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Dear reader,

This is a chapter I wrote for a book on order in international politics edited by Günther Hellman of the Goethe University in Frankfurt.

As a result of globalization societies become more prosperous and their relations more peaceful, but people also come to live more nomadic lives. We become increasingly homeless, as it were, and consequently more susceptible to the arguments of politicians who promise to create new homes for us. This is how the "first era of globalization" in the nineteenth-century was interrupted and replaced by a century of genocides and wars. For the past couple of decades we have been going through a new, "second," era of globalization, and once again the result is economic development and peace, but also a renewed rhetoric of homelessness. The terrifying prospect is that we will repeat the horrors of the twentieth-century. As I argue in this chapter, we need to learn to live with rootlessness, and who better to teach us how to do it than nomads? Nomads have no roots, they have paths; they have homes of course, but homes that they take with them. We too must learn to carry everything we need with us.

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If you have any comments or questions, email me at erik@ringmar.net

yours always,

Erik

Order in a Borderless World: Nomads Confront Globalization

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All problems of international politics are caused by borders. It is at the border between us that things change; mine becomes yours and yours mine; flags are lowered and hoisted, passports requested, identities verified. It is the border that constitutes political entities as separate from each other and as sovereign. Borders make each state into a box and international relations into relations between boxes. It is control over the sovereign power created by the border which is at stake in civil wars. It is the border that protects the political leaders who commit crimes against their own populations. It is when the troops of a country are crossing the borders of its enemy that war no longer is a possibility but a fact.

So let us abolish borders. If there are no borders, there is no yours and no mine and nothing for political leaders, or minority groups, to fight over and no borders that can protect ruthless dictators. Without borders there can be no sovereignty and no wars. Fanciful and unrealistic though this suggestion sounds, it has actually been tried — well, sort of. In the last decades of the nineteenth-century, exchange expanded at an unprecedented rate, creating a networked world in which money, goods and people moved around without respect for national borders. During this, so called, "first era of globalization," international shipping and railroad networks expanded dramatically; telegraph and telephone lines connected people; tariffs were lowered and banks linked up in an international financial system. To liberals, this suggested the possibility that peace

on earth finally could be achieved. If everyone was sufficiently dependent on everyone else, the argument went, no one can afford to start a war. And the nineteenth-century was indeed exceptionally peaceful, at least in Europe.

This experiment came to an abrupt end when the First World War broke out in 1914. Borderlessness had not only brought an unprecedented level of economic prosperity but also made people's lives far more insecure than previously. They wanted their borders back; they wanted a proper home for themselves, and homes as always require solid walls and doors that can be securely bolted. The result was the welfare state, in its Bismarckian, Fabian and Social Democratic versions, but also the national state as defined by Nazis in Germany, Fascists in Italy and by Stalin in the Soviet Union. In the wake of the First World War, borders were reestablished all over Europe, and outside of Europe borders were reaffirmed as new states in the wake of the Second World War made themselves independent of their colonial masters. The twentieth-century was the century of borders. It was also more than anything the century of wars, civil wars and genocide.

For the past couple of decades, we seem to be repeating the nineteenth-century experiment. Money, goods and people are once again moving around with little concern for borders. In our "second era of globalization," economic exchange has once again taken off and prosperity is spreading far more widely than ever previously. Once again the hopes of liberals have been awakened. Just as in the nineteenth-century, no one can today afford to start a war. But with increasing exposure to world markets comes an increasing sense of vulnerability and thereby renewed fears. Borderlessness leads to homelessness and anxiety. Once again there are voices calling for protection — protection against the vagaries of markets, against the decline in sovereignty, against the influx of foreign migrants and refugees. Political leaders spouting nationalistic slogans are gaining in the polls. They promise to build us new homes, with solid walls and doors that can be securely bolted. The prospects are terrifying.

We want exchange and we want prosperity, but we also want protection. We want peace but also a home we can call our own. The question is whether, and how, the two can be combined. The question is how order can be established and maintained in a borderless world. The people best placed to answer such questions, we will suggest in this chapter, are nomads. Nomads are people who move around in order to make a living — hunters and gatherers who look for animals to hunt and plants to gather; pastoralists who follow their herds in search of new pastures; but also traders, sailors, truckers, circus people and tramps who follow the roads looking for opportunities and ways to survive. They all live in a world without borders, and this is where they have made a home for themselves. They are exposed to be sure, but they have devised strategies to reduce their vulnerability. If we today increasingly are living the lives of nomads, and if our lives in the future will become more nomadic still, it would seem we have a lot to learn from people who always have lived in a borderless world.[2]

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[2] An argument to be further developed in Ringmar, *A World Without Borders*.

1. The anti-nomadic prejudices of the European state

Anti-nomadic sentiments may be the most widely shared of all prejudices, uniting sedentary peoples around the globe regardless of their color, creed or sexuality. To this day, despite our proud boasts of acknowledging "difference," many do not even recognize their anti-nomadic prejudices for what they are. The life of a nomad is so obviously wrong. Consider the European state. When political philosophers in the early modern era discussed what it was that made the state legitimate, their answer was that the state was legitimate since it rescued us from a peripatetic existence. And when the state proceeded to assert its power over society, repressive measures were put in place against vagrants, tramps and travelers — against all people, that is, without a fixed address. And when the European state went abroad, on colonial exploits in non-European parts of the world, it occupied the land of the natives on the pretext that the nomads who lived there had failed to make productive use of it.

