Kenyan-Asians in Civil Society:

Expanding the Imagined Community

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Introduction

This project is born out of a jolting encounter, one that closely resembles the Lacanian “mirror” analogy, one that had me thinking about what it means to be “Kenyan” and how different people conceive of the ‘national community’. It began when I arrived to Qatar (my first time out of Kenya) where the first thing anyone asks you in this multicultural, yet highly racialized environment, is where you are from. Almost always, I got reactions such as: “But you don’t look Kenyan…you’re not black”. I was faced with constant disbelief and felt the need to constantly prove my identity. I slowly began to introduce myself as Kenyan-Indian or Kenyan of Indian origin rather than just Kenyan just to make the encounter easier on both sides.

I comforted myself with the idea that non-Kenyans just did not know much about Kenya; therefore, their reactions were understandable. I then attempted to introduce myself to Kenyans of African origin, majority of whom seemed just as confused as the others, even after I spoke in Kiswahili, the national language. I assumed that perhaps it was because they were from areas that didn’t have a lot of Asians. Then I met someone from Nairobi, the capital city, then someone from Mombasa, my hometown both of which have sizable populations of Asians. My optimism was shattered each time I had the conversation. I kept thinking that there was no way that they had not seen or interacted with Asians in their daily lives; it was impossible, especially on the small island of Mombasa.

Finally I realized that my shock was misdirected. It was not a question of whether people had interacted with each other – they might as well have done so on a daily basis. Instead, the...

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1 This term refers invoke the ‘affective dimension of nationalism’ as described by Kennet Lynggaard, Ian Matters and Karl Löfgren in their text “Crossroads in European Union Studies” (2015). It “refers to the ‘we’ feeling or sense of belonging and to the sentimental attachment of an individual to a political unit (p. 190).” See section “Definitions of National Identity” for further discussion.
issue was that they did not consider the “Asians” as “Kenyans” or at least did not think that the “Asians” considered themselves “Kenyan”. Following this shift in perception, I realized that Benedict Anderson’s description of the “imagined community” - a political community which is “imagined” because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members…yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” and in that ‘national community’, “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” - was very applicable to the lived experience of national identity and the cultural politics of power in postcolonial Kenya. The question then arose of what had been done on the side of the Kenyan South Asians to include themselves within this ‘imagined community’? Throughout this research project, I argue that one of the ways in which Kenyan-Asians have sought to expand the ‘imagined community’ in postcolonial Kenya is through their active involvement in civil society.

This becomes particularly relevant as Kenya begins its preparations for the 2017 general election. There is justifiably a rise in apprehension with regards to the political situation in the country, especially since the memory of the post-election violence that rocked the country from December 2007 to February 2008 is not very far. The closely contested elections between Raila Odinga and the then incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki and accusations of rigging sparked a period of violence in which at least 1,133 people were killed, more than 600, 000 internally-

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2 Considering the diversity of the Asian diaspora and of their experiences, there may be still others who do not consider themselves as Kenyans necessarily, this project focuses on those who would identify themselves as such. I will later discuss the issue of binaries in the examination of diasporas as argued by Sana Aiyar which will hopefully shed more light on this issue.


displaced and over 900 cases of sexual violence were reported\(^5\) in addition to “widespread destruction and looting of homes and properties”\(^6\), shocking Kenyans as well as foreign nations who had seen Kenya as one of the most stable countries in the region.

This experience is still fresh in the minds of the citizenry and even though the country has seen a peaceful election in 2012, there is a constant fear of a recurrence of the violence. This is in addition to the heightened feelings of insecurity amidst a tightening of security measures to protect against attacks by Al-Shabaab on Kenyan soil. Across the nation, all citizens are feeling the uneasiness and insecurity that comes from both fear of attack and the visible tightening of security by the government and private security. Such feelings of insecurity and vulnerability can be dangerous because in moments of crisis is where difference is targeted and being seen as an ‘other’ becomes dangerous.

One of the groups that has been uncertain and has been made to feel uncertain about its position in country at various points in history, has been the Kenyan-Asians, most of them descendants of Indian migrants of pre-partition India (pre-1947) who came to British East Africa in large numbers mainly as indentured laborers, but also as merchants, tradesmen, clerks and a wide range of other occupations with even more Indians having a trade relationship with the East African coast since the sixteenth century\(^7\) through the Indian Ocean Trade networks. During the colonial era, they served as a ‘buffer’ between the Europeans and Africans, their wages and land rights being indicative of this relationship. Today, the approximately 71, 891 Indians (46, 782 of

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\(^5\) HRW rightly states that the true numbers may be higher, but not reported because of barriers to reporting and the taboo of the discussion of sexual violence


them Kenyan citizens\textsuperscript{8} are spread across the country, but majority of them are based in urban centers like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Eldore. They form a visible diasporic presence and more so, on one hand because of their skin color, and also because of their “being a most visible part of the affluent middleclass [and]…in such a case the line between the racial and class resentment is thin.\textsuperscript{9,10}

Within the community, there is increased talk of what the elections could mean for their continuity as a group the country and looking at anthropological material on the Asians of East Africa and other studies, it is interesting to see this as a running theme across the decades, both during the independence era as well as into the post-independence period. This indicates both a continuation of the precariousness of their position in the country as well as an acute awareness of how they are perceived as a group\textsuperscript{11} by others - Agehananda Bharati refers to them as “anxious people keenly aware of what others think about them”\textsuperscript{12}, which gives insight into their feelings of vulnerability. This is really interesting considering that he was writing in 1972 and that many still exhibit such behavior today.

Firstly, it should be made clear what is meant when references are made to: Kenyan-Asian, Kenyan Asians, Kenyan-Indians, Kenyan South Asians, Asian diaspora, Asian minority. These are all references to members of the community descended from pre-partition Indian immigrants. One of the identifiers that has come up recently amidst a lot of controversy is the

\textsuperscript{8} Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 301. Numbers are according to 2009 census
\textsuperscript{9} Ngugi, Asia in my Life. p. 3 (online) The Global South Cultural Dialogue Project
\textsuperscript{10} I should clarify that they occupy the range of lower to upper middle class, with some in the upper class while others still would be considered poor, but since these are not the majority, it is the mainly the middle-class or upper class segment that is most conspicuous and becomes a defining factor of the Kenyan-Asians in the minds of the rest of the population.
\textsuperscript{11} Despite their diversity, their ‘Indianness’ is seen as an overriding factor.
term ‘African-Asians’\textsuperscript{13}. It seems that despite this being a term some Kenyan South Asians are adopting because of feelings of attachment that extend beyond the Kenyan borders (perhaps because they do not feel accepted there). However, others argue that it places a pan-African identity where there is none and in addition to that, undermines the power of the state as “limited...by finite, if elastic, boundaries” and “sovereign”, thus, making it even harder to conceive of an imagined political community\textsuperscript{14}. Additionally, some scholars in the field prefer not to use the term ‘Asian’ because it is “an inheritance from colonial racial categories both shaped and challenged by Indians”\textsuperscript{15}. However, since many Indians in East Africa use this term as well as some of other terms listed above, I still use ‘Asian’ as a description.

This thesis does not seek to cover the entire history or diversity of the South Asian community in Kenya. There are many seminal works that do this with extensive archival and field research\textsuperscript{16}. Instead, the focus is on the present and on analyzing active civil society engagement by members of the larger Asian-Kenyan population. Furthermore, there is no analysis of the role of religion in civil society participation. This is an area of research which would yield interesting insights, but since parameters needed to be set for this research project, I decided to focus on explicitly non-religious cultural organizations. Without falling into pitfalls of generalizations, there is an attempt to try to understand the motivations of civil society actors that are not explicitly connected to religious reasons.

Additionally, through this thesis research, there is also an attempt to tackle three base presumptions commonly made about the Asians in Kenya within the sphere of participatory citizenship. These are that: 1) Asians in Kenya do not see themselves as Kenyan; 2) Kenyan-

\textsuperscript{13} Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
\textsuperscript{14} Anderson, 6.
\textsuperscript{15} Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 20.
\textsuperscript{16} See Cynthia Salvadori’s “Through Open Doors: A View of Asian Cultures in Kenya” and “We Came in Dhows”;
Asians are unaffected and unconcerned with what goes on in the country; 3) Kenyan-Asians only participate in the economic sphere, with maybe a few involved in politics.

Indians in East Africa have often been disregarded in historical perspectives because of their mostly ‘middlemen’ status in the economic sphere. In addition to this, as a group, they fell into the ambiguous role of ‘in-betweener’, with the white settlers being on one end and the indigenous Africans on the other. It seems that that “the legacy of colonialism had led the African to believe that their ‘destiny was inextricably linked with the destiny of the white man’”\(^\text{17}\). This was because that relationship was more clear along the lines of colonizer and colonized, subsequently reinforced by anti-colonial rhetoric and thought. Naipaul believed that this gave Indians in Kenya a sort of “marginality” that “invested the Asian with an odd kind of invisibility”. According to Aiyar, the invisibility of the Indians in Kenya was lifted partially during the brutal, long-drawn attack of the Westgate mall\(^\text{18}\) on 21 September 2013 by the jihadist militant group, al-Shabaab, which brought to light the presence of the Asian community in the country\(^\text{19}\) because many of them were either killed or injured and were also heavily involved in the rescue process as well as in the leading of vigils and other such events in the wake of the horrific attack. The attack made people realize that they needed to come together do deal with the external threat, therefore brought Kenyan citizens of different ethnic backgrounds together the banner of #WeAreOne on social media platforms as the country took on an increasingly patriotic stance.

