

# New Public Management Vs. Post-Npm In Somaliland: A Systematic Literature Review Examining The Legacy, Effectiveness, And The Shift Towards Holistic And Digital-Era Governance

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**ABSTRACT:** *This systematic literature review examined the implementation, legacy, and evolution of New Public Management (NPM) reforms within Somaliland's public sector from 1991 to 2023. The study synthesized evidence from academic and grey literature to critically assess the effectiveness of core NPM tenets—privatization, agencification, and performance management. Findings revealed a mixed legacy, characterized by isolated successes, such as in revenue collection and telecommunications, but broader issues of fragmentation, regulatory weakness, and a profound contextual misfit with Somaliland's hybrid governance and state-building realities. The analysis identified no conscious, systemic shift towards Post-NPM; reintegrative initiatives remained nascent and donor-driven, while the traditional clan system persisted as a powerful, informal integrating force. Concurrently, a vibrant, private sector-led digital transformation was observed, presenting a potential opportunity to leapfrog toward Digital-Era Governance, though lacking cohesive state strategy. The study concluded that Somaliland's administrative landscape is a unique hybrid, where imported models are negotiated within indigenous realities, necessitating context-sensitive reforms that leverage digital innovation and traditional institutions.*

**Keywords:** New Public Management (NPM), Post-NPM, Digital-Era Governance, Somaliland, Public Sector Reform, Hybrid Governance, Systematic Review.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Problem Statement

The late 20th century witnessed the global dominance of New Public Management (NPM) as the predominant paradigm for public sector reform, championing market-oriented principles such as privatization, agencification, and performance metrics to enhance efficiency and reduce government size (Hood, 1991). However, the widespread implementation of NPM subsequently attracted significant critique for fostering excessive fragmentation, undermining equity, and neglecting the distinctive public service ethos. These criticisms catalyzed the emergence of alternative models, notably Post-New Public Management, which emphasizes "whole-of-government" collaboration and reintegration, and Digital-Era Governance (DEG), which focuses on leveraging technology to create holistic, citizen-centric administration (Dunleavy et al., 2006). Somaliland, a nascent but de facto state lacking international recognition, presents a critical and under-examined case study of this global trajectory. Its public administration has been profoundly shaped by the importation of these donor-driven Western models, creating a complex laboratory where theoretical prescriptions collide with the stark realities of state-building, a powerful traditional clan system, and limited institutional capacity (Renders, 2012). Examining this context is crucial for understanding the limits of policy transfer and the evolution of governance models in hybrid political orders.

### 1.2. Research Objectives:

- ✓ To map and synthesize the evidence on the implementation of NPM principles (e.g., privatization, agencification, performance management) in Somaliland's public sector.
- ✓ To critically assess the documented effectiveness, legacy, and critiques of these NPM reforms.
- ✓ To investigate the existence and nature of any subsequent shift towards Post-NPM or Digital-Era Governance models.
- ✓ To identify gaps in the literature and suggest areas for future research.

### 1.3. Scope and Delimitation

This systematic review deliberately bounds its analysis to public administration reforms initiated in Somaliland following its declaration of independence in 1991, a period marking the inception of its ambitious state-building project. The temporal scope is essential as it captures the entire lifespan of modern governmental institutions in Somaliland and their engagement with international

reform agendas. Thematically, the focus is restricted to core NPM tenets—specifically privatization, agencification, and performance-based management—and their postulated evolution towards Post-NPM's integrative strategies and DEG's digital solutions. To capture a comprehensive view of this phenomenon, the review will synthesize literature from a tripartite source base: peer-reviewed academic scholarship, policy documents from key international financial institutions and donors, and grey literature from reputable research institutes operating within the region. This inclusive approach is methodologically necessary given that much of the nuanced, on-the-ground analysis of Somaliland's governance exists in reports from organizations like the World Bank and UNDP, which have been instrumental in designing and funding reform programs, rather than in a vast body of academic literature (World Bank, 2019; UNDP, 2020). Consequently, the review excludes reforms prior to 1991 and studies focused solely on the Republic of Somalia without a dedicated analysis of the northwestern regions (Somaliland).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This systematic literature review employed a rigorous methodology to identify, evaluate, and synthesize all relevant research on the implementation and evolution of New Public Management (NPM) and Post-NPM models in Somaliland, utilizing a pre-defined protocol guided by the PICO framework to structure the primary research question around the impact of NPM reforms and any subsequent shift in governance models. The comprehensive search strategy was executed across electronic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and PAIS Index for peer-reviewed literature, and extended to grey literature from key institutions like the World Bank, UNDP, and regional research institutes to capture critical on-the-ground analyses, using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators tailored to each database with a publication date range from 1991 to December 2023. Studies were selected based on strict inclusion criteria requiring focus on public administration in Somaliland and discussion of core NPM or Post-NPM tenets, while excluding works focused solely on Somalia or lacking empirical depth, with the study selection process following PRISMA guidelines involving deduplication, title/abstract screening, and full-text assessment. A standardized data extraction form was used to consistently capture data from included studies, and due to the heterogeneity of the literature, a narrative thematic synthesis was conducted, analyzing the extracted data through the theoretical framework of NPM versus Post-NPM/DEG to identify key themes and patterns, though the approach acknowledged limitations such as potential donor bias in grey literature and the sensitivity of findings given the relatively small body of work on the topic.

## **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FROM NPM TO POST-NPM AND DIGITAL-ERA GOVERNANCE**

The evolution of public administration paradigms over the late 20th and early 21st centuries provides the essential lens through which to analyze reforms in any context, including Somaliland. This trajectory is marked by a decisive shift from the traditional bureaucratic model towards New Public Management (NPM), followed by a period of critique and the subsequent emergence of Post-NPM and Digital-Era Governance (DEG) frameworks. Understanding the core tenets, criticisms, and evolutionary path of these models is fundamental to assessing their application and adaptation in a unique state-building environment like Somaliland.

### **3.1. The Rise and Core Tenets of New Public Management (NPM)**

Emerging in the 1980s as a response to perceived inefficiencies in the traditional Weberian bureaucracy, New Public Management (NPM) became the dominant global reform doctrine. Championed by leaders like Thatcher and Reagan, it sought to inject private-sector discipline and market dynamics into the public sector (Hood, 1991). Its intellectual foundation was the belief that government should be "steered, not rowed," encouraging a shift from process-heavy administration to results-oriented management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This philosophy was operationalized through several core tenets that defined a generation of public sector reform.

