

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910821497603321
Titolo	After the Soviet Empire : legacies and pathways / / edited by Sven Eliaeson, Lyudmila Harutyunyan, Larissa Titarenko
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Leiden, Netherlands ; ; Boston, [Massachusetts] : , : Brill, , 2016 ©2016
ISBN	90-04-29145-8
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (426 p.)
Collana	Annals of the International Institute of Sociology, , 1568-1548 ; ; Volume 12
Disciplina	306.0947
Soggetti	Post-communism - Europe, Eastern Social change - Former communist countries Former communist countries Social conditions
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references at the end of each chapters and index.
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Sommario/riassunto

The break-up of the Soviet Union is a key event of the twentieth century. The 39th IIS congress in Yerevan 2009 focused on causes and consequences of this event and on shifts in the world order that followed in its wake. This volume is an effort to chart these developments in empirical and conceptual terms. It has a focus on the lands of the former Soviet Union but also explores pathways and contexts in the Second World at large. The Soviet Union was a full scale experiment in creating an alternative modernity. The implosion of this union gave rise to new states in search of national identity. At a time when some observers heralded the end of history, there was a rediscovery of historical legacies and a search for new paths of development across the former Second World. In some parts of this world long-repressed legacies were rediscovered. They were sometimes, as in the case of countries in East Central Europe, built around memories of parliamentary democracy and its replacement by authoritarian rule during the interwar period. Some legacies referred to efforts at establishing statehood in the wake of the First World War, others to national upheavals in the nineteenth century and earlier. In Central Asia and many parts of the Caucasus the cultural heritage of Islam in its different varieties gave rise to new markers of identity but also to violent contestations. In South Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have embarked upon distinctly different, but invariably contingent, paths of development. Analogously core components of the old union have gone through tumultuous, but until the last year and a half largely bloodless, transformations. The crystallization of divergent paths of development in the two largest republics of that union, id est Russia and Ukraine, has ushered in divergent national imaginations but also in series of bloody confrontations.
