



Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations Before and After Borders

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations

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Nomads have traditionally gotten short shrift from the sedentary peoples of the world. Settled peoples have long understood their mobile or pastoral neighbors as uncivilized. Herodotus described the Scythian nomads, at the edge of the Greek world, in such terms.

The Scythians ruled Asia for twenty-eight years, and life was disrupted everywhere because of their arrogance and brutality. In addition to the tribute that they exacted and imposed on everyone, they would ride through the land plundering and seizing whatever else they wanted. (Herodotus, 2009, p. 61)

The Scythians, we are told, had no settled homes, migrated with changes in climate, and raided settled peoples at their convenience. More broadly,

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they were said to adopt strategies in war that would have seemed barbaric to the sedentary Greeks: they engaged in cannibalism, drank their enemies' blood, mutilated their corpses, blinded their slaves, and punished with death observance of foreign customs by their own people. Indeed, Herodotus (2009) cast the Scythian people as idealized barbarians (pp. 42, 61, 281, 308, 311).

We may be tempted to read in Herodotus an ancient and distinctively occidental bias against the peoples of Asia—that would be wrong. Almost two millennia ago, the great Chinese historian Sima Qian (1993) described the Xiongnu nomadic empire on the Qin Dynasty's northern fringe in similar, if much less inflammatory, terms:

It is the custom of the Xiongnu to support themselves in ordinary times by following their flocks and hunting, but in times of hardship they take up arms to raid. This would appear to be their nature. ... [In war,] When it is to their advantage, they advance; when not they retreat, as they see no shame in retreat. (p. 55)

Sources from the cores of both the ancient western and eastern worlds, respectively, describe nomadic peoples as backward, naturalistic, marginal, and uncivilized. And yet, the Scythians had defeated the Persian Empire. For this, Herodotus could not help but admire them. He writes that they had made:

... the most important discovery we know of concerning human affairs ... They have discovered how to prevent any attacker from escaping them and how to make it impossible for anyone to overtake them against their will. For instead of establishing towns or walls, they are all mounted archers who carry their homes along with them and derive their sustenance not from cultivated fields but from their herds. Since they make their homes on carts, how could they not be invincible or impossible even to engage in battle? (Herodotus, 2009, p. 301)

Imperial China too was often unsuccessful in pacifying the steppe nomads on its frontier and was occasionally conquered by them. These civilizations could deride their nomadic neighbors but did so at their peril. More than a thousand years later, at the heart of the *Pax Islamica*, Ibn Khaldun wrote of nomads generally that “Savagery has become their character and nature. They enjoy it, because it means freedom from authority and no subservience to leadership. Such a natural disposition is the negation and antithesis of civilization” (quoted in Scott, 2009, p. 324). Here again, rejection

mixes with implied admiration of nomadic freedom.¹ As Scott (2009, p. 29) notes, “states and nomadic peoples are twins ... joined in a sometimes rancorous but unavoidable embrace.”

What are we to make of this? While the powerful nomadic empires of the premodern world are gone, resentment of nomadic peoples persists as will be made clear throughout this volume. Indeed, the denigration of the nomadic by settled peoples has long been a feature of the latter’s written histories. These biases have crept into contemporary social science, where nomads have been marginalized, Orientalized, treated as backward, or simply ignored. So it was, until recently, in the field of International Relations (IR), where attention to nomadic peoples was rare and even more rarely complimentary. However, the field’s broadening agenda of the last few decades has seen this begin to change. IR theory, once focused narrowly on great powers, has paid increasing attention to non-state actors in world politics. This research has generally emphasized either large and powerful transnational actors—international organizations or multinational corporations—or small but exceptional groups with outsized real or potential impact on the state system, such as terrorist groups (Kydd & Walter, 2006; Pape, 2003) and cyber activists (Wong & Brown, 2013).² But, with exceptions, such work has often been historically limited in scope.³ Relatively little attention has been paid by IR scholars to other types of actors in world politics. This volume takes one such group, and the effects it has had on international relations, as a distinct object of study. We focus on transnational nomads—communities of people who are or have been migratory as a matter of practice and identity. Historically, nomadic groups have appeared in most if not all inhabited territories and have often predated sedentary modes of social organization. IR scholars have begun—but only begun—to take the nomadic seriously (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, pp. 67–77; Hall, 2018; Kwan, 2016; MacKay, 2016; MacKay, Levin,

¹ For a comparison of all three historians, see Stuurman (2013).

