



The Main Actors in the Law making Process for Economic Reform: An Assessment of their strengths & weaknesses to participate in the law-making process

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THE PROCESS OF LAW MAKING FOR ECONOMIC REFORM IN EGYPT

After launching the Economic Reform and Stabilization Adjustment Program (ERSAP) in 1991 the Egyptian government embarked on a new initiative to reform and upgrade the legislative framework with the aim of achieving the following objectives: (1) regulating the new market economy and encouraging an increasing role of the private sector, (2) making the legislative environment at par with international practice and in accordance with Egypt's new international economic obligations (WTO rules), (3) attracting foreign investments, (4) Increasing exports.

Against that background Egypt's legislative reform was initiated, taking different paths as follows:

- Promulgating completely new laws (e.g. Export Development, Competition),
- Unifying and amending existing laws in accordance with Egypt's international economic and trade agreements, (e.g. customs law, labour law, IPR law).
- Initiating new regional trade agreements aiming at establishing FTAs (e.g. Egyptian-European Association Agreement).

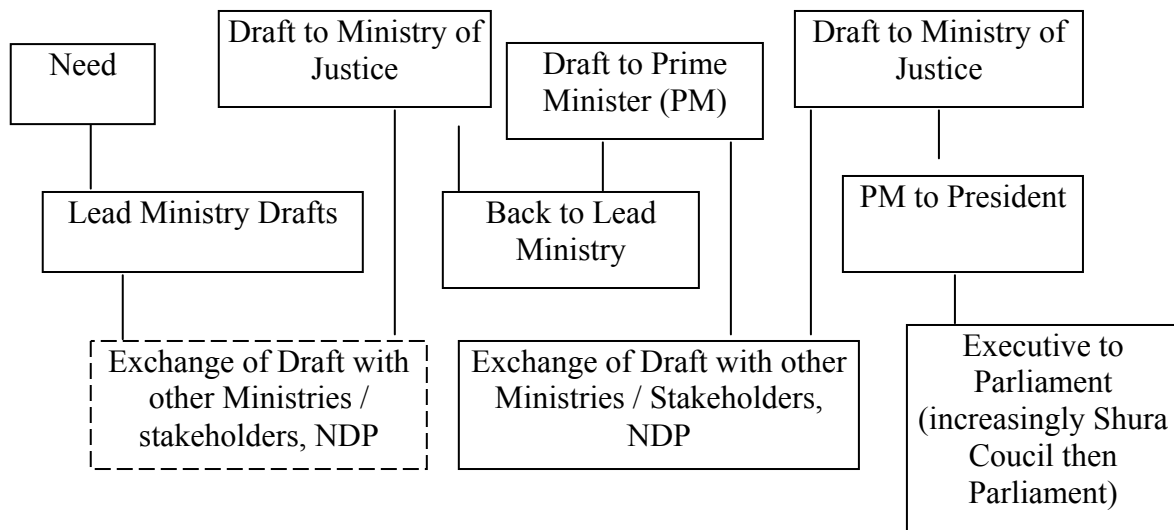
Several stakeholders are involved in this process. This paper highlights the role of the Executive, the Legislative and civil society, showing the weaknesses and the strengths of the process.

1. THE EXECUTIVE

1.1 Ministries, Councils

Practice has shown that this process of legislative reform takes various stages within the executive authority before any law/regulation is sent to Parliament for discussion and ratification. These stages are (Flowchart 1):

Flowchart 1: The law-making process from an Executive Perspective



1.2 Stages of Law-drafting by the Executive

The Law drafting process goes through several stages. These are:

First Stage: A need to promulgate or amend a law/regulation to solve a certain problem is often reflected in a public debate.

Second Stage: A Bill (draft law) is then drafted by a Ministry(ies) or any (governmental) authority that is responsible for the topic related to the bill.¹ Experience has shown that the following ministries play the most prominent role in the process of initiating economic legislations (and international economic agreements e.g. Egyptian-European Association Agreement)in Egypt:²

- Ministry of Foreign Trade and of Industry (previous two Ministries for Economy and Foreign Trade and for Industry)³,
- Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade,
- Ministry of Labor and Manpower,
- Ministry of Finance,
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in special cases such as Association Agreement).

¹ It is worth mentioning that in theory, the Egyptian constitution and law do not stipulate that the drafted bill be necessary a government bill (i.e. introduced by the government). However, for a bill to be discussed in Parliament it should be presented via the government which could act as a channel transferring it to the legislative authority, and accordingly that bill must be approved by the executive.

² Ministries get engaged in the making of economic laws at the initial stage.

³ An independent legal unit is attached to the office of the Minister of Foreign Trade with high-qualified legal experts from the Ministry of Justice and the academia.

