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Central Asians and the State: Nostalgia for the Soviet Era

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Abstract

This paper is a draft of a chapter for the edited volume *Everyday Life in Central Asia* to be published by Indiana University Press. The volume is intended for non-specialists, particularly undergraduates. To Westerners the fact that citizens of post-Soviet countries evaluate their current governments negatively as compared to the Soviet state might come as a surprise. After all, Westerners remember the Soviet state foremost as an instrument of oppressive rule. Yet, post-Soviet citizens, including residents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, are most likely to recall the greater responsiveness to their everyday needs. Of different demographic groups, ethnic minorities are most negative about the current government because they have experienced not only declining government responsiveness, but a worsening of their status in society. These conclusions are based on field and survey research in Central Asia.