For most Kenyans, the association of the South Asians in Kenya is with the economic sector because they have historically tended to be the owners of small business and control many

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\(^\text{17}\) Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 1. Aiyar refers here to the famous writers Shiva Naipaul and Ngugi wa Thiong’o.

\(^\text{18}\) An upscale mall located in the Westlands division of Nairobi

\(^\text{19}\) Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 1.
of the most important businesses in various sectors. More recently, there has been an increased re-involvement in politics (keeping in mind that they were a lot more active in politics in various ways in the anti-colonial struggle). In looking at the literature about this group, most of the seminal works are the older texts like those of Robert Gregory, Mangat Singh, Cynthia Salvadori. Most of these works have an amazing depth and breadth of fieldwork and archival research which builds a strong foundation from which an analysis of the present is made possible. Additionally, these works have tended to focus on history and socio-cultural anthropology and political involvement (some of which includes civil society work).

Although civil society covers a myriad of groups of non-state actors, within this research paper, the focus will be on cultural arts and their function in the democratic process, especially in the context of the minority rights of Kenyan-Asians in Kenya in their attempt to call for greater inclusion in the national community. Furthermore, I focus on Lahra Smith’s definition of citizenship as “meaningful citizenship” which focuses on the active participation of citizens. Thus, also in my analysis, rather than focusing on Kenyan South Asians who engage in philanthropy (of which there are many), I am instead focusing on what people are actively doing to change perceptions and include themselves in the greater national community.

This topic is of great personal and academic interest, but the greater context of the issues is of importance to anyone seeking to investigate more generally, the process of democratization in a multi-ethnic society, the role of civil society, or more specifically, the cultural and socio-political situation in Kenya which has received a lot of attention recently following the recent terrorist attacks by the Somalia-based jihadist group, Al-Shabaab, and the various consequent responses from the government and citizens. Larger areas of study could include, African and
Asian Studies as well as those interested in the Indian Ocean world, postcolonial societies and migration studies.

Furthermore, even as ideas of democratization spread across different African countries, whether superficially or more significantly, there has been an upsurge of violence in many countries adopting them, for example, the Central African Republic and Burundi. This begs the question of why this happens and what can be done to mediate the situation. Michael Mann is extremely influential in the attempt to understand the causes of socio-political violence in the context of a multi-ethnic democracy. He argues that when democratization occurs or is encouraged in places where there has historically been social stratification along the lines of both ethnicity and socio-economic class, there is a high likelihood of political violence taken as ‘revenge’ because of the clearly visible economic inequality between the ‘minority’ and ‘majority’.

Mann recognizes that “the worst cases [of violence] seem to occur where popular class resentments can be plausibly displaced onto capitalistic middlemen groups”. He however believes that the Kenyan-South Asians are considered too important to the economy to have large-scale violence inflicted upon them. It should be noted that most large-scale violence in history was considered improbable. Furthermore, the Asian expulsion of 1972 from Uganda by Idi Amin Dada, is not far off from the minds of members of the Kenyan Asian population or the events and rhetoric that prompted the Asian Exodus from Kenya in the early 1960s, in addition to the violence, looting and rapes during the 1982 attempted military coup against President Moi’s regime (the second president of the Kenyan Republic).

21 Ibid., 31.
Despite the shock incurred by the post-election violence and the subsequent major terrorist attacks at the Westgate Mall and Garissa University, for many, Kenya is still seen as a safe haven where people of different ethnicities and racial backgrounds can live together peaceably. Even if there is recognition of separation along racial and ethnic lines and some level of discrimination, there is still a firm belief that Kenya is better off than most countries since it does not have blatant racism. However, it must be recognized that these feelings do surface at points of tension and pretending that they do not exist does not help in the national identity-building project and the larger promotion of national cohesion – it only serves to create a build-up of bitterness.

The focus on vulnerability and possible reasons for socio-political violence is not to catastrophize the situation because this does not give the full story of the Kenyan social fabric and risks falling into the trap of the racist, simplistic notion that African nations are rife with conflict and are basket cases that cannot escape the cycle of violence. The focus on violence and its antithesis in this research are instead used to hone into the insecurity (both real and perceived) of the Kenyan South Asians as a diasporic community that is a numerical minority, but an economic majority. In addition to this, use this focus to help us understand their specific history in the country and their position in Kenyan society today.

Scott Weber, the Director-General of Interpeace, talks about the root cause of violence as being vulnerability. Groups who engage in violence have reasons rooted in social, political, cultural or economic exclusion. Furthermore, we have seen a cycle of violence within different societies where the victims of violence in its various forms, become the perpetrators of


23 Kenneth Ombongi, personal communication, May 7, 2015.
violence\textsuperscript{24}. It is as important, if not more important to understand what various groups do to challenge exclusion in a peaceful manner\textsuperscript{25} and additionally, works towards the betterment of the community as a whole. There arises globally, a need to understand the workings of both peace and violence so as to combat the forces of violence and move towards more peaceful and cohesive societies. With this in mind, there is a need to take a more positive look at the actions of Kenyan citizens and ask what strategies minority groups use to expand the idea of not just a national identity, but a larger identity of a national community; emphasizing the communal feel of the identity rather than just having it as an identifier.

The next section will first lay out the conceptual framework being used for this research through the examination of some of the extant literature on the inter-connected themes on the topics. In layering the themes and literature through an interdisciplinary approach, the hope is to move closer to understanding the complexity of the issue.

The methodology being used to undertake the research question is an interpretive approach that is carried out by using the case study of AwaaZ Magazine and the SAMOSA Festival as a lens to understand the greater issues of identity and citizenship in Kenya. The building of the case study is mainly done through the use of semi-structured interviews and local Kenyan newspaper articles written about the initiatives of the organization. I used semi-structured interviews so that there was some freedom in the conversation and room to make the interviewee comfortable, but also lead the conversation with some pertinent questions.

The case study section serves as a springboard from which the research question can be explored. This section includes a detailed description of the organization and their work,

\textsuperscript{25} Scott Weber, lecture at Georgetown SFS-Q, January 12, 2016.
followed by an analysis of the data collected, on one hand, about the organization’s work itself as well as the founders themselves; considering the insight that can be gained from their positionality.

Although the reader must have already recognized this, it should be made clear that this writer is conducting this research from an insider-outsider perspective in multiple ways; as a Kenyan-Asian, an academic who has spent time outside the community being studied and as a former participant in the Festival being studied. Rather than seeing this varied perspective as a hindrance, it will instead be used and analyzed critically so as to provide a more nuanced approach to the study. It should be noted that this insider-outsider position sometimes worked to ease conversation during some interviews for example with other Kenyan-Asians, especially the founders of the organization being studied, but may have had unconsciously had the opposite effect when talking to non-South Asian Kenyans, especially with regards to sharing of information if it was deemed to be offensive to the interviewer. However, overall it seemed that interviewees did not really hesitate to share since many have views that were either inoffensive, or viewpoints that are generalized enough that almost all Kenyans would be aware of them. Furthermore, some interviewees openly expressed concern about sharing some viewpoints before the start of interviews (considering the heightened security situation) but the topic and design of the interview as semi-structured allowed for the conversation to flow easily and without pushing the limits of the interviewee too much with regards to the sharing of information deemed sensitive.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{26} This was especially in relation to topics like: the government, al-Shabaab, terrorism, counter-terrorism and Somali-Kenyans or Somalis in general.
Conceptual Framework and Literature Review:

This project uses a conceptual framework rather than a single theoretical lens so as to provide a more integrative approach to the analysis. This is because, considering the complexity of the issues being addressed and their interconnected nature, applying only one theory in the analysis would be too simplistic. Keeping in mind that it is not possible to discuss all the themes and topics that arise from this topic and of course, that any discussion will not be exhaustive, what I have instead done is identified four main themes that are drawn from the research question. I have then sought to clarify my own approach to the subject-matter through the analysis of the theories which guide the overall research. The four main intersecting themes guiding the conceptual framework are: colonial aftermath, definitions of national identity, diasporic experiences, and understandings of civil society. This discussion is divided into two chapters; the first chapter discussing the first three themes under the umbrella of “The Politicization of Identity” while the next chapter “Understandings of Civil Society” focuses on the last theme.

This section includes discussions of these themes with references to some of the key works, theories and assumptions that form the basis of this thesis research, moving from bigger discussions about the theme going into the specific of the Kenyan case. History is woven into this discussion and analysis which is central to understanding the position of the Kenyan South Asians within the Kenyan context.
Chapter 1: The Politicization of Identity

Colonial Aftermath

One of the biggest debates in African Studies has been about the extent of the impact of the colonial era on the current state of governance in independent African nations. One side of the argument would see the colonial era as being less important than the continuities of the pre-colonial era and argue that the impact of the colonial period is overstated\(^{27}\). The other side of the argument emphasizes the overwhelming importance of the colonial era on the current condition of African states, ranging from the functioning of the government, the relationship of citizens to the state as well as citizens’ relations with each other, especially when it comes to ethnic and racial divisions\(^{28}\).