However, it merits noting in this regard that although several ministries get involved in initiating economic laws in Egypt there is no ministerial hierarchy pertaining to the legislative process. The relative power of one ministry vis a vis other ministries in the process of law making is usually determined by a set of factors including:

- The Minister in charge and how influential he/she is in the cabinet,
- Seniority of the Ministers i.e. how long they have been in the cabinet,
- Resources available to each ministry (either financial or technical).

In some Ministries, there is a legal unit which has the technical ability to work on law drafts. This is particularly true of the Ministry of Foreign Trade (see Box 1). In contrast, the Ministries of Labour and Finance do not strictly have legal units but have legal advisors.

Box (1): Ministerial resources available to Assist the Legal Reform Process

Technical and financial resources available to the Ministry of Foreign Trade (MOFT) include a special independent legal unit comprising qualified legal experts acting as advisors (nearly 30% of this unit are not originally from MOFT but outside legal experts from the Ministry of Justice), most of them (seniors) who have completed their post graduate education (PhD and LL.M). Some of them have done that in England. The rest are juniors from top university graduates in Egypt. All members have access to telephone lines, internet connections legal and economic training. This legal unit reports directly to the Minister and the presence of its members is dependent upon the presence of the Minister himself, should the latter be changed so would the whole unit. Senior members of the unit are mainly responsible for the research plan of the unit rather than appointing or dismissing other junior members. This legal entity is funded by Official Development Assistance (ODA) channeled to the Egyptian Government.⁴ The Legal Unit works with a Technical Office with similar resources.

Some public consultation with stakeholders may take place at that stage. Not all laws have that though. In later stages, public consultation may occur. Hence, public consultation may occur only once at an early stage or several times during the process.

Stage Three: The bill is referred to the Ministry of Justice to guarantee its constitutionality and consistency with other existing laws and regulations. Accordingly it will be sent to the (1) State Council, and the (2) High Legislative Department/Committee which was established in mid 1990s by a decree issued by the Minister of Justice (4168/1994). The High Legislative Committee/Department is headed by the senior advisor to the Minister and reports directly to him (i.e. the Minister of Justice). It was established with the aim of ensuring consistency with the constitution as well as some level of coordination of the effort of various ministries in the

⁴ In drafting the Competition Law several comparative laws of other countries were used as models (available on the internet) in addition to the draft competition law circulated by UNCTAD as a model.

process of drafting laws and regulations, given the fact that the first half of the 1990s witnessed the drafting of several versions of the same law by various ministries (e.g. competition law, Investment law, IPR law).

The High Legislative Committee holds under its auspices various subcommittees each established particularly for a certain bill. These subcommittees comprise members of various ministries whose mandate is related to the bill in addition to several economic, financial and legal academic experts and representative of the IDSC (Information and Decision Making Support Center of the Cabinet)⁵

Stage Four: Having guaranteed the consistency and constitutionality of the bill it is then sent back to the Ministry in charge possibly with some refinements and amendments. The Ministry then introduces these amendments to the bill as it sees appropriate.

Stage Five: The final draft is sent to the Prime Minister (PM) by the Ministry that initiated the bill. It is then sent by the PM to all ministries for further political refinement.

Additionally, other suggestions and amendments introduced by the business community, labor unions and the academia are also taken into consideration and incorporated into the proposed bill.

More recently, the feedback of the **Policies Committee and Economic Committee of the ruling National Democratic Party** is also sought at this stage. This party committee is headed by the son of President Hosni Mubarak, Mr. Gamal Mubarak, and includes a number of trusted experts in various fields that are relevant to economic reform in Egypt.

In some cases, voices appear which advocate the involvement of the Sheikh al-Azhar to get his approval on the Islamic nature of laws. When that happens, the Sheikh provides his comments too and he rarely blocks or vetos economic laws.

Stage Six: Finally, after having included all inputs from various ministries and entities and after having consulted the Ministry of Justice on the final bill version, the bill is sent to the President for approval before it enters parliament.

⁵ A Special Program was established within the IDSC (the Legislative Reform Program) with the aim of assisting the government (cabinet) in the process of law-making. According to this program the IDSC has established a comprehensive data base of all existing Egyptian laws and regulations dating to the 19th century in addition to comparative laws in other countries. Additionally, the head of the legislative reform program is also a lawyer and has participated in the subcommittees held under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice.

Stage Seven: The Government bill coming from the President's office is sent to Parliament for discussion and ratification. The recent trend is to send the law bill to the Shura Council (Upper House) for discussion. According to the Constitution, the Shura Council's opinion is not binding though.

