Re-imagining Citizenship in Kenya: The 'Shareholding' Metaphor and its Implications for National Security

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Abstract

The ideas of citizenship in uncertain security settings are in flux. The principles of citizenship are under question, not only in terms of their direct bearing on national security, but also in their privatization. Kenya is not an exception: the nation-state is becoming increasingly similar to a private corporation, in which citizens are considered to be the owners of shares, depending on how they vote during the general elections. The derogatory term "shareholding" has gained popularity in society. The partisans and coalition that gains power after an election are referred to as the majority shareholders in the government, and the electoral losers are considered to have no or a few shares and, hence, minimal right to the resources and opportunities of the population. Even though the concept of legal citizenship remains universal and protected by the 2010 Constitution, the metaphor of informal shareholding essentially redefines the everyday sense of belonging and rightful access to privileges, generating exclusionary practices in a manner different from those of formal citizenship. The paper discusses the question of why and how the shareholding metaphor has emerged and gained momentum and empirically demonstrates how it functions as a parallel, politically constructed form of hierarchical belonging that privatizes public space and weakens national security. Using purposively selected key informant interviews (including respondents who defend the metaphor as a legitimate political reward and those who dismiss it as harmless rhetoric) and historical analysis of post-independence regimes, the study demonstrates continuity in exclusionary practices from Kenyatta's administration to the present. Drawing on an expanded literature on hybrid governance, clientelism, neo-patrimonialism and performative belonging, this proposal presents a citizen-centric hybrid model that deliberately integrates formal state institutions with inclusive participatory practices to counter the shareholder narrative and enhance national security.

Keywords: *Belonging, citizenship practices, clientelism, exclusion, hybrid governance, Shareholding metaphor, national security*

Introduction

Traditional conceptions of citizenship, based on the state's monopoly on legitimate violence (Weber, 1919), face challenges from non-state threats and politically charged narratives, including shareholder activism. In the traditional sense, to be a citizen, one must be a member of a polity called the state, be an active participant in the polity, and, as a member, be subject to the laws of the state (Lister, 1997). Citizenship, therefore, revolves around the social contract between those who govern and the governed. It is a public enterprise and the result of a hierarchical relationship between an individual citizen and the state. (Dayi Ogali, 2023). The individual owes loyalty and allegiance to the state and, in turn, is entitled to protection.

Shareholding, on the other hand, depicts a private enterprise, especially in the context of the levels of ownership of private companies. Being a shareholder in a company means owning shares in the company. Enormous respect and is rendered to those with a bigger shareholding in a company. Those who have no shares in a company do not enjoy the benefits accruing to shareholders. Furthermore, the more shares one holds, the greater the respect and responsibility one receives. Shareholding, therefore, depends on who holds what in a company. Can this conceptualization of shareholding as accepted in private companies be extended to public spheres? How does shareholding interact with citizenship? Within the Kenyan context, citizenship is legally defined by the Constitution of Kenya (2010, Articles 12–18) and the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act (Cap 170, 2011), yet in everyday political discourse, the two terms are often conflated through the shareholding metaphor. Rather than being mutually opposing concepts, they are frequently presented as two sides of the same coin, although this conflation is contested and not universally accepted. According to Kanyinga (1994), this can be attributed to the heterogeneous nature of Kenyan society, which has a historical origin in political exclusion, whereby ethnic and regional diversity has been instrumentalized to create inclusion for some and exclusion for others.

As a result, this presents a challenge to national security, societal well-being and human security as it perpetuates social cleavages and hierarchies. In this study, therefore, the pitfalls of a state-centric model of citizenship are illustrated, with the shareholding metaphor serving as the primary fulcrum that affects the stakes in governance. The study proposes a hybrid approach or a citizen-centric model that integrates the varied dimensions that broaden the conceptions of citizenship: legal, political, social, personal and cultural.

