An assigned topic, discussed before other audiences in November and December 1952.
"POLICY" IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

No responsible citizen can avoid deep concern regarding the international situation. Either the skill of the Russians and the Chinese or the clumsiness of the Westerners has weakened the Atlantic alliance. When it should have been moving with assurance, it has faltered. Solidarity of opinion and action between the Canadian government and the United States has been strained; that is, indeed, an ominous warning to which prompt heed should be paid. A West divided might induce the Communists to precipitate plans from the realm of contemplation into aggressive action. There lies the greatest danger of war.

Not only is there tension among the free nations; within each country there are sharp differences of opinion regarding immediate courses of action. In the United States this was dramatized a couple of years ago as a "great debate" on foreign policy. After being launched with fanfare, it did not live up to expectations; the debate shrank as it proceeded.

The situation may fairly be described as both confused and confusing. In order to think clearly we must take our minds off current irritations and consider more basic questions. Often the instant problem is easier to solve when looked at in perspective. Broader and longer prospective alters the scale of daily events; they can be viewed with detachment; they can be seen in terms of permanent values rather than distorted by transient excitement. My thesis tonight is that, despite current strains, no fundamental policies either of the United States or of other Atlantic nations are profoundly in question.
The difficulty is partly semantic. We have been impoverishing our language by making a single word cover many different ideas. "Security," for example, has been used to cover so many things that it has been drained of much of its significance. It has been employed as a synonym for self-confidence, for economic independence, for military adequacy, and for many other disparate concepts. It no longer conveys accurate meaning until the exact context of its use is examined. In much the same way, the word "policy" has lost all precision. It is often applied to tactical decisions and to momentary programs of action. "Policy" has become as unstable as the college "tradition" which was "to take effect at 12 o'clock tomorrow."

The word "policy" ought to be reserved for fundamental objectives; that is its first decisive characteristic. It ought not to be applied to devices and tactics, however important they seem. It is a mistake, for example, to refer to the Marshall Plan as basic policy. It was an extraordinarily important operation, but essentially a tactical device in support of the basic policy of preventing a single power from controlling Europe. The Marshall Plan was a means to a larger end; it was transient for it stopped at the end of last year. It had the quality of ingenuity that any brilliant tactical maneuver should have; it involved the constructive use of economic power to buy time for the reorganization of forces likely to hold Russia in check. Its long-run success or failure had to be judged upon those considerations.

It certainly bought time. Few seriously believe that the Italian Government would be constituted as it is today without the Marshall Plan. That may well be true of the French Government also. The Schuman proposal for the integration of the coal and steel industries of France and Germany
a novel and bold suggestion—would have been incredible if either De Gaulle or the Communists had been managing France. The perpetuation of the Third Force in power by external support made possible that dramatic proposal for strengthening the economic defenses of Western Europe.

Whether progress toward reorganization of Europe has been complete enough or swift enough is a matter of judgment. Current opinion in the United States is that it has not proceeded with adequate speed or steadiness; current opinion in Europe is that Americans press too hard. Current opinion here is that Europeans do not pay enough of the costs; current opinion abroad is that Americans with infinite resources can have an unbalanced budget indefinitely, but they cannot. Beneath this surface tension is the basic agreement that a defensible Western Europe is the best check upon Soviet aggression.

The second great characteristic of policy is that it can be expressed with grand simplicity and directness and in terms as "naked as a needle." It brooks no equivocation or double talk. An illustration from domestic life will clarify the point. When nullification threatened the Union, President Jackson reduced fundamental policy to a brief phrase in his classic toast: "The Federal Union: it must be preserved." That defined the issue in terms clear, explicit, and simple.

When adjustment, which had been attempted in the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and again in 1850, failed to resolve the conflict, and the States were brought to the verge of war, Lincoln re-stated the Jacksonian policy in language equally clear and perhaps even more explicit: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that." He succeeded, i
those few words, in separating the central issue—the preservation of the Union—from the confusing emotional tensions arising from the problem of slavery.

