

THE PROVINCE OF BAS-UELE IS TESTED BY POLITICAL REGIONALISM: DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Introduction

The leaders of state institutions around the world mainly have one concern, that of ensuring a certain satisfaction in socio-economic matters which assail the population. This is what (BUABUA WA KAYEMBE: 2006) considers “general interest or superior interest of the nation”.

To achieve this, each State always seeks to apply a management method to achieve this noble objective. This is why reforms have imposed themselves throughout the world such as Decentralization, also Regionalism, in relation to the political-institutional situation following socio-economic changes due, on the one hand, to the questioning of the welfare state in favor of orientation towards market logic, the end of dictatorial regimes in a large number of southern countries, on the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union (GRALE: 2007).

The regionalism which is the subject of our dissertation has been favored in the world by its entry into globalization and the emergence of supranational structures.

On the European continent (Mikael BODLORE: 2010) thinks that the development of the regions was conducive to the emergence of nationalism. This promoted common values and the ability to obtain financial means aimed at altering regional disparities in the country. This was favorable in Italy, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, before its transformation into the Federal State in 1997.

In Africa, certain French Colony countries such as Algeria and Togo attempted to apply regionalism in the 1980s-1990s (Jean-Charles BRUN: 2004).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, after having touched on the idea of decentralization for a long time, the constitution which created the Third Republic in 2006 establishes an institutional system where the regions are assigned a pivotal role in the administration of the territory. She established regionalism which takes up the Congolese tradition which had seen most of the powers concentrated in the hands of national authorities during the First and Second Republics. (Sébastien MELMOUTH: 2007).

The territorial architecture of the Democratic Republic of Congo is in fact redefined by article 3 which distinguishes between the provinces and decentralized territorial entities, namely the city, the commune, the sector and the chiefdom. A sign of their importance as we can see, the provinces are the only territorial entities to be the subject of a chapter in the constitution (chap. 2. Art. 195 to 206).

The Bas-Uélé Province, one of four new Provinces resulting from the dismemberment of the former Orientale Province and one of twenty-six current Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, benefits, like other provinces of country, legal personality, organic and financial autonomy; mini-government with two political institutions; Executive and legislative in order to enable it to boost its development.

It is unfortunately clear that the Province of Bas-Uélé is unable to self-develop after three consecutive legislatures: deteriorated urban roads, lack of urbanization in the town of Buta, capital of the Province, movable property and administrative and residential buildings, for the most part, inherited from colonization remain in ruins, in a very advanced state of decay, without maintenance, nor rehabilitation, without replacement construction to the extent that some were destroyed by the various rebellions which followed one another in the country.

From this observation, our concern remains to know why the Bas-Uélé Province fails to develop despite the autonomy granted to it by political regionalism in the constitution.

From this question of the problem, we estimate as a hypothesis that the bad choice of leaders and the absence of a development policy would be the basis of underdevelopment of the Bas-Uélé Province.

To achieve the assigned objectives, the use of systemic analysis according to the David EASTON model applied to political institutions was used for the methodological approach in this study. David EASTON constructed an analysis model in which the interactions of the system and its environment are represented in the form of a closed circuit. (OTEMIKONGO MANDEFU

YAHISULE: 2018). Its application in this article demonstrates that the political institutions of the Bas-Uélé Province constitute the black box which receives the inputs consisting of the demands of the governed and the outputs are the visible actions taken by the governors for the benefit of the governed.

This study concerns the Province of Bas-Uélé, one of the four Provinces of the former Oriental Provincial and covers a period from 2015 to 2022, allowing the evaluation of two legislatures, the last of which is in progress.

For its good structuring, this article is structured around three points in addition to the introduction and conclusion: the first point is devoted to the succinct presentation of the Bas-Uélé Province; the second focuses on the political regionalism of Bas-Uélé and the third proposes a development plan for the province of Bas-Uélé.

I. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY ENVIRONMENT

I.1. Brief historical overview

The Bas-Uélé Province is one of the four Provinces resulting from the dismemberment of the Orientale Province.

