



Citizenship in Post-Independence Africa: A Theoretical Review¹

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Abstract:

Citizenship can be conceptualized from various eras of African history which include pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods (Lonsdale, 2019). This study is committed to appraise the status and practice of post-independence citizenship through the classical theories of citizenship, namely: Liberal, Republican, and Communitarian. Methodologically, a desk-based approach with the critical-analytical method is employed, and qualitative data is collected from secondary sources. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis techniques. In post-independence Africa citizenship re-emerged with the formation of new states in the early 1960s (Melber, et. al., 2020), and the study found that the bizarre and deleterious form and substance of citizenship has made theorizing citizenship in post-independence Africa very challenging, because in most African states the ruling classes are insulated from the masses with cumulative sins and malpractices of injustice accompanied by deep-rooted neopatrimonialism (Cooper, 2005). Hence, the study recommended a form of citizenship that accommodates both rights-based and ethnic identities in Africa.

Keywords:

Citizenship; Classical Theories of Citizenship; Post-Independence Africa; Theoretical Appraisal.

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Introduction

Citizenship is a very progressive concept; hence it is very dynamic when examined from historical (time) and geographic (regional) perspectives (Ulrich, 2019). When examined from an African perspective, citizenship can be explored and conceptualized from various eras of African history which include pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. According to Lonsdale (2019), there are enough scholarly evidences in the existence of the practice and status of citizenship derived from the social capital of belongingness of householders in pre-colonial Africa, and it is witnessed by the earliest history and discovery of pre-colonial constitution of various African kingdoms. The status and practice of citizenship in pre-colonial Africa is identified and defined by being the member in the state either through “descent, actual or fictional in lineage based units, or series of progressively more inclusive units...Citizenship means primarily membership in the national state through loyalty to the king” (Fallers, 1973:81). Citizenship incorporates the rights to own property by individuals and households’ thorough lineage based units and structures.

According to Cooper (2005), since the era of slave trade and then colonialism, Africa has been the prey of Western imperialism and its contemporary globalization, and this has disrupted the organic practice and status of citizenship in Africa having everlasting noxious consequences politically, economically, and socially. The European colonialism massively destroyed pre-colonial political, economic, social institutions, value and system of Africa in which it intentionally dismantled the oldest pre-colonial way of relations between the rulers and ruled, severing the existing practice and status of citizenship through the formation of artificial externally imposed states deliberately separating oldest society and community into different artificially organized entities (Nafziger, 1988; Manby, 2010).

Citizenship practice and status has also been changed with the formation of a post-independence African state (Ndegwa, 1997; Melber, et. al., 2020). In post-independence Africa citizenship³ re-emerged with the formation of new states in the early 1960s (Melber, et. al., 2020), and as a practice and a status “citizenship is both acquired and acknowledged through the ability to demonstrate the values that guide life and living within the community and society” (Biao, 2024:287). Post-colonial African citizenship has faced major political, economic, and social challenges in fairly entertaining and meeting the vital political, economic and social expectations and demands of members, and in deciding who to include and exclude in actively participating politically, economically, and socially (as a member/ citizen⁴). This is

³ When compared with the Western perspective of citizenship, it is very complicated having blurred meaning and definition as a status and a practice since the nature, organization and institutional structure of post-independence African states are scholarly explored and examined with the specific emphasis given to colonialism and its legacy.

⁴In post-independence African context, this study employs the term “individual” that clearly denotes the existing political, economic and social membership and relation taking place with the state rather than the term “citizen”.



accompanied by debating what the benefits and responsibilities are, and privileges of citizens should be in the state? – The core demands in understanding citizenship in post-independence Africa (Barbalet, 1988, cited in Kanyinga, 2000).

This study has the major objective of analyzing whether citizenship is accorded as a status, and exercised as a practice in post-independence Africa or not, and if so it deemed very vital to appraise post-independence African citizenship through each of the three classical theories of citizenship by endeavoring to answer the following questions in this study context: Can citizenship in post-independence Africa as a status and a practice be theorized classically? And, what are the major political, economic and social rationales that made classically theorizing the status and practice of citizenship a challenging endeavor in post-colonial Africa?