1.3 Assessing the Process of Drafting Laws by the Executive

In assessing the quality of the process, we resort to an OECD study cited in the concept paper of this project in which five components are stressed:

- (1) Management of timing and instruments: Often institutional reform in the form of law or regulation comes too late, rarely does it come too early. Even more delay is often associated with the issuance of executive decrees that are supposed to help administrations implement the law or regulation. The choice of instrument (law or regulation) is often correct. The choice of issues to be relegated to executive decrees is often too widely defined, leaving a lot of discretionary power in the hands of the Executive.

- (2) Assessment of Economic Effect: As aforementioned, practice has shown that the law is usually drafted to cope with a new economic need (regulate the market economy, attract FDI...) or as part of a regional multidimensional process (the Barcelona process in the case of the Egyptian-European Association Agreement). However, in drafting the law, ministries rarely conduct empirical studies aiming at assessing the real and comprehensive impact on various sectors of the economy which are likely to be affected by the new legal change. This could be explained in light of lack of sufficient resources and scarcity of data. Instead government officials participating in drafting the law usually rely on already available academic studies conducted either on Egypt or other regional and developing economies.

It is important to mention that international institutions (e.g. World Bank, ILO, IMF, UNDP, WTO) and international consultants also assist in assessing the likely impact of the law by providing empirical studies and legislative models of other laws promulgated by other countries.

- (3) Assessment of whether or not the law/regulation will Reduce current transaction costs: Some laws/regulations were primarily issued with the aim of reducing transaction costs (e.g. Temporary Admission, Duty Drawback and Tax Rebate, Law of Investment Guarantees and Incentives). It is, however, unclear whether there are systematic

monitoring tools to assess the progress made by the new law or regulation in this regard over time. A lot more needs to be done to promote a culture of monitoring and evaluation using clearly set milestones and performance indicators.

(4) Ensuring Public Consent: It is important to note that within the various stages, the government takes on several steps with the aim of ensuring public consent to the bill. These steps include the following⁶:

- Debating the bill in the Economic Committee of the National Democratic Party (the ruling party) which comprises various economic, financial and legal experts in addition to the business community and some members of labor unions. Suggestions proposed by this committee are incorporated into the bill before being sent to Parliament.
- Holding several seminars and conferences sponsored by NGOs, academic institutions (research centers and universities) and Business Confederations with the aim of evaluating the expected impact of the law in addition to getting feedback on the bill.
- Issuing the bill in the press, which is then debated by several experts and interested parties.

(5) Ensuring effective implementation: This process is usually taken care of in the executive regulation of the law that is issued by the Minister in charge after the law has been approved and ratified by Parliament. Often discussions and debates tackle issues pertaining to the supervisory authority that would be responsible for implementing the bill after being approved by Parliament. However, in some cases this issue could be regulated via executive regulations issued by the competent Minister or the Prime Minister. These regulations are easier to amend and do not necessitate legislative ratifications. However, all in all the executive is weak on implementation.

1.4 Evaluating the Performance of the Executive

The aforementioned survey of the various stages of the law drafting process indicates the overwhelming nature of legal reform. The executive often comes with too little, piece meal reform, too late. It often has weak analytical tools to assess the market impact or the exact bottlenecks that necessitated the law in the first place. The staff of most ministries does not have the skills or the capacity to deal with the load of new law drafts nor with the topics of

⁶ Consultations with interested parties (business associations, labor unions...) regarding the bill is usually held after the bill being drafted and not during the initial stages.

some of these laws. Moreover, the executive is often overwhelmed by the task of consulting interest groups and various societal stakeholders; hence the consultation process ends up being ad hoc and non-transparent.

In chapter three, we look at one mechanism by which the executive has tried to deal with its weaknesses, namely the establishment of technical offices. We analyze their pros and cons and suggest some steps for ensuring that they fulfill their function without hampering transparency or accountability.

