Ethnic Discourse on Contentious Issues in the Kenyan Press after the 2007 General Elections

James Ogola Onyango
Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Egerton University, Kenya
1.0 Introduction: Ethnic Conflict as a Precursor to Ethnic Discourse

In a historical perspective, ethnic conflict has been seen in Kenya for a long time; however, it is prudent to make the following observation. Before the advent of colonialism, ethnic conflict (though evident among some neighbouring communities) was the low-level type, marked by indifference discourse because competition for power was not a serious issue. During the colonial period, power was exclusively in the hands of the colonial government. Although some Kenyan communities were used by the colonial regime to quell rebellions in other communities, since power was not at the centre of such conflicts, conflict was the medium-level type, marked by avoidance discourse. However, ethnic conflict gained a new complexion after independence because ethnic groups directly competed for power in the nation-state. From that time, ethnic conflict associated with high-stakes ethnic groups has been the high-level type that is marked by disparagement discourse (cf. Lukens 1979 and Onyango 2008).

The roots of ethnic discourse after the 1997 general elections that put Kenya into the tragic books of ethnic conflict are long and they can be traced back in 1963, when the question of ethnic conflict and ethnic discourse was inextricably linked to power in the politics of Kenya. We go through this history, albeit in a summarised way but with a specific focus on the contentious issues that came up in the 2007 general elections. We also emphasise the issue of ethnolinguistic vitality that has been important in ethnic conflicts in connection with elections in Kenya.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality (hereafter EV) construct has been very important in studying ethnic relations (mainly in sociology of language perspective) between groups in a number of contexts (Landry and Allard 1994). However, Onyango (2007) showed that EV is still important in discussing ethnic conflict that is evident in elections. EV underlines three important aspects in ethnic relations: demography, institutional support and status (ibid: 21). These factors imply the question of disproportionate demography, institutional support and status of ethnic groups in a given locale.
Demography refers to the number of group members as it concerns the various ethnic groups throughout the territory. Demography also concerns the degree of concentration of an ethnic group within a territory, their relative birth rate, the degree of endogamy as well as rates of immigration and emigration (ibid). In Kenya, this has precisely led to two groups across the partisan divide. The groups with the big numbers are called the big groups. These are the Kikuyu (Gikuyu), the Luhyा, the Luo, the Kalenjin, the Kamba and the Gusii (Kisii), ranked from the biggest, according to the 1999 national population census. The others are referred to as the small groups. Demographic factors are very important in the question of power. In politics associated with power, the question of a majority vote, based on the principle of “one man, one vote”, has led to the small groups to suspect the big groups. However, the question of “the big” and “the small groups” has not always been very clear-cut, since there is intense rivalry between the big groups too. Furthermore, in connection with power, a group that has the President from its ranks is seen as big because of the power it wields in comparison to the out-groups, its real demography notwithstanding.

The issue of institutional support concerns how a group is represented in the nation-state’s institutions, such as media, education, government services, industry, religion, and culture (ibid). In actual practice in Kenya, the issue of institutional support does not proportionately correspond to demography. Experience has shown that the ethnic group that has the privilege of providing the presidency has always had an upper hand in representation in strategic positions that matter in the territory.

Lastly, status is viewed in terms of prestige along the dimensions of economic, social-historical, social and linguistic factors (ibid). For example, in Kenya, some communities are known to dominate in the economy of areas where they are not originally indigenous. On the side of language because of the varying status that is accorded to the languages in a territory, some will be referred to as high, while others will be seen as low. Evidently, EV has been important in the high-level ethnic conflict that has been seen in the periodic general elections that have been held in Kenya since independence.
At the time of independence, ethnic conflict was manifested in the form of the big groups that were mainly followers of Kenya African National Union (KANU) versus the small groups that mainly supported Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). The big groups that were very visible in KANU were the Kikuyu and the Luo. KADU was mainly a party of the groups from the Coast Province but also with the Luhya and the Kalenjin support.

