The Co-opted State

Politicians in young democracies face a dilemma when it comes to investing in state capacity. On the one hand, investments in bureaucratic competence can aid policy implementation. On the other hand, such investments can reduce bureaucratic loyalty, thereby undermining politicians' ability to secure votes through targeted distribution. In *The Co-opted State*, Sarah Brierley argues that to resolve this dilemma, politicians will recruit bureaucrats through procedures that reward merit but retain tools to control bureaucrats' career progression. She demonstrates how political incentives and career control tools shape public service delivery, often to the detriment of good governance. Drawing on rich fieldwork in Ghana and literature from across the world, Brierley challenges conventional wisdom about state capacity and meritocracy and offers a guide for understanding why seemingly well-designed systems often yield disappointing results, and what can be done to fix them.

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The Co-opted State

How Politicians' Control Over Bureaucrats' Careers Threatens Governance

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