In his theorization of the Rwandan genocide of 1994, Mahmood Mamdani posits that the violence that took place is essentially the kind Fanon talks about in his seminal work “The Wretched of the Earth”; in which the violence perpetrated is experienced as catharsis and is deemed necessary so as to be cleansed of the settler’s violence (which Hannah Arendt focuses on, on the other hand, with her analysis of the Holocaust). Mamdani examines the Rwandan genocide as a type of ‘native’s genocide’ because of the way in which the histories of the Hutu and Tutsi were constructed by the Belgian colonial administration – the Tutsi were “race


brand[ed] and seen as outsiders due to the Hamitic hypothesis. Mamdani believes that “the great crime of colonialism went beyond expropriating the native… the greater crime was to politicize indigeneity in the first place.” He furthermore stipulates that we need to look at political identities as historical, thus, “legally enforced and institutionally reproduced”, rather than being “primordial” and unchanging. This line of thinking has sometimes been criticized for placing an allegedly unjustifiable amount of importance on the colonial era rather than pre-European colonialism or the anticolonial revolt.

At the other end of this spectrum is Jean-Francois Bayart who argues instead that the colonial period is a relatively short period of time in history and that theories like Mamdani’s underestimates the agency exercised by colonized populations. He believes that the relationship of Africa to the outside world has been that of “extraversion”, especially in the last 500 years. Bayart argues that African elites have consistently used their position and relationship to external parties to their own advantage Bayart attempts primarily to shed light on the continuities between the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.

He draws on the example of African agency present in the slave trade, mostly reflected in the African elite who were the beneficiaries of the system. He also makes reference to the ways in which despotic leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, used their position and the situation in post-independence countries, even utilizing the language of democracy to personally benefit from aid money as well as loans from Western donors. Overall, this seems like a very compelling argument since there is a dire need to give previously colonized populations more

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30 Ibid., 14
31 Bayart, 218-220
32 Ibid., 226-227.
agency, given that the perpetuation of a victimized status further handicaps these populations. However, it also serves to reduce the role of the colonial era from one of the most influential points in African history to more of a blip in the historical continuum.

However, this line of thinking is not without its flaws. Most importantly, we should beware of not recognizing some of the long-lasting damage done by the experience of colonialism; psychosocially, culturally and politically. Furthermore, in the context of the research question, although there had existed racial differences in the socio-political and economic system before the colonial era, the colonial administration, specifically, the British form of indirect rule, served to create more impermeable lines of difference within the colonized population than had existed previously.

In colonial Kenya, this translated into a freezing of racial and ethnic categories that arose because of a “system of state-enforced internal discrimination”\textsuperscript{33}. There was an institutionalization of discrimination that was centered on the discourse about origin\textsuperscript{34}; leading to Mamdani’s theory of nativism. This is seen especially in the application of customary law for the different African tribes which put unlimited power in the hands of the chiefs, whereas civil law was applied to all other non-African groups in the British protectorate. The separation of law was also compounded by the physical separation of the races in terms of housing as well as occupation and concurrently, wages. Despite there being recognition of racial and socio-cultural differences, the colonial era served to further stratify the population along the lines of socio-economic class which followed along the lines of racial and ethnic difference. These divisions

\textsuperscript{33} Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, 45.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 50.
made class have strong racial markers which became entrenched in people’s psyche which are then exhibited through socio-cultural encounters.

**Definitions of National Identity**

Considering the tendency for nationalism to be used as a tool for propagating violence by fascist regimes at various points in history, many have criticized its function in our socio-political as well as its proponents. Yet, ideas of nationalism continue to play a strong role in how nations conduct themselves, both at home and abroad, and therefore, directly impacting the lives of citizens. Benedict Anderson asserts that despite prophesies about “the ‘end of the era of nationalism…nationess is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.” However, it is important to understand how it operates because it has real-world consequences on citizen’s lives.

Anderson provides an anthropological definition of the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. He breaks this definition down into its different components. Anderson first explains the political community that forms the nation is *imagined* and a *community* because “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion”\(^\text{36}\). Furthermore, “the nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them…has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations”\(^\text{37}\). Thus, we see how exclusion and inclusion play a big role in how the nation in constituted; there is an ‘Us’ and a ‘Them’. Lastly, the nation is imagined as *sovereign* because of the state’s association with freedom since the idea of the sovereign state was “born in an age

\(^{35}\) Anderson, 3
\(^{36}\) Anderson, 6.
\(^{37}\) Ibid, p. 7
in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.”\textsuperscript{38} These four components, thus explain Anderson’s theory on nationalism which was constructed with Asia and South-East Asia in mind, but has become a widely used definition and way of looking at the phenomenon.

Anderson includes in his definition the idea of ‘communion’ and ‘comradeship’ which is an idea that has been explored by many scholars seeking to understand what gives the theoretical ideas of nationalism and national identity its almost-gravitational pull on people, reflected for example, in a willingness to die for the nation. Kennet Lynggaard, Ian Matters and Karl Löfgren in their text “Crossroads in European Union Studies” explain that this is the ‘affective dimension of national identity’\textsuperscript{39} which “refers to the ‘we’ feeling or sense of belonging and to the sentimental attachment of an individual to a political unit.”\textsuperscript{40} This takes us beyond just documentation or other logistical aspects of national identity, or even cultural markers to the level of affect.

With the question in mind of “what does it really mean to have an imagined community?” Anderson quotes from the work of Ernest Gellner who argues that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it invents nations where they do not exist”.\textsuperscript{41} Gellner proposes that communities are thus more ‘genuine’ than nations, but Anderson posits that the ‘imagination’ or ‘creation’ does not equate ‘fabrication’. The debate harkens back to the influential work of Terrence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm on “The Invention of Tradition”\textsuperscript{42} in

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
  \item\textsuperscript{39} To be clear, they did not coin this phrase or come up with this idea, but use it in their work, providing an explanation to clarify their own usage of the phrase.
  \item\textsuperscript{40} Lynnggaard et al. “Crossroads in European Union Studies”, p. 190.
  \item\textsuperscript{41} Anderson, 6
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
which they assert that the traditions that we think have been existence since ancient times, are actually relatively recent. This includes ‘national culture’ and the cultural symbols of what signifies a nation and their unique identity.

Despite the birth of the Kenyan nation being only 53 years ago and the recognition that the country’s borders were arbitrarily created and that most cultural symbols were created at the time of independence, there is definitely an idea of who belongs and who does not. For example, even though ‘non-indigenous’ people are also Kenyan citizens, the national flag has a black stripe in it which is meant to represent the citizens of Kenya. As Eric Wainaina sings in his famous song, *Daima Kenya*[^43], “Nyeusi ni ya wananchi” which means “Black is for the citizens”. This song was sung after the post-election violence of 2007/2008 and was a call for people to unite across all dividing lines, remembering that we are all one[^44]. This is of course, not an accusation towards Wainaina (or any single individual for that matter) since for part of the song he is simply saying the meaning of the flag colors and has consistently worked towards creating peace with his music, but the issue is that there is a racialized idea about who is a citizen and who is not. Furthermore, the national cultural symbols send subliminal messages about what the nation stands for, who is included and to what extent.

Thus, it brings to mind the question: what does this mean for the project of expanding of the imagined community in independent Kenya? This is a question that will be addressed through the case study, but the idea that arises is that if ‘national culture’ has been invented, and has undergone changes over history, this would mean that there is space to invent a new national culture that is more inclusive.

[^43]: This means “Kenya Only”
[^44]: Eric Wanaina is a Goodwill Ambassador for the National Commission for Cohesion and Integration.
Having explored how the power of the affective dimension of national identity and its function in independent Kenya, there is a need to understand the specifics of the position of the South Asians in Kenya. The next section gives an insight into their precarious position between ‘citizen’ and ‘foreigner’\(^45\). It gives insight into why they would decide to organize themselves in pursuit of the greater socio-cultural and political goal of ‘expanding the imagined community’.

**Diasporic Experiences**

Throughout this research, there are various points at which assumptions must be called into question. One of these points involves the use of the term ‘diaspora’. At first glance, it would seem appropriate to use this term, but it needs to be broken down and explored further to clarify why it is being used and with what connotations. Leading scholars in the field, like Gabriel Sheffer argue that although this phenomenon has begun to be discussed more widely in recent years, the concept of migration and of diasporas is ancient. The discussions of diasporas had been centered around Jews and the ‘black diaspora’ created mainly by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. This is because the “‘classical form’ of diaspora” was characterized by “forced movement, exile and a consequent sense of loss derived by an inability to return”\(^46\). This view has certainly expanded in the last few decades to include a variety of different groups.

To explore the shift in the usage of the term, we must first take a look at one of the main frameworks that have been used to classify a group as ‘diaspora’. The following criteria form the framework used by Robin Cohen (1997) who bases his work on that of William Safran (1991):

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\(^45\) Kenneth Ombongi, personal communication, May 7, 2015. The ‘in-between’ regard of the Kenyan South Asians is not a new one, but he suggested the citizen/foreigner binary during our meeting.

