

Don't forget Law and Politics!

What can Arab Public Administration Scholars learn from the Fluidity of the Field in the US Experience?⁽¹⁾

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This article looks at why Arab public administration scholarship has lagged behind the needs of political and administrative reform and situating public administration within the context of political governance. This article draws insights from the development of the field in the US experience, its fuzzy boundaries, and value conflicts resulting from the three tributaries that have fed into its structure and content, namely law, business administration, and political science. The study concludes with a discussion of how different origins and political context have meant public administration research in the Arab world is disconnected from the ontological and methodological diversity that contribute to the richness of the field in the US experience.

Public Administration

Arab World Bureaucracy

Law

U.S. Public Administration

The Arab world is going through turbulent times. What appeared to be pro-democracy popular uprisings in late 2010 ended up with civil wars, unrest, and stalled transitions. The field of public administration could provide valuable contributions to the process of peaceful and democratic transition, building independent and representative civil service, and guaranteeing citizenship rights.

However, public administration scholarship from the region failed to address the needs of transition, and presenting insights into the values' conflicts that generally accompany such periods. Therefore, a UNDP report noted that, although the failure of policy reform was an important factor behind the so-called "Arab Awakening", studies and technical support provided to Arab countries in transition remain focused on building electoral institutions,

writing constitutions, settling conflicts, and reforming security sectors⁽⁴⁾. On the other hand, the public administration and policy dimensions remain precariously missing⁽⁵⁾.

This article sheds light on the reasons behind the lag of Arab public administration scholarship behind the needs of coping with the questions of political and administrative reform, and situating public administration within the context of political governance. This article draws insights from the development of the field in the US experience, its fuzzy boundaries, and value conflicts. We conclude with a discussion of how different origins and political context detached public administration research in the Arab world from the ontological and methodological diversity that contribute to the richness of the field in the US experience.

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⁴ UNDP, *Defining the Challenge, Making the Change: A Study of Public Administration Reform in Arab Transitions*, (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

⁵ M.A. Abdel-Moneim, *A Political Economy of Arab Education: Policies and Comparative Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

We argue that two main factors can help us understand this situation where public administration research is detached from the political developments in the region. First, the origins of public administration research in the Arab world in the managerial sciences created a focus on the values of efficiency, while the multiple foundational streams for the field in the US experience created fuzzy boundaries that encouraged contestation over values, methods, and ontology.

Second, the rather autocratic political context in the region, characterized by a convergence of power within the executive branch, created a view of the bureaucracy as an elitist arm of the executive used to maintain social control. As such, the politics-administration relationship found more attention in the field of political science. Questions relevant to public administration and politics did not acquire enough attention. These questions include issues related to accountability, governance, political control, bureaucratic representation, and bureaucratic values.

Definitions

Public administration is generally thought of as "the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized."⁶ Sometimes it is considered a design science of means, analogous to engineering or medicine. At the same time, however, others contend that it is inherently political in the sense of participating in the formulation and implementation of public policies. They reject the notion that public administration serves as a "transmission belt" for mechanistically transforming policy inputs into outputs and outcomes. Perhaps foremost in the rejection of the transmission belt model is research on "street-level" administration by police, teachers, social workers, and inspectors. It is now widely recognized that street-level administrators make public policy through their collective enforcement decisions. The same is true of other public administrators, though it may be less visible.

Another point of diversion relates to precisely where public administration fits as an academic subject. Whereas many contributors to the field view public administration as a social science, others consider it an art, craft, and philosophical endeavor. This disparity

For the sake of clarity, we begin with standard definitions of public administration. We then move to a review of its main underlying feature, which is that it is inherently normative and lacks consensus regarding what its dominant values should be or how they should be conceptualized and ranked in terms of importance. Next, we review the main influences on the field and its development in the Arab world. In this review, we focus on both the theoretical foundations and political context. We end with a brief conclusion noting that, although public administration's intellectual crisis cannot be resolved, it offers a dynamic degree of fluidity enabling public administration continually to adjust to changing conditions, ideologies, and the ordering of value preferences. In order to be better able to contribute to a coherent understanding of governance, politics, and values in the public sphere, Arab public Administration scholarship needs to address these terrains.

leads to a divergence over methodology. Those in the social science camp assert that quantitative methodologies, especially regression analysis, best serve progress in developing public administrative knowledge; those viewing public administration as art, craft, and philosophy argue that qualitative methods, such as case studies and historical institutional and interpretive research are most suitable to building knowledge in the field. These positions have largely fractured what had previously been a relatively unified field into two distinctive approaches, public management and public administration. Public management is a narrower approach focusing on cost-effective achievement of agencies' core mission objectives. Public administration continues to focus on that but also considers public administration's roles in nation building, governance, and promotion of broad political values including transparency, representation, participation, and human rights.

To the extent that academic public administration has a dominant framework, it consists of the three overarching competing perspectives of management, politics both in the sense of policy and the arrangement

6 John J. Corson and Joseph P. Harris, *Public Administration in Modern Society*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963).

and distribution of political power, and law. Within this framework, public administration is comprised primarily of the academic disciplines of management, political science (including public policy studies), and law. However, it also draws substantially on economics, history, communications, sociology, and other social sciences. Its major contribution as a field of study is to integrate knowledge from these disciplines by building theories and identifying techniques for effective government action. As noted, though, "effective" is subject to multiple values and definitions.

