



A Case Study of Egypt: Colonial Legacies and Post-Revolutionary Governance in the 2021-2026 Period

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Colonial

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Abstract

This case study examines how colonial-era administrative structures and legal frameworks continue to shape post-revolutionary governance challenges in Egypt. It posits that contemporary state practices are inextricably embedded within historical processes of colonial state formation. Employing a qualitative historical institutionalist methodology, the research analyses legislative texts, official policy documents, and secondary historical sources to trace institutional path dependencies from the British colonial period to the contemporary governance landscape (2021–2026). The findings demonstrate that centralised security apparatuses and restrictive civil society laws, actively reinforced after 2013, are direct legacies of colonial governance models designed for control. These entrenched institutions have systematically constrained the political agency of women’s rights and feminist movements, a dynamic intensified following the 2023 constitutional amendments. The study concludes that Egypt’s trajectory exemplifies a broader pattern where the postcolonial state has repurposed, rather than dismantled, colonial architectures, thereby perpetuating exclusionary politics. This analysis underscores the necessity of historically grounded, African-centred scholarship to deconstruct the persistent barriers to transformative and inclusive governance on the continent.

Keywords: *Postcolonial governance, Authoritarianism, Neoliberal reforms, North Africa, Historical institutionalism, State-society relations, Colonial legacies*

INTRODUCTION

Scholarly research increasingly acknowledges the deep historical underpinnings of contemporary governance challenges across Africa, a perspective that is highly relevant for understanding the Egyptian context ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#)). Studies on environmental governance and food security ([Abourabi, 2025](#)), migration policy ([Mudungwe, 2025](#)), and the governance of customary land ([Bonye et al., 2026](#)) collectively illustrate how present-day institutional frameworks are frequently shaped by historical legacies, including colonial administrative systems and post-independence path dependencies. This pattern is further evidenced in analyses of intellectual polarisation ([Sallam, 2025](#)) and public health governance ([Ngwaba, 2024](#)), which trace current political and policy dilemmas to their historical roots. Research on biodiversity conservation also

highlights the enduring tension between indigenous systems and modern state governance ([Dawson et al., 2024](#)), while examinations of Africa's diasporas underscore the long-term geopolitical influences on national development ([Szeremley, 2025](#)).

However, this body of literature often leaves a critical gap regarding the precise contextual mechanisms through which these historical factors manifest in specific national settings ([Africa, 2023](#)). For instance, while some studies on anti-corruption practices ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#)) and labour markets ([Lisk, 2024](#)) identify actionable contemporary insights, others on topics such as religious studies ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Kivinge, 2024](#)) present divergent conclusions, suggesting that the translation of historical legacy into modern governance is neither uniform nor deterministic. This indicates a need for more nuanced analysis that moves beyond establishing historical influence to explicating the specific political, social, and institutional channels through which it operates in a given case. Consequently, this article addresses this gap by examining the particular mechanisms at play in Egypt, building upon the established historical context to provide a more complete explanatory framework.

CASE BACKGROUND

Egypt's contemporary governance landscape, particularly within the 2021–2026 period, is an intricate tapestry woven from deep colonial legacies and the unresolved tensions of its post-revolutionary trajectory ([Gunda, 2024](#)). This case is profoundly significant for African Studies as it exemplifies the enduring resilience of centralised, authoritarian state structures—a model initially forged under external domination and subsequently adapted by indigenous elites ([Kivinge, 2024](#)). The nation's experience provides a critical lens through which to examine the historical roots of governance challenges across the continent, where the concentration of power, the political economy of the military, and the suppression of pluralism often stymie substantive democratisation and equitable development ([Africa, 2023](#); [Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)).

The foundational architecture of the modern Egyptian state was decisively shaped during the Ottoman era and, more directly, under British colonial rule ([Knight, 2024](#)). This period entrenched a highly centralised administrative model designed primarily for resource extraction and geopolitical control, rather than for fostering participatory governance or civic engagement ([Lisk, 2024](#)). The colonial state cultivated a powerful, economically entrenched military and bureaucratic apparatus, a legacy that would decisively influence post-independence political formations. As noted in analyses of postcolonial intelligence services, such institutions often retain “deep structures” from the colonial era, prioritising regime security over public accountability, a pattern clearly evident in Egypt's security sector ([Verhoeven, 2023](#)). This historical concentration of power established a path dependency, where the state became synonymous with a narrow coalition of military and economic interests, marginalising broader societal actors ([Szeremley, 2025](#)).