This study is intended to fill the existing knowledge gap through theorizing and analyzing the prevailing practice of post-colonial citizenship in Africa by employing the three classical theories of citizenship⁵ namely: Liberal, Republican, and Communitarian by exploring, examining and describing the roles and contributions of various key political actors (Colonialism, independent African states and their authoritarian political systems), and factors (colonial legacy, and post-colonial individual- state relation). This study found that the status and practice of citizenship in post-colonial Africa when theoretically reviewed by employing one of these classical theories could not fit any one of the three classical theories when examined from multiple socio-political perspectives, including the following two interrelated rationales: citizenship in Africa has still-unsettled meanings informed and misinformed by pasts of [Africans] (Lonsdale, 2019), and, theorizing citizenship in post-colonial Africa is very challenging scholarly endeavor, because the political nature and structure of post-colonial African state (form and substance of citizenship) is not the same as the Western state, and its politics are marked by the existence of two contrasting and contentious publics: amoral civic realm (state level); and a moral primordial realm or the 'native'/ ethnic segment where membership is attached with tribe, clan and race (Hunter, 2016), which directly clash/oppose with the ideals of modern citizenship.

Methodology

This study has employed a desk-based methodological approach with the application of critical-analytical methods. Qualitative data is collected from secondary sources of data, which are gathered from desk-based reviews and examination of essential and key documents, including research reports, various academic writings, national and international journals, plus public and private publications, and electronic sources. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis techniques. By employing desk-based methodological approach with the critical-analytical method, this study has

⁵Authoritative and dominant theories of citizenship have their roots since the classical period of Greco-Roman civilization which are having long established forms.

achieved its major task of “exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon [of theoretically appraising post-independence African citizenship through the classical theories of citizenship]” (Creswell, 2012:8). This paper has five major parts, and part one dealt with the introduction of the study, part two mainly focused on methodology, part three meticulously discussed results and discussion beginning with theories of citizenship: Liberal, Republican and Communitarian theories of citizenship separately, and then part four briefly analyzed the conception and practice of post-colonial African citizenship, and part five emphasized in theoretically appraising post-colonial African citizenship through the three classical theories of citizenship, and the conclusion is drawn with the references at the end.

Results And Discussion

What is Citizenship?

Modern citizenship is the Western laden concept having ancient reference “to a state of belonging to and being accepted as belonging to a city” (Biao, 2024:287), and it has become very important political issue, enjoying its revival through granting membership or belonging by guaranteeing security within the state (Kanyinga, 2000), and this is identified as the modern (Gothic) citizenship (Skinner, 1993). According to Harrington, modern (Gothic⁶) citizenship is “the product of a long and melancholy slide away from classical values” (Skinner, 1993:404) which include new values of liberty and equality. Citizenship is considered as a type of “socio-political identity” derived from membership devoted with a legal status granted by a political community (nation-state), and it is associated with rights, liberties, and obligations it accords. Citizenship bonds members not only to their government and state, but it also recognizes diversity and treats equally other fellow members of diverse social classes and identities that can be ethnic, religious, or cultural (Heater, 2004; Stokke, 2017 ; Alemayehu, 2019 ; Lonsdale, 2019). Modern citizenship is both a status and a practice enjoyed by citizens of a state, incorporating vital democratic political, economic, and social rights and responsibilities individually and collectively (Kanyinga, 2000).

Theories of Citizenship

According to Bellamy (2008), citizenship theories are classified into normative and empirical theories based on values and mechanisms (procedures) attached with the possession of rights and duties of citizens. The theory of citizenship that mainly focuses on setting out the rights and duties citizens ought to have is identified as normative, and this theory has its origin in the ancient Greece and Roman civilization, and the empirical

⁶This term sometimes refers to the belief held by 17th-century English constitutionalists that their "ancient constitution" (often described as "Gothic") protected them against the arbitrary will of a monarch, ensuring they lived under laws they helped make, rather than under the will of a ruler.



theories of citizenship (democratic citizenship⁷ of the West) are dedicated to describe and explain how citizens are made able to possess and practice their rights and duties within the state actively participating as legal-political members. This study mainly focused on setting out what rights and duties citizens ought to have, or the normative aspect of citizenship, that describes the relationship between individuals and the state. In theorizing citizenship the central components of citizenship (substantive membership, legal status; rights and participation) can be examined through various schools of thought or theories (Stokke, 2017), for example, Alemayehu (2019), identified liberal, social democratic, socialist or republican theories of citizenship. But, this study emphasized on dealing with the three classical theories of citizenship: Liberal, Republican and Communitarian (Ndegwa, 1997; Lister, 2008).

Classical Theories of Citizenship

These are major theories of citizenship which are very vital to clearly understand the status, role, rule, right and duty of an individual (he/she) bestowed upon and assigned for being a legal member/citizen within a particular state or community, and these theories are very fundamental and useful in explicitly defining the existing legal and political relations between the individual and the state (Lister, 2008). There are three categories of classical theories of citizenship: Liberal, Republican and Communitarian, and each of these theories are identified by their key tenets consecutively dealing with and emphasizing on: - individual freedom, active political participation of citizens, and collective membership and participation in shared communal affairs respectively (Lister, 2008; Dagger 2002; Delanty, 2002; Shuck 2002, cited in Stokke: 2017). The upcoming section is dedicated to explore and examine these three classical conceptions of citizenship separately to provide readers with the basic arguments they mainly relied on defining the rules, roles, rights, and duties individuals/ members/citizens must adhere to and play within a given state as political and legal members.