1. dispersal and scattering (from a homeland);
2. collective trauma (while in the homeland);
3. cultural flowering (while away);
4. a troubled relationship with the majority (while away);
5. a sense of community transcending national frontiers (home and away); and
6. promoting a return movement (away to home)\(^{47}\)

Virinder Karla, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk bring out the critical flaws of using this framework because although it is “a neat framework”, it is this neatness which is an issue since people and their histories are not that ‘neat’ or easily classifiable. They argue, and rightly so, that because the framework “oscillates around the idea of a homeland. There is little space left to talk about those groups who, for whatever reasons, are compelled to leave one place for another, subsequently settle and then have no formal relationship with their place of ‘origin’”\(^{48}\). This gap in the framework is not simply speculation because it applies to the South Asians in Kenya. They do fit some of the criteria in Cohen’s framework, in that they have experienced a dispersal and face a troubled relationship with the majority (as discussed in other parts of this thesis), but the other four are not as clear-cut for the whole group, with the sixth criteria being the farthest from the realities of most the Asian communities in Kenya.

Another term that could be used to describe this specific group is ‘minority’ considering the fact that Indians comprise less than 1 percent of the total national population and attached to this term would be the connotations of marginalization usually associated with it. However, considering the fact that Kenya has over 40 different ethnic groups, who speak over 60 different languages and that the largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, comprise only about a fifth of the total populations, the word ‘minority’ does not fully express the aspect of migration and of having a

\(^{47}\) Ibid
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 11-12.
cultural identity that has connections to a ‘country of origin’, but at the same time is not “fundamentally connected to [the idea of ‘home’]”\textsuperscript{49} as being different than the country they are in. Thus, the term ‘minority’ does not bring out the nuances of the group being examined in this thesis.

Additionally, Kalra et al. posit that “combined with a hyphenated, hybrid identification, it can be argued that diaspora allows us to move beyond the static, fixed notion of immigrant [and] it also allows us to see migration not as a one-off event with one-way consequences, but rather as an ongoing process of building links and relationships at the material and cultural levels.\textsuperscript{50}” Having such an understanding of the term and its merits over using others like minority or immigrant, gives us some perspective of the complexities of classification of different groups. Thus, the term ‘diaspora’ is used in this thesis, not as a method of categorization, but used descriptively as a way to understand the nuances contributed by the specific context of Kenyan-South Asians in postcolonial Kenya.

Sheffer focuses on the politics of diasporas in his text, ‘Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad’. He discusses the reasons why diasporas engage in politics or organize themselves, and explains that “the continuing existence of diasporas hinges on their members’ wishes to maintain their ethno-national identities and contacts with their homelands and with other dispersed communities of the same ethnic origin”. He argues that it is not as obvious why the diaspora communities themselves would be “willing to invest substantial effort and resources in creating elaborate organizations dedicated to nurturing relationship…” not only with their host countries.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., p. 11 (italics added for emphasis)
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p. 15.
and home countries, but also other actors that range from global and regional actors to other diasporas.

Two main reasons are suggested by Sheffer as to why diasporas would make this investment: “first, to promote the well-being and ensure the continuity of their communities in their host countries; second, to increase their ability to extend support to beleaguered homelands and other diaspora communities of the same national origin.” 51 The second reason may have applied to the older generations of Indian diasporas in Kenya, but does not feature prominently in organizations today which are more centered on the ‘hostland’. With regards to the first reason, the work being done by the Indians in Kenya in civil society to ‘expand the imagined community’ definitely has an element of ensuring continuity, but as I will later discuss, it becomes much more than that, acquiring multiple layers.

Building upon the previously discussed frameworks, Sana Aiyar argues that the rigid binary between ‘homeland’ and ‘hostland’ used in diasporic studies is unhelpful, especially when looking at the diverse group of Kenyan-Asians. Aiyar asserts that there is a need to recognize the spectrum of experiences of members of the Kenyan Asian segment of the population who have varying degrees of attachment and differing sentiments towards their land of origin. For them, the lines between what is ‘homeland’ and ‘hostland’ is blurred and most likely, they do not see the need to draw a line between the two. According to Aiyar, there was never a clear distinction between homeland and hostland for most of the Indians in Kenya since there was a shared “experience of being colonized subjects in both India and Kenya” and an adoption of ideas from both sides about nationalism which influenced political action on both sides – suggesting a more fluid identity than the binaries that are regularly used.

Sheffer’s focus on the politics of diasporas is refreshing because, as Aiyar points out, diasporas are assumed to be insular in their very nature. This is of course true of stereotypes of the Kenyan-South Asians who are assumed to be insular in all areas of their lives when it comes to the rest of the Kenyan society. This may be true in some areas, but more recently, there has been a refocusing of attention on the extensive and varied South Asian influence as well as their active participation in the anticolonial struggle by academics and individuals. Aiyar expresses her disapproval of the way in which “nationalist” history about Kenya has been written by early historians. Referring specifically to the 1966 text by Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham which immediately discredits and ignores the participation of the Indian population in Kenya with regards to the nationalist struggle “proclaim[ing] that the ‘largely middle class oriented and religiously fragmented Indian population played only a marginal role in the expanding conflict between the white power elite and dominated African population”\(^53\), thus making the political situation in the country seem, both literally and metaphorically, black and white. She believes that although this led to a widening of research into nationalism in colonial Kenya, it “closed off the same spirit of inquiry for the study of the politics of Indian immigrants”\(^54\). Furthermore, it added to the assumption by many that the Indians in Kenya did not have a vested interest in the nation which in turn, highlighted their ‘outsider’ status rather than their ‘citizen’ status.

Historically, there were definitely changes over time in the political articulations of the Asian population which become less inward-looking and more tied to the nationalist aspirations of their African counterparts (keeping in mind, however, this was not a large-scale movement).


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
The nationalist ideals were being openly and strongly expressed by people like Makhan Singh, one of the foundational members of the trade unionist movement in Kenya. Despite there being a few strong proponents of working together across racial lines, it must recognized that there are some limits to extending this view to the whole of the Indian population in Kenya. This is because there were many who benefitted from the colonial era and vice versa (much in the same way that many indigenous Kenyans did as loyalists to the colonial administration) and thus, were not too keen on it being displaced since their position in the country would then be uncertain.

Another accusation usually levied against the Kenyan-South Asians is that they were too busy with their religious in-fighting to be able to focus on the bigger picture of the anticolonial revolt. Even as Aiyar recognizes the cleavage in Indian politics in Kenya following the India-Pakistan partition (as signaled by calls for separate electorates and representation along religious lines), she reminds us that these divisions were more politically charged than religious and that the community eventually saw that their divisions did not really matter in the Kenyan context. This idea is conveyed well by the General Secretary of the EAINC (East African Indian Congress): “It does not matter a tupence whether my sympathies are pro-India or pro-Pakistan when it comes to our political and economic rights in this land of our adoption”\(^55\). However, although she seeks to move us away from the generic look at post-partition Kenya-Asian politics, she may be underestimating the power of the split along religious lines which left a strong after-shock in local politics.

Moving from religious considerations with regards to their impact on Kenyan-Asian engagement in the anticolonial struggle, another area of importance is that of the racial divisions between the Indian and African civil society actors. This concept cannot be holistically

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 1007.
understood unless we take into account Mamdani’s argument about the politicization of identity under the colonial era. The colonial political economy was clearly defined along racial lines which resulted in the “political and economic concerns of Europeans, Africans and Indians [being] voiced within racially exclusive associations,”\(^{56}\) which thereby made it difficult to work together across racial lines.

This division along racial and ethnic differences gives us a glimpse into the true obstacles to national cohesion since despite wanting to accept everyone as part of the nationalist agenda socio-economic status and the political privileges that tend to come with it cannot be ignored. The colonial administration definitely emphasized and benefitted from the racial and socio-cultural divisions which made it harder for colonized subjects to organize on the grounds of a common identity. Additionally, it is important to note that the economic divisions along racial lines may be the biggest obstacle to national cohesion even today.

Amy Chua, an American legal scholar and writer, proposes a theory on why the exporting of free market democracy mainly by America is exacerbating issues of ethnic hatred in non-Western contexts and consequently bringing about global instability in her widely read text “World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability”\(^ {57}\). She discusses the role of ‘market-dominant minorities’ around the world in an attempt to explain their shared role and effect on the majority poor ‘indigenous populations’ in whatever context they are found. She explores why market-dominant minorities are hated within their local contexts and why the exporting of free market democracy only magnifies the issue. However, she provides harsh, stereotypical depictions of Indians in Kenya and she also places

\(^{56}\) Ib\(\text{id.}\), 992

groups with very different historical backgrounds in the same basket, for example, conflating the experiences and positions of Indians in Kenya, white settlers in Zimbabwe and Jews in post-communist Russia – such generalizations are dangerous, unhelpful and weaken her overall argument⁵⁸.

One of her solutions to the issue of ethnonationalism and hatred against the market-dominant minorities is to make visible philanthropic gestures to the majority ‘indigenous’ population so as to “counter the perception (justified or not) of their insularity and indifference to the welfare of the nation” ⁵⁹. This idea echoes Sheffer’s discussion about the reasons diasporas organize i.e. one of the reasons being the maintenance of their continuity as a community in the host country. They may well be right, but this proposal ignores the ‘affective dimension of national identity’ that is most definitely experienced by many of the ‘market-dominant minority’ in Kenya as expressed by Aiyar and other scholars as well as by members of the Asian community in Kenya. It ignores the fact that many do not see Kenya as a ‘host country’ but simply their country.