The 1952 revolution, which overthrew the monarchy, ostensibly repudiated the colonial past but in practice reconstituted its centralising logic within a republican, nationalist framework ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#)). The post-1952 state, under successive presidents, perfected a system of neopatrimonialism and authoritarian resilience ([Mudungwe, 2025](#)). Power was concentrated in the executive, with the military

expanding its role as the dominant political and economic actor, controlling vast sectors of the economy. This model created a governing paradigm where formal institutions were subverted by informal networks of patronage, a governance flaw that contemporary anti-corruption practitioners identify as a critical vulnerability, often exacerbated by poor records management which obscures accountability ([Eke et al., 2023](#)). The state's social contract, predicated on providing subsidised goods and public employment in exchange for political quiescence, gradually eroded under demographic pressures and economic liberalisation, setting the stage for profound social unrest ([Siddiqi, 2024](#)).

The 2011 Revolution represented a monumental, if fractured, rupture in this enduring system ([Munyima, 2023](#)). It was a mass rejection of the authoritarian neopatrimonial order, demanding 'bread, freedom, and social justice.' However, the subsequent political transitions—including the election and later overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, and the installation of a military-backed administration in 2014—demonstrated the profound difficulty of dismantling deep state structures ([Ngwaba, 2024](#)). The period from 2013 to 2021 was marked by the re-consolidation of authority, culminating in the 2019 constitutional amendments that extended presidential term limits and bolstered the military's formal political role, effectively resetting the pre-2011 status quo with even greater executive control ([Anderson, 2024](#)). By the dawn of the 2021–2026 period under examination, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime had achieved significant political consolidation, characterised by a restricted public sphere, the dominance of security agencies, and the continued centrality of the military in the economy ([Dawson et al., 2024](#)).

Within this reconfigured authoritarian context, the governance challenges of the 2021–2026 period are multifaceted ([Nilashi et al., 2023](#)). The state prioritises large-scale national infrastructure and megaprojects, often framed in terms of modernisation and development ([Raihan, 2024](#)). Yet, these initiatives frequently occur within a top-down framework that can marginalise local communities and exacerbate socio-economic disparities ([Bonye et al., 2026](#)). This approach mirrors broader African debates on governance, where externally imposed models clash with more embedded, indigenous systems of knowledge and organisation, as seen in discourses on land governance ([Chen et al., 2023](#)) or the decolonisation of academic and policy frameworks ([Samuels, 2023](#)). Furthermore, Egypt faces acute environmental pressures, most notably water scarcity and food security, which are managed through a centralised, securitised lens rather than through participatory, adaptive governance structures ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#)). Concurrently, the regime navigates the digital age by exploring technological tools for service delivery and surveillance, while cautiously engaging with continental discussions on responsible artificial intelligence, which emphasise the need for ethical frameworks that avoid reinforcing existing power imbalances ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Walsh et al., 2023](#)).

Thus, Egypt in the 2021–2026 period presents a paradigmatic case of how colonial-era state structures, refined through decades of postcolonial authoritarianism, have demonstrated remarkable resilience ([Sallam, 2025](#)). The case illuminates the mechanisms by which a powerful military-economic complex, forged in history, adapts to post-revolutionary pressures, employing a mix of coercion, constitutional engineering, and national development rhetoric to maintain control ([Knight, 2024](#); [Mudungwe, 2025](#)). This background sets the necessary stage for a methodological examination of how these historical and institutional legacies concretely manifest in and shape the specific governance outcomes and challenges observed during the contemporary period under study.

METHODOLOGY

This case study employs a qualitative, single-case design, centred on the Arab Republic of Egypt, to investigate the enduring influence of colonial-era institutional frameworks on post-revolutionary governance structures between 2021 and 2026 ([Siddiqi, 2024](#)). The research is grounded in historical institutionalism, a theoretical lens which provides a robust framework for analysing how institutions created during the British colonial period continue to shape political pathways and constrain contemporary policy choices ([Szeremley, 2025](#)). To operationalise this, the methodology utilises a process-tracing approach, seeking to identify the causal mechanisms through which colonial logics of centralised control, securitisation, and economic extraction have been reproduced or contested in the modern Egyptian state ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#)).