Literature Review

The meaning of citizenship has evolved. Classical philosophers, such as Plato, have consistently interpreted citizenship as a social contract that ties one to the state. Plato noted that citizenship was a responsibility in which individuals followed and honored the laws of the Greek city-state in exchange for enjoying the rewards of residing in the given state (Milbank, 2021). It was therefore more of a legal than a political question. Introspectively, the evolution of the modern state continues to shape the concept of citizenship. The state-citizen relationship has become more politicized through patronage networks and electoral alliances, such that alignment with the ruling elite often determines effective access to rights and resources – a dynamic captured in Kenya by the shareholding metaphor (Osaghae, 2016). This makes citizenship more of a political than a legal question in practice (Bhambra, 2015).

Citizenship is not viewed solely through the lens of law or geography. According to Nyamnjoh (2022), cybernetic citizenship and other non-geographically ascribed variants of citizenship accentuate the fact that boundary features are becoming less decisive in defining the concept of citizenship. Moreover, citizenship is more public than private(Melber et al., 2023). It is the way of life that accords a person the right to belong to a state and includes the protection of one's rights at home and abroad. For most people, citizenship is closely tied to the sense of belonging and solidarity (Nyamnjoh, 2022). It is closely tied to satisfaction with the distribution of public goods: if one receives adequate public services, jobs, contracts, or security, one feels like a true participant-citizen; if not, one is treated as a non-shareholder despite legal status (Dorman, 2014). Thus, the distribution of resources has become a key marker of lived citizenship.

Empirical studies indicate that conceptions of citizenship in African perspectives are connected to the legacy of exclusionary colonial politics (Repertoires, 1997; Whitaker, 2005; Melber *et al.,* 2023). It is based on hierarchical structures(Repertoires, 1997). Throughout much of post-independence Africa, dominant political classes have systematically restricted access to meaningful political participation, often justifying these restrictions as necessary safeguards for national unity and stability (Whitaker, 2005). The most common strategy that borders on the 'shareholding ideology' is the denial of citizenship to potential political opponents. Although still nascent within the East African context, the most publicized examples have been in Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia. In Côte d'Ivoire, political contenders targeted Alassie Outarra from the Northern region of the country. In their claims, Outarra was identified as a foreigner from Burkina Faso and was therefore barred from competing in the country's elections (Melber et al., 2023).

In Zambia, President Chiloba also employed deportation to prevent political competitors and critics of the government from occupying strategic positions in the country (Melber et al., 2023). Moreover, the creeping 'foreigner label' that is manifest through the Uzawa (indigenization) policy is a policy that sought to shift control of the economy from non-indigenous Tanzanians to African Tanzanians (Marijani & Milanzi, 2022). However, unlike the cases in Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia, overt manipulation of citizenship rights in Tanzania for political benefit has been relatively minimal. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) also centres on issues of identity and citizenship. According to Kamoga (2024), Rwanda has been accusing DRC of embracing FDLR forces, whom it blames for the Genocide against Tutsi in 1994. In the same breath, DRC has continued to deny direct support for M23, which it accuses of being a Rwandan force operating illegally in DRC. This means that M23 remains stateless, as Rwanda has stated they are not Rwandan.

In summary, the meaning and practice of citizenship in most East African and broader African postcolonial states have been characterized more by continuity with colonial-era logic than by transformative change. This is evident in the enduring hierarchical ordering of populations through restricted political belonging, differentiated legal statuses and the persistent framing of certain groups as "strangers" or non-indigenous, which reproduces colonial distinctions under new guises. Such inherited exclusions are sustained rather than dismantled by the post-independence regimes of citizenship, whose continued generation of tiered access to rights and resources reproduces stratified belonging. This is not only at variance with the egalitarian promise of national citizenship but also nurtures fertile ground for recurrent xenophobic mobilization and the legitimization of exclusionary approaches to nation-building (Tafira, 2011).

Theoretical Basis

The concept of 'hybridity' adopted in this study explains the realities related to blending or mixing core approaches to citizenship in order to enhance national security value. Hybridity first emerged as a postcolonial concept espoused through the seminal works of Homi Bhabha (Umar & Lawan, 2024). In his discussion of cultural hybridity, Bhaha privileges the in-betweenness that straddles two cultures. In the interaction between elements within a culture, a new hybrid identity tends to emerge, thus challenging essentialism. Essentialism is the belief that any property, entity, or agency is pure, fixed and absolute(Umar & Lawan, 2024). The proponents of hybridity and, by extension, postcolonial studies are therefore aware of the dangers of fixity, arguing that all forms of interaction, including culture, are continually in the process of hybridity.