Its creation as a District by the colonial administration dates back to the 1890s and confirmed by the Royal Decree of July 28, 1914. The Uélé takes its name from the river which drains it with its numerous tributaries before flowing into the Ubangi. .

It should be noted that during the first experience of decentralization in 1962-1963 which divided the country into twenty-one provinces, Uélé became a province with Isiro as its capital. With the constitution of February 18, 2006, the region is divided into two new provinces including Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé.

Post-colonial Bas-Uélé was deeply affected by two events in which some of its natives played an important role: the Simba rebellion in 1964 and the Zairianization of 1973-1974. The repercussions remain visible today.

The desire for extravagance which lastingly marked the economic development of Bas-Uélé during colonization contrasts sharply with the post-independence situation, characterized by withdrawal.

I.2. Geographic location

Bas-Uélé is a region far from the major political centers of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Located in the far north of the country, on the borders of South Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR), the Bas-Uélé Province covers an area of 148,331km², of which 87,009km² constitutes the actually inhabited area and 61,322km² covers empty spaces, colonized by shrubby and grassy savannahs on the northern borders.

Let us nevertheless remember that by its surface area, Bas-Uélé occupies, after the Province of Tshopo (199,567km²), the second position in the order of the new provinces provided for in the constitution of February 18, 2006. In the same perspective, it is larger than countries such as North Korea: 120,538km², South Korea: 99,221km², Portugal: 92,072km² noted (KIBANDA: 2012).

The Bas-Uélé Province is limited to:

- In the North: through the Central African Republic (North-West) and the Republic of South Sudan (North-East);
- To the East: through the Haut-Uélé Province at pk10 of the town of Isiro on national road 25;
- In the South: Through the Tshopo Province at the level of the Tele river located at Pk80 south of the town of Buta on the road

national 4;

- To the West: Through the Provinces of Mongala and Nord-Ubangi.

I.3. demographic situation

Two major ethnic branches make up most of the population of the Bas-Uélé Province: on the one hand, there is the majority Sudanese ethnic group made up of the Azandé, Ngbandi, Makere, Madi and Abarambo. On the other hand, the Bantu strain made up of Ababua, Bengé, Benza...

Following long cohabitation in the same space, we identify so-called “mixed” groups such as the Kolongwandi, Nzakara, Kango and Bangbenda. The latter people are currently almost entirely Azandeized, that is to say they speak almost only Pazande, increasingly forgetting Ngbanda.

Bas-Uélé is currently counted among the least populated regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the statistics of which are as follows:

Table 1: Total population of Bas-Uélé

N°	ENTITES	HOMMES		FEMMES		GARÇONS		FILLES		TOT. GEN	%
		NAT.	ETR	NAT.	ETR	NAT.	ETR	NAT.	ETR		
01	AKETI	43362	12	48108	-	46084	-	48798	-	186364	8,5
02	ANGO	95640	-	103765	-	28627	-	34459	-	262491	12
03	BAMBES A	63673	-	73856	-	55557	-	60936	-	254022	11,6
04	BONDO	150876	28	177445	16	105728	7	139288	4	573392	26,2
05	BUTA	43255	2	48263	-	32102	-	34400	-	158022	7,2
06	POKO	133061	2	131846	-	91828	-	105608	-	462345	21,1
07	VILLE DE BUTA	90904	16	104521	8	48162	28	48170	21	291830	13,4
TOTAL		620771	60	687804	24	408088	35	471659	25	2188466	100

Source: Civil Status Office of the Public Administration division of the Bas-Uélé Province 2022.

I.4. Economic situation

Agriculture is the main economic activity for the population of Bas-Uélé. It unfortunately remains rudimentary, using traditional tools. The production produced remains mainly for self-consumption.

Livestock breeding is currently dominated by MBORORO breeders, people from the Central African Republic, Sudan, Chad who do not hesitate to cross the DRC-RCA border, to settle in the territories of Ango, Bondo and Poko, suitable for livestock, given their cover by the dominant grassy savannah offering very valuable pastures for livestock. For the population, it is the breeding of small livestock (goat, pig, sheep) and poultry which has taken on importance, because raised, not generally for consumption in order to improve the diet, but rather to resolve the social problem (dowry, end of mourning, hospitalization, legal or study costs, etc.).

