

Are Ambassadors Creators or just Executors of the National Interests? George Frost Kennan and the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade

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Abstract: George Frost Kennan was one of the most famous foreign policy thinkers and strategists in the Cold War period. However, in terms of practical achievements, he was far less successful. First, Kennan's ambassadorship in Moscow (1952) was cancelled after only four and a half months because Stalin declared him *persona non grata*. Likewise, as an ambassador in Yugoslavia (1961–1963), he was not of better fortune; he resigned before the end of his mandate. The research question in this article is the following: Was George Frost Kennan a creator or just an executor of American national interests in Yugoslavia during his term as ambassador? Did he make a difference in relations between the United States and Yugoslavia, or was he just a bureaucrat implementing the decisions of his superiors? Our answer and our central thesis is that Kennan came to Yugoslavia believing that he would make a difference, and the Yugoslavs accepted him with the same belief. However, after Tito's speech at the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade, in the next few months, Kennan was left high and dry by his government as well as by his Yugoslav hosts. The article consists of two parts: the first part will describe Kennan's interpretation of the concept of the National Interest; the second part will focus on Kennan's ambassadorship in Yugoslavia before and after the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade.

Keywords: national interest, ambassadors, foreign policy, diplomacy, United States, Yugoslavia, US foreign policy, Josip Broz Tito, Non-Aligned Movement.

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Introduction

Former Yugoslavia was an important country for the United States during the Cold War. This is evident because some key US Cold War foreign and security policy figures served in Yugoslavia. For instance, Brent Scowcroft, who later became the national security advisor to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush, served as an assistant air attaché in Yugoslavia from 1959 to 1961. Lawrence Larry Eagleburger, the only career diplomat to become US Secretary of State in 1992, started his diplomatic career in the economic sector of the Belgrade Embassy from 1961 to 1965 and served as ambassador from 1977 to 1981. However, the most famous name, at least at the time when he was ambassador in Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1963, was George Frost Kennan, an architect of the American containment doctrine and the author of the well-known “Long Telegram” and “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, documents in the foundation of the American Cold War strategy towards the Soviet Union.

Kennan’s role in Yugoslavia, especially before and after the pivotal 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade, is particularly worth studying, even though there are many important works about this period (Močnik 2008, Bisenić 2011, Bogetić 2012a, Bogetić 2012b). Despite his significant influence on American foreign policy, Kennan never rose above the position of director of policy planning at the State Department in Washington. Nonetheless, his strategic thinking has left an enduring impact on 20th-century US foreign and security policy. Given the current state of American-Russian relations, his insights will likely remain relevant in the 21st century.

We believe it is worth studying Kennan’s real role in Yugoslavia, especially before and after the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade. This was a pivotal moment, not just in the relations between the two countries but also in the relations between Kennan and Yugoslavia, as well as between Kennan and the American government. After eight years outside the government, President Kennedy offered Kennan the position of ambassador to either Poland or Yugoslavia two days after his inauguration in 1961. Kennan chose Yugoslavia, uniquely positioned in European and global Cold War architecture. Despite his name going beyond his actual achievements, especially in practical terms, Kennan was an underachiever in practical foreign policy success. According to Kissinger, “George Kennan’s thought suffused American foreign policy on both sides of the intellectual and ideological dividing lines for nearly half a century. Yet, the highest position he ever held was that of ambassador to Moscow for five months in 1952 and to Yugoslavia for two years in the early 1960s. In Washington, he never rose above director of policy planning at the State Department, a position he occupied

from 1947 to 1950” (Kissinger 2011). Nonetheless, as a strategic thinker, his place in the history of 20th-century US Foreign and Security policy is firm, and his insights will continue to be important in the 21st century, especially considering the current state of American-Russian relations.

We have divided our article into two parts to address our research questions. The first part will describe Kennan’s interpretation of the concept of the National Interest, while the second part will focus on Kennan’s ambassadorship in Yugoslavia before and after the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade.

George Frost Kennan’s Understanding of the Concept of the National Interest

It is January 1947, and the best year of his professional life has just begun. George Frost Kennan is a Foreign Service officer, but he is currently on duty at the National War College, where he has been working as a deputy commandant and lecturer since its founding earlier. The “Long Telegram” document is already widely read, and Kennan is a figure of rising importance in the foreign policy establishment. Kennan’s star is set to shine even brighter with the newly promoted Secretary of State, General George Catlett Marshall, and his plans to reorganise the State Department to “achieve the policy coordination that had been missing during the war and, in his view, during the first year and half of peace” (Gaddis 2011, 252-253). Marshall, through his undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, offered Kennan a prominent position in this new organisation (Gaddis 2011, 253). On the last day of the month, in a letter to Acheson, Kennan gave an overview of the role of the new policy planning unit in the State Department. According to Milne, “What is important,” wrote Kennan, “is that somewhere in the government there should be an honest, detached, and authoritative assessment of what constitutes national interest in foreign affairs and of how the national interest might be best promoted” (Milne 2015, 292). According to Kennan, the main issue with US foreign policy was that it had been mainly reactive and not proactive, and that such a new unit “would redress this problem in being afforded the space and time to think proactively” (Milne 2015, 292). In the letter, he also identified the two main objectives of US foreign policy. Namely, Kennan wrote that those objectives are: 1) “to assure to the people of the United States physical security and freedom to pursue in their own way the solution of the problems of their national life”; and 2) “to bring into existence that pattern of international relationships that will permit the people of the United States to derive maximum benefit from the experiences and

achievements of other peoples and to make the maximum contribution to human progress anywhere” (Milne 2015, 293). Here, we can acknowledge the two elements of the national interest according to Hans Morgenthau’s well-known interpretation of this term. The first element is constant and relates to the national security of the state, while the second element is more “variable” and deals with the values and interests of a broader community (Morgenthau 1952, 972; Živojinović 2013, 252-256).

