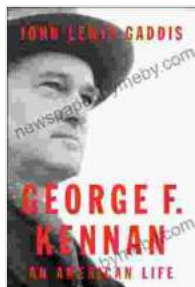


# Unveiling the Enigma: George Kennan, An American Life

George Kennan stands as one of the most influential and enigmatic figures of the 20th century. As a diplomat, author, and professor, he left an indelible mark on American foreign policy, particularly in the realm of the Cold War. His "containment" doctrine became the cornerstone of US strategy towards the Soviet Union, shaping the geopolitical landscape for decades. Yet, beyond his professional accomplishments, Kennan was a man of contradictions, with a complex and often enigmatic personality. In this article, we embark on a comprehensive exploration of George Kennan's life and legacy, unraveling the enigma that surrounded him and shedding light on his extraordinary contributions to the world.

## Early Life and Education

George Frost Kennan was born on February 16, 1904, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His father, Kossuth Kent Kennan, was a prominent lawyer and diplomat who instilled in his son a deep passion for history and international affairs. Kennan's early education took place at St. John's Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin. He went on to pursue a degree in history at Princeton University, graduating magna cum laude in 1925.



### George F. Kennan: An American Life by John Lewis Gaddis

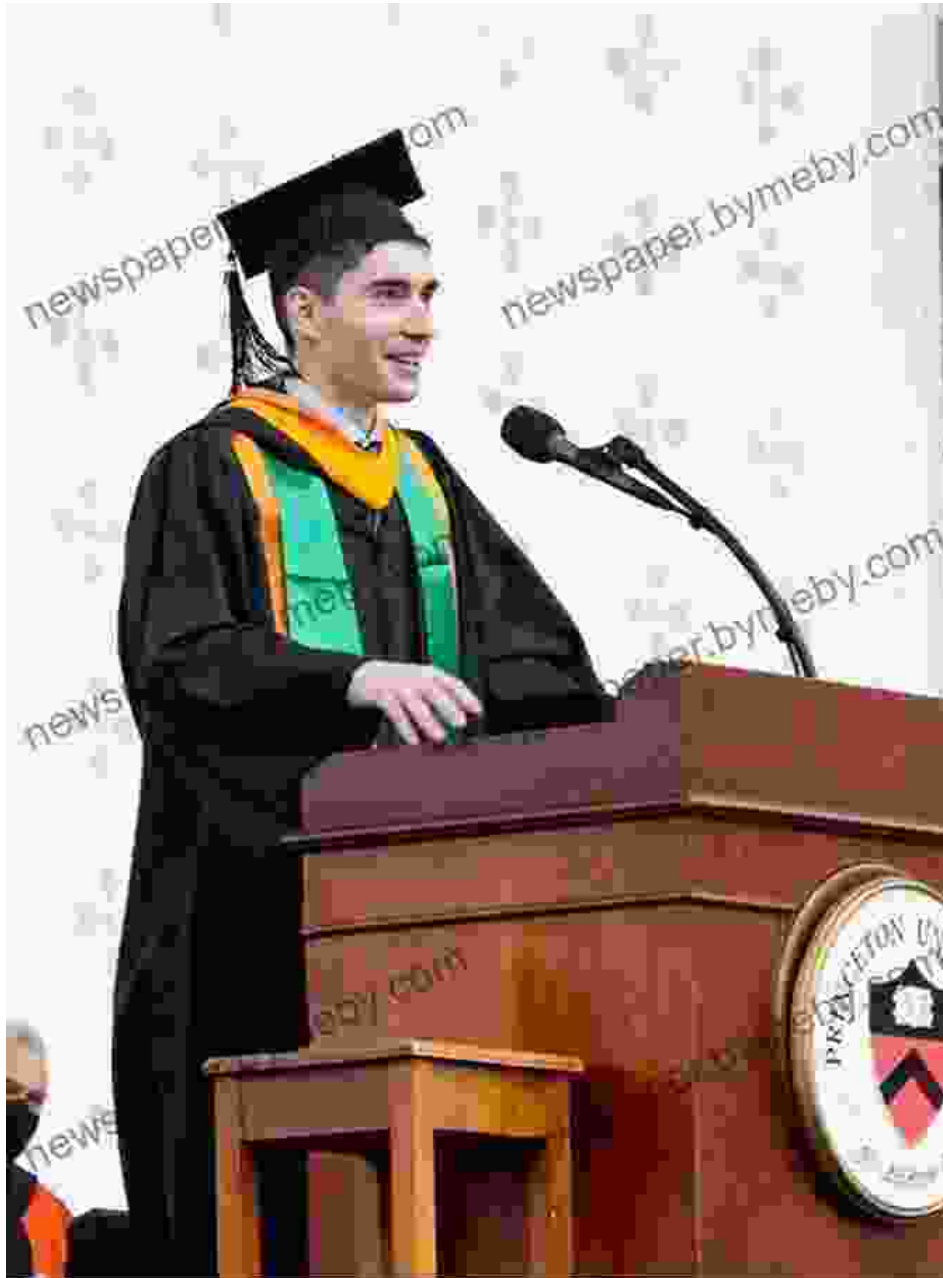
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Language : English  
File size : 3818 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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## Diplomatic Career

