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Nomads and international relations: post-sedentarist dialogues

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Abstract *The key concepts and reference points of International Relations (IR) are informed by a sedentarist worldview anchored on the territorial state. IR's conception of its subject-matter is thus 'static' in both senses of the word: state-centric and immobile. One of the consequences of this sedentarist worldview has been a neglect of the world's nomads. Defined by their spatial mobility, nomads have been either ignored or, less frequently, brought in as an exceptional 'Other' against which concepts such as statehood and territoriality can be defined. The interventions in this forum challenge IR's sedentarism by recovering the world's nomads as international political actors past and present, thus enriching the range of empirical cases upon which IR scholars may build their theories and challenging teleological narratives that view the history of the international system as the inevitable triumph of the territorial state. At the same time, the forum cautions against the reification of the nomad as the 'Other' of the state by disaggregating nomadism from mobility and problematising the sedentarism/nomadism binary. The goal of the forum is not to provide a blueprint for how IR scholars should study nomads, but to promote a critical reflexivity about IR's sedentarist assumptions.*

Introduction: towards a post-sedentarist IR (Jaakko Heiskanen)

The key concepts and reference points of International Relations (IR) are informed by a deeply sedentarist worldview anchored on the territorial state. IR's conception of its subject matter is thus *static* in both senses of the word: state-centric as well as immobile. One of the corollaries of this sedentarist worldview has been a neglect of the world's nomads. Traditionally defined by their spatial mobility, nomads have been either ignored by IR or, less frequently, brought in as an exceptional 'Other' against which concepts such as statehood and territoriality can be defined. This sedentarist hegemony is not just conceptual or theoretical, but also normative, insofar as it is coupled to a specific understanding of the ideal polity. For centuries, Western commentators have defined 'civilisation' with reference to territorial political units possessing proprietary rights over a definite portion of the earth's surface, while castigating nomads as 'barbarians' or 'savages' (Buranelli 2020). Not only has this 'anti-nomadic bias' (Ringmar 2020) concealed all kinds of interesting and important phenomena from IR's purview, but it has also helped to entrench a teleological metanarrative that culminates in the seemingly inevitable global triumph of the territorial state. Polities and societies that do not conform to the sedentarist model tends to be treated as exceptional, anomalous, or simply irrelevant for the study of world politics. The result, as Iver Neumann and Wigen (2018, 29) observe, is that 'the world's nomads are thrown on the rubbish heap of history'.

The overarching goal of this forum is to problematise IR's sedentarism and open up avenues for post-sedentarist dialogues in IR. Fortunately, important steps in this direction have already been taken. As the interest in historical and non-Western IR has grown, scholars have begun to excavate the forgotten agency of the world's nomads. As Levin and MacKay remind us, 'nomadic peoples themselves have often been ambitious builders of political order' (Levin and MacKay 2020, 4). Acknowledging the longevity of nomadic polities challenges the presumed universality of IR's analytical categories and forces us to grapple with the diversity of polity types that have existed throughout

history, many of which have only recently been supplanted by a 'global mono-culture of sovereign states' (Phillips and Sharman 2015, 1). To date, historical research has focused primarily on the Eurasian steppe, a vast yet understudied region in IR, which has been dominated by nomads for much of documented history (e.g. Buranelli 2024; Munkh-Erdene 2023; Zarakol 2022). In their analysis of the origins of capitalism, for example, Anievas and Nisancioglu challenge eurocentric explanations by highlighting the role of the nomadic Mongols in establishing trade links between Europe and China (Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015, 70). Others have explored the influence of the steppe nomads on state-formation processes in China (Kwan 2016; MacKay 2016), Iran (Matin 2013), and Eastern Europe (Neumann and Wigen 2018). Myths and memories of these interactions have left a deep imprint on contemporary political discourses and practices, including state policies towards nomadic groups, yet they have been disregarded by IR scholars. As one study points out, 'states attach to nomads far more importance than IR scholars do' (MacKay et al. 2014, 114).

Historically sensitive research on nomads is not the only direction from which IR's sedentary-centrism has been challenged. Another line of attack comes from the literature associated with the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry 2006) or 'mobilities turn' (Sheller 2017) that has gained ground across the humanities and social sciences. Rather than recovering the historical agency or contemporary predicament of the world's nomads, this body of literature challenges the 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki 1992, 31) of the international order by foregrounding the role of movement or mobility in world politics more generally. Much of this research is empirically grounded, exploring a plethora of mobile things—from tanks and drones to migrants and microbes—that circulate both within and across state borders (e.g. Squire 2011; Salter 2015). Other strands are theoretically oriented, rethinking IR's conceptual apparatus through analytics that take motion as primary. Thus, Suliman (2018) uses the lens of 'kinetic politics' to understand movement as constitutive of political relations, while Huysmans (2022) seeks to 'motion' the politics of security by giving 'conceptual primacy to movement'. By centring movement and circulation empirically or conceptually, the literature associated with the new mobilities paradigm seeks to overturn IR's sedentarist assumptions.

Despite their shared critique of IR's sedentarism, the aforementioned literatures have remained largely separate from one another. Our wager is that each has much to gain from the other. On the one hand, despite its empirical and historical richness, the historically sensitive IR literature on nomads has little to say about other kinds of mobility that permeate world politics, or how other kinds of mobile practices might compare with nomadic ones. This exclusive focus on nomads risks reproducing the familiar binary distinction between sedentarism and nomadism, which reifies the nomad as the mobile 'Other' of the immobile state. On the other hand, even as the new mobilities paradigm has sought to develop a more relational and multifaceted understanding of mobility, it has largely ignored the world's nomads. While some Deleuzian work in this camp does invoke the figure of the nomad (e.g. Reid 2010; Lenco 2011), its engagement with nomadism tends to remain on the level of metaphor. As critics note, the metaphorical linkage of nomadism with the transgression of boundaries often reflects a privileged positionality where mobility and

rootlessness are associated with freedom and autonomy. Such ahistorical uses of the nomad category gloss over longstanding practices of colonisation, discrimination, marginalisation, and forced sedentarisation to which many nomadic groups have been subjected (see e.g. Kaplan 1996; Pels 1999). If the risk with the historical IR literature is to reinforce the binary distinction between mobile nomads and sedentary states, then the risk with the new mobilities paradigm is to overlook the specificity of nomadism as a form of social, economic, or political organisation. In short, the strength of one literature is the weakness of the other.

The dilemma outlined above echoes another, related challenge that has preoccupied IR scholars in recent years: the promises and pitfalls of 'non-Western' IR. Without a doubt, there are compelling historical, theoretical, and normative arguments to be made in favour of studying IR beyond the West (e.g. Acharya and Buzan 2010; Tickner and Wæver 2009; Shilliam 2011). Just as the study of nomads is an important corrective to IR's sedentarist predilections, exploring non-Western IR helps to remedy the discipline's fixation with Western thinkers and theories. Nevertheless, the distinction between 'Western' and 'non-Western' IR is a problematic one. As Hobson and Sajed (2017, 551) remind us, 'neither "West" nor "non-West" exist in pure form but are amalgams that comprise Western and non-Western elements' (see also Bilgin 2008). Drawing a neat line between Western and non-Western IR risks turning the latter into a residual category without analytical or historical coherence, while leaving the identity of the West itself unquestioned (Hutchings 2011). There is thus a certain affinity between the category of the non-West and the category of the nomad: both tend to be treated as amorphous containers of exceptions or anomalies that do not conform to hegemonic (Western, sedentarist) conceptions of politics or statehood. The challenge is to recognise the profound ambivalence of these categories—the West and the non-West, the nomad and the sedentary—without wholly erasing the differences between them. Reflecting on the possibility of IR beyond the West, Pasha (2011, 219) suggests that we should treat the category of the non-West as a 'disruptive' rather than an 'immutable' category: 'it refutes the self-subsistent character of Western IR, but, more crucially, it gives voice to silence.' It is in this spirit that we wish to leverage the category of the nomad. Giving voice to the world's nomads in IR's panoply of actors should not lead to the romanticisation of the nomad as the immutable 'Other' of the sedentary state, but to the disruption of sedentarist categories and assumptions.

With this dual goal of recuperation and disruption in mind, our forum undertakes a two-pronged critique of IR's sedentarism. Building on the bourgeoning historical IR literature on nomads, our first prong entails an act of recovery, a recuperation of the world's nomads as international political actors past and present. The traditional hierarchy of sedentaries over nomads is thereby turned on its head, giving priority and agency to a set of actors that had been shunted to IR's margins. By contrast, the second and more disruptive prong of our collective endeavour entails breaking down the sedentarism/nomadism binary in such a way that the category of the nomad itself is put into question. Our contributors do this in a variety of ways, including conceptually disaggregating nomadism from mobility, revealing overlooked parallels between nomads and other mobile actors, exploring the self-perceptions of

communities habitually described as 'nomads', and foregrounding the 'nomadic' tendencies inherent in the states-system itself. We acknowledge that there is an unresolved tension between the two prongs of our critique—the one recuperative, the other disruptive—but we do not see this as a weakness. On the contrary, we see it as a necessary feature of our critical enterprise. What we hope to create through this forum is not an ideal blueprint for how IR scholars ought to study nomads, but an opening for post-sedentarist dialogues.