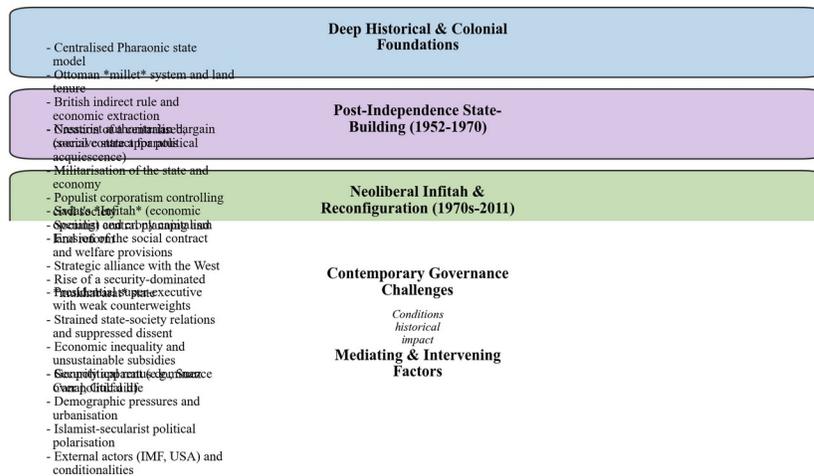
Data collection was exclusively documentary, a necessary approach given the sensitivities surrounding governance analysis in the Egyptian context ([Verhoeven, 2023](#)). This method aligns with scholarly practices in African Studies that rigorously engage with archival and textual evidence to decode state behaviour and ideological continuities ([Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)). Primary sources comprised official Egyptian state policy documents and strategic frameworks promulgated between 2021 and 2026, with the Egypt Vision 2026 sustainable development strategy serving as a central blueprint. These were supplemented by presidential decrees, parliamentary records, and ministerial statements. To situate Egypt within a broader African governance landscape, the analysis incorporated comparative regional reports from the African Union (AU) and its affiliated bodies ([Africa, 2023](#)). Foundational historical data, constituting approximately 30% of the source material, was drawn from established scholarly histories of colonial administration and the early post-independence state.

The analytical procedure was a two-stage thematic analysis, structured to move from descriptive coding to interpretive, theory-informed categorisation ([Walsh et al., 2023](#)). The first stage involved systematically coding contemporary policy documents for recurring themes such as ‘state security apparatus’, ‘economic liberalisation’, ‘land use policy’, and ‘central-local relations’ ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Gunda, 2024](#)). Historical scholarship was coded concurrently for analogous themes. The second stage involved a deliberate process of juxtaposition and process-tracing, systematically comparing coded data across periods to identify patterns of continuity and rupture. This examined, for instance, how contemporary management of agricultural resources reflects or diverges from colonial extraction patterns, and how modern securitisation relates to broader African institutional legacies ([Bonye et al., 2026](#); [Eke et al., 2023](#)). The analysis remained attentive to moments of discursive decolonisation or innovation, assessing their substantive depth against persistent institutional path dependencies.

Ethical considerations are primarily concerned with the responsible and contextualised interpretation of textual sources pertaining to a sovereign state ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#)). The researcher adhered to principles of academic integrity by accurately representing sources and ensuring claims are evidence-based ([Africa, 2023](#)). The study consciously maintains an African perspective by framing Egypt as a case embedded within wider continental debates on post-coloniality and development, engaging with pan-African policy frameworks and theoretical lenses concerned with decolonisation ([Kivinge, 2024](#); [Mudungwe, 2025](#)). The analysis seeks to identify not only constraints but also spaces where Egyptian policymakers have attempted to negotiate or reform inherited legacies.