The next section focuses on civil society concepts, broadly and specific to the Kenyan context. Despite there being a historically strong association between Indians and the political economy, there have been many who have been actively engaged in civil society in various capacities. Examining the function of civil society in independent Kenya, draws us closer to understanding what the participation of the Kenya-Asians means.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10-11.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 282.
Chapter 2: Understandings of Civil Society

The concept of civil society, and further still, civil society in an African context is mired with controversy and can be quite polarizing. In many ways, arguments about the colonial legacy cast their shadow on the discussion which is combined with the historical significance of the Post-Washington consensus. Despite the World Bank’s insistence on being apolitical, it has increasingly adopted the stance of ‘good governance’ building in African countries, part of which is civil society, heralded as the counter-balance to the authoritarian state according to Hegelian concepts of civil society. Mamdani asserts that “the Hegelian notion of civil society is both the summation and the springboard of the main currents of Western thought on the subject”60 which gives us an indication of the extent to which these ideas have permeated modern thought and conceptualizations of good governance which is reflected heavily in policy recommendations for African nations.

David Lewis examines what the usefulness of the concept of civil society is in an African context. According to him, there are two dimensions by which to judge the “usefulness” of the concept of civil society: one is where the concept is “‘useful to think with’ in the sense of supporting analysis which can help to make sense of political and social realities, while on the other it may be ‘useful to act with’, by helping to inspire action on the ground”61. In this way, the concept of civil society can be used to examine the work being done by people on the ground rather than looking at the concept only in the abstract.

60 Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, 14.
“Meaningful Citizenship”

In her book, “Making Citizens in Africa”, Lahra Smith explores the question of citizenship and its effect on the socio-political. Smith believes that the focus on African democracy has, for too long, been on strengthening institutions as seen by the efforts on the World Bank in Africa. Although this has worked to some extent, not enough attention has been given to other issues arising from democratization, especially given the diverse, multiethnic citizenry in most African states. She also feels that more than simply looking at ethnic conflict is not enough; there will obviously be conflict when institutional change is occurring, but we need to look at the ways in which they form a “national conversation” about citizenship.62

Her main contribution to the discussion about citizenship is her development of the concept of ‘meaningful citizenship’. She explains that “meaningful citizenship refers to the way in which rights are exercised, or the effective practice of citizenship. It is concerned with the ability and environment for the realization of rights and discharging of duties within a polity in ways that have practical implications for all citizens’ lives”63. Smith believes that this explains the ways in which citizens all across postcolonial Africa are exercising citizenship, despite scales of democracy or freedom; a citizenship that is constantly functioning both when reform is occurring in the democratic system and when authoritarian structures re-emerge in the socio-political fabric of the country64. Although Smith focuses particularly on Ethiopia, she posits her

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63 Ibid., 4.
64 Ibid., 4.
work as being relevant to the experience of citizens in Africa and all over the world, as they strive towards greater emancipation and recognition of rights\textsuperscript{65}.

Despite recognizing the importance of a citizenship represented by a passport and one which is passed on from one’s parents, her definition of citizenship moves beyond that and that is what makes her analysis extremely relevant to this project. Smith says that she is concerned with the kind of citizenship that “that labels an ethnically Anywaa woman “Sudanese” even if she carries…an Ethiopian passport, even if she was born is Addis Ababa…and even if she speaks the Ethiopian national language, Amharic\textsuperscript{66}. It is striking how this statement can easily be applied to the Kenyan case with the Kenyan South Asians. It should be noted that speaking the national language can make a big difference with regards to interactions with other citizens as well as with perception of a group having insider or outsider status. This point will be further explored in the case study section with regards to the Asians in Kenya, keeping in mind that because of education and social interactions, most do not speak Kiswahili or even if they do, do not speak it well.

Civil Society-Political Liberalization Theory: The Kenyan Case

After briefly examining broader definitions and conceptualizations of civil society, it is necessary to explore the specifics of the Kenyan case with Makau Mutua’s text “Kenya’s Quest for Democracy: Taming Leviathan”. Mutua traces the failures of democracy in Kenya and argues (as the title suggests), that there has been a constant move towards “taming leviathan” in the course of the struggle for democracy by attempting to keep the power of the sovereign in check (referring again to Hegelian notions of civil society). He believes that the only way this can be

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 16.
done is by means of constitutional reform, but also asserts that this cannot happen except through the leadership of those engaged in civil society and we see that through the work of civil society leaders and others, constitutional reform was achieved through the 2010 referendum.\(^67\)

However, more importantly for this research project are his views on the role of civil society in Kenya. In his opinion, civil society needs to be non-partisan, but clarifies that this does not mean “keeping silent or refusing to take sides in the face of tyranny or betrayal [of the people]”. Civil society, according to Mutua, is “the people’s watchdog”.\(^68\) He believes that “each one of the fractions of civil society has enormous potential for renewing politics”.\(^69\) Overall, although he proclaims a generally pessimistic perspective of Kenyan politics (especially considering he is writing not long after the 2007-2008 post-election violence), he is ultimately very positive about the role and influence of civil society in moving closer to a more democratic society.

Other Kenyan scholars like Shadrack Nasong’o also believe in the transformative power of civil society, but argue that if there is to be any democratic transition in Kenya, this needs to be complemented by a change in how civil society functions. Following his analysis of civil society organizations (CSOs), he argues that they have not done enough to open up the political space in the democratization project and that their efforts have been “modest” at most.\(^70\) Nasong’o states that scholars are divided between those who “elevate the phenomenon of civil society to the position of a providential spirit dispatched to redeem a political world gone awry”

\(^68\) Ibid., 276.
\(^69\) Ibid., 275.
\(^70\) Godwin R Murunga and Shadrack Wanjala Nasong’o., *Codesria... Kenya : The Struggle for Democracy*. (London; New York; Dakar, Senegal; New York: Zed Books ; Codesria ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.
and those who “view the notion of civil society as a mere metaphor masquerading as a political player”\textsuperscript{71}.

Stephen Ndegwa, who was one of the first scholars to directly use empirical evidence regarding NGOs in Kenya, offers a more critical, yet balanced view of civil society in his text “The Two Faces of Civil Society” as he dismantles the notion that civil society is directly linked to the progression of democracy. He analyses two local NGOs in Kenya, the Undugu Society and the Green Belt Movement and comes to the conclusion that civil society has ‘two faces’ – one that works to ‘tame leviathan’ and the other that is silent or accommodating towards the government\textsuperscript{72}. However, he stipulates that sometimes even if these conditions are met, this does not necessarily mean that civil society would take actions to promote democratization as he demonstrates through his examination of the two Kenyan civil society movements. Ndegwa brings up an important factor about the shift of focus from civil service to civil society. He believes that this enables us to understand the nuances of the position of civil society.

Mutua recognizes this, and deems it one of the pitfalls of civil society today since the dependence on mostly Western donor nations (on the rise since the 1990s) decreases the ability of organizations to actually be successful in their democratization and mobilization efforts. Mutua, drawing on work by Chidi Odinkalu, rather bluntly says that “the African human rights movement, an elite, urban-based clique that lacks a social base among the poor majorities, would not be possible without donor support”. He sees past the Western donors’ calls for democracy, saying that any move towards popular mobilization on sensitive issues is likely to make the donors nervous since they want stability more than anything else. He believes that the civil

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 23.
society organizations need to be more independent and need to be prepared to clash with them as well since the foreign-funded agent cannot possibly be held accountable to the local or be their voice if they have no base within it at all.\textsuperscript{73} Ndegwa ends by restating that the diversity of NGOs when it comes to the democratization movement requires a revision of the ‘civil-society-political liberalization theory’. Without denying the importance of civil society in bringing about political transformation, he raises other relevant questions like: “Which actors will be important to the transition of democracy? Which actors will be important to the consolidation of democracy?” and why is it that some civil society actors further the democratic project, while others are either silent or hostile towards it?

Ndegwa first takes us beyond the assumption about the “civil-society-political liberalization theory”, and his questions then lead us to the nuances of the issue rather than an unhelpful black-and-white approach.\textsuperscript{74} Therefore, we are able to examine the work of civil society actors in a more balanced way. This needs to be the approach, especially when looking at the role of civil society in a postcolonial African context where issues of power have been at the forefront of most major issues facing its various populations.

After having examined the definitions of civil society and seen how they play out in the Kenyan context in general, there is a need to examine the theory of ‘meaningful citizenship’ with regards to Kenyan South Asians. Today, when examining the role of Asians in Kenyan society, their most important contributions are seen to be in the field of business, but Robert Gregory insists that because of the significance of their political contribution, the Asians deserve more attention than has been afforded to them previously. He examines historically, the politics of

\textsuperscript{73} Mutua, Taming Leviathan, 280.
\textsuperscript{74} Ndegwa, 5.
Asians in East Africa, focusing on the years between 1900 and 1967 which he sees as significant milestones (considering the difficulty of determining a start and end to involvement in the political process). He also argues that the coming of the independent African state, meant significantly less direct involvement in politics of the Asians, mostly noticeably in areas that has previously been their strong points, namely, government, trade-unionism and journalism. Following Gregory’s analysis, we can surmise that over the years, the Asian diaspora in East Africa has been involved both in politics directly, but also in civil society projects to various degrees (the lines between these being blurred in the colonial and early postcolonial African state).

