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Sommario/riassunto	This is the first major archivally based study of the political career of Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, State Chancellor of the Habsburg Monarchy from 1753 to 1792. Author of the diplomatic revolution of 1756 and brilliant foreign minister of the Austrian Empire, Kaunitz was also the most important statesman in the development of enlightened absolutism in central Europe. Virtually the third head of state under Maria Theresa and Joseph II, he was the driving force behind the many reforms which sought to modernise the monarchy. Using Kaunitz as a focus, the author explores the dynamic of the development of enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg Empire through its most influential proponent and spokesman. Enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg Monarchy produced some of the boldest innovations in eighteenth-century Europe, and this book analyses the full complexity of the decision-making process.