It is a major tragedy of our time that no lucid exposition of the meaning of the last world war has come from any statesman. It is asserted that no valid pronouncement could be made because the Russian alliance brought incoherence in its train. That is not true. The Russian alliance involved no more confusing complications than the slavery issue brought to the War between the States. Yet Lincoln was able to put the reason for war into words which any child could understand.

Similarly the basic policy which underlay American participation in both world wars of the 20th century is so simple that any schoolboy can grasp it. It is, explicitly, that the interests of the United States are so world-wide that it cannot supinely permit any aggressor nation to control the whole continent of Europe—or, for that matter, Asia. As fundamental policy explains our entrance into the world wars, it equally explains our basic position (not our tactics) in the cold war and the Korean imbroglio.

Foreign policies should be expressed in phrases just as clear and just as brief as the Jacksonian policy with reference to the Federal Union. The classical British doctrine, the Balance of Power, requires only a few words. Our twin policies—the Open Door in China and the Integrity of China—are other illustrations. Reflection upon those fundamentals will show that they can be more successfully carried out when they are reduced to plain Anglo-Saxon terms. It is a magnificent exercise to list the major policies of American diplomacy and then define each in a hundred words or less. Such an effort leads to clarification of the mind.
The third characteristic of fundamental foreign policies is that they are not invented by any one individual; they grow through the years. When a situation has matured, a statement can sum up past experience and set the course for the long future. Policy is thus expressed in concrete form, and does not require frequent revision. The Balance of Power principle is old, but is as clear—and as valid—today as it ever was. The preservation of the Federal Union is as basic now as it was in 1830. Of course, policies are not "timeless," because there is change as well as continuity.

A good example is the Monroe Doctrine, which is essentially reinsurance of our own independence. One can trace its roots back to George Washington, but it could not be stated until two great events has occurred first, the consolidation of our nation, which culminated with the War of 1812; and second, the breakup of the Spanish colonial empire in Latin America. When those two historical developments came into conjunction, the Monroe Doctrine found expression.

Our basic policy not to permit one power to be dominant in Europe over a considerable period of time was always our interest; it was reflected in the fact that during the Napoleonic struggle we fought at various times on both sides—the naval war with France in 1800 and the War of 1812 with Britain. But it could not emerge as a deeply significant policy until all nations recognized the United States as a world power, and it could not become a fundamental policy until we were recognized as the anchor nation in the Western power group.

We have the same sort of policy with regard to Asia. Naturally that policy matured slowly because for many years we did not face the Pacific and Asia was not a factor in world affairs. Once we touched the
Pacific it is extraordinary how speedily men without other claims to great statesmanship perceived the reality of our interest. Thus as Asia came into the focus of international affairs and as we rose to the stature of a world power, the policy of no single dominant power in Europe was inevitably matched by a policy of no dominant power in Asia. It found expression in two classical phrases--the Open Door in China, that is resistance to economic imperialism, and the Integrity of China, or resistance to political imperialism.

It is necessary to recognize the essential stability of basic policy. The ebb and flow of circumstances over underlying realities occasion many tactical maneuvers in the effort to make policy effective, but that does not involve any "new" policy. The Integrity of China, for example, is still valid. It has suffered many vicissitudes. The ideal was never fully achieved; but, once its fundamental character is understood and there is appreciation of how long it was maturing, it becomes clear that current reverses do not mean that Integrity is permanently defeated. Its present eclipse is nothing to be happy about, but neither should despair overwhelm us.

Thus when policy is drawn into its time perspective most so-called "new" policies are seen to be transient; that is because they frequently violate a fourth quality which real policy should have. It should be not only fundamental, clear, and the stable product of experience; it must be free of passion and emotion. Policy ought to be a coldly intellectual construct defining real and permanent interests. Washington expressed this point well in his Farewell Address when he spoke against "passionate attachments" and "inveterate antipathies."