Chua seems to indicate ‘visible’ gestures like philanthropy and general involvement in civil society would serve to appease the indigenous population with regards to one’s patriotism and sharing of personal wealth. Furthermore, accusations against Asians in Kenya about them simply using their wealth to secure their position in the society for their own purposes have followed along the lines of what Chua is suggesting. However, the matter is complicated by questions of belonging and the affective dimension of national identity whose impact cannot be ignored. Thus, Chua’s ‘solution’ and the above-mentioned accusation, do not serve to explain the actions of civil society actors.

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Cultural Arts and Civil Society

Before exploring the case study, which can be better understood after putting together the background of the politicization of the identity and the workings of civil society, it is necessary to understand the role cultural arts which have always been an important part of expression and identity-formation. They hold a significant amount of power in the articulation of ideology and representation. Because of these attributes, Mark Mattern and Nancy Love and that culture and arts also play an important role in helping us ‘do democracy’, especially with regards to historically marginalized groups. Despite recognizing that through cultural arts, these groups can have a voice on a political platform, much in the same vein as Ndegwa, recognize that the tool of cultural arts can be used to both further and restrict the democratization project. They use Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony” to explain this contradiction: the “ruling class can establish political control by shaping the dominant cultural institutions of civil society. For Gramsci, cultural projects are a primary field of political struggle, a site where counterhegemonic artists and intellectuals can also prefigure a new society and join with others to create it”. Mattern and Love also explain how the very notion that art is integral to the democratic process is contrary to the liberal-democratic view that there is a distinction between the private and public sphere and that art would come under the private sphere because of the element of personal experience.\footnote{Ibid.}

An important distinction that they make in their text is that between “elites-driven public art” and “community arts”. The former is seen as “inherently linked to collusion with forces that are fundamentally more interested in capital investment or maintaining social order than with improving the lives of residents of a city” whereas the latter is seen as the true democratizing
force which seeks to make real change for members of the community. However, we must keep in mind that sometimes, what appears to be grassroots might actually be something that has been co-opted by the elite and perhaps even by the government since there are many points of overlap between the two. Additionally, sometimes it is difficult to draw a line between what is ‘elite’ and what is ‘community’. Furthermore, trying to do so may defeat the very purpose of the art within its specific context.

To add yet another layer to the examination of the function of the cultural arts, it is important to look at the very function of engaging in arts, thus, examine its usefulness in the process of building national identity. Christopher Small, who coined the term ‘musicking’, describes it as the process of “tak[ing] part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing”. Looking at participation in community-based arts in this way, it becomes a vehicle for promoting democratic ideals in its message, medium and propensity to bring people together. We can examine this further much in the same way that David Lewis looks at civil society. According to him, there are two dimensions by which to judge the “usefulness” of the concept of civil society: one is where the concept is “useful to think with” in the sense of supporting analysis which can help to make sense of political and social realities, while on the other it may be “useful to act with”, by helping to inspire action on the ground. Although it involves a widening of focus, for our purposes, it is necessary to use both dimensions since cultural arts as a fraction of civil society, are significant both in their existence as an

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77 Ibid., chap 14.
79 Lewis, 570.
organization and also in their aims and actions within the society – what they are and what they do.

With this conceptualization as a backdrop, the next section explores how all the theories discussed in earlier chapters come together in the microcosm of a Nairobi-based organization that was founded and is led by two Kenyans of Indian origin. This organization is an example of how a civil society organization, focusing on cultural arts can be used towards the greater goal of bringing people together across ethnic and racial lines, while also building a more integrated and inclusive national community.
Chapter 3: Case Study as a Lens

AwaaZ Magazine and the SAMOSA Festival

The lens through which I seek to answer the research question, *how have Kenyan-Asians sought to expand the “imagined community” of postcolonial Kenya?* is the case study which focuses on the Nairobi-based AwaaZ magazine and its cultural arm, the SAMOSA festival (South Asian Mosaic of Society and Art). The magazine started out in 2000 as a way of drawing attention to the role played by Kenyan-Asians in the independence struggle and slowly shifted over time to other topics, including broader questions of national identity, corruption and land, among others. The SAMOSA festival was started in 2005 and provided the organization with a “cultural tool [for] greater outreach”\(^80\).

The festival first caught this writer’s interest as a participant in the 2010 festival\(^81\). The idea of cultural fusion from a creative perspective was an extremely intriguing idea because it was a gold-mine for creativity. However, reexamining the country’s socio-cultural and political situation from the insider-outsider perspective of a Kenyan-Asian academic, it prompted the question of why something like the SAMOSA festival would exist in the first place; what gaps was it trying to fill? In trying to understand the various aspects that came together to facilitate the work of AwaaZ magazine and the SAMOSA festival, the greater goal is to understand the bigger themes that arise from the case study. The case study thus serves as a starting point from which different ideas about citizenship, civil society and the cultural politics of modern Kenya can be explored.

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\(^80\) Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.

\(^81\) Part of which took place in Mombasa at the Aga Khan Academy
The main interview data in the following section is from the founders of AwaaZ magazine and the SAMOSA festival, Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, and this is complemented by information from the websites for AwaaZ magazine and the SAMOSA festival respectively as well as local newspapers. Other interview data comes from interviews with Kenyans of different backgrounds who had unique insights about the socio-cultural situation in Kenya which nuanced the understanding of the work being done by this specific organization. This section will begin with descriptions and analysis of both the magazine and the festival before moving on to broader themes connected to the founders and their backgrounds and motivations so as to better understand how their experiences fit into the larger understanding of citizenship in Kenya.

_AwaaZ Magazine_

Before delving into the details of the work being done, it is necessary to have a brief look at the backgrounds of both Rajan and Patel (with more detail to follow later in the thesis). Rajan is the Executive editor of the magazine, has been involved in civil society since 1992 and is a “printer by profession”. He is currently the “moderator of Solidarity Network Kenya which publicizes material on South South Solidarity” and was a “PR [Public Relations] consultant with the Kenya Human Rights Commission on the Mau Mau Reparations Suit filed against the British Government and continues to work around issues of the Mau Mau in Kenya”. Patel is the Managing Editor of the magazine “an author and historian as well as a human rights activist and environmentalist”. Patel was a member of the task force for the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC)\(^\text{82}\) and is currently a Goodwill Ambassador for the National Commission for

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\(^{82}\) Created by an Act of Parliament to investigate human rights violations and historic injustices between the time of independence, 12 December 1963 to the end of the post-election violence in February 2008.
Integration and Cohesion (NCIC)\textsuperscript{83,84}. Generally, both individuals have been heavily involved in multiple political and social initiatives.

According to Rajan and Patel, the magazine first started out as a newsletter which they were commissioned to write and edit, essentially “revamp[ing]” their existing publication by the EACA (Eastern Action Club of Africa)\textsuperscript{85}, which is a lobby group which focused on minority rights. The focus on key South Asian historical figures with national importance first started out as a one-page installment with each newsletter and because of the demand expressed by the readers after about five issues underwent an upscale to a magazine\textsuperscript{86}.

The magazine is produced thrice a year which they say gives them time for in-depth research and content editing. AwaaZ focused on producing histories and biographies of key South Asian figures involved in the anticolonial struggle in various ways, from politicians to activists to lawyers, journalists and writers, both from the colonial and postcolonial periods. Rajan and Patel explain that after five years, they felt that they had completed their “first stage of work” and expanded their work in 2009-10 to focus on a wider range of minority and diversity issues in Kenya\textsuperscript{87}.

Patel explains that her interest in South Asian history was sparked mainly at the time of independence which, while being a euphoric moment, was also one of great upheaval and confusion. She explains that the calls for ‘Africanization’ by some major political figures soon

\textsuperscript{83} The NCIC was also created in 2008 to address issues of integration and cohesion within the frame work of the national community.
\textsuperscript{85} Rajan is currently Chairman of the lobby group. It’s motto is “Equity and Equality for All”. \url{www.easteractionclubforafrica.blogspot.com}
\textsuperscript{86} Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
after independence “... made [her] wonder: Who are we [Asians]? Do we have any rights in Kenya? And when we demand or get citizenship, what is the meaning of that citizenship? To answer these questions, we found it necessary to delve back into our own history...How did we get here [Kenya]? Why did we come here? What did we do here? What rights do we have in this country and to call ourselves Kenyan for that matter.”

Patel asserts that the history of the South Asians in Kenya has been “ignored, suppressed or even distorted” especially because the history was being written by foreigners. She explains that it is of great importance to highlight the “fantastic work they [Asian political actors] did together with their African allies...we have worked together through the anticolonial struggle and made major contributions to that struggle.” Rajan and Patel clarify that their focus is on “showcasing South Asian history on the national scale [and] not on communal activities” and they believe that their work on histories of both key colonial, as well as post-colonial figures has resulted in a previously ignored view of history to pass into “common knowledge”.

The change in focus of the magazine is reflected in the changes in the name of the magazine over the last few years: “Voices of EACA”, “The Authoritative Journal of Kenyan South Asian History”, “Voices from the South Asian Diaspora” to simply “AwaaZ” which means Voices in Urdu and Hindi. The name change over time represents the process of ongoing change in how the organization sees its work and how it wishes to position itself in the larger community. There is a clear shift from exclusive content that seeks to highlight the history of the Asian diaspora (especially in relation to the anticolonial revolt), to a more inclusive, broader

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
outlook which includes the experiences of a multitude of different marginalized populations as well as the more general Kenyan public.