Because the range of public administrative action is extensive, reaching into almost every province

of human concern, public administration is sometimes considered coterminous with civilization. Consequently, it incorporates normative and cultural dimensions including the study of public values and comparative government. In the 1930s, "efficiency" was considered "axiom number one in the value scale of public administration." While efficiency remains central and is frequently the default value when we lack a consensus on how public administration should operate, today it competes with a host of political and governmental values. Consequently, the boundaries of public administration as a field of study and practice are very broad, unfixed, "fuzzy," and overlapping with multiple other disciplines.

Public Administration's Normative Problem

In 1947, the famous American political scientist Robert Dahl challenged the notion that public administration could be a science. He argued that public administration is inherently normative, culture bound to an unknown extent, and difficult to study scientifically because it is based on human behavior. Here, we are concerned with the first of these challenges, that public administration has embedded normative dimensions at its core. Dahl contended that "[t]he first difficulty of constructing a science of public administration stems from the frequent impossibility of excluding normative considerations from the problems of public administration." He supported this observation by noting that "The doctrine of efficiency... runs like a half-visible thread through the fabric of public administration literature as a dominant goal of administration".⁽⁷⁾ This was exemplified by Luther Gulick's claim that; "In the science of administration, whether public or private, the basic 'good' is efficiency".⁽⁸⁾

Dahl offered no remedy for freeing public administration of its embedded normative values and none has been found, though not for want of effort

by those who define the field as the social science of public management. As recently as 2015, Richard Stillman, another major contributor to the field, calls on us to "notice the glaring, often unarticulated, normative questions" in the work of some of today's leading public administration and public management scholars. Echoing Dahl, he claims, "No matter what new categories, language, or methodologies spring forth, none escape the nagging BIG value dilemmas inherent within" many contemporary areas of public administrative inquiry.⁽⁹⁾ In short, Dahl's contention "that the study of public administration must be founded on some clarification of ends" remains pertinent.⁽¹⁰⁾

The normative problem deepens when one considers focusing the study and practice of public administration on efficiency. In 1948, Dwight Waldo, perhaps the major public administrative thinker of the second half of the twentieth century, asked "efficient for what? Is not efficiency for efficiency's sake meaningless?"⁽¹¹⁾ Similarly, Marshall Dimock, also a twentieth century leader, noted "we do not want efficiency for its own sake"⁽¹²⁾. We may want

7 R.A. Dahl, "The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems", *Public Administration Review*, 7(1), 1947, 1-11. doi:10.2307/972349

8 L. Gulick, "Science, Values, and Public Administration", in: L. Gulick & L. Urwick (Eds.), *Papers on the Science of Administration* (New York: Institute of Public Administration, 1937), pp. 191-195.

9 R. Stillman, "Foreword", in: M. E. Guy & M. M. Rubin (Eds.), *Public Administration Evolving: From Foundations to the Future* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015).

10 Dahl, *ibid.*

11 D. Waldo, *The Administrative State: A Study of the Political Theory of American Public Administration*, (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1948).

12 M.E. Dimock, "The Study of Administration", *The American Political Science Review*, 31(1), 1937 28-40. doi:10.2307/1948041

public administrators to be efficient in everything that they do. Yet, we also must recognize that there are huge tradeoffs between efficiency and the pursuit of other values. For example, in Western legal systems, procedural due process is notoriously inefficient. It involves adversary hearings or trials presided over by neutral hearing examiners and judges, delay, expense, and often convoluted rules of evidence that seemingly defy commonsense. Similarly, freedom of information requirements in the U.S. and elsewhere divert resources from agencies pursuits of their missions and involve appeals and litigation. “Representative bureaucracy,” which values administrative recruitment and selection procedures that generate civil services which demographically look like the societies they serve and regulate, can conflict with merit systems devoted to bringing the most talented—read “efficient”—personnel into public bureaucratic positions. On a simpler level, efficiency can also conflict with its “sibling” value of economy, depending on the scale of activity. A pen can be less efficient though more economical than a word processing if one only writes a couple of letters a year.

Such tradeoffs present an insolvable problem because the spectrum of public values is very extensive. Jørgensen and Bozeman compiled an inventory of public values based on 230 public administration/public management studies. They identified 72 values and placed them into seven categories as follows:⁽¹³⁾

Public sector's contribution to society: common good, public interest, social cohesion, altruism, human dignity, sustainability, voice of the future, regime dignity, regime stability.

Transformation of interests to decisions: majority rule, democracy, will of the people, collective choice, user democracy, local governance, citizen involvement, protection of minorities, protection of individual rights

Administrators and politicians: political loyalty, accountability, responsiveness.

Relationship between administrators and environment: openness-secrecy, responsiveness, listening to

public opinion, compromise, balancing of interests, competitiveness-cooperativeness, stakeholder or shareholder value.