² Examples proliferate (c.f., Keohane, 1995; Keohane & Nye, 2001; Kratochwil & Ruggie, 1986; Martin & Simmons, 1998; Milner, 1997; Simmons & Martin, 2001; Smith, 2000), or those groups that pose overt security threats to states, such as terrorists, guerrillas, drug cartels, and the like (c.f., Booth & Dunne, 2002; Duyvesteyn, 2004; Kolodziej, 1992; Laqueur, 1998; Singer, 2001; Tucker, 1998; Walt, 1991).

³ Perhaps the largest exception is historical IR focused on non-state “international” systems, especially in premodern East (Kang, 2010; Lee, 2016) and South (Pardesi, 2018; Phillips & Sharman, 2015) Asia. Even here though, the emphasis is on state-like actors and their proxies.

de Carvalho, Cavoukian, & Cuthbert, 2014; Neumann, 2011; Neumann & Wigen, 2013, 2018; Russie, 1993, p. 149; van der Pijl, 1995).

The chapters in this volume explore, explain, and interrogate this relationship between nomads and states. Nomads undermine or stand outside of the core features of the modern international order. The constitutive unit of that order—the Weberian state (Weber, 1978, p. 54)—requires of populations things nomadic peoples are not historically inclined toward. Modern and western state consolidation has commonly been understood as depending on the coercing, documenting, taxing, and conscripting power of governments. Nomads are less easily coerced than settled populations, are difficult to track or otherwise administratively document, and are thus also difficult to tax or conscript. The potential antipathy between nomads and modern territorial state-builders and administrators is quite deep.

And yet, nomadic peoples themselves have often been ambitious builders of political order. We know this in no small part from the history of the Eurasian steppe. The nomadic empires of the region were founded by large concatenations of migratory peoples, who conquered their sedentary peripheries in the Eurasian east, west, and south. Among them, the Chinggisid Mongol Empire, territorially one of the largest empires in history, is merely the best known (Morgan, 2007). The Timurid Empire controlled much of Central Asia and the Middle East during the late fourteenth century (Manz, 1999). The Qing Dynasty is now understood chiefly as a Manchu imperium, founded by northeast Asian post-nomads (Rowe, 2012; Waley-Cohen, 2004). The Manchus conquered not only Ming China but also a diverse range of peoples on the eastern steppe and in the inner Asian highlands, a space stretching from Mongolia, through Xinjiang, to Tibet, and beyond, toward Southeast Asia.⁴ They were hardly alone—the Russian and Ottoman Turkish empires both had origins linked to Inner Asia as well (Neumann & Wigen, 2013, pp. 321–22). These large, multicultural, and politically flexible orders structured political life across large swaths of Eurasia for centuries. They were created not by suppressing nomadic cultures, but by those very cultures themselves.

Such political projects seem unimaginable today. Nomads in the modern state, such as the Roma in much of Eastern Europe (see Guglielmo & Waters, 2005; Mišina & Cruickshank, in this volume; Shaha, 2007;

⁴This space partially parallels what Scott (2009), after van Schendel (2002), has called “Zomia.”