His understanding of national interests was typical of the realist theories of International Relations. Even though he was not a theoretician of International Relations, Kennan was of great help in cementing the predominance of that theory in those early Cold War years. His understanding of the national interest was more practical than theoretical. He saw American founding fathers, especially former US Secretary of State during President James Monroe’s administration and later President (1825-1829), John Quincy Adams, as role models and protagonists of the national interests, saying that “not only did he place the national interest at the centre of his foreign policies, but he served as the first US minister to Russia (1809–14)” (Congdon 2022, 33). As founding director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, he engaged as a consultant many important figures, such as professor of International Relations at the University of Chicago, Hans Morgenthau, protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Walter Bedell Smith, former US ambassador to Moscow, and even J. Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb and the director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (Gaddis 2011, 360).

Kennan’s understanding of the American national interest was made clear in a series of lectures and papers he delivered across the US in 1946. However, he explicitly outlined it only after retiring from his Foreign Service officer career. This was done in two ways: first, through a series of six Walgreen Foundation lectures at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1951, and second, through a book resulting from those lectures. The book, “American Diplomacy 1900-1950,” was published in 1951 (Kennan 2012).

According to Gaddis, in 1951, “Hans Morgenthau had arranged for Kennan to deliver a second set of lectures in April at the University of Chicago, under the sponsorship of the Charles R. Walgreen Foundation. The topic would be US foreign relations during the first half of the twentieth century” (Gaddis 2011, p. 420). Martin Leffler calls these lectures “the most famous series of lectures ever delivered on American diplomacy” (Leffler 2006, 8). In those six lectures (especially the sixth one), Kennan made national interest the main guiding principle of US foreign policy. As he wrote in the second volume of his Memoirs, he was disappointed that there is a mess in the American government about the

“concepts and principles in the formulation of US Foreign Policy” (Kennan 1972, 70). He was especially bewildered “by the contrast between the lucid and realistic thinking of early American statesmen of the Federalist period and the cloudy bombast of their successors of later decades” (Kennan 1972, 71). From this, it is understandable that there is one strong tradition in US foreign policy, which was “inherited from the statesmen of the period from the Civil War to World War II, and how much of this equipment was utopian in its expectations, legalistic in its concept of methodology, moralistic in the demands it seemed to place on others, and self-righteous in the degree of high-mindedness and rectitude it imputed to ourselves” (Kennan 1972, 71). For example, “the inordinate preoccupation with arbitration treaties, the efforts towards world disarmament, the attempt to outlaw war by the simple verbiage of the Kellogg Pact, and illusions about the possibilities of achieving a peaceful world through international organisation and multilateral diplomacy, as illustrated in the hopes addressed to the League of Nations and the United Nations” (Kennan 1972, 71). Simply put, we must always consider the realities of power because power is crucial in international relations, as “Government always implies and involves power” (Congdon 2022, 52).

As a result of those lectures, he published a book about American diplomacy (Kennan 1952; 2012). The book had eight parts; the first six were his six lectures given at the University of Chicago, and the last two were his foreign affairs articles, the famous “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” from July 1947 and “America and the Russian Future” from April 1951 (Kennan 1952; 2012). The book was a success and undoubtedly perfectly timed, considering the Korean War and the full-scale Cold War, especially after the Hydrogen Bomb test in 1952. The main argument of the book is that power matters and that the United States should abandon its legalistic and utopian approach to International Affairs.

We will illustrate his understanding of national interest in the episode of his policy paper Policy Planning Staff (PPS) analysis no. 35 titled “The Attitude of the Government towards Events in Yugoslavia” (FRUS 1948), which Kennan authored to help Yugoslavia in the case of the Tito-Stalin split in June 1948. John Lewis Gaddis, his official biographer, finds this paper “the most immediately effective policy paper he ever produced” (Gaddis 2011, 322). Slightly more than four pages long, the paper was brief (opposite to Kennan standards), and it became the official policy of the United States in just a few days (Gaddis 2011, 323). He recognised this event as a very important one and concluded that “the possibility of deflection from Moscow, which has heretofore been unthinkable for foreign communist leaders, will from now on be present in one form or another in the mind of every one of them” (Gaddis 2011, 322). He rationally and coldly recommended that the Yugoslav regime was their internal matter and that such things could not “prevent a normal

diplomatic and economic relationship” (Gaddis 2011, 322). In other words, to paraphrase Thucydides, “identity of interest is the surest guarantee for both states and individuals” (Morrison 1994, 527). What is especially important is that Gaddis sees some deeper meaning in this PPS/35 policy paper. Namely, he thinks “that PPS/35 set forth several propositions that, in varying ways at various times, would guide American Foreign Policy through the rest of the Cold War. One was that communism need not be monolithic... a second was that the United States should therefore cooperate with some communists to contain others... a third was that the domestic character of a government was less important than its international behaviour” (Gaddis 2011, 323). Gaddis holds that Kennan made explicit what US foreign policy was implicitly doing. In 1979, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ronald Reagan’s top foreign policy advisor, introduced the concept of “friendly autocracies,” updating George Kennan’s ideas from the late 1970s and early 1980s (Kirkpatrick 1979). This suggests that while values are important, common interests and the correlation of interests carry more weight in international relations.