When KADU crossed the floor of Parliament and merged with KANU, Kenya became a one party state for sometime. However, the Luo fell out with the Kikuyu soon after. The Luo and radicals formed Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) in 1966 that was destroyed by Kenyatta three years later (Lonsdale 2004: 88). Throughout the remainder of President Kenyatta’s reign that witnessed general elections in 1969 and 1974, the Luo and the radicals were a formidable opposition to his regime. Kenyatta reacted to the opposition of his rule by increasing the EV attributes of his primordial community by forming Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association (GEMA) in 1973 that is an example of mega-ethnicity.

When Moi succeeded Kenyatta in 1978, he mainly relied on the alliance of small groups as his power base. When multi-party politics was re-introduced in Kenya in 1992, ethnic conflict associated with elections reached a recognised high with the Luo and the Kikuyu forming a formidable opposition to Moi’s regime. Moi also employed a mega-ethnicity strategy that revolved around the Kalenjin (his in-group), the Maasai, the Turkana and the Samburu (KAMATUSA) plus other small groups to counteract the opposition. Indeed, the small ethnic groups that rallied around the KAMATUSA core made his victory in the multi-party elections of 1992 and 1997 possible.

In the 2002 general elections there was a consensus alliance called National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) whose core constituted the Kikuyu, the Luhya, the Luo and the Kamba that removed KANU (that was then predominantly supported by the Kalenjin) from power. However, because of ethnic mentality, the NARC alliance crumbled mid-stream leading to serious fallout between the Kikuyu (that had the presidency) on one hand and the Luo and the Kamba on the other. The Luo and the Kamba accused the Kikuyu of not honouring a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that had been signed (before the
2002 elections) on the understanding that a Luo (Raila Odinga) would be given the position of the Executive Prime Minister and a Kamba (Kalonzo Musyoka) would also be given a powerful position in the post election government. After the elections, the Vice-President was appointed from the Luhya community. Largely, the conflict in the post 2002 general elections shaped the nature of ethnic rivalry that was seen in 2007 general elections.

Up to now, the 2007 elections were the most hotly contested and the most vigorously campaigned for elections in Kenya. Opinion polls predicted a close contest between the two main parties namely: PNU and ODM. Modern campaign machines were used: advertisements, songs, Short Message Service (SMS) texts, propaganda and so on.

Although EV has been an important ingredient of Kenya’s general elections’ process since 1963 (as observed earlier), however, because of the cutthroat nature of the competition for, especially the presidency, in 2007 it had more subtle strategies. The mega-ethnicity that was witnessed in 2007 was of a larger scale than had been seen in the previous elections. Kibaki’s Party of National Unity (PNU) went beyond the horizons of GEMA to incorporate parties (read ethnicities) that represented a grand-mega ethnic constituency in Kenya as much as possible. Thus PNU had in its ranks: Democratic Party of Kenya (DP) (with a strong base around the GEMA communities), NARC-Kenya (NARC-K) (mainly constituting the support of GEMA communities and some other communities from the Coast and also other ethnic groups), FORD-Kenya (FORD-K) (that was mainly made up of Bukusu sub-group of the Luhya of Western Kenya) and so on. On the other hand, Raila Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) was mainly made up of the Luo, the Kalenjin, the other sub-groups of the Luhya, apart from the Bukusu, and other groups from the rest of the country as those from the Coast and like-minded groups from North Eastern Province.

In short, PNU and ODM were cryptic mega-ethnicities than their GEMA or KAMATUSA predecessors. However, Kalonzo Musyoka’s Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) was mainly a Kamba party; but all the same, it struggled to
give a national image. After the elections, ODM-K joined hands with PNU and ODM-K’s torchbearer (Kalonzo Musyoka) was appointed Vice-President. Thus, the discourse on contentious issues after the 2007 elections has a PNU, ODM-K on one hand, and ODM on the other hand divide.