The forum begins with Joseph MacKay's critical reflections on the nomad category. Tracing conceptions of nomadism in IR and beyond, MacKay sets the scene by outlining the definitional ambiguities and analytical pitfalls that have surrounded this concept. How should IR respond? First up is Iver Neumann's vigorous defence of the nomad category for comparative historical analysis, illustrated by a macrohistorical survey of nomad-sedentary relations from 3500 BCE to 1400 CE. Besides demonstrating the value of nomadic cases for theory-building, Neumann reminds us that interactions between sedentaries and nomads have also often generated hybrid political forms. Next, Einar Wigen and Ingrid Eskild explore how an attention to nomads might enrich theories of competitive selection. Focusing on the rise of the nomadic Türk Khaganate during the Late Antiquity Little Ice Age, Wigen and Eskild demonstrate how climactic changes can transform the competitive environment in a way that favours certain polity types over others—an argument with significant implications for international politics in the Anthropocene. The theme of state-formation is also central to Martin Hall's contribution, which inverts the familiar question 'Why states?' and instead asks why certain polities did *not* develop into territorial states. Arranging Eurasian steppe nomads, North American plains nomads, and the non-nomadic Vikings side-by-side, Hall develops the notion of 'raiding-trading complexes' to describe a type of non-territorial polity based on high mobility—but not necessarily nomadism. This disaggregation of mobility and nomadism marks a shift in emphasis from recuperative to disruptive readings, further emphasised by Alice Engelhard's postcolonial analysis of the sedentarism/nomadism binary. Focusing on encounters between the British and the Maasai in British East Africa around the turn of the twentieth century, Engelhard shows that the construction of the British Empire was far from a 'sedentary' project. From settlers and soldiers to tourists and hunters, the British imperial state was predicated upon a plurality of mobilities that are obscured by the simple distinction between sedentaries and nomads. Moving into the contemporary era, Hannah Owens challenges the categories of 'nomad' and 'refugee' that inform international aid governance. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Jordan, Owens's intervention offers an emic perspective into the self-identity of historically nomadic populations who experience displacement. The following contribution from Jamie Levin provides the other side of the story, so to speak, by asking why states have persistently pursued sedentarising policies towards nomadic communities. Leveraging ontological security theory, Levin suggests that states view the non-territorial organisation of transnational nomads as an ideational threat. The forum concludes with Franca Kappes's prescient discussion of disaster governance in the Anthropocene. Bringing a 'nomadological' sensitivity to post-Hurricane Irma and María Puerto Rico, Kappes explodes the myth of the

sedentary state and paints a picture of global politics riven with multiple, heterogeneous, and overlapping mobilities.

Nomads and nomadism in IR: a historical review (Joseph MacKay)

IR has long offered, or at least implied, accounts of nomadic peoples and things otherwise nomadic. However, its uses of the category 'nomadic' have long been polyvalent or simply ambiguous, lacking clear definitions and conceptual boundaries. In this sense, IR's sedentarist or 'anti-nomadic bias' (Ringmar 2020) has been paired with definitional confusion. If (putatively) sedentary life has been treated as a dominant and essential category, the nomadic has become a virtually residual one. Any number of peoples, classes, lifeways, and metaphors that fail to meet a canonical standard of immobility are categorised as 'nomadic'. Here, I briefly document IR's varied appeals to things nomadic, finding them scattered across quite varied usages of the category.

Some early accounts in and around IR treat nomadic peoples as models or metaphors for, or aspects of, other processes. Early geopolitical authors such as Halford Mackinder (1919) and Nicholas Spykman (1942) portrayed Eurasian nomads as drivers of world history. Typically, these stories depict Eurasian nomads as migratory raiding peoples, in defence against whom sedentary peoples built nascent modern states. In telling these stories however, these accounts wrote nomads out of historical modernity—rendering them, in Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 393) later phrase, peoples who have 'no history … only a geography.' Such accounts are now widely questioned (Di Cosmo 2002; Humphrey and Sneath 1999). However, they appear to retain some influence in IR, often supplying analogies for larger historical processes.[1] For example, Mancur Olson's (1993, 568) account of state formation focuses on 'roving bandits' who extract wealth from pre-state peoples. Though he does not focus on nomads, his logic draws on others who do.[2]

Elsewhere, metaphorical or analogical invocations of nomads in adjacent fields vary widely. When authors write of migration in terms of 'nomadic' modern lives, they invoke a quite different metaphor. Such accounts may focus on elite 'global nomads' or 'digital nomads' or may be the result of forced migration, statelessness, or other privations (D'Andrea 2007; Reichenberger 2018). Here, IR is in dialogue with the 'mobilities turn' discussed in the Introduction. Still, actually existing expatriation, global circulation, and statelessness are all marked by quite varied lived experiences. Edward Said (2000, 139) reminds us that, to understand statelessness, 'You must first set aside Joyce and Nabokov and think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created. … the hopelessly large numbers, the

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[1] They echo variously in realists (Gilpin 1983, 93–94, 221–22; Posen 1984, 39, 69, 249 n9, 25 n60; Mearsheimer 2001, 114–19, 442 n70) and the occasional liberal (Deudney 2007, e.g., 45, 220-26). Among constructivists, Ruggie's (1993, 149) account rests on a handful of references to Owen Lattimore (1940, 1962). Beyond IR, similar references surface elsewhere, as in James C. Scott's (2009, 22) account of occasional empire-building by anti-state peoples.

[2] While his historical examples draw from warlordism in 1920s China, his theoretical sources include Carneiro's (1970) territorial "circumscription" thesis on state formation, which invokes migratory peoples and forced settlement. Olson's bandits play roughly the role of gangsters in Tilly (1985).

compounded misery of 'undocumented' people suddenly lost, without a reliable history.' The professional expatriate or digital nomad shares none of this, yet the word is used to describe them.

These assorted 'nomads'—raiding state builders, world-traveling elites, and dispossessed mass populations—do not share much. Nomadic raiders appear to have essentially nothing in common with current forms of migration, privileged or otherwise. Currently nomadic peoples, such as the Roma in Europe are not refugees, though they risk being detractively compared to them. Late modern expatriates are best understood as members of a global elite integral to modern globalisation, rather than separate from it. This variety suggests a basic question: what use is a metaphor that aims to explain such widely divergent matters? Metaphors need not be rigid—indeed, they are commonly valued for their plasticity. But what are we to make of an analogy that appears to lack clear constraints on its meaning?

Some work in early historical IR canonically addresses nomadic peoples. For example, 'the Mongol-Tartar Dominion' recurs in Bull and Watson's *Expansion of International Society*, though without sustained analysis (Bull and Watson 1984, 2, 3, 4, 61, 62, 64, 240, 246, 393). Other early survey works similarly elide nomadic peoples. Adda Bozeman excised a lengthy section on 'non-literate peoples' from the beginning of her 1960 *Politics and Culture in International History*, at the behest of her publisher (Bozeman 1994, 6). It would likely have included migratory peoples. The published book discusses nomadic peoples much as Bull and Watson's volume does, but no more. Either way, nomads become chiefly precursors to history, not participants in it.

Analyses in more recent historical IR are more complex and empirically grounded. This work finds sophisticated nomadic and post-nomadic peoples in complex hybridities with sedentary peoples in East Asia (MacKay 2016; Phillips 2018). Others show how nomadic peoples have created large political formations that left significant traces in successor societies (Neumann and Wigen 2018) or innovated political structures that endured for centuries and continue to shape the present (Zarakol 2022). These reconstructions are historically valuable—I do not mean to fault them. Nonetheless, there may be an unintended consequence here: by locating nomadic peoples primarily in the past, and absent significant accounts of contemporary nomadism, the net effect of renewed historical focus may be to archaise them. The effect recalls James C. Scott's (2009, 8, 117) invocation of Southeast Asian sedentary peoples viewing their mobile neighbors as 'our living ancestors'. Peoples termed nomadic thus continue to have one foot lingering in IR's antechambers rather than its main disciplinary spaces. This perhaps reflects the geography of the scholars in question—all of the IR scholars cited above were or are at universities in the Global North and participate in the mainstream of historical IR. They broadly share an emphasis on Inner Asian Steppe nomadic imperialism which is valuable in itself but adds little on how to conceptualise nomadism in other contexts.

Nomadism as such, then, has been subject to persistent and problematic definitional ambiguity in IR. This is perhaps because the category reified in contrast to it—the sedentary state—is itself a quite recent phenomenon. As Hannah Arendt noted in 1943, the category 'refugee' makes sense only alongside a historically contingent system of territorially exclusive states, from

which, by dint of flight, expulsion, or statelessness, these persons experience exclusion. We might say the same of nomads.[3]

How should the field respond? On one view, perhaps IR has been mistaken in using the terms 'nomad' at all. Humphrey and Sneath (1999, 1), two leading anthropologists, simply reject the category. They argue what gets called nomadism is not a transhistorical phenomenon, so much as 'a series of local knowledges and techniques located in particular historical circumstances.' On this view, IR might do better to simply set the category aside. However, the entries in this forum suggest ways forward, productively complicating the term while sometimes retaining it. These new stories suggest opportunities for discussing these themes in novel and perhaps more cogent ways.