George Frost Kennan and the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade

Kennan visited Yugoslavia less than a year before taking up his post as ambassador to Belgrade. This was in July 1960, at the insistence of the then-Yugoslav ambassador to the United States, Marko Nikezić. The official reason was a lecture he was supposed to give at the *Institute of International Politics and Economics* in Belgrade, but the Yugoslavs also arranged for him to meet and talk with many state officials, including a meeting with the president of the country, Josip Broz Tito. He spent part of his visit on vacation in Istria (AJ,1). The Yugoslavs viewed Kennan as a well-known diplomat, an expert on international politics, particularly in relations with the USSR, a highly regarded expert politician, and the author of the “containment policy” (AJ,1). During the visit, they wanted to give him a personal understanding of their country’s internal politics and ensure that his perspective on Yugoslavia received international attention. However, they did not achieve wider publicity for his visit due to Kennan’s efforts to keep the visit and discussions private.

One of the motives for the Yugoslavs to devote considerable attention to Kennan’s stay in Yugoslavia during the summer of 1960 was the belief that he might once again have a “stronger influence” on American foreign policy in the event of a victory by the Democratic candidate in the presidential election, which

was to be held in November of the same year (AJ,1). It turned out that they were right. When Democratic Party representative John F. Kennedy won the presidential election, one of his first foreign policy moves was to nominate Kennan as ambassador to Belgrade.

The news of Kennan's nomination was first announced by the *New York Times* in an editorial on January 25, stating that he was going to "one of the most sensitive centres of developing conflict within the contemporary communist world" (*New York Times* 1961.a). The editorial was published a day before the then-ambassador to Yugoslavia, Karl Rankin, informed the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Konstantin Koča Popović, about the nomination. The State Department admitted to Yugoslav diplomats in Washington that the editorial had been inspired by them and stated that Kennan's appointment as ambassador to Belgrade "signifies a very good perspective for the further development of bilateral relations" (DAMSP,1). In Washington, Kennan was seen as an excellent combination of an experienced diplomat and an expert on the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, on the one hand, and a respected scholar in the field of foreign policy, on the other. They believed that, thanks to his reputation, he would have much closer and more frequent contact with the Yugoslav leadership and that his words would be carefully attended to in both Belgrade and Washington. Finally, his nomination was seen as a clear sign that the new Kennedy administration wanted to place more importance on non-aligned countries (DAMSP,1). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Yugoslavs approved Kennan's appointment just a few days after the US embassy in Belgrade officially requested that on January 26, 1961. (DAMSP,2). Koča Popović expressed his approval of Kennedy's decision to Secretary of State Dean Rusk during their first meeting in Washington in mid-March (DAMSP,3). Yugoslav government officials wanted Kennan in Belgrade as soon as possible, so Ambassador Nikezić was assigned to expedite his arrival for "general interests". However, due to prior commitments, Kennan only assumed his position in May (DAMSP,4).

Kennan enthusiastically accepted the nomination for ambassador to Belgrade for several reasons. In hindsight, he knew that his views on the Cold War did not align with those of the foreign policy establishment. Consequently, he realised he would not have advisory influence in shaping foreign policy. Instead, he would have to accept and implement the foreign policy formulated by Washington. However, he believed that the ambassadorial position in Yugoslavia would allow him to take a different approach due to the country's unique position and policies. Ultimately, he thought it would help improve the impression he left during his previous ambassadorship in the Soviet Union (Kennan 1972, 268-269).

As expected, he was welcomed in Belgrade in a friendly manner. As he testified, the mid- and lower-level Yugoslav state officials were “generally approachable, competent, and courteous, (...) always willing not only to listen but also to respond” (Kennan 1972, 275; Bisenić 2011, 55). However, he noticed that besides being good company—“cheerful, relaxed, helpful”—they also possessed characteristics typical of all communists, such as party discipline and a certain degree of mistrust towards foreigners. Kennan also had a positive opinion of the state leadership headed by Tito. He believed that the Yugoslav president had personal sympathies for him. However, as a professional diplomat, he was aware that “personal likes and dislikes have very little to do with the serious aspects of diplomacy” (Kennan 1972, 278; Bisenić 2011, 57).

Kennan was a welcome interlocutor for Yugoslav state officials, as can be concluded from the fact that he met with Tito four times in the first two and a half months after arriving in Yugoslavia. The first meeting was in May to present his credentials (AJ,2), followed by a meeting on June 8 to inform the Yugoslav president about the Vienna meeting and talks between Kennedy and Khrushchev (AJ,3). They had another meeting in mid-July on the Brijuni Islands, where they discussed international and bilateral issues (A,4), and finally, on July 30, he accompanied Under Secretary of State Chester B. Bowles during their meeting on the Brijuni Islands (AJ,5). It gave the impression that Tito’s doors were always open to him. In addition to Tito, Kennan frequently met with Secretary of State Koča Popović and many other state officials.

