Grynaviski, Eric. *America's Middlemen: Power at the Edge of Empire*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p.324, $24.

In *America's Middlemen: Power at the Edge of Empire*, political scientist Eric Grynaviski investigates how intermediaries shaped United States foreign policy and imperial expansion from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Challenging studies of United States foreign policy and international relations that focus on national leaders and political elites, Grynaviski maintains that "intermediaries used their structural position between societies to help the United States recruit the tribes, militias, and rebels whom the United States has historically depended on to conduct its foreign policy" (3). Individuals whose influence stemmed "from [their] position between societies rather than within societies," traders, missionaries, and adventurers functioned as intermediaries who brokered the alliances with the non-state allies that the US relied upon to achieve military victory and expand their empire in North America and across the globe (2).

Grynaviski begins by outlining a new network-based theory of intermediary influence. In world society, "structural holes" occur where no individual exists to connect contained clusters of individuals. By filling these structural holes, intermediaries with weak ties to certain clusters can promote cross-group cooperation by acting as gatekeepers of knowledge and emphasizing or fabricating shared goals, thus exercising what Grynaviski calls the "power of betweenness" (2). In this way, bicultural and peripheral figures with weak connections to formal centers of power found ways to broker alliances between non-state actors and the US from the Revolutionary War to the invasion of Iraq.

One of the study's key historiographic contributions involves applying insights from borderlands studies to the analysis of United States foreign policy. Grynaviski contends that, by incorporating perspectives from the periphery of the United States and its burgeoning empire, scholars can both recognize how "the outcome of local power struggles could greatly affect trade, war, and settlement patterns" and appreciate how "social skill, hybridity, and settlement patterns become forms of power" (285). Here Grynaviski utilizes an approach familiar to early American historians. Scholars such as Richard White, James Merrell, and more recently Kathleen DuVal have explored the varying ways hybridity, brokerage, intermediaries, and cross-cultural alliances have influenced the development

of empires in North America.[1] While these historians often emphasize how the relationships between Euro-Americans and non-Euro-Americans shifted and often deteriorated as the US expanded, Grynaviski limits his attention to the intermediaries whose goals and motivations overlapped with US interests.

Grynaviski then highlights the work of intermediaries in US foreign policy in a series of episodic chapters covering the American Revolution, the First Barbary War, the Civil War, the annexation of American Samoa, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, World War 2, and the invasion of Afghanistan. Throughout these chapters Grynaviski contends that figures marginal to the American state crafted avenues of cooperation with non-state allies, which he defines as political, religious or ethnic groups who cooperated with the United States but did not feature the level of modern statehood that IR scholars associate with states. Notable chapters feature how Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland bridged the structural gap between Oneidas and American rebels and how James Leander Cathcart, a US diplomat enslaved by Barbary Pirates for a decade, and William Eaton, a former soldier and adventurer fluent in Arabic, helped stage a coup attempt in Tripoli during the Barbary Wars. In a detailed chapter on the annexation of Samoa, Grynaviski outlines how an adventurer, a plantation owner, and a missionary brokered cooperation with Samoan political factions and brought the island to the attention of the US.

Grynaviski's work represents a fresh challenge to traditional US international relations scholars by recognizing the pivotal roles peripheral figures and non-state allies played in directing the growth of the United States' empire. Working with archives privileging the perspectives of "ship captains, traders, missionaries, slaves, and others," Grynaviski demonstrates that social connections forged between marginal intermediaries and non-state actors were more influential than military might in provoking American expansion (15). By emphasizing how figures such as Kirkland and Eaton or groups such as the Oneida and Samoan partisans were key factors in directing and supporting the imperial and military efforts of the United States, Grynaviski provides a study that decenters the state while identifying frontiers as sites of power throughout US history.

[1] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999); Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2015).

By focusing on the power of betweenness as a product of social structures, however, Grynaviski downplays the cultural beliefs and informal ties influencing the actions of intermediaries. Many of the cultural brokers discussed in the book who held a "position between societies" were nonetheless informed by United States cultural and social forces. Though knowledgeable in Oneida languages and customs, Kirkland was also a missionary who believed in the civilizing power of Euro-American religion and society. Despite his Arabic, Eaton's long history as a US soldier points to the informal ties of loyalty he felt to the United States. H. J. Moors - the largest American plantation owner in Samoa who pushed for the annexation of the island - was fully immersed in contemporary ideas of American capitalism. While Garrett Graveraet – a French-Anishinaabe who helped recruit Anishinaabek to the Union army – stands as an example of someone who truly existed between but not wholly a part of a single society, he was joined by another recruiter, former trader Edwin Andress, who may have misrepresented the benefits of allying with the Union to the Anishinaabek he helped recruit. In overemphasizing the biculturalism or "betweenness" of these figures, Grynaviski underplays how the motivations of these intermediaries made them borderland imperialists that did not fully exist between societies. Instead, they sojourned between societies while remaining intellectually and culturally grounded to prominent US social mores and values. Even those who claimed the cultural competency to understand non-western cultures and worldviews often used this insight to forge cooperation for reasons congruent with US interests.

Despite this issue, *America's Middlemen* presents a thoughtful corrective to IR scholars who fail to look beyond Washington, DC, when tracing the contours of American power. More than just a product of elite imperial agendas, the American empire emerged from the myriad motives and decisions made by peripheral intermediaries promoting cooperation with non-state allies around the globe.

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