Fishing is practiced mainly by the local populations of the Uélé and Api rivers, on an artisanal basis. The most popular fisheries are those installed on the Uélé River covering the territories of Bambesa, Buta and Bondo where the caught fish are preserved as smoked fish and especially salted fish to be sold in Isiro, Buta, Banalia and Kisangani.

It should be noted that the most famous fishery is that of Liguga located in the territory of Buta, Barisi-Mongingita-Bakango sector 120km from the town of Buta where the market is weekly (every Thursday).

Hunting is the prerogative of men who capture their game using traps and shotguns manufactured by YAKOMA in North Ubangi.

Concerning mining, it should be noted that Bas-Uélé contains some deposits of mercury, coltane, silver, but especially iron, gold and diamonds. The latter two, in larger quantities, are the only mining products to be extracted by artisanal miners scattered throughout the six territories of the Province. Their exploitation remains artisanal.

I.5. Administrative organisation

During the period of the Congo Free State (EIC) the (decree of the Sovereign King: 1887) provided for the division of the EIC into administrative districts headed by senior officials called District Commissioners.

(The ordinance: 1995) intervenes to reorganize the Oriental province by retouching the administrative boundaries and reducing the number of districts of the Oriental Province to four including the districts of:

- Stanley city, capital Stanley city;
- Ituri, capital Bunia;
- Haut-Uélé, capital of Paulis
- Bas-Uélé, capital of Buta, which became a Province like the districts mentioned above.

What is striking in this Province is the excessive number of chiefdoms. It has more than all the other Provinces of the country. It has 6 territories, a city, 42 chiefdoms, 8 sectors and 345 groups; distributed as follows :

1. Aketi territory: 4 chiefdoms and 4 sectors
2. Ango territory: 4 chiefdoms
3. Bambesa territory: 9 chiefdoms
4. Bondo territory: 10 chiefdoms
5. Buta territory: 4 chiefdoms and 2 sectors
6. Poko territory: 11 chiefdoms and 2 sectors
7. City of Buta: 4 municipalities.

II. POLITICAL REGIONALISM IN BAS-UELE

II.1. Notions

Regionalism comes from the word “region”. The Assembly of European Regions (ARE: 2010) defines the region as the territorial public entity corresponding to the level immediately below the state level and endowed with a government with its own political powers.

According to the (universal dictionary: 1996), regionalism is a political or administrative system tending to ensure a certain autonomy to the regions.

According to (MEKHANTAR: 1997), regionalism is a mode of management in which the distribution of powers between the central government and the provinces as well as the institutional order thereof are defined by the constitution and not by a simple organic law which can, at any time, be modified by the Central power.

For (Jean OTEMIKONGO MANDEFU: 2009), political regionalism is the form of intermediate State between Federalism and the Unitary State chosen by the Congolese legislator to reform the Congolese State. It is based on the principle of free administration. This type of State is characterized in particular by legal personality, its own normative power, the recognition of real political autonomy, the free administration of regions or provinces by political institutions, distinct from the central power, the distribution of powers and their transfer to the provinces, the dissolution of hierarchical links, he specifies.

For its part, (VUNDUAWA te PEMAKO: 2007) considers political regionalism as a mode of institutional organization and management of a Unitary State decentralized politically at the level of the provinces and administratively at the lower level of the basic territorial entities.

It should be remembered that this system is not to be confused with decentralization. The latter is a mode of management in which the State transfers skills to legal entities that it creates. These legal entities can have a general vocation (Territorial decentralization) or a specific vocation (Functional decentralization = Public establishments) emphasizes (YVES THOMAS: 1995).