2. THE PARLIAMENT

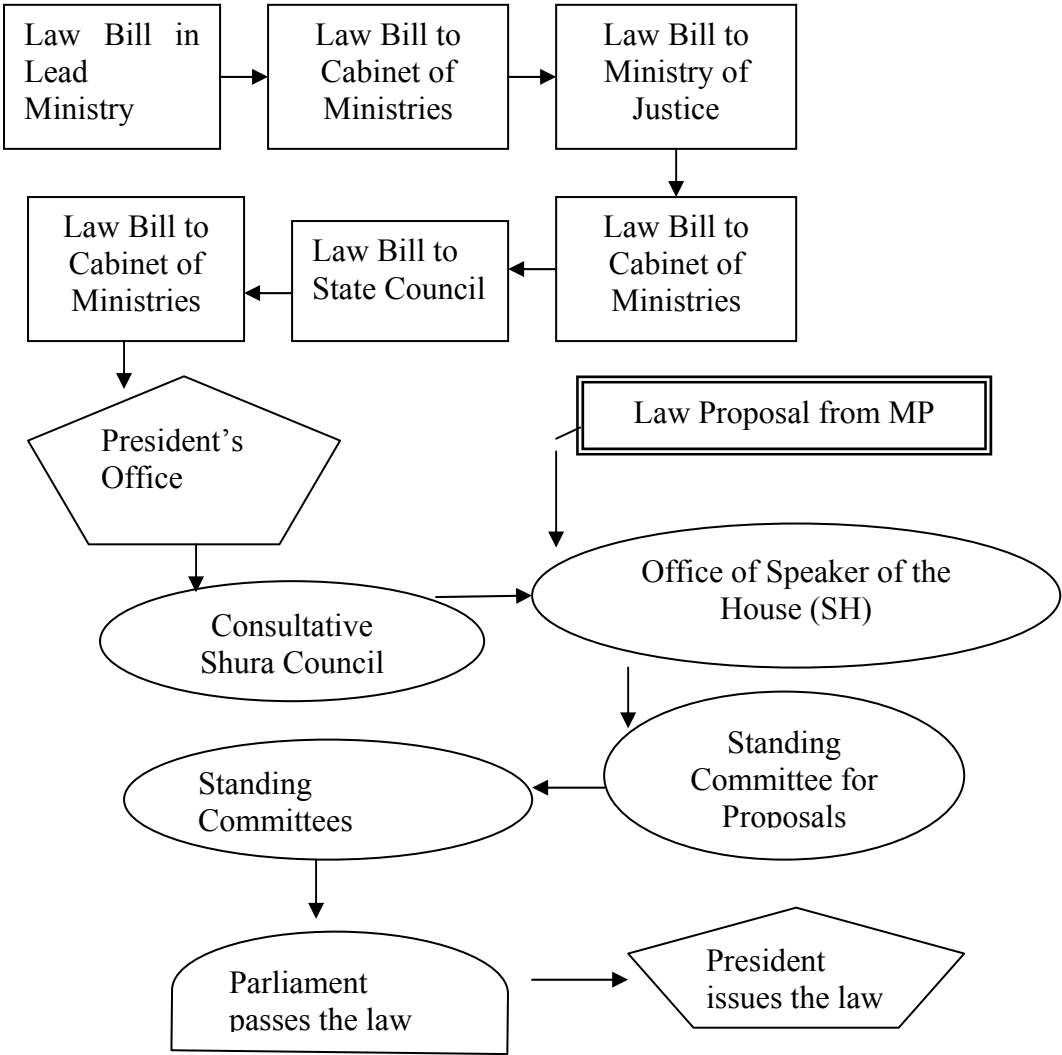
2.1 The Legislative Road

The legislative power resides, according to the Egyptian constitution, with parliament and the President of the Republic. The process by which a law bill (from the Executive) or a law proposal (from a member of parliament MP) gets voted into law is the same with one exception as shown in the following flow chart 2 (law proposals from members of parliament have one extra step to go through inside parliament). It is becoming increasingly common that law bills and proposals are first sent to the consultative Shura Council to give an opinion. According to the Egyptian constitution (articles 194 and 195), the Shura Council should express opinion on amendments and new proposals / bills related to the constitution, to social and economic development, international agreements.