First, NPM was characterized by a strong emphasis on managerialism, performance metrics, and efficiency. This involved granting public managers greater autonomy ("letting managers manage") while holding them accountable for pre-defined results through rigorous performance indicators and audits (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). The goal was to replace a culture of rule-following with one focused on achieving measurable outcomes and value for money, fundamentally changing the accountability structures within government.

A second, and highly significant, tenet was agencification. This involved the deliberate splitting of policy-making functions, which remained within core ministries, from service delivery functions, which were delegated to semi-autonomous agencies (Christensen & Lægreid, 2001). The rationale was that specialized agencies, freed from bureaucratic constraints, could deliver services more efficiently and responsively. This structural disaggregation aimed to create clearer focus and foster a competitive, quasi-market environment even within the state itself.

Furthermore, NPM vigorously promoted the privatization and marketization of public services. Drawing on public choice theory, NPM advocates argued that state monopolies were inherently inefficient. The solution was to either transfer ownership of public assets to the private sector (privatization) or to introduce market-like mechanisms such as contracting-out, internal vouchers, and

competitive tendering (marketization) (Lane, 2000). This was intended to drive down costs, increase choice, and improve quality through the discipline of competition.

Finally, NPM introduced the concept of client-orientation, reimagining citizens as consumers of public services. This stood in contrast to the traditional view of citizens as passive recipients or subjects. By framing the relationship in market terms, it was argued that services would become more responsive to user needs and preferences, as agencies would be incentivized to "satisfy their customers" to secure funding and legitimacy (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 180).

However, by the late 1990s, a robust critique of NPM had emerged. Scholars and practitioners began to highlight its negative consequences, including excessive fragmentation due to agencification, which created damaging "silos" and undermined policy coherence (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). The focus on narrow, quantifiable metrics was also criticized for distorting priorities and encouraging gaming, while privatization often raised serious concerns about equity, accountability, and the loss of a public service ethos. These critiques paved the way for the next evolutionary phase in public administration theory.

This phase, often termed Post-New Public Management, was not a full rejection of NPM but a course correction. It emphasized reintegration, collaboration, and "whole-of-government" approaches to mend the fragmentation caused by NPM (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). A key subset of this is Digital-Era Governance (DEG), which posits that information technology is the primary driver for reintegrating services, promoting needs-based holism, and enabling a new, digital-facing administration (Dunleavy et al., 2006). This theoretical progression from disaggregation and competition to integration and digitalization provides the critical framework for analyzing Somaliland's reform journey.

### **3.2. Critiques and the Emergence of Post-NPM**

The implementation of New Public Management reforms, while achieving some gains in efficiency and cost-awareness, generated a substantial body of critique from scholars and practitioners. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the unintended consequences of NPM became increasingly apparent, revealing structural and philosophical flaws that prompted a re-evaluation of its core principles. These criticisms were not merely academic but stemmed from observable dysfunctions in public services, leading to a search for a successor paradigm that could address the fragmentation and loss of coherence NPM had engendered (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). This period of critique directly catalyzed the emergence of Post-New Public Management, which can be understood as a corrective movement aimed at rebuilding the state's capacity for integrated action.

A central and powerful critique of NPM focused on the profound fragmentation and the "silo effect" resulting from its relentless pursuit of disaggregation. The widespread practice of agencification, while intended to create focused and efficient units, had the perverse effect of breaking governments into myriad semi-autonomous organizations. This created entrenched vertical silos that guarded their budgets and prerogatives, leading to poor coordination, destructive competition for resources, and significant difficulties in addressing complex, "wicked" problems that inherently cross organizational boundaries (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Citizens were often left confused, forced to navigate a labyrinth of specialized agencies rather than receiving seamless, holistic government service.

A second major line of criticism concerned the loss of public service ethos and equity concerns. Critics argued that the importation of market values and the language of customer-orientation fundamentally eroded the traditional concept of citizenship and the public service ethic. Where public servants were once motivated by a duty to serve the public good, NPM's performance metrics incentivized a narrow, target-driven mentality that could encourage gaming the system ("hitting the target but missing the point") (Bevir, 2009). Furthermore, the emphasis on efficiency and marketization often came at the expense of equity, as privatized or marketized services could exclude marginalized populations who were not profitable "customers," thereby undermining the foundational principle of equal access to public services (Osborne, 2006).

In direct response to the problem of fragmentation, the Post-NPM movement championed the rise of "Whole-of-Government," "joined-up government," and reintegrative initiatives. These concepts became the new mantras of public reform, emphasizing horizontal coordination and collaboration across government departments and agencies. The goal was to break down the silos created by NPM and foster a more integrated approach to policy development and service delivery (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). This represented a decisive shift in values from competition towards collaboration, from autonomy towards coordination, and from disaggregation towards reintegration.

The "Whole-of-Government" approach is not merely about structural change but represents a holistic philosophy of governance. It seeks to ensure that government policies and programs are coherent, that resources are used effectively across organizational boundaries, and that citizens experience the state as a unified entity rather than a collection of disconnected parts (Pollitt, 2003). This often involves new coordination mechanisms, such as inter-departmental committees, pooled budgets, shared performance targets, and cross-cutting policy initiatives focused on complex issues like social exclusion or climate change.

These reintegrative initiatives signify a recognition that the most pressing challenges facing governments cannot be solved by single, specialized agencies working in isolation. Problems such as public health crises, national security, and environmental sustainability require a concerted effort that leverages the capabilities and knowledge of the entire public sector apparatus. Post-NPM, therefore, seeks to rebuild the central government's "steering" capacity that was deliberately weakened under the NPM doctrine of devolved autonomy.

It is crucial to understand that Post-NPM is not a simple return to the traditional bureaucracy of the pre-NPM era. Instead, it is a synthesis that attempts to retain the performance and results-oriented focus of NPM while layering on top of it a new set of structures and values designed to foster collaboration and policy coherence (Bouckaert, Peters, & Verhoest, 2010). This theoretical evolution from a disaggregated state to a "reintegrated" one provides a critical framework for assessing whether reforms in any context, including Somaliland, are moving beyond the NPM model to address its well-documented shortcomings.

