

The Council on Foreign Relations

The think-tank lobbying the United States

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) was founded in 1921. It started out as a joint Anglo-American project in 1919, following a meeting between distinguished scholars at the Paris Peace Conference. In response to the devastating impact of World War I, emissaries, from both sides of the Atlantic shores, convened to carve out a strategy for the post-war period which lay ahead. A successive meeting was held that same year, again in Paris, at the Hotel Majestic where a group of British and American diplomats and scholars met on 30th May, 1919 undertaking the decision to create an organization called the "Institute of International Affairs", an Anglo-American think-tank operating from offices in London and New York. Due to isolationist views, at the time prevalent in American society, the scholars were faced with ontological obstacles in seeing their plan through, and turned their focus instead to a set of discrete meetings that had been taking place, since June 1918 in New York City, under the banner name "Council on Foreign Relations".

The secret meetings were headed by the corporate lawyer Elihu Root, who had served the United States as Secretary of State under President Theodore Roosevelt, and were attended by a reported 108 "high-ranking officers of banking, manufacturing, trading and finance companies, along with many lawyers". The participants were proponents of Woodrow Wilson's internationalism, but so were they particularly concerned about "the effect that the war and the treaty of peace might have on post-war business". The scholars who spearheaded these meetings saw the vision to create an organization that could bring together diplomats, high-level government officials, academics, lawyers, bankers and industrialists to engineer government policy to suit their agendas. On the 29th of July, 1921, they filed a certification of incorporation, officially establishing the Council on Foreign Relations. Elihu Root became the founding chairman of the CFR. The CFR's Headquarters in New York City, the Harold Pratt House, looks almost like a replica architecturally when compared with Elihu Root's home in Washington, DC.

In 1922, Edwin Francis Gay, former Dean of the Harvard Business School, initiated a suggestion to the CFR: to publish a magazine that would be the "authoritative source" on foreign policy. For this endeavour, Gay mustered \$125,000 from wealthy members of the CFR and also by soliciting funds, in writing, to the thousand richest Americans. Using these funds, the first issue of the new magazine *Foreign Affairs* was published in September of 1922, and, within just a few years, it gained a reputation for being the "most authoritative American review dealing with international relations".

In the late 1930s, the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation contributed large amounts of money to the CFR. In 1938, they created various "Committees on Foreign Relations" throughout the country, funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Influential men were to be chosen in a number of cities, and subsequently be brought together for discussions in their own communities, as well as participate in an annual conference in New York. These local committees served to influence young leaders as well as to shape public opinion to garner support for the CFR's policies. So too were these committees useful in providing data through which the CFR and the federal U.S. government could "sense the mood of the country".

As of 1939, and lasting for a period of five years into WWII, the CFR achieved much greater prominence within the government and the State Department after establishing the strictly confidential "War and Peace Studies", funded entirely by the Rockefeller Foundation. The secrecy surrounding this group was such that the CFR members who had no involvement in its deliberations were left completely in the dark with regard to the study group's existence. It was divided into four functional topic groups:

- Economic and Financial
- Security and Armaments
- Territorial
- Political

A hypothesis has been made, and continues ad nauseam, that the Council on Foreign Relations is an exclusive club of elites whose membership core consists of the cream of the American establishment.

Up to and including Barack H. Obama, the CFR roster features seven U.S. Presidents: Herbert C. Hoover, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, James E. "Jimmy" Carter, George H. W. Bush, and William J. "Bill" Clinton.

Former U.S. Secretaries of State members include: Robert Lansing, Frank B. Kellogg, Henry L. Stimson, Cordell Hull, Edward R. Stettinius, George C. Marshall, Dean G. Acheson, John Foster Dulles, Christian A. Herter, David D. Rusk, William P. Rogers, Henry A. Kissinger, Cyrus R. Vance, Edmund S. "Ed" Muskie, Alexander M. Haig, George P. Shultz, James A. Baker, Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Warren M. Christopher, Madeleine J. Korbel Albright, Colin L. Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and John F. Kerry.

Former U.S. Secretaries of Defense: James V. Forrestal, George C. Marshall, Charles E. Wilson, Neil H. McElroy, Robert S. McNamara, Melvin R. "Bom" Laird, Elliott L. Richardson, James R. Schlesinger, Harold Brown, Caspar W. Weinberger, Frank C. Carlucci, Richard B. "Dick" Cheney, Leslie "Les" Aspin, William J. Perry, William S. Cohen, Donald H. Rumsfeld, Robert M. Gates, and Charles T. "Chuck" Hagel.

The membership roster also accounts for a multitude of CIA directors, FBI directors, a saturation of multinational corporations of American origin, key media moguls like Rupert Murdoch but to name a few. These prestigious names speak volume; and there is much to be debated about the relationship, as to how corporate power is allied with political power. For instance, it is an undeniable fact that political parties have to raise vast sums of money when on the campaign trail. The mainstream political parties are virtually all financially insolvent, and debt relief is a means for creditors to assert their influences on government policy. On the 15th of July, 2009, Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed the Council on Foreign Relations as Secretary of State. Uncharacteristically for a senior politician, she admitted that her office takes instructions from the CFR:

"I am delighted to be here in these new headquarters. I have been often to, I guess the mother ship in New York City; but it's good to have an outpost of the Council right here down the street from the State Department. We get a lot of advice from the Council, so this will mean I won't have as far to go to be told what we should be doing, and how we should think about the future."

~ Hillary Rodham Clinton

The full transcript is available to read on the official website of the CFR [see link:].
<https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-us-secretary-state-hillary-rodham-clinton-1>

Such a scenario where secret and elitist societies, without any democratic legitimacy, lobby and advise governments on what laws should be passed, what treaties should be signed, would be inadmissible to most individuals with reasonable aforethought. The concept of sovereignty in the 21st century changed over time. A film called *Network*, which came out in 1976, sums things up well. The following transcript depicts a scene between two characters: Arthur Jensen (Ned Beatty) and Howard Beale (Peter Finch):

“...You are an old man who thinks in terms of nations and peoples. There are no nations. There are no peoples. There are no Russians. There are no Arabs. There are no Third Worlds. There is no West. There is only one holistic system of systems. One vast and immane, interwoven, interacting, multivariate, multinational dominion of dollars. Petro-dollars, electro-dollars, multi-dollars, reichsmarks, rands, rubles, pounds and shekels. It is the international system of currency which determines the totality of life on this planet. That is the natural order of things today. That is the atomic, and sub-atomic, and galactic structure of things today. And YOU have meddled with the primal forces of nature. And you will atone! Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale? You get up on your little twenty-one inch [television] screen and howl about America and democracy. There is no America. There is no democracy. There is only IBM and ITT and AT&T, and DuPont, Dow, Union Carbide and Exxon. Those are the nations of the world today. What do you think the Russians talk about in their Councils of State? Karl Marx? They get out their linear programming charts, statistical decision theories, mini-max solutions, and compute the price-cost probabilities of their transactions and investments, just like we do. We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations, inexorably determined by the immutable bylaws of business. The world is a business, Mr. Beale. It has been since man crawled out of the slime. And our children will live, Mr. Beale, to see that perfect world in which there is no war or famine, oppression or brutality. One vast and ecumenical holding company for whom all men will work to serve a common profit. In which all men will hold a share of stock. All necessities provided. All anxieties tranquilized. All boredom amused...”

~ Network (1976)