Liberal / Contractarian Theory of Citizenship

According to Skinner (1993), liberal theory of citizenship has its root in the political philosophy of Hobbesian social contract⁸ which is the origin and source of modern political authority and citizenship. According to Lieres, (1999), the modern liberal

⁷It is derived from European unification, and defined by a "common membership of a shared and imminent community" (1995, 75, emphasis in original). Such a citizenship is claimed and defined by political action launched from small communities of shared values and experience and enacted in the public sphere. This recognition of spheres of citizen formation other than the nation-state makes possible an analysis of ethnic groups as political communities in which citizenship can be formed and sustained" (Ndegwa, 1997:600).

⁸ In reading the major philosophical and scholarly works of George H. Sabine (1963), Ebenstein (1970), Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (1999), I am convinced that Hobbesian Social contract has to be identified as *Social Deal*, because it is a one-time political deal between the Absolute Sovereign and the subjects aiming to perpetual peace and stability not to be retracted to the Hobbesian State of Nature.

Western world has implemented and exercised the liberal theory of citizenship, which is an individual/ egoist/ private centric theory stressing on the liberal theory of individual freedom. According to the well-known liberal scholar John Rawls, the liberal society is composed of “free, rational and egoist persons devoted to furthering their own [private] interest” (Skinner, 1993:405), and the corresponding liberal political system is based on the respect of the individuals’ civil rights which establish the foundations of citizenship.

Divergent with the other two classical theories of citizenship, the liberal theory underlines the equality of rights which each citizen/individual enjoys, and how these rights enable the individuals to pursue their own aims and goals within the state. Citizenship in the liberal theory is a legal status that deliberates certain rights to the individual protecting him/her from the state's meddling/intervention in his/her own private affair and life. According to Alemayehu (2019), liberal citizenship entails individual's membership to a given political community whose primary responsibility is to fairly distribute, secure and protect the basic liberties of each member in the state. Philosophically and practically, liberal theory of citizenship hugely emphasizes on maximizing individual liberty by minimizing the calls of social duty and responsibility in which a citizen is not obliged as a member of a modern state to participate in public/civic/communal engagements, because “citizenship is increasingly viewed as a matter of rights. Citizens not only have the right to participate in public life, but also the right to place private commitments ahead of political involvements” (Lieres, 1999:142).

In the liberal political system, there exists the status of liberal citizenship that declares and guarantees individual rights which are natural (inborn) with marginal duties of serving the public (Keller and Omwami, 2007). In the liberal theory of citizenship, liberty is equated with the absence of any obligation of the individual in serving the public/community; hence the status of liberal citizenship does not attach strings of duties on citizens in freely exercising their membership and citizenship rights within the state (Kanyinga, 2000). According to Skinner (1993), liberal citizenship guarantees the maximum liberty to the individual ensuring the non-interference of the state in his/her private life through the law, and it is irrational for the individual/citizen to morally prioritize the performance of civic/public/ communal engagements at the expense of his/her private desire. Liberal theory of citizenship is antagonistic with utilitarianism⁹, and it is the best theoretical lens of understanding the selfish, egoist, irrational and immoral nature of an individual (Skinner, 1993). Liberal theory of citizenship strictly argues that individual liberty precedes public service, and this liberty has to be fundamentally protected by law. Even if liberal theory of citizenship is taken as superior and practically perfect by pro-Western

⁹ “Bentham’s philosophy that the government should do whatever would produce the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people” (Baradat, 2008:297). Baradat, Leon P. (2008). *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*. 9th edn. Prentice-Hall of India: New Delhi.



scholars (Lieres, 1999), in objective reality practical equality is missing in exercising liberal citizenship in liberal societies, because there are visible inconsistencies and biases of legal equality in terms of race, class and gender even today.

Civic-Republican Theory of Citizenship

Having its origin in the classical period, the civic-republican theory of citizenship is also known as the classical view of citizenship, and it precedes the emergence of individualistic liberalism emphasizing on the adherence to “virtue and civic equality” (Skinner, 1993:419). The earliest practice of civic-republican citizenship is found in the classical opposing philosophies of citizenship in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, where the Hellenic conception gave emphasis to “the activity of collective self-rule and tends to be ethnically exclusive, and a Roman one that emphasizes legal status and privilege and is expansive” (Bauböck, 2007:3). Modern civic-republican theory of citizenship is salvaged from the earliest civic-republican citizenship status and practice during the Renaissance period in Italy, and the leading scholar is Machiavelli (Skinner, 1993).

