



Reclaiming Accountability: Transparency, Executive Power, and the U.S. Constitution

Heidi Kitrosser

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Americans tend to believe in government that is transparent and accountable. Those who govern us work for us, and therefore they must also answer to us. But how do we reconcile calls for greater accountability with the competing need for secrecy, especially in matters of national security? Those two imperatives are usually taken to be antithetical, but Heidi Kitrosser argues convincingly that this is not the case—and that our concern ought to lie not with secrecy, but with the sort of unchecked secrecy that can result from “presidentialism,” or constitutional arguments for broad executive control of information.

In *Reclaiming Accountability*, Kitrosser traces presidentialism from its start as part of a decades-old legal movement through its appearance during the Bush and Obama administrations, demonstrating its effects on secrecy throughout. Taking readers through the key presidentialist arguments—including “supremacy” and “unitary executive theory”—she explains how these arguments misread the Constitution in a way that is profoundly at odds with democratic principles. Kitrosser’s own reading offers a powerful corrective, showing how the Constitution provides myriad tools, including the power of Congress and the courts to enforce checks on presidential power, through which we could reclaim government accountability.

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