

2017

H-Diplo

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Article Review

No. 725

16 November 2017

Article Review Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Web and Production Editor: George Fujii

H-Diplo Article Review on Daniel Gorman. “International Law and the International Thought of Quincy Wright, 1918-1945.” *Diplomatic History* 41:2 (April 2017): 336-361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhw052>.

URL: <http://tiny.cc/AR725>

Review by **Timothy Andrews Sayle**, University of Toronto

How to establish an international order that prevents war? In the interwar period, many scholars and diplomats looked to international law as the bricks and mortar with which to build such an order. Some of these hopes rested on a traditional use of law—a set of rules to the game of power politics. Why not just make a rule against war?¹ Others, however, and especially the University of Chicago political scientist and scholar of international law, Quincy Wright, came to believe that international law could do more than simply set rules. Its practice could change the game of international relations altogether. As Daniel Gorman argues, Wright played a major role in transforming international law “from a set of guidelines by which states governed their interactions to a tool for enacting peaceful change in international relations” (336). Gorman describes the evolution of Wright’s thinking, while making a strong case for Wright’s broader influence, pointing to his prodigious scholarly output and active participation in and connections to international affairs associations in the U.S., Britain, and Canada.

Wright’s efforts, and ultimately success, in “reposition[ing] international law as a cognate of progressive international relations,” derived from his study of the central problem in international relations: war (361). For Wright, Gorman argues, there was “no ideal system of international relations save that which prevented war.” Wright’s thinking about world citizenship, international law, and international organizations flowed from this first-order concern. According to Gorman, Wright thought that “[w]orld citizenship, underpinned by robust international law,” was the best means of achieving peace (336). Gorman explains just what these concepts meant—or came to mean—to Wright, and crucially, how Wright thought they could fit together to establish a more peaceful world.

Explaining Wright’s international thought is no easy task. While he was not a man of contradictions, he was certainly one of nuances. He had the tendencies both of a ‘realist’ and an ‘idealist,’ making him difficult to fit

¹ For a new take on the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, see Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, “Outlawing War? It Actually Worked.” *New York Times*, 3 September 2017, SR7.

into any of the neat slots provided by international relations theory (345). His pragmatism caused Wright to see both a world of independent states and a globe united by myriad interconnections and interdependencies. Wright supported some traditional ideas of international law, including international courts and codification of law, but was more a reformer than a traditionalist. He was a public advocate of the world federalist movement, especially in the lead-up and early days of the Second World War, yet he disagreed with another champion of world federalism, Clarence Streit as to whether world federalism could or should be built in opposition to an enemy, i.e. the Axis powers. And, crucially, Wright believed that a stable order did not mean rigid adherence to the status quo, but rather that a dynamic system was required to ensure stability and peace. Gorman's explanations of Wright's intricate and interlocking ideas call to mind a watchmaker's actions in skillfully taking apart and then reassembling the cogs.

The richness and originality of Gorman's study come from his careful attention to the complexity of Wright's thinking—the nuances mentioned above—and also from Gorman's placing of Wright's ideas in historical context. Wright's ideas were informed both by his scholarship, especially empirical case studies of war, but also by his experiences and the tumultuous contemporary events of the interwar period. His recognition of technological change, increasing global interdependence, and the powerful political ideologies of the interwar years all caused Wright to sense that wars were becoming increasingly dangerous and increasingly likely. Contemporary events informed his scholarship and lent his advocacy urgency.

Describing a thinker and a world of ideas can, of course, lead to abstractions. Gorman's biographical treatment of Wright helps provide important context and makes Wright's thinking more accessible. Gorman lends Wright's ideas texture by quoting from Wright's papers and publications, as well as his letters to colleagues that are found in archives in the United States and abroad. The article is at its best when Gorman explains the historical examples that illuminated Wright's thinking. Perhaps a longer treatment would allow for more such examples, but those offered are appropriate. The result, ultimately, is an article valuable for students of American international thought in the interwar period, of the development of international law, and of the origins of ideas that permeated thinking about international organizations in the postwar years.

Timothy Andrews Sayle is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of Toronto and Senior Fellow of the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History. In 2017-2018 he is the Bissell-Heyd Faculty Fellow of the Centre for Study of the United States in the Munk School of Global Affairs.