Civic-Republican theory of citizenship contrasts the basic premises of liberal theory of citizenship, and it strongly argues that citizenship rights are not inborn /innate and they are derived from active political participation of citizens on carrying out their civic responsibilities to the public and the state (Keller and Omwami, 2007). Civic-Republican theory is the inverse of liberal theory, because it strongly claims that “maximizing of individual liberty to be seen not as the fruit of minimizing the calls of social duty, but rather of engaging in public service, and especially in participating actively in the business of government” (Skinner, 1993:409). Civic-Republican theory strongly argues that the political community sustains with the active participation of members/citizens in carrying out their civic duties, and this virtue is used in defending their citizenship rights (Ndegwa, 1997, cited in Kanyinga, 2000). According to Lister (2008), the basic tenet of civic-republican theory of citizenship is, citizens” have to be committed with active participation in public affairs which include deliberation, policy making, formulation and execution of laws which are the basis for civic self-rule, the advancement of the civic good, and the law is used “as a means of creating liberty by way of enforcing the performance of civic duties” (Skinner, 1993:409).

In the civic-republican theory, public service precedes liberty, and individual liberty has to be earned through active civic participation in politics, but it must not be secured by law. Citizenship in the civic-republican theory is the active involvement of citizens in governing their own polity by participating in vital public activities, and avenues of politics. For civic-republican theorists, citizenship is a uniting common civic identity shaped by common public culture as long as it is stronger on its influence than religion, race and ethnicity etc. Civic-republican citizenship with active participation, inclusion and recognition of various identities surpasses rights and norms by providing political culture which “fosters bonds of solidarity, preserving memories of past injustices as well as working out alternative

conceptions of the self and community” (Lieres, 1999:143). The republican ideal of citizenship is clearly stated by prominent political philosophers of the West including Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Hegel and Tocqueville.

Communitarian Theory of Citizenship

Communitarian theory of citizenship is a community centered practice and status of membership that prioritizes active participation of individuals who belong to the particular community (Dagger, 2002; Delanty, 2002; Shuck, 2002, cited in Stokke, 2017). According to Lister (2008), communitarian theory of citizenship is in sharp contrast with the liberal theory of citizenship concerning the individual, his/her liberty and responsibility, in which for communitarian theorists the existence of community precedes the existence of individual, and duty or loyalty to the community precedes individual’s liberty. Scholars of communitarian theory firmly “argue that rather than stressing on maximizing individual liberty, theory of state must be based on shared meanings and common purposes” (Skinner, 1993:409). The major philosophical pillar of this theory elucidates that a citizen must identify her/himself with the community where he/she belongs as a member, and he/she must actively participate in the political life of the community for advancing the overall communal welfare, not the narrow egoist self-interest of the individual at the expense/cost of the community’s benefit/advantage. The common theoretical feature of both civic-republican and communitarian theory of citizenship is, the precedence and emphasis both given to the public/communitarian/civic duty having its origin in the active participation of members of the community/citizens in advancing the common good of their community or polity. After the thorough examination of the distinct features of the three classical conceptions of citizenship separately, it is very vital to explore and revisit the key and common features of post-independence African citizenship before appraising it through the three classical theories of citizenship, and the next section of the study is devoted to this purpose.

Historical Overview of Citizenship in Africa

Citizenship is not a new phenomenon as a status and practice for Africa, and it can be explored and conceptualized from three eras of African history: pre-colonial, colonial and post- colonial periods (Nafziger, 1988; Herbst, 2014; Hunter, 2016). According to Lonsdale (2019), there are enough scholarly evidences on the existence of the practice and status of citizenship derived from the social capital of belongingness of householders in pre-colonial Africa, and it is witnessed by the earliest history and discovery of pre-colonial constitution of various African kingdoms. The status and practice of citizenship in pre-colonial Africa is identified and defined by being a member in the state either through “descent, actual or fictional in lineage-based units, or series of progressively more inclusive units.... Citizenship means primarily membership in the national state through loyalty to the



king” (Fallers, 1973:81). Citizenship in pre-colonial Africa incorporates the rights to own property by individuals and households” thorough lineage-based units and structures. According to Cooper (2005), since the era of slave trade and then colonialism, Africa has been the prey of Western imperialism and its contemporary globalization, and this has disrupted the organic practice and status of citizenship in Africa having never lasting consequences politically, economically, and socially even today.

