Quincy Wright and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace

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In the late 1930s, as it became apparent that the world was once again about to experience war on a global scale, a small group of people in the United States and Great Britain viewed this event as an opportunity to create a world government. They referred to this global system as the “new world order.” Among the supporters of this concept in the United States were holders of some of the top political offices in the federal government, including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles.

To facilitate the creation of this world government, several organizations were established. They were closely associated with one another, and many of the people involved served on several committees simultaneously. The nature of the groups was chameleon-like, and organizations would change their names and objectives at the drop of a hat. One such group was the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP). Its members included people who were considered top in their respective fields—professors from Ivy League universities, officers of large corporations, and attorneys from some of the most respected law firms in the country.

The commission was aided in its efforts by many highly placed individuals in the U.S. government, particularly in the Department of State. President Roosevelt also took an interest. Commission member Clark Eichelberger met with the president on more than eight occasions to discuss the organization’s work on behalf of world government. At two of these meetings, Eichelberger reported that he personally handed FDR copies of commission reports that outlined their ideas of what this new world order should look like. Eleanor Roosevelt agreed so completely with the ideas and goals of the commission that she eventually became a member.

Money and other kinds of support flowed freely to the commission’s coffers. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) agreed to air, free of charge, weekly addresses by commission members and their guests. CBS also offered them two full days of free air time, over its Columbia Network, to broadcast the results of their work to the entire nation.
The commission’s influence on the soon-to-be-created UN is beyond question. In 1949, John Foster Dulles remarked that “the commission . . . made an indispensable contribution to the creation of the United Nations.” The introduction to *Building Peace*, an anthology of the commission’s reports published in the 1970s, accounts for the group’s influential role as follows:

It might not have been a mere coincidence that when the conference to establish the United Nations took place in San Francisco in 1945, forty-seven members of the Commission were there as members of the International Secretariat, members of the United States Delegation, or consultants to the United States Delegation. The Chairman of the Commission presided at the meetings of the consultants, and the director of the Commission chaired a committee of consultants representing various national organizations which were especially interested in problems of human rights and dependent peoples. It is not surprising, therefore, that when one compares the Commission’s report with the final text of the Charter of the United Nations, one can find a remarkable resemblance between a number of the Commission’s proposals and the text of the Charter, especially with respect to maintenance of international security (e.g., international air-force contingents), trusteeship (including the special problem of strategic areas), human rights, and economic and social cooperation.

The four individuals most responsible for the formation of the commission were James T. Shotwell, Quincy Wright, Clark Eichelberger, and Clyde Eagleton.

James T. Shotwell, professor of history at Columbia University, was the founder and chairman of the commission. Shotwell, along with most of the other commission members, was involved with several internationalist organizations. In addition to duties as commission chair, he was also president of the League of Nations Association and director of the division of economics and history of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (By coincidence, the president of the Carnegie Endowment was a Columbia University colleague of Shotwell’s, Nicholas Murray Butler, the university’s president.)

After World War I, Shotwell served as a delegate to the Versailles Peace Conference. He also helped outline the terms of the Pact of Locarno in 1925 and the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928, and he was a director of the Institute of Pacific Relations from 1927 to 1930. He would eventually be appointed as an assistant to President Roosevelt for organizing the UN (1943) and was the chairman of consultants to the U.S. delegation at the San Francisco UN Charter Conference in 1945.

Quincy Wright, professor of international law at the University of Chicago, supervised the section of the commission that explored the creation of a political international organization. He served on the central