The application of hybridity in the realms of security, justice and public administration is far-reaching. Within the realm of security, hybridity explores the intersections between formality and informality, as well as the state and non-state actors, in an effort to demonstrate the complex nature of security governance (Bagayoko et al., 2016). Security Sector Reforms (SSR) as a framework for analysis is a result of this hybridity. In the justice sector, hybridity refers to the integration of traditional and formal institutions in the administration of justice, particularly in post-conflict or transitioning societies. According to Clark (2007), hybridity is a common theme in the study and practice of transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction today. The Rwandan system of *Gacaca* exemplified this hybridity practice, where approximately 9,000 community-based

courts were created to operate alongside the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and national courts.

On citizenship, hybridity theory posits that traditional/state-centric and modern/citizen-centric forms can be blended to create a dynamic, transnational mosaic of legal, social, political, personal and cultural elements (Sigauke, 2021). This amalgamation shifts citizenship away from its state-centric or fixed conception to a more inclusive, citizen-centered concept. Although certain scholars rejoice over this change, as it has the potential to increase participation and national security, some worry that excessive hybridization might cause confusion between institutions or lead to a decline in their authority. The current work discusses the potential of shifting from state-centric citizenship to citizen-centered citizenship in the Kenyan case, as well as the constraints of the latter and how the shareholding metaphor complicates the shift.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, as the nature of the inquiry necessitated an in-depth examination of how the shareholding metaphor is utilized in the construction of differential stakes in the government of the day and how such discourse intersects with national security. As the qualitative approach best suited the inquiry into discovering perceptions, lived experiences and historical processes that anchor the exclusionary governance practices in Kenya, especially in situations where political elites instrumentalize the story of shareholding. It was a study design that was directly supportive of the objectives of the study, which had sought to examine how shareholding results in an unequal participation in government; to determine the mechanisms through which the elites legitimate and operationalise the same narratives; and gauge the possibility of having a citizen-based model to avert the security vulnerabilities resulting from such participation.

The described phenomenon of the shareholding metaphor, which is applied to the political situation in Kenya, comprises social constructions in which meaning is invariably contextualized. The focused topic of the research necessitated a qualitative design as the researcher needed to delve into how various actors perceive the meaning of shareholding, a symbol of either access, privilege, or exclusion in government structures and how such perceptions affect the perceptions of security, belonging and legitimacy. This kind of design also played a vital role in helping trace the historical process of the development of exclusionary practices in Kenyan governance. A qualitative design will ensure the depth, nuance and interpretive clarity necessary to answer the study's main research questions, as it will permit the exploration of the phenomenon from various perspectives.

Three methods of data collection were used, including key informant interviews, historical narrative reconstruction and documentary review, which were given complementary treatment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who held positions and roles that allowed them to comprehend political participation, administrative structures and the security implications of exclusionary rhetoric. These included national and county government officials, county security administrators, Nyumba Kumi (community-level security representatives), scholars whose work borders on citizenship and security and individual citizens from communities that had difficulties obtaining identity documents. Their intentional sampling was such that they captured official, professional and lived views on how shareholding discourses affect engagement in government and whether they have any influence on the sense of trust that people have in state institutions.

The historical narrative approach was employed to trace the development of exclusionary governance practices from independence to the present day. This helped in building a chronological history of how various political elites have employed proximity to state power to determine loyalty, apportion state rewards and marginalize certain groups in the name of political shareholding. This historical analysis demonstrates that administrative systems over the years have been utilized to promote divisions and dictate the groups considered legitimate stakeholders in the government. Also, secondary materials were reviewed comprehensively at the desk. These comprised legislative procedures, such as the Kenya Citizenship and

Immigration Act of 2012, policy reports, scholarly writings, archival materials and reliable news articles. The desk review provided a legal, theoretical and empirical framework for contextualizing primary data and facilitated the triangulation of multiple sources.