Interorganizational aspects: robustness, adaptability, stability, reliability, timeliness, innovation, enthusiasm, risk readiness, productivity, effectiveness, parsimony, businesslike approach.

Behavior of public employees: accountability, professionalism, honesty, moral standards, ethical consciousness, integrity.

Relationship between public administration and citizens: legality, protection of individual rights, equal treatment, rule of law, justice, equity, reasonableness, fairness, professionalism, dialogue, responsiveness, user democracy, citizen involvement, citizen's self-development, user orientation, timeliness, friendliness. (Redundancies have been omitted).

Not all of these public values are central to the activities of all or most public administrators and their agencies. Zeger van der Wal et. al. added to the study of public administrative values by analyzing both the literature on administrative ethics and public administrators' ordering of work related values. Their ranking of the ethics literature is:⁽¹⁴⁾

1. Honesty
2. Humaneness
3. Social Justice
4. Impartiality
5. Transparency
6. Integrity
7. Obedience
8. Reliability
9. Responsibility
10. Expertise
11. Accountability
12. Efficiency
13. Courage
14. Prudence

¹³ Torben Beck Jørgensen and Barry Bozeman, “Public Values: An Inventory”, *Administration and Society*, 39(3), 2007, pp. 354-381. doi:10.1177/0095399707300703

¹⁴ Z. Van Der Wal et al, “Central Values of Government and Business: Differences, Similarities and Conflicts”, *Public Administration Quarterly*, 30(3/4), 2006, pp. 314-364.

15. Serviceability
16. Cooperativeness
17. Responsiveness
18. Dedication
19. Effectiveness
20. Innovativeness
21. Lawfulness
22. Loyalty
23. Consistency
24. Autonomy
25. Stability
26. Representativeness
27. Competitiveness
28. Profitability
29. Collegiality
30. Self-fulfillment

Van der Wal's ranking based on a survey of Dutch practitioners is: ⁽¹⁵⁾

1. Incorruptibility
2. Accountability
3. Honesty
4. Lawfulness
5. Reliability
6. Transparency
7. Impartiality
8. Expertise
9. Effectiveness
10. Dedication
11. Serviceability
12. Efficiency
13. Collegiality
14. Responsiveness
15. Innovativeness
16. Social justice
17. Obedience

18. Self-fulfillment
19. Sustainability
20. Profitability

Note that efficiency ranks twelfth on both of van der Wal's lists, strongly suggesting that it is no longer axiom number one in public administration, if it ever was. Similarly, Jørgensen and Bozeman include several surrogates for efficiency, such as effectiveness, sustainability, reliability, parsimony, and professionalism.

Given this extent of value pluralism—and Jørgensen and Bozeman's and van der Wal's analyses are based only on the public administration literature in English—how can thinking about public administration's normative dimension be productively framed? Although it has limitations, as noted earlier, the dominant approach is to organize values according to three dimensions of public administration: management, politics/policy, and law. These dimensions are relevant to all public administrative systems in developed nations though their content and weight vary from regime to regime. Public administration inherently involves executive (management), political/policy (legislative), and legal *functions*, however they may be arranged.

In separation of powers systems, each of the functions may be subject primarily to the authority and values associated with separate branches of government. In the U.S., for example, management falls within the purview of the presidency, politics/policy with the legislature, and law within the courts. Because U.S. public administration manages the execution of the law, engages in policymaking and politics through the distribution of burdens and benefits in rulemaking and budgeting, and adjudication of individual cases, the separation of powers collapses into administrative operations and is subject to supervision by all three constitutional branches of the government. In non-separation of powers systems, administrative agencies engage in these functions to one degree or another and are subject to different supervisory arrangements. In China, for example, the judiciary is relatively much less prominent in public administration than in the U.S. Supervision is by the

15 D. Jelovac, et al, "Business and Government Ethics in the "New" and "Old" EU: An Empirical Account of Public - Private Value Congruence in Slovenia and the Netherlands", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 103(1), 2007, pp. 127-141.

Communist Party, and is diffused throughout the national, provincial, and local public bureaucracies.

The key to the management-politics-law framework is that the functions of execution (implementation), politics/policy, and law are associated with values and those values drive their organizational structures, views of individuals and the public, cognitive approaches or ways of knowing, decision-making, and budgeting and personnel systems. For instance, in the U.S. execution values cost-effectiveness and responsiveness to customers, politics and policymaking emphasize the importance of representation, responsiveness, and accountability, while adjudication looks toward constitutional integrity, procedural due process, equal protection of the law, and robust individual civil rights and liberties. These values drive execution to be organized in a businesslike manner, politics/policymaking to value organizational pluralism in the sense of broad representation of the public and overlapping and competing missions and jurisdictions, whereas adjudication is organized according to court-like adversary procedure headed by neutral decision makers. Execution views individuals and the public as cases and customers, politics/policymaking looks at them as members of groups such as women, farmers, small business persons, and minorities, and adjudication considers individuals as unique individuals per se or members of a class of litigants.

Cognition also varies with execution valuing science, experimentation, and performance as the basis for determining what is correct, politics/policymaking emphasizing agreement among stakeholders and public opinion as a basis for knowing, and adjudication using inductive case analysis, deductive application of established legal doctrine, and normative reasoning.

