

# George F. Kennan Quotes

*People, Country, Russia, War, America, Military, Endurance, Opinion, Clever,  
Men, World, Should, Judging, Atheism, Thinking, Nuclear, Order, Morning,  
Generations, Long*

It is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.

~George F. Kennan

Heroism is endurance for one moment more.

~George F. Kennan

World communism is like [a] malignant parasite which feeds on diseased tissue

~George F. Kennan

The nuclear bomb is the most useless weapon ever invented. It can be employed to no rational purpose. It is not even an effective defense against itself.

~George F. Kennan

Instruments of coercion, once created, have a tendency to find their own natural masters.

~George F. Kennan

There is more respect to be won in the opinion of this world by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives.

~George F. Kennan

The United States should not jump around like an elephant frightened by a mouse.

~George F. Kennan

A political society does not live to conduct foreign policy; it would be more correct to say that it conducts foreign policy in order to live.

~George F. Kennan

War is a highly overrated tool of foreign policy.

~George F. Kennan

The Russian leaders are keen judges of human psychology, and as such they are highly conscious that loss of temper and of self-control is never a source of strength in political affairs.

~George F. Kennan

Popular revolt against a ruthless, experienced modern dictatorship, which enjoys a monopoly over weapons and communications, ... is simply not a possibility in the modern age.

~George F. Kennan

Public opinion, or what passes for public opinion, is not invariably a moderating force in the jungle of politics.

~George F. Kennan

Above all, it behooves us to repress, and if possible to extinguish once and for all, our inveterate tendency to judge others by the extent to which they contrive to be like ourselves.

~George F. Kennan

Do people ever reflect, one wonders, that the best way to protect against the penetration of one's secrets by others is to have the minimum of secrets to conceal?

~George F. Kennan

Fig leaves of democratic procedure to hide the nakedness of Stalinist dictatorship.

~George F. Kennan

Forms of government are forged mainly in the fire of practice, not in the vacuum of theory. They respond to national character and to national realities.

~George F. Kennan

A foreign policy aimed at the achievement of total security is the one thing I can think of that is entirely capable of bringing this country to a point where it will have no security at all.

~George F. Kennan

The truth is sometimes a poor competitor in the market place of ideas - complicated, unsatisfying, full of dilemmas, always vulnerable to misinterpretation and abuse.

~George F. Kennan

Perfect discipline requires recognition of infallibility. Infallibility requires the observance of discipline.

~George F. Kennan

Russia, Russia - unwashed, backward, appealing Russia, so ashamed of your own backwardness, so orientally determined to conceal it from us by clever deceit.

~George F. Kennan

A guest of one's time and not a member of the household.

~George F. Kennan

The best thing we can do if we want the Russians to let us be Americans is to let the Russians be Russian.

~George F. Kennan

Like a graceful vase, a cat, even when motionless, seems to flow.

~George F. Kennan

The Red Army... swept the native population clean in a manner that has no parallel since the days of the Asiatic hordes.

~George F. Kennan

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