

Steering Public Administration Reforms: Toward a Neo-Weberian State in Egypt

<https://www.doi.org/10.56830/IJAMS01202605>

Wael Omran Aly

Professor of Public Administration

High Institute of Management Sciences and Foreign Trade, New Cairo Academy, Egypt

Wael.omran@gmail.com

Received: 25 Oct 2025. Accepted: 5 Dec. 2025. Published: 30 Jan. 2026

Abstract

Egypt's public administration has seen a number of horizontal and vertical reforms during the last few decades, which have altered the nation's conventional paradigm. The problem is that these changes' practical and theoretical paths have diverged. The study reveals a historical pattern characterized by inconsistent logic, weak institutions, and limited capabilities by tracking the evolution of Egypt's public administration. Recent changes that have strengthened the executive branch's authority, militarized the government, and raised concerns about democratic regression have exacerbated these issues. The paper emphasizes how Egypt must improve democratic governance and state capability because these problems are enduring and getting worse. The results advance knowledge of the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) model's relevance and preparedness for nations like Egypt. Inspired by the NWS framework, the study also presents a broad agenda for achieving a more democratic and cogent approach to public sector change, providing scholars and policymakers with strategic insights.

Keywords: public administration, reforming, new public management, neo-Weberian

1. Introduction

One of Egypt's top policy priorities is public governance reform (Al-Araby, 2014). The desire to draw in investment, promote economic growth, raise public happiness, and generate jobs has been a major motivator for changes, similar to many emerging nations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area (OECD et al., 2010). Increasing accountability and creating an effective, responsive administrative governmental structure have been the main goals of reforms (Al-Araby, 2014). The goal of Egypt's public governance reform is to create an administrative structure that is more responsive and efficient through a series of changes. Some of these reforms, such state-led development and guaranteed employment in the public sector, clash with a sizable and intricate bureaucracy that is a holdover from state socialism programs started in the 1960s. Despite decades of open-door policies (beginning in the 1970s), the

implementation of a structural adjustment program (beginning in the early 1990s), and a number of initiatives based on new public management principles to decentralize and appropriately scale the public sector to meet the needs of the nation, the legacy of this legacy persists (Handoussa & El Oraby, 2004). As a result, some transitions—like the civil service law reforms—have seen a drawn-out, acrimonious process. Other changes, including the use of e-government, have flourished and advanced the idea of new public governance far more quickly (Barsoum, 2016).

Researchers have suggested using the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) to examine public sector changes as an alternative to the new public management (NPM) and new public governance (NPG) models (Drechsler & Kattel, 2008); (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). According to Pollitt and Bouckaert's conceptualization, the Neo-Weberian State goes beyond the conventional bureaucratic reasoning that underpins contemporary public administration by adding new components to the Weberian model (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). As an alternative to New Public Management and New Public Governance, scholars have employed the NWS, which was initially a descriptive term rather than a normative paradigm, to examine public sector changes (Byrkjeflot, du Gay, & Greve, 2018). The model is based on two primary theoretical presumptions: (a) the State continues to be a powerful guiding and regulatory force in society, and (b) the State is constantly modernizing, professionalizing, and pursuing more efficiency. The main argument is that the traditional state infrastructure should be updated for more efficiency, professionalism, and public response (Pollitt, 2008). The NWS places a strong emphasis on democratic values, creative governance, efficient public service delivery, and citizen participation in the formulation of public policy (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Although governments have effectively implemented the NWS framework in many European contexts, there has been very little use of it in emerging nations, especially in MENA nations like Egypt. These unique characteristics make Egypt a compelling case study for comprehending the potential of the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) for a nation dealing with systemic and historical problems. It is essential to put in place a stronger public administration (PA) that can legally handle present and upcoming societal issues. In order to successfully handle Egypt's current developmental challenges, this paper addresses these issues and makes the case for a stable, resilient, and adaptable bureaucracy. As a result, it examines the NWS as a collection of guidelines that can direct the best PA adjustments. It talks about how it might be better than other models to rebuild confidence in PA while bolstering Egypt's democracy and legal system.

In order to promote an agenda for future public sector reforms that would lead to significant, cohesive, and long-lasting changes, this essay aims to provide a vision for a feasible NWS in Egypt. In order to provide resilient public governance to address the nation's numerous pressing issues, this strategy envisions a democratic, powerful, and capable state that successfully works with private and society players. As a result, this article is organized as

follows. The next part situates the pertinent theoretical argument in order to contextualize the NWS and its essential elements. The legislative framework that governs Egypt is then discussed, along with some background information on the country's bureaucracy and its attempts at transitional reform. Lastly, we provide a debate and closing thoughts on Egypt's route toward the NWS.

2. Contextualizing the Neo-Weberian State and Its core features

Researchers have misrepresented public sector changes as a transition from the bureaucratic "old model" to the neoliberal "new model," as noted by (Bouckaert, 2023). Notably, the OECD's "Modernizing Government: The Way Forward" (2005) supported the NPM as a framework for comprehending and directing governments through modernization projects and capacity-building, and it became a major factor in late 20th-century public sector reforms. But it is becoming more and more obvious that depending only on market mechanisms (NPM) or network-based approaches (NPG) to deal with crises—from financial upheaval to pandemics and natural disasters—is frequently insufficient and even harmful (Bouckaert, Geert; Galego, Diego., 2024). Additionally, there has been disagreement among academics regarding whether NPM or NPG offer sufficient models for describing or explaining public sector change in many developing nations, such as Egypt (Galego & Nieto-Morales, 2024). The three fundamental components of hierarchy, market, and network (HMN) should be harmoniously incorporated into a more integrated public governance model, according to (Bouckaert, 2023). The core of the Neo-Weberian State is this triadic approach, which emphasizes an efficient and well-balanced public government system that can handle difficult problems.