In terms of decision-making, the respective approaches look toward administrative performance, Charles Lindblom's "muddling through" model, and reliance on legal precedent in an incrementally developed case law.⁽¹⁶⁾ For budgeting, the three approaches are performance-oriented, incremental distribution of burdens and benefits, and rights funding. For personnel, execution emphasizes merit, politics/policymaking, social representation, and adjudication

values equal and fair treatment of public employees and a broad array of rights for public employees.

It is important to emphasize that the values associated with management, politics/policy, and law may be in tension or conflict with one another. This is probably inevitable in separation of powers systems and, perhaps to a lesser extent in parliamentary democracies and developed authoritarian governments. Yair Zalmanovitch finds beneficial "trialectic" synergy in the interaction among the management, politics/policy, and law approaches.⁽¹⁷⁾ For instance, the U.S. administrative system is highly tolerant of conflicting missions, competitive relationships among agencies, agency independence, and litigiousness. Though appearing chaotic elsewhere, these qualities are suitable for a separation of powers system and pluralistic political culture. The give and take among the three approaches is viewed as functional in promoting democratic-constitutional governance. In China, by contrast, a greater emphasis is placed on unity, harmonious relationships, and upstanding cadre behavior in the national effort to promote further economic development and reduce or eliminate corruption and other forms of maladministration. Nonetheless, though execution dominates and administrators make policy, currently, there is a strong effort to advance rule by and rule of law within Chinese administration.

There is a great deal we have yet to study and learn about public administration. Its complexity and contradictions are daunting. However, advancement requires recognizing that it cannot usefully be reduced to a single value, set of values, or approach. The problem of its value pluralism and multiple competing perspectives must be met head on.

With this broad overview of public administration and its central normative challenges, we now turn to studying the nature of public administration scholarship, its dominant values, and understanding of the nature of administrative phenomena in Arab countries. This overview is based on reviewing the available literature published in Arabic, as well as reviewing articles published in 2017 in the *Arab Journal of Administration*.

16 Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through'", *Public Administration Review*, 19(2), 1959, pp. 79-88. doi:10.2307/973677.

17 Y. Zalmanovitch, "Don't reinvent the wheel: the search for an identity for public administration", *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 80(4), 2014, pp. 808-826. doi:10.1177/0020852314533456

Public Administration in the Arab World: the lost boundaries!

There is a belief among Comparative Public Administration scholars that Arab countries have generally been left out of this field of research, to the extent that some scholars have argued that there is no theory of administration in the Arab world.⁽¹⁸⁾ This observation arguably manifested itself following the Arab popular uprisings starting in late 2010. There is growing perception that the field had played no significant role in providing roadmaps for building functional and independent civil service, or helping during periods of transitions. The UNDP report cited at the beginning of this work highlights this point.

As an academic discipline, Public Administration in the Arab world started as a branch of law, particularly administrative law, and the earliest journals publishing articles in administrative sciences in the region starting the late 1950s were law journals.⁽¹⁹⁾ The origins in law is not unique to Public Administration scholarship in the Arab world. It is possible, however, that the continued dominance of legal approaches did not allow for expanding the research focus into issues related to public administration and the constitution, separation of powers, the role of courts, the implementation of judicial decisions, and other issues that have the potential to create the knowledge necessary for administrative scholarship to respond to changing conditions.

Management sciences also played an important role in the early stages of Public Administration scholarship in Arab countries, especially through journals published by schools of Commerce. In 1952, the Faculty of Commerce at Cairo University issued the first widely recognized Arab journal with a focus on administrative sciences, titled "The Journal of Economics, Politics, and Commerce." The 1970s witnessed a further expansion of journals

that specialize in administrative sciences. Again, schools of Commerce pioneered many of these journals. The business administration focus of these journals directed attention toward issues related to organization, organizational behavior, and human resources management.⁽²⁰⁾

The origins in law and management, accompanied by less attention directed to the relationship between politics and administration, led to a focus on the study of the management part of government, with a particular focus on efficiency as the motto of the public sector. A PhD dissertation in Cairo University reviewed empirical research published in a sample of 13 Arabic journals of Public Administration between 2000 and 2011.⁽²¹⁾ The study found that the majority of authors in these journals specialize in business administration (48%), followed by public administration (24.9%). Regarding the studies that focus on public administration, the plurality focus on organizational behavior (27.2%), a field that crosses the interests of public and business administration.

A related observation concerning Arabic language research in Public Administration is that there is actually little focus on administrative issues as opposed to other fields such as economics and business administration. A number of studies have noted that public administration topics represent a minority in Arab journals that focus on administration sciences.⁽²²⁾ On the other hand, articles that focus on economics usually represent a majority, followed by Public Administration, Business Administration, and Law.⁽²³⁾

We corroborated these findings through our own analysis of all studies published in the Arab Journal of Administration in 2017. This journal is the official publication of the Arab Organization for

18 E. Dedoussis, "A cross-cultural comparison of organizational culture: Evidence from universities in the Arab world and Japan". *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 11(1), 2004, pp. 15-34. doi:10.1108/13527600410797729; P. Iles et al, "Managing HR in the Middle East: Challenges in the Public Sector", *Public Personnel Management*, 41(3), 2012, pp. 465-492. doi:10.1177/009102601204100305

19 M. K. ElKariouty. *Muqaddima fi'l-Idāra al-Āmma* (Amman: Dar Wael For Publishing and Distribution, 2012); M.A. Yaghy, *Wāqi' al-Dawriyyāt al-Arabiyya al-Mutakhaṣṣa fi'l-'Ulūm al-Idāriyya* (Riyadh: King Saud University, 1984).