Superior nomadic military prowess and state formation (Iver B. Neumann)

As noted in the introduction, there would be little point in running a symposium on nomads if we did not find 'nomad' to be a fruitful category. As with other categories, it needs fine-graining when put to empirical use. While we know of plenty of purely nomadic groups, many nomads are transhumant, which means that they travel across (Lat. *trans*) ground (Lat. *humus*) on a seasonal basis. Winter grazing in a valley and summer grazing on a mountain may serve as a typical example, but there is also shifting between dry and wet seasons, etc. Sedentary farmers who engage sporadically in mountain dairy farming from shielings, may be said to be secondary transhumant nomads. So may sea-roving Vikings (Hall, this forum). In terms of production, there is a continuum here. To give an empirical example, when Homer noted that some expectedly nomadic Scythians were agriculturalists, he noted a glitch between actual group identity and production. Self-identifying groups may consist of pure nomads, transhumant nomads, secondary nomads and, crucially for our purposes, sedentary agriculturalists on a full-time basis. This is important, for it means that, as seen from what sedentaries tend to think of as nomadic groups, members of that group may be either or both what sedentaries call nomadic. Put differently, given that nomadic ideas of territoriality have not necessarily foregrounded the distinction between nomadic and sedentary (Buranelli 2024), since the fourth millennium, nomadic groups have often been what we (but not these groups themselves) call hybridised.[4]

Note also the widespread historical occurrence of agriculturalists who were not sedentary, but who practiced so-called swidden or slash-and-burn agriculture. This may create a circular moving pattern, or it may take groups far afield. For example, Goths and Vandals seem to have migrated from Scandinavia to the limes of the Roman Empire over a long century. Finally, settled nomads may return to nomadic ways, as was first noted by Russian ethnographer Vladimir Bogoraz (1975). Like all useful categories, that of 'nomad' has its limitations.

The hybridising of nomadic groups is bound up with power. That leaders of hybridised nomadic groups tend to own land was first documented by the

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[3] See discussion in Banerjee and Smith (2020, 267).

[4] Note that we also know of nomadic groups, for example Roma and Sinti, for whom sedentaries have served as Others. However, Roma and Sinti neither are nor were pastoralists.

anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1961) during his field work amongst the Basseri in Iraq during the late 1950s. Barth's reading, now received wisdom within anthropology, was that leaders tended to invest accumulated surplus from nomadic activities in arable land as an insurance against bad times. Here we have a phenomenon that may also be observed as early as the fourth millennium BCE in Mesopotamia, and at least from the second millennium BCE in Egypt.

Inspired by Ibn Khaldūn's (1958) work, I will suggest a tentative theorem for the pre-modern area: for as long as pastoralist nomadic polities retain a nomadic element, and for as long as nomadic technologies of war are superior to contemporary sedentary ones, there is a possibility that such polities will position themselves on top of sedentary polities with which nomadic polities are hybridising. By the same token, if a nomadic polity takes over a sedentary one, it will lose power if it does not retain a nomadic element. The following section begins to substantiate the theorem by means of a quick *tour d'horizon* of hybridising nomad-sedentary relations beginning with the first emergence of polities in Mesopotamia around 3.500 BCE and ending with the fall of the Golden Horde in Russia around 1400 CE to substantiate the theorem.

Hybridising nomads: a tour d'horizon

Mesopotamian culture, as it arose during the fourth millennium BCE, was a social and cultural hybrid between Sumerians and Akkadians. We do not know where Sumerians came from, but we know that they were the first sedentaries, and we know that they produced Mesopotamia's high culture. Akkadians were Semitic nomads. Most Akkadians eventually settled, but there was always a nomadic element as well. In the 24th century BCE, Sargon, himself an Akkadian, mobilised nomads to take over Mesopotamian city-states and establish an Akkadian empire in Mesopotamia. A pattern of nomads conquering sedentaries was to follow. Already during the following century, a new group of Semitic nomads that had grazed the pastures north of the Akkadians for centuries, the Amorites, began to settle. The Amorites developed a social structure within which a segment continued to lead the full nomadic life to the north, a group that became stationary pastoralists, and another that transitioned into agricultural practices. The entire chain was mobilised in trade in meat and hides, which fed the by now fully sedentary Akkadians. With Akkadian sedentary rule weakening over the following two centuries, nomadic Amorites eventually took over most Mesopotamian city states, but not before they had been culturally assimilated by sedentary Akkadians to the extent that they abandoned their own language (Canaanite) and adopted Akkadian (Whiting 1995). A weaker but clearly similar sequence eventually occurred when the nomadic Kassites arrived throughout sedentary Mesopotamia at the beginning of the second millennium BCE, ultimately leading to their domination of the region. To sum up, for as long as Akkadians, Amorites and Kassites maintained their military edge by retaining nomadic elements, they kept their military edge and were able to conquer city states. Once these groups became fully sedentary, new nomads came and took over. The Mesopotamian experience up to around 1750 BCE confirms the theorem suggested at the outset.

We find a similar theorem-supporting pattern in ancient Egypt. In the beginning of the second Millennium BCE, Semitic nomads had trekked across the Sinai Desert and established themselves in the Nile Delta. At the beginning of the seventeenth century BCE, one of these groups, the Hyxos, were able to establish themselves as the rulers of Egypt and to remain so for well over a century (Stantis et al. 2020). At the time of the take-over, the Hyxos were largely sedentary, but maintained a nomadic element. A coda of this sequence played out during the first two centuries of the first millennium BCE, when «Libyans» (that is, Berbers), some of whom had settled but the bulk of whom seem to have maintained nomadic ways in the Sahara, established themselves as rulers for a period of two centuries.

The Roman empire demonstrates versions of the same pattern. Romans repeatedly settled defeated nomadic enemies (*dediticii*) and groups that they turned into allies (*foederati*) within their empire. Once cut off from their nomadic lifestyle, these once nomadic groups gradually lost their ability to challenge Roman imperial power.[5] However, if nomads remained composite and retained a nomadic element, as did, for example, the Greutungian Ostrogoths, they continued to pose a threat (Wolfram 1988, 168). Once Attila the Hun emerged from out of the steppe, many Ostrogoths became Hunnicised and participated in his take-over of Rome.

We may add two examples from Byzantium. Bulgars trekked down from the Volga and established the first Bulgar empire in 680 CE. Once again, the Bulgars contained sedentary as well as nomadic elements. The Bulgars eventually lost their nomadic element and were assimilated by their Slav underlings. Avars trekked Byzantium in the sixth century and were able to establish a Khaganate in present-day Hungary. However, as they settled down, every man was no longer a fully capable warrior. The Khagan began to amass treasures. Their heavy armour grew lighter. Their military advantage diminished (Pohl 2003). As a result, they were beaten by the expanding Frankish empire and ceased to exist in 803 CE. The Roman and Byzantine experiences with nomadic groups fit the theorem.

A final example is the 13th-century CE Mongol Empire, which quickly evolved four successor states (Neumann and Wigen 2018). In three of these—China, Chagatai, Il-Khan Persia—the conquering nomads quickly assimilated to the sedentary lifestyle and were eventually replaced by sedentaries as rulers. Only in the fourth, the Golden Horde, did nomad rulers hold on to power for around a century and a half. In contrast to the other three, the Golden Horde was ruled from the tent capital of Sarai on the Volga, whence the Mongol rulers were able to retain their nomadic lifestyle, thereby sustaining their military superiority and power. This empirical sequence, too, supports the theorem.

To conclude, in the absence of established counterexamples, it appears that transhistorically, and potentially transculturally, as long as pastoralist nomadic polities maintain a nomadic element and their technologies of warfare remain superior to those of contemporary sedentary societies, these polities may

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[5] There were cases where Romans did not force agriculture on such groups but allowed them to maintain their military prowess in order to use them as soldiers. It was the cutting off from the nomadic lifestyle, not the cutting short of their military ways, that was deemed to be of the essence by the Romans.

position themselves above sedentary counterparts with which they are hybrid-ising. By the same token, if a nomadic polity takes over a sedentary one, it will lose power if it does not retain a nomadic element. Quod erat demonstrandum.