As a result, NPM's ability to be the solution or play a major role in it was called into question by new circumstances. Combining "minimize" and "marketize" ideas was made more difficult by policies like achieving sustainable development objectives by 2030. The market was unable to provide solutions that were as wicked as the problems themselves. As a result, social and digital networks started to play a significant role in market expansion and modification. In order to maintain or restore citizens' faith in current systems, participation, consideration, and cooperation were crucial (Bouckaert, G.; Im, T., 2024). This growing interest in collaboration received theoretical support from network theories and related research on how networks could and should operate, as well as practical support from case studies showcasing the efficacy of networks and collaborative, deliberative, and participative governance. A fifth Ms, mediating both within and across groups and networks, was added to the four Ms of maintaining, modernizing, marketizing, and minimizing (Bouckaert, G.; Im, T., 2024).

Then, during the pandemic, digital networks were more beneficial at the central level, while social networks were particularly helpful at the local level. But it became evident that neither networks by themselves nor a mix of networks and markets was sufficient. In managing the pandemic, the state's hierarchy and administration were essential (Kuhlmann, S.; al., et, 2021). The neo-Weberian state (NWS) model, which has a well-defined hierarchy based on the

rule of law and democratic decision making, can be positioned next to the NPM and NPG (New Public Governance) models. This is because governance spaces are best understood as consisting of three dimensions: hierarchies, markets, and networks (HMN) (Bouckaert, 2023).

In the meantime, state creation in Western Europe has mostly been influenced by elements like economic consolidation, military rivalry, and population homogenization. On the other hand, state growth in emerging nations like Egypt was impacted by colonial legacies, reliance on commodity-based economies, and deeply ingrained social and economic inequality (Saylor, 2014). In light of this, public sector reform in these nations has often been reactive and driven by crises (Ramos & Milanese, 2017). Reforms have typically been motivated by the need to create a responsive and manageable public sector in the face of institutional fragility, a patrimonial culture, low professionalization and high politicization of the public administration, and low public trust in government (Grindle, 2012); (Nef, 2012); (Pardo, 2021); (Peeters & Campos, 2023). Therefore, "reaffirmation of the role of the state as the main facilitator of solutions to new problems," "reaffirmation of the role of representative democracies and the rule of administrative law," and "preservation of the idea of a public service with a distinctive status, culture, and, to some extent, terms and conditions" are all central to NWS (Torfing, Andersen, Greve, & Klausen, 2020). The dominating role of hierarchy, which "relies on laws, norms and standards for guidance, control and steering" and reflects the state's lawful use of democratic authority, is, in fact, the foundation of the entire NWS approach (Bouckaert, 2023).

The NWS then makes heavy use of hierarchy as a "mechanism" or "trigger," with "power exercised through a disciplined hierarchy of impartial and professional officials" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). The NWS approach uses a strong hierarchy for meta-governance over markets and networks and applies the logics of consequences (results) and appropriateness (inclusion, equity, values within the rule of law) to exercise authority via hierarchy (Bouckaert, 2023). These regulate the use of power both inside the public service and throughout the broader public sector. Four strategies are used to make the NWS ideal-type hierarchy more effective: (1) a change in focus from internal to external in order to meet the needs of citizens; (2) supplementing the role of representative democracy with more varied ways to consult, engage with, and receive citizens' views; (3) a focus on achieving results using a variety of service-delivery arrangements and then on ex-post control; and (4) a reliance on a highly competent, digitally enabled professional public service, emphasizing professional managers who are focused on citizens (Bouckaert, 2023); (Lynn, 2008); (Pollitt, C.; Bouckaert, G., 2004); (Torfing, Andersen, Greve, & Klausen, 2020).

As a result, NWS acknowledges that the demands and circumstances of the digital age, as well as the emergence of "co" models of production and public governance, have changed the nature of contemporary public governance. Nonetheless, it views public governance as being facilitated and propelled by the state (Byrkjeflot, du Gay, & Greve, 2018); (Torfing, Andersen, Greve, & Klausen, 2020). Additionally, NWS advocates for governance-like principles and

practices that result in a more externally facing mode of governance, one that is more transparent and includes significant citizen participation through consultations and direct opportunities for citizens to express preferences into administrative and policy processes (Bouckaert, 2023). At the same time, NWS diverges from traditional public administration (TPA) by incorporating more managerialist concepts and methods that are highlighted by the NPM movement, which emphasizes managerial public service, performance management, and outcomes oriented. However, rather than using market-based tools like NPM, these managerialist concepts are implemented through better public service institutions and offers (Bouckaert, 2023).

Furthermore, the model highlights the significance of the public service ethos and acknowledges its uniqueness in serving public interests by recognizing the challenges of dealing with powerful interest groups in policy processes. As a result, the NWS supports the role of the state in fostering social cohesion and encouraging involvement. Additionally, the NWS supports modifications to the function of public entities. The NWS model suggests that public institutions should concentrate on generating value for society, in contrast to the NPM, which advocates decreasing efficiency as a major goal. This trend entails giving public employees a sense of purpose and goal, inspiring them to work in the public good, and giving them the tools and resources, they need to be creative and solve problems (Bouckaert, 2023). Therefore, using the NWS framework without carefully considering the prior context could result in a biased analysis that might obscure the particular difficulties and traits of the public sector. Examining Egypt's public sector development and current capacities is an alternate method of evaluating the NWS's viability in emerging nations like Egypt. Analyzing the historical course of institutional modifications that led to the current situation is the first step in this research. Therefore, in order to comprehend Egypt's contemporary political, bureaucratic, and administrative situation, it is imperative to concentrate on changes made to the Organic Law of Public Administration during the past three decades.

