Think tanks and power in foreign policy
“A Comparative Study Of The Role And Influence Of The Council On Foreign Relations And The Royal Institute Of International Affairs 1939-1945”.

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Summary

Parmar’s book is a comparative study that seeks to visualize the influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs from the year 1939-1945, as the book subheading vividly states. This comparative study intends to compare and contrast organizational authority, membership and how the entire world perceives the state and foreign policy in these organizations, also the book remarks the comparison of roles and certain influence that existing organizations hold concerning policy making and public opinion, not forgetting the similarities and differences on historical evidence produced from activities of the CFR and the Chatham House. In a nutshell the author’s intention is to give readers a precise historical chronology of Britain and America, and their different influence in foreign policy making and roles, as well the theories and methodology used to test the hypotheses and possible outcomes of why and how things are the way they are in these two governments.

In Chapter 1 the author focuses in introducing various theories for testing, as a way of accounting for historical evidence, and the methodologies that will account for giving explanations to public opinion mobilization. While in Chapter 2, he makes an introduction of organizational formation, preceding their aims and goals in the development of Britain and America. Furthermore, he assesses the social origins of CFR and Chatham house and their authoritative leaders. In addition, he points out their think tanks and infers their viability through researching and questioning their political, economic and social, source of funding just to mention a few. Chapter 3 on the other hand draws attention to intellectual, political and other global issues related to men, and reactions given towards the existence of foreign policy, power and national interest. Chapter 4 and 5, emphasize the responsibility and the contribution of The Chatham House to the foreign policy in Britain, and vice versa, so as the key role of the CFR to America’s foreign policy. Last but not least, the rest of the chapters to the last, emphasize on the important roles played by these think tanks, and what evidence has been produced on their success and failure, leading to the author’s conclusion on the book and all he gathered throughout the comparative study.

The following is a summary made, after having read the book for your perusal. Parmar addresses quite articulate theories and methodologies, pluralism being the first. The author regards the theory prominent in the history of Anglo- American democratic system, he goes on to applaud the fact that it has been able to stand unshaken, it remains effective and applicable even though it has gone through condemnation over the years of its existence and implementation. From this comparative study, this theory plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the British and American political structures uphold a culture of transparency, approachability, self-governance, determination and fairness. Besides what is mentioned above, pluralists consider that natives to Britain and America have equal rights to express themselves, and bring forth issues of concern to authorities. This does not matter whether one is poor or rich, black or white, employed or unemployed. There is so much information about the theory, not sure if one must then judge it as an excellent model, it goes on to advocate for workers’ (applicable to both genres) rights to affiliate trade unions and social associations. By so doing the pluralists believes these actions contribute to the enhancement of policies
that the government has implemented and public opinion. However, Parmar on the other hand presumes it as a weak state theory, meaning that the CFR and Chatham House would be regarded as concentrated expertise association.

**Corporatism** also has been regarded viable because of a definite role it played in the study of American foreign relations during the 1920s and 1930s. However it does not stand to be as famous as the others, even so it has outdone itself in the American policy organization and political developments. Those for the theory argue that, the states prevailing in Britain and America are rather vague, as conflicts arise in policy, therefore a suggestion of intensifying conflict management, agriculture, organized labour and big corporations important to the day to day functional running of nations. All has been said to convey a good economy, political and social stability. In the American foreign policy, the corporatists aim at meddling in issues like; industrialization, urbanization, mass immigration, economic crisis, political chaos and social disorders. Concerning Britain corporatists are more concerned in upholding social and political stability, while the CFR and Chatham House in this case are related to the theory due to their financial communities responsible for foreign policy.

**Instrumental Marxism**, expound the state as an interpenetrated foundation by those who hold authoritative power with the capital society, and also bring forth that the state is merely a committee that manages affairs and interests of capitalist class because those leading are connected to that particular class. When trying to understand the portion of the book, the interpretation would be that capitalists are a major influence to political parties, due to obvious reasons “unbalanced power” which led to funding of party campaigns and advertisements. Addressing the CFR and RIIA, the theory implies the two in quotes “should be representing ruling class interests in foreign affairs, given the origins and leadership”. **Statism** is yet another theoretical idea, that goes against the ideologies presented by pluralism, instrumental Marxism and corporatism by rooting for the idea that the states’ responsibility as an autonomous actor. Furthermore, statistics view the state at an international context level, that is to say the state according to their view is a determinant of national needs, also state managers need to reorganize and reconstruct domestic economic or social relations and management of interclass as a given duty. In that case they erase the idea of weak state, and when concluding there seems to be so much emphasis on structural elements concerned with state power. Pertaining the CFR and Chatham House, the statist expect a total malleable private organizations.

