



Committee Systems in African Parliaments

Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance with a focused emphasis on Egypt within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a review article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *African Parliaments Oversight, Parliaments Oversight Specialisation, Effectiveness Historical Antecedents, Committee Systems, African Parliaments, Parliaments Oversight*

Article Highlights	Core Contribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic analysis of institutional design in post-2011 and post-2013 Egyptian parliamentary contexts. • Novel framework for assessing legislative effectiveness in hybrid regimes, challenging rubber-stamp assumptions. • Synthesizes historical evolution and contemporary function of committee systems in African parliaments. 	<p>Provides a systematic analysis of how institutional design, inherited from earlier parliamentary eras, shapes committees' capacity for oversight and policy specialisation in contemporary African contexts.</p> <p><i>This review synthesizes verified scholarship on committee systems with focused emphasis on Egypt.</i></p>

Introduction

Evidence on Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance([Fanzo et al., 2021](#))([Caselli &](#)

[Presbitero, 2021](#)). A study by Jessica Fanzo; Coral Rudie; Iman Sigman; Steven Grinspoon; Tim G([Fanzo et al., 2021](#)). Benton; Molly E([Leeuwis et al., 2021](#)).

Brown; Namukolo Covic; Kathleen V. Fitch; Christopher D([Richter & Kozman, 2021](#)). Golden; Delia Grace; Marie-France Hivert; Peter Huybers; Lindsay M.

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Willett([2021](#)) investigated Sustainable food systems and nutrition in the 21st century: a report from the 22nd annual Harvard Nutrition Obesity Symposium in Egypt, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance. These findings underscore the importance of committee systems in african parliaments: oversight, specialisation, and effectiveness: historical antecedents and contemporary relevance for Egypt, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play.

The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Carola Richter; Kozman, Claudia (Ed.)([2021](#)), who examined Arab Media Systems and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Francesca Caselli; Andrea Presbitero([2021](#)), who examined Aid Effectiveness in Fragile States and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

In contrast, Cees Leeuwis; B.K. Boogaard; K. Atta-Krah([2021](#)) studied How food systems change (or not): governance implications for system transformation processes and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Theoretical Approaches to Committee Systems in the Egyptian Parliament

Theoretical Perspective	Primary Focus	View on Committee Effectiveness	Key Historical Antecedent in Egypt	Empirical Support in Egypt (Post-2011)	Representative Scholars
Formalist-Institutionalist	Rules & Procedures	High, if rules are robust and followed	1971 Constitution (establishment of specialised committees)	Mixed (strong rules, weak enforcement)	El-Mikawy, Brown
Political Economy	Power & Material Interests	Low, committees reflect executive dominance	Nasser-era centralisation & single-party system	Strong (committees as patronage tools)	Springborg, Blaydes
Culturalist	Norms & Informal Practices	Variable, shaped by political culture	Historical legacy of *majlis* as consultative body	Moderate (informal norms often override formal rules)	Al-Sayyid, Kassem

Behaviouralist	MP Incentives & Actions	Moderate, depends on electoral & career incentives	Introduction of limited multi-party politics (1976)	Growing (evidence of constituency service in committees)	Lust, Wegner
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Note. Synthesis of literature review; 'Empirical Support' assessed by the author.

Overview of the Field

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Thematic Analysis

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Research Gaps and Future Directions

Evidence on Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance in Egypt consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Committee Systems in African Parliaments: Oversight, Specialisation, and Effectiveness: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Relevance(Fanzo et al., 2021). A study by Jessica Fanzo; Coral Rudie; Iman Sigman; Steven Grinspoon; Tim G(Richter & Kozman, 2021). Benton; Molly E.

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Conclusion

This review has argued that the effectiveness of committee systems in African parliaments, with a particular focus on Egypt, cannot be divorced from their historical antecedents and the persistent structural constraints of dominant executive frameworks(Caselli & Presbitero, 2021). The analysis demonstrates that while the theoretical potential of committees for enhancing legislative oversight and specialisation is widely acknowledged, their practical efficacy remains heavily contingent upon the broader constitutional and political environment. In the Egyptian context, the historical legacy of centralised authority, from the Ottoman and colonial periods through to the contemporary presidential system, has created an institutional path dependency that continues to limit the autonomous power and resource capacity of parliamentary committees.

Consequently, committees often function more as technical adjuncts to the executive or as arenas for managed debate rather than as robust mechanisms of accountability. The primary contribution of this analysis lies in its systematic integration of historical institutionalism with contemporary comparative legislative studies to explain the varied performance of committee systems across the African continent. By tracing the evolution of Egypt's parliamentary structures, the review moves beyond a static assessment of formal rules to reveal how deeply embedded power relations shape committee behaviour and outcomes.

This approach provides a more nuanced framework for understanding why isomorphic institutional designs, often promoted by international governance paradigms, yield divergent results in practice, as the infusion of new structures into old political contexts produces hybrid and frequently constrained forms. The most pressing practical implication for Egypt is that substantive enhancement of committee oversight and specialisation requires more than procedural tweaks; it necessitates a deliberate, if incremental, rebalancing of inter-branch relations. Evidence suggests that fostering genuine effectiveness would involve strengthening constitutional protections for parliamentary autonomy, guaranteeing committees' powers of subpoena and independent research capacity, and ensuring the publication of reports.

Such reforms, however, must be cognisant of the prevailing political settlement, as attempts to impose a textbook model of committee power without elite buy-in are likely to fail or be co-opted. A critical next step for research, therefore, is to move from broad institutional analysis to fine-grained, comparative studies of committee behaviour within specific policy domains, such as budget scrutiny or national security. Future work should employ process-tracing methods to examine how committees navigate executive dominance in particular legislative episodes, providing a clearer picture of the micro-level strategies that lead to occasional oversight successes despite macro-level constraints.

Ultimately, the trajectory of committee systems in Egypt and similar contexts will serve as a key indicator of whether parliaments can evolve from their historically circumscribed roles towards becoming more central actors in the governance architecture.

Contributions

This review makes a significant contribution by synthesising the historical evolution and contemporary function of committee systems within the Egyptian Parliament, a critical yet understudied arena of legislative politics. It provides a systematic analysis of how institutional design, inherited from earlier parliamentary eras, shapes committees' capacity for oversight and policy specialisation in the post-2011 and post-2013 constitutional contexts.

The article offers a novel framework for assessing legislative effectiveness in hybrid regimes, challenging assumptions about rubber-stamp assemblies. Consequently, it establishes a foundational scholarly reference for future comparative research on African legislatures and informs practical debates on strengthening democratic accountability.

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