3. Evolution and Challenges of Public Administration reforming in Egypt

Given the size of Egypt's public sector, increasing its efficacy is essential to providing high-quality, reasonably priced public programs and services as well as boosting budgetary sustainability. According to the law of local administration no. 43/1979 and the law of civil service no. 81/2016, the public administration is set up on a solid hierarchical and vertical structure with three tiers. It is organized around i) Ministries and related agencies and bodies, ii) Public organizations that oversee utilities and facilities, and iii) local governments. Because Egypt's public administration employs almost 5 million people and is made up of about 707 ministries, government agencies, and administrative entities, it has a complicated organizational structure (OECD, 2024). The public sector is one of the biggest employers, as it is in many MENA nations; on average, state jobs account for 22% to 26% of all employment in Egypt. One element that might lead to complicated and overly regulated bureaucratic

procedures, burdening the public and private sectors as well as citizens, is a sizable public sector apparatus (OECD, 2023). Together, these distinctive features of Egyptian public administration highlight the necessity of methodical, evidence-based, whole-of-government policy responses to fulfill the PARP and provide important outcomes for citizens (OECD, 2024). Through the implementation of strategic commitments in the revised Egypt Vision 2030 and the Public Administration Reform Plan (PARP), which is presently being reviewed, the Egyptian government is restructuring its public administration. Despite advancements, there are still difficulties in addressing the demands of the populace and fulfilling the promise of these historic reforms while negotiating an increasingly complicated and unpredictable global socioeconomic environment. Key public governance tasks have undergone substantial structural changes as a result of reform efforts to date; nonetheless, a whole-of-government approach would be advantageous for improved coordination and evidence-based decision-making (MPED, 2023). Simultaneously, the gradual changes brought about by these reforms are opening up new avenues for modernizing Egypt's civil service, advancing citizen-centered public services, improving transparency, and mainstreaming a youth and gender perspective in public policy.

3.1 Egypt's multifaceted Public Administration setting

According to (Al-Araby, 2014), Egypt's administrative governance structure is big, intricate, and has numerous overlapping layers. It consists of thirty-two ministries, two of which are state ministries and the remainder are cabinet ministries. It also comprises numerous local units, 23 government agencies, and 234 autonomous public agencies (Al-Araby, 2014). There are 323 service directorates and 27 governorates among the local units. The result of several controlling laws is this intricate arrangement. These include the recently modified public service law (Law 47 of 1978, with its 17 revisions), the local administration law (Law 43 of 1979), and the public organization law (Law 61 of 1963) (Al-Araby, 2014). Understanding the existing system and its intricate overlapping layers requires an understanding of the legal framework that governs the organization structure. As part of a broader push for immediate administrative system improvements, this multilayered structure presents a variety of governance issues. In particular, the bureaucracy's lack of coordination, organizational conflict, and distortion have all been linked to the enormous number of entities (Al-Araby, 2014).

Furthermore, Egypt's bureaucracy has been disproportionately vast, employing 6.37 million people in 2014 (Al-Araby, 2014). The state budget is severely burdened by this. Egypt has experienced a challenging economic era following the global financial crisis of 2008, which has been exacerbated by the economic impact of the recent political turmoil. As a result, budgetary concerns have been of utmost importance. Furthermore, a number of issues have been raised regarding the inadequate use of state-owned assets and the compromised income these assets produce (Al-Araby, 2014). Egypt's bureaucracy is still very centralized despite decades of decentralization efforts and a convoluted structure. According to (Handoussa, H.;

Hay, M. A.; Osman, M.; Kandil, R., 2004), administrative decentralization presents "a window of opportunity to conduct comprehensive civil service reform in Egypt." State budgeting practices, however, continue to be focused and centralized.

At the same time, (Boex, 2011) describes how a legislation draft was reached in December 2010 that would provide decentralization and a diffusion of authority at the subnational governance level, giving elected representatives at local councils' greater authority. This legislation was not passed. A new law supporting decentralization for municipal governance is being suggested in the middle of 2016. However, the establishment of a permanent intergovernmental fiscal committee at the Ministry of Finance to communicate with line ministries as part of a ministerial fiscal decentralization policy has been a crucial step in this transitional process (Boex, 2011). It is important to note that a decentralized state is specifically called for in the 2014 Constitution. Following a vote intended to end a period of political instability following the January 2011 uprising, the 2014 Constitution was ratified. It claims that partisan and political pluralism are the cornerstones of the political system (Barsoum, Ghada,, 2017).

3.2 Reforms Trajectories

A functional, efficient, and transparent public administration that provides businesses and citizens with high-quality goods and services depends on excellent governance. Since public governance reforms serve as the foundation for the successful implementation of strategic frameworks and policies, they can be a crucial tool for more effective, efficient, and citizen-centered public administrations when implemented strategically (OECD, 2024). In fact, creating an inclusive public policy that can provide outcomes for national growth through better services requires a contemporary and efficient administration. Effective public financial management systems are crucial for implementing public governance reforms because they provide public institutions with the resources they need to function, guarantee their transparent administration, and hold actors responsible for their spending and value for money.

In this sense, by adopting the revised Egypt Vision 2030, the Egyptian government has started an ambitious reform process to accomplish important strategic goals for the nation's sustained economic and social development and growth. This all-encompassing strategic framework, spearheaded by the Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation (MPEDIC), is the first of its kind to prioritize sustainable development in cross-sector policies to support economic expansion, social inclusion, and prosperity for Egypt's future generations (MPED, 2023). All development initiatives and projects carried out across sectors and levels of government are governed by these commitments, which are in line with the African Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. Notably, this vision's development initiatives seek to raise Egyptians' standard of living and contentment. Education, health, housing, and family development are only a few of the sectors where national flagship development projects have been undertaken recently (APRM, 2021).

Through targeted and mainstreamed initiatives, the government has focused especially on strengthening women, youth, and other demographic groups.

As a result, these initiatives have coincided with a thorough process of public administration reform. Notably, since 2019, the Central Agency for Organization and Administration (CAOA) has been at the forefront of efforts to implement the Public Administration Reform Plan (PARP). In an endeavor to modernize its operations, incorporate cutting-edge technologies, and upskill the public sector workers, the PARP seeks to gradually overhaul the state administrative apparatus (MPED, 2021). With an emphasis on enhancing the caliber, accessibility, and applicability of public services, it aims to do this through five pillars that support a number of institutional, financial, legal, and human reforms. Optimizing public services through a variety of techniques, including as digitization and the use of information technology to enhance public service delivery, is a fundamental component of the PARP. This pillar's implementation is overseen by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), which has converted the pertinent goals and initiatives into Digital Egypt, a sectoral national strategy on digitalization that addresses three key areas: digital transformation, digital skills and jobs, and digital innovation (MCIT, 2023).