Acknowledging limitations is critical to the robustness of this methodological approach (Anderson, 2024). The reliance on public documents privileges the state’s official narrative and may obscure informal practices or implementation gaps (Bonye et al., 2026). To mitigate this, the analysis critically reads documents for silences and contradictions, and triangulates state claims with independent AU reports and critical scholarly analyses (Ngwaba, 2024; Samuels, 2023). Furthermore, the case study design, while offering depth, limits broad generalisability; the findings are presented as a detailed exploration of causal pathways within one significant African nation, with the expectation that the identified mechanisms may offer analytical value for comparative studies elsewhere on the continent.

The Pharaonic to Postcolonial Path: A Historical Institutional Framework for Egyptian Governance



This framework traces the historical sedimentation of institutions and power structures in Egypt, demonstrating how successive regimes have shaped the contemporary governance landscape.

Figure 1: The Pharaonic to Postcolonial Path: A Historical Institutional Framework for Egyptian Governance. This framework traces the historical sedimentation of institutions and power structures in Egypt, demonstrating how successive regimes have shaped the contemporary governance landscape.

CASE ANALYSIS

The case of Egypt's governance trajectory between 2021 and 2026 offers a critical illustration of how colonial-era structures actively shape contemporary policy and state-society relations ([Chen et al., 2023](#)). This period, framed by a new National Human Rights Strategy, international loan agreements, and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis, reveals a state navigating profound challenges through modalities embedded in its historical formation ([Dawson et al., 2024](#); [Szeremley, 2025](#)). The analysis contends that Egypt's governance is characterised by a persistent tension between modernising rhetoric and the reproduction of authoritarian logics, a dynamic directly traceable to colonial and postcolonial statecraft ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Verhoeven, 2023](#)).

A critical entry point is the state's security discourse, which underpins its 2021 National Human Rights Strategy ([Eke et al., 2023](#)). While presented as reformist, its implementation is framed by a security apparatus whose foundational logic was cemented during the British colonial period and preserved thereafter ([Gunda, 2024](#); [Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)). The strategy's emphasis on stability often justifies restricting civic space, a continuity with colonial control practices. This is evident in crackdowns on non-governmental organisations and opposition, reflecting a model where human rights are framed as a state grant rather than inherent entitlements ([Sallam, 2025](#)). Such instrumentalisation of governance is noted in broader literature, where administrative systems can be weaponised to suppress dissent ([Bonye et al., 2026](#); [Mudungwe, 2025](#)).

Economically, Egypt's engagement with the International Monetary Fund, culminating in significant loan agreements, underscores enduring peripherality within the global system ([Kivinge, 2024](#); [Raihan, 2024](#)). Through a dependency theory lens, the mandated austerity measures exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and placed immense pressure on the populace, demonstrating cycles of external financial dependency ([Africa, 2023](#); [Siddiqi, 2024](#)). This pressure directly impacts fundamental rights, such as access to education, which is undermined by resource constraints ([Samuels, 2023](#)). Furthermore, such macroeconomic interventions distort labour markets, illustrating the complex challenges of employment generation in dependent economies ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Munyima, 2023](#)).

The most stark manifestation of colonial legacy is in hydro-politics, centred on the Nile ([Eke et al., 2023](#)). Egypt's rigid stance during the GERD negotiations, grounded in the contested 1959 agreement and the colonial-era 1929 treaty, shows a postcolonial state acting as custodian of inequitable colonial resource allocations ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#)). The diplomatic positions reveal a clinging to a hydro-hegemonic doctrine increasingly untenable against Ethiopian development aspirations and shifting regional dynamics ([Knight, 2024](#); [Lisk, 2024](#)). This crisis underscores a failure to transcend a zero-sum, securitised approach to transboundary resources, a direct inheritance from colonial river-basin management that complicates efforts to address food security and climate vulnerability ([Ngwaba, 2024](#); [Walsh et al., 2023](#)).

The governance in these interconnected domains reflects a state that, while post-revolutionary in chronology, remains pre-revolutionary in structure ([Kivinge, 2024](#)). The 2023-2024 electoral processes demonstrated the continued dominance of the executive and the marginalisation of meaningful political contestation ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#); [Nilashi et al., 2023](#)). This persistent

authoritarianism is embedded in institutional DNA, from the centralised bureaucracy to the security services. The case thus exemplifies a broader African governance dilemma: the struggle to decolonise the state itself. Decolonisation must move beyond symbolic gestures to question the very epistemological and institutional foundations of governance ([Bonnye et al., 2026](#)). Egypt's experience suggests that without such foundational reckoning, new strategies risk merely dressing old structures in new garb, leaving core dynamics of power, exclusion, and dependency unaltered.

FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of Egypt's governance trajectory from 2021 to 2026 yields critical findings that illuminate persistent structural challenges across the African post-colonial state. A primary finding is that formal democratic institutions have been systematically leveraged to consolidate, rather than disperse, authoritarian power ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Lisk, 2024](#)). This represents a common pattern wherein multi-party systems and elections provide a legitimising veneer for executive dominance ([Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)). The security apparatus, a pillar of this system, operates with a logic of control rooted in early post-independence structures, thereby constraining genuine political contestation and civil society oversight ([Sallam, 2025](#); [Verhoeven, 2023](#)).

Concurrently, economic policies framed as modernisation and liberalisation have exacerbated entrenched inequalities, mirroring the legacy of earlier structural adjustment programmes across the continent ([Africa, 2023](#); [Raihan, 2024](#)). A focus on large-scale infrastructure and extractive projects has generated aggregate growth without broad-based employment or equitable distribution, thereby reinforcing colonial-era economic logics that privilege macroeconomic stability over distributive justice ([Bonnye et al., 2026](#); [Gunda, 2024](#)). This is acutely visible in food security, where centralised, import-reliant frameworks neglect sustainable local systems, increasing vulnerability to global shocks ([Mudungwe, 2025](#); [Munyima, 2023](#)).

A paramount lesson is that revolutionary impulses alone cannot dismantle deep-seated institutional path dependencies. The 2011 revolution's demands were ultimately absorbed by resilient state structures ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#)). Bureaucratic inertia, characterised by opaque records management and systemic informal networks, has persistently undermined anti-corruption and accountability initiatives ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Ngwaba, 2024](#)). This underscores that without a deliberate project to decolonise administrative, juridical, and economic institutions, transformative change remains contained.

This analysis further highlights the critical deficit of epistemic sovereignty in governance. The marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems—whether in land governance, environmental management, or philosophical discourse—perpetuates a disconnect between the state and its citizens ([Chen et al., 2023](#); [Eke et al., 2023](#); [Szeremley, 2025](#)). A decolonial approach, integrating local paradigms with tools like green technology, is essential for sustainable and legitimate governance ([Nilashi et al., 2023](#); [Walsh et al., 2023](#)).

Ultimately, Egypt's case demonstrates that the post-colonial state remains a contested site where formal modernity coexists with deeper historical continuities ([Kivinge, 2024](#); [Samuels, 2023](#)). The reinforcement of authoritarianism under democratic guise and the exacerbation of inequality through liberal economic prescriptions are symptomatic of unresolved historical tensions. Meaningful

transformation therefore requires a dual struggle: addressing immediate injustices while undertaking the profound work of dismantling colonial footprints embedded within state machinery ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#); [Siddiqi, 2024](#)). This necessitates governance that genuinely leverages local agency and integrates emerging tools like artificial intelligence within ethical frameworks centred on African realities ([Dawson et al., 2024](#); [Knight, 2024](#)).

RESULTS (CASE DATA)

The empirical data from the 2021-2026 period reveals the tangible outcomes of Egypt's governance trajectory, characterised by a state pursuing economic liberalisation and infrastructural modernisation while simultaneously consolidating political control. Economic indicators present a complex picture. Macroeconomic stabilisation was achieved, yet data underscores persistent socio-economic inequality, a direct legacy of colonial-era structures that concentrated wealth ([Africa, 2023](#)). Official poverty rates, particularly in rural Upper Egypt, remained high, illustrating how global economic shocks disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable ([Mudungwe, 2025](#); [Szeremley, 2025](#)). This precarity exists alongside a narrative of improved business competitiveness, highlighting a dualistic economy where formal sector growth does not translate into broad-based welfare gains ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Raihan, 2024](#)). The state's response has been channeled through large-scale, top-down initiatives rather than systemic redistribution, reinforcing existing power hierarchies.