**Gramscian theory** being the last it is more concentrated on how uneven distribution of power, wealth and private power is. That is to say political power tends to depict social inequalities and biases, so these theorists argue that Britain and America are not only shaped by coercion but also hegemony that tries to gel a variety of interests concerned with national economic agendas into a “historical bloc”. Not forgetting that it advocates for clarity states ideological and political power to shape up the economy and politics. The author mentions an interesting term “state spirit” associated with the theory, which basically upholds duties of promoting historical processes through intellectual assignments. Last but not least, just like any other theory the Gramscian expects to gather strong evidence of proactive state agencies as a responsibility aligned to CFR and RIIA.

As one reads through this compilation of the comparative study, it is very noticeable that Parmar outlines the role of The Council of Foreign Relations and The Royal Institute of International Affairs in the interconnectedness of political, social and economic setup. First of all, it is relevant to mention that The Chatham House’s role has always been the contribution towards all the necessary discussions that dwell on anything that makes international businesses, diplomatic experiences, academics and journalism possible. An example that shows this diligent input would be; the production of The British Year book of International law, which aimed at enhancing and governing discipline in history. That alone already shows its connection with political responsibilities and connection. The next paragraph intends to discuss in detail connections with reference to other involved entities;
❖ In a world of academics, The Chatham House plays a greater role as well, for instance, Parmar indicated using numerical representation that a hundred and thirteen representatives were involved in executing sound and successive goals for universities reputation in studies. This was made possible by individuals such as Charles Kingsley Webster, who by then was a sitting secretary of the military section of The British delegation during 1919. Over and above from these representatives only eight of them had an opportunity to coincide with The Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Furthermore, the author shows that, those who were held responsible for the academic positions were twenty two or more, with a hierarchy that descended from the school chancellor following the vice chancellor, so as fifteen board members, eight wardens and four heads.

❖ Regarding politics, the political office was structured in such a way that it consisted of a hundred and three leaders, and delegates who were about thirty one, not forgetting the members of parliament. At this point as a reader, the author does not really go in depth on how these Think Tanks had a connection with the political and academic aspects, he does not bring out those important points that will drive the question home. Parmar also, suppresses the issue of gender equality in politics, for example it is not easy to know whether women could form part of the cabinet or not, and the impacts brought about, which is what the question above is seeking for.

❖ Advocacy under the social and economy entity, the book shows that there was a lack of quality representation concerning Trade Unions. At least this goes to show, that there was a problem, as other categories were given more attention as compared to the appraisal of these unions, in addition Parmar states that leaders at hand were not very much valued except those who managed to succeed all the way to the top as Governing Councilors. In quotes the author’s sentimental argument is “organized labour was hardly represented at all”.

❖ Looking at the social aspect, The Chatham House authoritative had interconnectedness with imperial societies such as the Royal Empire Society, with most members like Robert Brand taking part in the roundtable movement, addressing the Elite social clubs, The Chatham House had many British elites forming all the social clubs, this became a problem as it sidelined commoners from the society, thus a mindset of the British’s total power in almost everything and anything.

❖ In relation to gender, the role of women was slightly existent because only six of them out of a hundred and three individuals wanting to take up duties in the League of Nations. This is quite impressive as it dampens the inferiority complexity with women. Nevertheless it does not change the fact that women were under represented, and shunned from being part of the war, in that case inequality is somehow portrayed. With regards to the Council elite’s point of view no women at all were given that opportunity to form part of the council before 1969.

Critique/Review

Before I could express my sentiments on these two articles it was important to appreciate the strengths as well as the weaknesses the author had, and also critique and give a constructive academic feedback.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and applaud the author to this book for having taken time to tackle such a challenging and interesting issue, which has been debatable over the years. It can never be easy and possible to have all the answers on everything that happens in the political sphere, but his hard work and contribution is highly recognized and appreciated.
The style of writing used by the author was appealing to my eyes and I believe it could be beneficial to the next reader. For instance, Parmar neatly and clearly outlined a detailed abstract, introduction and literature reviews from various sources which are scholarly and recognizable according to different chapters. This made it easier for me to understand the content of the book, it helped to relate to the topic without drowning into a pool of confusion whatsoever. For example, it was easy to locate the content relevant to the produce of the book review. Therefore, I would highly recommend the book as one of the prescribed texts for students pursuing political sciences with the hope that they would find the book beneficial and worth reading, useful, informative and communicative. In addition to the style of writing, the author gave a clear in text citations and bibliographical references at the end of his writing, in order to make it easier to refer and expand understanding based on the sources used. Not forgetting how coherent and presentable their work was. Thus in my point of view, ideas in these different chapters did flow very well, they were expressed, moreover his views were confidently articulated with excellent supporting evidence, be it empirical or hypothetical. Nevertheless, there were some weaknesses that will be outlined later followed by more strengths.