This illustration of ethnic conflict in Kenya leads to an observation that ethnic relations are mainly competitive rather than co-operative (Nnoli 1995). It is therefore in this history of ethnic conflict that is associated with power (emanating from elections) that we discuss the concomitant discourse with special reference to 2007 elections.

2.0 Ethnic Discourse
From the foregoing discussion of ethnic conflict, we can infer that ethnic discourse depicts ethnic conflict. The argumentation scheme in ethnic discourse is one that explicates positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. It is in the question of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation that we locate the issue of discrimination in ethnic discourse. Although Reisigl (2007) was mainly concerned with discrimination in racism discourse, his point of view is illuminating to this paper. He argues that, prototypically, discrimination in discourse is negative (cf. Reisigl 2007:365). In this respect, we adopt his argument and observe that ethnic discourse decries, discredits, debases, degrades, defames and so on, members of the competing out-groups (ibid).

Furthermore, ethnic discourse is characterised by pro-and contra-argumentation. “Whereas in schemes of pro-argumentation a controversial claim is supported, contra-argumentation tries to refute a controversial claim” (Kienpointner 1992:180). Actually all the issues that we are analysing in this paper are controversial.

In the analysis of ethnic discourse, there are a number of discursive strategies that are used, namely: referential strategies, predicational strategies, argumentation strategies, perspectivisation strategies and intensifying or mitigation strategies (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 45-85).
Referential strategies are strategies in which one constructs and represents social actors, in-groups, out-groups by ways of reference tropes, biological, naturalising, depersonalising, metaphors, metonymies as well as synecdoches. Predicational strategies are for example, the stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:45). They are very close to referential strategies. In Kenya, there are a number of ethnocentric labels that embed referential and predicative strategies that are used concerning various ethnic groups. For example, the Kikuyu have been labelled *Kinyambi* (Kikuyu grass, a weed, by the Gusii), the Kalenjin are called *warriors* (Onyango 2008) and so on.

Argumentation strategies are constituted by topoi and fallacies, through which positive and negative attributions are justified. These are actually aspects of rhetoric (Kienpointner 2005). ‘Topoi’ or ‘loci’ can be defined as "parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises. They are content related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim" (Kienpointner in Wodak 2001: 74). For example in Kenya, we have the topos of definition or name interpretation in the ethnocentric label “foreigners”. The label implies that since they are “only foreigners”, they will or must return to their original area of ancestry (cf. ibid: 75). Under argumentation strategies, we also have fallacies. In argumentation, fallacies are violations against rules for rational disputes and constructive arguing that allow for characterising and discerning reasonableness in critical discussions (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 70).

Perspectivation/framing or discourse representation are the means that speakers express their involvement in discourse and position their point of view in the reporting, description, narration or quotation of discriminating events or utterances (ibid:45). “Discriminatory nominations, predications and argumentations, can, for instance be

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1 Kienpointner (2005) explains that historically, rhetoric has mainly been constituted by two sections: ancient rhetoric and rhetoric of modern times. Ancient rhetoric was mainly influenced by Aristotle where he defined rhetoric as the monological equivalent of the art of rational disputation and also the ability to recognize acceptable means of convincing the audience of any subject (p.2). Rhetoric of modern times is generally connected with argumentation schemes.
realised from an I-perspective, she-/he perspective or we-perspective; they can be framed by direct quotation, indirect quotation or free indirect speech and so on” (Reisigl 2007: 383).

The last strategies are, intensification strategies on one hand and mitigation strategies on the other. Both of them help to qualify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, anti-Semitic nationalist or ethnicist discourse (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:45). The former can be seen in hyperboles such as “very” and “absolutely”. The latter can be seen utterances like “yes, but” (Reisigl 2007:383).

