Traumas Memories And ‘Modern’ Politics in Central Africa, *Fomin E.S.D.*

Most ‘modern’ states in Africa are generally patch works of ethnic entities that European colonialists lumped together in the course of creating colonial empires in the continent. These European colonies became nation-states at independence in the last half of the twentieth century. Many of them have remained nation – states without a future till today and with disturbing antagonisms and conflicts among the ethnic entities that make up these patch works.

This paper demonstrates vividly that the ethnic conflicts that have bedeviled the nation-states of Central Africa and which continued to mar their efforts towards building strong nations are influenced by their colonial and neocolonial history. In the creation of their colonial empires the colonialists played ethnic groups against one another thus impairing unity and fostering dependency. The paper argues further that after independence, the colonialists have continued through neocolonialist machinations to perpetrate ethnic conflicts for their own interest and as a deliberate policy to promote dependency in Central Africa. The neocolonialists and their agents do this through resuscitating traumatic memories of past conflicts among ethnic entities, cultural and regional groups.

The paper also stresses the fact that memories and the reenactment of traumatic relationships among peoples in the sub-region have engendered many conflicts. Such conflicts have in turn impaired democratization and promoted bad governance, misery and all other ills that have plagued the building of strong nations in central Africa despite the abundant natural resources of the sub-region. The paper draws examples from many states in the area but focuses on Cameroon where the nation-building endeavour has been greatly marred by ethnic, cultural and regional antagonisms.

In the conclusion, the paper emphasizes the fact that memory and vision are important for all societies, especially those that did not keep written records, because they help in the study of the past as compared to present and as guide to the future but that elite politicians must watch out for tendencies, which can turn memories of traumatic history to new conflicts as it is often the case in central Africa sub-region.