must realize that their military and political "fighting" did not end with V-E day. The objective for American foreign policy in Europe was the restoration of the balance of power. Morgenthau believed this could occur only if the Red Army left Eastern Europe. That would occur only if they faced overwhelming power against them.

In the first decade after the end of World War Two, Kennan, Niebuhr, and Morgenthau all advocated increased recognition of power and its predominance over more universal ideas like peace, justice, and love of mankind in America's foreign relations. Kennan well described some of the feelings each of these realists had on the subject when he reflected in 1950,

(The diplomacy of the twentieth century) lacks any accepted, enduring doctrine for relating military strength to political policy and a persistent tendency to fashion our policies toward others with a view of feeding a pleasing image of ourselves rather than to achieve real results in our relations with others.

Kennan also believed the United States had limits on its power. As stated earlier, he felt America only should give assistance in any form in situations where her economic strength and capabilities could make a positive impact, as in Greece. For Kennan, American involvement in Viet Nam was an example of the overextension of our
assistance. When questioned in May 1965 by the House
Subcommittee on the Far East and the Pacific on Viet Nam
he replied, "On the other hand I think the best we can
hope for in this situation is that we will be able to
get out with reasonable protection of the security of
surrounding countries and protection of our own prestige." 26

Asked about how Viet Nam fit into his idea of contain­
ment Kennan answered,

The definition of it (containment) which
people most frequently think of is the
Truman Doctrine statement, at the time of
our intervention in Greece. I personally
objected—I think I can safely say this now—

enough time has gone by—to the wording of
that statement, considering that it was too
swEEPIng, and amounted to a promise to in­
tervene everywhere in the world where people
were threatened by communism, quite regard­
less of their own efforts to defend them­
selves and quite regardless of the prospects
for success of any efforts that we may make
on their behalf. 27

In Viet Nam Kennan felt the situation was largely beyond
the reach of our aid, especially for the quantity of
assistance given. It was then foolish to throw away
money and lives on a problem where those closely in­
volved were not giving their full effort and where U.S.
aid alone could do little good. By recognizing this
fact, Kennan argued much waste and frustration from
unfulfilled expectations could have been avoided by
greatly or totally cutting back assistance to South
Viet Nam.
Other aspects of his political thought contain elements of realism also. One area closely related to the discussion is what Kennan called the "legalistic-moralistic" approach to foreign policy in the United States. He defined it in his 1951 book, *American Diplomacy* as, "The belief that it should be possible to suppress the chaotic and dangerous aspirations of governments in the international field by the acceptance of some system of legal rules and restraints." Kennan believed it was an attempt to transpose Anglo-Saxon concepts of individual law into the field of international relations. The ability to create institutional and judicial frameworks for the resolution of conflict internally was simply carried over to global relationships.

This stance was most pronounced for Kennan in President Woodrow Wilson's administration. In his arguments for entering World War One, Wilson and his administration portrayed Germany as militaristic and anti-democratic, while the Allies were fighting for democracy and the chance to make the world over to America's liking. But peace would not be maintained by the old balance-of-power system. Rather, a "League of Nations which would mobilize the conscience and power of mankind against aggression." The goodness of mankind would then overcome national pride and interests and peace, safety, and stability would be achieved through cooperation and mutual respect.
Kennan argued that this line of thought ignored the varied aspirations and concerns of differing cultures. The "universalist" approach was unfair to other nations whose standards often were not similar to our's. Thus in many cases America's source of grievance against them had no pertinence to them and only caused more friction.\(^\text{31}\)

Kennan felt that legalistic-moralistic policy often caused the United States to strike righteous poses when it had no business doing so. In his 1967 *Memoirs* he believed the trial of Nazi war criminals was wrong for that reason. He agreed that the atrocities committed by them were deplorable and they should be punished properly. The act of bringing them to trial was another matter. The United States had no right to judge war criminals when one of its allies committed unthinkable atrocities of their own, as evidenced by Soviet behavior in Poland.\(^\text{32}\) It created a double standard in America's policies which was difficult for Kennan to forgive.

In his 1977 book, *The Cloud of Danger* Kennan found another area of American policy which was too moralistic at the expense of bringing about real change. This was the policy of supporting human rights as a vital part of American foreign policy, culminating in President Jimmy Carter's administration. While the Helsinki declarations on human rights gave the United States a solid basis from which to criticize Soviet human rights violations, Kennan questioned whether it was wise to do
so to the extent the Carter administration pursued it. In the first place, they were merely declarations, not contractual agreements, which contained concrete guidelines for behavior. Moreover, as Kennan contended that the Soviet Union was much more tolerant of dissidents in the 1970's than the 1930's, what would the increased criticism by the United States make the Soviets think? If further mildness to dissidents would increase criticism, perhaps the repression of the Stalin period would be needed to keep the situation secret from the West? To Kennan, the gains of dissidents in the Soviet Union were in jeopardy because of America human rights policies, which were too universal in their language to do much good. For him, the best policy would have curtailed American human rights declarations in order to allow the Soviets to gain confidence and allow more concessions.

Another recent example of Kennan's aversion for self-righteous policies were his comments on South Africa, also in *The Cloud of Danger*. Calls for the withdrawal of investments by American companies in South Africa and banning South African athletes from international competition did not seem useful to Kennan. He felt that if America could do anything constructive in South Africa, holding high-minded positions would not serve a useful purpose.

