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Nomad – State Relationships in International Relations: Before and After Borders.

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Throughout history, nomads have been considered to be out on the frontier, wandering aimlessly around the far borders of civilisation. Nomadic people were usually described as backward and uncivilised. Even today, nomads are still misunderstood, marginalised and often treated with disdain by settled peoples. Fortunately, there is now increasing recognition of the value of nomad's traditional ecological knowledge and the efficacy of many of the livestock and grazing management practices that nomads still use. However, the general consensus is that nomads have largely been resented, treated without sympathy and given little attention by sedentary peoples or nation states.

Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations is a welcome addition to our understanding of nomadic peoples. While the volume centers on nomadic pastoralists it also addresses reindeer herders (Sami), sea nomads and the Roma (widely known in English as Gypsies). The orientation is on transnational nomads from an international relations lens; a field where attention to nomadic people is limited. Thus, our understanding of the relationship between nomads and nation states is greatly broadened.

The thirteen chapters are divided into an introduction followed by three sections and a concluding chapter. The first section provides theoretical understandings about state-nomad relationships. The second section situates the theoretical insights historically, providing specific explanations of how nomads were treated by sedentary people and nation states. The third section discusses how nomads have historically challenged the state and continue to do so in many cases. The final concluding chapter raises questions about some of the assumptions made in the volume regarding nomad interactions with states. All the chapters have extensive references.

The Introduction by Jamie Levin and Joseph MacKay provides an overview of how nomadic peoples have been viewed unfavorably throughout history and how nomads stand outside the modern international order. The authors point out, however, that nomads were often great architects of political order, with the Mongol Empire being a prime example. They term nomads 'pre-state actors' and emphasise that they are not reliant on the nation state for legal order and present challenges to state sovereignty and running of a modern bureaucratic state. Nomads' lack of fixity and movement across borders is

usually at odds with modern nationalism. The Introduction concludes with a useful synopsis of each chapter that follows.

Chapter 2, by Thomas Barfield, explores the historical background to nomad-state interactions. He outlines the differences among nomadic societies, with some having minimal levels of political centralisation while others were extensive steppe empires under the control of strong rulers. The cultural ecology of nomadic pastoralism in five key geographic areas is discussed and this is followed with a description of the nomadic political structures in East Africa, Arabia, Iranian Plateau and Mongolia. Although nomads played key historic roles in world political systems, most nomad groups, except for Mongolia, now face major political and economic challenges. Barfield concludes by noting that nomads' traditions of self-support and self-governance hold promise for the future. In Chapter 3, Erik Ringmar discusses the bias against nomads and their way of life in Western political thought. He notes that nomadic societies are more egalitarian than sedentary societies and that nomads often enjoyed more abundance and were more consensual and egalitarian than sedentary groups. He argues that states have relied on both political theatre and political theory to control and subjugate nomads. In Chapter 4, Jamie Levin, Gustavo de Carvalho, Kristen Caroukian and Ron Cuthbert explore the differences in how states treat nomads. They argue that differences in treatment of nomads result from two main factors: state material capacity and the idea of modern, exclusive territoriality. Strong states will tend to forcibly control nomads in order to eliminate the threat nomads may have. Weak states may ignore or accommodate nomads. Nomads have the potential to pose both material and ideational challenges to a nation state.

Chapter 5, by Filippo Costa Buranelli, starts part two of the volume. He focuses on the interaction of the Russian Empire with nomads on the Eurasian steppes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argues that Russians viewed the nomads as a threat to the spread of civilised society. As the Russian Empire increased its physical presence in the Kazakh steppe, it brought new laws and norms of development and control of nomadic populations. Mass migrations of peasants turned the steppe into a zone for growing crops. Territoriality was a defining element in Russian ideology of progress for the steppe that was rooted in European discourses on civilisation, scientific racism and crop-based agriculture as a sign of modern civilisation. Buranelli concludes the chapter by recommending that research on encounters between nomads and settled polities from the perspective of nomads is needed. In Chapter 6, John Galaty explores border dynamics in two settings in East Africa where trans-border movements by pastoral nomads have been viewed as threats to the territorial integrity and political sustainability of states. The history of boundary-making by colonial powers in East Africa is well summarised. Galaty argues that

