



The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game

Alvin S. Felzenberg

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It's a perennial pastime to rate U.S. presidents on an all-time ranking: Certain presidents were "Great," others were "Near-Great," and so on down to "Failures" and "Unmitigated Disasters." (OK, we made that last category up.) But as Alvin Felzenberg points out, there are many flaws with these rating systems. Despite reams of new historical information, the rankings never seem to change very much. They all favor a certain kind of president-those who tended to increase executive power. That aside, the idea of rating presidential performance on a simple linear scale is absurd. The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't) breaks presidential performance into easily understandable categories-character, vision, competence, foreign policy, economic policy, human rights, and legacy-and assesses, for each category, the best and worst. The result is a surprisingly fresh look at how the various presidents stack up against each other, with some of the "greats" coming off far worse than their supposedly mediocre colleagues.



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