Despite implicating ethnicity in everything from civil war to economic failure, researchers seldom consult psychological research when addressing the most basic question: What is ethnicity? The result is a radical scholarly divide generating contradictory recommendations for solving ethnic conflict. Research into how the human brain actually works demands a revision of existing schools of thought. At its foundation, ethnic identity is a cognitive uncertainty-reduction device with special capacity to exacerbate, but not cause, collective action problems. This insight leads to a new general theory of ethnic conflict and nationalism that can improve both understanding and practice. Supporting this claim is a wide-ranging discussion of patterns in secessionism, international integration, state collapse, race relations, and deadly ethnic violence found across the globe. Special attention is paid to an in-depth case study of national separatism in Eurasia, which produces a major reinterpretation of nationalism’s role in the USSR’s breakup and interstate relations in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

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SEPARATISM OF STATES AND NATIONS IN EURASIA AND THE WORLD

HENRY E. HALE

George Washington University
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Note on Transliteration

Russian, Ukrainian, and Uzbek language material is transliterated here using the Library of Congress system with the following exceptions:

General exceptions:

- Y is used at the beginning of soft vowels (ya, ye, yu) that are the first letters in words
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- Common spellings are employed for words or names that widely appear in English-language media (e.g., Chechnya not Chechnia)

Exceptions made for people’s names:

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- The letter y is used at the end of names that would otherwise end in ii or iy
- The letters ie are substituted for ’e (e.g., Glaziev not Glaz’ev or Glazev)