Nomads and climate change (Einar Wigen and Ingrid Eskild)

Like any social theory, the validity of IR theory rests on the cases it includes in its sample. Lest it be made obsolete, IR needs the greatest possible validity for the phenomenon that it seeks to theorise. For a long time, nomadic polities were often considered irrelevant to theories of the state, which were predominantly understood as sedentary in nature, or were relegated to providing residual explanations for marginal phenomena. In an era where the environmental prem-ises of the political are transforming, we argue that IR's need for broadening its sample is stronger than ever. As Author A writes in the introduction to this forum, IR's conception of its subject-matters is 'static' in two senses of the word: state-centred and immobile. Considering that IR struggles to account for envir-onmental instability in its case samples, we may add a third static conception: IR tends to assume climate homogeneity. Using 'the state system' anno 1648 [sic] to 2024 as a template for understanding politics under rapid climate change limits IR theory's usefulness in the coming century. In this intervention we argue that rather than being a deviant or residual form of politics, the rise of nomadic empires may offer a case for theorising order transformation under rapid environmental change. We present a case of historical climate change that may have benefited rather than obstructed empire building: the rise of the Türk empire on the Eurasian steppe in the sixth century, which we argue may have occurred due to severe climatic disruption. Our case serves another purpose as well, namely, to broaden the empirical ground for theorising climate change's consequences for the international order. As anthropogenic climate change becomes increasingly salient, previous occurrences of climatological and eco-logical disruption become even more important to investigate. The sovereign state is only a sliver of the manifold human experiences throughout history. Most stories on pre-modern environmental disruption take the shape of civilisa-tional catastrophes and deal accordingly with parameters that are almost exclu-sively sedentarist: reduced agricultural output decreased state revenues, famine impacted for the work force and military power, plagues threatened densely populated areas and so on. A story of historical periods of 'good' climate vs. 'bad' climate simply will not do, as what is considered hardship for some may prove beneficial for others.

The Late Antiquity Little Ice Age and the Türk

The Türk Khaganate arose in the mid-sixth century CE and is notable for being the first polity to bring all the steppe nomadic polities under a single suzer-ainty stretching across the Eurasian steppe. Its rise was concurrent with a dras-tic cooling period in the northern hemisphere. Dubbed the Late Antiquity Little Ice Age (LALIA), natural scientists attribute the cause of this phenom-enon to a series of volcanic eruptions between 536 to 547 CE (Büntgen et al. 2016) that covered the Northern Hemisphere in aerosol particles and blocked

solar radiation, resulting in temperature drops and crop failure for some years. The cooling period evidently lasted until 660 CE (Tvauri 2014, 31). Historical accounts of the 'years without summer' (Gunn 2000) were recorded in several parts of the world, from the Byzantine historian Procopius to Chinese state records, as well as in the Irish Annals of Innisfallen. In Viking sagas they were known as 'the Fimbul winter'. These events have in recent years been supported by evidence provided by dendrochronology, ice cores in glaciers as well as geological layers. Several scholars have argued that this climatic shock led to severe social disruption (Peregrine 2020; Helama et al. 2018; Di Cosmo, Coppenheimer, and Büntgen 2017). Helama et al. (2018) argue that 'persistently low irradiance contributed to remarkably simultaneous outbreaks of famine and Justinianic plague in the eastern Roman Empire with adverse effects on crop production and photosynthesis of the vitamin D in human skin and thus, collectively, human health' (see also Dishur 2021, 1339).

This was the time in which the Türk Khaganate (552-774 CE) rose to prominence and set the blueprint for an imperial tradition that became hegemonic among steppe nomads and was mimicked until Chinggis Khan established his Mongol empire in the twelfth century (Golden 2006). Little is known about how the effects of cool temperatures may play out differently between nomads and sedentaries. However, although more research is needed, their indisputable success in the years immediately following the colling period may imply a causative relationship between the two. Damette, Goutte, and Pei (2020) have shown a positive correlation between cool and dry periods and nomadic migration in China from 300-550 CE, a period that overlaps with the LALIA. Pei and Zhang (2014) have also pointed out the correlation between adverse climate events—in their case drops in precipitation and drought—and historical migratory waves. Part of the explanation for the success of the Türk may either be a larger resource base for recruitment (the nomadic lifestyle is conducive to becoming a good warrior—no additional training is required), or the relative weakening of state apparatuses that relied on crop taxes. Their transhumance, furthermore, facilitated moves from scarcity to abundance. However, there are other factors that may explain the nomadic resilience.

First, the Türk relied upon ruminant animals such as cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and yak. These grazing animals are less affected by crop failure than monogastric humans, as they do not need to wait for the plant to reach flowering to make use of their nutrients. As crop yields diminish quite drastically with just minor reductions in heat or sunlight, this difference is highly relevant (Proctor, et al. 2018). Furthermore, sheep and horses are able to find grass under layers of snow (Sinor and Klyashtorny 1996, 87). As opposed to agriculturalists, steppe nomads may have maintained their source of subsistence to a greater degree during these years.

Second, since nomadic pastoralists such as the Türk relied heavily on milk in their diet, they may not have been as affected by the drop in sunlight, which, as Helama et al. stated above, caused major health problems due to lack of vitamin D. Sheep and goats are able to synthesise vitamin D in their skin during periods of low UV radiation (Nemeth, Wilkens, and Liesegang 2017). The consumption of milk and meat from these animals may therefore create a buffer from the vitamin D deficiency that puts humans at risk during the 'years without summer'.

Third, as shown by Neumann and Wigen (2018), the nomadic political system is constituted by clientelist bonds. At the core of such bonds is the Maussian gift—a gift that indebts the recipient. Times of famine are excellent opportunities for the rich and powerful to indebt the weaker and meeker, as a gift of food may help a family or a sub-tribal unit survive when it would otherwise have died. The onset of the LALIA may, therefore, have significantly intensified the clientelist system, as surplus food could rapidly be transformed into a political following. A political following comes with commitments, but it also comes with greater potential for steamrolling one's opponents.

Reflections upon the nomadic element in IR and climate change theorisation

Sovereign states may be the only polities recognised in the contemporary international system, but they are far from being the only actors operating within. After much writing on 'multi-national corporations' around the millennium, and possible neo-medievalism as a way to theorise the shared and over-lapping authorities of the nation-states, the EU and sub-national regions, the main political actors that have emerged are tech billionaires. From building doomsday shelters to buying up agricultural land, it is clear that many of these are making plans and adaptations for rapid climate change (Rushkoff 2022). Whether we see them as polities worthy of theorising or not, it is clear that the capacity for surviving and managing rapid climate change is not equally distributed within the international system. Nothing revolutionary there. What this intervention seeks to highlight is the possibility for radical transformation of the competitive environment, and the potential this has for transforming how the international order is constituted.

From being more regional nuisances to individual empires along the frontier, the Türk turned steppe nomads into a formidable steppe-wide force. Nomadic empires were fissile, but from the late sixth to the sixteenth century, they were a crucial part of the Eurasian system of polities, without which political order cannot be fully understood. Their rise coincided with the onset of the LALIA, and there are possible causal factors connecting climate and political success, *via* mode of production, nutrition and coercive capacity. While we cannot firmly conclude with causality, the correlation strongly implies that the nomadic mode of production proved resilient in the face of climate adversity. Whether climate change will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it is up for debate (Steel, DesRoches, and Mintz-Woo 2022). But with such high stakes, IR should seek the greatest possible validity. That validity, we argue, can partly be achieved by serious study of the political consequences of the LALIA, one of which was the rise of the Türk Empire, and the unification of the steppe nomads under a single suzerainty. LALIA's explanatory value is quickly gaining ground among scholars, and Andras Tvauri (2014) has convincingly argued that it was integral to the onset of the Viking Age, a point which Author E also brings forth in their contribution below.

Raiding-trading complexes in international relations (Martin Hall)

Extant studies of state making emphasise the mobilisation and extraction of intra-polity resources and provide inside-out accounts of state making as the

result of the preparation for war with other polities, or as bargaining processes among elites (Grzymala-Busse 2020). Recently, studies have stressed emulation as an important historical process in state making. Extra-polity ideational resources are crucial in such accounts (Neumann and Wigen 2018; Huang and Kang 2022; Grynaviski and Steinsson 2023; Grzymała-Busse 2023). Typically, but not necessarily, these literatures take their departures from Weberian or Tillean definitions of what a state is, including their presumptions of territoriality.

Missing from this picture of internal resources and external ideas are external material resources, or what Jason Sharman (2023) calls an outside-in logic of state making. Various literatures have identified a robust historical process whereby political elites use externally extracted resources to build up a warrior following through gift giving, and enabling polity building (Earle 2021). Typically, this process was catalysed by some sort of crisis causing political-economic structural dislocation and heightened social competition as well as intensified internal warfare and raiding. When high mobility technology was available, raiding-trading complexes integrated into and sustained by world economies would develop. These complexes would rely on external resources, rather than internal, in internal security dilemma-like politics. Raiding and trading were interdependent activities, with goods raided in one location being traded in other locations, where surplus raided goods could be transformed into bullion or other required items for intra-polity consumption. Raiding-trading complexes were durable blockages of state-making, instead advancing decentralisation.

In raiding-trading complexes two characteristics stand out. First, high mobility is critical. For these polities value is created through cost-effectively transporting goods and/or bullion from one place to another, be it a world economy marketplace, or its own domicile. High mobility was also a crucial element of the superior military-strategic capacity raiders-traders possessed (Neumann, this forum). Thus, access to mobility technology such as ships or horses is an absolute requirement for living off world economies (Earle 2021). Second, any geographical feature—rather than bordered territory as such—that affords control or influence over the flows of the world economy can be developed into a power resource. Raiding-trading complexes may or may not be nomadic, and nomads may or may not form raiding-trading complexes. Nomadism is not the *differentia specifica* for raiding-trading complexes: mobility is. Not all nomads have access to high-mobility technology, and not all polities with high-mobility technology are nomadic. Engelhard in this forum points out that the British Empire was a highly mobile polity, for instance. As suggested in the Introduction to this forum, the distinction between sedentary states and mobile nomads does not hold.