### **3.3. Digital-Era Governance (DEG): A Digital-Led Evolution**

Digital-Era Governance (DEG) represents a profound evolution within the Post-NPM paradigm, positing that information technology is not merely a tool for efficiency but the primary catalyst and enabler for a fundamental restructuring of public administration. While Post-NPM provides the philosophical impetus for reintegration, DEG offers the practical mechanisms to achieve it at scale and depth. Dunleavy et al. (2006) argue that DEG is superseding NPM, driven by the transformative power of technological change rather than by ideological shift alone. This model moves beyond simply fixing the silos of NPM; it uses digital technology to reimagine the very architecture of government service delivery and citizen-state interaction, making it a highly relevant framework for assessing modernizing states, including Somaliland.

The first pillar of DEG, reintegration, directly counters NPM's agencification and fragmentation. DEG advocates for the pulling together of functions that were previously devolved or outsourced. However, unlike a simple structural reversal, digital reintegration is often achieved through shared technological platforms. For instance, a single government portal can seamlessly integrate services from multiple departments (e.g., tax, licenses, benefits), creating a unified front-end for the citizen while the back-end operations may remain distributed (Dunleavy et al., 2006). This technological reintegration reduces transaction costs for users and breaks down informational and operational barriers between government units, fostering the "whole-of-government" approach that Post-NPM theorists desired.

Closely linked to reintegration is the principle of needs-based holism. This pillar represents a radical reorientation from the agency-centric logic of NPM to a citizen-centric philosophy. Instead of forcing citizens to understand the complex structure of government to find the correct department or agency, DEG aims to design digital services around life events, such as "having a child," "starting a business," or "grieving a death" (Margetts & Dunleavy, 2013). The system is designed to be holistic from the user's perspective, automatically orchestrating the required processes across different government entities in the background. This approach recognizes that citizens' needs do not conform to the organizational charts of government and uses technology to make the state adapt to the people, not the other way around.

The third and foundational pillar is digitalization, which encompasses the full spectrum of digital transformation. This goes far beyond simply putting existing forms online (e-government 1.0) and involves a deep process change. It includes the development of integrated digital service delivery systems, the adoption of open data initiatives to promote transparency and innovation, and the leveraging of big data analytics for evidence-based policy-making (Margetts, 2017). Digitalization is the engine that makes reintegration and needs-based holism operationally feasible and cost-effective.

A critical aspect of DEG's digitalization is its potential to "leapfrog" traditional stages of administrative development. For countries with limited legacy infrastructure, like Somaliland, deploying mobile-first, cloud-based platforms can be more straightforward than for established governments burdened with outdated, incompatible systems (Heeks, 2006). This presents a unique opportunity to bypass the costly and disruptive phase of NPM-style fragmentation and move directly towards more integrated, digital-native governance models, though this potential is contingent on significant investment in digital capacity and literacy.

It is important to note that DEG is not without its own challenges and critiques. Concerns arise over the "digital divide" excluding vulnerable populations, data privacy and security in centralized systems, and the new forms of dependency on large technology corporations (Margetts, 2017). Furthermore, successful DEG requires more than just technology; it necessitates a supportive legal framework, digital skills in the civil service, and a cultural shift within government towards openness, collaboration, and user-centric design.

In summary, Digital-Era Governance provides a coherent theoretical framework that builds on the integrative ambitions of Post-NPM by offering a tangible pathway through digital technology. Its focus on reintegration, needs-based holism, and comprehensive digitalization presents a compelling model for 21st-century public administration. For a context like Somaliland, analyzing reforms



through the DEG lens is particularly valuable, as it allows for an assessment of whether digital initiatives are merely automating old processes or are genuinely driving a transformative, citizen-centric reintegration of the state.

#### **4. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN SOMALILAND**

##### **4.1. Historical and Political Context: Hybridity and State-Building**

Any analysis of public administration in Somaliland must begin with its extraordinary genesis. Unlike most states, Somaliland did not emerge from colonialism or revolution but from a conscious, bottom-up process of reconciliation and state-rebirth following the catastrophic collapse of the Somali state in 1991. The brutal civil war and the disintegration of central institutions left a vacuum filled by local clan-based movements, which eventually chose to forge their own path towards sovereignty and order (Renders, 2012). This unique origin story is the foundational context for its administrative system, predicated not on the imposition of a central state but on its negotiated construction.

The cornerstone of Somaliland's stability has been its innovative hybrid governance model, which deliberately blends modern Western-style institutions with deeply entrenched traditional Somali systems of authority. This is not merely a theoretical concept but a practical reality of daily governance. The modern component includes a constitution, a bicameral parliament, an executive branch with ministries, and a judiciary, forming the recognizable skeleton of a contemporary state (Walls, 2014). These institutions provide the formal framework for administration and claim a monopoly on legal authority.

However, operating in tandem, and often in integration with these modern structures, are the traditional institutions of clan governance. The most prominent of these is the **Guurti**, the House of Elders, which forms the upper chamber of parliament. The Guurti is not elected by universal suffrage but is composed of senior clan leaders and religious figures, embodying the traditional authority of Somali society (Bradbury, 2008). Its role in conflict mediation, legitimizing political agreements, and providing stability is widely cited as a critical factor in Somaliland's success compared to the south.

Alongside the Guurti, the principle of **Xeer** plays a fundamental role. Xeer is a complex, pre-colonial system of customary law that governs social contracts, dispute resolution, and compensation between and within clans (Van Notten, 2005). While the formal legal system is based on statutory law, Xeer continues to operate in parallel, especially in rural areas and in mediating inter-clan conflicts. This often creates a dual legal system where modern courts and traditional elders jointly navigate complex cases.

This hybrid model presents a significant paradox for public administration. On one hand, it has been remarkably successful in maintaining peace and forging a collective Somalilander identity, achieving a level of stability that is unprecedented in the region. The incorporation of traditional leaders granted the nascent state immediate legitimacy and an effective, pre-existing mechanism for conflict resolution (Renders, 2012). This bottom-up legitimacy is a stark contrast to the top-down, often coercive state-building exercises seen elsewhere.

On the other hand, this very hybridity creates inherent tensions for implementing standardized, Weberian-style bureaucratic reforms like NPM. Clan loyalty (*qabiil*) can and often does conflict with the modern state's requirements for merit-based recruitment, impartial service delivery, and universal citizenship (Eubank, 2012). Administrative appointments and the allocation of resources can be influenced by clan patronage networks, potentially undermining the principles of efficiency, neutrality, and equity that underpin most public sector reform models. This tension between modern rational-legal authority and traditional patrimonial authority is the central dynamic shaping Somaliland's administrative landscape.