Simhandl, 2006), the Bedouin in Israel (see Falah, 1989; Havatzelet, 2006; Krakover, 1999; Meir, in this volume), the Sámi people in Sweden (see Hall, in this volume), the Maasai of East Africa (see Azarya, 1996; Enghoff, 1990; Galaty, in this volume; Ndagala, 1990; Ochieng, 2007), and others are commonly marginalized by their host polities—often relegated to migration in residual spaces unwanted by sedentary populations, or settled into economic privation at the margins of urban areas. In settler colonial states, indigenous peoples, some of them historically migratory, practice their historical lifeways largely within the confines of reservations and in parts of those countries with sparse settler populations.⁵ Even in places like Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, where nomadic peoples are the titular nationalities, nomadism has become increasingly marginal. Populations are largely sedentary and increasingly urbanized. Even as they shaped the rise of the modern state system itself, nomadic peoples have been impacted by the emergence of the modern state and international system as much as, or perhaps more, than other groups. The place of nomadism in the modern state and state system, and in their history, thus seems especially important and especially fraught.

Nomadic migration presents a historically rich and varied area of empirical inquiry for IR. The term nomad appears simple, but in fact captures strikingly varied modes of social order. Pastoral nomads migrate primarily to graze livestock. Other groups—such as the Roma—travel, but not for pastoral reasons. The scale of social organization may vary enormously as well, from small hunter-gatherer groups prone to division, and thus persistently small size, to the nomadic empires of the Eurasian steppe, which grew, in part, as they conquered sedentary groups. Nor is nomadism an absolute value: a group may meaningfully be described as semi-nomadic, moving occasionally, or in seasonal cycles, but remain in a given place for as long as a season or more (a practice known as transhumance). Moreover, pastoralism did not necessarily precede sedentary life. Premodern peoples in many cases may have been settled or semi-nomadic, only to “achieve” full pastoral nomadic status by mobilizing permanent flocks for long-term migratory grazing.⁶

⁵Work on indigenous peoples in IR is small but growing—see, for example, Crawford (1994, 2017), Keal (2003).

⁶This review is based primarily on Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson (1980) and Brockington (2006).

Scholars have attributed a range of motives for migration as well. The migratory peoples of the Eurasian steppe were once thought to have been mobile for reasons linked to climatic pressures (Lattimore, 1940) or in dynamic interaction with settled peoples (Mackinder, 1904). On such accounts, the political lives of nomads were determined either by environmental shifts in available resources, driving patterns of movement and interaction with settled peoples, or as a response to settled peoples themselves. Accounts of the latter kind remain especially persistent.⁷ For example, Scott (2009) argues that the upland nomadic peoples of Southeast Asia might be thought of as innovating mobile and geographically remote social orders to escape the taxing and conscripting privations of emerging lowland states.

Unlike IR scholars, modern territorial states have taken nomads seriously, as the chapters below demonstrate. Far from treating them as inconsequential, states have often marginalized and mistreated them. States have routinely forced nomads from, and then refused entry into or passage through their territories. In other cases, nomads have been the target of ethnic cleansing, genocide, or forced sedentarization. Indeed, the last century has seen the vast majority of the world's nomadic population targeted for settlement, denying them their most basic cultural characteristic: mobility. Such treatment poses a puzzle: why have states treated nomads, putatively small and marginal social groups in the modern world, as a threat? Moreover, why does the treatment of nomadic populations vary across cases, from exclusion to forced settlement? The authors in this volume explore these questions from a variety of perspectives and disciplinary identities. They do so with reference to factors falling into two broad categories: on the one hand, those involving the military and economic capacity of states; and on the other, those involving the identity of states as particular political communities.

DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORK

We define nomads according to three criteria that differentiate them from the modern, territorially bounded exclusive state but also from refugees, economic migrants, ethnic minorities, diaspora groups, and other mobile

⁷ See, especially, the canonical systematic account in Barfield (1989, 2001). See, differently, Di Cosmo (2002), Beckwith (2009) and Rogers (2012) on the Steppe. For a review aimed at IR, see MacKay (2016, pp. 482–87).

or marginalized groups. First, they must practice or have practiced nomadism: they must be, or historically have tended to be, migratory, and thus not historically practice landholding agriculture or hold individual title to land.⁸ They must have, so to speak, little or no fixed address. Second, nomadism must be central to their self-understanding. Nomadic peoples are thus distinct from refugees, economic migrants, or other peoples made mobile by circumstances apart from identity. Third, at least in the context of the modern world, these practices must be, or must historically have been, transnational. While there are examples of domestic nomadism, such as the Irish Travelers, our study is concerned with those nomads who, upon encountering territorially delimited states, cross borders—an activity that makes their relationship with the modern territorial state especially acute.