II.2. Legal Basis of Regionalism in the DRC

The constitution of February 18, 2006 states in its first paragraph 1 that the DRC is within its borders of June 30, 1960, a united and indivisible state of law. It states in its second to fourth article that the DRC is made up of the city of Kinshasa and 25 provinces with legal personality, that is to say territorial entities benefiting from broad management autonomy guaranteed by the constitution. Kinshasa, which is the capital of the country, also has the status of a Province. With this broad autonomy (NTUMBA LUABA: 2005) maintains that it is a constitutional regionalism which goes very far in the direction of a loosening or relaxation of state constraints but without as much using the federal form of the State. The autonomy left to the regionalized entity goes beyond the level of simple decentralization and is recorded in the constitution, with a determination of matters.

II.3. The Particularity of Political Regionalism in Bas-Uélé.

II.3.1. Political Institutions of the Province

The Province of Bas-Uélé, like other provinces of the country, exercises the powers devolved to it and recognized by the constitution by its political institutions which are the Provincial Assembly and the Provincial Government.

II.3.1.1. The Provincial Assembly of Bas-Uélé

The Provincial Assembly has had two legislatures: the first, from 2006 to 2018; and the second, from 2018 to 2023. It is made up of 18 provincial deputies in the first and second legislatures.

In the first legislature, the deputies sat first in the Provincial Assembly of the Orientale Province in Kisangani, then in Bas-Uélé in Buta after the dismemberment where no motion of no confidence or censure was taken at the time. 'place of the executive. However, some oral questions with or without debate and current affairs were initiated against certain members of the provincial government, followed by the questioning of the provincial governor; this generated a crisis between the two institutions which resulted in 2017 in the suspension of the deliberative body by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Interior, Security and Customary Affairs until the end of the

legislature in 2018. The recorded consequence is the functioning of the provincial government as a free electron, without counterbalance. This legislature has experienced the withdrawal of confidence in a member of the office of the deliberative body, in this case, the honorable president who was stripped of his functions by the honorable deputies.

The second legislature was characterized by political tumult; we will note the motion of no confidence against the governor and his vice; but also withdrawal of confidence against certain members of the office of the Provincial Assembly; follow-up of the adversarial procedure and partial election of a few dismissed members: the President, the Vice-President and the reporters

II.3.1.2. The Provincial Executive of Bas-Uélé

The Executive is made up of the provincial government composed of the governor, his vice and ten ministers.

The first mandate there was short; from 2015 to 2016 first with the Special Commission; then from 2016 to 2018 with the provincial government. We observed here, only one governor elected with 61.1% or 11 out of 18 deputies.

The current second mandate saw until 2022, the succession of three governors, two of whom were all elected at the same proportion 55.5% or 10 out of 18 deputies; and a lady appointed on an interim basis after the fall of the first. This configuration leads us to evaluate the actions carried out for this purpose.

II.2. Evaluation of the objectives assigned by Regionalism to Bas-Uélé

Today, the centralization of state power has become unpopular and unsuitable, even out of step. We are talking more and more about good governance, governance serving development, citizen participation in political decisions, but also about bringing them as close as possible to the administration. Hence the decentralized and regionalized state management mode. The latter gives autonomy to the Province (Law n°08/01: 2008), which does not allow the central power to exercise administrative supervision over

the provinces. Nevertheless, within the framework of consultation and harmonization between the national executive and the provinces, a conference of provincial governors is established with the mission of issuing opinions and suggestions on the policy to be pursued and the legislation to be enacted. by the republic (Organic Law No. 08/015: 2008).

It is imperative to remember that regionalism was instituted to encourage development at the grassroots, by creating development competitions between the provinces. This noble objective must be of primary concern to the leaders of the institutions of the Bas-Uélé Province.

We can observe in 2015 with (programming law n°15/004: 2015), the dismemberment of the Orientale Province brought back the autonomy of the Bas-Uélé Province, this, the management of the province, achieved by the special police station only gave a result that was very poorly appreciated by the population, especially since the leaders were appointed and therefore could not report to the Provincial Assembly.