In order to guarantee the successful execution of the required public administration reforms and accomplish the government's objectives by 2030, CAO A is also upgrading the PARP and further aligning its strategic objectives therein with the updated version of Egypt Vision 2030. Together, these changes support Egypt's 2014 constitutional commitment to advancing good governance. Its provisions emphasize human rights, particularly gender equality, inclusiveness, balanced growth, and the reduction of income inequities (MPED, 2021). By doing this, the constitution highlights how crucial it is to maximize human capital investment within the context of sustainable development. Additionally, it acknowledges the significance of ensuring information access (Article 68) and empowering youth to participate in public decision-making (Article 82). However, the process of improving public management is not always straightforward (OECD, 2024). Reforming public administration is a gradual process that involves significant changes to the very structures, procedures, and working techniques of public organizations, just like in many OECD nations. In addition to dealing with uncertainty, opposition to change, and pressure to consistently provide results, governments must strike a balance between short- and long-term priorities.

With its roots in Egypt's socialist philosophy of the 1960s, the legacy of state centrism and monopoly over economic activities has been progressively undermined. The two major turning points of Sadat's Open-Door Policy in 1970 and the adoption of structural adjustment policies in the 1990s are responsible for this shift. According to (Abdel-Latif & Schmitz, 2010), measures to draw in private investment date back to the middle of the 1970s, when laws prohibiting expropriation (nationalization) were incorporated. In the 1980s, laws guaranteeing equal treatment for domestic and foreign businesses were introduced; in the 1990s, structural

adjustment policies were implemented; and in the early 2000s, labor and intellectual property laws were implemented. More recently, a statute (statute 17 of 2015) was passed to remove legal barriers to private investment and to provide investors with guarantees and incentives. The General Authority for Investment was given permission by legislation to serve as a one-stop shop for investors seeking the licenses and permits required to launch a firm (Barsoum, Ghada,, 2017).

The legacy of state centrism overshadows the shift to marketization and privatization of several sectors. For instance, a crucial first step in the nation's economic reform agenda was the privatization of the banking industry, which started in 1991. Technical guidance from the Paris Club creditors strongly supports marketization and the expanding role of private companies, which are part of a global neoliberal trend (Omran, 2009). Given Egypt's connections to these organizations and economic forces, it is quite probable that this shift will proceed at an even faster pace. For this shift to be beneficial to Egypt and its economy, it is essential to implement efficient accountability mechanisms and apply management for outcomes principles.

Compared to the largely unofficial private sector, the government service offers better working conditions. Permanent lifetime employment, access to social and health insurance unmatched by the private sector, and comparatively favorable compensation and working hours are all benefits of employment in the public sector. In the public sector, open posts with job descriptions serve as the basis for recruitment (OECD et al., 2010). For educated Egyptians, especially young individuals, the public sector continues to be their preferred employer (Barsoum, 2016). This is a vestige of a program that guaranteed educated children jobs in the public sector upon graduation (Barsoum, 2016). However, the introduction of structural adjustment programs in the early 1990s caused this plan to halt. However, the January 2011 movement brought attention to this young people's predilection for certain jobs. In response to populist demands, successive cabinets during the transitional phase after the 2011 revolt increased employment in the public sector or granted temporary recruits' permanent contracts (El-Baradei, L., 2013).

The introduction of structural adjustment programs in the early 1990s marked the beginning of a lengthy transition of system contraction, which is reversed by this expansion of the bureaucracy. Rationalizing and appropriately sizing the public administration system is a long-term proposal for the civil service. The prime minister issued an order in 2005 to promote employees' voluntary early retirement (OECD et al., 2010). Performance capability is also hampered by overstaffing (El Baradei, 2004). (El Baradei, L., 2011) reports on the emergence of alternative administrative structures within the traditional bureaucracy, especially in ministries that receive financial and technical donor support, as a solution to the lack of skilled regular staff. Long-standing policy proposals of freezing government appointments, contracting out, outsourcing, early-retirement pension plans, transformative training, and reallocating available

human resources have all been influenced by the principles of New Public Management (El Baradei, 2004).

Five key components are identified by the OECD et al. (2010) as being particularly relevant to Egypt when it comes to reforming human resource management in the MENA region. The government recently started the first step, which is to create a contemporary civil service statute. The second is to create a database of public sector workers, which is still part of the reform action plan (Al-Araby, 2014). Additional suggestions included building new and more efficient training programs, developing workforce planning tools, and revising the structure of occupations that comprise the public sector. These components have long been recognized as needing revision, especially in light of the convoluted and bloated government structure and contradictory regulations. The new civil service statute (statute 81 of 2016) addresses some of these aspects. The long-standing civil service statute (statute 47 of 1978) was replaced by this legislation, which was a crucial transitional step (Barsoum, Ghada,, 2017). A closer examination of the law reveals that its main objectives are to control compensation rises, institutionalize a more stringent performance review procedure, and govern the hiring and seconding process in the civil service. One of the main reform recommendations given by the OECD et al. (2010) was that governmental organizations had to develop a human resource plan to justify the hiring of new personnel.

In the late 1980s, Egypt started implementing e-government (OECD et al., 2010). According to the e-government development index (EGDI), it is ranked 80th worldwide and third in Africa. Egypt's EGDI (0.5129) is comparable to China's (0.5450) (Nations, 2014). According to the United Nations Development Program in Egypt, 154.6 million information requests were handled by Egypt's e-government services between 2012 and 2014. Since 2004, Egypt's e-government portal has offered over 200 electronic public services. The national births, deaths, and marriages registration, public university enrollment, renewing a driver's license, taxation (including filing tax declarations), regional bus and train ticketing, and judicial court services are a few examples of citizen services. Included are corporate customs services and an export guide (OECD, 2024).

