

## Foreign Powers and Intervention in Armed Conflicts

By Aysegul Aydin

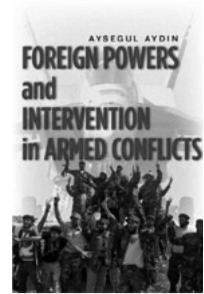
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Reasons are always abundant when the United States decides to intervene in an internal conflict. Politicians justify responses out of national interest. The media provide lasting images from the conflict, sometimes turning public opinion. International organizations react to violations of their laws or articles. While each reason might play a small role in intervention, Aysegul Aydin in *Foreign Powers and Intervention in Armed Conflicts* demonstrates domestic politics and economic concerns dominate intervention decisions.

Aydin advocates a framework emphasizing the role of domestic economic interests in international affairs. Viewing intervention through the lens of *economic liberalism*—explaining issues “around the core relationship of economic interests and their reflection on foreign policy through domestic political processes”—this book brings to the forefront internal dynamics in intervention. Beginning with the classification and definition of many frameworks, Aydin takes the reader through a literature review of scholarly intervention work to highlight liberalism as a substitute for realism. Shifting to quantitative data to stress the role of international trade, Aydin closes with a series of case studies highlighting the United States’ involvement in both civil wars and international conflicts.

For any reader outside the academic community, the beauty of the book does not appear until Chapter 5. The previous chapters present the reader with an exhaustive and dense theoretical framework that creates a link between economics and a state’s international role. Aydin then uses Chapter 2 to clarify multiple versions of intervention. Ranging from the classic response to war, to postconflict involvement to preserve peace, this chapter discusses the timing of the intervention, international law through the United Nations, and when coalitions are involved.

Once through the meticulous and tedious definition of intervention, Aydin breaks liberalism down in Chapter 3, “Defending Economic Interests Abroad.” Liberalism—at least to Aydin—is not meant to replace other theories, nor does it suggest that force must be eliminated from conflict. Instead, liberalism describes the circumstances surrounding the likelihood of force and highlights the relationship between foreign policy and economic interests. This understanding comes from a “bottom-up view of political decision making” that identifies the fundamental role individuals and private groups play. While the influence individuals have on public policy and intervention might seem distasteful—especially given the effects of any intervention—this chapter clarifies the role of small groups in different types of governments. Overall, Aydin does an excellent job of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of economic liberalism, but loses readers due to this section’s length, which would benefit from a consolidation of definitions.



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Unfortunately, the reader turns the page to Chapter 4, "In International Conflicts," and is faced with a slog of quantitative data. While empirical data is needed to prove the validity of Aydin's hypotheses, the presentation challenges any reader unfamiliar with regression tables. As a result, the amount of models tested can overwhelm some and limits this book's audience to only those familiar with, or interested in, these techniques.

The book closes strongly with a case study analysis as a test of Aydin's theory. Aydin reengages readers by intertwining economic liberalism with a brief history of American intervention. Through cases on twentieth-century conflict, Aydin focuses on two themes of US involvement: containing regional aggressors who threaten stability and keeping "direct military involvement at the minimum level possible." At first glance, the second theme appears weak but is later clarified as Aydin uses case studies to demonstrate influence through trade and ally relationships. Taking readers back through American history, Aydin uses Central American policy and Eisenhower's actions in the Middle East to invite the reader back into this book. Readers in the defense community will appreciate the successful application of Aydin's theory without the need to overemphasize quantitative data. In reading these cases, we come to understand the role trade and preserving the status quo plays in international policy.

Taking the case study analysis one step further, Aydin provides a chapter relevant to ongoing intervention debates in countries like Syria. Aydin ties together both quantitative and case study analyses to show that economic liberalism can also explain intervention in civil wars in Africa. Through this chapter's analysis, the book provides the reader insight into the decline in international conflict and today's increase in "civil violence." Despite the change in the type of conflict, intervention still occurs through diplomacy to maintain the same themes—status quo and limited direct military intervention—potentially explaining current American policies.

Not for all readers, *Foreign Powers and Intervention in Armed Conflicts* provides an economic view of intervention where states try to limit involvement until conflict affects the public good. Not quite providing the reasons most Americans are used to hearing on the nightly news, Aydin's book is also not what the reader expects when picking up a book this size. While the book would benefit from combining the data with the case studies, Aydin's economic liberalism proposal provides another alternative to when countries intervene, allowing the defense professional to add another perspective.