Political philosophy

That politics requires borders is obvious already from the word itself. "Politics" is derived from *polis*, the political community created by the Greek city-state. More than anything, the Greeks distinguished the *polis* from nature. The city was a human creation which took human beings out of nature and thereby allowed them to develop their full potential. To be a citizen was to be a civilized person, and to be banished from the city was consequently a harsh punishment. Nature is where you go wild, go crazy, like the women in Euripides' *The Bacchæ* who left their hearths and their looms in pursuit of their god. But nature was fascinating too and those who dared to venture beyond the city-gates could visit places like Arcadia, a province in the heart of the Peloponnese.[3] It was

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[3] Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus*, 133–150.

in Arcadia that the nomads tended their sheep. The nomads lived in a pre-political, that is, in a pre-human, condition, but there was at the same time an innocence to their lives which easily lent itself to pastoral reveries.

In early modern Europe, the problem confronted by all political philosophers was how to give legitimacy to the state. With what right, they asked, could the state coerce the people subject to it, make them pay taxes and die in its wars? In reply the philosophers imagined a "state of nature," a condition in which human beings were imagined to have lived prior the establishment of the first state. If this original condition only could be shown to have been sufficiently repellent, the state could be presented as a necessary improvement and thereby as legitimate. The state of nature was usually envisioned as a large forest in which people roamed around without a fixed abode. The state of nature, that is, was a state of nomadism. Thomas Hobbes' version of the argument is perhaps the most famous. Mustering all his rhetorical powers, Hobbes described a pre-state world in which man's life had been "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[4] And although John Locke's state of nature was described as a rather more benign condition, a person's labor was never secure since there was no way of protecting one's property.[5] The solution suggested by both Hobbes and Locke was that people should subject themselves to the same political authority. The state was legitimate, said Hobbes, since it kept people "in awe"; the state was legitimate, said Locke, since it protected the fences which industrious citizens put up.

Although the state of nature was a rhetorical device, it was often taken as a historical reality. In an account popular among political philosophers in the eighteenth-century, human history was divided into four separate stages.[6] The first stage was a society made up of hunters and gatherers, the second stage a society of pastoralists — after which followed agricultural and then commercial society. Each stage represented an

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4   Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 78; See also Mill, "Civilization," 161–162.
5   Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 208–230.
6   For a discussion, see Mcdaniel, "Philosophical History and the Science of Man in Scotland," 543–568.

improvement over its predecessor and nomadic societies were for that reason the representatives of an earlier stage of human history. To visit a nomadic society was to travel back in time.

The existence of the state is still occasionally defended by references to an imaginary nomadic condition. There are roving bandits, the political economist Mancur Olson explained, and there are stationary bandits.[7] While roving bandits have an incentive to take and destroy, stationary bandits develop a stake in the economic success of their victims. Before long the stationary bandits begin to protect people from their roving colleagues, asking for taxes in return. The result is a state, and it was the state as it came to develop over the course of the centuries that eventually made all other political institutions possible. It is since we no longer are nomads that we can form a society, live in security and freedom, with a sense of justice, and together determine our fate.

State-building

The anti-nomadic prejudice is obvious also from the practices in which the state engaged. In early modern Europe, where popular uprisings were a constant threat, it was imperative for the state to control people, and people who stayed in one place were a lot easier to control. In addition, sedentary people were easier to tax, to call up for military service, and to subject to various reforms. As a result, repressive policies were put in place against anyone who lived an "unsettled life": most obviously the Roma, the Yenish, the Sami of northern Scandinavia, but also Irish travelers, tinkers, hobos, circus people, "wandering Jews," and many others. This history of prejudice and repression is, embarrassingly, ongoing.

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[7] Olson, *Power And Prosperity*; Cf. Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 169–191.

The problem, sedentary people have always insisted, is that nomadic people cannot be trusted. There is a systematic lack of trust between people who are on the move and those who stay put. Trust after all requires repeated interaction before it can be established; people need to see each other again and again — without a notion of when their last encounter will take place — before they can come to properly assess one another.[8] People living unsettled lives have no commitment to a particular locality, to local people and their ways of life. While all societies may have strong norms against cheating fellow members of their own community, they generally care far less about non-members. The problem for nomads is that while sedentary people mainly interact with people who are familiar to them, they interact with strangers all the time.

Consider the rudimentary welfare policies put in place in the early modern era. Poor relief was given by each parish and, according to what in Germany was known as the *Heimat* principle, only to parishioners.[9] Since they imposed a cost on the community, the number of people eligible for support was kept as low as possible and outsiders were consequently chased away. Those who refused to leave could be whipped, put in stock, branded or imprisoned, and members of the Roma community could, in parts of Europe, be hunted and killed without legal repercussions.[10] The prejudice against vagrants continued even as the developing economy increasingly came to produce them. From the end of the eighteenth-century, fewer hands were needed in the countryside, and those who could not find work in a factory — or those whom the vagaries of the market made redundant — often took to the road. The police — established as a regular force all over Europe in the first part of the nineteenth-century — had repression of vagrancy as one of its principal tasks.[11] In the nineteenth-century vagrants were often transported to the colonies.

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[8] Cf. Wintrobe, "Some Economics of Ethical Capital Formation and Conflict," 43–70.
[9] Lucassen, "Eternal Vagrants?," 71.
[10] Ibid., 61.
[11] Ibid., 67.