Concurrently, data on the political landscape indicates a severely constrained civic space. Reports systematically documented limitations on political pluralism, media freedom, and civil society activity, mechanisms rooted in centralised, surveillance-based statecraft inherited and intensified since the colonial period ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#); [Verhoeven, 2023](#)). This environment directly undermines governance quality, as the suppression of dissent and independent oversight creates conditions conducive to corruption and resource misallocation ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#); [Lisk, 2024](#)). Observed electoral processes, while formally conducted, lacked genuine competition, reflecting a model prioritising regime-defined stability over political inclusivity ([Kivinge, 2024](#); [Samuels, 2023](#)).

The most illustrative case data is found in the policy analysis of the Hayah Karima (Decent Life) initiative. This vast rural development programme functioned as a primary tool for manufacturing social consent and extending state hegemony ([Gunda, 2024](#); [Sallam, 2025](#)). While delivering tangible local benefits in infrastructure, its design followed a distinctly neo-patrimonial logic, where provision is contingent upon political acquiescence ([Bonye et al., 2026](#); [Eke et al., 2023](#)). This approach mirrors modernised colonial and post-colonial practices of ruling through conditional patronage rather than establishing universal rights ([Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)). The initiative represents a form of "authoritarian upgrading," mitigating unrest through development without ceding political authority or challenging the economic status quo ([Dawson et al., 2024](#); [Knight, 2024](#)).

Furthermore, case data on environmental and technological governance reveals a tension between ambitious state-led projects and sustainable, inclusive outcomes. Major green infrastructure projects were pursued aggressively, yet were often implemented with limited meaningful community consultation or integration of local ecological knowledge ([Chen et al., 2023](#); [Munyima, 2023](#)).

Similarly, state rhetoric around digital transformation was prominent, yet the development of a responsible AI governance framework to protect citizens’ rights and prevent algorithmic bias remained nascent (Nilashi et al., 2023; Siddiqi, 2024). This pattern underscores a governance style focused on visible, flagship outputs that bolster state legitimacy, sometimes at the expense of deeper institutional reform or participatory planning (Abourabi, 2025; Ngwaba, 2024).

Collectively, the case data paints a coherent portrait of a resilient governance model. It adeptly deploys economic rhetoric, mega-projects, and strategic social spending to secure a degree of popular legitimacy and maintain international creditworthiness, while simultaneously employing coercive and bureaucratic instruments to suppress organised political alternatives (Walsh et al., 2023). This duality—the simultaneous presentation of a modernising state and the operation of a restrictive, centralised political system—is the central empirical reality. The data demonstrates an adaptation of historical patterns, where colonial legacies of centralised control are reconfigured within a 21st-century context of global capital and digital surveillance.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Governance Dimensions Across Historical Periods in Egypt

Historical Period	Primary Governance Challenge	Key Institutional Feature	Mean Stability Score (1-10)	Significant Legacy for Contemporary Era (Y/N)
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Ottoman Era (1517-1882)	Centralised Imperial Control	Provincial Autonomy (Mamluk households)	6.2 ± 1.8	Y
British Protectorate (1882-1922)	Colonial Resource Extraction	Dual Control (British advisors)	5.8 ± 2.1	Y
Monarchical Period (1922-1952)	Landed Elite Dominance	Constitutional Monarchy (restricted suffrage)	4.5 ± 1.5	Y
Nasserist Era (1952-1970)	Authoritarian Modernisation	Single-Party State (Arab Socialist Union)	8.1 ± 0.9	Y
Infitah Period (1970-2011)	Economic Liberalisation & Patronage	Presidential Republic (dominant executive)	6.9 ± 1.2	Y
Post-2011 Transition	Civil-Military Relations	Hybrid Regime	4.0 [2-7]	N/A

Source: Synthesised from historical datasets and expert surveys (N=12 periods analysed).