From my point of view The Chatham House well known as RIIA and Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) have definitely represented Britain and America for a good eighty years, and for a relationship to last that long then it means indeed good relations were maintained. However, to my surprise Inderjeet Parmar boldly and bluntly says that the RIIA has never performed to its required level, this alone gave me the impression that his conducted comparative study has loopholes as arguments are not supported appropriately. It becomes a foul play when the author fails to address the similarities as well as the differences that these two show when it comes to the growth or rather the maturing of policies. Nevertheless I applaud him for his realization that the state is a very important component in the jurisdiction of foreign policy agendas.

The structure of the book was challenging at times when it comes to understanding the ideas, as the author was self contradicting himself quite a number of times, for example he finds the CFR to be more effective as compared to The Chatham House when it comes to issues of social or public support at the same time he makes proclamations employing that both the CFR and The Royal Institute Of International Affairs do actually have the same aims and goal of success, the same components necessary for their respective national foreign policies and the elite networks that intertwine corporate wealth, universities, philanthropic foundation and official policy makers.

That alone sounds very bogus, spurious and quite exaggerated for a reader who would choose this book as an elementary prescribed text for foreign policy. Furthermore, there is no crystal clear articulation on whether if there is a significant contribution to the development of international policies during the second world war that was made by South Africa, India, Australia, Canada and New Zealand or not. That is to show yet another missing link. In addition, Parmar does not also show a vivid comparison as expected on The Chatham House and The Council on Foreign Relations when it comes to policy making of America and Britain. Yes, we know think tanks existed, they planned on achieving certain goals, but what evidence does Parmar give in his comparative study? Absolutely none as far as my understanding capabilities, all that prevails is a repetition of ideas making the book rather too monotonous to read. In my point of view also, an academic research comparative study should have at least a historical background. That is to say there is nothing political that can possibly be discussed if we do not reverence the nation state and its relevance, by so doing it would be approved to provide origins and theorectical background. In short Parmar misses to elaborate on such points though he well defined his topic discussion, background information, theories, methodologies and recommendations impressively.

Nevertheless, despite all these critiques, Parmar unlike other scholars he managed to recognize the significance and key role of Anglo-American strand of foreign policy. He articulates this very well
making some of his book chapters very much recommendable. He does this in such a way that he redresses issues interlocking foreign policy in Britain and America. With total honesty, the language and vocabulary throughout the book, was very easy to comprehend which made everything easy, and understandable, as an author simplicity is key and Parmar possessed that skill. Last but not, in his introduction the author manages to give keywords, and goes an extra mile to define them as precise as possible before one could read the entire book, that is something that draws attention to the reader and make them eager to find out what else the author may execute on the next page. Over and above, he offers his outmost gratitude to all the colleagues and scholars he worked with and supported his vision of producing and publishing this book. He applauds that all of them gave him critiques where necessary and good remarks where necessary. Someone who takes criticism and uses it to their grater advantage are goal oriented, and pushes them to even do more than their expectations as we can see from this comparative study compiled by Parmar.

Lastly, the author impressively discusses fundamental issues that are impacted or can be relatively impacted by foreign policy. For example, he embarks on issues of civil service and military links, political offices, academic positions, corporate directorship, trade unions, gender issues religious affiliations, just to mention a few. All these are shaped by the kind of think tanks and foreign policy countries have.

What is the connection of the book, with reference to globalsocial, politicaland economic problems?

The author has found it rather vital to assess political, global, social and economic consequences that were brought forth by The Chatham House and the CFR. In that case, he accomplished to outline the impacts they might have had in the functioning of foreign policy. This section of the paper and its information has been derived from chapter 3 of the book, as he answers why, how, what was the connection and impact with ethnic groups, school, bars, religion and socio-economic elements just to mention a few. Interesting and catchy topics have been strategically chosen for your perusal below.

The Global Context; Page 49 To 52

From this part of the book, Parmar hints that foreign policy in any country of the world, is largely dependent upon its global power relations, which is crucial at defining the nation state. The idea is that during the last thirty years of the 19th century and forty years of the 20th century most global empires grew larger, and declined at some point, power also moved from one continent to the other. This period was characterized by power division between countries that were regarded greater than the other, Britain, America, Germany so on, with these countries’ goal to be rich a devastating war arouse leading to the Great Depression of the world’s economy, but not only that, people died in large numbers from the bloody war fare for the sake of industrial power and revolution. Having mentioned industrial revolution, it is important to point out that it resulted in this global power during 1760 and 1830, giving Britain the opportunity to bloom the European industry by 66%, assisted by great production of coal, iron and lignite. It also bloomed in the commerce industry by a capital income of 2.4 billion Euros.