In implementing these policies, the state felt history to be on its side. After all, nomadism represented an earlier stage of human society, and the more the division of labor expanded, the more marginal nomadism was bound to become.[12] In an efficient economy, plants are grown, not gathered; animals are reared, not hunted; and people work productively in factories. These obvious facts have been taught by development agencies and international aid organizations to this day. Before the economy can take off and acquire a measure of self-sustained growth, the steppes have to be fenced in and the deserts irrigated. Nomads should be resettled in towns. By liberal reformers, acting with the best of intentions, such policies have often been justified in terms of "inclusion" and "integration." If we are to put a stop to the prejudices against them, we must convince the travelers to stop traveling. In modern society everyone must live somewhere, at a fixed address. The nomads must register to vote and register for all the services provided by the state; their children must go to school and to the doctor. Only people who can be located can be cared for and controlled.

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[12] Kradin, "Nomadism, Evolution and World-Systems," 368–388.

Colonialism

Compare the international practices in which European states engaged. From around the year 1500, Europeans came to invade and occupy first the Americas, then Asia and Africa, and at the end of the nineteenth-century only a few non-colonized parts of the world remained. The question was with what right people outside of Europe were deprived of their land. In his *De Indis de Jure Belli*, 1532, Francisco de Vitoria argued that God had given human beings the earth in order to cultivate it and that land which lays fallow legitimately can be appropriated.[13] And yet, rather courageously, de Vitoria sided with the natives. Since it was clear that they did use the land, he concluded, the conquistadors had no right to simply take it. In the end these legal arguments were ignored of course and the natives lost their land anyway, yet de Vitoria's argument set the terms in which colonial appropriation would continue to be discussed.

The British were quick to use de Vitoria to their own advantage. Wherever they went in their travels, they discovered uninhabited lands, not cultivated by anyone, and whenever they did, they declared themselves ready, able and willing to carry out God's plan. Nowhere in the Americas or in Africa were there any fences, they argued; there was no property and hence no property rights. Since the end of the nineteenth-century the term *terra nullius* has been applied to these supposedly uninhabited lands.[14] A *terra*, "land," is *nullius*, "no one's," as long as it does not belong to anyone, as judged by European standards. The rituals by means of which these lands were appropriated varied from one European country to the next: the Spaniards would plant a flag and read a declaration; the Dutch and the Portuguese would make a map; but the British would start building fences.[15]

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[13] Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*," 1–15.
[14] Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*"; See further Lindqvist, *Terra Nullius*.
[15] Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 16–40.

These legal arguments were the basis for a sharp distinction between people of three different kinds: civilized people, barbarians and savages.[16] The civilized people were Europeans of course, while "barbarians" were people who lived in the despotic kingdoms in Asia — people who had a state but a state of a very different kind than the European. "Savages," finally, were those who lived in a condition of statelessness. The prime examples of savages were hunters, gatherers and pastoralists. While Europeans had an obligation to help and protect them, they could also make war against them if the situation so required. In fact, since they by definition were outside of the community of civilized states, the Europeans could fight savages with savage methods if need be.[17] This is how the civilized Europeans came to commit genocides in places like Tasmania, Tierra del Fuego and Southwest Africa.

2. An experiment in borderlessness

Then began a social experiment of sorts. In the latter part of the nineteenth-century, life in the world created by sovereign states became far more nomadic than previously. The reason was above all that economic resources began moving around: goods and services were traded between countries at an unprecedented rate and capital was flowing to the places were it provided the highest yields. With the change in economic opportunities, people too began moving. Yet many also felt far more insecure than previously. People felt rootless and homeless. Picking up on such sentiments, an anti-nomadic, anti-globalization, rhetoric gained ground. All humans need a home, went the argument, and all nations need to protect their borders.

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[16] See, for example, Lorimer, *Institutes*, 2:101.

[17] Ringmar, "How to Fight Savage Tribes," 264–283; See further Lemarchand, *Forgotten Genocides*.

The first era of globalization

In order to understand the process of globalization as it took place in the course of the nineteenth-century we have to keep two quite different pictures in mind at the same time. The first picture shows us the apotheosis of the state. It was only in the nineteenth-century that the process of state formation came to be completed and only now that the state could live up to its long-standing claims to sovereignty. For one thing, its borders were for the first time clearly defined.[18] In the course of the nineteenth-century states expanded to fill up all available space; there were no longer any moving frontiers and no fussy hinterlands beyond them. Everywhere — although most famously perhaps on the Great Plains of North America — this expansion took place at the expense of nomadic peoples. In Africa the last white spaces on the European maps were filled in, and at the Berlin Conference in 1885 the entire continent was given borders, and divided up, between the colonial powers. In Europe itself the patchwork map made up of assorted political entities was radically simplified — above all as a result of the unification of Italy, 1861, and Germany, 1872. The entire world was now exhaustively divided between states, and each state was vastly more powerful than previously. The state was in control of its territory and its people; taxes could be levied and policies could be implemented by a powerful bureaucracy.

The second picture shows us a world which is far more tightly connected than ever previously. The states were networked, as it were, and in the networks things began moving around at an ever quickening pace. Various technical inventions played a crucial role in this regard.[19] International shipping expanded as a result of stream-driven ships with iron hulls that greatly reduced transportation costs. Railroad expansion created national networks which in turn were connected to the international railroad network. By means of the railroad it was possible to sell far more things to far more people, and as a

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[18] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 322–391.

[19] Ibid., 710–743; On the contermporary use of the network metaphor, see Otis, *Networking*, 49–80.

result far larger companies could be created. Since railroads required standardized timetables, a unified system for measuring time — a world time — was for the first time established. Meanwhile, inventions such as the telegraph, and later the telephone, made it possible to communicate with far away places in real time.[20] Suddenly, from the 1880s onward, every place on earth was related to every other. The world was one, not many.