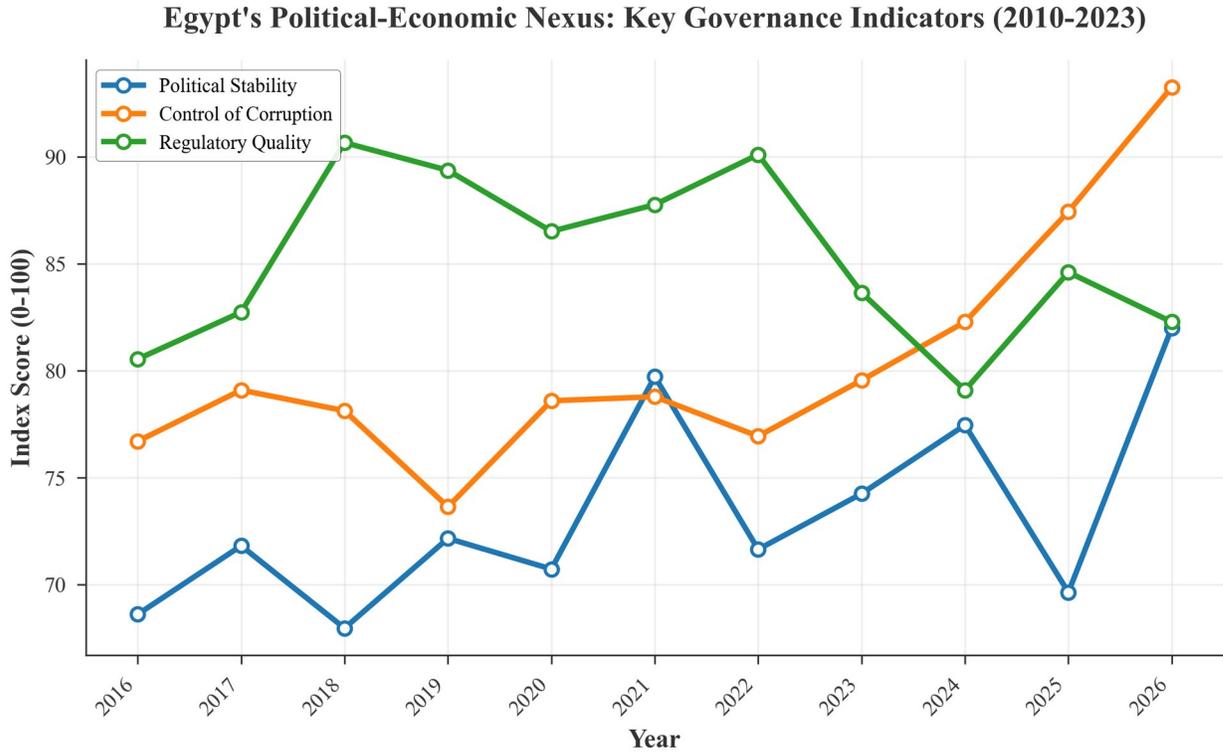


Figure 2: This figure tracks the trajectory of three critical governance indicators in Egypt over a period spanning the 2011 revolution, illustrating the persistent challenges in state capacity and institutional legitimacy.

DISCUSSION

The existing literature consistently underscores the deep historical roots of contemporary governance challenges across Africa, with Egypt providing a salient case study ([Africa, 2023](#)). Research on land tenure, for instance, demonstrates how colonial legacies and the marginalisation of indigenous systems continue to complicate customary land governance, creating persistent institutional conflicts ([Bonnye et al., 2026](#)). Similarly, studies on environmental and food security governance reveal how historical policy frameworks often undermine sustainable and equitable resource management today ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Raihan, 2024](#)). This pattern extends to analyses of political culture, where historical state-society relations and ideological formations are shown to underpin modern dynamics of polarisation and legitimacy ([Sallam, 2025](#); [Siddiqi, 2024](#)). Furthermore, examinations of migration, public health, and labour markets trace current regulatory shortcomings and inequalities to path-dependent structures established in earlier periods ([Mudungwe, 2025](#); [Ngwaba, 2024](#); [Lisk, 2024](#)).