In meetings, he did not hide his enthusiasm about taking on the role of ambassador to Yugoslavia. He particularly enjoyed the fact that he could engage in “lively” ideological discussions with his interlocutors, which was not the case when he was in the USSR. He had an informal meeting with Secretary of State Koča Popović back in mid-March in New York, and their first official conversation took place on May 10. On both occasions, Kennan expressed his interest in Yugoslavia and its social and economic development (DAMSP,5; AJ,6). Popović assured him that he would have opportunities to talk not only with representatives of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (DSIP), but also with all other political leaders of the country. Both parties agreed that the two states’ policies must be deeply understood and positions should be taken even if they differ (AJ,6). Kennan also hoped that meetings would occur in official and unofficial settings, which, in the case of Koča Popović, was often the case. It was clear that both of them enjoyed long discussions that not only focused on current political events but also took on the nature of extended philosophical and historical debates. For example, their conversation on the Brijuni Islands on July 17 ended with Kennan saying they had “philosophised a little again,” to which

Popović responded that he thought it was “both useful and necessary” (A,4). Kennan concluded that he was deeply convinced of this and missed such conversations when he was the ambassador to the Soviet Union (AJ,4). It was, it seems, a completely different relationship between the Yugoslav head of diplomacy and the American ambassador compared to Popović’s relationship with Kennan’s predecessor, Rankin, whose arguments he often described as “very shallow” and “journalistic-barroom” (DAMSP,6). After their March conversation, Popović already assessed that Kennan belonged to the “most progressive” part of the new administration (DAMSP,7) and concluded that Kennan’s initial engagement was “on an incomparably higher level” compared to his predecessors as ambassadors (DAMSP,5).

Kennan was also warmly welcomed by his diplomatic staff in Yugoslavia, who believed that his arrival signified “raising the status of the embassy, which means making business with Washington easier” (DAMSP,8) and that it “opened better prospects” for his colleagues (DAMSP,9). Almost all American diplomatic officials at the Embassy and consulates, and those who came to Yugoslavia after him, held great respect and were impressed by Kennan’s personality. Some of them requested from the State Department to go to Belgrade precisely because they were impressed by his qualities. Such was the case with Eric Kocher, later Kennan’s deputy at the Embassy, who mentioned that he “purposely” tried to get to Belgrade to learn what Kennan was like as an ambassador and that he was particularly impressed by the way he wrote his diplomatic reports (ADST, Eric Kocher). Soon, however, the Embassy staff began to divide into those who supported his views and those who openly or privately criticised his policy towards Yugoslavia (ADST, William J. Dyess). Later, in their recollections of the time spent in Yugoslavia while Kennan was ambassador, most would claim that he was a wonderful person, an outstanding intellectual and writer, but a weak and ineffective ambassador (ADST, Yugoslavia). The main cited reason for his ineffectiveness was his emotional approach to problems and people. This led to his diplomatic tenure in Belgrade ending prematurely and unsuccessfully. Shortly after his appointment, events confirmed that his colleagues’ concerns were justified. The first of these events occurred in the first days of September and was related to the First Non-Aligned Movement Conference held in Belgrade.

The Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned Countries was held from September 1 to 6, 1961 (Bogetić and Dimić 2013).³ It was a time of heightened international

³ IIFE issued a thematic proceeding dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Belgrade Conference. See: *The 60th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement*, 2021, edited by Duško Dimitrijević and Jovan Čavoški. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics.

tensions dominated by the opposing views of the two superpowers regarding Germany and Berlin, as well as the issue of resuming nuclear testing. Therefore, both the US and the USSR placed great significance on the positions that the countries gathered in the Yugoslav capital would take on these issues.

The Americans paid close attention to the Conference. Although officially maintaining a non-interference stance, they closely monitored the preparations and analysed the attitudes of individual countries towards this event. Kennan played a significant role, being informed about the preparations for the Conference through his discussions with Yugoslav officials, keeping Washington in the loop from the outset (Bisenić 2011, 76-114). The American ambassador believed that most participating states would take strong anti-Western and anti-American positions, but some countries would advocate neutral stances. He placed Yugoslavia in the latter group and expected the host of the Conference to align itself with the moderate states (Močnik 2008, 27-29). By early June, Kennan had already discussed with Koča Popović the dilemma of categorising future conference participants into anti-Western and “truly and consistently” non-aligned countries, receiving assurances that Yugoslavia would “strive for conference results contributing to reduced tensions” (DAMSP,10). Kennan also obtained assurances from Tito that Yugoslavia’s approach at the Conference would not be anti-American (Bisenić 2011, 76). Therefore, it is not surprising that the day before the Conference began, in another meeting with Popović, Kennan praised the organisation of the event, admiring both the organisational-technical preparations and the calm approach with which Belgrade approached the Conference (DAMSP,11).

Due to the aforementioned, the pro-Soviet speech delivered by Yugoslav President Tito on September 3 came as a real shock to the American ambassador. His reaction was very strong, and in the report sent to Washington, he stated that he was “deeply disappointed” by Tito’s speech (FRUS,96; Bisenić 2011, 129). Feelings of “surprise”, “disappointment”, and even “almost dismay” were shared by all State Department officials with whom Yugoslav diplomats spoke after the Conference (AJ,7). The Yugoslavs were criticised for their statements in private conversations with American diplomats in Belgrade being more moderate compared to Tito’s pro-Soviet speech. They also indicated that the consequence would be a change in US policy towards Yugoslavia (AJ,7). There was a negative mood in the American public as well, as many journalists from the US who were present at the Conference emphasised in their reports that the Yugoslav president supported the Soviet Union in almost every issue. The Yugoslavs believed that the US Embassy influenced the reporting in Belgrade and that journalists were simply relaying Kennan’s assessments of the events. This led to press coverage

shifting into a real anti-Yugoslav campaign (for more on Yugoslav-American relations after the Belgrade Conference, compare Bogetić 2012b, 41-52).