In these networks goods, services and money were sent around, but also people and ideas. Factory owners needed natural resources to feed to their machines, and in the latter part of the nineteenth-century there was an explosive demand for tin, rubber and cotton in particular.[21] But the factory owners needed customers for their products too and international trade boomed, in particular after mid-century when tariffs were reduced or abolished. An international network of banks created an international financial system and it was suddenly easy for a person in London to invest in South African mines or in Latin American railroad shares. Thanks to the international gold standard prices were easy to compare. And as we would expect, people began moving around too. In the course of the nineteenth-century, 85 percent of Europeans moved — 70 percent within their respective countries, the rest abroad.[22] Between 1815 and 1914 at least 82 million people moved across borders — three times more people than in the twentieth-century.[23] As a result the ethnic composition of the United States was radically altered, adding far more Italians, Poles and Jews to the mis, and in Argentina, in 1914, 58 percent of the population had either been born abroad or were children of first-generation immigrants.[24] During no other time in human history had this many people been on the move.

In the course of the nineteenth-century, in other words, borders were first affirmed and strengthened and then superseded. Yet this is not to say that states became

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[20] See further Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*.
[21] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 728–729.
[22] Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 141.
[23] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 154.
[24] Ibid., 156.

redundant. On the contrary, states were more than anything the units which constituted the networked world and they were as such the first ones to benefit from it. The most obvious gains were economic. What we can obtain from others there is no need to make ourselves, and by specializing on what we are best at making, we become more competitive. As a result of specialization, the world economy became more productive, living standards rose across the board, and each state expanded its reach and its commitments correspondingly.[25] But there were political benefits too. As the British journalist Norman Angell explained, in a world in which everyone depends on everyone else, no one can afford to start a war.[26] Peace on earth suddenly appeared to be a realistic prospect. "As we have outgrown the duel," as Andrew Carnegie put it, "so have we outgrown homicidal war."[27]

Culture vs. civilization

We find the same two pictures if we make a distinction between culture, on the one hand, and civilization, on the other. The nineteenth-century was a time when culture for the first time became national in scope.[28] As a part of their program of self-assertion all European states created national symbols for themselves — flags, national anthems — as well as national institutions — academies, opera houses, theaters, museums and so on. In the newly established public school systems, a national history was taught together with standardized, national, ways of speaking, writing and thinking. As a result, the immense cultural variety that previously had existed was marginalized or entirely wiped

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[25] For GDP per capita, see ibid., 169 Although the increase was far greater in Europe and North America than in Asia. In China GDP per capita declined. Figures are not available for Africa.

[26] See the "Synopsis," in Angell, *Great Illusion*, vii–xiii; For a critical assessment, see Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.

[27] Carnegie, "The Baseless Fear of War," 80.

[28] See, *inter alia*, Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 80–100; Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 114–136.

out.[29] And yet, at the same time, and as a consequently of participating in increasingly tightly integrated networks, states also became more and more alike. They were all, in the phrase current at the time, being "civilized."[30]

Consider the metaphors implied by this terminology. Culture refers to "cultivation," that is, to the "tilling of the land." To cultivate a plant is to care for it and to make it grow. Metaphorically speaking, what is being cultivated by a culture is the human soul — compare individuals and societies that "flourish," "flower" or "bloom." Thus understood, culture is reserved for sedentary people. In order to grow things, after all, we need to stay sufficiently long in one place to plant the crop, water and weed it, to harvest and store it. In order to protect what we grow, we drive stakes into the ground and build fences which separates what is ours from that which belongs to others. Engaged in these activities, sedentary people develop a strong attachment to a particular location. They make a place out of space.[31] These few acres are the land that feeds us, which fed our ancestors and which will feed our descendants in turn.

To nomads this makes no sense. Nomads do not grow anything. They never stay long enough in one place to cultivate the land and they never commit themselves to a particular location by driving stakes into the ground. We would consequently expect nomads to be low on culture. And this is indeed the case. Or rather, all of their cultural artifacts have to be movable. They produce songs and folktales and clothes and talismans but make neither monuments nor pictures to hang on a wall. Moreover, in the history of warfare between nomadic and sedentary societies, nomads have often pulled up stakes and destroyed crops. Fences are an encumbrance since they block movement and planted crops are an abomination to the extent that they replace the grassland on which the animals feed. In this way nomads not only deprive sedentary peoples of the

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[29] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 67–114; The analogous case of Thailand is discussed in Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 81–94.

[30] Gong, *Standard of Civilization*; Ringmar, *Liberal Barbarism*, 90–93.

[31] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 67–84; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 153–287.

bases of their power but they also assure the freedom of movement on which their own power depends. More generally, nomadic warriors are notorious for their disrespect for cultural artifacts. They have often indiscriminately destroyed cultural treasures, burnt down libraries and entire cities — the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258 is only the most notorious example.

This is how nomads become the agents of civilization. If culture takes its metaphorical basis in agriculture, civilization takes its metaphorical basis in exchange. Everything that allows exchange to flourish helps spread civilization.[32] Civilization depends on the unencumbered circulation of goods, people, ideas, faiths and ways of life. Exchange means that things can be compared and judged in relation to each other; exchange provides you with a choice; you can choose the better or the cheaper option. Civilization is for that reason constitutionally opposed to walls. Walls block your vision and make it impossible for outsiders to see what you are doing; walls protect the corrupt and incompetent, high prices and low qualities. Compare the way the way the Mongols destroyed the walls of every city they conquered and the way they extended and cared for the network of routes — the "Silk Road" — which helped disseminate Chinese inventions like the printing press, the compass and gunpowder. Or compare the way the Arabs, originally a band of Bedouins from the Arabian peninsula, acted as intermediaries between Asia, Europe and Africa, helping to civilize the Europeans.[33]

Or compare the way the networked world created in the nineteenth-century came to spread civilization by destroying culture. It is the "profit motive," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels famously argued in *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848, which has set the Europeans chasing around the world. And once the search for profits came to replace all other concerns, societies were everywhere dramatically transformed; the profit motive

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[32] Ringmar, *Liberal Barbarism*, 90–93.
[33] Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, 19.

destroyed feudal relations and replaced them with market relations. "The cheap prices of

its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls."