The present research employed thematic analysis to structure and analyse the information from interviews, historical narratives and documentaries. The suitable analytical approach is thematic analysis, as it provides a structured method for identifying patterns, meanings and relationships between different types of data. The various phases of analysis involved familiarization with the data, creation of preliminary codes, sorting these codes into larger thematic groups and further refinement of those groups to ensure they aligned with the study's objectives. The last themes focused on the political construction of shareholding as a foundation for possessing shares in government, the administrative and governance processes through which exclusion is practiced and the security implications of these processes on the nation's cohesiveness. The divergent views were approached with sensitivity during the analysis phase; for example, the interpretations considered shareholding as ordinary political rhetoric, rather than a structural means of exclusion. This enhanced the analytical integrity of the study and addressed reviewer concerns regarding balance and triangulation—ethical considerations characterized all the steps of the research. The interviews were voluntary and the purpose of the research was clearly explained to each respondent, with their right to withdraw at any point in time also clarified. Anonymity through a professional coding system was applied to their identities, which keeps them confidential and enhances the credibility and integrity of the research. The sensitivity of the materials examined in the research, particularly those related to ethnic identity, political affiliation and security issues, was also given proper consideration.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research highlight the mutual dependence between administrative problems and the lives of citizens in Kenya. Interview and documentary review findings have shown that although there is a constitutional guarantee of formal citizenship, the respondents in interviews and documentaries reviewed have shown that this does not always imply that citizens exercise their rights and opportunities equally. It was found that, based on the information, the political discourses on shareholding determine how different groups believe that they obtain the benefits and protection afforded by the government. These impressions cause the different citizens to feel included and other marginalized, which the respondents attributed to national stability and cohesion. The detailed findings with respect to the objectives of the study are discussed in the subsections below.

State-Centred Citizenship and National Security

The state-centric citizenship in Kenya has the state as the centralized power that distributes and controls the exercise of civic rights, political rights and social rights. Interview respondents also observed that these rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of Kenya 2010, but they are only subject to prospects of being exercised in practice under the condition that the state recognizes them and they are admitted by the administration. Through national identification documents by the State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services, civic rights, including identity registration, freedom of movement and access to justice, are granted. State-controlled electoral and governance structures are important in political rights, such as the right to vote, the right to hold office of operation in the state and the right to take part in the decision-making process. State organs and systems distribute the resources of the state to the population, providing social rights, including equal access to education, security and development benefits. The respondents stressed that these rights are not merely controlled but, in fact, are selectively empowered or even disabled in some instances by state agencies.

Despite the fact that rights should be equally accessible in citizenship documentation, there are various communities in which there are state-created obstacles that diminish a sense of belonging. One interviewee in the Somali community has elaborated that with national identity cards, they are regularly subjected to a higher level of scrutiny, random security inspections and suspicion of divided allegiance. This reduces their civic

accessibility and political representation. This conclusion corresponds to the point of view by Faturahman (2023) that bureaucratic procedures in state agencies tend to reproduce hierarchies of belonging.

It implies that these hierarchies are carried to a greater extent into the allocation of social resources, especially on the national scale. The respondents noted that ethnic affiliation to ruling political elites reflects employment in the national government, state contracts and other government opportunities. According to the evidence provided by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission 2023 report, the communities related to the recent governing coalitions, i.e., the Kalenjin and Agikuyu communities, are characterized by disproportional shares of the national public services appointments (National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 2023). The participants claimed that this adds to the view that political affiliation defines one's interest in politics. The shareholding metaphor thus represents a practical fact where exclusion is not as much founded on equal legal status as on political loyalty.

A number of the respondents mentioned that the legal documentation does not necessarily mean that the rights should be enjoyed. They claimed that there are citizens who are treated like outsiders, thus their security and their role in national development are not given fair recognition by those in authority. One of the security administrators who was interviewed claimed that sometimes the access to the protection provided by the state is perceived to differ based on whether an individual is believed to be loyal to the government of the day. This implies that the political elites can use the citizenship rights to cement their power and reward their supporters.

The researchers discovered that such abuse of constitutionally guaranteed rights has adverse consequences on national security. In those cases, where communities feel that the state institutions are biased or dominated by the interests of elites, the trust of people will be impaired and the collaboration with security agencies will become less effective. This makes them very likely to come into political conflict, marginalization, violence and susceptibility to radicalization. These results confirm Marshall and Bottomore (1950), who state that rights should be non-partisan, forward-moving and never be utilized politically. The Kenyan example demonstrates that the state-centric model is dangerous because it creates insecurity by strengthening the grievances that cause instability.