Alexander Hamilton, writing in the eighteenth century had similar views on the place of morality in American foreign policy,
Indeed, the rule of morality in this respect is not precisely the same between nations as between nations. The duty of making its own welfare the guide to its actions is much stronger upon the former than the later.

Morgenthau also wrote on the legalistic-moralistic dimension of American foreign policy. For him, three factors contributed to moralism: the uniqueness of the American experience; the actual isolation of America in the nineteenth century; and the humanitarianism, pacifism, and anti-imperialism of American ideology. While he believed universal moral principles were a part of American foreign policy, they could also serve only as pretexts to the pursuit of national policies. If they became anything more, the nation could take on a false sense of dignity for promoting moral principles as ends when they were only means to an end.

Henry Kissinger, a self-proclaimed protege of Morgenthau, agreed with the above line of thought. He argued the legal background of many American policymakers produced biases in favor of legal, constitutional solutions. When nations attempted to apply their own laws as universal truths, disputes grew larger and the symbolic aspects of policy took precedence over the substantive. A better understanding of American interests would give perspective to American idealism and to humane, realistic objectives. Kennan was in the company of other realists when discussing the legalistic-moralistic problem, but became more isolated from them in advocating
other policies.

As the 1950's progressed, George Kennan began to advocate a "disengagement" from Europe by the United States and the Soviet Union. With Western Europe's recovery progressing rapidly under the Marshall Plan, the need for physical involvement by the United States in the region had ended. Though this may seem at odds with his earlier balance-of-power argument, it was actually in line with that policy. Kennan imagined a unified continental European union, free of Britain so Germany could play a leading role in the union. This would have allowed Europe to become a viable member of a balance-of-power scheme which included the United States and the Soviet Union. Developing this line of thought in his 1957 Reith lectures, Kennan believed Germany needed to be reunited in such a union so she could devote herself to leading the European community rather than pursuing nationalistic schemes. Yet if Germany were allowed to reunite and choose which treaty organization to affiliate with (NATO of the Warsaw Pact), she might well choose NATO. That would have been humiliating for the Soviets, as they would be asked to leave a nation it defeated in battle to allow it to become a threat to it once again. For Kennan, the only realistic way of bringing a unified Germany about was a mutual withdrawal of Soviet and American troops from Germany and the rest of Europe.
A related aspect of this argument for disengagement made it more realistic. At that time, intercontinental ballistic missiles were unknown to all the world's arsenals. While the U.S. had a strategic bomber force which was on paper capable of striking the Soviet Union, the only area where an exchange of nuclear weapons could occur was in Europe. Thus, at this time Europe was perhaps the most sensitive area in East-West relations in terms of preventing nuclear war. By moving the two nuclear powers out of the theater and developing a strong, non-nuclear Europe as a third great power, the threat of nuclear confrontation would have greatly diminished for Kennan.

Other realists had views on an "independent" Europe. Niebuhr felt that, "Europe will have to work out its own solution with not too much aid from either Russia or the West."44 Henry Kissinger commented that, "... it wasn't natural that decisions affecting a crucial area like Western Europe should be made 3,000 away."45 In advocating a united Europe able to participate in a reconstructed balance-of-power relationship, Kennan demonstrated a realistic approach to the European situation.

A third area where Kennan utilized more realistic arguments was on the subject of nuclear weapons and the idea of the objectives of warfare. The two atomic bombs dropped on Japan in August 1945 culminated the technical
advances made in man's ability for mass destruction in the twentieth century. To Kennan's mind, this was the expected step in the untenable American idea of total defeat of the enemy in war. The American Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World Wars One and Two demonstrated a historical trend in this line of thought. Especially in the World Wars, the policies of total defeat and unconditional surrender of the enemy were an excuse for not giving serious thought to the political objectives of the war while it was in progress. The obsession with total defeat of Germany in World War Two enabled the Soviets to occupy Eastern Europe in order to defeat Germany "unconditionally". Kennan felt this was another reason why the outcry of an American "sellout" at Yalta, and even the attempt to gain any political power in Eastern Europe was foolhardy. If America had thought through what kind of Eastern Europe we desired after the war, her war-aims could have been tailored to that outcome, rather than simply the destruction of Germany.

This was were the question of nuclear weapons entered into play. The destructive capabilities they possessed made the total destruction of the recipient of a nuclear attack highly probable. Since total destruction as a war aim was untenable to Kennan, so to were nuclear arms. He expressed this when he said, "I regard it (nuclear war) as the reflection of a vast misunderstanding of the
of the purposes of warfare and the true usefulness of weaponry.\textsuperscript{48} Kennan believed that the Soviet leadership viewed nuclear weapons as, "only good for scaring people with weak nerves."\textsuperscript{49} They were idle threats because they could only obliterate, whereas conventional power could hold, organize, and use occupied territory.\textsuperscript{50}

In his thinking Kennan saw war as a means to a political end, not as an end in itself. This view was very much in line with the classical idea, indentified with Clausewitz, of war as but the most coercive of means by which one nation can induce another to respond in an acceptable manner. He was again of a like mind with Morgenthau, who believed that total war destroyed both the victor and the vanquished. While the victor may preserve himself, in total war he might not save a world worth living in.\textsuperscript{51}

Though Kennan in his early writings on nuclear arms found some need for them, if only as a deterrence against an attack on the United States, he was opposed from the start of the arms race to the principle of "first use". Total war only brought total destruction and did not solve any political problems. In this sense, Kennan supported the more realistic policy of warfare to solve disputes and adjust the balance-of-power, rather than to destroy an enemy and upset the balance.