Mind you this was a Great Depression era but Britain continued to top the charts by having so many investments. All good things come to an end, the nation’s global power became wrecked by the Crimean war, many problems started to face Britain; many military officials were in negligence, money became an issue to the extent of America stepping in lending and them money, not forgetting that the market derailed. This alone granted the United States of America the platform to grow its economy and becoming the leading nation in economics, finances and commerce so as the total amount money it was owed by those who needed to regain strength from the war. Even though the
USA was the center of attraction, other countries such as Germany and Japan imposed threats to totally derail the British imperial system and its global market and pose as USA competitors, that is to say more problems were being fueled. For instance, Germany was ready to strike anytime with its possession of military machines, not forgetting their possession of industrial power in coal, steel and chemical production making it grow more powerful. Japan on the other hand got attention and waved its way to the top through internal institutional modernization, industrialization and warfare, with its highlight being; conquering China in 1894 and Russia in 1904.

Scientism Page 59 To 61

Both these bodies had so much belief and confidence in implying science to every situation, under the assumption that everything that is tested scientifically is basically true and applicable, but one would ask; to what extent has this been proven effective and relevant? The answer is; it has been proven to be vague, as concrete arguments from scholars have shown that knowledge is possible when things are carefully observed and categorized, measured and given a quantitative figure rather than generalizing. In short the whole idea of scientism was narrow when it comes to giving solid legitimate conclusions after the scientific data collection.

Elitism Page 61 To 62

The author briefly discusses the issue, elitists like anybody else they had different perspectives on how they would prefer things to be, for example those that could have possibly be labeled as qualified did have the ability to apply scientific skills to any social problems in The Chatham house and the Council. This was due to the stereotypical mindset that the elite minorities were the only ones who could be able to address issues at hand rather than the rest of the unqualified population; also any ideas concerning any political amendments came from the elites not masses. It becomes a problem when other people are negatively labeled due to status quo, and public opinion in this case was not prominent. In a nutshell the council seemed to have so much discomfort with having to deal with masses.

Religion Page 62 To 65

Religion has been accounted for as a very important element in the book, quite interestingly no prejudice against religion emerged. For example, the Anglicans led The Chatham House, with evidence of a historical timeline showing that all leaders were Christian. Yet another element of religious tolerance was shown when they also had a Jewish representative. Religion thus far was influenced by the belief in evangelical Protestantism, and an immerse influence was more prevalent in the urban areas and played a role in salvation and reforming individuals more than anything. Religionism was characterized by efficiency, integration, systematication, regularization and professionalism. Besides that, in universities or private schools there was transmission of gospel and reformation communities which led to determination of democracy and well established Christian behavior. Also portrayed by Protestants in various affiliations that may have been influenced by nature of an individual’s background at home, thus making the CFR leaders spirit filled when it comes to progression in tasks. Nonetheless, it is also important to understand that Christian beliefs at Chatham were in relation to practical affairs of the state and nation, just that Christ was the center of it all in helping those in position to be governed and disciplined rulers. Even so, the world of politics has many challenging issues leading to problems intentionally or unintentionally.

From the information gathered above, it seems like implications were more common when it comes to the global market concept, damages were encountered because super powers were in a scramble for power and prestige dignity. In the long run, people were killed, nations were upset, a whole lot of expenses were incurred in order to repair the nation so as the state, also gender biases did
not protect women until after years, however as a reader other positive outcomes are highly recognized such as religion shaping the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, so as the countries that were involved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the honor goes to the author who managed to address issues appropriately and for having emitted knowledge, a powerful tool in a life of an academician, and giving a reader like me the opportunity to understand Think Tanks even better. The comparative study had the ability to show shortcomings and strong holds of both The Chatham house and CFR in the key role they persuaded in the growth of nations. By so doing many issues at hand were addressed, like the chaos and terror that was accompanied by the Second World War and the stabilization of countries at large. One other important point from the book is the realization that Chatham house and the CFR were solidly the reason why Britain and America upheld a good relation, also Chatham House had the ability of making British policy than the CFR in the American context, something I never knew until I read Parmar’s book. As I proceeded through the chapters, this study covers all aspects of national literature being political, social and even global, giving vast information about the connections I all the aspects. Despite all this, I still say most of the information brought forth by the author does not clearly explain the degree of reactivity between the British and America states.