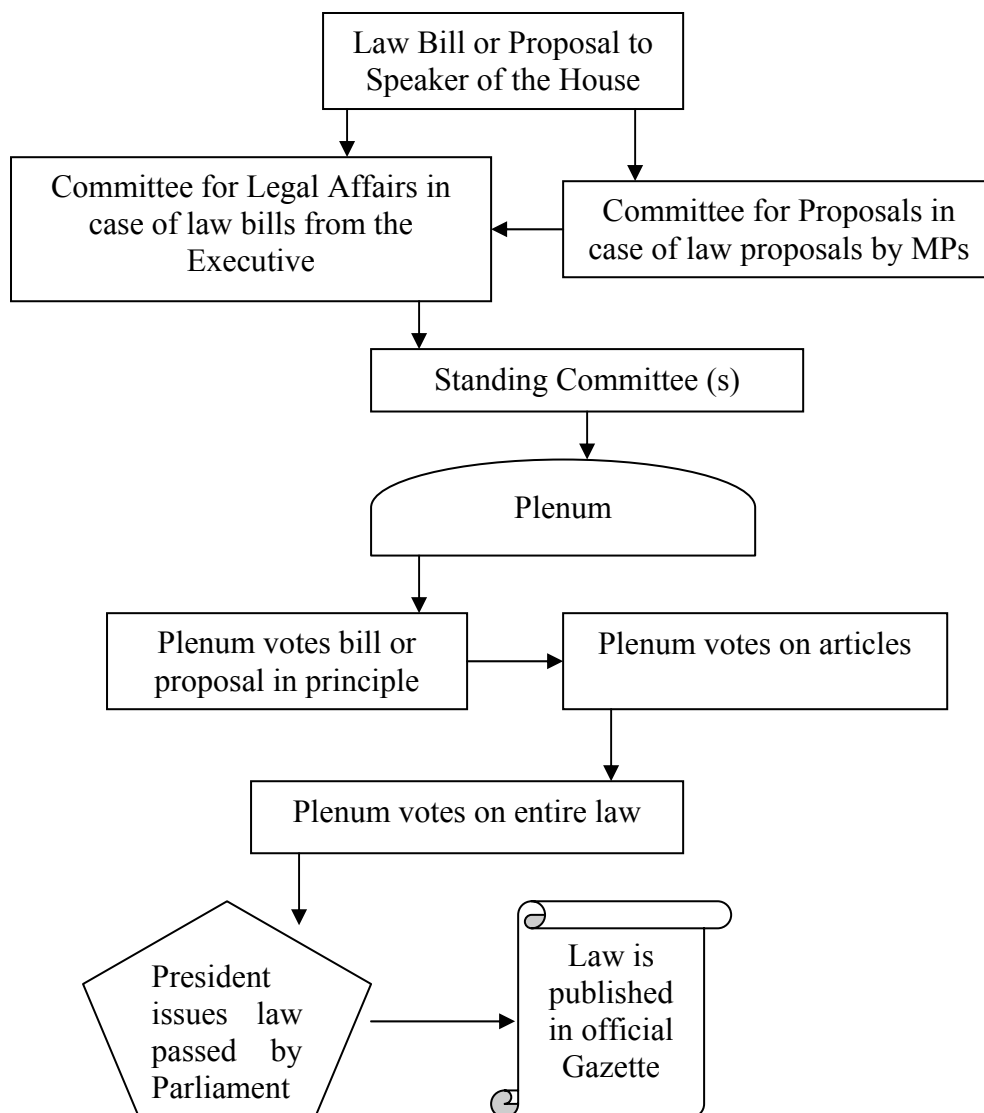
Law bills coming from the Executive are two types: main law bills and sectoral ones. The former type represents public laws such as criminal law, civil law, commercial law. These laws are prepared by the Ministry of Justice with the assistance of several committees comprising a number of experts. As to the sectoral law bills, they pertain to issues or sectors and hence are prepared by the Ministry concerned with the respective issue. The bill goes from the Ministry to the Prime Minister's office to the President who sends it to Parliament. It has become increasingly the case that law bills receive extensive consideration and debate inside the Executive before they are sent to Parliament.

Once the law bill enters parliament, it goes through a number of procedures as shown in flow chart 3.

Flow Chart 2: Law Bills vs Law Proposals



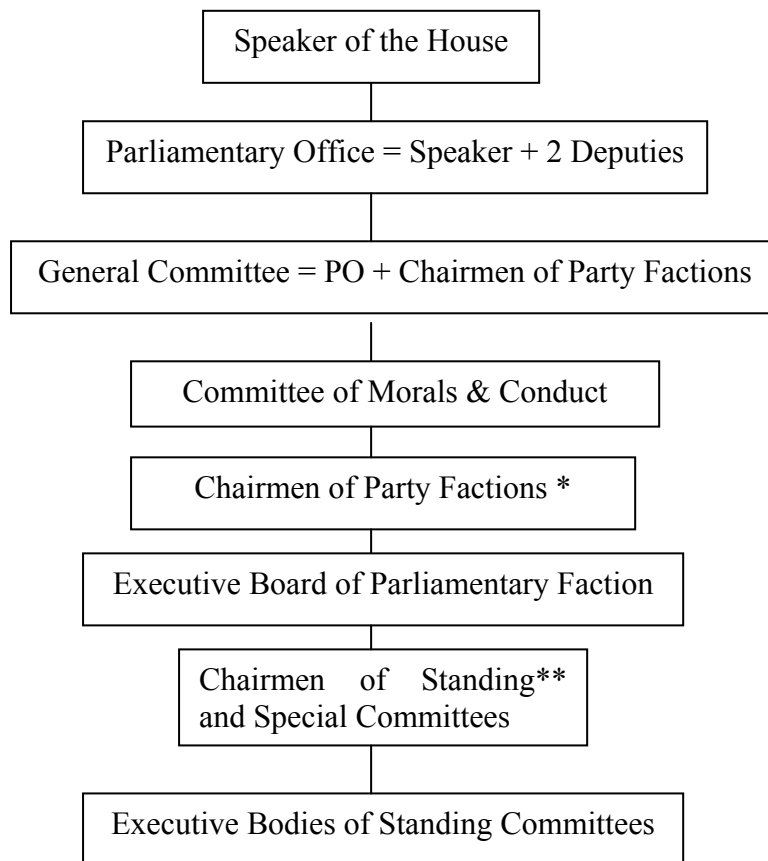
Flow Chart 3: The Process of Passing a Law Inside Parliament