The ecological deterioration of America's and the world's natural resources was always a part of Kennan's
thoughts. As early as the 1930's he, "never ceased to ponder...the obvious deterioration in the quality of both American life and of the natural environment in which it had its being, under the impact of a headlong overpopulation, industrialization, commercialization, and urbanization of society."52 As the years progressed he voiced more often and urgently the need for more effort in our conservation and preservation of resources and the environment. He strictly questioned America's growing dependence on foreign raw materials, especially oil. With our dependence so great, and the political regimes of these raw material areas being at times unstable and/or unfriendly to the United States, was it politically and strategically realistic to allow these regimes to have a potential stranglehold on the American way of life? Kennan believed, and still believes, that America would do itself a favor both environmentally and politically by reducing its needs for raw materials, especially from abroad.

The importance of the ecological factor to society for Kennan can be seen in this 1976 statement of his,

\[\text{We talk of saving Western civilization when we talk of a military confrontation with Russia—} \]
\[\text{but, saving it for what? In order that 20 or 30 years hence we may run out of oil, and minerals, and food, and invite upon humanity a devastating conflict between the overpopulated and undernourished two-thirds of the world and ourselves?} \]

Even if the West were to defeat and eliminate the Soviet
Union from its list of troubles, the inevitability of the ecological problem would do the world in. This was another example of the importance of means to Kennan. As in the nuclear war scenario, the enemy would be destroyed, but the leftovers would not be worth fighting for.

Finally, Kennan desired a realistic view for foreign policy through the separation of intentions from the capabilities of another nation. To him this was of crucial importance in viewing the Soviet Union. While the Soviets had a large army stationed in Europe after World War Two and soon after developed communist regimes in the territory, one could not be quite sure of Russian intentions. Did the Soviets wish to overrun Western Europe, or to consolidate its hold in Eastern Europe and protect the Russian homeland? Though they developed nuclear bombs, would they use them to destroy Western power or to deter others from attacking the Soviet Union? These questions of intent were the important ones to Kennan. The military leadership's use of "worst-case" scenarios, which emphasized capability over intention bothered Kennan, as they overly-militarized and intensified an already strained East-West relationship. Kennan therefore stressed the ...

... importance in the formulation of national policy on two things—one's idea of one's country, its capabilities, and its natural role in the world; the other, the interpretation given to the psychology, the political personality, the intentions, and the likely behavior of an adversary.
Stressing the analyzing of intentions and likely behavior of an opponent rather than a knee-jerk reaction to his capabilities, Kennan believed a foreign policy which addressed the reality of the world situation could be achieved. Although Kennan, in his advocacy of these various policies seems quite realistic, other arguments he presented, some on the same subjects discussed previously, may be less realistic than he has supposed.
III. Kennan and the Clash of Realism and Moralism

George Kennan was one of the most outspoken advocates of the disengagement of Soviet and American forces from Europe. His arguments for its necessity; namely that Europe could then participate in a new balance-of-power scheme and that the threat of nuclear war would be reduced were prime examples of realist thought.

In certain assumptions he made, though, Kennan was more of an idealist than realist. One assumption was that Western Europe and the West in general were willing to accept a unified Germany leading them in a coalition without the United States being a part, particularly militarily, of it. To Kennan, Germany was a natural choice to lead a unified Europe. Two world wars and tens of millions dead, billions of dollars in damages, and numerous political upheavals later, many non-German Europeans were doubtful this Germany could be trusted to lead them. To them, a divided Germany was more important than a unified Europe.\(^1\)

Related to this European unification was the withdrawal of American armed forces from European soil. These forces were small in number but did possess nuclear weapons. For many Europeans and Americans it was this "nuclear umbrella" held up by the United States over Western Europe that kept the region from being invaded by the large Soviet conventional forces in Eastern Europe. While the truth of this can be disputed, the fact remains that politically and
psychologically Western Europe was not prepared to exist without American armed forces and nuclear weapons in the region.

Kennan's arguments against this line of thought was that Western Europe had a neurotic fear and belief that the Soviets wanted to attack them. Without U.S. help they would be unable to defend themselves. For them American nuclear weapons had been the only deterrent to a Soviet attack.² To him, the Soviets would have attacked Western Europe long before if they had desired. However, since Stalin's death, the motivations of the Soviet leadership had changed. In Kennan's eyes the use of terms like "peace" and "noninterference" in their rhetoric meant that public opinion, at home and abroad, meant something to them.³ Perhaps they were content with their situation and were becoming more nationalistic in their views on their role in the world, more like Tsarist Russia than an expanding ideological power.

This could explain not needing American forces in Europe. There was, however, an equally large obstacle to disengagement; namely, Soviet unwillingness to withdraw from Central and Eastern Europe. If Kennan was correct in his analysis that the Soviet Union was becoming more traditional than ideological in her foreign policy, the chances of her leaving the occupied areas was almost nil. For hundreds of years Tsarist Russia pictured itself as

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the ethnic and spiritual leader of the Eastern European Slavic nations. She tried throughout her history to gain predominant influence, if not outright control, of the region. Also, Tsarist Russia had been attacked from the West through the plains of Eastern Europe three times in 150 years. That the Soviets would easily forget past history and their recently-won victories in "liberating" these areas to Russian control for the first time in history was an unrealistic assumption, by Kennan.