##### **4.2. The Donor Influence: Imported Agendas and Conditional Funding**

Somaliland's public administration reforms cannot be understood without acknowledging the profound role of international financial institutions (IFIs), bilateral donors, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). As an unrecognized state, Somaliland is largely ineligible for direct budget support or loans from major IFIs like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Consequently, development assistance is channeled primarily through projects and programs focused on capacity building and governance reform (World Bank, 2019). This project-based funding model gives donors outsized influence in setting the reform agenda.

Donors have overwhelmingly promoted a package of reforms derived from the New Public Management (NPM) toolkit. Reports and strategy documents from major actors consistently advocate for familiar NPM themes: civil service reform based on performance metrics, the creation of semi-autonomous agencies for revenue collection and service delivery, public financial management (PFM) reforms for greater transparency, and the commercialization or privatization of state-owned enterprises (UNDP, 2020). These are presented as technical, neutral solutions for building an effective and efficient state.

The driving rationale behind this promotion is a belief in the universal applicability of these "best practice" models. Donors operate from a standpoint that the NPM-inspired reforms that were implemented in Western countries represent the most advanced and

effective form of public administration and are therefore directly transferable (Andrews, 2013). This approach often prioritizes technical solutions over political and cultural realities, leading to a phenomenon known as "isomorphic mimicry," where Somaliland adopts the forms of modern institutions (e.g., an audit agency) without necessarily developing the underlying functionality in a way that is congruent with its hybrid context.

This donor influence creates a complex dependency. The Somaliland government, chronically underfunded and eager to build legitimacy through visible state functionality, is highly motivated to accept donor aid and funding. This results in a reform agenda that is often more reflective of donor priorities than homegrown, context-specific strategies (Hesse, 2010). Government ministries may design proposals and structure units specifically to align with donor funding cycles and thematic interests, potentially distorting local administrative priorities.

Furthermore, the implementation of these donor-driven NPM reforms often faces significant challenges on the ground. The emphasis on creating lean, efficient agencies can clash with the political necessity of maintaining a civil service that absorbs unemployment and manages clan balance through patronage (Eubank, 2012). Performance-based pay and promotion are difficult to implement in a system where seniority and clan affiliation remain powerful factors. The push for privatization can be politically dangerous, seen as selling national assets or threatening vested interests.

In conclusion, the contextual background of Somaliland's public administration is defined by a double heritage: an internal, organic heritage of hybrid governance blending traditional and modern institutions, and an external, imposed heritage of donor-driven NPM reforms. The interaction, and often the friction, between these two forces—the indigenous, politically-legitimate hybrid model and the imported, technically-driven NPM model—forms the critical lens through which the effectiveness and legacy of its administrative reforms must be analyzed. The state operates in a constant negotiation between these two powerful logics.

## **5. ANALYSIS OF NPM REFORMS IN SOMALILAND: LEGACY AND EFFECTIVENESS**

### **5.1. Privatization and Marketization**

The implementation of New Public Management-inspired privatization and marketization in Somaliland presents a complex picture of remarkable success in one sector juxtaposed with stagnation and failure in others. Following the logic of NPM, which posits that private ownership and competition drive efficiency and improve service quality, donors and some government actors have pushed for reducing the state's direct role in service provision. The most compelling evidence of these attempts is found in the telecommunications sector, which was fully liberalized and opened to private investment shortly after Somaliland's declaration of independence. This *laissez-faire* approach led to the emergence of competing private firms, most notably Somtel, Somcable, and Telesom, (Hesse, 2010). In utilities, similar intentions have been expressed for sectors like water and electricity, though with markedly different outcomes.

The effectiveness and legacy of this policy are profoundly mixed and sector-dependent. In telecommunications, marketization has been an undeniable success story, transforming Somaliland into a region with some of the most advanced and widely accessible mobile money and mobile telephony services in Africa. The private sector, unencumbered by bureaucratic constraints, innovated rapidly, famously pioneering the E-dahab and Zaad payment system, which became a critical piece of economic infrastructure (World Bank, 2019). However, in other sectors like water and power, attempts at privatization or commercialization have largely stalled or failed. The legacy here is one of private monopolies or oligopolies where they do exist, characterized by high prices and limited coverage, as the state lacks the strong regulatory capacity needed to oversee private providers and enforce standards or fair pricing (Hesse, 2010). Political resistance from elites with vested interests in the status quo has also frequently halted reforms.

A major critique of the privatization drive is that it can fundamentally undermine state-building. In a nascent state like Somaliland, where establishing the government's legitimacy and presence is paramount, ceding control over essential services like water or electricity to private entities can weaken the social contract. Citizens may begin to attribute the provision of basic services to private companies rather than to the state, potentially eroding the state's legitimacy and its perceived role as a primary duty-bearer (Renders, 2012). This creates a paradox where efforts to create a "leaner," more efficient state through NPM, may inadvertently weaken the very authority and legitimacy the state is trying to build.

Furthermore, the push for marketization raises significant equity issues in access to services. Private companies, driven by profit motives, naturally prioritize serving lucrative urban markets and wealthy customers. This often leads to the neglect of rural, remote, or impoverished urban communities where providing services is less profitable. Consequently, the shift from a public service ethos (however imperfectly implemented) to a commercial one can exacerbate existing inequalities, denying the most vulnerable populations access to essential utilities and deepening socio-economic divides (Cunningham, 2011). This outcome stands in direct contradiction to the principle of universal access, which is a cornerstone of public service.

The experience of Somaliland suggests that the success of marketization is highly contingent on pre-existing conditions. The telecom sector succeeded because it was a new industry without an entrenched public monopoly, allowing agile private actors to fill a vacuum. In contrast, reforming existing, failing state utilities requires a level of regulatory sophistication and political will that is often beyond the capacity of a young administration. The result is a patchwork of service delivery where citizens' access to basic services depends more on their geographic location and economic status than on any coherent government policy, highlighting the limitations of a one-size-fits-all NPM approach.

In conclusion, while the telecom sector is frequently cited by proponents of marketization as a model for Somaliland, it remains the exception rather than the rule. The broader legacy of privatization efforts is one of inconsistency, unmet regulatory needs, and potential collateral damage to the state-building project. This suggests that a more nuanced approach, perhaps involving carefully regulated public-private partnerships or community-based models, may be more appropriate than wholesale NPM-style divestment for a state in Somaliland's unique position.