In the deep heat of the campaigns before the 2007 general elections, disparagement discourse was evident across the partisan divide. For example, high profile PNU politicians openly called Raila Odinga of ODM “One Dangerous Man”. This referential strategy depicts *pars pro toto* (part standing for the whole, Reisigl and Wodak 2001:45), where Raila was taken as a part to represent the Luo community or the whole of ODM. Just one year before the 2007 general elections, Odinga’s biography had been released that was interpreted by strong PNU adherents as having implied that he actively participated in the abortive coup of 1982, during Moi’s regime. It is important to note that during this abortive coup, most of the top brass coup leaders who were later executed were the Luo (Raila’s ethnic group). Thus, in the text of “One dangerous Man” (a caricature of ODM, so to speak), was the topos of danger implied in a dangerous coup plotter who should not be entrusted with the legitimate reigns of power. On the other hand, ODM supporters presented a counter argument to PNU’s “One Dangerous Man” text. To them the counter text was “One Daring Man” that depicted Odinga as an unrivalled political rights crusader in Kenya.

However, if the ethnic discourse of disparagement was covert in the public, in private it was more overt and marked outright disparagement. Largely, the SMS in mobile phones was a remarkable medium. There were so many messages but we just use two examples
to illustrate our point. On the part of ODM supporters, one message that was circulated said:

A Deadly Mountain Flu known as PNU, which affects the brain, has been reported in Central Kenya. The region is under quarantine. People in other parts of Kenya are advised to take ODM pills. One full orange for 3 months to avoid infection.

This was coded ethnic discourse. In the first place, PNU was seen as a Central Kenya affair. Therefore, here, PNU was mainly seen in terms of the Kikuyu ethnic group who are the leading inhabitants of Central Kenya. Secondly, PNU was also seen as a negative thing (flu or disease) that is associated with Mount Kenya region. This was a referential strategy that associated PNU stronghold with a disease. This is mainly rooted in the GEMA mega-ethnicity that had its stronghold in the Mount Kenya region.

In argumentation, the association of PNU stronghold with a disease depicts the topos of harmfulness, because, diseases are associated with harm to normal well being. To many Mount Kenya out-groups any time the mountain is mentioned, the bell that rings is that of GEMA, because all the conglomerate ethnic groups of GEMA come from around Mount Kenya, namely, the Gikuyu, Embu, and the Meru. In fact, the supposed sacred cows in President Kibaki’s first five-year tenure were referred to as Mount Kenya Mafia (see Onyango 2008). This message of disparagement ended with a fallacy cushioned in persuasion, in line with the spirit of campaign. It persuaded people to take a full orange for three months to avoid the flu. The explicit message here was that people who were targeted by the message were to remain steadfastly in ODM during the whole period of the campaigns (shown by the three months). The issue of quarantine was also a persuasive strategy that appealed to audience of the message to keep off PNU. The idea of full orange was very precise to ODM’s party symbol that was a full orange. ODM-K’s party symbol was one and half oranges.
On the part of the PNU supporters, one short message against the Luo ethnic group read thus:

Do you want to be ruled by Luo to take us back to joblessness? Safeguard the Kingdom. Let us ALL come out and give all the votes to Kibaki so that we are not ruled by an uncircumcised man who will make us wear shorts and plunder all our wealth. It’s your vote that will prevent our country from going back to Egypt. May our God bless you.

In this text message, an ethnic stereotype that was coined against the Luo during the colonial period is revisited. During the colonial period, careful social engineering came up with ethnocentric labels that labelled the Kikuyu as cheeky, the Luo: genetically lazy and the Maasai as trustworthy albeit trustworthy natives (Ochieng 1975). Thus, this is the right place to place the “the Luo to take us to joblessness” referential strategy in the above discourse. In the question of the Luo not being circumcised lies the topos of not being ripe to lead. The Luo do not traditionally circumcise their male, the inner groups that supported PNU traditionally circumcise their male. The question of male circumcision has been a very intriguing point in ethnic discourse that is associated with top leadership. In this connection Atieno-Odhiambo correctly observes:

The Gikuyu notion of civil society was extended by Kenyatta to the political arena of the state in 1966-9 when he accused the Kenya Peoples Union (Odinga’s party after fall out with Kenyatta) opposition of being chameleons-definitely not part of civil society, and by extension therefore not legitimate citizens of the Kenya state that he ran. The Luo were targeted for this rhetorical exclusion ostensibly because they did not practise male circumcision. This specifically central-Kenyan discourse on being cut- ‘the narcissism of small differences’ as Freud once spoke of it, the tendency to think of ourselves as superior to others because of some laughably superficial and non-essential feature - resurfaced in 1992 as two Gikuyu barons, Kenneth Matiba and Mwai Kibaki, bid for the presidency
against Oginga Odinga. It was widely asserted that Odinga ought not to be elected because he was not circumcised. Odinga understood its potential damage, and raised it as a debating issue at a rally in Kiambu in late 1992. In Meru the Ford-Kenya party secretary and parliamentary candidate Gitobu Imanyara was severely ridiculed for fronting for Odinga, an uninitiated ‘boy’. Thus the ball set in motion by Kenyatta found its everyday life extended in the bid for a post-Moi state. The issue of circumcision also confronted the National Democratic Party presidential candidate Raila Odinga in 1997, again in central Kenya. Raila Odinga treated it as a case of false consciousness, bantering facetiously that the women were not complaining, and calling for a focus on the real issues of the campaign.

(Atieno-Odhiambo 2004:179. The clarification and extension of political parties’ names is mine).

Although Atieno-Adhiambo reckons that the circumcision trivia on the Luo is remarkably central Kenya discourse, however, the truth of the matter is that it is common rhetoric among the male circumcising groups of Kenya when referring to the Luo in negative terms. In this line of thought among the people of Coast, the Luo are called *watu wazima*, that is complete persons, because they have not been cut. Similarly, the Bukusu refer to the Luo as *omusinde*, the uncircumcised. Actually, in the National Referendum campaign on the new Constitution in 2005, Honourable Simon Nyachae, who hails from Nyanza with Raila Odinga but from the male circumcising Kisii group also expressed the uninitiated boy sentiments when referring to Raila Odinga.

The idea of “putting on shorts” can be seen in the context of “boyhood”. Although Kenya is a tropical country and therefore putting on of shorts would be good for adults, generally, it is boys and not men who are associated with shorts. This is understood in full in relation to our discussion on circumcision above.

It is also important to note that the above short message employs the *argumentum ad verecundiam* fallacy, albeit indirectly. “This fallacy consists of backing one’s own
standpoint by means of reference to authorities considered to be or passed off as being competent, superior, sacrosanct, unimpeachable and so on” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). “Going back to Egypt” is taken from the Bible, a Holy Book. Egypt is associated with the suffering of God’s chosen people. In this text, therefore, we see a fallacious campaign manoeuvre that was sought to associate ODM leadership with suffering. The conclusion of the text was “may our God Bless you”, that was in nutshell a false appeal to revered authority. However, whereas we know that God is not discriminatory, but in this message the appeal for God’s blessings was for those who were to heed the message of not voting for a Luo (read ODM) and God is reduced to a specific group, that is, the senders of the message and their targeted ethnic audience seen in, “our God”. The issue of revering PNU in this text was seen in the urge to safeguard the “kingdom”, which was in fact a mega-ethnic kingdom, no more no less. The use of ALL in capital letters was populist and a persuasive appeal. This is the important background to the discursive analysis of contentious issues.

3.0 Discursive Strategies in Contentious Issues

The contentious issues in the aftermath of the 2007 general elections are: presidential poll rigging, amnesty for the post-election violence perpetrators, resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and portfolio balance in the Grand Coalition Government that was formed after the violence.

3.1.1 Presidential Election Rigging

One of the contentious issues after the 2007 general elections was the claim by the ODM party that the presidential elections were rigged in favour of PNU’s presidential candidate. The European Union’s (EU) observers also cast doubts on the credibility of the presidential poll. On this issue, there were mutual referential strategies from both PNU and ODM camps that the opposing sides were vote riggers, thus compounding the argument on vote rigging. ODM-K had no dispute with the outcome of the elections. When the ODM-K joined PNU to form the initial government, its presidential candidate who was appointed the Vice-President said that PNU had fairly won the presidential poll.
In *The Standard* of January 2nd 2008, the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), made what the newspaper called a damning admission. The ECK boss said that he did not know who won the election. He said that he announced the results of the fiercely contested presidential elections under pressure.