Even if Kennan stuck to his mixture of ideology and traditional influences a la the containment argument to explain Soviet policy, an American presence would most likely be needed in Europe. The lack of confidence Kennan believed Western Europe had in defending itself was precisely the weakness of will which he described as being Western Europe's main pitfall in thwarting Soviet expansion. If the only way to build confidence in the region was to have an American presence there, perhaps it would have to remain until she felt ready to defend herself. Thus Kennan's disengagement policy forgot about the realities of the European situation, however realistic the desired outcome may have been. Either attempt to describe the driving force of Soviet policy would have placed Soviet interests in remaining in Eastern Europe, if not eventually moving against Western Europe.

A second realist of the period also called for a disengagement of the superpowers from Europe. Walter Lippmann
journalist and commentator on foreign relations, called for this policy some ten years earlier in his 1947 book, *The Cold War: A Study In U.S. Foreign Policy*. Lippmann's proposal stemmed from a critique of Kennan's containment idea. He felt America was unable to meet Soviet expansion wherever it may occur. Most of her partners in containing Soviet power would be weak, unstable governments of questionable loyalty to the United States. For him, the only solution to creating a stable European situation was disengagement.

For if, and only if, we can bring about the withdrawal of the Red Army from the Yalta line to the new frontiers of the Soviet Union—and simultaneously, of course, the withdrawal of the British and American armies from continental Europe—can a balance of power be maintained.

Unfortunately Lippmann, like Kennan, forgot the historical and political aspirations of the Russians in Eastern Europe and was unable to find an argument which could allow for disengagement to be as desirable for the Soviets as for American realists.

In 1958 former Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote an article summing up the arguments of many against disengagement in the West. He felt that American military power was a major deterrent against Soviet aggression towards Western Europe. The preservation of Western Europe and America were of vital interest to both areas. He also believed that Soviet forces were required in Eastern Europe to keep the area controlled by their internal
To Acheson, these reasons caused any call for disengagement to be unacceptable in light of the West's vital interests and untenable for the Soviets if they wanted to control Eastern Europe.

Kennan again ignored important realities in favor of a desired outcome in his later arguments for an end to the nuclear arms race. Earlier in his life he contended that nuclear weapons and warfare were useless in gaining any positive political change from an adversary. Since nuclear weapons only obliterate an enemy and left new problems in their wake, to Kennan more limited war enabled combatants to gain political changes in already existing balance-of-power schemes.

As time and technology progressed, Kennan became dismayed at the continuance of the arms race. Abandoning the acknowledgement that nuclear weapons, though terrible in their effects, were a part of America's power in foreign relations, he in effect called for a unilateral Western disarmament. In doing so, he believed that this would give the Soviets a clear sign that America and the West were serious about nuclear disarmament. If the West did this, Kennan felt the Soviets would follow suit.

This line of thought from Kennan was expressed in this 1977 statement about power relationships,

> The belief that stronger powers dominate weaker ones and dictate terms to them simply by the possession of superior military force, has extremely slender support in historical experience.
Kennan seems to have forgotten his statement that foreign relations run much more smoothly when one has a little armed force behind them and the actual use, however risky, of nuclear brinkmanship in the Quemoy-Matsu disagreement or the restraint Finland must exercise in its press when discussing world affairs with the Soviet Union as its neighbor. Although Kennan denied any undue stress on the Finns, the controls, self-imposed as they may be, on their foreign policy are reminiscent of the psychological pressures Kennan viewed as the main threat to Western Europe from communism. In any event, the nuclear forces of both sides had and still have a deterrent effect, as Kennan earlier conceded on any large-scale "adventurism" by either side.

Another factor in this disarmament notion was the assumption that the Soviets would have eliminated their nuclear weapons after our gesture of magnanimity. If Soviet leaders were and are as pragmatic as Kennan believed, would they be likely to deny themselves an extra measure of protection by keeping some of their nuclear arsenal? George Urban and others have rightly called Kennan too good a man in his faith in the reciprocal reaction of the Soviets. In this sense, Kennan might be grasping for an idealistic quick-fix to a problem which has only become worse with time regardless of the good intentions of many capable, intelligent men on both sides.
A final point on Kennan's recent idealism on this subject concerns his recent call for nuclear disarmament. This quote of Kennan seems to be the stance he has adopted on the subject in the past ten years,

For the love of God, for the love of your children and of the civilization to which you belong, cease this madness. You are mortal men. You are capable of error. You have no right to hold in your hands—there is no one wise and strong enough to hold in his hands—destructive powers sufficient to put an end to civilized life on a great portion of our planet...No one should wish to have in his hands such powers. 'Thrust them from you.'

While the powers of nuclear weapons are horrible, and few if any want to see a nuclear exchange, this argument seems out of line with his earlier one about the unsuitability of nuclear weapons as means to political ends. Here Kennan sounds like an unadulterated pacifist pleading for peace and safety at all costs. It is a more emotional, subjective argument than a reader of Kennan expects.

It is apparent that in his later arguments for nuclear disarmament Kennan has abandoned much of his more thought-provoking, realistic arguments in favor of more idealistic, moralistic ones. In fact, one is reminded of the Kellogg-Briand Pact "outlawing" war. His earlier arguments would seem to be more appealing to the conservative Soviet leadership Kennan envisioned, or to a more ideologically-bent Soviet Union, as to what purpose would a worldwide proletarian revolution be if most of the world was irreparably destroyed? Perhaps it is Kennan's age or a more
conservative outlook, but this idealism and moralism carry through to other arguments he has made.