20 M. A. A. Al-Araby, *Tawajjuhāt al-Bāḥithīm al-'Arab fi'l-Dirāsāt al-Manshūra bi-Dawriyyāt al-Idāra al-Āmma al-Arabiyya fi fatrat 2000-2001m: Taḥlīl Kayfī wa-Kammī li'l-Majāl wa'l-Manāḥij* (Cairo: Cairo University, 2014).

21 Ibid.

22 W. I. A. AlHindi, "Wāqi' Buḥūth al-Idāra al-Āmma fī Majallatay Jāmi'at al-Malik Sa'ūd "al-'Ulūm al-Idāriyya" wa-Jāmi'at al-Malik 'Abdul'azīz "al-Iqtisād wa'l-Idāra": Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya", *al-'Ulūm al-Idāriyya*, 7(1), 1995, pp. 99-139.

23 Yaghy, *ibid.*

Administrative Development, an affiliate organization of the Arab League. The dataset of 46 articles shows that the plurality of authors comes from the field of Business Administration, followed by Finance. The majority of articles that could be defined within the field of administrative sciences focuses on either organizational behavior and management, or human resources/personnel management.

The units of analysis in Arabic language research in public administration is often the individual, and most studies use quantitative methods.⁽²⁴⁾ We also corroborated this finding through our review of articles published in the Arab Journal of Administration. According to the logic mentioned earlier, this could be a reflection of a perception of public administration as a social science. According

to another perspective, this trend could be a reflection of the relative ease of using quantitative methods by Arab scholars, especially give the lax peer review processes.⁽²⁵⁾

The focus on the individual as the main unit of analysis in Public Administration research published in Arabic also reflects the lack of attention to organizations, organizational environments, and the role of intra- and inter-institutional relations. This observation should direct attention to the need for broadening the methodological and theoretical starting points of Arabic language research to include approaches from political science and law, especially to be able to provide advice to countries going through different transitions such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria.

The Normative Question

Unlike what we have seen in the previous discussion of Public Administration in the US, normative questions found little attention in the Arab world. A number of Arab governments have published codes for professional and ethical standards expected from public employees. Such codes are familiar in different parts of the world, and represent an approach to guarantee ethical standards of public service. One interesting observation about this code in the Egyptian case published in 2014, for example, is that it makes no reference to human rights, protecting whistle blowers, or questions of administrative discretion. The code reflects an orthodox separation between politics and administration. The Egyptian code include the following principles, which reflect the values of the public sector as prescribed by the government:⁽²⁶⁾

1. Respect for the law
2. Neutrality
3. Integrity
4. Diligence
5. Effectiveness and Efficiency

The stated values miss reference to such values as humaneness and social justice, which reflect administrative discretion, and the need to direct the public employee's discretion toward serving the public. Furthermore, these values also miss reference to the business part of government, which has gained attention in recent values' surveys in Western countries as highlighted above. These values include responsiveness, innovativeness, and competitiveness. These omissions reflect an orthodox prescription for public service as a design science of management, and public service as a "transmission belt" for implementing public policies.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also issued a code for professional behaviors and public sector ethics. Similarly, the code mentions five principles, which reflect the prescribed values of public service (Public Service Authority - Kingdom of Bahrain, 2016):

1. Respect for the law
2. Neutrality
3. Integrity

24 A. M. Rayyan, *Istikhdam al-Manhaj al-Kayfi wa'l-Kammī fi'l-Baḥth: Dirāsa Istīlā'iyya li-Wāqi' Adabiyāt al-Idāra al-'Arabiyya*, paper presented at the Third Arab Conference on Administrative Research and Publishing, Cairo, 2003.

25 Ibid; Editorial Board, "Tahrīr Dawriyyāt al-Idāra al-'Arabiyya al-Muḥakkama", *al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li'l-Idāra al-Maḥaliyya wa'l-Tanmiya* (32), 2000, pp. 113-120.

26 Egyptian Ministry of Planning, *Mudawwinat al-Sulūk al-Waḥīfi li'l-'Āmilīn bi'l-Jihāz al-Idāri li'l-Dawla bi-Jumhūriyyat Miṣr al-'Arabiyya* (Cairo: Ministry of Planning, 2014).