We term nomads “pre-state actors.” We do not intend “pre” in the sense of chronological priority. Nomads may predate the states they interact with, but need not do so—indeed, they may emerge *out* of state-like societies, as Scott (2009) has shown. Instead, we intend conceptual priority or independence. Nomads, unlike most of what are now termed non-state actors, are not in principle reliant on the state as a source of legal order (as are, e.g., multinational corporations or refugees), nor as an interlocutor (as are NGOs), nor even as an enemy (as are terrorist or insurgent organizations).⁹ Nomads are pre-state not in the sense of predating the state (though this they often do), but in the sense of being conceptually prior to it, and having in their political structures no necessary relationship to it. Put simply, we can define nomadic life as such without reference to the modern, territorial state. They present a challenge to the state’s claims to unique power and legitimacy as a site of social order. Put differently, nomadic societies are not just non-state actors. They are non-state *political communities*, independent, or potentially so, in their modes of social

⁸This is not to overlook historical instances of nomads settling voluntarily or previously nomadic peoples now settled in territorial states (e.g., Fulbe, Mongol). See Azarya (1996) who emphasizes increased wealth and political resources, along with related forces of political stratification as primary factors related to voluntary state formation among African nomadic groups. Interestingly, voluntary nomadic settlement in Africa appears to have been conditional on continued pastoral production. An exception might be relations between nomads and the Soviet Union, where a focus on economic development may have been more pressing than security concerns.

⁹Even such “illegal” or illegitimate non-state actors as these take advantage of, and depend on, the legitimate structures of states, even as they may be violently set against them. In some cases, these groups oppose existing states to carve out status of their own.

ordering. As such, they challenge the modern state's claim to territorially delimited exclusive political legitimacy (Weber, 1978).

This definition captures a relatively broad swath of peoples and social orders, from the nomadic empires of Inner Asia to the itinerant Roma of modern Europe. However, if nomadic peoples themselves have varied widely, premodern state-like political orders, and especially modern states, have been relatively consistent in treating nomads with disdain, distrust, and sometimes aggression. As the examples above indicate, nomadic peoples have sometimes represented clear and present dangers to sedentary life—the Chinggisid Mongol expansion is the most obvious of many instances. But during the period of the modern state's predominance in world politics—roughly the last three centuries in Europe, a century or more in most of Asia, and a minimum of many decades elsewhere—nomadic peoples have been relatively weak, posing little serious risk to the states with whom they interact.

Economically, nomads rarely have a great impact on modern states, their transnational capital flows, or level of development. From a security perspective, nomads scarcely pose a danger. Nevertheless, transnational nomads do present a series of material challenges to state sovereignty and efficient operation of the modern bureaucratic state. For example, the nomadic lifestyle undermines the state's capacity to assign property rights, collect taxes, conscript citizens, and otherwise regulate their populations. Furthermore, their transnational mobility challenges the state's ability to effectively control its borders. As a result, enforcement of immigration protocols, customs regimes, and livestock control measures may be undermined by the passage of nomads across international boundaries.

But perhaps more importantly, their lack of fixity constitutes a series of conceptual or identity-based challenges to the state. For example, the movement of people across borders stands at odds with the project of modern nationalism. In particular, the presence of nomadic minorities challenges the putative linguistic, cultural, religious, and historic homogeneity on which ethno-nationalism bases its claims to legitimacy (Anderson, 2006). The movement of a cohesive group across, and their presence within, national borders stands at odds with the notion that a particular geographically bounded area (i.e., a state) is the exclusive home to one people who share a common language, culture, and history (i.e., a nation), a core claim of ethno-nationalists. In this sense, after the military threat of nomadic empires declined permanently, the threat posed by

nomadic groups, however small, to the idea of the modern nation state emerged.

