“The Supreme Court follows the election returns,” the fictional Mr. Dooley observed a hundred years ago. And for all our ideals and dreams of a disinterested judiciary, above the political fray, it seems Mr. Dooley was right. In this engaging—and disturbing—book, a leading historian of the Court reveals the close fit between its decisions and the nation’s politics.

The story begins with the creation of the Constitution and ends with the June 2008 decisions on the rights of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Rendering crisp (and often controversial) judgments on key decisions from Marbury v. Madison to the War on Terror, Lucas Powe shows how virtually every major Supreme Court ruling, however deftly framed in constitutional terms, suited the wishes of the most powerful politicians of the time. This history reflects a changing Court, from the country’s early struggles over commerce and transportation to the torturous justifications of slavery before the Civil War, to a post–New Deal interest in ending segregation, controlling criminal procedure, and addressing knotty questions arising from the Cold War. Through all of this the Court emerges as part of a ruling regime, doing its best to implement the regime’s policies.

Drawing on more than four decades of thinking about the Supreme Court and its role in the American political system, this book offers a new, clear, and troubling perspective on American jurisprudence, politics, and history.

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My Personal Review:
I really enjoyed this book. I have read many, many books on the Supreme Court, its history, and the lives of those who have served upon it, and this one rates among the most enjoyable panoramic histories I've read. It may not appeal as much to one who selects this as an introduction to the Court's history, as I believe it is written more for persons already familiar with the area -- but for those readers, it offers a rewarding insight into each of the cases, controversies, and personalities, and the interactions of these forces, which have shaped the Court and the Country since its founding days.