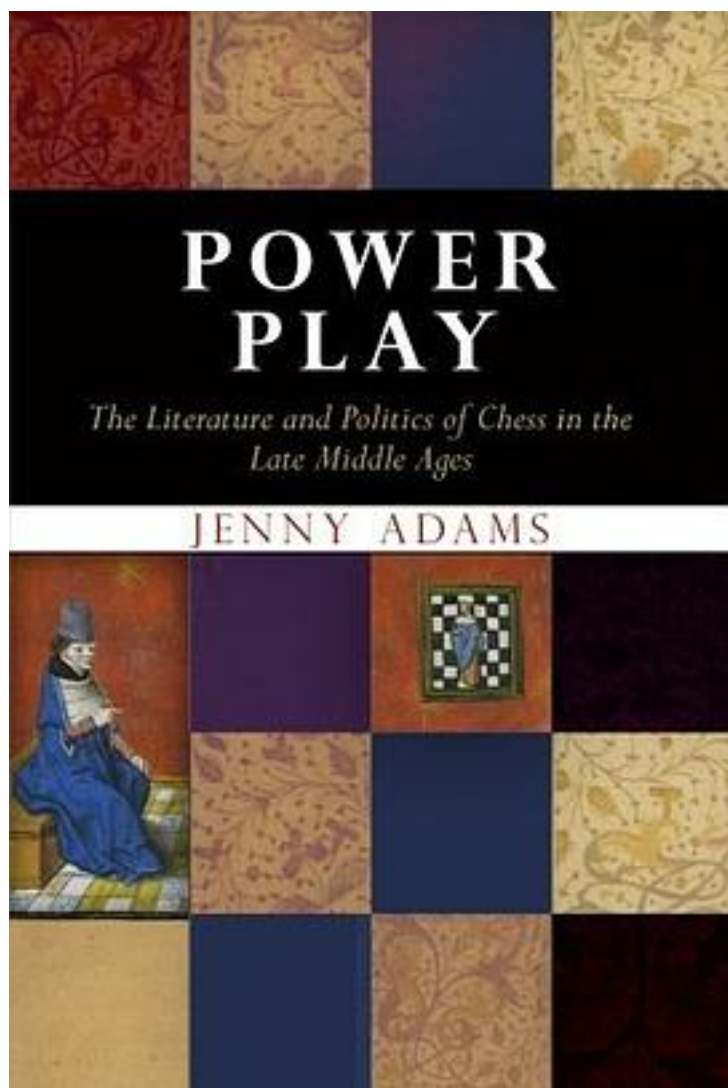


Power Play



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Since 9/11, the Bush presidency has been engaged in a two-front offensive. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the administration aggressively prosecutes the "war on terror." At home, its target has been the separation of powers and more broadly, the rule of law. In "Power Play", noted presidency scholar, James Pfiffner lays bare the extent of this second campaign and explains why it threatens the future of republican government. The framers of the U.S. Constitution divided the federal government's powers among three branches: the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. Their goal was to prevent tyranny by ensuring that none of the branches could govern alone. Many presidents have sought to expand the scope of executive power, but the administration of George W. Bush arguably has done so in exceptional ways: it has denied the writ of habeas corpus to individuals deemed to be enemy combatants; it has suspended the Geneva Convention and allowed or encouraged the use of harsh interrogation methods amounting to torture; it has ordered the surveillance of Americans without obtaining warrants as required by law; and it has issued signing statements implying that the president does not have the duty to faithfully execute hundreds of provisions of laws he has signed. "Power Play" analyzes the Bush presidency's efforts to expand executive power in these four domains and puts them into constitutional and historical perspective. Pfiffner explores the evolution of Anglo-American thinking about executive power and individual rights. He highlights the lessons the Framers drew from such philosophers as Locke and Montesquieu, as well as English constitutional history. He documents the ways in which the current administration has undermined the separation of powers, and he shows how these practices have imperilled the rule of law. The Bush administration has no shortage of critics. But Pfiffner does not simply take issue with the president's policy decisions. In this thoughtful and passionate book, he focuses on the constitutional implications of expanded presidential power and why American citizens should care.

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