In this newspaper, President Kibaki was quoted as having said that: “with the elections behind us, it is time for healing and reconciliation among all Kenyans”. On his part, Mr. Odinga of ODM said that: “Kibaki must first step aside and publicly own up to the fact that he was not elected President”. The head of the EU observer team said that: “the presidential poll lacks credibility and an independent audit should be instituted to rectify things.”

In President Kibaki’s discourse above, there is indirectness. Talking from the position of the declared winner, the President indirectly referred to the contentious presidential poll but focusing more on reconciliation from all Kenyans. By using “us” and “all”, the President was also referring to the ODM supporters, who were in fact in a big dispute with his point of view as shown by Odinga’s comment.

Odinga’s view that was the popular position of ODM leadership and their supporters was strong, direct and lacking in reconciliation. This can be seen in terms of ODM seeing itself as the aggrieved party. In the contra-argumentation used by Odinga to dispute President Kibaki’s argument on poll rigging, he was implying that he was the one to “legitimately” occupy the position of the President. He argued that Kibaki (note that he never referred to him as President) should step aside and publicly own up that he was not the elected President.

Although the EU observer team said that the presidential poll lacked credibility and that an independent audit should be made to rectify things, up to now the discourse on the presidential poll rigging between PNU and ODM-K on one hand and ODM on the other hand has not seen reconciliation. It has been a protracted pro-argument and contra-
argument by both sides on this issue. The dispute over presidential poll has been protracted because the presidency is the ultimate position of power in Kenya.

### 3.1.2 Amnesty

Because of the tragic violence that occurred in the 2007 elections, there were many young people who were apprehended and placed in custody. Thereafter there was a clear divide on the issue. Many of the ODM Members of Parliament (MPs) including the Prime Minister (Raila Odinga), claimed that most of the youth who were arrested belonged to their communities and they argued that they should be given blanket amnesty i.e., they should be released with no charges being preferred against them. On the other hand, the PNU MPs have argued that the culture of impunity that was demonstrated by the youth in custody must be punished with the due process of law in mind.

It is important to note that the amnesty debate has more relevance in the context of the Rift Valley that was the epicentre of the post election violence. This is understandable because of what in Kenyan ethnic parlance is called historical injustices. Rift valley is a home to mainly the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, Samburu as the indigenous groups. However, during the colonial period other groups, especially the Kikuyu, migrated to the Rift Valley mainly as farm labourers on European farms after the white settlers in their original homeland in Central Province alienated their land. After independence, the Kikuyu formed land buying companies that alongside the indigenous groups bought land from the departing settlers. This is the genesis of the historical injustices discourse on the part of the indigenous groups. The rationale behind this discourse is that their land was not only given back to them but also to “foreigners”.

In the *Daily Nation* of May 22nd, 2008, the amnesty row was the headline. The argument on both the ODM and the PNU/ODM-K sides showed a clear divide. ODM MPs: William Ruto (Minister for Agriculture), Assistant Minister Charles Keter and MPs Jakoyo Midiwo and Isaac Ruto argued that: “the people we are talking about here are boys who came out to demonstrate against disputed elections.”
According to the Minister (William Ruto):

The youths were urged to take on the streets by ODM leaders to protest against the election results in which the ECK declared President Kibaki winner for a second and final term. ODM disputed the results, saying its candidate, Mr. Raila Odinga, had won the election…ODM called for protests and PNU ordered police to shoot at the youths to quell the protests. The police were as guilty as anyone.

On the part of PNU, Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs Minister Martha Karua argued that:

This is a matter that decides whether our country is under the rule of law or the rule of the jungle. There is due process to be followed before the youths are released—they are investigated, prosecuted and charged and those found innocent freed (ibid).