4. Diligence

5. Economy and efficiency

The almost identical wording in both documents of the values that should exist in public service reflects the similar origins of public administration among Arab countries. It also reflects a dominant discourse that could have spread because of the influence of scholars from a limited number of Arab countries, mainly Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

In line with the social science perspective, as opposed to the normative perspective, prevalent among Arab scholars of public administration, the majority of studies addressing public sector values in the region aimed at describing the prevailing values rather than prescribing what these values should be. While we can infer efficiency and effectiveness to be the number one mottoes of public administration scholarship in the Arab world, there has been a more conscious effort to pinpoint other prevalent values in Arab bureaucracies and among Arab bureaucrats. A good deal of attention focused on the role of culture and Islam in determining the values of Arab bureaucrats.⁽²⁷⁾

Studies published between the 1970s and 1980s seem to reinforce some of the stereotypes surrounding the Arab culture, and hence Arab bureaucracies. A number of studies stressed the rigidity and excessive centralization in Arab bureaucracies, as well as low productivity.⁽²⁸⁾ There seems to be a level of agreement that certain characteristics of Arab culture have direct effects on the behavior of managers in the region. These characteristics include power deference, uncertainty avoidance, and need for affiliation. These characteristics generally result in

nepotism, consultative decision making but rejection to delegate decision-making authority, and unclear accountability channels.⁽²⁹⁾

A number of catchwords emerged to reflect some of the stereotypes prevalent about Arab values and their organizational reflections. Some of the terms used include “the prophetic-Caliphal model” of leadership, which reflects the dominance of authoritarian leadership and lack of institutionalism.⁽³⁰⁾ In the GCC countries in particular, there seems to be a high level of consciousness regarding the effects of family ties and tribalism on the nature of work in public organizations. This was reflected in catchwords such as the “Sheikh as CEO,” and analysis of the *majlis* as a decision-making and conflict resolution structure. Such perspectives saw these institutions and practices as sources of divergence from the Western (also read *modern*) administrative traditions.⁽³¹⁾

More recent research has paid attention to the issue of convergence with global administrative practices, especially given the economic, if not political, liberalization of economic and social sectors in a number of Arab countries.⁽³²⁾ This research has generally found a level of convergence with global practices in areas such as participatory decision-making and human capital development. This has resulted mainly from openness to foreign labor, international managerial practices, and international education, particularly in GCC countries. On the other hand, some characteristics such as low institutional capacity continued to hinder the full utilization of available capacities.⁽³³⁾

Unfortunately, there has been little attention to the tradeoff between efficiency and other administrative

27 P. Iles et al, “Managing HR in the Middle East: Challenges in the Public Sector”, *Public Personnel Management*, 41(3), 2012, pp. 465-492. doi:10.1177/009102601204100305

28 M.K. Badawy, “Styles of Mideastern Managers”, *California Management Review*, 22, 1986, pp. 51-58; B. Khadra, “The Prophetic-Caliphal Model of Leadership: An Empirical Study”, *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 20(3), 1990, pp. 37-51. doi:10.1080/00208825.1990.11656535; M. Palmer et al, “Bureaucratic Flexibility and Development in Egypt”, *Public Administration and Development*, 5(4), 1985, pp. 323-337.

29 A.J. Ali, “Decision-Making Style, Individualism, and Attitudes toward Risk of Arab Executives”, *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 23(3), 1993, pp. 53-73; B. Bjerke and A. Al-Meer, “Culture's Consequences: Management in Saudi Arabia”, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 4(2), 1993, pp. 30-35; Iles et al, *ibid*.

30 B. Khadra, *ibid*; M. K. Badawy, *ibid*.

31 M. Biygautane et al, “The Evolution of Administrative Systems in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar: The Challenge of Implementing Market Based Reforms”, *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 26(1), 2016, pp. 97-126.

32 M.A. Abdel-Moneim, *A Political Economy of Arab Education: Policies and Comparative Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015); L. Nolan, *Liberalizing Monarchies? How Gulf Monarchies Manage Education Reform*. (Doha: Brookings Doha Center, 2012).

33 K.O. Al-Yahya, “Power-Influence in Decision Making, Competence Utilization, and Organizational Culture in Public Organizations: The Arab World in Comparative Perspective”, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19(2), 2009, pp. 385-407. K. O. Al-Yahya, *Empowerment and Human Capital Utilization Deficit in Public Sector Organization: Gulf States in Contemporary Perspective* (PhD), University of Connecticut, 2005.

values. Notions such as the separation of powers, due process, freedom of information, and representative bureaucracy did acquire some attention.⁽³⁴⁾ However, even the available studies addressing these issues only describe their status in Arab bureaucratic

settings, such as the presence of representation within bureaucratic agencies, without addressing the normative competition among these concepts and the values they reflect.

The “Separation of Powers” Question

As explained earlier in the discussion of the boundaries of public administration research in Arab countries, topics related to the separation of powers and administrative law did not acquire much attention; and research remains focused on theoretical issues within a closed or semi-closed organizational settings. Research on administrative decentralization and local governance, possibly motivated by international and donor attention, is one of the few topics that reflect some attention to relations between different levels of government.

This absence of attention to legal and political approaches to the study of public administration could be attributed to the rather authoritarian nature of Arab political systems, with the only possible exception of Lebanon and, recently, Tunisia. This authoritarian nature makes the focus on the political and judicial branches irrelevant to administration. Administrative structures exist as the arm of the executive branch, or the ruling regime, to maintain its dominance, and are largely insulated from popular or institutional forms of scrutiny.