Shareholding in National Security: A Historical Epistemology

Different interviews indicated that shareholding metaphors generate hierarchies with adverse security consequences. It codifies a partisan, competition, self-serving strategy in which the interests of the strong groups are favoured over others, hence creating polarization and violence. The findings of this study echo Reno's analysis of rentier economies (Berdal & Malone, 2000). According to Reno, exclusivist narratives are spread by political elites to entrench a rent-seeking behaviour in the state economies.

The study's findings align with historical events in Kenya that show how some political elites, by exploiting their positions as (or proximity to) agents of the state, have instrumentalized shareholding systems with negative consequences for national security. Retrospectively, right from independence, Kenya witnessed a perverse politics of shareholding and exclusionary political elitism (Bigambo, 2024). Upon assuming the presidency in 1964, Jomo Kenyatta was expected to create a cohesive society in which every citizen felt included. He implemented capitalist economic policies and for the first two decades of independence, Kenya enjoyed strong economic growth, though it was not the fastest-growing economy in Africa. The trickle-down economics would remedy the exclusivist policies that the colonial regimes had cemented in the previous years in the Kenyan society. However, a significant portion of the wealth generated during this period became concentrated in the hands of President Kenyatta's close family members, friends and loyalists from the Kiambu/Gatundu Kikuyu elite, commonly referred to as the "Kiambu Mafia" or "Kenyatta family and associates (Branch & Cheeseman, 2006; Himbara, 1994).

According to Bigambo (2024), during Jomo Kenyatta's regime, the Luo community became the non-shareholders in Kenya. Their exclusion from the political economy was due to a bitter fallout between the Kikuyu President and his then Vice-President, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, who was a Luo. J.M. Kariuki's famous 1970s statement that Kenya had become "a nation of ten millionaires and ten million beggars"

powerfully captured the extreme wealth inequality and elite capture that characterized Kenyatta's era (Munene, 2017).

The exclusionary narratives during President Moi's (1978-2002) regime were coined through philosophies like *Siasa mbaya maisha mbaya* ("bad politics, bad life"). This meant that those who opposed the government were considered hostile and not shareholders in government (Bigambo, 2024). This behaviour of political elites in President Moi's ruling regime illustrated more of a continuity rather than a change from previous dispensations. The instrumentalization of politics under the Moi regime was most evident in the deliberate manipulation of resource allocation decisions – who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 2018). This is reflected in activities like selective issuance or denial of trading licenses, discriminatory distribution of settlement schemes and public land, the abrupt transfer or posting of civil servants who are considered disloyal and redirection of constituency development funds in opposition strongholds and the selective giving out of government contracts and parastatal directorships to regime loyalty (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008; Klopp, 2001; Mueller, 2008; Wrong, 2009). These processes guaranteed the tight control of access to economic opportunities and state resources and the conditional nature of the said options in light of political obedience. According to Hamisi (2018), political elites at the top under Moi amassed ample irregularly distributed public land that is in dispute at present. The official Ndungu Report (2004) recorded many of them, with thousands of acres taken over by state farms and forests by those in power, like Vice President Saitoti (thousands of acres in Nyota Complex in Laikipia), Minister Njenga Karume (thousands of acres in Molo which he resold to the government in 2019 at a price of KSh 186 million after acquiring it in 2004 at KSh 2.7 million) and President Moi himself (53 acres in Baringo These distributions, usually on nominal prices, were a source of patronage and remain the subject of litigation.

Wrong and Williams, (2009), observes that systemic grand corruption existed under the shareholding politics within the President Kibaki regime. This established narrative of exclusion extended into the Uhuru Kenyatta administration (2013–2022), where the colloquial Swahili phrase *"kula na macho"* (literally "eat with your eyes," implying passive observation of others' gains without sharing in them) gained popularity in social media, news commentary and opposition rhetoric to criticize the regime's favouritism toward elites, leaving ordinary citizens sidelined from public goods and opportunities (Musembi & Chun, 2020). A most pronounced case of exclusive politics in President Ruto (2022 to present) is epitomized by the former Deputy President. In February 2023, the former Deputy President declared that government contracts and appointments would be a preserve for those who voted for the Kenya Kwanza Government. In his words, "this government is a company that has shares. There are owners who have the majority of shares and those with just a few, while others do not have any. "You invested in this government and you must reap. You planted, cultivated, spread manure and watered and now to harvest (Bigambo, 2024).