I will illustrate the life-span of an ideal-typical raiding-trading complex with the polities of the Comanche, the Eurasian Steppe and the Vikings. What these three 'cases' have in common is not nomadism, but high mobility. I have chosen these vignettes inductively, and my analyses draw on prominent historians and archaeologists.

The Comanche

From the early part of the eighteenth century to late in the nineteenth, the Comanche nation established a 'kinetic empire' in what is today New Mexico and western Texas (Hämäläinen 2008). It was an empire of long-distance

trading and raiding. The original crisis for the nomadic hunting and gathering Comanche was a displacement from the Central Great Plains. Trekking south as refugees from conflicts, they began raiding horses, which afforded both high mobility and wealth.

The driving force of the Comanche expansion from migrating hunter gatherers to kinetic empire was fierce social competition. The initial enterprises of raiding south and trading north caused internal stratification, as raiding parties met with variable success. Soon, relatively poorer men would attach themselves to successful leaders, expecting shares in the spoil. Leaders competed horizontally among themselves for wealth and influence in councils. The three primary means in this competition were a large labour force of slaves, retainers, and large herds of horses. All three means were secured by raiding, and trading. The transfer of wealth from New Mexico and Texas to the Comanche nation was vast. The Comanche empire halted the expansion of both the Kingdom of Mexico and of the USA well into the late nineteenth century (Hämäläinen 2008). Mobility and external extraction of resources were the foundations of the Comanche kinetic empire. No structural forces for centralisation or territorialisation were present.

The Eurasian steppe

One crucial debate in the literatures dealing with the international relations of the Eurasian steppe concerns the issue of nomadic state formation. Peter Perdue has usefully identified four main models of nomadic state formation (2005, 535). The key disagreement is whether nomadic society was resource-rich enough to sustain more than a modicum of stratification, or whether it was dependent on procuring resources from the outside in order to finance political complexity. Nicola Di Cosmo argues that nomadic empires formed after indigenous processes that began with some sort of crisis on the steppe, leading to intensified warfare within it (2021). Increased militarisation led to centralisation as polities—already and always highly mobile—defeated each other. The legitimacy of new leaders was dependant on their capacity to reward military followers. And, according to Di Cosmo, it is at *this point* that the nomadic economy becomes insufficient and requires external resources. In my terminology, it is in this context that the raiding-trading complex emerges, if, I add, these polities are attached to a world economy to be raided. Not all acephalous polities developed raiding-trading complexes following a crisis.

New leaders could not prevent their own commanders and the aristocracy from raiding, and thus acquiring their own military followings. This weakened vertical power structures and necessitated horizontal considerations. However, some polities managed to navigate these sources of instability and became nomadic empires. These processes developed within an inherited set of political and cultural institutions as delineated by, inter alia, Neumann and Wigen (2018) and Munkh-Erdene (2023).

The Viking world

The Vikings were not nomads. Farming was the primary source of sustenance and most of their internal political and cultural life centred on the great mead halls of a

multitude of petty kings and chieftains who co-existed in a vaguely differentiated geography. Before the Viking age, political hierarchy was financed by the Roman Empire through the employment of Scandinavian mercenaries and through diplomatic gifts. With the implosion of the Empire, the influx of external wealth ended, and internal competition and warfare increased. This was exacerbated by the mid-sixth century Late Antique Little Ice Age in which the Scandinavian population decreased by as much as 50% (Price 2020; c.f. Authors D1 and D2, this issue). Internal conflict and raiding endured, but as sails began to be used, mobility increased exponentially, thus extending the raiding across the surrounding seas.

The Vikings took advantage of the eighth century revival of the post-Roman economy to extract external resources to finance aggrandising and centralising ambitions at home (Price 2020). At the same time, the Byzantine empire expanded and the Abbasid Caliphate experienced a golden age. The Vikings formed raiding-trading complexes attached to these three world economies, moving wealth—primarily in the form of slaves and silver—between them. There is a strong consensus around the statement that 'mobility and interaction are integral to the concept of the Viking Age' (Lund and Sindbæk 2022, 174). The high mobility afforded by their ships granted the Vikings a high success rate in raiding and trading ventures, and raiding escalated very rapidly. It was only a century between the raid on Lindisfarne by a few dozen men, and a year-long siege of Paris.

In this raiding-trading complex, the control over trading places, navigable straits and beachheads were prioritised over territory. Also, alliances with those who had control over such places further away was important, since trade transformed loot from raiding to wealth.

Conclusions

I have argued that in these three cases political competition and conflict at home drove external extraction and polity making, but not territorial state making. Through their superior mobility all three polities could extract resources from the outside, to finance aggrandising and centralising ambitions at home. There were no incentives to territorialise these ambitions, since nodes and bottlenecks, as well as the capacity to move wealth between these nodes were the source of external extraction. As my three cases demonstrate, nomadism was not the barrier to territorial state making; rather, it was high mobility that posed the challenge. The corollary of this is that we need an explanation for the territoriality of the state. We cannot assume it, as is often implicitly done through the reference of Weber's or Tilly's definitions, which treat the concentration of power within a defined territory as a given.

Mobile states and territorial nomads: the British Empire in Maasai-land (Alice Engelhard)

This intervention makes a critique of the nomadism-sedentarism binary through a brief illustration of encounters with the Maasai in the colonisation of British East Africa. It argues that the definition of nomads in opposition to state sedentarism is inaccurate and obscures imperial mobilities, including the

mobilities of settlers, tourists, and big game hunters. It encourages the study of nomads to ask more specific questions about what forms of mobility and territoriality are at stake in different political projects, and calls for a heightened attentiveness to the politics of the nomad category.

The contribution proceeds in three sections. First, it identifies and critiques an association of states with sedentarism and territoriality, in opposition to mobile nomads. Second, it offers an empirical sketch of encounters between British imperial actors and the Maasai in the early twentieth century. This suggests that Maasai and settler political societies were both mobile and both made claims to territoriality. Third, it reflects on the political stakes of associating states with sedentarism, and suggests an approach to studying nomads which does not reify a binary between nomadism and sedentarism. To do so, I analysed representations of 'nomads' as 'mobile' in existing academic literature, as well as through limited archival analysis of official narratives on nomads in early-twentieth-century Britain.

A postcolonial critique of the nomadism-sedentarism binary

Most work on nomads takes nomads to be mobile, and understands them as a challenge to states that are understood to be sedentary. In this intervention, I destabilise the linking of the state with sedentarism, by illustrating the role of imperial mobility in the colonisation of British East Africa. As addressed in the introduction to this forum, sedentary states are often taken as the norm of global politics, and mobile nomads are treated as an exception. This intervention builds on the argument made in the introduction to argue that a norm of sedentary states is often unwittingly reproduced in work on nomads through an association of the state with sedentarism, which does not necessarily hold in an imperial context. Illustrative of the association of territoriality with sedentarism in the study of nomads, Levin and MacKay (2020, 4) write that '[n]omads undermine or stand outside of the core features of the modern international order. The constitutive unit of that order—the Weberian state (Weber 1978, 54)—requires of populations things nomadic peoples are not historically inclined toward'. This is understood to be because: '[nomads'] 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' (Levin and MacKay 2020, 8). Even in critical work where the exceptionalisation of nomadic mobility is questioned by relating it with other forms of mobility, such as migration, the sedentarism of the state remains undisputed (for example, see Banerjee and Smith 2020, 266). The implications of this are to associate nomads with mobility, and states with fixity, and to suggest that nomads pose a challenge to states because of their cross-border mobility. However, attentiveness to empire suggests that state territoriality is synonymous with 'sedentarism' or 'stasis', and that mobility is often very compatible with state politics.

Drawing on postcolonial theory, I problematise the association between states and 'sedentarism'. First, because modern European nation-states emerged as imperial-states, rather than evolving endogenously from sedentary societies within Europe (Bhambra 2016, 346; Cooper and Stoler 1997, 1). Second, because in an imperial context, territoriality did not imply

'sedentarism', as the colonial conquest of territory operated through circulation and mobility, for instance, through the circulation of imperial troops (Cooper and Stoler 1997, 28). From a postcolonial perspective, imperial mobility, rather than state sedentarism, characterises the emergence of the modern nation-state. The centrality of mobility to the imperial expansion which provided the conditions for the emergence of the modern state is clear in the colonisation of British East Africa.[6]

Territorial nomads, mobile states

Territoriality is receiving increased attention in IR (Branch 2012; Goettlich 2019; Li 2022; Mukoyama 2023). Defined by Sack as 'the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions, interactions, or access by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographic area', territoriality is linked to the rationalisation of geography through practices such as map-making and the linearisation of borders, with both European and non-European origins (cited in Mukoyama 2023, 5). However, territoriality is often assumed to be coterminous with sedentarism. An imperial focus highlights how imperial claims to territory operate through the circulations of 'generations of families, tools of analysis, social policy, military doctrine, and architectural plans' (Cooper and Stoler 1997, 38), along with ideas such as scientific racism (Yao 2021), and legal cultures (Mawani and Hussin 2014).