One area which George Kennan devoted a significant degree of attention to throughout most of his career has been that of the quality of American society. Probably due to his support of means over ends in political and personal life in general, he wrote, that the quality of a civilization is the only true measure of its purposes, its methods, and prospects in world affairs. This is not an entirely new concept to mankind, but is significant coming from someone concerned mainly with foreign affairs. As in his views on the pending ecological disaster, Kennan also described moral problems in the West early in his career. In 1952 he wrote,

> What is at stake here is our duty to ourselves and our own national ideals. When individual citizens no longer find themselves unhappy in our country merely by virtue of their race or color; when our cities no longer reek with graft and corruption;...when we have cleared away our slums and filth and blighted areas; when we have taken in hand the question(s) of juvenile delinquency,...the meaning of community and citizenship,...inflation,...when we have done such things, then, in my opinion, we shall have achieved spiritual distinction... and the world will be well aware of that achievement.

Though these are certainly desirable goals to work for in any humane society, no society has yet to solve effectively any of these or similar problems. These goals are quite unrealistic to hold as a final judgment of the worth of a society.
Yet this is what Kennan does. At the end of the "X" article he stated that America, "need only live up to its own best traditions", to survive. In the late 1970's he wrote, "I think this country is destined to succumb to failures which cannot be other than tragic and enormous in their scope." Barton Gellman perceptively pointed out that it was surprising that Kennan failed to acknowledge the historical fact that all the so-called great civilizations of the past had similar problems, but nonetheless fought for what was good in their societies, coped with poor leadership, and rarely if ever believed their ways of life were too decadent or immoral to preserve.

Kennan's arguments on this point were more intuitive than logically, factually demonstrable. It is not far from the legalistic-moralistic line of thought he earlier deplored. If simply by virtue of the sound morality, equality, and responsibility of our society others would take special notice of our foreign policy to Kennan, it does not mean that our policy would be correct for the given situation automatically. Just because a nation is internally sound does not mean its foreign policy would be realistic. While these reforms would be desirable, they would not automatically lead to an improvement in the methods and results of our foreign policy.

An area of concern for Kennan closely related to the above was the pitfalls he described that democratic
society causes for foreign policy. While in the mid-1960's he believed that a democracy could have a coordinated, flexible foreign policy in spite of itself, by 1977 he became convinced that democratic society placed harmful and unnecessary constraints on foreign policy. For this dilemma Kennan would have an interesting solution.

Kennan saw three main elements in American society which harmed its foreign policy formulation and implementation. The first was public opinion. It was far too simple-minded, moody, subjective, emotional, and unrepresentative to allow statesmen to function with much effectiveness. He especially abhorred the effects of minorities in America and the powerful lobbying strength they often had relative to their size. The unstable foundation of voter support of Congress and much of government in general allows these groups to wield, in Kennan's eyes, more influence than they should for the good of the nation.

In theory this could be the case, but has there ever been an instance of the United States taking significant policy directions from a small minority with views radically different from the majority of Americans or detrimental to America's long-run interests? Kennan felt the push for a policy of liberation of Eastern Europe from Soviet control in the 1950's was such a case. If some ill-phrased statements from President Eisenhower and an all-but-forgotten
Congressional resolution for the liberation of Eastern Europe were detrimental to American relations with the Soviet Union than he may have a point.

It would seem that Kennan had forgotten that this sort of "minority power" was a part of the "best American traditions" which she created. The fact that a minority might be able to corral such power could be evidence of Kennan's "lack of citizenship" and that American democracy was in need of "democratization" to allow the collective voice of all Americans to guide their statesmen.

The second area of concern for Kennan was Congress. With the increase in responsibility for foreign policy decisionmaking Congress gave itself after the Viet Nam War and the Watergate scandal, he believed policy would be effected negatively by the clumsiness, confusion, and the concern for domestic support over foreign policy needs by legislators. The loss of power in these matters by the President, who Kennan thought could move more quickly and less consciously of domestic concerns bothered him. 18

This would imply that Kennan believed that the more centralized and compact the group forming foreign policy was, the more options open to it and the less it would have to concern itself with detrimental public opinion. In America, where for good or bad public opinion does play an important role in foreign policy, would allowing a select few to form policy, of which some or most would still be elected officials, be much different than having over 600
elected officials make policy? While it may be easier for them to form a consensus of opinion and act quickly, their opinions and policies may not be representative of the majority of public opinion, which Kennan earlier felt was necessary. Also, like the question of domestic morality, allowing a small body to make foreign policy decisions does not necessarily entail that their decisions would be sound, representative, or even timely. It should be remembered that the "best and the brightest" in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were largely responsible for the amount of American involvement in Viet Nam.

Finally, Kennan believed that since American diplomats were employed by elected officials whose main concern was domestic politics, their abilities to function effectively at their jobs suffered. The weaknesses of the domestic politics arguments have been discussed above. More importantly, this came from a man who believed it was a diplomat's duty to do the bidding of his government. When asked why when he was Ambassador to the Soviet Union in the early 1950s never sought an audience with Stalin Kennan replied, "I had nothing to say to Stalin on behalf of the United States government. Nor did I have instructions which would have given me any idea what to say to him." The diplomat, to Kennan, was a spokesman of his government, not one who formulated policy. He could no more be tainted by democratic process than his government.
It is interesting to note the interconnectedness of this line of thought, his ideas on morality in America, and his support of a "semi-isolation". Democratic society allowed for individuals to become less conscious of their responsibilities to their world and themselves. This in turn negatively affected the process of formulating and enacting foreign policy. Since American foreign policy was so affected, Kennan felt the limitations should be recognized by limiting the scope of its involvements.  