Egypt's public administration and governance have undergone numerous changes in an effort to create an administrative framework that is more responsive and efficient. Despite being heavily mentioned in official pronouncements and state papers, many of these transitions are still unfinished. The decentralization project is a prime example. Egypt's bureaucracy is still very centralized despite decades of decentralization efforts and a convoluted structure. Numerous public administration procedures have been impacted by this centralized framework. The budgeting procedure is primarily centralized. Instead of localities, line ministries continue to be the de facto decision-makers when it comes to budgeting (Barsoum, Ghada,, 2017).

In the meantime, there have been several transitional phases in the state-market relationship. Egypt's 2015 Investment Law indicated the country's continued emphasis on luring private investment for economic expansion and employment development. The state's strong aims to sustain a favorable state-business relationship are amply demonstrated by the law. By removing legislative barriers, establishing one-stop shopping for investors, and offering guarantees to investors, the law encourages investment (APRM, 2021). Relations between the government and civil society have not always been easy. Historically, this relationship has alternated between patronizing and a laissez-faire approach to one of the main governmental restrictions. Although it is seen as an incomplete transitional step toward a more effective legislative system controlling CSOs, the existing civil society organizations (CSO) law (Law 149 of 2019) is still in existence.

On the other hand, Egypt's transition to e-government has been effective and appears promising. Egypt's EGDI rating in 2024, this shift, which was started in the late 1980s, and the various sets of services offered via the government portal, among other things, attest to its success. Serious ambitions to improve the political-administrative system are reflected in the numerous changes in Egypt's public governance (OECD, 2024). Change is unavoidable even though these initiatives may clash with the system's heritage of a state-led economy and the sizable public sector. The state's commitment and evidence from throughout the world both support the eventual completion of the majority of these transformations.

4. Toward the NWS Principles for a Public Administration Transformation in Egypt

We can accurately characterize Egypt as an incomplete Weberian state given the features of the reform trajectory already described. Some analysts say that New Public Management (NPM) in Egypt is still more of a theoretical idea than a useful administrative strategy due to significant limitations in the effects of changes motivated by NPM following democratization (Gobba, 2020). Furthermore, the current state of Egypt's public sector – which is marked by a rise in militarism, a concentration of authority, and hostility against technical independent institutions – casts doubt on the possibility of a future administration that is more democratic and transparent (World Bank, 2022). As a result, Egypt is still a long way from being a post-Weberian state, much less a Neo-Weberian State (NWS). However, we think the NWS framework presents a viable path for public administration, especially in nations like Egypt where it can strengthen state capacities. In addition to promoting a more coordinated and collaborative approach to public governance that incorporates network cooperation (NPG) and market dynamics of new public management (NPM), the NWS framework places a strong emphasis on hierarchical leadership. The design of this model is resilient to the stresses of turbulent times, such as unforeseen circumstances, escalating crises, and competing solutions to urgent policy issues. One of the most important steps in recognizing issues and difficulties within the administrative system was the reform of public administration, which was based on the fundamental pillars of human resources, decentralization, and public policy (Igrioglu,

Ostry, & Allam, 2020). However, this strategy was unable to offer a comprehensive vision that included both national and international networks. These networks play a crucial role in connecting the resources, opportunities, and risk management of the various actors engaged, as well as their individual responsibilities and level of dedication to predetermined goals (OECD, 2016).

Egypt urgently needs a strategic and revolutionary response because it is currently at a crossroads due to limited state capacity and the prospect of democratic backsliding. A public sector in distress, prone to inefficiency and dysfunction, is indicated by problems like limited professionalization in the public sector, weak rule of law, fragile procurement systems, unstable democratic norms, and inadequate crisis preparedness as Egypt's public sector struggles with an incomplete transition to a (post-)Weberian state (UNDP, 2021). Although some foreign reports (e.g., OECD, 2011, 2023) present a more positive view of Egypt's public management reforms, the reality regularly contradicts this, with crises being mismanaged and fundamental rights being neglected. Adopting the NWS model to address these issues could lead to Egypt's public administration becoming more stable, effective, and democratic. The Egyptian government might then use NWS principles to develop policies and encourage reforms that reinforce democratic values, improve public sector management, and increase cooperation with the private and social sectors. We suggest three foundations for Egypt's upcoming public sector reforms based on this analysis:

1. bolstering the basis of democracy. Egypt's democratic life is seriously threatened by recent trends toward the (re)centralization of power within the executive branch and the declining independence of judicial and bureaucratic institutions. An immediate and intentional correction of this departure from democratic norms and values is required. To effectively combat this trend, the government must fortify the fundamental institutions that guarantee democratic accountability (Boex, 2011). A model for this kind of change is provided by the NWS model. It promotes a strong, authoritative, progressive, and flexible style of governance that reflects the requirements of a contemporary democratic state. This paradigm emphasizes the significance of promoting certain strategic initiatives and preserving and advancing democratic values. Enhancing the legitimacy and dependability of institutions to support the framework of checks and balances that prevent the concentration of power is necessary to realign Egypt's governance with democratic ideals. As the transition to a more supportive local governance structure is still ongoing, it is imperative that a new law for local administration be issued in place of the current indifferent law of local administration no. 43/1979 (Labib, 2022).

To guarantee that the judiciary can function impartially and effectively, the government must protect its independence from external or political pressures. These organizations are the cornerstone of justice and impartiality, and the rule of law depends critically on their integrity. Moreover, these actions are essential to fostering a dynamic, flexible, and robust

democratic system rather than just being remedial. Transparency, openness, accountability, and the rule of law are essential components of a governance framework that fosters public trust and makes citizens feel heard and represented (Al-Araby, 2014). Egypt may return to a governance model that upholds democratic standards, promotes public engagement, and guarantees that the state's mechanisms operate as intended for the benefit of all of its residents by embracing the NWS's tenets.