From this perspective, the origins of present-day ills of the public sector in the Arab world are not only a result of its imperialist roots alone, but also of the period of state expansion between the 1930s and 1960s. This is the period of independence for countries that later came to be known as the Arab Republics, such as Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia. The systems that developed during this period maintained a central role for the state in the economic, political, and social spheres. The economic system was based

on import substitution industrialization (ISI), and a central role for public enterprises. The social contract created during this period traded economic for political rights. As a result, Arab bureaucracies became tightly linked to the ruling establishment for their very existence, even following economic reform and structural adjustment measures that began to spread across the Arab region starting the second half of the 1980s.⁽³⁵⁾

The expansion of the public sector in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries followed a somewhat different logic. Instead of developing mainly as the regime's arm to implement its developmental strategies and maintain its dominance over the society and culture, public sector expansion in GCC countries came mainly in response to oil rents. The flow of resources from oil exports, especially following the oil boom of the 1970s, allowed Gulf monarchies to increase public spending and engage in large-scale developmental projects that required developing the state apparatus. Furthermore, the regional monarchies needed to distribute the oil rents in order to buy the loyalty of their populations. Government employment was an approach to achieving this goal. A significant part of the state as well as private sector bureaucracy relied on expatriate labor to fill its ranks, mainly from other Arab countries given the small populations and low quality of labor at the time. This labor also came with their centralizing and hierarchical culture.⁽³⁶⁾

Given the authoritarian nature of Arab regimes and the perception that administrative agencies play the role of state arms for societal control, public

34 M. Herb, “A Nation of Bureaucrats: Political Participation and Economic Diversification in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41(3), 2009, pp. 395a-395a. doi:10.1017/S002074380909148X; H.S.M. Youssef, “al-Tamthīl al-Bīrūqrāfī fī Ba’d al-Ajhiza al-Markaziyya (al-Hukūmiyya): Dirāsa Maydāniyya ‘an al-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Sa‘ūdiyya”, *Dirāsāt al-‘Ulūm al-Idāriyya* (Jordan), 24(2), 1997, pp. 338-351; A.S. Al-Khasawna, “al-Insijām bayn al-Qiyam al-Bīrūqrāfiyya wa’l-Qiyam al-Ijtīmā’iyya fī Dawlat al-Imārāt al-‘Arabiyya al-Muttahida min Wjhat Nazar al-Muwazzafīn al-Hukūmiyyīn”, *al-Iqtisād wa’l-Idāra* (King Abdulaziz University), 23(1), 2009, pp. 37-84; A.I. Al-Shiha, “al-İslāh al-Idārī fī’l-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Sa‘ūdiyya: Min al-Bīrūqrāfiyya al-Markaziyya ilā Tawṣī’ Sultāt al-Majālis al-Maḥalliyya”, *al-Majalla al-‘Ilmiyya li’l-Idāra* (Saudi Arabia), 8, 2015, pp. 63-93. 3

35 Cammett, M., Diwan, I., Richards, A., & Waterbury, J. (2015). *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Fourth Edition ed.). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press

36 M. Cammett et al, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015).

administration is often perceived not as “the action part of government” as in the Western/American experience, but rather as the “inaction part of government.” Not only has public administration been a tool for state control, but also an approach to buy loyalty and create employment opportunities. As such, a level of corruption could be tolerated to compensate for the low salaries in poor Arab countries, as well as allowing deference to local customs in societies where public office is perceived as an approach to rent distribution.⁽³⁷⁾

Given the lack of channels for popular control on Arab bureaucracies, and widespread perceptions of bureaucracies as tools for political control, it makes sense to expect low levels of trust among Arab populations in the established institutions. There is a widespread perception that there are limited channels for popular control over the executive branch. The Arab Opinion Index 2017-18, which surveys nationally representative samples from 11 Arab countries, report high levels of distrust and dissatisfaction with state institutions as well as public services. While the survey showed high levels of trust in the military and security institutions, followed by the judicial branch, levels of trust dwindled regarding the executive and legislative branches of government.⁽³⁸⁾

The same report also reflects high levels of dissatisfaction with public services. Improving the situation for poor people, finding solutions for unemployment, and the distribution of public services among the various regions of the government (70%, 73%, and 57% are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, respectively). Levels of satisfaction are over 50% for providing water and electricity, but lower for sanitation, education, and health. This reflects a sense of marginalization based on income and geography that is rarely addressed in the Arabic public administration studies.⁽³⁹⁾

One interesting observation in Arabic public administration studies is that although administrative

law did occupy some attention, studies that address legal issues in public administration are largely descriptive and dominated by legal approaches (as opposed to a synthesis of legal and administrative approaches). Topics under this umbrella include administrative discipline, and the role of some oversight agencies such as the Accountability State Authority in Egypt. Other topics appear even more purely legal such as drafting, managing, and adjudicating government contracts.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Accordingly, legal research in the Arab world fails to integrate knowledge from the law field to promote effective government action and understand the challenges of policy change.