During the colonial period, the European colonialism massively destroyed pre-colonial political, economic, social institutions, values and systems of Africa in which it intentionally dismantled the oldest pre-colonial way of relations between the rulers and ruled, severing the practice and status of citizenship through the formation of artificial externally imposed states deliberately separating oldest society and community into different newly created entities/ states (Nafziger, 1988; Manby, 2010). In the majority of colonized sub-Saharan Africa, the newly imposed European administrations clearly categorized the population as: citizens/settlers/ colonizers (minority) accorded with legal and political rights and responsibilities, and Black Africans as subjects /natives/ colonized (majority) being victims of oppression, and exploitation of cruel system of forced labor for more than seven decades (Ulrich, 2019; Melber, et al. 2020). According to Herbst (2014), colonialism made Africans the largest subjects in modern history, and it came to an end with Decolonization in the late 1950s.

In post-independence Africa citizenship re-emerged with the formation of new states in the early 1960s (Melber, et. al., 2020), and as a practice and a status “citizenship is both acquired and acknowledged through the ability to demonstrate the values that guide life and living within the community and society” (Biao, 2024:287). Post-colonial African citizenship has faced major political, economic, and social challenges in fairly entertaining and meeting the vital expectations and demands of members, and in deciding whom to include and exclude to actively participate politically, economically, and socially (as a citizen/member). This is accompanied by debating what the benefits, responsibilities, and privileges of citizens should be in the state? – The core demands in understanding citizenship in post-independence Africa (Barbalet, 1988, cited in Kanyinga, 2000). Then, to clearly understand citizenship as a practice and a status and theorize it in this study context, the most important concept that has to be defined is a “citizen”. A citizen is an individual person who (he/she) is legally recognized member of the state, and a citizen is defined as “an abstract individual without identification and without particular qualifications (tribes, identities and ethnic groups), going beyond all concrete determinations” (Mutabazi, 2020/1:4-5).

The concept citizen in the contemporary global politics and international relations denotes “to an individual residing among a recognizable group of persons occupying a defined territorial space usually known as nation-state who owes allegiance to the said nation-state and who is in turn protected by the said nation-state (Biao, 2024:287), and it is defined as an individual who has a contractual relation with the state, and this

contractual relation “carries with it both rights and responsibilities” (Stokke, 2017: 6). A citizen is an individual person (he/she) “has full rights as a member of a country either by birth or by being granted such rights” (Hornby, 1989, cited in Akokpari, 2008:98). A citizen is also defined as an individual person (he/she) who has the “ability to break from the determinations that would lock him into a culture and destiny imposed by his birth” (Schnapper, 1994, cited in Mutabazi, 2020/1:5). Modern citizenship heavily relies on the fundamental principle that the state is the key actor, and it is primarily responsible in setting up “equal opportunities-political, economic and social-to every member of the state [citizen] or political community” (Akokpari, 2008:98)

Analysis of Post-Colonial African Citizenship: Conception and Practice (Theoretical Appraisal)

In theoretically appraising/evaluating the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship through the classical theoretical lens of citizenship, this section began by posing the question: - does the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship fit into the liberal theory of citizenship? The answer of this question mainly relied on examining the common features of the post-independence African state and its subsequent political system whether it is liberal or authoritarian. To begin with, the formation of post-independence African state is not based on Lockean social contract which is the origin and source of liberal convention based relation established between modern political authority (sovereign) and the individual in the West (Skinner, 1993), but post-independence African state is externally imposed artificial state (Tangari, 1985; Ndegwa, 1997; Biao, 2024) which according to Lonsdale (1981), African independence is only the change of ruling elites color/ race from white to black, or briefly it is "Africanization" of the newly ruling elite that inherited the basic class (citizen-subject) relation and political character of the colonialists (Nafziger, 1988; Kanyinga, 2000).

Hence, the status and practice of citizenship in post-colonial Africa is different from the Western experience of rights oriented and duty engrossed liberal status and practice of citizenship (Lieres, 1999), because post-independence African governments are labeled as neopatrimonial, weak and dictatorial/authoritarian regimes of narrow class based selfish and self-serving ruling elite (Locust class) which are identified with and characterized as “hybrid, uncertain, unstable, and usually authoritarian regimes” (Williams, 2011:56). The narrow ruling elite in post-colonial African states have established exclusionary and extractive (political-economic) institutions which hugely advanced politics of citizenship through the neopatrimonial authoritarian form of governance with the rise of intense inequality among members/ citizens leading to domestic violence and war (Williams, 2011; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013).