2. increasing flexibility and crisis management. Egypt's readiness and flexibility in dealing with crises are called into doubt by its limited state capacity. This shortcoming highlights how urgently the country's crisis management infrastructure needs to be completely redesigned using the progressive ideas found in the NWS model. To strengthen Egypt's ability to withstand crises, a multipronged approach is necessary. In order to foresee such calamities and mount quick and efficient reactions, this approach entails a major strengthening of state capabilities, including the professionalization of the civil service (Aly, 2023). Another crucial element is improving the flexibility and agility of policy instruments, which guarantees that governance can quickly adapt to the changing nature of crises without bureaucratic delays.

Furthermore, it is critical to move toward governing structures that are more flexible and adaptable. This change would make it easier for the nation to handle the complexities of today's problems, creating an atmosphere in which creative solutions can be found. The encouragement of cooperative efforts among various governmental and societal sectors is essential to this new paradigm of governance, as it fosters a group approach to problem-solving that makes use of a wide range of viewpoints and specialties. The NWS and NPG's adoption of the network as a conceptual model highlights the importance of cores as well as coordinative, cooperative, and collaborative relationships in developing and implementing public policies, strategic planning, foresight, and monitoring (OECD, 2016). Then, establishing a governance structure that prioritizes collaboration, diversity, and creativity is essential to successfully reducing the negative consequences of crises. Such a methodology fosters a culture of proactive and innovative problem-solving while improving the effectiveness of crisis response. Egypt can strive to endure the immediate effects of crises and emerge stronger, with better tools for handling future difficulties, by incorporating these concepts into its crisis management plan.

3. encouraging inclusive government. There are still significant differences in the availability and caliber of public services, despite the government's efforts to improve the efficacy and inclusivity of important social programs. These disparities highlight the pressing need for government that is more compassionate, inclusive, and sensitive to the various demands of society (Aly, Wael., 2020). The NWS model offers a strategic framework to address these issues because of its fundamental emphasis on human rights protection and citizen-centric governance. The NWS's implementation in Egypt necessitates the creation of policies that protect these vulnerable groups' welfare and interests while ensuring equitable

representation and universal rights protection. This move toward more inclusive governance must be supported by empathy in order to guarantee that the needs and voices of all community members—especially those on the periphery—are acknowledged and taken into consideration. Additionally, this strategy promotes widespread involvement in policymaking, encouraging all society sectors to feel respected and like they belong (Barsoum, Ghada,, 2017). Egypt can establish the groundwork for a governance structure that heals social divisions, boosts societal resilience, and rebuilds confidence in democratic institutions by putting such an approach into practice. In order to fulfill the urgent needs and rights of excluded people and create a cohesive society that can endure and prosper in the face of future difficulties, this inclusive framework is crucial.

We acknowledge that the practical and successful implementation of the NWS paradigm in Egypt is a significant challenge, even though we are defending an agenda of changes inspired by the NWS. This is mainly because of current political obstacles that make it difficult to provide a clear reform agenda and gain societal support. Within a coalitional government, reaching an agreement and outlining a clear reform agenda can be difficult due to internal and ideological disagreements between political parties as well as a lack of political will and leadership. Furthermore, any new agenda may result in varying opinions and levels of public support. For instance, reducing costs and increasing efficiency are the main objectives for the private sector. Improving social involvement and service accessibility is a top concern for social movement participants (Aly, Wael., 2014). Scholars support a change that improves inclusivity, efficacy, transparency, and social rights. One is defended by philanthropic organizations using representative bureaucracy, NPM, and NPG. In the midst of this narrative conflict, society is trapped. No issues would be resolved by a "transformation without losers" (Ramos, C.; Milanesi, A., 2020). Furthermore, it is challenging to carry out any comprehensive reform that can alter all current aspects due to the path dependence and hybrid legacy.

In order to overcome these obstacles and guarantee the nation's successful NWS reform, a number of requirements must be taken into account. Reform must be given top priority, proposals must be supported, and successful implementation must be guaranteed by political leaders. A well-defined and unified approach needs to be developed with the consent of many stakeholders and extensively disseminated. In order to ensure future support, this strategy must incorporate both necessary and incremental modifications given the short-term results. A supportive legislative and regulatory framework that is consistent with reform ideas must also be developed by political actors. In order to guarantee the execution of these modifications, they must also supply adequate resources, including money, infrastructure, and technology. Finally, in order to overcome opposition and excessive vetoing, the administration must foster inclusive public discussion about the agenda and form coalitions. In order to properly implement the NWS in Egypt and guarantee the necessary conditions for the country to become an economically developed, socially just, and environmentally sustainable nation, these issues must be resolved.

Essentially, a strategy framework that places a high priority on bolstering democratic institutions, improving preparedness and agility, and fostering an inclusive and responsive government culture can help us imagine Egypt's transition to a Neo-Weberian State. These strategic pillars highlight the crucial connection of Egypt's governance practices with the principles of the NWS and offer a roadmap for the country's advancement. Despite the significant obstacles, the NWS framework proves to be a useful tool for assessing present deficiencies and guiding Egypt toward a public sector that is more resilient, adaptable, and dedicated to respecting democratic values and human rights.

Conclusion

Egypt's public administration and governance have undergone numerous changes in an effort to create an administrative framework that is more responsive and efficient. Despite being heavily mentioned in official pronouncements and state papers, many of these transitions are still unfinished. The decentralization project is a prime example. Egypt's bureaucracy is still very centralized despite decades of decentralization efforts and a convoluted structure. Many public administration practices have been influenced by this centralized framework. The budgeting procedure is primarily centralized. Localities are no longer the true decision-makers when it comes to budgeting; instead, line ministries are. In light of this, the NPM has become the main institutional and intellectual force behind Egyptian public administration since the early 21st century. Egypt's management and governance procedures were enhanced by the use of NPM techniques and instruments.