Until the 1990s, Arabic studies on the role of legislatures in the policy process, and the relationship between legislatures and bureaucracies were scarce. It has often been argued that the role of Arab legislatures, where they exist, is limited to rubber-stamping decisions issued by the executive branch. As explained earlier, most Arab regimes, especially in the so-called republics, are bureaucratically controlled in the sense that bureaucracies provide a source for political recruitment, regime stability and reproduction, in addition to their role as resource allocators. In such regimes, legislatures might very well end up as a source of patronage for the dominant elites.⁽⁴¹⁾

Traditionally, Arab legislatures played a minimal role in the political oversight of bureaucracies. Given weak political institutions and civil society organizations, and the seeming independence of bureaucratic organizations that lack a clear incentive to be responsive to popular needs, legislatures in a number of Arab countries played the role of a liaison with the bureaucracy.⁽⁴²⁾ This phenomenon explains the importance Arab parliamentarians allocate to establishing good relations with Ministers and other members of the executive branch in a largely patronage systems. The aim of these relations is to secure a channel to transfer their constituencies' petitions to

37 Abdel-Moneim, *A Political Economy of Arab Education: Policies and Comparative Perspectives*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2015); Cammett et al, *ibid*.

38 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, *The 2017-2018 Arab Opinion Index* (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2018).

39 *Ibid*.

40 Al-Araby, *ibid*.

41 R. Springborg, “Legislative Development as a Key Element of Strategies for Democratization in the Arab World”, *The Arab Studies Journal*, 3(1), 1995, pp. 95-100.

42 *Ibid*.

the administrative body. Such relationships clearly turn the separation of powers concept void.

Especially following the Arab uprisings of late 2010, a trend in the literature analyzed the economic and political foundations of neopatrimonialism in the region; and the roles played by bureaucracies as tools of control as well as corrupt and rent-seeking agents.⁽⁴³⁾ Other studies addressed the political role of bureaucracies in maintaining traditional power structures and limiting the potential for democratic transition. For example, one insightful analysis discussed how the Egyptian bureaucracy, with its close ties to the regime established since the Free-Officers' revolution in 1952, worked to abort three projects for reform in the decade preceding and directly following the 2011 uprising. These projects are (1) Gamal Mubarak's project to succeed his father as President and establish a neoliberal economic and social path, (2) the January revolution, which was

met by either containment or repression, and (3) the Muslim Brotherhood project to cultivate their own networks within the bureaucracy and judiciary following electoral successes. In all three projects, the bureaucracy prevailed in its attempts to maintain the established political and social regime.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Despite its helpful insights into understanding the relationship between politics and administration in Arab countries, this research remains dominated by approaches from political science, and fails to address the breakdown of the bureaucratic bodies and their dominant values. A main shortcoming that future studies need to address is the lack of clarity regarding what constitutes the state bureaucracy. Some studies use a narrow definition of the state bureaucracy that equates it to civil service, while others have used a broader definition that included other institutions such as the military and judiciary.⁽⁴⁵⁾

CONCLUSION

The nature of Arab political regimes shaped the orientation of public administration research in the region. Arab public administration research focuses on the managerial stream as the dominant approach, perceives public service as a transmission belt for public policies, and is mainly scientific as opposed to normative. As such, it fails to provide insights into understanding the outcomes of policies in the region, and approaches to guarantee peaceful political transitions.

Comparing the boundaries and approaches of public administration research in the US to those in the Arab experience shows the limitations of research in the Arab region, and explains the absence of a public administration theory for Arab countries. The perceived "intellectual crisis" of the field in the US could actually be a source of richness, at least when compared to the Arab focus on management and efficiency as the motto of public service, and the

absence of other considerations related to the ethics of public service and the separation of powers. The inherent fluidity of the field creates dynamism that allows public administration to respond to constantly changing conditions, ideologies, and ordering of value preferences.

We summarize the differences between public administration research in the US and Arab countries according to our analysis in Table 1 below. The main dimensions of comparison include theoretical origins, values, and methods.

In conclusion, public administration research in Arab countries needs to benefit from the fuzziness and contestation prevalent in the field. Without exploring these new boundaries, the field will remain irrelevant to current regional developments as well as to any serious attempts to reform policy making and implementation the region.

43 A. Nehme, *The Neopatrimonial State and the Arab Spring*, (Beirut: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, 2016).

44 A. Adly, *Triumph of the Bureaucracy: A Decade of Aborted Social and Political Change in Egypt*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015).

45 Nehme, *ibid*; Adly, *ibid*.

Table 1: The many faces of “needed” Public Administration Research in the Arab World

Dimension of comparison	US	Arab
Overall approach	Public Administration	Public Management
Sources	Politics, management, and law	Management and law
Values	Multiple and contested	Dominated by efficiency
Units of analysis	Individuals, groups, organizations, institutional settings	Individuals within closed organizational settings
Methods	Quantitative and qualitative	Dominated by quantitative methods
Boundaries	Fuzzy	Absent boundaries in the sense of an absence of a clear definition of the field. It sometimes coincides not only with the values, but also methods and topics, of business administration and economics. Absence of a discussion of politics and law.

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