

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910967897703321
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Titolo	Language, religion and national identity in Europe and the Middle East : a historical study / / John Myhill
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia, : J. Benjamins, 2006
ISBN	9786612155819 9781282155817 1282155814 9789027293510 9027293511
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (311 p.)
Collana	Discourse approaches to politics, society, and culture, , 1569-9463 ; ; v. 21
Disciplina	306.44094
Soggetti	Nationalism - Europe - History Nationalism - Middle East - History Language and languages - Religious aspects - Christianity Language and languages - Religious aspects - Islam Europe Languages Political aspects Middle East Languages Political aspects
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Language, Religion and National Identity in Europe and the Middle East -- Editorial page -- Title page -- LCC data -- Table of contents -- Acknowledgements -- Dedication page -- Introduction -- 0.1. Language, national identity, and nationalism -- 0.1.1. Big and small languages -- 0.2. Premodern national churches -- 0.3. Roman Europe and the Caliphate -- 0.4. Evaluating nationalist movements -- 0.5. Civic and ethnic nationalism -- 0.6. Conclusion -- Notes -- Premodern national churches, Roman Europe, and the Caliphate -- 1.0. Introduction -- 1.1. Premodern national churches -- 1.1.1. Middle Eastern national churches -- 1.1.2. The Eastern Orthodox Churches -- 1.1.3. The Reformation -- 1.2. Areas associated with universal churches -- 1.2.1. Roman Europe -- 1.2.2. The Caliphate -- 1.3. Conclusion -- Notes -- Small languages and national liberation -- 2.0.

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Sommario/riassunto

This book discusses the historical record of the idea that language is associated with national identity, demonstrating that different applications of this idea have consistently produced certain types of results. Nationalist movements aimed at 'unification', based upon languages which vary greatly at the spoken level, e.g. German, Italian, Pan-Turkish and Arabic, have been associated with aggression, fascism and genocide, while those based upon relatively homogeneous spoken languages, e.g. Czech, Norwegian and Ukrainian, have resulted in national liberation and international stability. It is also shown that religion can be more important to national identity than language, but only for religious groups which were understood in premodern times to be national rather than universal or doctrinal, e.g. Jews, Armenians, Maronites, Serbs, Dutch and English; this is demonstrated with discussions of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the civil war in Lebanon and the breakup of Yugoslavia, the United Netherlands and the United Kingdom.