Kennan said, "My main reason for advocating a gradual and qualified withdrawal is that we have nothing to teach the world. We have to confess that we have not got the answers to the problems of human society in the modern age." He later stated that,  

...we should not accept new commitments anywhere. To do so would be a new offense in its own right...we should gradually reduce our existing commitments to a minimum, even in the Mid-East, and get back to a policy of leaving other people alone and expect to largely be left alone by them.  

By doing this Kennan believed we would be true again to our abilities and others would respect us for it.

Kennan again is like a perfectionist who, when realizing he has no chance to solve a problem entirely, refuses to solve half or most of it. His late 1940's criteria for economic and political aid distribution has been abandoned. Realistically, a Peace Corps group helping farmers produce more in Africa is not going to solve that region's hunger problem, but it could alleviate.
some of it, and reap intangible benefits for American diplomacy than simply feeding people. Or an attempt to find a peaceful solution to Middle Eastern problems or those in Asia or Africa may not bring about total harmony for those regions, but it could reduce tensions somewhat so that insignificant incidents would not fester into major conflicts. It is realistically self-denying to abandon all attempts of implementing foreign policy outside the NATO plus Japan area for America, when nations of less economic strength like the U.S.S.R. and China project power and influence without regard for the morality of their societies. Our economic capabilities, military strength, and relatively stable political institutions have potential, not to make every area we influence into a domestic Garden of Eden, but but with forethought and a healthy respect for the realities of the situation, a more bearable place to live. Kennan placed too much emphasis on the unrealistic, ill-conceived quagmire of Viet Nam and less on policies like the Marshall Plan and the Peace Corps.

The above has shown that Kennan has changed his arguments in tone from the post-war days of realistic considerations in his policy recommendations and philosophical writings to a moralist commentator appealing to a large body of readers with more emotional, intuitive thoughts on the condition of America and her policies. His writings of this later period can be deceiving; the notion that morality at home equals sound, respected foreign policy;
the idea that the Soviets would be willing to leave Eastern Europe if the United States would simply pull its troops from Europe, and so on. The consistency of Kennan's thoughts, particularly on Soviet-American relations, has often been analyzed. It would be appropriate now to discuss this subject.
IV. Kennan's Record of Consistency

An area where Kennan has been criticized for inconsistency concerns his view of the nature of Soviet intentions and power at any one time, and his consequent assessment of American policy toward it. In essence, critics have charged Kennan with changing from a right-wing view of America's needs for policy concerning the Soviets in the late 1940's to a more left-wing view of Soviet policy by the 1960's. It was only in the years 1946 to 1948 that Kennan believed American perceptions of the Soviet Union were realistic to the actual situation. Prior to that period, dating back to Kennan's first tour of duty in the Soviet Union in the 1930's, he felt American views of the Soviets were too far left of reality. He wrote in 1936 that he saw little hope for a peaceful future for the Soviet Union, that she would run into conflict with the West at some point. As war between the Western democracies and Hitler's Germany seemed imminent, the idea that the Russians could help us eliminate Hitler and create "our world" began to gain popularity. Kennan saw that the Soviets played on these beliefs well. The American press' portrayal of "Uncle Joe" Stalin and the amount of lend-lease aid and other forms of support through the war were evidence of this. He wrote of this situation, "To welcome Russia as an associate to helping restore democracy would cause public misunderstandings later on..., we shouldn't identify
Soviet political or ideological war aims with our own. If it was in our self-interest to help the Soviets against Hitler, that was acceptable; but to do so by selling the American public a false sense of mutual aims and ideas was not.

The end of the war brought home to Americans a more realistic view of Soviet policy. Their consolidation of power in Eastern Europe, the establishment of communist governments there, and their attempts to further their control in areas of the Far East naturally clashed with the symbol of "Uncle Joe". For Kennan, the years 1946-1948 were the years of the Marshall Plan, the idea of containment, and a more enlightened view of the nature of Soviet policy.

Kennan believed by 1950 this short-lived "realistic" era was replaced by an overly hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union. The Truman Doctrine and the military aspects of NATO were caused by and led to a highly militaristic view of America's problems with the Soviet Union. Containment was not to prepare for war with the Soviets or even to hold the status quo, but to serve as a breathing-space until the time arose when an agreement with the Soviets on leaving Eastern Europe could be reached. The depolarization of the communist world in the late 1940's altered the single-minded policies of communist ideology, and the death of Stalin in 1953 caused Kennan to envision more room for accommodation with the Soviets and a decrease in
their militancy. Also, the development of nuclear weapons by the Soviets made for a kernel of common interest with the United States.

Since that time, Kennan has become less bellicose in his description of Soviet power. Their foreign policy had become more defensive and less expansionist. The Soviet leadership was a gerontocracy given to cautious, conservative policies to protect their power. Finally, the Soviets had the same interest as we did in arms control and peace.

Kennan would seem to be rather inconsistent in his assessment of America's view of Soviet power. As Gellman pointed out, Kennan believed that sweeping doctrines in perceptions and politics for American policymakers are hopeless, as they already had enough trouble with the subtleties of international affairs themselves. Kennan himself remarked,

*The essence of international political life is change, and the only systems of regulations that will stand up to time are the ones which are subtle and pliable to change.*

This line of thought fits in with Kennan's stress of the means over ends in foreign policy, because though the ends may be for removal of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, the ways it could and should be achieved differ with one's view of Soviet intentions. When questioned on whether his views had changed, Kennan replied,
Well, they have to my mind. I've tried to adjust them to the nature of the Soviet Union as we know it today, not to the world of thirty years ago—do you think it would have been better if in these thirty years I had learned nothing, and were saying precisely the same things that I said in 1947?  