## 5.2. Agencification and Structural Reforms

The NPM principle of agencification, creating semi-autonomous bodies to handle operational tasks, has been a central tenet of donor-supported public sector reform in Somaliland. The evidence for this is visible in the establishment of several key institutions designed to operate at arm's length from core ministries. The most prominent and frequently cited example is the Somaliland Revenue Authority (SRA). Established as an autonomous agency, the SRA was given a clear mandate, independent management, and performance-based targets to improve revenue collection (World Bank, 2019). Similar agency-style models have been proposed or implemented in other areas, such as civil service commissions, road authorities, and specific service delivery units within ministries.

The effectiveness and legacy of agencification are decidedly mixed and reflect a clear pattern. Specifically, in high-priority areas like revenue collection, the model has yielded significant successes. The SRA is widely considered a triumph of reform, having dramatically increased domestic revenue by leveraging its autonomy to hire skilled staff, implement modern IT systems, and operate with a degree of efficiency and professionalism often absent in line ministries (Eubank, 2012). Its success is attributed to its focused mandate, insulation from the day-to-day political and clan pressures of ministerial structures, and sustained donor support. This demonstrates that agencification *can* work in the Somaliland context when applied strategically.

However, outside such shining examples, the legacy of agencification is often one of confusion in chains of command and operational friction. When applied more broadly, the creation of semi-autonomous agencies has frequently led to tensions with parent ministries, which may resent the loss of control and resources. This can result in bureaucratic turf wars, duplicated efforts, and a lack of coordination between policy-making (retained by the ministry) and implementation (delegated to the agency) (Pirani, 2016). The clarity of the SRA's mandate is often missing in other sectors, leading to agencies that are autonomous in name but remain deeply entangled in the traditional governance web, thereby failing to achieve the intended efficiency gains.

A core critique is that agencification fundamentally contradicts the need for a unified, coherent state apparatus. For a young, unrecognized state like Somaliland, building a strong, centralized administrative capacity is a primary objective of state-building. The deliberate fragmentation of the state into multiple autonomous agencies can work against this goal, creating a disjointed landscape of fiefdoms rather than a cohesive, integrated government (Christensen & Lægheid, 2007). This NPM-induced fragmentation can make it exceedingly difficult to pursue coordinated "whole-of-government" policies on complex national issues, as each agency prioritizes its own narrow performance indicators.

This structural disaggregation also creates profound challenges of accountability. To whom are these agency heads ultimately responsible? While in theory they account to their supervising ministry and, by extension, to parliament, in practice, their specialized nature, technical focus, and often direct financial links to donors can make them less accountable to domestic political oversight (Pirani, 2016). This can create a democratic deficit, where powerful agencies are effectively accountable upwards to international donors for meeting performance targets, rather than downwards to the citizens and their elected representatives for fulfilling broader public needs.

The Somaliland experience with agencification thus reveals a critical lesson: it is a tool, not a panacea. Its effectiveness is contingent on a clear and limited mandate, strong political backing, and a well-defined accountability framework that balances operational autonomy with ultimate ministerial and parliamentary oversight. Where these conditions are met, as with the SRA, it can be powerful. Where they are absent, it risks exacerbating the very problems of coordination and coherence it was meant to solve.

## 5.3. Performance Management and Managerialism

The introduction of performance management and managerialist techniques represents the less visible but deeply pervasive aspect of NPM reform in Somaliland. The evidence for this is found not in large structural changes but in the internal processes and documents of government and donor projects. This includes the introduction of performance contracts for senior civil servants, the

ubiquitous use of log frames (logical frameworks) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in all donor-funded initiatives, and training programs aimed at instilling a results-based management culture within the civil service (UNDP, 2020). These tools are presented as technical solutions to improve accountability and efficiency.

The effectiveness and legacy of these managerialist reforms are largely superficial. While performance metrics and log frames are now widely *used*, they have primarily become a donor-driven exercise in compliance and reporting. Government agencies learn to produce the required documents to secure funding and demonstrate progress to international partners, but the underlying culture of the civil service often remains unchanged (Andrews, 2013). The internalization of these performance-oriented values is limited; they are rituals performed for an external audience rather than genuine management tools guiding daily decision-making and resource allocation within ministries.

This gap between form and function leads to a state of ritualistic compliance. Civil servants become adept at "hitting the target but missing the point," a classic critique of performance management systems where meeting a quantitative metric becomes the goal itself, sometimes at the expense of the actual objective (Bevir, 2009). For example, a health clinic might be evaluated on the number of patients seen rather than on health outcomes, incentivizing staff to prioritize quantity over quality of care. This ritualism undermines the very purpose of the reforms and can even introduce new inefficiencies.

The most profound critique is that this managerialist model represents a fundamental misfit with clan-based patronage systems. NPM-style performance management assumes a Weberian bureaucracy where appointments and promotions are based on merit and performance. In Somaliland, however, the civil service is a key arena for managing clan balance and distributing patronage (Renders, 2012). appointments and promotions are often influenced by *qabiil* (clan) considerations to maintain political stability and appease different groups. A performance-based system that seeks to reward the most productive employees directly challenges this politically necessary practice.

Attempting to impose a pure meritocratic system without acknowledging the political function of the civil service can therefore be destabilizing. It creates a tension between the formal rules of the new system and the informal, politically salient rules that actually govern careers. This often results in a hybrid practice where performance review documents are filled out to satisfy donors, but actual promotion decisions continue to be made through a calculus that balances merit with clan representation and political loyalty (Eubank, 2012).

Consequently, the legacy of performance management is one of added administrative burden without a transformative change in culture or incentives. It has created a dual system: a paper world of KPIs and log frames that exists for donors, and a real world where the logic of clan and patronage continues to operate powerfully. This does not mean that all aspects of managerialism are worthless, but it highlights that technocratic tools cannot easily override deep-seated political and social structures.

In summary, the analysis of these three NPM pillars in Somaliland reveals a consistent theme: the implementation of NPM reforms has produced isolated islands of success in areas with clear mandates and strong external support (e.g., the SRA). However, their broader effectiveness has been severely limited by a lack of regulatory capacity, political resistance, and a fundamental incompatibility with the hybrid political and social realities of Somaliland's state-building project. The reforms have often introduced new tensions and contradictions without fully achieving their intended goals of creating a more efficient and performance-oriented public administration.