This paper thus concludes that this kind of ethnic-based exclusionary pronouncement, as was the case with 20242025 rhetoric of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, which portrays Mt. Kenya communities as victims of the so-called ethnic cleansing by economic warfare and deserving preferential treatment to the state resources, is detrimental to the pursuit of substantive citizenship in Kenya, in which no one is to be privileged as an equal right holder under Article 12 of the Constitution. Although Gachagua does not make a direct distinction between Kenyans as citizens and non-citizens, his words build covert ethnic divisions that undermine this equality, as non-favored groups are treated as second-class and, in the process, the society is torn apart. According to one interviewee, otherwise, it is ethnic stereotyping that is called shareholding. It generates a us vs them differential, which polarizes society.

This finding agrees with a study by Hamisi (2018), who points out that "tenderpreneurs form groups and collude with avaricious government officials to ensure that state tenders are given exclusively to their members or so-called shareholders on a rotational basis to crowd out other bidders. Ethnic conflict, as an extreme form of polarization, results from an institutionalized system of *shareholding*. It was found that the exclusion of groups along ethnic lines codified as *shareholdings* creates disparities, resentment and grievances, which, if unaddressed, culminate in conflict. This finding is supported by Njagi (2018), whose study shows that

politicized ethnicity increases mobilization along ethnic lines and consciousness towards human rights violations and conflict.

One may therefore contend that the instrumentalization by the political elites of the concept of shareholding is a calculated move to pervert the constitutional principle of equal citizenship and convert it into a hierarchical, state-oriented privilege, which is enjoyed mainly by those considered as the major shareholders. Such elites render exclusionary distribution of national goods, promote high levels of corruption related to ethnic loyalty and increase the likelihood of ethnic-based warfare, thus weakening national security by framing some communities as deserving a greater share of national resources and putting a minority group or simple observers at risk. A rather more relevant question, however, is whether a truly citizen-centred approach, one that in the equality of all Kenyans as rights-holders regardless of ethnic or regional affiliation, would be strengthened instead of weakened by the national security, a question that is the subject of the forthcoming section.

Citizen-centric Model on Citizenship

The traditional conceptions of citizenship are in a state of flux despite the state being the only hegemonic agency that awards citizenship. An interviewee observed that;

> *The traditional top-down level model on citizenship has broadened and deepened…citizens are now active participants in public administration, governance and policymaking…It is no longer a traditional echo-chamber where administrative organs are the only ones with a say on legal, political, or civic rights…. but some wokeness exists where public services are increasingly co-created between the state and private individuals.*

To be a citizen, therefore, is to actively participate in shaping public policies and hold state officials accountable. This finding aligns with reflections by Ruteere (2003) that for improved safety and security, there needs to be a 'plurality of actors, both formal and informal, adopting hybrid, polycentric and networked action to security production, regulation and authorization'. Thus, addressing root causes of insecurity, poverty and marginalization requires a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' programming. The security model needs to emphasize multi-stakeholder and community-centred approaches.

A section of interviewees pointed out that a citizen-centred model goes beyond territorial borders. Conjectures like a 'global citizen' are indicative of this notion. This finding draws parallels with Nyamnjoh's (2022) idea that citizenship is a permanent work in progress and usually in a state of incompleteness. It is incomplete because there are always efforts towards the construction of a living-togetherness that takes the reality of interconnections and interdependencies (Nyamnjoh, 2022) seriously. An interviewee observed that globalization and the revolutions in information technologies have expanded the concept of citizenship. It aligns with notions that a form of citizenship that intersects the traditional concepts with modern digital and technological systems is taking place, putting the individual at the centre of gravity. Conceptions like 'cybernetic citizenship', 'digital citizenship ', 'e-citizenship' and 'algorithmic citizenship' are, according to Reijers *et al.* (2023), manifestations of the changes that are happening.

