

1. Record Nr.	UNISA990002954130203316
Autore	SALEMME, Vincenzo
Titolo	.. e fuori nevica / Vincenzo Salemme
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Palermo : Sellerio, 2003
ISBN	88-389-1541-5
Edizione	[2. ed]
Descrizione fisica	117 p. ; 17 cm
Collana	Teatro ; 21
Disciplina	852.914
Collocazione	XIII.1. Coll. 18/ 22
Lingua di pubblicazione	Italiano
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
2. Record Nr.	UNINA9910462844603321
Autore	Griffin Stephen M. <1957->
Titolo	Long wars and the constitution [[electronic resource] /] / Stephen M. Griffin
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, Massachusetts, : Harvard University Press, 2013
ISBN	0-674-07447-5 0-674-07445-9
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (376 p.)
Disciplina	342.73/0412
Soggetti	War and emergency powers - United States Electronic books. United States Foreign relations 1945-1989 United States Foreign relations 1989-
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 and index.

Nota di contenuto

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Sommario/riassunto

In a wide-ranging constitutional history of presidential war decisions from 1945 to the present, Stephen M. Griffin rethinks the long-running debate over the "imperial presidency" and concludes that the eighteenth-century Constitution is inadequate to the challenges of a post-9/11 world. The Constitution requires the consent of Congress before the United States can go to war. Truman's decision to fight in Korea without gaining that consent was unconstitutional, says Griffin, but the acquiescence of Congress and the American people created a precedent for presidents to claim autonomy in this arena ever since. The unthinking extension of presidential leadership in foreign affairs to a point where presidents unilaterally decide when to go to war, Griffin argues, has destabilized our constitutional order and deranged our foreign policy. *Long Wars and the Constitution* demonstrates the unexpected connections between presidential war power and the constitutional crises that have plagued American politics. Contemporary presidents are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand are the responsibilities handed over to them by a dangerous world, and on the other is an incapacity for sound decision making in the absence of interbranch deliberation. President Obama's continuation of many Bush administration policies in the long war against terrorism is only the latest in a chain of difficulties resulting from the imbalances introduced by the post-1945 constitutional order. Griffin argues for beginning a cycle of accountability in which Congress would play a meaningful role in decisions for war, while recognizing the realities of twenty-first century diplomacy.