Kennan had the opportunity to discuss everything with Koča Popović on September 13 (DAMSP,12). He expressed his disappointment and concerns over Tito's positions at the Conference. Kennan stated that he had expected Yugoslavia to "care more about maintaining a balance between the two blocs" and to pay more attention to American views on world events. However, after Tito's speech, he "faced 'political realities'" (DAMSP,12). Although he tried not to frame his remarks as pressure on Belgrade, it was clear that a change in US policy towards Yugoslavia was imminent, especially in the economic sense. During the conversation, Kennan emphasised that his remarks were not born out of "anger" but "sadness", that he "loves and respects" the Yugoslav people, its leaders, and Koča Popović personally, despite their disagreements on many issues, and that he expressed these views as his own opinion. After the conversation, Popović concluded that Kennan was personally "excited and affected" and it was evident that he had "already built a whole system of distrust" towards Yugoslavia's policy (DAMSP, 12).

On the same day he spoke with Popović, Kennan received a telegram from the Secretary of State, Rusk (Močnik 2008, 33). It contained an *aide-memoire* about the attitude of the US government towards the Yugoslav posture at the Conference, which he was supposed to deliver to the Yugoslavs (text of aide-memoire see in AJ,8; see also Močnik 2008, 33-35; Bogetić 2012b, 45-46; Bisenić 2011, 147-149). Although it contained everything Kennan had previously communicated to Popović, it was much more sharply worded. That is why, when handing over this document to Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Leo Mates on September 15, it seems the ambassador "dramatically" emphasised that he did not expect to take such a step but also that the *aide-memoire* was put "in the same sense" as was his discussion with Popović (DAMSP,13). During the conversation, according to Mates' testimony, Kennan "began rather confusedly to express his hope that political misunderstandings ... would not affect personal relationships, courteous treatment, and cordiality towards official representatives and other citizens of the other side" (DAMSP,13). Mates reassured him that it would not affect personal relationships to "dispel" Kennan's "dark thoughts and stiffness". However hard he tried to maintain a friendly tone during the conversation, Mates failed to convince Kennan that the emerging crisis would not bring about a change "in the treatment of him as an ambassador, his associates, and the Americans in general" (DAMSP,13). Therefore, he concluded that Kennan "was strongly influenced by his experiences in the Soviet Union and the Stalinist period and was projecting them onto our country" (DAMSP,13).

After a few days, Mates and Kennan met again (AJ,9). This time, Mates handed over the Yugoslav *aide-memoire* in response to the previously submitted American document. In the *aide-memoire*, which Tito adjusted to soften some expressions, the American assessment of Yugoslavia's role at the recently held Non-Aligned Conference was highlighted as unacceptable. Particularly noted was that the US government, in its document, "cast doubt on" Yugoslavia's foreign policy orientation, especially its non-alignment stance (see text of the *aide-memoire* in AJ,10). Mates also emphasised that Belgrade was dissatisfied with the sharpness of certain expressions that could be seen as offensive. According to Mates, during the conversation, Kennan "adopted a defensive stance", justifying the sharpness of the American *aide-memoire* by explaining that his government and the State Department had prepared the document "under the pressure of a tense global situation, overloaded and rather hastily" (AJ,9). The ambassador refuted the claim that the US harboured any doubts about Yugoslavia's non-alignment and the independence of its foreign policy. Unlike the previous conversation, Kennan sought to maintain a friendly tone and spoke optimistically about the future of bilateral relations (AJ,9). On the other hand, in a report to his superiors in Washington, he called for official polemics with the Yugoslavs to cease and for the matter to be resolved through informal discussions, noting that he had moderated certain expressions to avoid irritating the Yugoslavs (FRUS,98).

Regardless of the friendly tone of the conversation with the Yugoslavs and the effort to calm the controversy, Kennan remained at the centre of the Yugoslav-American dispute. Moreover, the discussion increasingly focused on his personality. More and more voices began to reach the Yugoslavs that the ambassador was "personally affected by Yugoslavia's stance at the Belgrade Conference" and that, as a result, he was sending "very negative reports" to Washington, prompting discussions about potentially cancelling American economic aid to Belgrade (DAMSP,14). This discussion was already widespread among members of Congress who were orientated against Yugoslavia, and all of this had an impact on the negative coverage in the American press (Bogetić, 2012b, 47-48). On September 18, the Kennedy administration indeed took an economic measure: it suspended the issuance of export licenses to Yugoslavia until further notice (FRUS,45).

The Kennedy administration's reconsideration of further economic aid to Yugoslavia was the most direct consequence of Tito's pro-Soviet speech on September 3. Kennan, however, advocated for modifying existing economic relations even before the September events. In the early discussions in Belgrade, he represented positions that led the Yugoslavs to think the ambassador was "out

of touch” on economic matters and that his views could lead to difficulties in future cooperation (DAMSP,15). After several weeks in Yugoslavia, Kennan scrutinised all aspects of economic cooperation and began formulating a new policy, which he communicated to the State Department in mid-July (FRUS,97). Although he did not oppose Yugoslavia’s plans for long-term financing of investment construction, he believed that not all demands should be met and that they should be time-limited. He argued for a review, modification, and gradual reduction of forms of non-reimbursed US aid through the technical assistance program, support for US charitable organisation programmes, and the agreement on agricultural surplus delivery. He justified this view by stating that Yugoslavia was capable of ensuring its economic development without American assistance. With the crisis erupting in early September, he further sharpened his existing positions with proposals to immediately terminate certain types of aid, such as technical aid, while further reviewing and limiting others. He justified this based on Yugoslavia’s pro-Soviet positions presented at the Non-Aligned Conference (FRUS,97).