Viewed through this lens, the early twentieth-century encounter between the British Empire and the Maasai was not an encounter between one mobile society and one territorial or sedentary society, but between two societies that were both mobile and territorial. Broadly, when the British began the imperial expansion in East Africa, the area between the Swahili coast and Uganda was commonly recognised as Masaai grazing land, and known by the British as 'Masai-land' (Hughes 2006, 3). This indicated some recognition of a form of Maasai territoriality, understood as 'the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions, interactions, or access by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographic area' (see above). The early-twentieth-century colonisation of British East Africa involved the alienation of 'Maasai-land' and the enclosure of the Maasai in nature reserves. In a series of land grants and unequal agreements between the Maasai and the British, between 1903 and 1911 many Maasai were displaced from their grazing lands and moved into two nature reserves, to clear land for white settlement (Hughes 2006, 5). This alienation of land from the Maasai was partly justified by representations of the Maasai as mobile and nomadic, for example, in references to the Maasai in the House of Commons as a 'wandering tribe' and as 'nomadic and warlike.' .[7] At the same, the ongoing contestation of their displacement by the Maasai (see Waithaka 2012; Hughes 2006) may be understood as a form of territoriality.

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[6] In problematising the ideal of the state as 'sedentary', I specifically focus on the mobility of the British Empire, which may not directly translate onto Eurasian empires as addressed elsewhere in this forum and in recent work on nomads (e.g. Buranelli 2024).

[7] Ormsby-Gore in *Hansard* HC Deb vol 227 col 1493 (30 April 1929). Available online at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1929-04-30/debates/5ec6e3c1-6661-416a-a13b-7cbda88c7409/ClassIi (last accessed 26 August 2024).

The justification of land alienation through Maasai mobility obscured the fact that settler society was only possible through imperial mobilities, and not through sedentarist politics, even when it involved claims to territoriality. This included the mobility of settlers themselves (Kennedy 1987), and the tourists and big game hunters who the colony increasingly depended on for income (Jackson 2011; Mbaria and Ogada 2016). These mobile subjects constituted a wider society that, as Cooper and Stoler (1997) prompt, spanned colony and metropole. Moreover, they connected settler society with a wider 'anglo-world' of white supremacy through, for example, Theodor Roosevelt's 1909 Safari in East Africa (Lake and Reynolds 2008, 208). Indeed, as the settler agriculture that justified the Maasai displacements failed to yield profitability (Jackson 2016, 262), the settler colonial project in British East Africa may not have been viable without income derived from tourism and hunting.

Opening an agenda for problematising 'sedentary states'

Rather than a mobile society encountering a sedentary one, the encounter between the British and the Maasai represents two mobile societies with competing claims to territoriality. Highlighting the centrality of mobility to settler colonialism in British East Africa is intended to problematise the linking of the state with 'sedentarism', especially in studies of the relations between states and nomads. Imperial mobilities were central to the emergence of both the metropolitan and colonial state, neither of which can be adequately understood through an emphasis on sedentarism. At the same time, while the Maasai were also a mobile society, this was not an unfettered mobility, but one that also involved claims to territoriality.

This sketch necessarily opens up more questions than it answers, and in doing so, intends to contribute to the reorientation of debates on the political significance of nomadism, and the politics of the nomad category. This may lead to more specific inquiry into forms of territoriality associated with 'sedentary' societies in contrast to 'nomadic' societies, as well as forms of mobility inherent to state polities. This can also contribute to interrogating the politics at stake when specific forms of mobility, such as nomadism, are made visible as 'mobility', while other forms of mobility, such as the imperial mobilities which led to nation-state formation in Europe, and the tourism which facilitated it, are understood as belonging to 'sedentary' societies.

Troubling nomadic-refugee identity in international aid governance (Hannah Owens)

Constructed in the 1960s, Zaatari Village in northern Jordan was founded by members of the Bani Khalid who, as Bedouin kin, traversed the Arabian Peninsula. This land has been a passageway used by numerous tribes connecting nomadic lifestyles between Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. During this period, many senior members of the Bani Khalid network were gifted land by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and granted citizenship, and, in exchange, a process of settlement and cultivation followed (Zuntz 2020).

Since 2011, Zaatari Village has adapted to become a refugee-host community adjacent to its namesake, Zaatari camp. Now home to around 12,000 Syrians, movement to Zaatari Village was not random. It represents routes of familiarity created by socio-historical and economic patterns upheld across generations and rooted in nomadic tradition which spans across borders. As a consequence of conflict-induced displacement between 2011 and 2015, the Syrians who settled in the village employed many of the same kinship networks, extended family ties and economic channels used prior to the war. It was the context—one of conflict—that changed, rather than the movement itself. While many individuals in the village would not classify their current lifestyle as nomadic, legacies of nomadism remain, where cross-border movement in the past has helped to secure community connections in the present.

In this intervention I propose an understanding of 'nomadic-refugees' that problematises the categories of 'nomad' and 'refugee', by showing that for displaced Syrians in Zaatari Village, the category of 'refugee' may not take into account long histories of affiliation and nomadism. By refusing methodological nationalism and instead giving primacy to refugees' own conceptualisations of identity, this contribution explores the tensions which emerge when historically nomadic populations are identified as refugees by state governance and international aid organisations.

The village represents the increasing difficulty in identifying, categorising and, therefore, containing refugees who do not classify themselves as refugees based on colonial national identity markers. Rather, Syrians here position themselves through tribal affiliation and nomadic history. While Author F problematises the nomad/sedentary distinction from the outside, this contribution problematises this distinction from the point of view of the people themselves. To do so, I draw on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Zaatari Village between 2021 and 2022. Daily conversations with and stories from interlocutors reveal the ways in which identity and belonging in displacement contexts emerge differently, outside of international aid categories. Unpacking refugee-aid relations from this alternative perspective is an opportunity to understand the ways in which historically nomadic populations who experience displacement challenge the category of refugee.

Positioning Syrians as the refugee 'other'

Dating back to the Ottoman Empire, refugee resolutions in the region had been based on traditional understandings of personhood, grounded in Arab, Islamic or tribal notions of brotherhood, guest or hospitality, creating space for the movement of peoples across vast areas of land (Chatty 2017, 26). People on the move were often well looked after by both the state and civil society through integration programmes, the granting of citizenship, and the offer of land to encourage self-sufficiency (Chatty 2017, 26). Due to this hosting lineage, and by employing family or kinship roots, in 2011, many Syrians travelling from the governorates of Homs or Dara'a did not view themselves as refugees but extended family in need.

Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention; however, it has traditionally accepted Syrians with a passport through the Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs. As a key host country in the region,

Jordan welcomed (forced-)migrants across its borders (Chatty 2017). However, lacking a definitive legal framework, Syrian refugees have been referred to as 'visitors', 'irregular guests', and 'Arab brothers' (International Labour Organisation 2015). Despite these terms, the arrival of Syrians in large numbers necessitated the Government of Jordan (GoJ) to dispel any informal tented settlements in (semi-)urban areas, where the majority of Syrians chose to settle. Instead, together with the UNHCR, the GoJ began building Zaatari camp in 2012

This hyper-visible encampment—far away from urban areas—depicts a distinct shift in the governance narrative, from one of hosting to security management (Turner 2015). The GoJ, alongside their international aid agency partners, constructed 'Syrian' Bedouins as refugees, and therefore distinctly as not belonging (Zuntz 2020,176). These actions reinscribe dangerous 'administrative categories' produced by the state or aid agency which are fundamental to 'shaping … notions of threat' (Darling 2017, 179). The politics of categorisation serves as a particular tool of governance which defines security and belonging by ignoring or overlooking nomadic-refugee identity, thereby fixing the category of 'refugee' to certain individuals and spaces.

Movement as everyday life

Zaatari Village demonstrates the ways in which nomadic-refugee identity presents a specific problem to international aid work and refugee governance, which operates within the narrow parameters of national identity markers. Many residents of Zaatari Village embrace 'transnational lives' (Zuntz 2021), troubling the distinct analytical categories - Syrian/Jordanian, refugee/local, movement/stasis - used in international and state refugee governance. Rather, Syrian refugees here uncover the 'untenable link between birth and territory on which the principle of territorial citizenship at the origin of the present global political order is based, an order incapable of imagining any other form of belonging and legitimate "right to a place"' (Minca, Martin, and Katz 2020, 751).

As this forum's introduction notes, migrants are often conceptualised as mobile things: becoming a migrant through the practice of movement. However, Syrian cross-border movement, in this case, can be better understood through a framework of nomadic practice; that movement along these familiar routes was central to many Syrians' ability to make home and create security. Thus, Zaatari Village illustrates how cross-border strategies are a way of life which resemble 'ancestral migration patterns' of security or economic and social significance, which foster important manifestations of identity and belonging (Dourish and Bell 2007, 422). These come to be reflected in the adaptive processes of movement, settlement and urban planning which 'permeate … everyday life, making daily life, and the movement through space, a cultural and historical experience' (Dourish and Bell 2007, 422). Syrians and Jordanians reactivated pre-existing patterns and bonds from before the conflict, working through these social layers to co-create spaces of security in displacement beyond international aid frameworks. This includes renting land at a discounted price, providing an unused building to create a home, or sharing childcare responsibilities. Moreover, new possibilities for shared space have

arisen, such as building a community centre, which often has positive impacts on the local economy, infrastructure and cultural life.