## **6. The Shift? Examining Post-NPM and Digital-Era Governance in Somaliland**

### **6.1. Reintegrative and "Whole-of-Government" Initiatives**

The global critique of NPM's fragmentation has led to the promotion of "Whole-of-Government" (WoG) approaches, which emphasize reintegration, collaboration, and cross-cutting policies to address complex challenges. In Somaliland, evidence of such initiatives is nascent and predominantly donor-driven. Projects often focused on public financial management (PFM), for instance, aim to create integrated financial management information systems (IFMIS) that require coordination between the Ministry of Finance, line ministries, and spending agencies (World Bank, 2019). Similarly, donor-supported "capacity development" programs frequently advocate for and fund inter-ministerial committees or task forces to address specific issues like civil service reform or anti-corruption strategies, creating formal structures intended to foster collaboration.

However, a critical analysis reveals that these initiatives do not represent a conscious, systemic shift towards a Post-NPM paradigm in Somaliland's administrative philosophy. Instead, they are often isolated, ad-hoc responses to the failures of fragmentation that became apparent through the uneven implementation of NPM itself. These projects are typically technocratic exercises designed by international consultants and are dependent on external funding and impetus. They exist alongside, rather than replace, the entrenched, siloed structures created by agencification and ministerial turf wars, lacking the sustained political ownership and deep cultural change needed to become the norm.



Paradoxically, one of the most powerful "joining-up" mechanisms in Somaliland operates entirely outside the formal state apparatus: the traditional clan system. While NPM and WoG are modern administrative concepts, the clan network (*qabiil*) functions as a pervasive, informal, and highly effective integrator of governance. Clan affiliations and the authority of elders create horizontal linkages that cut vertically across all ministries and agencies (Renders, 2012). A minister may feel a stronger obligation to consult with and achieve consensus among clan elders from his constituency than to coordinate with a fellow minister from a rival clan, even on a technically related policy issue.

This informal integration presents a complex duality. On one hand, it can facilitate coordination and conflict resolution where formal mechanisms fail, providing a layer of social cohesion that has been vital for Somaliland's stability. On the other hand, it can fundamentally undermine the formal "Whole-of-Government" ideal by prioritizing clan-based interests over national, technocratic, or merit-based considerations. A WoG approach requires a primary identity as a state actor; the clan system reinforces sub-state identities, making truly impartial, cross-cutting collaboration within the formal state structure exceptionally difficult.

Therefore, the pursuit of WoG in Somaliland is not a simple matter of adopting new coordination techniques. It requires navigating a delicate balance between leveraging the integrative capacity of traditional institutions and preventing them from corrupting the impartiality of the modern state. Effective reintegration cannot be achieved solely through donor-funded projects; it must be organically cultivated through a political settlement that finds a sustainable equilibrium between these competing logics of governance—formal and informal, modern and traditional.

Consequently, while the *language* of coordination and integration is entering the policy discourse through donor influence, a genuine Post-NPM shift remains elusive. The state operates in a hybrid space where the problems of NPM fragmentation are acknowledged, but the solutions are either technical and superficial (donor projects) or informal and politically complex (clan mediation). Somaliland has yet to develop a coherent, homegrown model of reintegration that successfully synthesizes its unique hybrid governance with the functional needs of a modern state.

In summary, the evidence for a shift towards Post-NPM reintegrative initiatives is weak. What exists is a patchwork of donor-led projects that scratch the surface of the fragmentation problem, while the most powerful integrating force remains the informal clan system, which operates by a logic entirely separate from, and sometimes in opposition to, the principles of modern "Whole-of-Government" policy.

## 6.2. Digital-Era Governance (DEG) as a Potential Leapfrog

Unlike the hesitant movement towards administrative reintegration, the digital transformation in Somaliland is vibrant and rapidly advancing, presenting a potential pathway to leapfrog traditional bureaucratic stages. The most compelling evidence of this is the spectacular, private-sector-driven adoption of mobile money. Systems like Telesom's Zaad and Somtel's e-Dahab are not mere payment tools; they have become foundational economic platforms facilitating everything from salary payments and utility bills to international remittances, achieving a level of financial inclusion that many recognized states struggle to match (Hesse, 2010). On the government side, there are ongoing efforts to digitize records, including the civil service payroll to reduce ghost workers, and immigration records to enhance border security and service delivery.

A critical analysis of this digital shift, however, reveals a crucial distinction: the primary driver of innovation is the private sector (telecoms) rather than a strategic government DEG plan. The government's role has largely been a permissive one, allowing the private sector to innovate with minimal regulation. This situation represents a form of de facto outsourcing and marketization of core state functions like financial infrastructure and identity verification. This blurs the theoretical lines between NPM and DEG; it is NPM-style privatization creating the platforms that could enable DEG-style reintegration. The government is piggybacking on private sector success rather than leading a cohesive digital transformation strategy.

This dynamic creates both opportunities and risks. The opportunity lies in the potential for digital platforms to become pragmatic tools that bypass traditional bureaucratic weaknesses. The existing mobile money infrastructure offers a ready-made platform for the government to achieve core Post-NPM goals. For instance, a single digital portal for citizen services could be developed where citizens, already accustomed to using their phones for transactions, could access integrated services from multiple ministries—renewing a license, paying taxes, and applying for benefits through a unified interface. This would achieve "needs-based holism" from the citizen's perspective, even if the back-end government structures remained fragmented.

Such an approach would constitute a genuine "leapfrog" maneuver. Somaliland could potentially bypass the costly and disruptive phase of building a full, traditional Weberian bureaucracy and instead move directly towards a digital-native governance model (Heeks, 2006). Digital platforms can compensate for a lack of physical administrative presence, especially in remote areas, and enhance transparency by reducing discretionary manual processes vulnerable to corruption. The citizen-centric design inherent in successful apps like Zaad provides a model for how government services *should* be designed: intuitive, accessible, and efficient.

However, this potential is contingent on the state moving from a passive to an active role. The risks of the current model are significant. Dependence on private corporations for critical state functions raises questions of accountability, data sovereignty, and equity. The terms of service, data privacy policies, and operational priorities of a company like Telesom are not subject to public scrutiny or parliamentary oversight in the way a government department would be (Margetts, 2017). Furthermore, a purely market-driven approach may still exclude the very poorest or those in areas with no network coverage, exacerbating digital divides.