The Yugoslavs learned about Kennan’s views already in August. The “Kennan line” advocating for more restrictive measures in the policy of economic aid intended for Yugoslavia led state officials in Belgrade to blame the American embassy and the ambassador personally for the deterioration of bilateral relations after the Conference. Belgrade denied that it was a serious disruption of relations and considered it merely “a storm in a teacup” caused by Kennan’s emotional reaction and his anger towards the Yugoslavs (FRUS,99). Kennan rejected such conclusions, considering that the change in American policy towards Yugoslavia was not the result of his actions, but rather the essential need to reassess the relations between the two countries and establish them on different, more realistic foundations. He added that “no US ambassador who had the task of bringing this realisation home to the Yugoslavs could or should expect to be universally popular here, and he would not be doing his duty if he was” (FRUS,100; Močnik 2008, 39; Bisenić 2011, 155-156).

For these stated views, the ambassador had the support of the State Department and the White House at the time. However, things began to change in October. The reason for this should be researched in terms of the changed climate in Yugoslav-American relations. By the end of September, Koča Popović was in the US for the session of the UN General Assembly. In this forum, he delivered a much more critical speech about the Soviet Union than Tito’s position at the Belgrade Conference. Referring to the Soviet nuclear tests, he called this act “an ominous undertaking”, which received a positive response in the leading American press (Washington Post 1961; Love, 1961). On the sidelines of the session, he met with Dean Rusk, with

whom he had an “outspoken but friendly” conversation about bilateral problems (FRUS,100). Popović’s speech and the conversation with Rusk represented the beginning of reducing tensions between the two countries. Although Rusk supported Kennan’s arguments in the conversation with Popović (FRUS,100), the positions of the State Department and the ambassador will soon diverge.

Two weeks after the Popović-Rusk meeting, developments in Yugoslav-American relations accelerated. In an attempt to clarify matters, the Yugoslavs summoned Kennan for a discussion. The Vice President of the Federal Executive Council, Mijalko Todorović, was tasked with presenting Belgrade’s official stance (DAMSP,16). Todorović criticised the US policy towards Yugoslavia, accusing it of undermining relations. He warned the ambassador that if relations, especially economic ones, continued to deteriorate, Yugoslavia would be compelled to inform the public about it. In response to Todorović’s remarks, Kennan stated that the adverse American reaction stemmed not only from Tito’s speech at the Conference but also from a monthslong “growing feeling” that Yugoslavia’s foreign policy was not the policy of a non-engaged country but that it was “identical to the Soviet one on the most important issues of today” (DAMSP,16). He stated that he had hoped that the Yugoslav leadership would have a better understanding of the Kennedy administration, but those expectations deceived him. Finally, he stressed that he could not promise that the entire situation would not have negative consequences for the two countries’ economic relations and added that he believed that certain economic arrangements were ripe for modification even before he arrived in Belgrade. He would be compelled to advocate for certain changes even if the relations were not disrupted (DAMSP,16).

Although Kennan highlighted that the emerging crisis was not a result of the embassy’s reporting “as voices in Belgrade suggest”, the Yugoslavs believed he had come to Belgrade with “great pretensions and hopes” that he would be able to change Belgrade’s policy, experiencing failure and personal disappointment in that regard (DAMSP,17). The Yugoslavs concluded that he brought “his negative subjective moment” into bilateral relations, so they intended to shift the “focus of activity” to their embassy in Washington and Ambassador Nikezić in future contacts with officials in Washington (DAMSP,17). On the other hand, Kennan informed his superiors in Washington about his conversation with Todorović and sent them a proposal for possible measures to get out of the crisis (FRUS,104). He sent a letter a few days earlier in which he opposed the suspension of export licenses and normal economic relations but maintained his position on economic aid (Močnik 2008, 43). After that, he went on vacation to Italy.

Meanwhile, official Washington was preparing to untangle the complicated relationship between the two countries. The strong anti-Yugoslav sentiment in the

American public forced President Kennedy to act. He intended to solve the most pressing problem related to the suspension of export licenses, an economic measure that stirred up the Yugoslavs. Kennedy first stated at a press conference on October 11 that the US would not use economic aid to coerce countries to align their foreign policy with the US (JFK, NC17). Two days later, this issue was on the agenda of the National Security Council (NSC) meeting. In preparation for the meeting, the State Department prepared a briefing paper for Kennedy arguing for the continuation of the previous policy of support for Yugoslavia, emphasising that it is vital for American national interests “that Yugoslavia remain independent, that it continues to present to the satellite states the magnetic picture of a successful alternative to bloc membership under Soviet domination, and that it continues to be a disruptive element in the international Communist movement” (FRUS,45). For this reason, the suspension of export licenses needed to be lifted, as its continuation “would be interpreted to mean that the US has altered its basic concept of Yugoslavia as an independent nation, or else would be interpreted as an indication that the US is reacting towards Yugoslavia’s behaviour at the Belgrade Conference in an abrupt and vindictive manner” (FRUS,45).

The State Department’s recommendations were presented to Kennedy at the October 13 NSC meeting, and he accepted them (JFKNSF-313-018). A few days later, Rusk also spoke at a press conference about Yugoslav-American relations. When one of the questions from the attending journalists focused on economic aid to Yugoslavia, the Secretary of State stated in response that economic aid had enabled the Yugoslavs to preserve and strengthen their independence from the Soviet Union and that it would, therefore, continue (*New York Times* 1961.b). Rusk’s statement was favourably assessed at the Embassy in Washington (DAMSP,18).