2.2 The Parliamentary Elite

An analysis of the power structure inside the Egyptian Parliament comprises the institutional structure of parliamentary elites and the relationship among them. Parliament has more than one elite that comprise the multiple layers of organizational units which run parliament's daily affairs (flow chart 4).

Flow Chart 4: The Structural Elites in Parliament



* there are since 1995 3 party factions: ruling NDP, rightist Wafd and leftist Tagammu. Parliament had in 2000 - 2001 exceptionally four including the Nasserist party.

** There are 18 standing committees.

It appears from flow chart 4 that the Egyptian parliament consists of 8 major organizational units: Office of the Speaker of the House, the Parliamentary Office, the General Committee, the Committee of Morals, the party factions ⁷, their executive committees (a novelty specific to the Egyptian parliament), standing committees and special committees; the standing committees have executive bodies, whereas the special committees are ad hoc (e.g. the special committee responding to the government policy statement). Some of these units are composed by internal elections at the beginning of each parliamentary year (standing committees), while other units acquire members automatically such as the party factions. Some of these units are constant in number, e.g. the Parliamentary Office, while others vary in size, e.g. the General Committee. Some of these units require nominations from the Parliamentary Office (PO) and in many cases such nominations are regulated by the Internal Code of Operation (ICO). For example, the ICO requires that the PO selects a women among the members of the Committee of Morals (article 25 of the ICO) and that the PO

⁷ Political parties with minimum of 3 seats are eligible to form a parliamentary party faction.

select an independent if Independents have managed to win at least 10 seats (article 21 of the ICO).

2.2.1 Speaker of the House

The Speaker has an important role to play in guiding / influencing the political agenda of parliament and in coordinating the political positions of the various members of the parliamentary elite. In the 2000-2005 parliamentary term, the Speaker has gained increasing power because of a number of factors. Firstly, the party has started off with an unprecedented election defeat (party got ca. 30% of the votes in first round of elections, whereby conducting elections on two rounds was done for the first time). This situation was only remedied when most winning independents joined the party's ranks. Secondly, the leader of the ruling party faction in parliament became relatively weaker than his predecessor in the early to mid 1990s. Thirdly; the cabinet ministers are not political figures who are capable of mobilizing support and dominating parliamentary debates.

2.2.2 Standing Committees

The core of parliamentary work is done inside the standing committees (SC), of which the Egyptian Parliament has 18. The leadership of the SCs is predominantly from the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Though the Egyptian Parliament has a 50% quota for farmers and workers, the predominant majority of parliamentary leadership in the SCs are professionals (teachers, engineers, physicians, etc.).

2.2.3 Chief of Staff

Door # 3 is that through which the parliament's chief of staff enters the building leading to his office. In international conventions, the chief of staff is there to serve all MPs irrespective of party partisanship. He / she is not supposed to interfere in political debates, legislation or supervision of the government. He / she is not supposed to interfere with MPs contacts to society or the outside world, neither is he / she supposed to be so helpful and friendly as to facilitate or solve personal MP problems.

This office has been in the hands of the same person for over 13 years. The chief of staff has interfered in the hiring of hundreds of staff members based on personal and constituency considerations. The same is true with several formal security officers.

2.3 Elite Stability

The number of MPs leading the aforementioned organizational parliamentary units is around 135 MPs (table 1). This elite has been fairly stable over the past two parliamentary terms (1995-2000 and 2000 to the present) inspite of the considerable shuffle which the 2000 parliamentary elections caused. For example, though more than 50% of MPs in the current parliamentary term (2000-2005) are newcomers, the Parliamentary Office leadership remained the same (Dr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour, Dr. Amal Othman and Mr. Al-Sayyed Rashid). Other members of the parliamentary elite remained within the elite circle, only moving around from one committee to another.

This elite determines the core functions of parliament. That includes setting the legislative agenda, setting the questioning agenda, determining which issues will have priority in discussions, determines the agenda of issues discussed in the Standing Committees. Being able to do all that, this elite pretty much determines the evolutionary path of parliamentary relationship with the Executive branch of government.