Perhaps it would be more profitable to ask if Kennan's view of this change was founded in fact, rather than taking him to task for the change itself. Questions of this supposed change will be discussed shortly. The argument Kennan made in his last quote seems to be a valid, realistic one. A realist is concerned with the 'facts' of the international situation. To assume that any such situation would stand pat for decades at a time appears foolish, as history shows. To cling stubbornly to a doctrine which was no longer applicable would seem a greater fault than to alter a doctrine to meet the changing needs of the international situation.

A related area in Kennan's thinking concerns his changed attitude toward his "X" article and containment. In his 1967 Memoirs he stated that the most serious deficiency of the article was his failure to make clear that it was containment of a political threat by political means rather than a military threat by military means. He also regretted not explaining that it would be impossible to employ everywhere successfully.  

From his objections to the universality of the Truman Doctrine of the late 1940's, Kennan's ideas on containment's
application seem consistent. His stress of political over military containment appears less defensible. The use of "counterpressure" as Kennan described the West's efforts to deny Soviet expansion reads as hinting at military rather than political pressure. While Kennan may well have meant political containment, the fact remains that many in power interpreted it as advocating military containment, and the damage to American foreign policy had been long completed before Kennan's apology.

A second area where Kennan could be questioned on his consistency pertains to his view of the importance of ideology and more traditional/nationalistic motives to Soviet policymakers. Early on, his was a rather mixed view, leaning more to the side of communist ideology. As mentioned, Kennan described in his "X" article that Soviet power was driven by ideology and the experiences of three decades of rule. For the West the main threat was political in that the weakened states of Western Europe were more susceptible to Soviet ideology, propaganda, and internal communists. He mentioned that the "Idea that communist ideology is only a "window-dressing" for real lust for military power is dangerously inadequate; it is a combined military and political threat, more political than military, and associated with the weaknesses of Western civilization." A strengthening of Western society in economic, military, and spiritual terms would be necessary to thwart this type of challenge and would
be fairly consistent with his "X" ideas.

Kennan would later have this to say about Soviet power, "Surely for the Western World in general the Soviet threat today is almost exclusively a physical one, a military-territorial one, along traditional patterns, not one of the power of ideas." The leadership was restricted, aged, insecure, and distrustful, concerned more with increasing their own influence than their formal limits of power. If this was the nature of Soviet power, then new considerations on how to deal with it would need to be made. Could the West afford to remain tense to each move of the Soviet Union, fearing it was perhaps the beginning of the "world ideological revolution" and risk a major confrontation over a matter which was more security-minded to the Soviets and could be settled by other means? Was the problem of the internal health of Western nations being overly attended to, with a consequent ignoring of Soviet moves outside the West? Kennan's later argument seems more plausible in light of Stalin's policy of "communism in one country" and by the moves of the Soviets in Eastern Europe. It could be said here that Kennan, in his change of arguments may have caused more confusion than good in the minds of American policymakers and the public. Perhaps he contributed to his loathed inconsistency and emotionalism in American government and the press without even knowing it.
A third area where Kennan's consistency can be questioned deals with his thoughts on the moral decay of Western society. As discussed earlier, Kennan believed that Western society needed to solve its internal societal problems like urban decay, poor education, and pollution in order to set an example for the rest of the world and make our foreign policy operate more realistically and effectively. A study of the history of his views on the subject, and on the moral, internal strength of the Soviet Union and its policies show an interesting inconsistency in viewpoint.

Just after the war Kennan felt that while there were problems in the West, if its inhabitants matched up to their best traditions, it could succeed in dealing effectively with the Soviet Union. He saw the Marshall Plan, as enabling us to pay off a debt to civilization and to, "be all we could be", in light of our traditions in order to give Europeans an alternative to their obsolete values. Conversely, "The supposed rising star of communism impressed those who are more respectful of power and success than for principle." For these individuals, the envy of the West's success and a desire to see it humbled caused them to look to communism and the Soviet Union. In fact, for Kennan,

No American can be expected to view with anything other than abhorrence the proposition that men are best ruled by lying and deceit, by appeals to hatred and sus-
picion and fear, by the destruction of religious belief, by the denial of moral obligation on an individual ethical basis (which occurred in the Soviet Union).

In the battle between East and West, the real competition for Kennan was not in arms or power, but in who could solve its own problems most rapidly and successfully. While the United States and the West in general had problems, they were more capable of being solved through the system. The Soviet Union, using lies and deceiving its own people and those outside the country, was not principled enough to win the war against capitalism and the West.

Even though he was saying this, Kennan was having doubts about the worth of our society and the evilness of the Soviet Union. While describing the real nature of the East-West competition, Kennan felt a need for "greater detachment and reservation of judgement on our own part", toward the internal life of the Soviet Union. Though Kennan would arrive at the conclusion that America had nothing to offer the outside world due to its moral pitfalls, he believed that Russia should shoulder part of the burden for aiding and guiding the underdeveloped world, as she had things to offer that we did not. While the Soviet leadership was becoming more conservative and defensive in its foreign policy, America was projecting vain poses and rhetoric which had little substance or relevance. The Soviet Union was conscious of the "Western encirclement", events in Iran, Pakistan, and China, and the disintegration of their position in Eastern Europe. They did
not want to mistreat people but simply saw a threat to their political and strategic position. America and the West, on the other hand, were clinging to the nuclear arms race, far-flung military treaties and bases which caused Soviet anxiety, and most importantly not solved their internal problems and were doomed to succumb to its own internal contradictions and frustrations.