Following his graduation from Princeton, Kennan joined the US Foreign Service in 1927. His early assignments took him to Geneva, Berlin, and

Moscow. In Moscow, he witnessed firsthand the rise of the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin. Kennan's experiences in the Soviet capital left a profound impact on his worldview, shaping his belief in the need to contain Soviet expansionism.

In 1947, Kennan became Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the US State Department. It was during this time that he authored the famous "Long Telegram," a 5,500-word diplomatic cable that outlined his views on the nature of Soviet foreign policy and the need for a policy of containment. The "Long Telegram" became a seminal document in US foreign policy, providing the intellectual foundation for the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

## **The Cold War**

Kennan's "containment" doctrine became the guiding principle of US foreign policy towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The doctrine advocated for a strategy of limiting Soviet influence without resorting to direct military confrontation. Kennan believed that by containing the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions, the United States could eventually weaken the regime and bring about its eventual collapse. This policy of containment shaped US foreign policy for decades, influencing everything from the Korean War to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

However, Kennan was not always a supporter of every aspect of the US Cold War strategy. He criticized the arms race, the Vietnam War, and the CIA's covert operations. Kennan believed that the United States should focus on its own values and not become embroiled in ideological conflicts around the world.

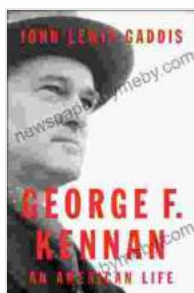
## Later Life and Legacy

Kennan retired from the Foreign Service in 1952. He went on to become a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He also wrote extensively on foreign policy and international relations, publishing several influential books, including "Russia Leaves the War" (1956) and "The Nuclear Delusion" (1982). Kennan's writings and lectures continued to shape the foreign policy debate in the United States and abroad.

Kennan died on March 17, 2005, at the age of 101. He is remembered as one of the most influential diplomats and foreign policy thinkers of the 20th century. His legacy continues to be debated and studied by scholars and policymakers alike.

George Kennan was a man of contradictions. He was a brilliant diplomat who played a pivotal role in shaping US foreign policy. Yet he was also a critic of some aspects of American Cold War strategy. He was a man of deep faith who believed in the importance of dialogue and understanding. Yet he also witnessed firsthand the horrors of war and the brutality of totalitarian regimes.

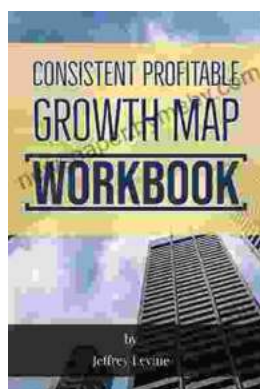
Kennan's life and legacy offer a fascinating study in the complexities of international relations and the human condition. His writings and insights continue to resonate today, providing valuable lessons for anyone seeking to understand the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. By unraveling the enigma that surrounded George Kennan, we can better appreciate his extraordinary contributions to the world and the enduring impact of his legacy on the course of history.



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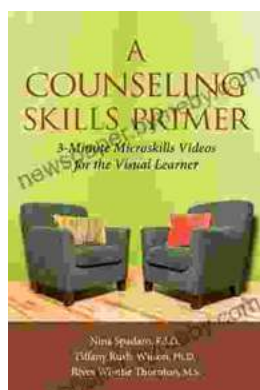
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