Table 1: Size of the Parliamentary Leadership

Unit	Size	How is it formed
Speaker of the House SH	1	Secret direct election; by absolute majority of present MPs in the first parliamentary session at the beginning of the year. The session is headed by the oldest MP. As soon as the Speaker is elected, he heads the session.
Speaker Deputies DS	2	Secret direct election; by absolute majority of present MPs in the first parliamentary session after the Speaker is elected. The Speaker heads this ballot process.
Parliamentary Office PO	3	SH and 2 DS
General Committee GC	29	SH, 2 DS, 18 Chairpersons of Standing Committees, Chairpersons of the party factions, 5 more MPs chosen by PO including an independent MP if independents on minimum of 10 seats.
Morals Committee MC	14	One DS as chair, chairpersons of 3 Standing Committees (Constitutional, Religious, and Proposals), 5 members of the GC (including 2 representatives of the Opposition and independents), 5 more members to be chosen by lot (including one woman).
Standing Committees SC	4 leaders in 18 SCs	Membership varies by committee. Members are approved in the Plenum according to specialization and seniority of MP. Each Committee choses its chairperson, 2 deputies and treasurer with absolute majority of the committee's members.
Parliamentary Faction PF	15 leaders	The PF is practically the entire parliamentary plenum (454 MPs). Its executive board is composed of PO, chairperson of the Foreign Affairs SC, 8 members elected by the PF according to nomination of the PO, another 3 to be chosen by PO (including at least one Opposition MP).

With respect to legislation, this elite can ensure that the government's priority laws receive particular attention inside parliament. If the government (or the President of the Republic) wants to pass a law, the parliamentary elite sees to it that the process goes faster than

normal. If the government (or the President of the Republic) wants to avoid bringing some issue under scrutiny, the parliamentary elite makes sure such issues do not show up on top of the questioning or debating sessions.

2.4 The Power Structure of the Parliamentary Elite

Whereas the structural elite is one of leadership defined organizationally, there is also a functional definition of the parliamentary elite (table 2). In the functional sense, there are elites of power and those of influence. Within the above organizational structure, there are individuals who exercise varied degrees of influence depending partly on personal skills and attributes (such as charisma, knowledge, connections); the chairmen of the standing committee for foreign affairs, economics, education and housing belong to that category. Some MPs exercise disproportionate influence because of the ideological or political power of groups or networks to which they belong; Zakaria Azmi and Kamal El-Shazli belong to this category. Those who combine both leadership (organizationally or structurally defined) and influence (functionally defined) are a small group of maximum 30 MPs and could be called the “power elite”⁸.

The parliamentary elite, whether structural or functional, derives part of its power from contacts it has to extra-parliamentary institutions which play a special role in the political process. For example, the Egyptian parliamentary elite weaves special threads to institutions such as the National Council for Women, the Coptic Church of Egypt, Business Associations. Via the parliamentary elites to which these extra-parliamentary institutions stay in direct and regular contact, an extra-parliamentary elite is formed which may claim influence on the parliamentary process even though it is not a formal part of parliament. The latter could be called a “political elite”.

Table 2: The Parliamentary Elite, Structurally & Functionally Defined

Structural Leadership	Influence	Power
The people occupying the boxes of flow chart 3	MPs with charisma, close connection to the President of the Republic, close contacts with ruling party units outside parliament such as the Economic Committee, MPs on good terms with national institutions that have special clout such as the Coptic Church or the Islamic al-Azhar.	Those who combine leadership and influence

⁸ The same applies to the Consultative Shura Council.

Several trends characterize the elite and power structure in the Egyptian Parliament:

- The elite which truly influences the parliamentary agenda consists of 30 persons or 7% of total parliamentary seats. It consists of the Speaker of the House, his two deputies, the chairpersons of specific Standing Committees (namely Legal Affairs, Budget, Education, Housing, and Foreign Affairs), the representatives of the party factions (NDP, Wafd, Tagammu), Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, and some individual MPs⁹.
- There is a considerable amount of homogeneity in the parliamentary elite as most of them are professionals, there are few women¹⁰ and most of them belong to the ruling party. Any presence for the opposition is guaranteed by the IOC of parliament and does not reflect voting power inside parliament.
- Because of the dominant position in the parliamentary elite of ruling party MPs, it is to be expected that the composition of the parliamentary elite is often agreed upon beforehand inside the leadership circles of the ruling party. Thus the composition of the parliamentary elite is less determined by parliamentary vote- as decreed by IOC.
- Because the parliamentary elite is stable over time, it has become a network “Shella” of friends who coordinate their positions closely. This Shella stifles parliamentary evolution from within.