borders generate potential social, political and economic energy and underlie much of the history of East Africa. Chapter 7, by Martin Hall, discusses the Sami reindeer herders in Sweden. Unlike most states that tried to eliminate pastoral nomads, Sweden inadvertently reinforced nomadism among its Sami peoples. Hall provides an interesting historical account of what took place with the Sami and how reindeer herding was viewed as a way to economically use the mountainous areas of Sweden. As such, state policies encouraged Sami to continue nomadic herding, at the same time ‘modernising’ them to be good Christians, citizens and efficient reindeer herders. Chapter 8 presents case studies of community-based conservancies (CBC) in Africa whose goals are to enhance well-being and development of nomadic pastoralists and conserve biodiversity. They are in contrast to national parks where conservation policy is focused on biodiversity without people. In this chapter, Kathleen A. Galvin, Danielle Backman, Matthew W. Luizza and Tyler A. Beeton argue that political drivers and history of CBC formation are different in the three countries in the case study. Their data suggests that elites at various levels still control and extract most of the benefits from CBCs. They conclude that CBCs are a process whereby pastoralists in partnership are users and conservators of land, which requires embracing and empowering diverse values and voices and new ways of collaboration.

The third section begins with Chapter 9 by Avinoam Meir, who explores struggles by the Bedouin people in Israel. A concise history of the Bedouin in Palestine and the later state of Israel is provided, focusing on issues that eventually became central to their conflict: territorial control, land tenure and settlement. A discussion of Bedouin practices of challenging the state follows. Although the Bedouin are largely settled, they maintain many aspects of their nomadic heritage, enabling them to be resilient to the state. In Chapter 10, Joseph MacKay explores the history of Imperial China’s relation with nomads. He describes three types of nomads: the nomads of the Inner Asian Steppe, who were often a rival empire; smaller nomadic groups in the uplands; and seagoing pirates. In dealing with these different nomadic people, China responded with both political and military strategies and ideological features that advanced imperial ideologies. Chapter 11, by Cynthia Chou, explores sea nomadism in Southeast Asia. She provides a concise overview of these little-known nomads. Like other nomadic peoples they have been seen as backward. Their widespread distribution today is evidence of their ability to push back against the state. In Chapter 12, Dalibor Misina and Neil Cruickshank discuss the Roma, Europe’s single largest minority group, who have experienced discrimination and abuse from both civil groups and governments. They describe historical and contemporary aspects of Romani’s marginalisation and outline signposts that make them hopeful about the likelihood of a

trans-territorial Romani political community. They note, however, that the existing Westphalian model of sovereign states may be unable to accommodate the needs of the Romanies. The concluding chapter by Kiran Banerjee and Craig Damian points out that International Relations literature has a sedentary bias, which matches contemporary political rhetoric about the threats of mobility and migration. They argue that mobility can't be ignored and that a broader lens needs to be taken in looking at the nature of migration of peoples.

Given the long history of trade across the Himalaya and relations with nomads in Tibetan areas of China, it would have been nice to see a chapter dealing with this region. The interactions between nomadic tribes in Afghanistan and neighbouring states of Iran and Pakistan would also have been an interesting inclusion in the volume. These are minor quibbles, however, with what is an excellent volume that adds considerable new information and ideas for the further study of nomads.

Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations will be of interest to a wide audience. Those interested in nomadic pastoralism will find new insights and others interested in history and the rise of nation states will find value in various chapters. Diplomats and policymakers in the field, dealing with nomads, non-state actors and migration, will also benefit from the ideas presented.

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