

## The Logic of Discipline: Global Capitalism and the Architecture of Government

By Alasdair Roberts

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The era of economic liberalization, spanning 1978 to 2008, is often regarded as a period in which government was simply dismantled. In fact, government was reconstructed to meet the needs of a globalized economy. Central banking, fiscal control, tax collection, regulation, port and airport management, infrastructure development—in all of these areas, radical reforms were made to the architecture of government.

A common philosophy shaped all of these reforms: the logic of discipline. It was premised on deep skepticism about the ability of democratic processes to make sensible policy choices. It sought to impose constraints on elected officials and citizens, often by shifting power to technocrat-guardians who were shielded from political influence. It placed great faith in the power of legal changes—new laws, treaties, and contracts—to produce significant alterations in the performance of governmental systems. Even before the global economic crisis of 2007-2009, the logic of discipline was under assault. Faced with many failed reform projects, advocates of discipline realized that they had underestimated the complexity of governmental change. Opponents of discipline emphasized the damage to democratic values that followed from the empowerment of new groups of technocrat-guardians.

The financial crisis did further damage to the logic of discipline, as governments modified their attitudes about central bank independence and fiscal control, and global financial and trade flows declined. It was the market that now appeared to behave myopically and erratically—and which now insisted that governments should abandon precepts about the role of government that it had once insisted were inviolable.

A sweeping account of neoliberal governmental restructuring across the world, *The Logic of Discipline* offers a powerful analysis of how this undemocratic model is unraveling in the face of a monumental—and ongoing—failure of the market.

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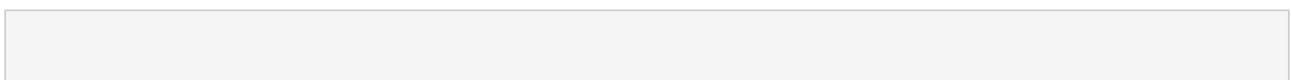
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## The Logic of Discipline: Global Capitalism and the Architecture of Government By Alasdair Roberts Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2791514 in Books
- Published on: 2011-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x .60" w x 9.10" l, .69 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 220 pages



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#### Review

"An insightful and timely examination of the global political economy and its increasingly unstable institutional architecture." *Canadian Public Administration*

"A *tour de force* which deserves to be read and debated. It has a grand synthetic sweep which is rare enough in scholarship these days, and it makes an important, imaginative contribution to our efforts to understand the forces shaping public policy in the last three decades." *Public Administration*, December 2012

"This concise and provocative book has a readability that belies its dense subject matter. The evidence produced by Roberts to support his points is thorough and compelling, but rarely overdone."--*Times Literary Supplement*

"The argument is intriguing, and can explain not only the movement toward autonomous central banks and legislation mandating budgetary restraint, but also the move toward management by contract (or New Public Management) and the effort to explicitly define performance measures for holding top managers accountable."--*Public Administrations Review*

"Government reform is like the weather--everyone talks about it but few people really know how to change it. Until, that is, this terrific new book by Alasdair Roberts, which stokes our intellectual capital for tackling the big changes government needs and builds the case for how to make these reforms work."--Donald F. Kettl, Dean, University of Maryland School of Public Policy and author of *The Next Government of the United States*

"In this provocative and wide-ranging book Alasdair Roberts uses the current economic crisis to reveal deep flaws in a wide range of reforms popular at the end of the twentieth century. His cases range from central banks to independent regulatory agencies to privately managed infrastructure projects. Throughout the world, reformers embraced the same 'logic of discipline.' All suffered from a naïve faith in institutions and expertise as solutions to the excesses of political and popular control. Support for independent, apolitical bodies arose from a perceived gap between the demands of global capitalism and popular pressures. But Roberts shows in case after case that the logic of discipline did not work even on its own terms. The current crisis has brought democratic accountability back to the fore."--Susan Rose-Ackerman, Professor of Jurisprudence, Yale Law School

#### About the Author

Alasdair Roberts is the Jerome L. Rappaport Professor of Law and Public Policy at Suffolk University Law

School. He is also a Fellow of the U.S. National Academy of Public Administration and an Honorary Senior Research Fellow of the School of Public Policy, University College London. Professor Roberts received his law degree from the University of Toronto and his Ph.D. in public policy from Harvard University. He is co-editor of the journal Governance.

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