



# Above Politics: Bureaucratic Discretion and Credible Commitment (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions)

*Gary J. Miller, Andrew B. Whitford*

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Economic development requires secure contract enforcement and stable property rights. Normal majority-rule politics, such as bargaining over distributive and monetary policies, generate instability and frequently undermine economic development. Above Politics argues that bureaucracies can contribute to stability and economic development, but only if they are insulated from unstable politics. A separation-of-powers stalemate creates the conditions for bureaucratic autonomy. But what keeps delegated bureaucrats from being more abusive as they become more autonomous? One answer is the negotiation of long-term, cooperative relationships - that (when successful) typically bind subordinates to provide more effort in exchange for autonomy. Even more compelling is professionalism, which embeds its professional practitioners in professional norms and culture, and incidentally mitigates corruption. Financial examples are provided throughout the book, which ends with an analysis of the role played by professionalized bureaucracies during the Great Recession.



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