2.5 Capabilities vs Incentives

The chapter on information and research in parliament will show the weakness of the technical capabilities of parliament as an institution and of MPs as individuals. The aforementioned analysis of the power structure of parliament sheds light on the extent of inertia that afflicts the parliamentary institution and hampers its ability to exercise self correction, in the sense of re-allocation of resources away from administrative staff and towards technical capacity. But re-allocation alone is not enough. Equal allocation among all MPs is recommended in order to empower all MPs equally to exercise their legislative role in the various sectors whether economic or social effectively and with knowledge. Yet again,

⁹ Such as Zakaria Azmi, Gorgette Qallini, Faiqa al-Rifai (NDP), Adel Eid, Ayman Nur, Kamal Ahmed, Abdel Monem al-Alimi and Faruk Metwali (Independents), Hamdeen Sabahi, Abu Elez al-Hariri, Mohamed Shaaban and Badri Farghali (Opposition).

¹⁰ Women are very thinly represented in the Standing Committees (SC) leadership. About 5% of the SC leadership are women, which corresponds to their overall presence in the Egyptian Parliament. Though women’s representation in parliament has been weak (5-8%) ever since the quota for women has been abolished, yet one woman has managed to obtain an important position in the parliamentary leadership. Dr. Amal Othman became Deputy Speaker setting precedence in the entire parliamentary history of Egypt. This is an important position which gives her the right to head the special committee which responds to the government’s yearly statement of policy and the Committee of Morals, become a member of the General Committee and a deputy to the executive board of the party’s parliamentary faction.

the power structure of the Egyptian parliament makes its ability to achieve equality of resource allocation irrespective of party representation a weak possibility indeed. The prospects of reform in the parliamentary power structure are pretty much determined by the parliament's pivotal role in nominating the presidential candidate. In other words, as long as parliament is the pivotal institution which nominates the presidential candidate for a general referendum, the overwhelming majority will continue to be secure for the incumbent ruling party and with that the stability and exclusiveness of the parliamentary elite which is the gateway to internal parliamentary self correction.

Focus groups and a workshop with parliamentarian participation have highlighted a crucial issue of incentives. MP participants in these events have insisted on a number of features in the political life of Egypt which dilute their incentive to exert much pressure for change from within the parliamentary institution. MPs of all political colours have repeatedly insisted on the lack of political will from above to make the parliamentary institution independent and strong. The second often mentioned feature of the political system is that of voters who are a lot more interested in having their local problems solved by the MP in the national Parliament than on the positions taken by that MP on national issues such as economic laws. Finally, some MPs have voiced concern that their status in society changes dramatically after they leave office and thus their need to use all possible fringe benefits from their term as long as it lasts. An MP who is not a businessman, i.e. independently wealthy, nor an academician or a well known public figure, i.e. independently respectable, finds the anonymity of post office life and the possible disrespect associated with it too scary, that he / she would be willing to play the power game to remain close to the parliamentary elite and its preferences. All of that dilutes any desire from within the parliament by MPs to press for self correction by the institution. Opposition members suffer from the same besides their numerical weakness in parliament.

2.6 Evaluating the Performance of Parliament

Several indicators of parliamentary weakness need to be highlighted. Any program that means to upgrade and enhance parliamentary performance can use these indicators as a benchmark for improvement:

- 1) Widespread absenteeism
- 2) Recurring phenomenon of MPs signing in for their colleagues
- 3) Inadequate time allowed MPs to study legislative bills
- 4) Often the bills are not available to all MPs
- 5) MPs use contradictory facts

- 6) Sessions are not always accurately recorded in parliamentary minutes
- 7) Inaccessibility of plenum discussions to the public
- 8) Inaccessibility of parliamentary minutes to researchers
- 9) Inaccessibility of parliamentary agendas and budgets
- 10) Inaccessibility of MPs to the public

A lot of the above has to do with serious reforms. Serious reform of the attitude towards information is key. In both cases, there are too many restrictions, security permits and finally inadequate information that come a bit too late. Reforming that would have a positive impact on freedom of information for MPs and for the public.

The parliamentary elite has established a new parliamentary tradition of deliberating legislation using informed analysis rather than polemics alone. This is to be seen in the following positive tendencies: a) Standing Committee discussions which often rely on information from external experts; b) Prime Minister Atef Ebeid, Minister of Finance Medhat Hassanein and Minister of Trade Yousef B. Ghali tend to support their programs, policies and arguments with facts and scientific knowledge.

But there are other types of reform that are needed. Voting electronically can increase transparency and confidence in the system. This can be done by installing buttons in front of each seat and installing machines with coded cards for the extra MPs who do not have seats (parliament's plenary hall has 390 seats, while there are 454 MPs).

Chapters 4 and 5 will explore the issues of information and research capabilities of parliament in Egypt. Chapter 6 will highlight the problem of Parliament's image and its connection to the press, a link of vital importance if this democratic institution is to gain more credibility among the public.