This study found that post-independence African citizenship doesn't fit in to the liberal theory of citizenship, because the status and practice of citizenship has become more multifarious with the majority of African governments being authoritarian which are well known in imposing strings of forced duties, harsh intimidating mechanisms with



excessively coercive institutions where members/citizens are not/ cannot freely exercise their membership/individual/ citizenship rights within the state. The authoritarian post-independence regimes in Africa accompanied by the absence of strong, viable democratic institutions and legal-political structures which lack room for the proper employment of liberal political practices including the realization of civil, political and social rights individually and collectively has made theorizing the status and practice of citizenship in post-colonial Africa through the classical theory of liberal citizenship impossible and unfeasible (Tangari, 1985; Nafziger, 1988).

The status and practice of post-independence African citizenship except the "Africanization" of its ruling elite is not liberal since members/citizens have no right to participate in civic and public life democratically, including the right to place their private commitments ahead of forced/imposed political subjugation. What makes post-independence African citizenship similar with the colonial period is the confines between the state and the subject remain the same, because substantive membership; legal status; rights and participation are preferential based on ethnicity, class and clientelism, and accessing the weakest, fragile, inefficient and illiberal state institutions and its political system is primordially exclusionary to the majority of Africans who are not close to political power making liberal theory of citizenship unfit in post-independence African context (Kanyinga, 2000).

In theoretically appraising the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship through the classical theoretical lens of citizenship, the second key question of this study was: - does the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship fit into the civic-republican theory of citizenship? The answer to this question is based on examining the institutional organization and participatory nature of the post-independence African state and its subsequent socio-political system whether it is duty/merit/professional based in granting a member/citizen access to participate freely in the affairs of the state? Or, is it exclusionary? Post-independence African state is well identified with its special closed (marginalizing) political bequest, and weak social marks it inherited from the colonial legacy where the "fundamental changes in many social practices as foreign languages, religions, and ideologies were introduced" (Herbst, 2014: 96) which seriously deconstructed the indigenous pre-colonial organic social fiber, network, interaction and political institutions with the formation of new artificial states having borders irresponsibly drawn by colonial masters separating identical social and identity groups deliberately (Nafziger, 1988; Cooper, 2005; Herbst, 2014).

Politically, the newly independent African state is the victim of a legitimacy deficit because the governments are forcefully imposed autocratic and authoritarian, and the state is alien and isolated from its members/ individuals/citizens barring access and imposing limitations on them from actively participating in the overall affairs of the state (Tangari, 1985; Nafziger, 1988; Kanyinga, 2000). This socio-political reality has adversely contributed on post-colonial African state-member /citizen relation which is the socio-political outcome associated with the lack of "embeddedness [within the society at large, and] its divorce from underlying norms and networks of social

organization” (Englebert, 1997:768). Hence, post-independence African citizenship doesn't fit in to the civic-republican theory of citizenship, because colonial legacy and the undemocratic/ authoritarian nature of the regimes within the independent African state severely and negatively deconstructed and denied the active engagement of Africans in practicing citizenship /membership (that is a uniting common civic identity shaped by common public culture) through weakening its strength highly influenced by ethnicity, religion, class and clientelism (Tangari,1985; Nafziger, 1988; Keller, 1991).

Post-independence African state can't employ and practice civic republican citizenship with genuine, inclusion and recognition of various diverse identities allowing active civic participation, because in the process of detribalizing the state, post-independence African state sidelining the formation of democratic institutions and form of governance “reproduced a despotic form of authoritarianism characteristic of the colonial situation” (Kanyinga, 2000:15), perpetuating the process and practice of exclusion of individuals, groups and society in actively participating politically, economically, and socially within the affairs of the state.

Even if civic-Republican theory strongly argues that political community sustains with the active participation of member citizens in carrying out their civic duties, and this virtue is used in defending their citizenship rights (Ndegwa, 1997), in post-independence Africa dictatorial /authoritarian and neopatrimonial regimes, with weak/subservient organs of government, and their draconian laws have crippled the liberal/democratic functioning of the three organs of government (the executive, legislative and judiciary) which are essential in exercising the active participation of members within the affairs of government in defending citizenship rights through the system of checks-and-balances. Weak/subservient organs of government in tandem with authoritarian regimes, and lack of active and effective civic society within the political sphere instrumentalized in marginalizing individuals/citizens, and groups from actively participating and carrying out their civic duties which positively maintain the state-citizen relation (Nafziger, 1988; Keller, 1991; Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000).