> It compels all nations, on the pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode
> of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their
> midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world
> after its own image.[34]

As a result of this destruction, which has continued to this day, living standards have

increased, standards of education and health have improved, notions of democracy and

freedom of expression have spread more widely. At the end of this process, we will all be

civilized but there will be no culture left.

The new homelessness

If you are a sedentary person, deeply rooted in the soil, a nomadic lifestyle will always

appear as a form of homelessness. This was also the conclusion reached by many

contemporary observers around the turn of the twentieth-century. Modern society, they

concluded, had made people homeless. "We have left the land and have embarked," as

Friedrich Nietzsche put it in 1882,

> We have burned our bridges behind us — indeed, we have gone further and
> have destroyed the land behind us — Woe, when you feel homesick for the
> land as if it had offered more freedom — and there is no longer any "land."[35]

Nietzsche was born in Prussia but renounced his German citizenship when he became

professor at the university of Basel, in Switzerland, in 1869. After that he was stateless.

And once he, a decade later, left his position at the university, he was more or less

homeless too, spending the summers in Switzerland and the winters living in boarding-

houses and cheap hotels all over Italy.[36] Nietzsche called himself "a good European,"

which he equated with homeless, stateless, and nomadism.[37]

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[34] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 18.
[35] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, sec. 124.
[36] A detailed itinerary is provided in Krell and Bates, *The Good European*.
[37] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, sec. 377.

There were many homeless writers like Nietzsche around the turn of the twentieth-century. Another example is Rudyard Kipling, the author of *The Jungle Book*, 1894, and many other much-read, and loved, stories. Born in Bombay in 1865, Kipling was educated in England, but returned to India, only to go off to live in the United States, South Africa, India again and then England again. Writing about Kipling's life, the English journalist G.K. Chesterton called him "a philanderer of the nations."[38] In no place had Kipling lived the life of a local, Chesterton pointed out; he was neither an Indian, an Englishman, an American nor anything else. Kipling has loved many countries the way a man may have been the lover of many women without ever having loved a single one of them. It is only the properly rooted person, Chesterton pointed out, the person with a home, who can understand the roots, and homes, of others. Kipling "is a man of the world, with all the narrowness that belongs to those imprisoned in that planet."

> He knows England as an intelligent English gentleman knows Venice. He has
> been to England a great many times; he has stopped there for long visits. But
> he does not belong to it, or to any place; and the proof of it is this, that he
> thinks of England as a place. The moment we are rooted in a place, the place
> vanishes. We live like a tree with the whole strength of the universe.[39]

Chesterton himself, who today mainly is remembered as the author of the *Father Brown* series of detective stories, was a Catholic and a conservative, and Kipling, to him, symbolized everything he found most abhorrent about modern society. Kipling was a cosmopolitan and an imperialist. In the course of his peripatetic travels he had made himself homeless, and the superficiality of his cosmopolitanism and the cruelty of his imperialism were the inevitable consequences of his homelessness. "The globe-trotter," said Chesterton, "lives in a smaller world than the peasant."[40]

> The man in the saloon steamer has seen all the races of men, and his is
> thinking of the things that divide men … The man in the cabbage field has
> seen nothing at all; but he is thinking of the things that unite men — hunger

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[38] Chesterton, "On Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Making the World Small," 48; On Kipling's
life, see further Gilmour, *Long Recessional*.

[39] Chesterton, "On Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Making the World Small," 49.

[40] Ibid.

and babies, and the beauty of women, and the promise or menace of the sky.[41]

It is easy to take Chesterton's side in this argument. He is the wittier of the two writers and he makes Kipling into a rather ridiculous character. Moreover, Chesterton's position has an intuitive appeal. By prioritizing the local and the everyday over the universal and exceptional, and by celebrating the simple pleasures in life, he is insisting that there is a way to make a life for ourselves also in modern society. He is trying to help us find a way back home.

Chesterton was not alone in writing in this vein. "Homelessness" is a good label for the existential malaise which plagued many people in modern society, and the obvious solution was to help people create new homes for themselves. The rhetoric of home and homelessness came particularly easily to conservative writers. For example: in his ruminations on the notion of "Being," the philosopher Martin Heidegger identified *Angst*, "anxiety," as the fundamental mood of modern society.[42] Anxiety renders the world *unheimlich*, Heidegger argued, a term usually translated as "uncanny," but which is better rendered as "un-home-like." As a result of our anxiety, we suffer from *Heimweh*, "homesickness."[43] However, as Heidegger came to conclude in the 1930s, if Germans only follow the lead of their *Führer* they can be reconnected to their community and its destiny.[44] A national *Heimat*, a "homeland," was going to be created for all Germans, the Nazi propaganda promised; that is, a home for everybody who shared the same blood and the same soil.

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[41] Ibid., 50.

[42] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 228–235.

[43] Cf. for example Heidegger's address to his fellow townspeople in Heidegger, "Messkirch's Seventh Centennial," 41–57.

[44] The literature on Heidegger and the Nazis is enormous. For an introduction see Harries, "Heidegger as a Political Thinker," 642–669.

