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|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Record Nr. | UNISALENTO991002007049707536 |
| Autore | Bardazzi, Rossella |
| Titolo | Teoria, sistema informativo e modellizzazione delle imposte indirette / Rossella Bardazzi |
| Pubbl/distr/stampa | Firenze : Banca toscana, 1992 |
| Descrizione fisica | 139 p. ; 24 cm |
| Collana | Studi e informazioni. Quaderni ; 37 |
| Disciplina | 336.2001 |
| Soggetti | Imposte indirette |
| Lingua di pubblicazione | Italiano |
| Formato | Materiale a stampa |
| Livello bibliografico | Monografia |
| 2. Record Nr. | UNINA9910811384903321 |
| Autore | Granieri Ronald J. |
| Titolo | The ambivalent alliance : Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949-1966 // Ronald J. Granieri |
| Pubbl/distr/stampa | New York : , : Berghahn Books, , 2004 |
| ISBN | 1-57181-492-2
1-57181-272-5 |
| Edizione | [First paperback edition.] |
| Descrizione fisica | 1 online resource (273 pages) : illustrations |
| Collana | Monographs in German History ; ; 9 |
| Disciplina | 943.087092 |
| Soggetti | HISTORY / Europe / Germany
Germany (West) Foreign relations United States
United States Foreign relations Germany (West) |
| Lingua di pubblicazione | Inglese |
| Formato | Materiale a stampa |
| Livello bibliografico | Monografia |
| Nota di bibliografia | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
| Nota di contenuto | Frontmatter -- CONTENTS -- PREFACE -- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -- ABBREVIATIONS -- INTRODUCTION: KONRAD ADENAUER AND THE |

PARADOX OF WESTBINDUNG -- Chapter 1 THE CHANCELLOR AND HIS ALLIES, 1949–1953 -- Chapter 2 SOVEREIGNTY AND ITS DISCONTENTS, 1953–1957 -- Chapter 3 ADRIFT IN A WIDER WORLD, 1958–1961 -- Chapter 4 A PARIS-BONN AXIS? 1961–1963 -- Chapter 5 THE END OF THE ADENAUER ERA, 1963–1966 -- CONCLUSION: WHOSE WEST IS BEST? -- BIBLIOGRAPHY -- INDEX

Sommario/riassunto

Whenever asked to name his most significant accomplishment as West Germany's first Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer would invariably reply: "The alliance with the free West." Scholars have echoed his assessment, citing the Federal Republic of Germany's successful integration into the American-led West (Westbindung) as the key to its postwar economic and political recovery. Behind this simple success story, however, lies a much more complicated history: Adenauer and the CDU/CSU remained ambivalent about the ultimate relationship between Europe, Germany, and the United States within the West, torn between visions of Continental European integration based on Franco-German reconciliation and of an Atlantic community linking Europe and the "Anglo-Saxons." These differences eventually erupted into a damaging public conflict between "Atlanticists" and "Gaullists," which colored Adenauer's last years and, after his retirement in 1963, led directly to the failure of his successor, Ludwig Erhard. The opening of various personal and party archives over the past few years has now made the entire Adenauer Era accessible for historians. As one of the first efforts to use that material to re-examine existing conventional wisdom about the period, this book traces the roles of Adenauer and the CDU/CSU in shaping Westbindung. Adenauer emerges as a skilled and resourceful (if also mistrustful and devious) politician, and as a distinctly German statesman, maneuvering between allies and adversaries to shape both the Western community and the German role in it, leaving a legacy that still influences contemporary German-American and European-American relations.