The other key political factor is the organization of post-independence African state and its subsequent socio-political system with the existence of two different opposing views and practices of citizenship (Hunter, 2016), which are identified as “official” and determined by the state; and the other “unofficial” or “primordial,” defined by local communities based on birth/ethnicity/identity, and these two different opposing views have hugely challenged the very concept of who a citizen is, downgrading the realization of substantive membership; legal status; rights and active participation of citizens individually and collectively at the official /national level, making civic-republican citizenship difficult status and practice to employ theoretically and practically in post-colonial African states (Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000; Hunter, 2016).

In theoretically appraising the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship through the classical theoretical lens of citizenship, the third key question of this study was: - does the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship/membership fit into the communitarian theory of citizenship? The answer to



this question is based on examining the colonial legacy and the socio-political organization of the post-independence African state. To begin with, the major philosophical pillar of this theory emphasized that a citizen must identify her/himself with the community he/she belongs as a member, and he/she must actively participate in the political life of the community for advancing the overall communal welfare, not the narrow egoist self-interest of the individual at the expense of the community. But, the advent of colonialism destroyed pre-colonial organic/indigenous political, economic, social fiber, value and communal system in Africa, with the formation of new artificially formed and externally imposed colonial state that separated similar communities into multiple new independent entities sowing inter and intra-societal and intra-state socio-political discord (Tangari, 1985; Nafziger, 1988; Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000).

The colonial state being “forged by use of force: a 'regime of compulsion' [with the new economic policy of] appropriation and expropriation of land [used as] an instrument of control” (Kanyinga, 2000:13), extinguished the early existing means “of interaction between governors and governed” (Hunter, 2016:3) within pre-colonial African states and political organizations. The newly independent states of Africa since the early decolonization period have become incompatible to advance and employ communitarian theory of citizenship, because the state is composed of multiple eccentric communities where the personalization of political power by the immediate post-independence leaders “have patrimonialized the state [in which] corruption has become a defining feature of contemporary politics [hence] politics has become more like business” (Keller, 1991:139), favoring individualism, tribalism and clientelism by downgrading individual responsibility in the community, and severely diminishing substantive membership; legal status; rights and participation both at the communal and state level.

This hugely deteriorated the state-community-individual/citizen relation in Africa sidelining the masses after independence, in which “the state has remained inaccessible to citizens [individuals, and] in spite of these changes, citizens continue to be marginalized in the governance process” (Kanyinga, 2000:5). The Colonial legacy exacerbated the expansion of new exclusionary personality cult based egoist political culture of the ruling elite, and post-colonial African states “encouraged a passive vision of national unity—a celebration of state and ruler—instead of the citizen activism they had ridden to power” (Cooper, 2005:22), sidelining the very communities African states vowed to free, serve for and develop since independence.

Major Findings

After thoroughly exploring and examining those three classical theories of citizenship in relation with the weak, neo-patrimonial nature of post-independence African state, and its contrasting political, economic and social friction between the individual’s loyalty to state and to the corresponding ethnic group he/ she belongs (Hunter, 2016), this study found that the concrete political, economic and social justifications along with the

authoritarian form of governance that “is the most common political device for dominant class consolidation in Africa” (Nafziger, 1988:82) has made African citizenship as a status and a practice the paper tiger on constitutional and legal documents being adopted from ex-colonial masters understood as unrealistic and inapplicable by the masses (Keller, 1991; Kanyinga, 2000; Herbst, 2014). Citizenship as a status and a practice is solely accorded and practiced by the narrow elites of the ruling class of the regimes in post-independence Africa (Tangari, 1985; Keller, 1991; Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000). Unlike the Western status and practice of citizenship that is deeply rooted in the social contract theory, post-independence African citizenship as a status and a practice is the political, economic and social victim of class dominance by the narrow ruling elites and its clients with the broader exclusion of the African masses poorly treated by the corrupt officials and feeble institutions of public administration (Tangari, 1985; Keller, 1991; Kanyinga, 2000).

Most post-independence African states have seriously failed politically, economically and socially in achieving the diverse interests of their citizens individually and collectively (Englebert, 1997). Hence, the three classical theories of citizenship are very difficult and impractical to employ and explain the existing status and practice of citizenship in post-colonial African political context, because in post-independence Africa citizenship goes against Aristotelian dictum where “to be truly human, one had to be an active citizen to the community, which Aristotle famously expressed: ‘to take no part in the running of community’s affair is either to be a beast or a god¹⁰’” (Singh, 2020:95). Hence, the failure of post-independence African state in taking no part in the running of community’s affair concerning the legal-political implementation of the status and practice of citizenship has made it to be a god, and the deliberate marginalization of the majority African mass in taking part in the running of its own affair as a citizen has made it to be a beast, making post-independence African citizenship impractical to employ and explain it through one of those three classical theories of citizenship.