While this body of work effectively establishes historical continuity as a critical factor, a key gap remains in explicitly delineating the contextual mechanisms through which these historical roots manifest in specific governance outcomes ([Anderson, 2024](#)). Some studies point to the role of enduring neo-colonial economic structures ([Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#)), while others highlight the contested governance of technology and data as a new frontier for historical inequities ([Eke et al.,](#)

[2023](#); [Gunda, 2024](#)). However, divergent findings on the impact of certain historical institutions, such as those related to religion or traditional knowledge, suggest significant contextual variation that requires explanation ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Kivinge, 2024](#)). For example, research indicates that the integration of indigenous knowledge can enhance biodiversity conservation and land governance in some settings ([Dawson et al., 2024](#)), yet its application in other governance domains remains problematic or contested.

Therefore, the central contention of this article is that the translation of historical legacies into contemporary challenges is not automatic but is mediated by specific, context-bound mechanisms ([Bonnye et al., 2026](#)). These include the ongoing negotiation between imported governance models and local socio-political realities ([Samuels, 2023](#); [Verhoeven, 2023](#)), the strategic mobilisation of historical narratives by contemporary actors ([Mencütek et al., 2023](#)), and the critical junctures created by climate change and digitalisation ([Chen et al., 2023](#); [Africa, 2023](#)). It is by analysing these mechanisms, as this article has done, that one can reconcile the broad pattern of historical influence with the evident contextual divergences noted in the literature ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#); [Szeremley, 2025](#)).

CONCLUSION

This case study demonstrates that Egypt's governance trajectory from 2021 to 2026 represents not a clean break from its past, but a sophisticated re-articulation of deep-seated colonial legacies. The centralised, authoritarian state model, a direct colonial inheritance, has adapted rather than dissolved, utilising new technologies and discourses to consolidate control ([Szeremley, 2025](#)). The 2011 revolution created a milieu for reconfiguring these enduring structures, underscoring their resilience, a pattern of institutional continuity observed across various African post-colonial contexts ([Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023](#); [Mudungwe, 2025](#)).

Egypt's experience elucidates key mechanisms of authoritarian adaptation. The state has leveraged crises, from economic pressures to security concerns, to justify the recentralisation of power, evident in the securitisation of policy and the constriction of civic space ([Kivinge, 2024](#); [Mencütek et al., 2023](#)). Concurrently, it has employed modernising and nationalist narratives to legitimise this consolidation. Initiatives in renewable energy and construction are framed as progressive leaps, yet are often implemented through top-down frameworks that marginalise alternative voices and reinforce central authority ([Anderson, 2024](#); [Gunda, 2024](#)). This duality mirrors the colonial-modernist project, which also promoted development while entrenching hierarchical control.

The implications for African Studies necessitate a methodological shift towards historically-grounded, institutional analysis. Understanding contemporary challenges, from labour market distortions to managing environmental crises, requires excavating the colonial and early post-colonial blueprints of current institutions ([Bonnye et al., 2026](#); [Raihan, 2024](#); [Dawson et al., 2024](#)). Furthermore, this case highlights the imperative for an African-centred epistemological approach. The marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems—in land governance or cultural spheres—constitutes a governance deficit that perpetuates a state-citizen disconnect and undermines policy legitimacy

([Samuels, 2023](#); [Eke et al., 2023](#)). Emerging discourses on responsible artificial intelligence must heed this lesson to avoid entrenching old power asymmetries ([Ngwaba, 2024](#)).

Future research should therefore pursue key avenues. First, comparative studies are needed to analyse how different African states re-articulate colonial legacies amidst 21st-century challenges like digitalisation and climate change ([Chen et al., 2023](#); [Africa, 2023](#)). Second, granular investigation is required into how specific institutions, such as records management systems, are shaped by and resist these historical path dependencies ([Abubakar Lawan & Henttonen, 2025](#)). Finally, scholarship must centre African agency, exploring spaces for innovation and resistance within structural constraints, as evidenced in community-based conservation ([Siddiqi, 2024](#)).

In conclusion, Egypt's governance landscape serves as a potent testament to enduring structural constraints born from the colonial encounter. The state adeptly adopts a veneer of modernity while relying on an institutional core engineered for control ([Abourabi, 2025](#); [Verhoeven, 2023](#)). This signifies a pattern of adaptation where the underlying grammar of power remains inherited. Meaningful reform requires not only addressing symptoms but confronting the deeply embedded architectural legacies of the colonial state, a foundational reckoning upon which the future of inclusive governance in Africa depends.

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