This is perhaps why many Syrians in Zaatari refused to register with the UNHCR on arrival or reject the refugee label altogether. Interlocutors purposefully reinforced their historical connections to the people and spaces of Zaatari, recovering their Bani Khalid bond in order to seek social protection. On the other hand, those who did register with international aid organisations did so for the political and financial protections granted to the legal category of 'refugee', when transnational legacies of nomadism are overlooked, ignored or misunderstood. This linguistic preference depicts the tension between familial connections and categorisations of governance, and portray how the category of nomad-refugee must work through various layers of social, political and financial protection.

Despite being positioned as a security threat by governance mechanisms due to their nationality or international categorisation of 'refugee', Syrians travelled to and settled in Zaatari Village, forging a new life in displacement. While location and movement continue to guide the principles of refugee categories, they too channelled the residents of Zaatari Village to build spaces of protection outside of an international aid framework. They found solidarity in the patterns of movement which historically supported cross-border relations.

Concluding thoughts

Conceptualising movement as a way of life, fundamental to security-making in displacement, nomadic legacies begin to unravel the labels used in refugee governance. Mobile subjects blur categories of identity and belonging, and open an opportunity to explore the ways in which displaced persons often do not classify themselves, or circumscribe their position, as refugees, precisely because of connected histories, and in spite of spatial division.

For many residents of Zaatari Village, it was the subtle forms of ordinary living which generated feelings of security, and resulted in many families deciding to stay in the village rather than return to Syria. Hence, the perceived differences based on humanitarian assumptions of 'local', 'migrant' or 'refugee' require interrogation. Individuals are not positioned through a refugee status. Rather, Zaatari Village reveals pre-existing methods of cohesion and community support which draw on pre-war kinship, labour and familial networks grounded in histories of transnational movement, that interventions on nomadism can help to address.

International aid governance would therefore benefit from a deeper understanding of identity, in the national context of Jordan, and beyond. Incorporating complex systems of self-identification, where identity and movement are read differently and do not always relate to displacement, refugee arrival or the humanitarian condition, could help develop a relevant response for displaced Syrians, and nurture a greater appreciation for the traditional structures revolving around tribal, religious and kinship solidarity. This, as Zaatari Village demonstrates, has proven to help foster community security. Systems to control migration continue to work within frameworks where work necessitates the identification of refugees, which assume certain experiences and (in)securities based on difference, diversity and associated need. Foregoing

these assumptions is an opportunity for alternative mechanisms of support to arise and for the limited funding from international aid agencies to be redirected towards projects that benefit the community.

Transnational nomads: pre-state actors in a post-Westphalian system (Jamie Levin)

As indicated by the previous contribution, nomads have consistently faced heavy-handed treatment. States have been relatively consistent in their attempts to 'civilise' nomads—a euphemism for forced sedentarisation, or, in the most extreme cases, subjecting them to campaigns of ethnic cleansing or genocide (Levin and MacKay 2020). As a consequence, the world's nomadic population has declined precipitously in the past hundred years (c.f., Moretti 2012; Randall 2015).

Although it is true that nomads have historically presented material challenges to the state—such as limiting its ability to enforce property rights, collect taxes, conscript citizens, and regulate borders—they have generally been rendered relatively weak in comparison to the modern state. Today, nomads pose little significant threat to the state's hegemony, its economic stability, development levels, or security. How, then, can we account for the persistent oppressive attitudes of states toward nomads? In this contribution, I argue that transnational nomadism continues to represent an ideational threat to the concept of the nation-state, thereby prompting states across the world to maintain a vigilant and often harsh response.

I emphasise two such ideational challenges: First, transnational nomadism undermines the ontological status of the Westphalian state system as the sole legitimate mode of sovereignty. By crossing borders, nomads not only undermine the states' ability to delineate borders and enforce its authority over them, but also weakens their legitimacy to do so. In other words, nomadism calls into question the link between sovereignty and territoriality by serving as a reminder of alternative models of sovereignty that do not cleave neatly to the division of politics between domestic and international, along clear and mutually exclusive boundaries (see Ruggie 1993). For traditional nomadic groups, population and territory are important but not spatially fixed. Political authority is not necessarily seated in any one territorial domain, as they are for states. Nomadic rule is portable, typically based on kinship. Sovereignty is more fluid, with populations moving from territory to territory, often with different populations inhabiting the same territories at different times.

Second, the movement of nomadic groups across, or their presence within, national borders calls into question the supposed homogenous identity upon which many modern nation-states are constructed. Indeed, nomadic groups challenges the central claim of modern ethno-nationalism: that a particular geographic area (i.e., the state) is the exclusive home to a people with a common language, culture, history, etc. (i.e., the nation) (e.g. Smith 2009).

Jennifer Mitzen (2006) argues that states routinely go to great lengths to protect themselves from ontological threats, even when they appear largely insignificant from a materialist perspective (see also: Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 2018; Steele 2008). Indeed, such responses may even come at the expense of their material wellbeing. Similarly, Rae (2002) argues that nationbuilders

have tended to construct the 'other' as a threat to the homogeneity of the state and thus its legitimacy.

Nomads (and other groups) thus became an easy scapegoat for the central-isation of power.[8] Nationbuilders have historically manipulated such hostility 'to build their own legitimacy and consolidate their power,' Rae (2002, 81) writes. She suggests that the pursuit of homogeneity cannot be explained with reference to materialist factors alone, such as the competition over scarce resources, but is instead a product of the desire for power and legitimacy. Consequently, the possibilities for a significant state response—or a costly overreaction—remain high despite the diminished material status of nomadic groups over time (Levin and MacKay 2020).

I theorise that states will respond to the presence of transnational nomad-ism on their territory in one of several ways, depending on their material strength, the depth of their commitments to ethno-nationalism and Westphalian sovereignty, in particular the territorial aspects of Westphalian sovereignty:

First, materially strong states with deep commitments to Westphalian sov-ereignty—particularly those that have a rigid understanding of the (supposed) ethnic composition of the nation—will likely employ coercive means, attempt-ing to constrain the movement of nomads by assimilating them into the seden-tary population, expelling nomads from their territory (ethnic cleansing) or, in extreme cases, targeting nomads for genocide.[9] These efforts serve two pur-poses: they help stem the material effects of transnational nomadism, however limited (i.e., a settled population can no longer escape enumeration, taxation, conscription, etc.) and, more importantly, they relieve the exception nomads represent to the state's monopoly on sovereign control and/or the homogen-eity of the nation.

Following Rae, leaders seeking to consolidate their legitimacy by way of nation-building will likely follow a similar path. In extreme cases, attempts to consolidate power and forge national unity will result in ethnic cleansing and genocide (see also Heiskanen 2021). Rae terms this process 'pathological hom-ogenization' which she describes as 'the relationship between state-building and the strategies … used by elites to construct the bounded political commu-nity of the modern state as an exclusive moral community from which out-siders must be expelled' (quoted in Lischer 2003: 378).

Second, weak states will attempt to legitimise the practice of movement associated with nomadism—their transnational movement in particular—des-pite a commitment to Westphalian sovereignty or ethno-nationalism (or indeed because of it). By definition weak states tend to lack the material capacities to successfully sedentarise and assimilate nomads or regulate movement across their borders. Thus, they may have little choice but to permit transnational nomadism—adjusting their policies to fit reality—in order to preserve the

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[8] MacKay (2016) similarly argues that states deploy the idea of the nomadic other as a foil against which they sometimes legitimise themselves.

[9] Hall (2020) flags an exception to this in Sweden, where government policy at the turn of the last century aimed to forcibly keep the *Sámi* nomadic. The *Sámi*, he argues, were not seen as a threat and their economic utility to the state was predicated on their continued movement. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Kazakhstan has turned to its nomadic history in an effort to consolidate its post-Soviet national identity (Ferret 2016; Chang 2015).

appearance of sovereign authority and their commitment to territoriality. Where nomadic populations remain unconstrained by sedentarisation policies and borders remain porous, transnational nomadism will likely continue. However, by sanctioning their movement, the state has at least nominally mitigated the ontological threat those practices pose to its exclusive and legitimate control over territory. In sanctioning nomadic behaviour, weak states might continue to cling to the idea of territorial sovereignty, despite their tenuous grasp of it.

And finally, those states that have integrated aspects of sovereign authority across their national boundaries—thus freeing the movement of goods and people across them—have reduced or eliminated the ideational threat of that transnational nomadism poses to state sovereignty by default. In deemphasizing the salience Westphalian territoriality nomadism can largely continue (at least in principle) without undermining the real or perceived sovereign authority of the state or states. In most such examples, there is often a concomitant decline in the political salience of ethno-nationalism (Smith 2007). However, in those cases where ethno-nationalism has witnessed a resurgence, we are likely to see renewed coercive efforts directed towards nomadic groups, following Rae.