The so-called "Morgenthau policy" to reduce Germany to an agriculture
economy was not a true policy at all; it was just an angry, emotional re-
action. It overlooked geography, experience, the talents of a people, 
strategical concepts, and the psychology of both Germans and Americans. 
It was a disastrous program which exemplified a characteristic modern 
error—the belief that the opposite of something bad must be something 
good. By completely destroying not only German dominance but German 
power, protection of our interests was not achieved; quite the contrary, 
the Morgenthau plan produced a power vacuum which drew in Russia until 
it threatens to replace the conquered nation as the dominant force in 
Europe. The consequence of folly is a situation no more tolerable than 
that which was overcome by war.

The aim of destroying all German power—economic, political, and 
military—was emotionally oriented. Only slowly did realization dawn 
that it was defeating our own policy by making us think of Germany in 
purely negative terms while misconceiving Russia in positive terms. This 
sentimental attitude can be summed up in the phrase, "Good old Joe," now 
happily relegated to the realm of myth.

That brings us to the fifth characteristic of policy which is 
important in this broader consideration: responsibility for its success 
is never unilateral, because it is a policy of the United States with 
regard to other people. The "other people" contribute directly to its 
success or failure. There have been times, for example, when the be-

In recent discussions of the "failure" of our Far Eastern policy, 
its multilateral aspect is often overlooked. In seeking to effectuate its
aims, the United States has had to use the available instruments. Chiang Kai-shek is obviously no longer the man he once was, physically, politically or spiritually. General Marshall, in his mission to China before he became Secretary of State, could find no personal unconnected with the Kuomintang or the Communists adequate for leadership; the Third Force, which has proved the decisive factor in post-war France, was conspicuous by its absence in China. Therefore, there was no suitable channel through which our policy could flow.

Somewhat the same problem has confronted us in Greece; we have had to work with what was there. In 1950 Ambassador Grady wrote the Premier of Greece complaining of lack of cooperation. He made a bold and tactically dangerous move to improve the situation. "The effort to make Greece self-sustaining and independent of foreign aid," he said, "has hardly begun... Only a Government which can secure and maintain public confidence by its boldness and by its devotion to the public interest can be expected to execute the reconstruction stage of Greek recovery...It is the obligation and intention of the American Government with regard to all Marshall aid countries to decide whether or not the performance of the recipient Government, whether Greek or any other, justifies a continuance of the aid on the scale heretofore contemplated."

The boldness of this effort becomes clear when one realizes that it is usually bad tactics to interfere so openly in the domestic policies of a foreign nation. The letter suggests a situation so serious that only a drastic remedy was worth trying. In this instance it did not succeed. The ambassador was shifted to another post; then aid was cut, just to show that action could match words. However Ambassador Grady's political approach has been continued, to some extent at least, by his successor,
John E. Peurifoy, who urged the recent election for a new Government in the hope of securing a stronger and more stable regime with which to work. He was accused of telling Greece how to run its own business, and there is no doubt that the attitude of the United States did affect the outcome of the election.

These episodes highlight the fact that a sound and necessary policy may fail temporarily (and the word "temporarily" must sometimes be given a very flexible interpretation) for want of adequate cooperating partners.

The sixth aspect of basic policy is that success or failure is affected by the quality of our own management. Americans in the past were proud of "shirt-sleeve diplomacy"; sometimes it worked well; sometimes it was hopelessly bad. Our diplomats have shown deftness and finesse, perception and skill—as well as stupidity and lack of stamina.

A sound strategic concept can fail for want of energy; a valid policy can be under-played, as the Monroe Doctrine was from time to time when we were not alert in the defense of its principles. A policy can be over-played, also, as Olney did in the Venezuela case. Neither the under-playing nor the over-playing affects the validity of the basic concept.