A citizen-centred approach produces a greater good or happiness in society. Interviewees observed that a happy citizen is involved in shaping their destiny, observing that the best solutions are usually those based on the lived experiences of the people. A former *Nyumba Kumi* (community leaders in the village) interviewee, for instance, mentioned that involving communities in policing helps to create a positive relationship between the public and the police that consequently enhances trust and legitimacy. It is a finding supported by Ruteere (2003), who says that public participation of citizens in governance produces better decisions, increases trust and legitimacy and enhances compliance and implementation.

It was further acknowledged that citizen-centred governance may help to contain negative *shareholding* narratives that end up creating divisive outcomes. A citizen-centred approach to governance promotes inclusivity and equity in service delivery across the ethnic divides, which eventually counters divisive

narratives. In sum, many benefits are realized through a citizen-centred citizenship as active participation fosters social cohesion, inclusivity and community resilience.

Conclusion

This study had a broader objective of understanding 'why' and 'how' a state-centric citizenship affects national security. It also sought to investigate how citizenship can be re-imagined through an application of the hybridity concept. A state-centric citizenship was found to position the state as the primary unit of analysis. It ascribes an identity through legal documents, including a national identity card, a passport, or a birth certificate, which the state alone has the monopoly to issue. The problem arises when political elites capture this monopoly and instrumentalize these documents and the rights attached to them (such as access to public services, land, jobs and security) by making them conditional on ethnic loyalty or political alignment, thereby turning citizenship from an inclusive right into an exclusionary tool of patronage. A state-centric citizenship often creates hierarchies and divisions that polarize the society, as elaborated in the discussion section. Agents of the state and political elites have, over time, instrumentalized the concept of citizenship by systematically deploying shareholding narratives and metaphors. These metaphors are a means to an end, including benefitting from the award of state jobs, contracts, education scholarships, business opportunities and other lucrative deals. The privatization of public spaces through the *shareholding projects*, therefore, is a reality that creates pervasive corruption and ethnic violence. A re-imagination of citizenship demands the embedding of hybridity in all spheres of political, economic and social life. A citizen-centric model includes the blending of a multiplicity of actors, both formal and informal, as well as a polycentric and networked approach to security, governance and public administration. This approach contributes positively to addressing national security challenges.

Recommendations

To re-imagine citizenship for national security, there is a need to:

Embed a hybrid approach. To shift from a state-centric citizenship to a citizen-centred one, there is a need to adopt a hybrid approach in all matters of public administration, security and governance. The approach could include the expansion of actors involved in these spheres while encouraging inclusive public participation in nation-state building.

Encourage localized solutions. To avoid top-down hierarchies that normalize divisive narratives like *shareholding*, local solutions for problem-solving need to be promoted at the county and national levels. Such solutions include harnessing of *nyumba kumi* initiatives, as well as other indigenous knowledge and institutions, taking advantage of local resources, talents and representation.

Support cross-cultural ties. A framework that fosters cross-cultural dialogue, conflict management and economic empowerment should be established across countries. The County Governments, under the guidance of the Ministry of Interior and Coordination, should oversee the implementation of such programmes at the grassroots levels. Consequently, equitable sharing of resources may be realized.

Strengthen and expand community-based feedback mechanisms. Existing community forums for dialogue and feedback should be promoted by the relevant authorities and leadership. This will ensure an active people-centred approach to rights and obligations.

Fast-track the nationhood science bill. The proposed nationhood science bill before parliament needs to be fast-tracked. A culture of inclusivity and patriotism is likely to be enhanced through the strengthened legal and policy framework.

Promote national ethos and patriotism in education curriculum: The current curriculum gives insufficient attention to civic education, shared national history and values of inclusivity and diversity. It should be revised

to include mandatory, in-depth teaching of Kenya's multi-ethnic liberation struggle, national symbols, constitutional values (especially Article 10) and the dangers of ethnic exclusion, thereby fostering a stronger sense of shared citizenship and patriotism among learners.

Promote Public-Private sector collaboration in governance, security and economic development. The private sector should also engage in patriotic duty through active corporate social responsibility that counters narratives on shareholding.

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