Among premodern states, migratory peoples were commonly derided as uncivilized, barbarian, or archaic (Scott, 2009). These biases seem to have persisted even in the context of scant material threats. Thus, for example, the sedentary lowland peoples of Southeast Asia once referred to migratory hill tribes as “our living ancestors”: peoples who persisted in a prior, less civilized, more naturalistic way of life, after the lowlanders had become more sophisticated and mature (Scott, 2009, pp. 8, 117).¹⁰ Similarly, the Roma are subjects of persistent racial bias in Europe today despite their relatively marginal and non-threatening status. These biases are not new—the Roma were targeted for genocide by the Nazis, and had been subject to racial bias long beforehand. These observations suggest a second pattern of conflictual interactions between states and nomads—one linked not to military nor economic threats but instead to differences of, and threats to, identity. The nomadic peoples around premodern China and Southeast Asia, whether large or small, confronted settled peoples as a fundamental *other*, whether in open conflict or not—a counter identity group, against which they could constitute their own identities, and in opposition to which they could imagine themselves as more civilized, sophisticated, and eventually, modern.

However, these are not the only concerns nomadism presents to the modern state. This threat extended beyond the ethno-nationalist desire for a homogeneous population to the spatial organization of the nation state. The contemporary world is almost entirely carved up into discrete political entities—territorially bounded, contiguous, and mutually exclusive. State governments with the ultimate authority in their domains. Fixed and monopolistic territoriality is important not only to the efficiency of modern states (Spruyt, 1996) but is also a defining element of their identity. But as Ruggie (1993) argues, territorial governance is neither necessary nor inevitable. Indeed, rule need not be fixed, territorial, or mutually exclusive.¹¹ Nomadic groups offer such an alternative model of

¹⁰ Scott (2009) goes on to note that these characterizations were not terribly accurate. Often these nomadic identity groups were of quite recent vintage, emerging as populations fled the privations of premodern states.

¹¹ For example, in much of the world, for much of history, authority was based on kinship and not seated in any particular territorial domain. Such groups occupied territory, Ruggie (1993?) explains, “but it did not define them.” (p. 149) And, even where territorial claims

social organization, for which territoriality is important but not geographically fixed. For nomadic groups, authority is not seated in any territorial domain. Rule may be based on kinship. Indeed, it is the movement between various territories, rather than fixed territorial order, that exemplifies nomadism.¹²

The authors in this volume assess nomadic politics, in particular nomad-state relations, from multiple perspectives. Rather than advancing a narrowly unified analytical framework, our combined purpose is exploratory. The authors, focusing on the interface between nomads and modern states, find these relationships shaped by a range of factors. States are motivated by economic, military, ideological, and cultural motives. In some instances, states, committed to territorially exclusive notions of statehood, coerce nomads, forcibly settling and assimilating them, or expelling them. Others ignore nomadism or adopt flexible institutional arrangements to accommodate migration.

Of course, nomads are not merely the referent objects of the state. They have also pushed back against the state in various ways. As many of the authors in this volume show, nomadic peoples of multiple kinds have developed wide ranging responses to the state, from every day modes of resistance such as foot dragging, to irregular violence, and, ultimately, to escape, in the form of out-migration.¹³ Inversely, some nomadic groups have faced the intrusions of the state by becoming states themselves, either conquering existing states or retreating into the vacuums of the international system to form their own. In the most extreme cases, nomads have become the centers of empires, founding the imperial confederacies of the premodern Inner Asian steppe.

The chapters in this volume focus on either or both of these lines of argument in varying ways. Some look at the treatment of one or another nomadic group(s) by the state or states with which they interact. Others focus on the intellectual history of nomadism as it bears on the idea of the state—both as a material threat to it and as a matter of identity formation and consolidation. The authors have in common a drive to question

were relatively fixed, rule need not be “mutually exclusive.” For example, medieval Europe and the European Union are characterized by overlapping rights and responsibilities.

¹²Nomads are thus somewhat different from ethno-national diasporas, which are detached from their traditional territory but are not defined by being traditionally migratory or pastoral.

