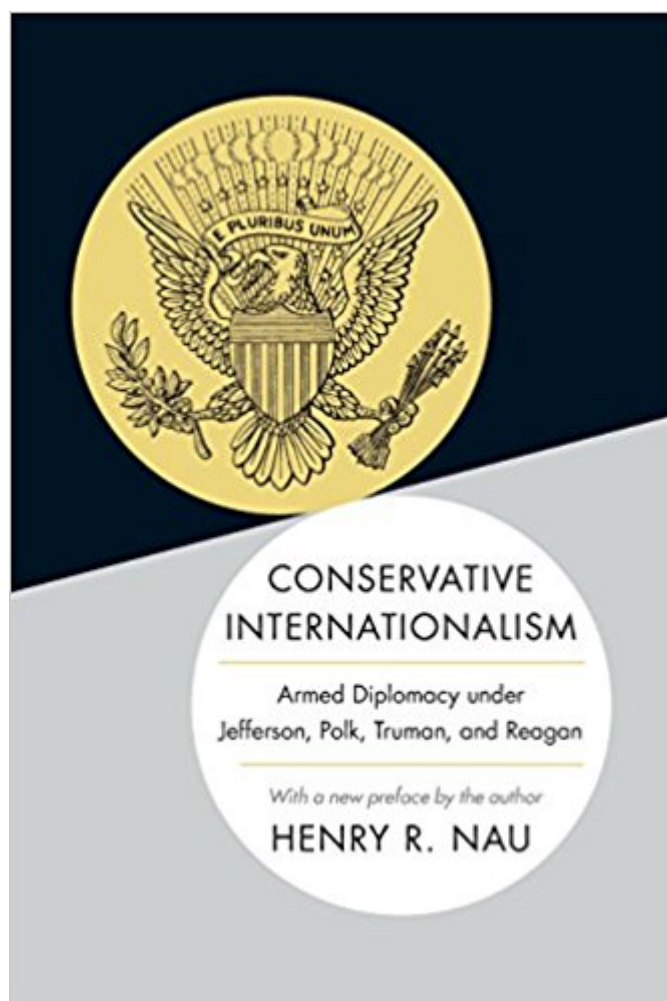


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# Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy Under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, And Reagan



## Synopsis

Debates about U.S. foreign policy have revolved around three main traditions--liberal internationalism, realism, and nationalism. In this book, distinguished political scientist Henry Nau delves deeply into a fourth, overlooked foreign policy tradition that he calls "conservative internationalism." This approach spreads freedom, like liberal internationalism; arms diplomacy, like realism; and preserves national sovereignty, like nationalism. It targets a world of limited government or independent "sister republics," not a world of great power concerts or centralized international institutions. Nau explores conservative internationalism in the foreign policies of Thomas Jefferson, James Polk, Harry Truman, and Ronald Reagan. These presidents did more than any others to expand the arc of freedom using a deft combination of force, diplomacy, and compromise. Since Reagan, presidents have swung back and forth among the main traditions, overreaching under Bush and now retrenching under Obama. Nau demonstrates that conservative internationalism offers an alternative way. It pursues freedom but not everywhere, prioritizing situations that border on existing free countries--Turkey, for example, rather than Iraq. It uses lesser force early to influence negotiations rather than greater force later after negotiations fail. And it reaches timely compromises to cash in military leverage and sustain public support. A groundbreaking revival of a neglected foreign policy tradition, *Conservative Internationalism* shows how the United States can effectively sustain global leadership while respecting the constraints of public will and material resources.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In the wake of Syria-related brinkmanship, it is easy to see, at the moment, how enduringly important it is to manage force in human affairs. . . . [Nau] identifies six traditions in American diplomatic history and connects each to at least one important president whose policies capture the tradition's outlook . . . the general reader can learn a good deal."--Wall Street Journal

"Nau is interesting, provocative, and sometimes convincing when he looks for signs of conservative internationalism through the long sweep of U.S. history. His description of that school of thought alone makes this book worth reading. . . . This is a valuable way of thinking about U.S. foreign policy for a post-Bush, post-Obama future."--Foreign Affairs

"Conservative Internationalism offers a rigorous and thought provoking conceptual look into an important dimension of U.S. foreign policy. It raises in particular the question of whether the literature on American liberal internationalism focuses too much on the 'liberal' and not enough on the 'internationalism.' If so, Nau tilts back the balance here."--Nicolas Bouchet, International Affairs

"Throughout this tightly reasoned book, Nau carefully defines relevant terms, identifies the key features and principles of conservative internationalism, and distinguishes it from nationalism, realism, and liberal internationalism. . . . This book would be a solid addition to courses on foreign policy or American politics."--Choice

"An important book for 2014, it sets out a manifesto for a classical liberal but non-isolationist approach to foreign policy."--Tyler Cowen, Marginal Revolution

"[Nau] has presented a useful reference work for researchers attempting to determine what inspires U.S. presidents to go to war and what dissuades them."--Wes Vernon, Washington Times

"In this book, Henry Nau accomplishes the seemingly impossible, by recovering conservative internationalism as one of America's long-standing and respected foreign policy traditions. In eliciting vigorous engagement from all political sides, his dispassionate and learned book makes us reexamine some of our most cherished assumptions about core aspects of world politics. No serious student of American foreign policy can afford not to read this book closely."--Peter J. Katzenstein, Cornell University