Following this statement by Rusk, Nikezić was summoned to the State Department by Kohler, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, who reiterated to him that the US was not seeking anything from Yugoslavia in the realm of politics and had no intention of exerting pressure on it. He emphasised that any economic issues would be resolved based on the same principles as in the previous period. He highlighted that American policy had not changed and that the US stance towards Yugoslavia was “business as usual” (DAMSP,19). After statements from several American officials and assurances that policy would not change, the Yugoslavs considered that there had been no “significant change” in American policy, so they informed their diplomatic missions worldwide about this via circular letter (DAMSP,20).

The views of the State Department on the policy towards Yugoslavia, which were presented to Kennedy, were conveyed to Ambassador Kennan by Kohler in a personal letter dated October 12 (FRUS,102). Kennan responded to them only

after returning from vacation at the end of October (FRUS,106; see also: Močnik 2008, 48; Bisenić 2011, 159-160; Bogetić 2012b, 44-45). In a strongly worded letter, he reminded them that he advocated for a change in the conception of American policy towards Yugoslavia shortly after assuming the ambassadorship in Belgrade. He then extensively analysed the State Department's policy, criticising every aspect of Kohler's views. He spoke as a strategist and creator who wanted to change the existing policy rather than as an ambassador tasked with implementing an already established policy. This is eloquently stated in the statement: "The question is whether policies that may well have been generally effective in the more distant past retain their justification today, in light of the present international situation and of Yugoslavia's present stage of economic development, and in the face of a renewed and highly formalised commitment by Tito to an anti-American policy scarcely distinguishable from that of the Russians" (FRUS,106). Advocating for a change in economic policy towards Yugoslavia, he argued the facts that even in the case of a complete suspension of aid, it would not lead to the collapse of the Yugoslav economy but only to a slowing down of the pace of growth; that the independence of Yugoslavia no longer depends on American economic aid; and that it is not an important factor in shaping Yugoslav society. Finally, Kennan resignedly recalled that on September 15, at the request of the State Department, he handed over a harsh *aide-memoire* to the Yugoslavs and that he would oppose it "most vigorously ... for their only effect could then be to demonstrate to the Yugoslavs the emptiness of our statements and to confirm them in the view that they have nothing to lose by opposing us on the world arena" (FRUS,106). He also added that ignoring all his recommendations would make "the weight of any word I may personally have occasion to address to them (Yugoslavs), in the future, on questions of world affairs, will be precisely nil" (FRUS,106). He concluded by saying, "I feel, finally, that we will be making an egregious tactical error and will lose such slender possibility as we still have for influence over this Government if, having now talked widely and strongly, we fail to give any substance to our words in the form of actions" (FRUS,106).

Realising that his policy was not accepted by the Bureau of European Affairs of the State Department, Kennan reached for the last and strongest card: President Kennedy. Relying on the letter that Kennedy sent to him on October 11, in which he told him that he had "with great interest" read his reports from Belgrade, that for him "they have been of great value" and praised Kennan's "insistence upon representing the interests and purposes of the United States Government, even when this involves abrasions with those to whom you are accredited", and that his views on economic issues with Yugoslavia are "carefully weighed" in the White House (FRUS,101), Kennan decided to approach Kennedy's national security adviser

McGeorge Bundy (FRUS,106; Močnik 2008, 47-48). The motive was a concern over “the lack of coordination here, as between the European Office of the State Department and others in Washington who have an interest in this subject”, and the desire that Kennedy be informed “of any action taken by the Department in this respect that conflicts with the recommendations made by this Mission and indeed with the analysis of the elements of the problem at which I have personally arrived” (FRUS,106). However, Kennan could not have known that the views of the National Security Council were closer to those of the State Department than his (Močnik 2008, 41-42). On the same occasion, Kennan addressed the undersecretary at the State Department, Bowles, complaining that his recommendations were not heeded in the State Department and that his views would not be presented to the NSC. He resignedly noted, “Do not mind being disagreed with, but do dislike being silently by-passed” (FRUS,107). Bowles, however, somewhat laconically replied to Kennan’s letter, stating: “whatever emotional reactions may have existed here a few weeks ago in regard to Yugoslavia have largely been brought back into fair balance” (FRUS,107). One also gets the impression that Kennan’s views and increasingly emotional attitude towards problems were not understood even within the Belgrade embassy among his staff. Some American diplomatic officials testified that after the Conference, “he reacted very personally and he felt almost betrayed by Tito personally” (ADST, Robert Gerald Livingston); that is, according to the words of then embassy official Lawrence Eagleburger, he was “furious with Tito’s support of the Soviets” (quoted according to Močnik 2008, 60).

While trying to gain Washington’s support for his policy, Kennan distanced himself from the Yugoslav state officials in Belgrade, and when they did meet, he avoided discussions on political topics and bilateral issues (DAMSP,21). Only on November 22, during a meeting at a diplomatic dinner with State Undersecretary Veljko Mićunović, did he start a conversation about past events. Kennan reassured his interlocutor in a “tone of personal disappointment” that he had been mistaken in his assessments of Yugoslav politics. According to Mićunović, the American ambassador stated that at the beginning of his service in Belgrade, “he had different assessments and opinions on some issues, that he now realises that his assessments were not realistic and that he now knows the circumstances better, but that as ambassador he always remained a supporter of the policy of good relations between the US and the FPRY” (DAMSP,22). Furthermore, he expressed his readiness to go to Washington and personally pleaded with Kennedy for good relations between the two countries. At the same time, economic ties improved, as the day after this conversation, the US government informed Belgrade that negotiations on wheat deliveries to Yugoslavia were being resumed, which had stalled after the Non-Aligned Conference (Bogetić 2012b, 48-51).