Failure to reach desirable goals sometimes arises from the incapacity or unwillingness of our leaders to recognize legitimate sensibilities of the other nation involved and adapt our tactics to take account of them. In setting up some of our steel allocations and in handling the aluminum question and half a dozen other incidents the United States had not been very alert either to the interests or the feelings of Canada. To some of our friends across the border it has looked as though they were being treated like a satellite. Over a year ago the President of the United Nations General Assembly, Canada's Minister for External Affairs, Lester B
Pearson, expressed their irritation: "The days of relatively easy and automatic political relations with our neighbor are, I think, over." "We are not willing to be merely an echo... The only time the American people seem to be aware of our existence... is when we do something they do not like." And he went on to say that Canada has "more outstanding problems with the United States this year than in any year of our history." The general uneasiness was summarized by a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* who made this statement: "For the first seventy years our wars were declared for us by London. Now it looks as if for the next seventy years they are going to come from Washington."

If we are insensitive to the needs and feelings of a country so close to us in space and so intimately associated with us in tradition and policy, how much more have we neglected to take thoughtful care of the sensitivities of the Swedes and the people of India and elsewhere. A tactic, in sum, which is intrinsically sound can be made futile by lack of awareness of the interests and feelings of the other parties involved.

In the seventh place a critical episode seldom determines the success or failure of basic policy. In our day we have practically worn out the word "crisis"; it has been as badly overworked as "security" or "policy." Modern means of communication have helped create this acute sensitivity to current events. The speed of reporting makes the event enter into our consciousness before its effects can be seen; as a result there is a strong tendency to overdramatize and overestimate what in historic perspective proves to be nothing more than a painful incident. In foreign affairs the indirect and delayed effects are often far more important than the immediate, obvious, and observable impact of an
action. The true meaning of a "crisis" about which the public is deeply aroused emerges only long after attention has shifted to a new focus. In a notable speech George F. Kennan said that sometimes five or ten years elapse between cause and effect in major foreign policy developments.

It is fair to say that crisis seldom creates policy; it may, however, precipitate a definition that survives the exciting situation which evokes the declaration. President Hayes' statement in 1880 offers a good illustration: "The policy of this country is a canal under American control...An inter-oceanic canal across the American Isthmus will essentially change the geographical relations between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States...It would be the great ocean thoroughfare between our...shores, and virtually a part of the coast line of the United States."

The idea that the canal would be "part of the coast line of the United States" was not wholly new; it has been growing for years; it merely came to maturity at that moment. Few people, even those familiar with American diplomatic history, could now describe the circumstances which led President Hayes to issue the statement just when he did. That illustrates the distinction between crisis and policy and shows why it is important to emphasize the long view rather than the short one.

This particular policy, moreover, furnishes a beautiful example of the fact that without change in objectives the means taken to realize them may vary from time to time. Indeed they may appear to constitute a reversal of policy, when in reality they are mere changes in tactical dispositions.

When we determined that the canal was to be part of our coast line, the obvious course of action was to include everything within that coast line under our own sovereignty—to gobble it up, either directly or indirectly, openly or clandestinely. For some time there was a strong drift
in that direction. The statement of Olney that our "fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition" was in harmony with such an idea. The Platt Amendment for Cuba, the armed occupation of Haiti and Santo Domingo, the partial occupation of Nicaragua and other countries might have eventuated in military, political, and economic control of the whole Caribbean.

Later we took the opposite course; while the basic policy of regarding the canal as part of our coast line remains unchanged, our relations with Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean have been put upon a basis of mutuality to a degree which Olney's tactics would never have led one to expect as within the realm of possibility. In short, a shift in tactics from time to time, seen in too short a perspective, looks like a shift in policy, when in reality it does not involve any such development.

This consideration leads to the eight point—bipartisanship. Basic policies are non-political, a more accurate term than "bipartisan." The Monroe Doctrine, the Panama Canal as our coast line, Canada as part of a single defense system with the United States, resistance to control of Europe or Asia by a single power—these and other basic policies would be the same whether the administration were Democratic or Republican.