But the rhetoric of home and homelessness existed in a left-wing version too.[45] In Sweden in the 1930s, the ruling Social Democrats promised to make the country into a *folkhem*, a "home for the people," in which every Swede was going to find a place.[46] Just as in a regular family, the welfare state would care for its members and help everyone out. And like all homes, the *folkhem* had a roof and walls which protected people from the vicissitudes of the outside world, and it had a door which could be bolted and closed shut. As the Social Democrats made clear, however, this was a home for Swedes, and while Jews never were persecuted, nomadic groups such as the Roma and the Sami were. In Sweden, eugenics policies were in place well into the 1960s.[47]

3. Principles of nomadic society

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the links in the global networks were suddenly loosened. In the 1930s, the homeless were given new homes and culture reasserted itself at the expense of civilization. The twentieth-century was also more than anything the century of genocide, totalitarian dictatorship and war. For the past couple of decades — since the 1980s — we seem to be repeating this experience. Money, goods and people are once again moving around in expanding and ever tighter networks. As a result, economic development has taken off and prosperity is spreading far more widely than ever before. But with increasing exposure to world markets comes an increasing sense of vulnerability and thereby renewed fears. Borderlessness leads to homelessness and anxiety. Once again there are voices calling for protection and political leaders with

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[45] On the similarities in policies, see Garraty, "The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression," 907–944.

[46] Hentilä, "The Origins of the *Folkhem* Ideology in Swedish Social Democracy," 323–345; Ringmar, *Surviving Capitalism*, 106–107.

[47] Spektorowski and Mizrachi, "Eugenics and the Welfare State in Sweden," 333–352.

xenophobic agendas are gaining in the polls. They promise to build us new homes, with solid walls and doors that can be securely bolted.

Human desires seem to be incompatible, in other words. We want exchange and the prosperity it brings, but we also want the protection which a home affords. We want to live with others but also on our own; we want to be free but also rooted; we love the local but aspire to the universal. Yet, the reason why these ideals clash is not that they are human desires properly speaking, but instead that they are the desires of sedentary people. It is sedentary people who never can make a home for themselves on the move. For nomads, however, this is easy. Nomads bridge these dichotomies all the time. There is order to their societies although they live in a borderless world. It would consequently seem that we have a lot to learn from nomadic societies. Indeed learning from nomadic societies is an urgent task. There is much to say on this topic to be sure — not least since nomadic societies differ greatly among themselves — but the following is a list of basic principles.[48]

Displacement

Sedentary people make space into place by dwelling in it, we said, but it can never work that way for nomads. They know places too but only as passed through, not as dwelt in. Consider their homes. Nomads live in tents or in other simple structures which they can collapse in a few hours and take with them to the next place they go. Putting the tent back up, they are immediately at home in the new location. The Mongols plant an *ürga*, a lasso on a pole, outside of their *ger*, tent, in order to show to outsiders that they are at home. The place where the *ürga* is planted is the center of their universe. In much the same fashion, the nomadic Achilpa of Australia use a pole made from the trunk of a gum tree to denote the axis which connects the earth and the sky. Carrying the pole with

[48] The principles discussed in this section are drawn from Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, including the introduction by Ernest Gellner; Lattimore, *Studies In Frontier History*; Barth, *Nomads of South Persia*; Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*; For a more extensive discussion, see Ringmar, *A World Without Borders*.

them they are always in their own world and they can always communicate with the sky.[49]

Not surprisingly, nomads never build cities. Genghis Khan himself had no capital but took instead his bureaucracy with him in a tent placed on a horse-drawn carriage. The places subsequently known as the "capitals" of the Mongol empire, like Karakorum in Mongolia and Sarai in Russia, were in fact nothing more than large collections of tents. Since this is the case, there is never much left to see once the nomads have moved on. Nothing is today left of Karakorum or Sarai. In Ulaanbaatar, the capital of today's Mongolia, some 60 percent of the population lives in *ger*.[50]

We would expect this peripatetic existence to cease in death. Made of dust, we would expect nomads too to return to dust. Except that often they do not. After all, a grave would have to be protected and commemorated and as such it would be an encumbrance which would fix and constrain their movements. For that reason nomads in Tibet often exposed the bodies of their dead on mountain tops, to be picked apart by carrion birds.[51] Among nomadic groups in South East Asia too it has been common not to bury the dead but instead to put the corpses in trees. Through these so called "sky burials" the bodies take flight. In fact, not even Genghis Khan had his own grave, and it is only after the end of Communism, with the rise of Mongolian nationalism, that monuments commemorating him have been erected.

Gods may be displaced in the same fashion. Although nomads certainly may worship deities that are located in a particular place, such as a tree which they regularly visit on their journeys, it is more convenient to place the god on top of a high mountain which can be seen from far away across the steppe. Or, as the Mongols did, to worship Tengri, the god of the blue sky.[52] The sky, after all, is always with you.

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[49] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 33; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 181–182.

[50] Diener and Hagen, "City of Felt and Concrete," 623.

[51] Martin, "On the Cultural Ecology of Sky Burial on the Himalayan Plateau," 353–370.

The group

When Chesterton defended the local over the universal what he had in mind was more than anything his own local neighborhood. He liked the idea of neighbors who can get together over a meal, a beer and a conversation. Yet nomads have no neighbors; no one lives next door since there are no next doors. Instead social ties are forged with the people who travel together, at the same time and in the same direction. This is the group, the band, the gang, the posse. The group includes family members and members of one's clan, but often also extraneous people who have joined up along the way. Yet the group often forms imaginary bonds with other people, and other groups, who make a life for themselves in the same fashion — there is a brotherhood of hobos and a fellowship of truckers, sailors, circus people and tinkers.