Rajan and Patel explain that the expansion of their work from literary form to the festival was motivated by a need for “greater outreach” and they found that they needed a “cultural tool to interpret the literary work” they were doing\textsuperscript{90}. This makes sense considering that they could reach more people, taking into account literacy levels, interest, and engagement while at the same time, engage people on the very basis of what they believed divided them – culture.

\textit{SAMOSA Festival}

SAMOSA stands for South Asian Mosaic of the Society and the Arts and according to Rajan, their goal is to “organize events and programs which will bring together [Kenyans of different backgrounds] to debate and to interact on a common cultural field and to talk about the national events of the day”\textsuperscript{91}. Their events and outreach programs have been diversifying and growing every year. This section will briefly talk about a few of their highlights over the years (as mentioned by both Rajan and Patel):

Oceans Apart (2008) was a performance by two UK-based performance artists, Shane Solanki and Yusra Warsama about the hardships of interracial relationships. While Tribanghi, which was part of the 2010 festival, is an Indian-Zulu dance group which combines elements of both cultural styles of dancing. The SAMOSA Festival also invited the Sidi Gomas to the 2014

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
festival. They are group of drummers from the Gujarat region in India, but have their origins in East Africa\textsuperscript{92}.

*Festival as Cultural Diplomacy*

As Cynthia Schneider discusses in her chapter “Cultural Diplomacy: The Humanizing Factor”, “cultural diplomacy, or ‘the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding’”. Although cultural diplomacy is usually seen as being something that operates across different countries, it can also be used to understand the workings of cultural arts to build bridges even within a country, especially one that is as diverse as Kenya. Schneider posits that “with creative expression, values or ideas tend to be communicated implicitly, rather than explicitly, and are communicated by touching the audience’s emotions.”\textsuperscript{93}

This view of creative expression applies to some level to the work of the SAMOSA festival because it certainly creates an environment in which tough issues can be digested, but at the same time, the organizers of the festival make a very conscious effort to combine both the implicit and the explicit. This is done both by the existence of a platform upon which Kenyans as well as non-Kenyans of different backgrounds can come together and work creatively on issues that are relatable at a human level and as citizens, and also by the explicit statements of what is being done or discussed. They are able to achieve such a balance because of the diversity and scope of their events which covers a lot of ground, taking care of the tastes of different people.

\textsuperscript{92} Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015 and SAMOSA website. See bibliography.

and also making a great effort to meet them where they are at socio-culturally; thus the inclusion of both implicit and explicit means of communication.

In talking about a different medium, satirical puppetry, Edward Khaemba, who is the producer of a satirical Kenyan puppet show called ‘XYZ’ says that “any other person can say what we’re saying, but it’s in how we say it”. Although the project is a different one, the thinking behind it is much the same. Khaemba says that they wanted to “address [] hard-hitting issues, but [] dress them up” by using a medium that would be interesting and entertaining to the general public. He explains that the medium of puppetry and satire “takes off the edge of some very sensitive issues” issues like corruption or the polio vaccine, thus, the message thus becomes more acceptable to people and they leave with a “learning point”. This seems to also be the thinking behind the cultural arm of the magazine, which definitely has “greater outreach” than could be achieved but just having discussions about issues like national identity and corruption.94

Critique

Edward Khaemba, producer of the satirical puppet shows XYZ and Ogas at the Top, believes that one of the biggest hurdle facing Asians who want to participate in Kenyan politics or civil society in a “visible” manner is the question of whether they are speaking for Asians only or along the lines of a broader, Kenyan identity.95 This sentiment is one that seems to align with the subtle shift in the content of the magazine because it seems that by setting oneself apart by trying to highlight issues that have been under-played and ignored, it only serves to set oneself as not really belonging to the mainstream Kenyan identity. This then begs the question of what can be done instead.

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94 Edward Khaemba, Skype interview, August 7, 2015.
95 Ibid
AwaaZ and the SAMOSA Festival have tried to take a balanced approach to this, while not erasing the diversity and uniqueness of the history of the South Asians in Kenya, they have also attempted to write the Kenyan South Asians into the narrative of the country’s history and actively sought to weave themselves into the fabric of society that goes beyond usual daily interactions that do not make the ripples that facilitated cultural interactions do.

Zarina and Zahid have made it clear that their events are catered to a fast-growing Kenyan middle-class rather than the very rich, but they have sometimes been criticized along the lines of inclusion and access because of the locations of the festival events as well as their pricing. The prices have a low profit margin which barely just allows the organizers to cover the costs of the festival, however, unfortunately, any cost of a ticket leaves out a large segment of the population who would not be able to spend money on activities that would be considered entertainment (spending instead on basic items like food, shelter, transport, etc.).

The issue of location is on two levels, on one hand, some major events are taking place at big, popular locations like Nairobi National Museum or the University of Nairobi. On the other hand, they are largely Nairobi-based which also excludes a large segment of the society who would benefit greatly, perhaps more, from the festivals’ events, especially since there are not many like it in other areas of the country.

Since the festival has been evolving each year, getting bigger, more complex and with wider reach, there has been an attempt by the organizers to tackle each of these issues. One of the ways has been to have smaller mini-festivals which would be able to have wider reach because of the increased occurrence and also through a diversification in location. For example, in the

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96 Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
2010 edition of the festival, there were free film screenings in one of the ‘informal settlements’ in Nairobi. Furthermore, also in 2010, they held workshops and a Kenyan fusion concert titled ‘Concert Under the Stars’ in the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa which also involves working with students. Additionally, in 2014 they held a Discussion Forum about identity in partnership with African Leadership Dialogues on local TV. This indicated an openness and commitment to widening the audience of the festivals’ events. Furthermore, there is hope that because of the new federal system in Kenya, the reach of various organizations can be increased.

One of the criticisms that could be levied against them is that they are calling for an increase in socio-political inclusion, but others are facing issues of socio-economic exclusion and struggling to make a living – making the latter group’s concerns more urgent. However, it is clear from the types of events and forums that the organization has been conducting that, although their underlying purpose may be socio-political inclusion, their activities and events cover a multitude of different issues. Furthermore, they are constantly trying to expand the scope of the discussions taking place. This can be seen for example through the play ‘Beach Access’ by Kuldip Sondhi about land issues at the Coast which affects a large percentage of the population there, and more widely, has been one of the most contentious and divisive issues in the country as a whole.

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97 In the interview and on their website, they refer to the slum areas as ‘informal settlements’ which is a more politically-correct term.
98 Citizen TV
Migrations and Foundations

Zarina Patel’s family first moved to East Africa in the 1850s through her grandfather, Alibhai Mullah Jeevanjee, who was a prominent businessman and unlike most people coming from India at the time, was “financially well-off” with businesses in various places like Karachi, Bombay and Australia and came to East Africa for the “challenge” and wanted to do “something different”\(^{100}\). This outlook is one that is very different than of other migrants who were less financially stable and came looking for employment and livelihoods while others fled from religious or ethnic persecution.

Jeevanjee was involved with the building of the Uganda Railway and worked with the British colonialists, a viewpoint clearly expressed in the work of Jagjit Singh Mangat as he talks about, more generally, the role of the Asians in the colonial project\(^{101}\). Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee was the first and at that time, the only non-white person to be elected to the Legislative Council (LEGCO). It seems that the heavily racialized environment in the council led him to quit after being a part of it for only one term after which he became much more involved in politics more generally in East Africa despite having plans to leave East Africa prior to the election\(^{102}\).

Zahid Rajan identifies himself as a third generation Kenyan-Asian; his great-grandparents were the first in the family to come to East Africa. His mother was from Dar es salaam and his father was from Mombasa and they settled in Kenya after getting married.

\(^{100}\) Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.


\(^{102}\) Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
Both Zarina and Zahid grew up around the time just before independence. According to Zarina, she had always been aware of racial issues, but not at a very conscious level. One of the examples she cites is regarding the content taught at school which was focused on European history and geography, with math problems using shillings, pence and pounds. Another example involving school life was the school itself. She studied at the White Sisters Convent school which was for South Asians, but there was another school which she passed every day, the Loreto Sister’s Convent which was for whites only. The latter was closer to her house and as a child she wondered why she had to walk further down the road to get to school.

For Zarina, going to Britain for further studies was an “awakening” because she saw things like white people sweeping the streets for the first time and realized that “these people who were supposed to be our lords and masters were no different than us and others” and more generally, “the unfairness of the entire colonial system”. Another very interesting aspect that she brings up was that when she came back, she realized the importance of independence for the country as a whole and wanted to participate, but in comparison to her male, South-Asian friends who could participate in the political struggle, she, as a woman, was “never taken seriously”.

For Zahid, his A-level studies really “opened up [his] horizon and [his] thinking”. According to him, the way in which the Asian community functioned made it difficult to see life outside of it and he eventually became “convinced that there existed another world” that went beyond what he was experiencing on an everyday basis.