¹³On various modes of peasant resistance, see Scott (1977, 1985, 1998, 2009).

received conceptions of the relationship between states and nomads in multiple new ways.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE VOLUME

We divide the chapters below into three sections. The first offers theoretical insights into the state-nomad relationship. The second and longest section locates these ideas historically, exploring specific cases of the treatment of nomads by sedentary populations. The third section explores how nomads have pushed back and continue to push back against the state. Finally, the concluding chapter attempts to problematize some of the underlying assumptions in the volume.

In Chap. 2, Thomas Barfield considers the core problematique of state-nomad interaction in terms of the challenge each poses to the other. Territorial states have long perceived nomads as challengers and organized against them. In response, nomads living on the borders of states developed political and military strategies allowing them to remain independent. In some cases, they conquered settled states, while in others they lose territory, move on, and re-establish themselves elsewhere. As a result, he argues, the majority of the world's territory was outside the control of territorial states up to the early modern period. However, the rise of new transportation and military technologies in the nineteenth century allowed states to win out, displacing other forms of rule, such as those of nomadic groups. In Chap. 3, Erik Ringmar addresses the persistent bias against nomadic peoples and lifeways in Western political thought, from the Classics through the Enlightenment. Political theory, he argues, developed with nomads as its foil. The nomadic way of way of life is framed as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”—a condition from which we need rescue. The state provides such an escape. And yet, he argues, for much of human history, it was sedentary peoples, not nomads, that led lives of drudgery. Nomadic society enjoyed greater abundance and was more consensual and egalitarian than its sedentary counterparts. Ringmar concludes that the nomadic foil helped excuse the sharp inequalities of sedentary life. In Chap. 4, Jamie Levin, Gustavo de Carvalho, Kristin Cavoukian, and Ross Cuthbert discuss the dual threats nomads pose to the modern nation state: material and ideational. On the one hand, they argue nomads undermine the states capacity to tax, conscript, and otherwise regulate their population. On the other, nomads constitute a non-material threat by disrupting the state's territorial

configuration. They argue that states respond to these threats in various ways, from accommodation to forced sedentarization, depending on state capacity.

Filippo Costa-Buranelli opens part two of the volume with a discussion of the encounter between the Russian empire and the nomadic populations on the periphery of Europe in the nineteenth century. He argues that the empire cast the nomads of the Eurasian steppe as uncivilized barbarians and a threat to the European order. By exporting the model of territorial governance to the extra-European domain, he argues, the Russians helped stabilize and extend the Europe order, making Russia more European in the process. In Chap. 6, John Galaty explores political dynamism at the frontiers of several African states and whether the relative strength of those states explains how fragile or resilient the nomadic/state relationship is and whether it is detrimental or advantageous to states and trans-border communities. In Chap. 7, Martin Hall explores the treatment of the Sámi population in Sweden, which, he argues, acted uniquely among states in the nineteenth century in reinforcing nomadic activities. He argues that this occurred for two reasons. First, the Sámi were associated with reindeer herding, then an important economic activity, and tending migratory flocks necessitated nomadism. Second, the Swedish national identity being fostered at the time romanticized the Sámi. In Chap. 8, Kathleen A. Galvin, Danielle Backman, Matthew W. Luizza, and Tyler A. Beeton discuss the increasing number of land conservancies in Africa. The privatization of land meant to preserve nature tends to lead to sedentarization of nomadic populations. They ask what the causes of this shift are and whether they will allow nomadic groups to preserve their historic way of life.