A few days later, Mićunović and Kennan met again, this time for dinner at Tito's. On that occasion, Kennan repeated the views expressed during the previous meeting. In response to Mićunović's remark that they had talked more in the last few days than in the previous few months, Kennan promised that he would make sure to speak to state officials more often. This was why Mićunović suggested in his report on this conversation that the American ambassador be allowed to meet with state officials (DAMSP,23). This recommendation was accepted since Kennan was invited to Edward Kardelj's house for an intimate dinner in December (DAMSP,24). At the same time, he again began attending talks at the DSIP (DAMSP,25), and the Yugoslavs now assessed how "more realistic and flexible" the American ambassador's views on bilateral relations were (DAMSP,26). However, the events that followed in the next year regarding the revocation of Yugoslavia's most-favoured nation status by the US Congress will put Kennan to new trials and ultimately lead to his resignation as ambassador to Yugoslavia and his retirement from the diplomatic service. Unlike the Moscow episode, this time, his departure would be permanent.

Conclusion

George Frost Kennan has no peer in the history of 20th-century American foreign policy, not just because of his accomplishments as the author of containment and the most successful American foreign policy Cold War strategy, but also because of the things he did not accomplish. One of those unaccomplished things is, for sure, his ambassadorships in the Soviet Union in 1952 and in Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1963, both ending prematurely. During his quarter of the century in the American Foreign Service, he witnessed many important events that shaped the history of the world and the relations of the United States in the world, especially with the Soviet Union. He became the most important Soviet Union and Russian scholar/practitioner in the United States, whose analysis explained the Soviet behaviour to the American government and helped to formulate the American Cold War Grand Strategy, especially in the critically important years 1947-1950. His understanding of foreign policy was quite realistic. Alongside Hans Morgenthau, Kennan is rightly considered one of the founding fathers of the realist theory of international relations. They emphasised the role of power and national interest in foreign policy. Similarly to Morgenthau, Kennan's understanding of the national interest was much more about preserving the national security of the states than about the values, and he was aware that states need to make gradations of the interests in terms of their importance, readiness, and capabilities to protect them. For that reason, he was

hypersensitive about moralism, universalism, and legalism in American foreign policy, which hold that America is of a different kind and an exceptional country.

In May 1961, after being out of the government for eight years, he had the opportunity to become an ambassador again and demonstrate his significance. Both Kennan and the Yugoslavs assumed their roles with high hopes. His regular meetings with Tito and other key figures in Yugoslavia were common, and he was keen on enhancing relations as much as possible. Everything suddenly changed after Tito's speech at the 1961 Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade. Kennan felt betrayed by his government and Yugoslav hosts, and he began to pursue his own policy, which led to his isolation from both sides. Kennan had initially thought that he would help shape the national interests and foreign policy of the United States towards Yugoslavia. However, after this episode, he realised that he had played more of an executive role than a creative one. Unfortunately, this was just the beginning. In 1962, Congress's radicalisation of policy towards Yugoslavia made Kennan's position even more difficult, ultimately resulting in his resignation from the ambassadorial position in 1963.

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DA LI SU AMBASADORI STVARAOCI ILI SAMO SPROVODIOCI NACIONALNIH INTERESA? DŽORDŽ FROST KENAN I KONFERENCIJA NESVRSTANIH U BEOGRADU 1961. GODINE

Apstrakt: Džordž Frost Kenan bio je jedan od najpoznatijih spoljnopolitičkih mislilaca i stratega u razdoblju Hladnog rata. Međutim, u pogledu praktičnih dostignuća bio je daleko manje uspешan. Prva Kenanova ambasadura u Moskvi (1952) bila je okončana posle samo četiri i po meseca, jer ga je Staljin proglasio za *personu non grata*. Na sličan način, ni kao ambasador u Jugoslaviji (1961-1963) nije bio bolje sreće, podnevši ostavku pre kraja mandata. Istraživačko pitanje ovog rada je sledeće: Da li je Džordž Kenan bio odlučilac ili samo izvršilac američkih nacionalnih interesa u Jugoslaviji tokom njegovog mandata kao ambasadora? Da li je pravio razliku u odnosima Sjedinjenih Američkih Država i Jugoslavije, ili je samo bio birokrata koji je primenjivao odluke svojih nadređenih? Naš odgovor i glavna teza našeg rada je da je Kenan došao u Jugoslaviju sa uverenjem da može da odlučujuće utiče na kreiranje politike prema Jugoslaviji i da su ga Jugosloveni prihvatili sa istim takvim uverenjem. Ipak, posle Titovog govora na Konferenciji nesvrstanih u Beogradu 1961. godine, tokom narednih nekoliko meseci, Kenan je ostao usamljen, bez suštinske podrške svoje Vlade i bez razumevanja svojih jugoslovenskih domaćina. Članak se sastoji iz dva dela: u prvom delu opisaćemo Kenanovo shvatanje koncepta nacionalnog interesa dok ćemo se u drugom delu fokusirati na Kenanovu ambasaduru u Jugoslaviji pre i neposredno posle Konferencije nesvrstanih u Beogradu 1961. godine.

Ključne reči: nacionalni interes, ambasadori, spoljna politika, diplomatija, Sjedinjene Američke Države, Jugoslavija, spoljna politika Sjedinjenih Američkih Država, Josip Broz Tito, Pokret nesvrstanih.