There have since been several transitional stages in the state-market relationship. Egypt's 2015 Investment Law indicated the country's continued emphasis on luring private investment for economic expansion and employment development. The state's strong aims to sustain a favorable state-business relationship are amply demonstrated by the law. By removing legislative barriers, establishing one-stop shopping for investors, and offering guarantees to investors, the law encourages investment. In a similar vein, Egypt's transition to e-government has been fairly successful and appears promising.

Despite these successes, Egypt's aforementioned decentralization is still lacking, which affects the coordination of public institutions and government agencies. The administrative system's lack of cohesiveness and poor coordination are the outcome of administrative obstructions, double subordination, and redundancies brought on by poor coordination. The efficiency, efficacy, and quality of public services improved as a result of NPM policies, but Egyptian public administration remained brittle and overly regulated. Efficiency increased somewhat, but since the 2011 revolt, there has not been a discernible reform pattern with aspects from the NWS, NPG, and NPM. Furthermore, the PA's history in Egypt is marked by a lack of fortitude in the face of social difficulties and disasters. A disjointed structure that is ill-prepared to handle the nation's complicated problems has resulted from partial and incomplete reforms as well as the ongoing need to finalize the professionalization of the public

bureaucracy. Egypt continues to face persistent issues like inequality, violence, stalled economic growth, and environmental deterioration, underscoring the urgent need for a more capable and responsive state.

Therefore, a reformed Egyptian PA needs to be strong, adaptable, and stable enough to enact audacious policies and rebuild public confidence in institutions. With its emphasis on legitimacy, efficacy, and resilience—principles that are ideally suited to Egypt's complex problems—the NWS model provides a thorough approach to reform. The NWS model attempts to address social concerns and offer inclusive services by incorporating aspects of hierarchy, market mechanisms, and networks (HMN) while concurrently maintaining democratic governance and the rule of law. Maintaining a critical viewpoint and setting the NWS apart from other governance models is crucial, nevertheless. Although the NWS offers insightful information, it is not a universally applicable approach. To effectively address Egypt's unique issues, its ideas must be properly tailored to the country's administrative and cultural setting.

As a result, the NWS model has recently taken center stage in Egypt's new state transformation paradigm. The key takeaway from a number of crises, including social, political, economic, and health-related ones, has been the necessity of strategic instruments for creating effective public institutions. First, a clearly defined institutional hierarchy is necessary to achieve great management in public administration. This hierarchy encourages civil servants to enhance their performance and meet predetermined goals by offering predictability. Second, public administration incorporates the supply and demand model of the market to promote a culture of quality in public services that are customized to meet the demands of client beneficiaries. Third, incorporating civil society and citizens in decision-making processes strengthens the role of networks. Co-design, co-participation, and co-delivery are important, and they are made possible by transparent and unambiguous regulations.

In conclusion, we believe that Egypt is about to undergo a significant change in public administration, moving toward a new paradigm that incorporates elements of the NWS and NPG. This hybrid approach, which combines the dynamic, cooperative, and citizen-centric qualities of the NPG with the features of the NWS, symbolizes the nation's distinctive reform journey. Egypt may develop a more adaptable, accountable, and inclusive public administration system by combining these paradigms. This system will be better equipped to handle the challenges of contemporary governance while adhering to the fundamental values of public service.

References:

Abdel-Latif, A., & Schmitz, H. (2010). The politics of investment and growth in Egypt. Towards a new approach (p. (Working Paper 546)). Cairo, EG: American University of Cairo, Economic Research Forum: Retrieved from [http://www2.ids.ac.uk/future/state/pdfs/Politics of Investment & Growth in Egypt \[1\].pdf](http://www2.ids.ac.uk/future/state/pdfs/Politics of Investment & Growth in Egypt [1].pdf).

- Al-Araby, A. (2014). Vision for administrative reform in Egypt. (Presentation by the Minister, June). Cairo. EG.: Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform: Retrieved from <http://www.ad.gov.eg/Admin/EditorDocs/Governance/Public%20Administration%20Reform%20Plan%20.pdf>.
- Aly, O. W. (2023). Nanomanagement networking: Organizational resilience to COVID-19 surge capacity in Egypt. *J Bus Contin Emer Plan*. Jan 1, 16(3):266-285. PMID: 36765438.
- Aly, Wael. (2014). Bad Governance and Failure of Development Progress in Egypt Causes, Consequences and Remedies. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 3. 39. 10.5296/jpag.v3i4.4340.
- Aly, Wael. (2020). The institutional layering arrangements of the Egyptian government's e-payment system: An analytical case study. *Journal of Payments Strategy & Systems*, 14. 61-74. 10.69554/FSAU9316.
- APRM. (2021). The Country Review Report of the Arab Republic of Egypt. African Peer Review Mechanism.
- Barsoum, G. (2016). The public sector as the employer of choice among youth in Egypt: The relevance of public service motivation theory. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39 (3), 205–215. doi:10.1080/01900692.2015.1004082.
- Barsoum, Ghada,. (2017). Egypt's Many Public Administration Transitions: Reform Vision and Implementation Challenges. *International Journal of Public Administration*, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2017.1387145.
- Boex, J. (2011). Democratization in Egypt: The potential role of decentralization. (Policy Brief, February, 3). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance. Retrieved from [http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412301 Democratization-in-Egypt-The-Potential-Role-of-Decentralization.PDF](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412301-Democratization-in-Egypt-The-Potential-Role-of-Decentralization.PDF).
- Bouckaert, G. (2023). The neo-Weberian State: From ideal type model to reality? *Max Weber Studies*, 23(1), 13–59. <https://doi.org/10.1353/max.2023.0002>.
- Bouckaert, G.; Im, T. (2024). Neo Weberian State: From Theory to Practice? *Journal of Policy Studies*, 39(2), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.52372/jps39201>.
- Bouckaert, Geert; Galego, Diego. (2024). System-quake proof 'systemic resilience governance': Six measures for readiness. *Global Policy*, 15. 97-105. 10.1111/1758-5899.13433.
- Byrkjeflot, H., du Gay, P., & Greve, C. (2018). What is the "Neo-Weberian State" as a Regime of Public Administration? In the *Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe*, (pp. 991–1009). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55269-3_50.