ODM party therefore argued that there was no justice done in arresting its supporters who were called in a referential strategy, “demonstrators”. The argument of ODM chiefs also fronts the topos of innocence in which the demonstrators were seen as innocent since they were demonstrating against a bigger mistake that hinges around the election dispute in which the implication is that PNU had not won the election.

In the amnesty debate, it has emerged in the press that ODM leadership and supporters feel that although violence was also meted out on ODM supporters who worked or resided in PNU strongholds, the PNU perpetrators in ODM’s view, did not face the full force of the law. Evidently, in the amnesty debate ODM constituents argue from a point
of view of discrimination victims. In Minister Ruto’s argument above, the police arm worked to the advantage of PNU.

It is important to note that some ODM MPs have used the amnesty issue as condition on the resettlement of the post election Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) in the Rift Valley. On this one, their argument has been that if amnesty is not granted to young people from their communities who are in custody, then reconciliation will be hard to come by. Most IDPs in Rift Valley who were displaced were mainly the Kikuyu because of the historical reasons we explained above. Once again, just like on the issue of presidential poll rigging, in the true scheme of pro-argumentation and contra-argumentation, the amnesty debate has no converging lines of reconciliation between PNU and ODM MPs.

3.1.3 Resettlement of IDPs
Apart from death, one other tragic outcome of the 2007 general elections was Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). When the Grand Coalition Government was formed, the question of resettling the IDPs, especially in the Rift Valley, came up. PNU MPs were of the view that IDPs should be resettled in their former homes without any conditions. However, some ODM MPs from the Rift Valley argued that there were some issues that were to be addressed first. One such issue is that of the historical injustices. Behind this tussle are the referential strategies of “the indigenous” versus “the foreigners” and the underlying implication that “the foreigners” were the ones who set the pace of injustice.

The ODM MPs who have been opposed to the immediate resettlement of IDPs in the Rift Valley argued that the cause of the problem should be addressed -read historical injustices (The Standard 24th April 2008). They argued that if this is not addressed, then it means that the issue will still recur in future. On the other hand, the PNU MPs argued that it was not fair to use the IDPs issue as a bargaining chip for example on the amnesty debate.
In general, on the part of MPs who represent “indigenous groups”, the resettlement of IDPs debate is inextricably linked to “the indigenous” versus “the foreigners” discourse in Kenya. It is however evident that the perspective of the MPs is rooted in a rationalisation. It is true that the historical injustices issue is indeed an injustice that even begs restitution (see Kameri-Mbote 2006); however, the main cause of the IDPs after the 2007 general elections has more to do directly with high-level ethnic conflict based on competing for power in elections.

3.1.4 Portfolio Sharing

The debate about portfolio balance has been raging for sometime. The point of contention has been revolving around whether PNU and ODM got a just deal in sharing the most powerful ministries in the Grand Coalition Government. Further, the debate has been on whether PNU and ODM are equal partners (on 50-50 basis) in the Grand Coalition Government.

The background to the debate on portfolio sharing was an observation in the National Reconciliation Accord that was brokered by Dr. Kofi Annan (former United Nations Secretary General) that led to the formation of the Grand Coalition Government that said that ODM and PNU were sharing power as equal partners. The referential strategy “the two principals” has been used in the Kenyan press to imply the question of equal partners. In relation to the “two principals” it is important to note that whereas the President (who is an Executive President) and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Kenya appoints all ministers in consultation with the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister who is an Executive Prime Minister coordinates the affairs of all ministries.

Before the formation of the Grand Coalition Government, it was reported that ODM had great expectations. For example, in the Sunday Nation of 9th March 2008, it was reported that ODM eyed 18 ministers, 18 Permanent Secretaries, 22 ambassadors, five Provincial Commissioners, 94 District Commissioners, among others as its share in the government. This just shows the great expectations that were attached to the question of portfolio balance. It is instructive to note that this was also there on the PNU side. This was the
main reason that led to the crisis that was characterised by mutual accusations between PNU and ODM before the formation of the Grand Coalition Government.