With regards to rationales, this study outlined that the following core political, economic and social rationales have made theorizing the status and practice of citizenship a challenging endeavor in post-independence Africa: - the colonial legacy of Africa made a citizen/member of the state is to be typically affiliated with tribes, identities and ethnic groups (primordialism) attached with particular language, religion, class and racial differences rooted within solid determinations (Mutabazi, 2020/1). Colonialism adversely contributed on the status and practice of post-independence African citizenship with the new trends of state versus ethnic citizenship¹¹, because “ethnic identity in Africa is a relatively recent phenomenon whose salience is largely a

¹⁰ Not in the Christian or other religious domains, but only in the ancient Hellenic/Greek religious perspective.

¹¹ Having its origin in the earliest Greek citizenship that was marginalizing with ethnic exclusivity (Bauböck, 2007; Singh, 2020), ethnic citizenship is claimed to exist “rest[ing] on evidence of identity, authority, and legitimacy for members of an ethnic group” (Ndegwa, 1997:601).



product of colonial rule (Ekeh, 1975; Kalinga, 1985; Young, 1976) and of postcolonial dynamics in which elites have continued to rectify ethnic identity for political mobilization” (Lentz, 1994; Sithole, 1985; Binsbergen, 1994, cited in Ndegwa, 1997:600).

The other key rationale in failing to the theorization of post-independence citizenship as a status and practice in Africa has to be observed from the following two interrelated rationales (justifications) in this study context: - citizenship in Africa has “still-unsettled meanings informed and misinformed by pasts of [Africans]” (Lonsdale, 2019:19). The unsettled meanings of citizenship informed and misinformed by pasts of Africans is attached with the reality that in post-independence Africa, citizenship as a status and practice cannot be explained and examined at the level of the nation-state only (Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000)., there are also other variables which are important in African context; the existence of two different opposing social views with regard to the statuses and practices of citizenship (Hunter, 2016), which are identified as “official” and determined by the state; and the other “unofficial” or “primordial,” defined by local communities based on birth/ethnicity/identity in which exercising the civil, political and social rights, and ensuring them using the corresponding weak institutions of the state are very meager and unlikely.

Post-colonial conception of citizenship in Africa is very challenging and problematic when examining the question where and with whom is an individual belonging as a member/citizen and being loyal with? The state, the identity group or ethnicity (Lieres, 1999), and this implied the bifurcated nature and analysis of the conception of citizenship in post-independence African context where citizenship is identified either at the national (state) level or primordial (ethnic) level being complicated and challenging to appraise it through one of the classical theories of citizenship (Ndegwa, 1997; Kanyinga, 2000).

Conclusion

Modern citizenship as a status and practice is the Western laden concept, and it has become a very important political issue, enjoying its revival through granting membership or belonging by guaranteeing security within the state, and this is identified as the modern (Gothic) citizenship. Citizenship as a practice and a status is not novice in the history of Africa, but it has been changed with the formation of a post-independence African state since the early 1960s, and this study emphasized on attempting to theorize its practice through the three classical theories of citizenship: - Liberal/contractarian, Civic-Republican and Communitarian. After thoroughly exploring and examining those three classical theories of citizenship in relation with the weak, neo-patrimonial, authoritarian nature of post-independence African state, and its contrasting political, economic and social friction between the individual’s loyalty to state and to the corresponding ethnic group he/ she belongs, it is clear that none of those classical theories of citizenship are fit in this study context.

To theorize the practice of citizenship through one of these classical theories of

citizenship, the African states must adopt democratic, inclusionary and fair political system which is devoid of its colonial legacy, otherwise, post-colonial citizenship as a practice and a status remains complex not only to theorize but also to exercise it in objective reality. Finally, this study recommends that, citizenship in Africa has to be based on shared accommodation and realistic, practical agreements between those who are ruling and those who are ruled (members/citizens), where democratically sustainable, all-inclusive political system that fairly entertains and addresses the diverse political, economic and social demands and expectations of an individual and groups must prevail. Hence, post-colonial African citizenship has to be theorized in a very accommodative way, and what is required is a form of citizenship that is capable of negotiating both rights-based and ethnic identities in the African context. Undertaking these recommendations in the objective reality of post-independence African politics, it will be possible to theoretically appraise the practice of African citizenship accordingly in one of the classical theories of citizenship.

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Ethical Approval

This research did not involve human participants in case of primary data collection, or interventions. Since this article is theoretical appraisal, its data are exclusively gathered from the existing literatures which are secondary sources and publicly available scholarly materials, hence no ethical approval is necessary in conducting this study. All academic and scientific sources are appropriately cited to maintain academic integrity.

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Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that there is no any conflict of interest from any other author in any form including no competing financial interest exists for this article.

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