On the other hand, the tactical dispositions adopted to achieve the policies are subject to politics, and properly so. It is the essence of the democratic system that action by the party in power is carried on under the scrutiny and criticism of the minority. In Britain this is epitomized by the phrase, "Her Majesty's loyal opposition." It is revealed in our government by fraternization across the aisle at one moment and tension between the two sides at the next.
The opposition almost always has to take a somewhat negative attitude because it does not have access to current dispatches and information necessary for constructive judgment. Moreover it is in no position to carry out a positive program. But even negative criticism may well force those in power to act carefully. It can be vigorous and occasionally may be violent, but should at all costs be responsible.

When we interpret political opposition in this light, we realize that it is not to be deprecated, but encouraged; it is the only way by which a democratic society can hear both sides of every question and reach a considered consensus. That is the purpose and function of, and the full justification for, vigorous public debate. It accounts for the legitimacy of the discussion of foreign policy in the recent campaign. One may regret the extremes to which partisan speeches sometimes run, but it is better to have discussion even when it exceeds discretion than to have silence.

When danger is imminent, opposition is mitigated. That was evident at the announcement of the so-called "Truman Doctrine" with regard to Greece and Turkey; it was conspicuous in connection with the Berlin airlift, the Marshall Plan, and the initial phase of the Korean war. Nonetheless, if the mitigation of opposition is long continued and not limited to instant dangers, it encourages a tendency to regard all opposition as improper. That feeling is in many respects far more perilous to the safety of the democratic system than violent opposition, because it cuts at the root of the responsibility of the majority party and destroys the foundation of an informed public opinion.

Consideration of policy in these broader terms indicates in the ninth place that it must be judged as a dynamic operation, rather than by
any static method of estimation. In 1943 Walter Lippmann, in a best
seller, proposed to draw up a balance sheet, showing our assets and lia-
bilities, and thus determine whether or not we are over-extended. It is
not an apt analogy, because policy is never fully reflected in a balance
sheet—even industrial policy. The momentum inherent in the activity of
any organization is not shown: In some of our greatest corporations, the
balance sheet has an item: patents, one dollar. If the patents were really
worth only one dollar, the organization would be bankrupt. That dollar is
merely a symbolic figure; it is an indication that the value of the patents
cannot be estimated.

Likewise the balance sheet does not always reflect promptly the kind
of management the company has. The enterprise may be solvent, but stagnant
management may be vigorous, but unwise. Those considerations could well
remain unrevealed for some time on a balance sheet. Moreover, by its very
nature the balance sheet isolates the company; it does not show its re-
relationship to its competitors. But an industrial concern does not exist
in isolation any more than does a nation. Therefore, while a balance
sheet has certain obvious merits, as a basis for estimation of policy it
may be quite misleading.

As an example, let us try out the balance-sheet idea on the Monroe
Doctrine. On any such basis of estimation it would never have been
drafted by so stern a realist as John Quincy Adams nor uttered by so
seasoned a political leader as James Monroe. At the time timorous people
felt that we were over-extending our commitments; they wanted us to con-
cert our action with Britain. But John Quincy Adams, one of our really
great Secretaries of State, said that he was unwilling the United States
should come in as "a cockboat in the wake of the British man-of-war."
The policy involved in the Monroe Doctrine has been challenged many times, by many powers--Britain, France, and Germany among others--but we were seldom alone in its defense. The common historical generalization that it rested upon the power of the British navy is inaccurate. From time to time and to some extent it did so depend, but at other times it challenged the power of the British navy.

What the balance-sheet technique conceals is that, whenever an issue was drawn, there was always some nation with an interest parallel to our own upon whom we could count for assistance, direct or indirect. It was not necessary for our interests to coincide with those of the cooperating power in all respects--not even in Latin America; support might arise from no more lofty a motive than a common desire to oppose the threatening power for wholly different reasons. The effect, nevertheless, was to lend help to our policy at the moment of need.