"Henry Nau is one of our wisest scholars of international relations, and that wisdom is on full display here. Cutting across today's exhausted political categories, his book is a vision of limited government and personal liberty at home and abroad, achieved through an international engagement pioneered by Thomas Jefferson and developed by three of America's most successful presidents. It is a vision that will surprise and challenge conservatives, liberals, and realists alike."--John Owen, University of Virginia

"Arguing for the existence and advantages of a distinct American foreign policy tradition called conservative internationalism, this book is engaging,

very well organized, and entirely relevant to current U.S. foreign policy problems. Grounded in a serious reading of the historical literature, and informed by a clear awareness of the main theoretical debates on the subject, this work is a worthy contribution to the field. There is no other book like it."--Colin Dueck, George Mason University

"In this compelling book, Nau identifies and defines conservative internationalism as an important but overlooked tradition in American foreign policy, from the time of Jefferson to Reagan. It is grounded in a deep understanding of American strategy and diplomatic history, and is integrated with a sophisticated treatment of competing currents in foreign policy analysis and prescription."--Robert J. Lieber, author of *No Common Power: Understanding International Relations*

Excellent review of nationalist, realist and liberal internationalist concepts of political activity and diplomacy. Identifies and explains conservative internationalism as a needed expansion of political theory approaches and provides convincing description of conservative internationalist policies in the Jefferson, Polk, Truman and Reagan administrations. A must read for understanding the structure of domestic and international political decision making.

This is an amazing, groundbreaking book. It adds an entire new theoretical construct to the lexicon of International Relations. Even though Conservative Internationalism has been around since the Founding Fathers, it has been unfairly pushed aside. Nau carefully makes both the past case and the current case for Conservative Internationalism at a time when the field of International Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy Analysis needs it most. Nau's ideas have bold color and moral clarity compared to the pale pastels of today's confused and disoriented foreign policy leaders. This is a must read for practitioners, members of the academy and the general public. It is sure to shape the foreign policy debate for the 2016 Presidential election as Americans wrestle with what constitutes the proper role for the U.S. military and diplomatic efforts. I would like to see this theory and its tenets added to International Relations text books and make it required reading for graduate students in IR and Foreign Policy. I will definitely teach this if I ever return to academia.

A breakthrough book for students and practitioners of international politics! Nau goes beyond two prevailing traditions: the liberal internationalists of the Wilsonian school and the realists who are only too happy to send Other People's Kids to their endless wars. Instead Nau provides a synthesis that melds the best traditions from American diplomatic history, back when the US did not always have the advantage of wielding the strongest hand. Instead, Nau analyzes how the cautious use of armed

diplomacy counters two recurring flaws: the excessive idealism of centralized international institutions (like the UN) or the go-it-alone reliance on American force. Best of all, Nau's work is relentlessly bi-partisan, from its Jeffersonian roots to the modern ideals of both Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan. This book is an antidote for the characteristic non-think of the Obama era, even offering hope for re-establishing the bipartisan consensus needed to confront 21st century challenges.

I find Nau's book to be more self-aggrandizing than an elevation of discourse in US Foreign Policy. In short, neither president discussed sat around with the other presidents or their cabinet and decided- we need to be conservative internationalists and these are the principles that should distinguish it. Mr. Nau selected the presidents, the situations, and a particular viewpoint on each situation to argue that international conservatism is a thing, that it works, and that it works better than other foreign policy ideologies/ frameworks. I think the interjection of a conservative international framework can provide meaningful discourse for foreign policy issues. I don't know why Mr. Nau felt a need to provide historical reference to validate such ideas. Especially when under Jefferson and Polk the US justified expansion through manifest destiny- historically, a decidedly nationalist foreign policy orientation. In addition, I would venture to guess that what a politician does and says not only depends on their ideology but on the realities of what is possible given other constraints as well- these other constraints do not enter Mr. Nau's equation for if and when to use armed diplomacy. This leaves international conservatism and armed diplomacy the same place as neo-liberalism where expected results are based on hope and wishful thinking. If it fails, it will rely on someone else to write about how it would have worked if there was better evidence; or it did work but not in the way we expected. Or, probably more likely, the next time a book is written by a conservative internationalist they'll include the failure episode as the work of a realists, nationals, or international liberals, or ignore it altogether.

One thing that strikes the reader about the book is its usefulness to today's foreign policy debates. That one needn't be a dove, or a war-like advocate of nation building toward troubled areas like the Middle East. But a proponent of measured force and armed diplomacy, as the author demonstrates were the successful approaches of Presidents Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan. From the shores of Tripoli to, well, the shores of Tripoli, as in the case of Jefferson's tackling of the Barbary Pirates to Reagan's face-down with a young Gaddafi of Libya. This timely book has great relevance to current hot spots like Iran and Ukraine. And impressive scholarship that imparts a great deal

about America's foreign-issue past, and future, in a highly readable style.

While it was a slow read for me, I must admit this book was very wonderful for someone who is just now entering the world of international study. Nau was ver concise is outlining the major goals of international relations and how different parties attempt to achieve their goals. I would recommend this to anyone who is beginning to study how the United States interacts with the rest of the world, and would imagine that even a seasoned student of diplomacy would benefit from the historical analysis the author puts forward to argue for armed diplomacy.

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