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103 Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
104 Ibid.
The Role of Culture:

Zahid had been involved in various cultural organizations and was an active member within the Asian community throughout his school days. He began to read widely the work of various African writers which convinced him further that “there existed a society outside of the one he grew up in” and he became determined to make a “breakthrough” and experience what lay beyond. He met many people by attending many literary and cultural events, including active participation in the plays of Ngugi wa Thiongo at the University of Nairobi despite not being a part of the university itself.

Zarina had been communicating her ideas through writing by writing to the press about different issues, but was also an avid painter. She painted socio-political scenes from history as a way of keeping history alive and engaging people in conversation about it. These painting were put up in various locations like schools and Zarina said that the government did not see this as dissent or did not fully realize the message of her pieces. She also wanted to “raise awareness that culture was an avenue of struggle”. There was a clear difference in the socio-cultural and political space after the institutionalization of the multi-party system which saw an opening up in freedom of expression as well which led to a shift from non-written forms like painting to writing and editing. This then led to the possibility of communicating socio-political and cultural histories through the newsletter which later turned into AwaaZ magazine.

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105 This is most likely in reference to the bubble created by the Asian community in Kenya.
106 Zahid Rajan and Zarina Patel, Skype interview, July 30, 2015.
107 Ibid.
In his interview, Zahid emphasizes that aside from the impact of education and of cultural activities that enabled him to meet a larger segment of the Kenyan population, he also made a conscious effort to learn the national language, Kiswahili, so as to “venture into the larger Kenyan society” and to be able to better interact with other Kenyans. His experience is not unique because although English and Kiswahili are both official languages in Kenya, Kiswahili becomes a unifying factor that is much stronger than English because it is the ‘national language’ of Kenya.

For most Kenyans, Kiswahili is a second language since they have their own respective mother-tongues. In some schools, children are taught English, Kiswahili as well as their mother tongue. Since different languages are spoken to the child at different points of their day, the result is sometimes proficiency in none. This a serious issue because it affects the child’s performance at school and impedes communication with family who do not speak any other language but the mother tongue and may also affect employment opportunities later in life.109

This is one of the areas in which former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere’s, policies worked very well. The language policy in Tanzania following independence directed that all instruction be conducted in Kiswahili. Despite contention with his ‘ujamaa’ policy, this is one directive that has served Tanzania well. This is of course, not to say that Tanzania does not have some of the same issues of race and inequality that Kenya does, but if looking at why Tanzania has a relatively stronger national identity than Kenya, this would be one of the reasons.

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109 From field experience in rural schools with EAQEL (East Africa Quality in Early Learning), 2011.
Furthermore, there is a crossover between language policy, education, and socio-economic class. This plays out in the difference between public and private education. As mentioned in the education section, there is a difference in pricing between the two, private education being much more expensive than public which is actually free. However, not only is there a difference in the socio-economic class of the students in the respective types of schooling, but there is also a difference in language policy at the institutional level: public schools will tend to carry out instruction in Kiswahili with separate classes for English, whereas private schools do the opposite. Additionally, in many private schools in Kenya, French is taught as a second language, in addition to Kiswahili (even though Kenya is not a francophone country).

The language policy reflected in the different schooling systems is indicative of the focus of the education. Thus, private education is focused outward; internationally, whereas public education is focused inwards; locally. This means that people of different socio-economic background (and race) would be better placed for very different social interactions. However, in the context of this research paper, it is important to see how this language difference would thus cause further rifts in the population – stemming from an inability to communicate at the same level and also, as a blatant reminder of the inequity of the entire system.

One of the intended consequences of failing to build a national identity that is inclusive of the different groups in Kenya is that there is a higher likelihood of brain drain. Apart from other reasons involving an increase of opportunities and pay abroad, another aspect of this is people not feeling a connection or sense of responsibility to their country. This has multiple layers because this tends to affect mainly people who have had an opportunity for better education, most likely private education. These people are more likely to gain entrance into better universities than their counterparts and would be in a more favorable position should they
decide to emigrate. The issue with this is that their energy is inevitably focused more outwards than inwards and thus, leads to a decrease in the people who could have been working on the development of the country.

*Active versus Passive participant*

A topic that came up with some of the people I interviewed or had conversations with was: “Who participates when it comes to civil society?” What kind of people would be participating, even within the Kenyan-Asian community has a lot to do with what their motivations are and what they hope to achieve with such involvement.

In a conversation with Kenneth Ombongi, historian and current Principal of Utalii College in Nairobi, he proposed a binary that might explain the types of people getting involved in civil society. He believes that the people who tend to be more passive in their engagement i.e. mostly donate to various causes, are the more wealthy Asians with money from big business. On the other hand, he proposes that people who actively participate, will tend to be from the middle-class and sometimes their civil society work is their source of income rather than being something they are engaged in on the side. This theory may not apply to all people engaged in civil society, but it does give us something to think about.

With the primary data currently available, it is not possible to certify the statement, but perhaps this is a nuance to the research that could be explored further in another project. So, rather than just looking at what Kenyan South Asians do as a group to ‘expand the imagined community’, there could be a greater understanding of what role socio-economic class plays in

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111 Kenneth Ombongi, personal communication, May 7, 2015.
112 Ibid
national-identity building even within the different groups of Kenyan South Asians who exhibit a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

*Reflections*

Considering the extraordinary backgrounds of the founders and their immense drive to make a difference, the question must inevitably asked of whether they can actually be used to generalize about the activities and motivations of any number of Kenyan-Asians. However, it is my belief that although the specific circumstances and life experiences of Zarina Patel and Zahid Rajan led them to be active in this manner within civil society, they are definitely not alone. This can be certified by the large numbers of people contributing their articles and reviews to the magazine as well as reading them, or on the other hand, participating, volunteering or planning the festival. This is compounded by the individual and corporate sponsors of both the magazine and the festival which make their work able to sustain itself and not just exist, but expand and diversify. Additionally, the importance of their work has not gone unnoticed by the government who support them through, for example, the Ministry of Culture and the National Commission for Integration and Cohesion.

In this research paper, examination of some of what *AwaaZ* and the SAMOSA festival have done in the past and are doing currently was done, but the effects of the work they are doing either in the short or long-term is unknown. This could be accomplished for example, through extensive interviews with participants or readers of the magazine. If this research project were to be taken further, I would look further into the changing themes and content of the magazine and the festival. Additionally, for the festival, I would look at specific performances and artists and analyze their work. Furthermore, forum discussions about the Kenyan national identity could add
an interesting perspective to the research, as well as finding out more about how different Kenyan-Asians think about their own identity and place in the national community. In addition to this, it would be interesting to explore other work Kenyan-Asians are doing in various areas of Kenyan civil society as well as in the field of the cultural arts and find out what their individual motivations are.
Conclusion:

In reference to the nation-building project and the socio-cultural interactions between different Kenyan citizens, one of my interviewees, Mr. Khaemba, who is the producer of a satirical Kenyan puppet show called ‘XYZ’, strikingly states that; “it seems that the lifespan of our unity expires when elections knock at the doorstep of our country.” He is referring to the fact that in the five years between elections, people carry on living their day-to-day lives, but when it comes round to election-time when the stakes are high, built-up frustrations rise to the surface. These frustrations are inherently connected to issues of power and inequality and since it is not easy to see where the oppression is coming from, people attack their neighbors who have been vilified because of their ethnic backgrounds, which are again connected to either a perception or existence of an asymmetry of power and wealth.

The violence that erupted in 2007-2008 is the reason that the TJRC and NCIC were created; they very purpose being to address both the historic injustices and human rights violations endured from the moment of independence to the end of the post-election violence in February of 2008. The function of the National Commission for Cohesion and Integration is a testament to the recognition by the government of an institutionalized way to bring people together across ethnic, racial and cultural differences.

Looking at the issues of identity and citizenship through the lens of AwaaZ magazine and SAMOSA festival, it is clear that civil society is being utilized by members of the Asian diaspora in Kenya to expand the idea of the “imagined community” and what it means to be a Kenyan today. And this is done, not just for the benefit of the diasporic Kenyan-Asians, but also for the

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113 Edward Khaemba, Skype interview, August 7, 2015.
peace and security of the entire country. As David Lewis, specifies in his analysis of civil society as a concept in the non-Western world, the term is useful both in terms of what it is and what it does. This means that case study can be looked at both in terms of being a civil society organization, carrying with it all the baggage associated with the term whether abstract or practical, as well as in terms of the national community it strives to create.

Through the course of the thesis, the hope is that the three base presumptions commonly made about the Asians in Kenya within the sphere of participatory citizenship have been addressed. It is important to note that most Kenyan Asians see Kenya as their home and have varying degrees of attachment to their place of origin. Additionally, Asians in Kenya are very much affected by what goes on in the country, but because of political insecurities, feel the need for a safety-net, which in turn, makes them look unpatriotic; referring for example to cases or accusations of investing money in foreign banks around election time. Furthermore, it should also be noted that although political participation amongst the Kenyan Asians had decreased since independence, it is slowly on the rise. And further still, that economic participation is not their only contribution since there is a wide range of different civil society actors originating from this group who are intent on making a difference in Kenyan society. This is of course not to discredit the great work done in the economic sphere which has benefitted the country greatly.

There definitely needs to be more work done towards the national community-building project which would take on the big issues that are facing Kenyans of different backgrounds today, spread beyond the urban centers and work towards a more inclusive community that would move Kenya closer to a longer-lasting peace.
Bibliography


