Book Review: The Executive Unbound: After the Madisonian Republic, by Eric A. Posner and Adrian Vermeule

Michael A. Genovese
Loyola Marymount University, mgenovese@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/coli_fac

Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.
Since 9/11, a debate over the scope and limits of presidential power has raged. The first blast was fired by John Yoo, member of the Bush administration's Office of Legal Counsel and author of the infamous "torture memo," who argued that the president possesses vast powers that are largely unchecked. At the other end of the spectrum is Harold Koh, former dean of Yale Law School, who argued that the Constitution and separation of powers limit the scope of presidential power. Posner (Univ. of Chicago Law School) and Vermeule (Harvard Law School) offer a different interpretation. They argue (with Koh) that the framers suffered from something called "tyrannophobia" (an excessive fear of executive tyranny) and thus established a Madisonian system that checks and balances the powers of the president. However, this "historical curiosity" has been eclipsed by the demands of US superpower status. They argue with Yoo that in an age of terrorism, the president must be strong and largely unchecked. The US must, they argue, abandon the old Madisonian system in favor of a more robust presidency. Powerfully argued, this book is an important part of the debate over presidential power in the present world.

--M. A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount University

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through researchers.