

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910826492103321
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Titolo	Nationalist mobilization and the collapse of the Soviet State // Mark R. Beissinger
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, UK ; ; New York, : Cambridge University Press, 2002
ISBN	0-511-10273-9 1-107-12430-1 1-280-41920-2 0-511-17670-8 0-511-04183-7 0-511-15759-2 0-511-30460-9 0-511-61359-8 0-511-04429-1
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (xv, 503 pages) : digital, PDF file(s)
Collana	Cambridge studies in comparative politics
Disciplina	320.54/0947/09048
Soggetti	Nationalism - Soviet Union Soviet Union Politics and government 1985-1991 Soviet Union Ethnic relations Political aspects
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Title from publisher's bibliographic system (viewed on 05 Oct 2015).
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Machine generated contents note: 1 FROM THE IMPOSSIBLE TO THE INEVITABLE -- 2 THE TIDE OF NATIONALISM AND THE -- MOBILIZATIONAL CYCLI -- 3 STRUCTURING NATIONALISM -- 4 "THICKENED" HISTORY AND THE MOBILIZATION -- OF IDENTITY -- 5 TIDES AND THE FAILURE OF NATIONALIST -- MOBILIZATION -- 6 VIOLENCE AND TIDES OF NATIONALISM -- 7 THE TRANSCENDENCE OF REGIMES OP -- REPRESSION -- 8 RUSSIAN MOBILIZATION AND THE -- ACCUMULATING "INEVITABILITY" OF -- SOVIET COLLAPSE -- 9 CONCLUSION: NATIONHOOD AND EVENT -- Appendix I PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING EVENT -- ANALYSIS TO THE STUDY OF SOVIET -- PROTEST IN THE GLASNOST' ERA -- Appendix n SOURCES FOR THE COMPILATION OF -- EVENT DATA IN A REVOLUTIONARY -- CONTEXT

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Sommario/riassunto

This 2002 study examines the process by which the seemingly impossible in 1987 - the disintegration of the Soviet state - became the seemingly inevitable by 1991, providing an original interpretation not only of the Soviet collapse, but also of the phenomenon of nationalism more generally. Probing the role of nationalist action as both cause and effect, Beissinger utilizes data and case studies from across the USSR during its final years to elicit the shifting relationship between pre-existing structural conditions, institutional constraints, and event-generated influences in the nationalist explosions that brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Beissinger demonstrates, the 'tidal' context of nationalism - i.e., the transnational influence of one nationalism upon another - is critical to an explanation of the success and failure of particular nationalisms, why some nationalisms turn violent, and how a crescendo of events can overwhelm states, periodically evoking large-scale structural change in the character of the state system.
