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Hail to the Chief: The Making and Unmaking of American Presidents

Robert Dallek

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The Presidency of the United States is our nation's most challenging position. It has subjected many men to public vilification, condemned numerous others to historical obscurity, and exalted a few to lofty positions in our nation's history. But what is it that separates the revered from the reviled? Now, in *Hail to the Chief*, Robert Dallek offers an engaging examination of presidential excellence and failure.
For some of our chief executives, great crisis meant great opportunity, as can be seen in the lasting legacies of Washington, Lincoln, and FDR. But what of presidents such as Ronald Reagan, who succeeded despite having served during relatively benign times? And what of luck? Isn't it possible that the onset of The Great Depression doomed a competent and intelligent Herbert Hoover to failure? In answer to these questions, Robert Dallek investigates the five qualities--vision, pragmatism, consensus, charisma, and trust--that have defined our most effective presidents. The product of meticulous research, the book presents numerous examples of these qualities in action, and also details the failures that accompany their absence.
From Washington's masterful efforts at nation building to Lincoln's leadership through the greatest crisis in the country's history; from the beneficent paternalism of FDR to Lyndon Johnson's tragic miscalculations in Vietnam and his achievements in advancing civil rights, Dallek offers a penetrating analysis of the presidency, the personalities who have defined it, and the strategies that led to their triumphs and defeats.

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