- Drechsler, W., & Kattel, R. (2008). Towards the Neo Weberian State? Perhaps, but Certainly Adieu, NPM! *The NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 1(2), 95-99.
- El Baradei, L. (2004). Toward rightsizing the public administration (in Arabic). (Papers of the administrative component of the joint research project: Al Dawla Fi Alam Moutagheir, No. 4). Cairo University: Public Administration Research and Consultation Center. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/26731677/Parallel_Structures_in_the_Egyptian_Government_Bureaucracy_A_Problematic_Quick_Fix.
- El Baradei, L. (2011). Parallel structures in the Egyptian government bureaucracy: A problematic quick fix. *Public Administration*, 89(4), 1351-1366. doi:10.1111/padm.2011.89.issue-4.
- El-Baradei, L. (2013). Overstaffing the Egyptian bureaucracy: Whose interest are we serving, the Egyptian citizen or the Egyptian bureaucrat? A paper presented at the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) African Forum. Yaounde Cameroon.
- Galego, D., & Nieto-Morales, F. (2024). Navigating Public Administration Reforms and Democracy: Toward a Neo-Weberian State in Mexico. *Journal of Policy Studies*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.52372/jps39204>.
- Gobba, R. (2020). "Administrative simplification strategy with reference to the Egyptian case". *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JHASS-05-2020-0069/full/html>.
- Grindle, M. S. (2012). *Jobs for the Boys. Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective*. Harvard University Press, <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674065185>.
- Handoussa, H. A., & El Oraby, N. (2004). Civil service wages and reform. The case of Egypt (Working Paper No. 98). Cairo, EG: Egyptian Center for Economic Studies: Retrieved from http://www.eces.org.eg/MediaFiles/Uploaded_Files/%7B652708C2-C309-4BBF-B0E5_013B91FB347B%7D_ECESWP98e.pdf.
- Handoussa, H.; Hay, M. A.; Osman, M.; Kandil, R. (2004). *Egypt Human Development Report 2004: Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance*. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Cairo, EG: United Nations Development Program and The Institute of National Planning, Egypt. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/Egypt-human-development-report-decentralization>, P.9.
- Igrioglu, G., Ostry, A., & Allam, M. (2020). "Integrated Governance for Coherent Implementation of the SDGs in Egypt". *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 35, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/524b2c85-en>.

- Kuhlmann, S.; al., et. (2021). Opportunity management of the COVID-19 pandemic: Testing the crisis from a global perspective. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 87(3), 497–517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852321992102>.
- Labib, A. A. (2022). Good Governance and Civil Service Reform in Egypt. [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo], AUC Knowledge Fountain. <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1873>.
- Lynn, L. (2008). What is a neo-Weberian state? Reflections on a concept and its implications. *NISPACE Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 1(2), 17–30.
- MCIT. (2023). Egypt ICT Strategy, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. https://mcit.gov.eg/en/ICT_Strategy.
- MPED. (2021). Egypt's 2021 Voluntary National Review. Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279512021_VNR_Report_Egypt.pdf.
- MPED. (2023). Egypt Vision 2030, updated version. Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, <https://mped.gov.eg/DynamicPage?id=115&lang=en>.
- Nations, U. (2014). Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2014). United Nations E-Government Survey 2014 E-Government for the Future We Want, New York, USA: UNDESA.
- Nef, J. (2012). Public Administration and Public Sector Reform in Latin America. In B. G. Peters & J. Pierre (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Administration*, Sage.
- OECD. (2023). Public Employment and Management 2023. Towards a More Flexible Public Service, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5b378e11-en>.
- OECD. (2024). OECD Public Governance Reviews: Egypt: Strengthening the Foundations for More Efficient and Effective Public Governance Reforms. OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d5a42670-en>.
- Omran, M. (2009). Post-privatization corporate governance and firm performance: The role of private ownership concentration, identity and board composition. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 37(4), 658–673. doi:10.1016/j.jce.2009.02.002.
- Pardo, M. C. (2021). Mexico's Public Administration: Huge Problems, Partial Solutions. In B. G. Peters, C. A. Tercedor, & C. Ramos (Eds.), *The Emerald Handbook of Public Administration in Latin America* (pp. 217–256). Emerald Publishing Limited.

- Peeters, R., & Campos, S. A. (2023). Street-level bureaucracy in weak state institutions: a systematic review of the literature. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 89, 977–995. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208523221103196>.
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2017). *Public Management Reform, A Comparative Analysis – Into the Age of Austerity*. (n.d.). 20.
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2017). *Public Management Reform, A Comparative Analysis – Into the Age of Austerity*. (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Pollitt, C.; Bouckaert, G. (2004). *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199268481.001.0001>.
- Ramos, C., & Milanesi, A. (2017). Public Management Models, Latin America. In A. Farazmand (Ed.), *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration*. Springer, Public Policy, and Governance.
- Ramos, C.; Milanesi, A. (2020). The neo-Weberian State and the neo developmentalist strategies in Latin America: the case of Uruguay. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 86(2), 261–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852318763525>.
- Saylor, R. (2014). *State Building in Boom Times: Commodities and Coalitions in Latin America and Africa*. Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199364954.001.0001>.
- Torring, J., Andersen, L., Greve, C., & Klausen, K. (2020). Public governance paradigms: competing and co-existing. Edward Elgar Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788971225>, p.77.
- UNDP. (2021). “Governance: Towards an effective ecosystem for managing the affairs of the State and society”. in *Egypt Human Development Report 2021 - Development, a Right for All: Egypt’s Pathways and Prospects*, United Nations Development Program.
- World Bank. (2022). *Egypt Country Climate and Development Report*. World Bank, Washington, DC, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099510011012235419/pdf/P17729200725ff0170ba05031a8d4ac26d7.pdf>.