This view certainly differed from the view expressed at the end of the "X" article. What is surprising is that Kennan seemed to have forgotten the nature of the Soviet state. It still denied religious practice, many individual rights at home and in Eastern Europe and was still willing to force recalcitrant neighbors to follow the guidelines posted by themselves, as evidenced in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and even Afghanistan. He also forgot some of his own words, "The capacity for pity and the sense of sin were qualities that represented weakness rather than strength in Western character." If Kennan had kept in mind the historical facts of Soviet policies and his own words on the weaknesses of Western character, he might have been less inclined to paint the Soviet leadership as simply minding its own business while running their country, and less inclined to flagellate Western society for its lack of morality, as Martin Luther punished himself for not measuring up to the laws of God.
V. Summary

George F. Kennan's career as a thinker and writer on American foreign policy has been a unique one. Advocating realistic policies with realistic arguments, speaking for realistic outcomes with idealistic reasons, and pleading for moral reforms with emotional rhetoric have all been a part of Kennan's long career. While some of his arguments have been inconsistent over time and in so being been detrimental to his audience's thoughts on the subject and to his own credibility, while other "inconsistencies" have had a legitimate basis.

It might be appropriate to discuss Kennan himself and his views on mankind. He described his family as "tight-lipped", minding their own business, not realizing their poverty or complaining about it. He wrote that 10 to 15 percent of the population had higher values, instincts, and sensitivities than the others, with 70 to 80 percent being average human beings and the balance crooks and no-goods. Of the upper 10 percent he believed, "Those with outstanding abilities should be taught to be aware of their moral responsibility and to conduct themselves accordingly... I am, in this sense, an invenerate elitist." This falls in line with his support of a more centralized policy-forming body in America and his views on the fickle emotional opinions of most Americans and the pitfalls on the subject, "No substitute seems to have been found for the statesman of earlier ages whose courage, self-confidence, and largeness of spirit were conditioned by personal
wealth and assured family position." He would seem to support an idea of eighteenth-century noblese oblige in America's wealthy intellectuals and could well accept a leadership based on a "meritocracy" for the United States.

Kennan once depicted mankind as, "...always going to fight and do nasty things to each other. They are always going to be part animal, governed by their emotions and subconscious drives rather than by reason." As he believed the bulk of society was of average intelligence or below, perhaps their ability to enact the changes Kennan thought necessary was limited, and they had only the capacity to cling to universal, moralistic ideals? But when one considers his earlier feelings that America could succeed if she measured up to her best traditions, his belief in the "change" that has taken place in the Soviet leadership, and his arguments for nuclear disarmament to save mankind and his world, it appears that Kennan would have a rather high opinion of humans, higher than of simply being half animal and nasty.

The greatest over-all scheme for analyzing Kennan's political and philosophical writings would be the "minister versus Machiavelli" idea put forth by Barton Gellman and others. In it, Kennan's mentioned and implied religious faith, personal belief in good manners, hard work, and the maintenance of high moral standards causes Kennan to bemoan the decadence of a nation which has largely turned away from religion and traditional mores to find and call for reforms which would reinstall more traditional forms
of rules for the operation of public and personal life. This would be the "minister" side.

The "Machiavelli" side stresses realistic outlooks and perceptions when conducting foreign policy. The ends of policies are the most important component to the Machiavellian while means are often compromised. The "minister" would stress the means over ends. For some, then, this is the cause of Kennan's interchangably realistic and idealistic/moralistic views.

There is some validity to this argument. The many realistic ideas and policies of Kennan were often later supported by idealistic, moralistic rhetoric which was more intuitive, not unlike a religious faith. Kennan's idealistic arguments are perceived to be realistic because their truth and validity are a given to him. In the end, it is largely the tone of his arguments and the supports for his policies and beliefs which have changed, not the policies themselves. Perhaps Kennan is too old and realizes the possibilities to see the policies of his home change are slim. Maybe he is frustrated at the fact that aside from containment most of his ideas have not been seriously considered by those in power. The worst outcome of this is to read Kennan's "death sentence" for Western society and realize that he has largely given up hope for the positive possibilities of Western civilization. That a man so intelligent, sensitive, and pursuasive in his prose should go over to the camp of the nay-sayers of Western
society is a tragic loss, for the future generation and Kennan himself.

One last word needs expressing on the validity of realism as a political philosophy. While ideological and moral rhetoric are eagerly sought for by the public, realist philosophy seems the most efficient method in achieving American foreign policy goals in our world. Except for some of the Western European states and possibly Japan, most of the major antagonists concerning American policy have little or no understanding of our legal and moral institutions from which most of our moralistic and idealistic rhetoric abounds. Why then subject foreigners and ourselves to verbal gymnastics which they may not understand or use against us to hold us at bay while achieving their desired ends, and we are left to protest their breaking an international law or treaty. Until a harmony in the political desires of those around the world is achieved (if ever), stability in the world order must be maintained in order for America to survive and flourish to the best of her abilities. While certain Judeo-Christian mores will prevent us from an amoral course of achieving the best for America with a reckless abandon, realistic policy is the best way to reach our ends. Realism proposes accepting the world as it is and working within it to achieve one's goals. America should take heed, and she could then expect more acceptable results.
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