Book Review: The Unitary Executive: Presidential Power from Washington to Bush, by Steven G. Calabresi and Christopher S. Yoo

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The source of much debate and rancor, the Unitary Executive Theory posited primarily by supporters of the Bush administration calls for an expansive and powerful presidency. Adherents to the theory see its roots in the founding era, but critics are skeptical of such claims. Vast in scope of power and largely unmoored from the separation of powers system created by Madison and the framers, proponents of the unitary executive see a president largely independent of the Congress and able to act with independent authority derived from the vesting clause of the Constitution (the grant of executive power to the president in Article II, Section 1). The authors of this thoughtful and comprehensive work, two well-known legal scholars, are advocates of the Unitary Executive Theory. To their credit, Calabresi (law, Northwestern Univ.) and Yoo (Univ. of Pennsylvania Law School) narrow their focus primarily to the president's removal power and, in doing so, strengthen their case. Their advocacy scholarship is designed to make a case for a strong presidency and, while they on occasion go beyond the evidence in their claims, they make a compelling case that the framers of the Constitution did indeed intend to create a presidency with clear and defined independent power.

--M. A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount University

Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-division undergraduate through professional collections.