This leads to the final characteristic of basic policies. They are not of uniform value to the United States and the order of priority in which they would be defended changes from time to time. The most vital naturally involve this hemisphere, our home base on this world island which we call the Americas. Of prime importance are the inclusion of Canada within our continental defense system, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Panama Canal as part of our coast line. These clearly take precedence and would be the last policies to be sacrificed. The integrity of Europe--resistance to its engrossment by a single aggressive power--important as it is, takes a secondary position. Our policy toward Asia comes after that involving Europe. Policies with regard to the Near East and Africa would have a still lower priority. In short, our commitments are not uniform over the whole area of policy; they vary greatly in intensity.
Furthermore, policies do not have the same priority at different moments. For example, during the Civil War the policy of the indissolubility of the Union took priority over the maintenance of the Monroe Doctrine. We allowed things to take place in Mexico and elsewhere which we would have resisted but for our own domestic struggle. Today no one is challenging our American policies; there is no direct threat in this hemisphere. The instant threat is in Asia and the proximate challenge in Europe. Those facts account for the noticeable shift in our tactical dispositions, in new political emphases, in dramatic economic maneuvers. It does not mean, though the situation is serious, that we are over-committed, because while there is a very heavy threat in one area there is virtual absence of menace in others.

In considering the whole complex of international relations we have to bear these basic thoughts in mind, remembering that other nations also have different priorities within their systems of policy. That no one power should dominate Europe is not only American policy, it has long been British policy and French policy. Just as American hemispheric policy takes priority with us over our European and Asian policies, so with the British and the French the security of Europe has the highest priority. When we think about the Russians and the Chinese we need to bear in mind that they also have orders of magnitude and ranges of intensity in their international policies. We make a serious mistake whenever we act on a contrary assumption.

What does all this tell us of our current situation. We can conclude that there are no significant differences in basic policy between the United States and its great allies—the British Commonwealth and France. Moreover, there are not even significant differences as to basic policy
within the United States. The manner in which President Truman and President elect Eisenhower have sought to demonstrate the basic unity since the election is final evidence of this. The differences of opinion have to do, not with ends, only with means.

With reference to Europe, some feel that committing large numbers of United States troops there would irritate the Russians into action; others feel that to fail to put troops there would do so much psychological damage to the French, British, and Germans that they will not do all that is needful to defend themselves. These judgments have nothing to do with basic policy. They are different estimates of the psychological reaction on the part of the Russians, the French, and the British. No one can give a scientifically accurate answer; it must remain in the realm of judgment.

Even in the Far East basic policy is not seriously in question. Our mistakes, reverses, and defeats have been tactical. They are painful, but not decisive. All who are concerned with foreign policy are determined that Japan, the Philippines, and India shall not be swallowed up by Russia or Russia's deputy. While the policy of resisting the engrossment of Asia has been grievously set back by the Communists, it is not yet defeated.

Controversy is more shrill and seems more important than it is because no government of a great Power, save the Russian, is in a strong domestic position. In the United States, the majority in the House continues to be small; in the Senate almost invisible. The last election in Britain gave the Churchill government only a small majority. France has had a succession of cabinets; evidences of instability are manifold. In Italy and in Western Germany, the situation is similar. Wherever the government majority is narrow, political tension inevitably heightens. That situation has made so-called bipartisan action particularly difficult.
in the United States; therefore the issues seem both more dramatic and more significant than they really are.

The alternatives are important, but not vital; they are essentially transient issues. Decisions about them must not cloud the central fact, which is the firm determination upon the part of the United States, the British Commonwealth, France, and Italy not to let Russia gobble up Europe or Asia.

In short, beneath the strident arguments and the surface irritations there is basic unity within our country and among the free nations. It is the part of wisdom to put as much emphasis as possible in our diplomacy upon the fundamental things which unite us; we should waste as little energy as possible upon the forces and factors which divide us.