The third section begins with Avinoam Meir's discussion of the ongoing struggle for rights by the Bedouin population of Israel. While the Bedouin have been largely sedenterized in the past century they still retain many aspects of their previous nomadic ways of existence, particularly surrounding political, social, and territorial organization. It is here, he argues, that the Bedouin have pushed back against the incursions of the state with an arsenal of largely non-violent practices of resistance. In Chap. 10, Joseph MacKay describes three categories of nomadic organization in Ming and Qing China: The nomadic peoples of the Inner Asian Steppe, which occasionally constituted themselves as rival empire; the smaller upland nomadic peoples, which were habitually constructed as the "other" by the Chinese state; and seagoing pirates that occasionally preyed on the

rural margins of the Chinese state—and suggests that a different mode of state response followed from each, from containment and warfare to domestication. In Chap. 11 Cynthia Chou argues that “being tribal” is “not a passive condition, but the active *agency of individuals*.” Following Scott (2009), she discusses how nomadic groups in the Malay world have created a mobile existence to fend off the apparatus of the state. It is not because they do not know of other ways to organize themselves, she argues, rather it is because they have not yielded to the power of the state. In Chap. 12, Dalibor Mišina and Neil Cruickshank explore the viability of a trans-territorial or non-territorial Romani state within Europe. The Roma, Europe’s single largest minority group, have experienced acute forms of discrimination and maltreatment at the hands of government and civil society, without having had an institutional arrangement through which they could meaningfully address their condition of ongoing marginalization. They argue that the formation of a Romani state would significantly alter Romani relationships with the European community by creating an institutional framework for engaging with Europe on more equal terms.

Finally, in the concluding chapter Kiran Banerjee and Craig Damian Smith attempt to problematize some of the underlying assumptions in the volume. Like nomads, they write that the issue of human mobility more broadly has been neglected in the literature, consigned to the domain of “low politics.” They argue that a focus on nomads leaves in place the dominant paradigm of a world inhabited primarily by stationary people in bounded states. They attempt to complicate this view by showing that mobility, contingency of borders, and migration controls have long been the dominant order.

These diverse accounts are unified by several themes. First, the scholars in this volume focus on nomads as the constructed *other* of the state, showing how understandings of nomads have been leveraged by theorists and state authorities alike to make sense of the territorially exclusive state itself. Thus, Ringmar shows us the persistent bias against the nomadic in European political thought—a bias that deployed the category of the nomad as a foil to make sense of political order itself. Similarly, Levin shows that states experience the nomadic as a challenge to identity, as well as to military or economic security. Empirical chapters by Costa-Buranalli, Hall, Galaty, and Galvin et al. show states responding to nomads in various coercive ways in the cases of Russia, the Sámi, and East African pastoralists, respectively.

Second, however, in so doing, many of these authors take the second step of inverting the narrative, showing how states have informed nomadic strategies, thinking, and beliefs. Thus, Barfield finds historical nomads ordering themselves in new and elaborate ways in response to state encroachment. MacKay finds diverse nomadic groups around late imperial China responding in a range of ways to the expansion, consolidation, and decline of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Chou and Meir explore the strategies nomads have used to push back against the state. And Mišina and Cruickshank explore the possibility of a contemporary non-territorial nomadic state. Whatever states and their experts may have told themselves, historically, nomads have not taken state encroachment lying down. Their responses have been not just powerful but also at times innovative, as shown in these cases.

Third, a central theme is the form that rivalry takes. As we have argued above, nomads challenge states—indeed, states and nomads challenge one another—not just in terms of conventional measures of physical security but also in terms of identity construction and persistence. Once states came to understand nomads as their other, they could remain who they were only by continuing to understand migratory peoples in this way. Thus, Levin’s focus on ontological security makes the “nomadic other” a central feature of state identity building and maintenance. Indeed, contemporary experience suggests this bias may be unusually deep-seated.

These linkages indicate the depth and breadth of material nomadism offers IR as an area of investigation. The chapters in this volume aim to develop the nomadic interface with the modern state system as a new thematic area of inquiry for the field. In so doing, they develop points of contact with several important existing literatures in IR theory. The emerging literature on historical IR, especially among constructivists (e.g., Mitzen, 2013; Nexon, 2009; Reus-Smit, 1999), the abovementioned focus on non-state actors, a focus on international ordering outside the west, both historically (Kang, 2010; Phillips & Sharman, 2015) and more recently (e.g., Acharya, 2001), and a broader focus on developing IR theory itself, beyond the West (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). These diverse, historically and socially thick literatures constitute the context in which this volume intervenes.

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