

Central Eurasian Studies

Theorizing Central Eurasia: The Problem of Nationalism

Catalog Number CEUS-U 320/520

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Though some people predicted a generation ago that nationalism would disappear, it has clearly remained an important political force throughout the world. Nationalism unquestionably gained strength in Central Eurasia after the breakup of the Soviet Union, yet it had emerged as an ideology and a political force in the region long before the 1990s. In order to understand how and why, this course will introduce students to key works on the origins and significance of nationalism. We will consider a number of fundamental questions. How are nations and nationalism related? Are nations imagined and invented, as critics claim, or ancient and enduring, as nationalists assert? Are nationalism, communism, and religiosity necessarily in tension? Are indigenous nationalisms more authentic than "official nationalisms"? Was (and is) nationalism in Central Eurasia merely a "derivative discourse," imported from elsewhere?