When the Grand Coalition Government was finally formed, the question of sharing power in the civil service was not publicly executed, although, evidently ODM had some hand in the appointment of some of the senior officers in the civil service. For example, some remarkable ODM party loyalists were appointed in high positions in the civil service in the Grand Coalition Government. This was also the case for some remarkable PNU and ODM-K loyalists. On the part of ministers, PNU and ODM-K got twenty ministers and ODM also got twenty ministers based on the rationale of equal partnership.

However, the question of portfolio balance was not just simply that of 20-20 divide of the ministries. The persistent and the enduring argument that has ended in claims such as “we were short-changed” (on both sides of the divide) has been to do with the power that is associated with particular ministries. The ministries that have been in focus are: Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Security, Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Roads, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Public Service.

These ministries are associated with power. For example, the Ministry of Defence is important in safeguarding Kenya’s sovereignty. The Ministry of Internal Security is concerned with the important arms of security within the nation-state. Thus, the police, criminal investigation officers and national intelligence officers fall under the jurisdiction of this ministry. The Ministry of Finance is very powerful indeed, because the Central Bank of Kenya and all the important financial institutions fall under this ministry. The history of Kenya (from independence) reveals that the person who occupies this ministry is normally a very close ally (most of the time (s)he comes from the ethnic group that the President hails from) of the President. Justice has been a very thorny issue in Kenya. Thus, for example the question of amnesty for election violence defendants revolves
around the Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs. The Ministry of Energy is important in the national economy. The Ministry of Local Government is important because all the urban, town, municipal and city councils are under it. Tourism is the leading foreign exchange earner in Kenya. Roads and Transport ministries are important for infrastructure and the developmental agenda of Kenya. Ministry of Lands and Ministry of Agriculture are very important because agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya’s economy. Ministry of Public Service deals with all the civil servants in Kenya.

After much acrimony over sharing out of these ministries between PNU/ ODM-K and ODM, the party principals resolved the crisis by sharing out the premium ministries thus: PNU/ODM-K got: Internal Security, Defence, Transport, Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Energy. On their part, ODM got: Local Government, Agriculture, Lands, Tourism, Roads, Planning and Public Service. It is important to note that in both PNU and ODM, all these positions were carefully balanced among the high-stakes ethnic conglomerates. However, some ODM supporters felt that they did not get equal share in the premium ministries. Similarly some PNU supporters who had “take it all” mentality also grumbled that PNU had ceded “too much ground”.

However, the debate on portfolio balance has refused to fade out completely. For example in Daily Nation 8th September 2008, the Prime Minister said he was short-changed: “Mr. Odinga said negotiations between PNU and ODM before the formation of the Grand Coalition went well but things changed after it was formed”.

In this utterance, Mr. Odinga implies that after the formation of the Grand Coalition Government, the spirit of equal partnership has been checked by PNU. Discontentment is likely to continue for along time, because given the cryptic mega-ethnic nature that forms the core of both PNU and ODM, then the question of portfolio balance is likely to remain troublesome.
4.0 Conclusion
This paper has discussed ethnic discourse related to four contentious issues that are linked to power: Presidential election rigging, amnesty for post-election violence offenders, resettlement of IDPs and portfolio sharing. It is clear from our discussion in this paper that ethnic discourse that was analysed is related to ethnic conflict that is mainly pegged on struggle for power. Further, the discursive strategies that we used to look at the ethnic discourse apart from depicting the pro-argument and contra-argument scheme of argumentation also depicted positive in-group presentation and negative out-group presentation. The discursive strategies that we used in our analysis: referential strategies, predicational strategies, argumentation strategies, perspectivation strategies, mitigation strategies or intensifying strategies show this. From our discussion in this paper, we can conclude that the issue of nation-state building in sub-Saharan Africa is still troublesome.

References

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