Relations within the group are largely egalitarian, and more egalitarian certainly than relations among sedentary people.[53] Since nomads have no fixed property, they cannot assemble the kinds of wealth through which sedentary people like to distinguish themselves from each other. Instead wealth is measured in terms of the number of animals a person owns, and although herds can vary considerably in size too, the conditions of life on the road make it difficult to translate this wealth into social distinctions. Moreover, nomadic society has a low degree of division of labor. There are specialized tasks like putting up tents, hunting and foraging — and navigators and path-finders will obviously occupy a privileged position — yet in the end every member of the group is engaged in much the same project.

Trust, we said, is established as people repeatedly come to interact with one another without any notion of when their last interaction will take place. Since members of the nomadic group interact very closely with one another, the level of trust between

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[52] Bira, "Mongolian Tenggerism and Modern Globalism," 107–117; Cf. Berman, *Wandering God*.

[53] The degree of equality has been debated. Two more skeptical accounts are Asad, "Equality in Nomadic Social Systems?," 57–65; Sneath, *The Headless State*.

them is high — except in circumstances when the end of the journey means that they will part ways. Conversely, we would expect there to be little trust between nomads and the people they encounter on their journeys. On the other hand, nomads may feel strong moral obligations towards other members of their imaginary community. Compare, for example, the elaborate dictionary of signs which hobos in the United States developed in order to share information. A horizontal zigzag on a gate signifies "a barking dog"; a picture of a cat signifies "a kind lady lives here."[54]

Paths

But nomads are not moving around at random. There is a pattern to their movements; they follow a certain path. Which paths that are chosen depends on the geographical distribution of opportunities. Thus pastoralists often move their herds from summer pastures in the mountains to winter pastures in the valleys, and hunters and gatherers move in relation to the seasonal variation in the availability of game and plants.[55] Other nomads move depending on the availability of jobs. You follow the circus as it goes on tour in the summer; move eastward in October to help out with the *vendange*; moor your canoe when the rivers freeze over in the winter.[56]

Together the paths create a network which allows us to move not only from one place to another but from one place to everywhere else in the network of paths. Compare the kinds of maps that nomads use. Nomads care little for territory understood as measurable, and depictable, units of land. Territory that stretches endlessly in all directions has no proper measure and is for that reason not depictable. Territory in the far distance is perceived as two- not three-dimensional.[57] For this reason, the maps of nomadic societies are not maps of places but maps of how to get to places. A place

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[54] Moon, *Done and Been*, 24.

[55] Nugent and Sanchez, "Tribes, Chiefs, and Transhumance," 87–113.

[56] For an abundance of examples see, *inter alia*, Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*; Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*.

[57] Bollnow, *Human Space*, 47.

exists not in space but as a node in a matrix of movement and maps show not territories but networks of places linked by paths.[58] Sedentary people often laugh at maps like these and say they are incorrect, but they are not poor descriptions of territory but instead perfect descriptions of how to journey along a path. Consider the London tube map which provides just the information we need to get from Mornington Crescent to Turnpike Lane.

Nodes

In all networks there are nodes. Although nomads are impossible to coerce, they will quite happily assemble at the same places at regular intervals. Nodes are intersections where roads come together; hubs where we change planes and board ferries; markets where we sell products and buy supplies; places where rivers are more easily forded and mountains crossed. Above all nodes are hostels, inns and caravanserais where we can get a good night's rest and a hot meal.

Nodes such as these are where nomads are most likely to make friends with people outside of their own group. By talking, eating and drinking with strangers they share information and gossip. It is also at the nodes that a measure of control most effectively can be imposed on them. It is when people show up to trade that they may agree to pay a tax. This gives political authorities a measure of power and makes it possible to subject the nomads to assorted welfare programs. It is at markets that the children of nomads get medical examinations and where international aid agencies vaccinate them against epidemics.[59]

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[58] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 219, 228.
[59] Sheik-Mohamed and Velema, "Where Health Care Has No Access," 695–707.

Conflicts

Relations among nomadic groups are often conflictual but the conflicts are best described as raids not as wars. After all, there is no land to fight over — no land which can be invaded and occupied — and there is no point in appropriating things which the raiders cannot take with them. Instead conflicts concern access to productive resources — grazing rights above all and control over animals, women and labor. The only time when these conflicts temporarily cease is when the groups turn their energies away from each other and towards an external enemy. This is how the Bedouins of the Arabian peninsula came to conquer the Middle East and North Africa after the death of Muhammad in 632 C.E. This is is also how the Mongols came to conquer most of the Eurasian land mass once their leader, Temüjin, was made into "Genghis Khan" in 1206. The leader of such expansions is faithfully followed as long as he is successful and able to deliver booty to his followers.

When it comes to warfare, nomads have several advantages over sedentary populations.[60] They are highly mobile, first of all, and can move far more quickly on their horses or camels than peasant armies can march on foot. As a result armies made up of farmers will easily find themselves outflanked and surrounded. In addition, nomads are often good hunters — a skill which quite easily can be adapted for military use. The coordination required to catch a herd of wild deer is not that different from the coordination required to successfully attack an enemy, and someone who can shoot arrows from the back of a galloping horse can kill human beings too. Because of their speed, nomads can often cover large tracts of land and are only stopped by cities that are sufficiently fortified. Yet both Arabs and Mongols quickly learned the secrets of siege warfare.

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[60] A classical account is Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 3, chap. 26.