Therefore, the future of DEG in Somaliland hinges on the state's ability to evolve from a passive beneficiary of private innovation to a strategic regulator and architect of its digital ecosystem. This requires building internal capacity to develop and manage digital services, creating robust legal frameworks for data protection and digital inclusion, and forging new forms of public-private partnerships that leverage private sector agility while ensuring public accountability and equitable access.

In conclusion, while Somaliland may not be consciously pursuing a Digital-Era Governance strategy, the ground-level reality of its digital transformation presents a more tangible opportunity for achieving Post-NPM goals than its formal administrative reforms. The ubiquitous mobile phone and the culture of digital finance it has created provide a unique foundation upon which a more integrated, holistic, and citizen-centric state could be built—if the government can seize the initiative and provide the necessary strategic direction and oversight.

## **7. COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **7.1. The Hybrid Reality: Beyond NPM and Post-NPM**

The preceding analysis reveals that Somaliland's public administration cannot be neatly categorized as either a New Public Management or a Post-NPM state. Instead, it operates through a complex and dynamic hybrid model where multiple governance logics coexist, compete, and occasionally. This hybridity is not a temporary phase but a fundamental characteristic of its state-building project, reflecting the intricate interplay between imported models and indigenous realities (Renders, 2012). This synthesis posits that Somaliland's administrative landscape is a tripartite system, each layer operating by a distinct set of rules and principles.

Formally, the state adopts NPM-like structures and rhetoric primarily under significant donor influence. The architecture of its public sector is increasingly populated with semi-autonomous agencies, performance metrics, and policy documents advocating for privatization and efficiency, all hallmarks of the NPM toolkit (World Bank, 2019). This formal layer provides the legitimizing language and institutional forms required to engage with the international community and access development funding. It represents the state's aspiration to be recognized as a modern, rational-legal bureaucracy, yet this adoption is often partial and focused on form rather than function.

Informally, the engine of daily governance and political stability is powered by traditional, patrimonial, and clan-based systems. The formal rules of NPM are consistently mediated, and often overridden, by the informal logic of *qabiil* (clan), the authority of elders, and patronage networks (Eubank, 2012). This informal system ensures political buy-in, manages conflict, and facilitates coordination in ways that the formal silos of government cannot. However, it also directly challenges NPM's core tenets of meritocracy, neutrality, and impartiality, creating a system where administrative actions are often influenced by kinship and political loyalty rather than performance metrics.

Technologically, a third layer is emerging that transcends this formal-informal binary: a bottom-up digital revolution. Driven overwhelmingly by the private sector, particularly telecommunications companies, this revolution is reshaping service delivery and economic interaction outside the classic NPM/Post-NPM paradigm (Hesse, 2010). The phenomenal success of mobile money platforms like Zaad represents a form of de facto infrastructure outsourcing that delivers NPM-style efficiency and DEG-style integration simultaneously, but based on market logic rather than state design.

This tripartite hybrid reality means that evaluating Somaliland's reforms through a purely NPM or Post-NPM lens is insufficient. A reform may be a formal success (e.g., meeting donor KPIs) but an informal failure (e.g., exacerbating clan tensions), or a technological success (e.g., high digital adoption) that occurs largely outside state control. The state's challenge is to navigate this complexity, finding ways to harness the efficiency of the formal, the legitimacy of the informal, and the innovation of the technological, without allowing one to destructively dominate the others.

Therefore, the key finding of this review is that Somaliland's path is not a linear evolution from NPM to Post-NPM. It is a unique, context-driven negotiation between these parallel systems. The future of its public administration will depend less on its fidelity to any single Western paradigm and more on its ability to craft a sophisticated, homegrown model of governance that strategically integrates these competing yet complementary logics into a coherent, functional whole.

### **7.2. The Contextual Misfit of NPM**

A central synthesis of this review is that the core failure of NPM reforms in Somaliland was not necessarily their design, but their profound contextual misfit. The NPM model, developed for and within mature Western states with strong institutions and established markets, was applied with little adaptation to a context defined by state-building, institutional fragility, and a powerful informal sector (Andrews, 2013). This misfit manifested in several critical ways, ultimately limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of the reforms and generating unintended consequences.

Firstly, NPM's core principle of disaggregation (through agencification and outsourcing) directly contradicted the primary imperative of a nascent state: building a coherent, unified administrative capacity. For Somaliland, constructing a centralized state apparatus that could project authority and foster a national identity was a fundamental goal. The NPM playbook, which deliberately fragmented the state, risked undermining this objective by creating a landscape of uncoordinated fiefdoms, thereby weakening the state's steering capacity at the very moment it needed to be strengthened (Christensen & Lægveid, 2007).

Secondly, NPM's reliance on market mechanisms assumed the existence of a functioning market and a capable regulatory state—conditions largely absent in Somaliland. The attempt to introduce competition in sectors like utilities foundered due to a lack of regulatory capacity to oversee private monopolies, leading to high prices and inequitable access rather than improved efficiency (Hesse, 2010). The model's failure to account for the state's weak institutional capacity to regulate and manage contracts meant that marketization often led to market failure or the mere replacement of a public monopoly with a private one.

Thirdly, and most significantly, NPM's technocratic, meritocratic assumptions clashed violently with Somaliland's socio-political reality. The model's insistence on performance-based management and client-orientation ignored the fact that the civil service is a key political arena for maintaining clan balance and distributing patronage (Renders, 2012). Imposing a system that rewarded individual performance threatened the delicate political settlements that underpin stability, ensuring that such reforms would be resisted, subverted, or adopted only ritualistically to satisfy donors.

This contextual misfit led to a phenomenon akin to what Andrews (2013) terms "isomorphic mimicry"—the adoption of the forms of modern institutions (e.g., an autonomous revenue authority) without their intended function. The SRA succeeded precisely because it was insulated from the broader system; elsewhere, NPM structures were grafted onto a governance body that continued to operate on patrimonial and clan-based logic. The result was not the transformation of the system but the creation of a dualistic administration where new formal rules coexisted with, and were often subordinate to, enduring informal practices.

In conclusion, the legacy of NPM in Somaliland is a testament to the limits of policy transfer. Its shortcomings arose from a fundamental neglect of context: the political necessity of patronage, the state-building need for coherence, and the institutional limitations on regulation. The effectiveness of any administrative reform is not inherent in its design but is contingent on its alignment with the underlying political and social realities of the place where it is implemented.