An example of the first type—states settling nomads by force—can be found in the efforts to sedentarise the Bedouin population of Palestine during the late Ottoman period, continuing through the British Mandate, and into the early period of Israeli statehood. The first notable attempts to settle the Bedouin were made when international boundaries were becoming more salient in the late nineteenth century, though the declining Ottoman empire achieved little success before finally collapsing. The British achieved greater success upon assuming control over the Mandate for Palestine. This was a period in which the modern boundaries of the Middle East were being rapidly staked out by European powers (c.f., Sykes-Picot) and the British largely restricted the movement of Bedouin to certain areas that wouldn't threaten these fledgling borders. Finally, sedentarisation accelerated after the establishment of the State of Israel. The Zionist movement was keen not only to secure territory and define borders against internal and external challengers, but also settle these territories with newly arriving Jewish immigrants (see MacKay et al. 2014; Meir 2020).

Examples of the second type—the treatment of nomads by states clinging to Westphalian sovereignty despite lacking the material capacity to fully enforce it—can be found throughout the developing world. East African pastoralists were a particularly illustrative example. Despite nearly a century of sedentarisation efforts by both colonial and independent post-colonial governments, the Maasai continued to engage in pastoral activities, routinely crossing international borders between Kenya and Tanzania with their livestock. Unable to meaningfully halt this activity, Kenya and Tanzania instead began to provide legitimacy for it by harmonising phytosanitary measures amongst others (see MacKay et al. 2014 and Galvin et al. 2020). However, as these states developed, becoming materially stronger and more capable of consolidating authority, they began exerting more substantial control than in the past. Today, rather than accommodating transnational nomads, they have begun clamping down on them, as European states once did. Tanzania, in particular,

has recently undertaken meaningful efforts to evict the Maasai from game reserves where they once moved freely and restrict their movement across borders (c.f., York and Bociaga 2022; McQue 2022; Brockington 2002; see also Author F in this forum).

The nomadic passages of the resilient state: kinopolitical liminality in an era of disaster acceleration (Franca Kappes)

Within the climate resilience discourse, nomadic practices are lauded as exemplary manifestations of communal autopoiesis, epitomising the capacity for self-recreation through co-evolution with surrounding socio-ecological systems, as opposed to the top-down crisis governance approach of the sedentary 'State' who is portrayed as a gravitational force obstructing the transformative adjustments necessitated by the dynamic currents of the Anthropocene (D1 and D2, this forum; Ghazali et al. 2021). Echoing calls for the adoption of a 'kinopolitical framework' in IR (Huysmans 2022), this intervention challenges the prevalent notion that 'nomadic motion' categorically exists in opposition to the 'State'. Taking post-Hurricane Irma and María Puerto Rico (PR) as an example, the concept of 'kinopolitical liminality' is introduced to explore what happens when successive waves of disasters open up passages during which the 'State's' desire for self-preservation leads to a co-optation of nomadic motion and formerly distinct kinetic identities become functionally equivalent. Conceiving of nomadism as a kinetic mode of being, rather than as an idiosyncratic feature of historically mobile societies, not only allow us to revisit debates on the sovereign 'State' and anthropocentric governance from a novel ontological perspective, but also enables the inclusion of hypermobile actors overlooked by scholars studying the role of 'Nomads' in IR.

Towards a kinetic understanding of anthropocentric statecraft

The Weberian concept of the 'State' no longer appears to be as static as it once was (Loh and Heiskanen 2020). Although there is ample scholarship on governance in the Anthropocene (Biermann 2014; Delanty and Mota 2017), the role of the 'State' is either disregarded or portrayed as a gravitational force obstructing transformative adjustment, resulting in its retreat as a sovereign. Considering that sovereign statehood continues to shape the conventional understanding of political order despite having 'no essence grounded in either material facts or normative principles' (Matthews 2021, 61), we must not abolish the concept altogether but reconfigure it in a way that enables us to capture how the 'State's' ontological form is performatively enacted without ever becoming fully 'present'. Adopting a kinopolitical framework allows us to understand how the Anthropocene 'State's' resilience becomes contingent on its ability to 'transform [itself] constantly by forging new connections and by reorganising in creative ways'' (Boas and Rothe 2016, 6).

Wandering masses & kinetic elites as a cause and consequence of kinopolitical liminality

First introduced by Arnold van Gennep (1909), liminality is defined topologically as a 'border zone', and/or temporally, as a transitional state of 'no longer being' and 'not yet being'. Due to the frequent exposure to natural hazards, PR has emerged as an emblematic site of kinopolitical liminality. Since Hurricane Irma and María hit PR in 2017, annually recurring disasters paired with chronic governmental neglect have forced the local population to become non-residential by constantly being on the move. In addition to internal displacement, PR has seen a sustained trend of outward migration, with a significant portion of the population relocating after María (Hinojosa 2018, 236). At the same time, the government responded to the devastation by transforming the archipelago into a tax haven, and crypto paradise. Nearly 12% of PR's population has left since 2012, while over 4500 crypto entrepreneurs, investors, and influencers moved to benefit from exclusive tax benefits (Chow and Espada 2022). Additionally, after the Jones Act was temporarily suspended, international disaster relief workers, and volunteers arrived, and returned whenever a new disaster happened (American Red Cross 2022). These kinetic elites enjoy passport privileges, including specialised transportation access and legal safeguards, allowing them to move freely in response to emergencies compared to the local population's experience of perpetual motion whose pace is dictated by the conditions on the ground.

The escalating frequency of disasters led to the normalisation of kinopolitical liminality, as disparate kinetic networks became increasingly intertwined. Although anarcho-libertarian nomad capitalists pride themselves on living independently from governmental control, they do not only rely on consumer capitalism and bureaucratic proficiency, but are also intended to serve as an agile crisis governance tool. Yet, instead of contributing to the consolidation of the 'State' by bringing capital, they triggered a privatisation of beaches, environmental destruction, and 'transnational gentrification processes' due to the use of short-term rentals, co-working spaces, and other facilities geared towards remote work (Chow and Espada 2022). Furthermore, initially celebrated as a revolutionary technology, blockchain and crypto mining proved to be exceptionally detrimental to the environment, thereby further exacerbating a crisis that created the precondition for their presence in PR in the first place. Similarly, the influx of humanitarian workers altered the respective areas' original demographic composition causing new displacement through gentrification.

Rather than being indicative of an inability to perform essential functions associated with statehood, resilient statecraft 'is concerned with guaranteeing the sovereign duty of care [… despite the] limits of its possibility' (Pospisil and Gruber 2016, 10). After María, the government successfully co-opted the seemingly emancipatory resilience narrative of 'autogestión' as it complemented their neoliberal approach to recovery. Due to its reliance on charitable organisations, disaster capitalism, and austerity measures, Puerto Ricans had to come together to autonomously organise community kitchens, cooperatives, and debris clean-up. Over the course of the following years the PR 'State' appeared as a phantom 'State', while networks of people turned into 'people as infrastructure' (Ficek 2018, 113), mimicking its functional capacities and kinetic order. However,

kinopolitical liminality must not be understood as a sequential transgression from one discrete kinetic state into another, and it is important to reiterate that nomadic motion may simultaneously constitute a 'mode of governance *and* resistance' (Ansems De Vries 2015, 83; see author B, p. x). For instance, according to Bonilla (2020, 101), the protests that caused governor Ricardo Rosselló's resignation in 2019 were facilitated by preceding experiences of communal autopoiesis. Similarly, in the wake of the 2019/2020 earthquakes and Hurricane Fiona, the slogan 'Puerto Rico rises!' which had resonated with the government's promotion of national unity during the post-María period, was replaced by 'Only the people save the people' (Jackson 2022), signalling a further detachment from the 'State'.

Conclusion

Further complicating the relationship between mobility and stasis, this intervention aimed to contribute to the nascent 'post-sedentary dialogue' by conceiving of nomadism as a distinct, and yet, transient kinetic mode of being, embodied by a multitude of hypermobile and even seemingly static entities. In line with the forum's second objective of moving beyond the sedentarism-nomadism binary, a kinopolitical reading of resilient statecraft suggests that 'nomadic' motion—be it communal, or anarcho-libertarian—is not necessarily opposed to the raison d'être of the postmodern 'State', but may be appropriated by it, to survive in form, without realising its substantive functions. As demonstrated by the PR case, an idealised reading of both nomadic adaptability and liminality, which suggests a universal experience of systemic dissolution, has rightfully been criticised for overlooking the diverse range of encounters forged at times of crisis, thereby glossing over the power differentials that continue to shape the passage of the individual 'Nomadic' traveller.

Tensions between forced and voluntary movement epitomised in a TikTok video by the crypto investor Hayden Bowles who reacted to the declaration of emergency in the aftermath of Fiona, posting the following statement: 'An official emergency has been declared, which means in the tax program, your physical presence time is suspended […] So I am headed out of the island' (quoted in Chow and Espada 2022). When engaging in examinations of 'Anthropocene mobilities', it is crucial to recognise that high levels of 'motility' and location independence constitute both a privilege afforded to 'kinetic elites' while imposing a curse upon those who find themselves stuck in perpetual cycles of deterritorialisation and displacement due to the recurrence of calamitous events. Against this backdrop, this intervention advocates for a non-totalising and non-sequential understanding of the liminal, emphasising the possibility of an overlap of nested transitional modes of being.

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