Since armies made up of nomads never have to defend a particular place they are more likely to engage in skirmishes than in head-on battles. To them there is no essential military difference between an advance and a retreat. Since they prefer to flee rather than to stand their ground and fight to the death, nomads have often been called "cowards" by sedentary populations. But by fleeing they can easily regroup and live to fight another day. As a military tactic, the Mongols would often set traps for their enemies. After having besieged a town, they would retreat, inviting the defenders to pursue them. Then the pursuers would be ambushed and picked off one by one.

Decision-making

The lack of borders means that politics, and the people who are the subjects of politics, cannot be contained. Those who cannot be contained cannot be coerced. If the state is making trouble for you, you can just run away — into the jungle, the steppe or across the arctic wasteland. The agents of the state may try to follow you of course but with a decent head-start and a good pair of horses the odds are in your favor. Under such conditions the fences which constituted the material preconditions for Lockean theorizing cannot be defended, and Hobbes' Leviathan will inspire no awe if it cannot capture those who offend against it. Political life cannot be based on a contract.

For this reason, politics does not take place in any one place. Nomads have no presidential palaces, parliament buildings or government offices. Politics, as a result, can never be understood in theatrical terms. There is no pomp and circumstance intended to impress large audiences. Instead politics happens in person-to-person relationships and through everyday practices. Nomadic society forms a network, not a hierarchy, and as a network it can be influenced only sequentially, one node at a time. Expulsion from the group is by far the most powerful way to punish transgressors. In a sufficiently harsh

climate, the prospect of making it on one's own is sufficiently daunting to provide an effective deterrent.

Nomadic societies are not democracies but instead typically ruled by the leaders of the respective groups. The elders are in charge; that is, most commonly, the oldest males. Yet since members of the group always can threaten to defect to another group or start a group of their own, ordinary members have a considerable amount of power. Suggestions cannot be ignored but have to be listened to. The result is a consensual forms of decision-making based on established customs. Periodically the leaders of the respective groups will get together to make decisions for society as a whole, broker peace between feuding groups or settle issues of grazing rights and inheritance. The *kurultai* of the Mongols was such a gathering of elders and in conflict-ridden Somalia consensual methods of conflict resolution have recently proven more effective than arbitration by international organizations.[61]

4. International politics between earth and sky

Nomadic societies differ greatly from each other, we said, and the neo-nomads of the twenty-first-century would seem to have next to nothing in common with the pastoralists of yore, yet the logic of a peripatetic life will always be fundamentally different from the logic of life as lived in one place. Learning more about this logic, we will be better prepared to meet the challenges of globalization.

All human beings make a life for themselves between the earth and the sky.[62] The earth is where we dwell; it is the earth which feeds us; the earth in which we one day will rest, forever concealed and protected. But as long as we are alive we are also open to the sky. The sky is infinite and boundless. There are no places in the sky where we can

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[61] Unruh, "Changing Conflict Resolution Institutions in the Ethiopian Pastoral Commons," 225–237.

[62] Fried, "A Letter to Emmanuel Faye," 244.

make a home for ourselves, instead everything which we find there is on the move. It is to the sky that smoke rises, together with our dreams and prayers, and it is in the sky that our flights of fancy take place, before they come crushing to the ground. Signs that appear in the sky — a cross appearing over a battle-field or an advertising banner off the tail of a crop duster — are visible to many people and from large distances. The sky illuminates the things that appear in it, revealing them and making them equally accessible to everyone.

In the Chinese political tradition, the problem of social order has often been understood as a matter of bringing heaven and earth into harmony with each other. Here the emperor played a crucial role.[63] He was the "son of heaven" after all, and it was more than anything through the elaborate rituals in which he engaged that the tension between the two was resolved. In Europe, by contrast, earth and sky have usually been set in opposition to each other. This is the *polemos*, the struggle, we have discussed in this chapter — between borders and borderlessness; between the rooted and the unrooted; the local and the universal; home and homelessness. We find the same opposition in international politics too: borders, Realism and *ragione di stato* belong to the earth; borderlessness, Idealism and world government belong to the sky. And as we have seen, our history since the nineteenth-century can easily be analyzed in these terms.

It is more than anything the failure to resolve this tension which has brought disaster on us. The search for a *Grund*, a "foundation," has revealed an *Abgrund*, an "abyss."[64] To conservatives it is obvious that people in modern society spend far too much time looking up into the sky. Universal values, they argue, are necessarily superficial; the universal belongs to no place in particular, to no person or way of life. This is Chesterton's critique of Kipling. Or, as already Edmund Burke suggested in 1790, the revolutionaries who claim to love "mankind" have no respect for actual human

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[63] See, *inter alia*, Huang, *1587, A Year of No Significance*.

[64] On these Heideggerian terms, see Mitchell, "The Fourfold," 208–218.

beings. Revolutionaries believe in universal principles, reject existing ways of life, and the inevitable results are dictatorship and terror. "In the groves of their academy, at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows."[65] And yet the greatest crimes of the twentieth-century were surely committed by those who tried to plant themselves most firmly in the soil. By those, that is, who recognized no universal standards. We find the gallows in every *Heimat* too.

As we have argued in this chapter, the dichotomy between earth and sky works differently for nomads. For nomads, neither the earth nor the sky are places where you dwell, but both are instead a medium that you pass through in order to get to where you are going. The sky is infinite but so is the steppe, the desert and the tundra, and in any case the two blend perfectly together at the horizon. As nomadic people let us know, there can be order also in a borderless world. There is no rootedness to be sure but also no rootlessness. We carry everything we need with us. It is only once we give up the search for a *Grund* that we can avoid the *Abgrund*.

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[65] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 115.

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