### **7.3. Is Post-NPM the Answer?**

Given the documented shortcomings of NPM, a logical question is whether the principles of Post-New Public Management and Digital-Era Governance offer a more viable path forward for Somaliland. Theoretically, the principles of Post-NPM, reintegration, holism, and collaboration appear far more aligned with the needs of state-building and the country's traditional communal ethos. The concept of "whole-of-government" resonates with the indigenous imperative for consensus and collective action, while DEG's citizen-centric holism offers a tool to enhance state legitimacy through improved service delivery (Dunleavy et al., 2006). However, a conscious and formal "shift" remains severely constrained.

The primary constraint is that the same capacity and donor-preference constraints that shaped NPM adoption also hinder a genuine shift to Post-NPM. Donors often continue to promote standardized "best practice" solutions. While these may now be packaged as "integration" or "digital governance" projects, they can still be technically complex, top-down, and disembedded from local political realities (Andrews, 2013). Without deep ownership and adaptation, these initiatives risk becoming the next generation of donor-driven rituals—creating inter-ministerial committees that do not meet or digital portals that are not maintained—failing to achieve meaningful reintegration.

Furthermore, the political economy of Somaliland presents a unique challenge. The traditional clan system, while a powerful informal integrator, operates on a logic that is often antithetical to the formal, impartial collaboration envisioned by Post-NPM. "Whole-of-government" collaboration requires actors to identify primarily as parts of a unified state apparatus. However, the clan system reinforces sub-state identities, making truly impartial, cross-clan collaboration within the formal bureaucracy exceptionally difficult (Renders, 2012). Reintegration efforts must therefore navigate the delicate task of leveraging the positive coordinating aspects of traditional governance while mitigating its particularistic and exclusionary tendencies.

The potential for Digital-Era Governance to act as a leapfrog mechanism is Somaliland's most promising avenue. The population's high familiarity with digital platforms provides a unique foundation to build integrated, citizen-centric services that bypass

cumbersome bureaucratic structures (Heeks, 2006). However, as noted, this currently is driven by the private sector. For DEG to fulfill its Post-NPM potential, the state must transition from a passive beneficiary to an active architect and regulator of the digital ecosystem, a move that requires significant investment in strategic capacity, legal frameworks, and digital literacy that may currently be beyond its reach.

Therefore, while Post-NPM principles are theoretically better suited, their implementation faces a paradox: they require a level of state capacity, strategic coherence, and political consensus that the fragmented legacy of NPM and the realities of hybrid governance have made difficult to achieve. The answer is not simply to import another model, but to foster an endogenous, context-sensitive approach to integration.

This suggests that the most effective path may not be a wholesale "shift" to a new paradigm, but a pragmatic hybridization of goals. The state could focus on strategically applying Post-NPM and DEG principles in specific, high-impact areas where they align with local incentives and capacities—such as using digital platforms to integrate revenue collection or citizen service delivery—while accepting that other areas will continue to be governed by a mix of formal bureaucracy and traditional negotiation.

In conclusion, Post-NPM is not a ready-made answer but a source of valuable concepts. Its principles of integration and holism provide a better compass for Somaliland's journey than NPM's disaggregation ever did. However, the direction must be set by Somaliland itself, through a process that thoughtfully synthesizes global insights with local wisdom, rather than simply swapping one imported template for another.

## **8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.1. Summary of Findings**

This systematic review has elucidated the complex legacy of New Public Management (NPM) in Somaliland, revealing a landscape of mixed effectiveness. The implementation of core NPM tenets—privatization, agencification, and performance management—yielded isolated successes, most notably in revenue collection through the Somaliland Revenue Authority and in the telecommunications sector through marketization. However, the broader legacy is one of limited impact, unintended consequences, and contextual misfit, characterized by fragmentation, unmet regulatory needs, and a reinforcement of inequities in access to essential services. The analysis finds no evidence of a conscious, systemic shift towards a Post-NPM paradigm; instead, reintegrative initiatives remain nascent, donor-driven, and often overshadowed by the powerful, informal integrating force of the traditional clan system. Concurrently, a bottom-up digital revolution, primarily led by the private sector, presents a disruptive and promising opportunity to leapfrog traditional bureaucratic hurdles, though it currently operates outside a cohesive government strategy, blurring the lines between NPM-style outsourcing and Digital-Era Governance's (DEG) integrative potential.

### **8.2. Contributions**

This review makes a significant contribution by providing a structured synthesis of a widely dispersed body of literature, amalgamating academic scholarship with critical grey literature from policy and donor reports that are essential for understanding on-the-ground realities in Somaliland. It offers a clear and robust analytical framework—tracking the evolution from NPM to Post-NPM and DEG—that allows for a nuanced understanding of the competing logics and hybrid nature of public administration in a unique state-building context. By rigorously applying this framework, the review moves beyond simplistic assessments of success or failure, instead providing a critical lens to analyze the interaction, friction, and negotiation between imported reform models and indigenous governance structures, thereby filling a notable gap in the literature on policy transfer and hybrid political orders.

### **8.3. Policy Recommendations**

A paramount policy recommendation is for both the Somaliland government and its international partners to move away from ideological adherence to any standardized Western model, whether NPM or Post-NPM, and instead prioritize the development of context-sensitive reforms. These reforms should strategically blend modern administrative tools with the strengths of indigenous governance institutions, leveraging the integrative capacity of traditional systems while mitigating their particularistic tendencies to foster a uniquely Somaliland model of public administration. Furthermore, the government must strategically harness digital technology (DEG) as a central pillar of future reform, evolving from a passive beneficiary of private innovation to an active architect of its digital ecosystem by developing a national digital strategy, robust legal frameworks for data protection, and public-private partnerships that ensure digital services promote integration, citizen-centric design, and equitable access, thereby solidifying state legitimacy.

### **8.4. Avenues for Future Research**

Future research should prioritize empirical studies on specific digital governance initiatives, such as the implementation of e-payment systems for public services or digital identity platforms, to critically assess their impact on integration, corruption reduction, and

citizen engagement. There is also a pressing need for in-depth qualitative analysis of the daily interaction between formal (NPM-inspired) agencies and traditional institutions to understand the practical negotiations and hybrid practices that actually constitute governance in Somaliland. Finally, research on citizen perceptions of different service delivery models (privatized, traditional, digital) is crucial to ground future reforms in the actual needs and preferences of the population, ensuring that administrative evolution enhances state-society relations and the social contract.

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