The provincial government resulting from the 2016 election has not even managed to chart the milestone for the province's takeoff. It was more characterized by unbridledness, inaction of development. This one, out of concern to weaken the deliberative body, appointed although the constitution authorizes it, the valiant ones as ministers following political alliances. This makes us believe (Alain de Georges SHUKURANI MUNGEGERE and Jules Maps BAGALUA MAPATANO: 2020) that political appetites can sometimes lead provincial parliamentarians to turn a blind eye to the mismanagement of the province.

The second provincial government elected in 2018 hardly bothered to distance itself from its predecessor. This, characterized by inertia caused by carelessness motivated by remote management, has dragged the province into the doldrums of the executive machine. The result recorded was the dismissal of two heads of the executive by the deliberator, after vigorous mobilization of the population through civil society.

This decline allowed the President of the Republic to appoint a lady in an interim capacity, at the head of the executive of the Province in 2020, who curiously broke the status quocyclical. This one stood out for the rather epic actions she took. This concerns the construction and rehabilitation of certain buildings in Buta and Likati in the Aketi territory, among others:

1. The rehabilitation of the official residence of the Governor of the Province;
2. The construction of the residences of 4 senior justice officials;
3. The rehabilitation of the Provincial Ministry of the Interior;
4. The construction of a large building housing three provincial ministries: Finance, ITPR and Budget;
5. The rehabilitation of the former official residence of the Territorial Administrator of Buta, current official residence of the Vice-Governor;
6. The rehabilitation of two pavilions of the Likati General Reference Hospital in Aketi territory;

These acts of public interest become incentives and triggers for other more important ones to be carried out by his successors because they are tangible acts and constitute for the population, the references, a strong argument for claims in the event of mismanagement by the Province subsequently.

III. DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

The Province of Bas-Uélé, facing the test of its autonomy, now only needs people dedicated to development, steeped in an innovative spirit to lead the various provincial institutions.

With its surface area of 148,331 km², giving it an almost continental dimension, Bas-Uélé remains larger than the six African countries combined, notably:

1. Burundi: 27,834km²
2. The Gambia: 11,300km²

3. Equatorial Guinea: 28,051km²

4. Lesotho: 30,444km²

5. Rwanda: 26,333km²

6. Mauritius: 1,865km²

Total: 125,827km²

This vast area requires significant resources for its development. Bas-Uélé is full of enormous potential which requires its transformation into wealth. In this regard, it is imperative to mobilize the various resources, notably human, financial and natural, which compose them to achieve the assigned objectives.

III.1. Human resources: the choice of Governments

With its population of more than two million inhabitants, Bas-Uélé is equipped with men specialized in different sectors and are likely to take up the challenge. However, they must be of good moral character, conscious men and demonstrating virtue. They must be characterized by strict respect for public goods (RESPUBLICA) which will be dissociated from private goods.

The population of Bas-Uélé will have to make a judicious choice of public agents recruited by election, in particular the provincial and national deputies, and the advisors of the deliberative bodies of the decentralized territorial entities who, in turn, elect the governor and his vice, the senators. and the executives of decentralized territorial entities, apart from the head of the chiefdom who is appointed by the ruling family after consultation. (Organic Law No. 08/016: 2008), despite the corruption and imposition which plague elections in the DRC, in general and Bas-Uélé in particular. This is what motivated (Gabriel A. ALMOND and G. Bingham POWELL: 1972) to emphasize that the methods by which individuals are recruited for political roles will similarly influence the capacities of the system. Particular attention will be paid to these resources, to the extent that man appears to be the most productive resource, the most flexible and the richest in possibilities by his nature.

III.2. Financial resources

They constitute the support of the executive. To do this, they must be effectively mobilized to enable the executive to materialize its program. To date, we note that the financial resources mobilized by the provincial financial authority remain insignificant in order to carry out the provincial government's program: 182,000,000 FC on a monthly average (DGRBU Annual Reports 2015-2022), although they have experienced significant increases. . This is justified by certain factors; the lack of significant activities in the provinces such as commercial, industrial or service companies; poor channeling of resources which leads to embezzlement, corruption, etc. The management of these resources must be orthodox, respecting budget lines regarding their allocations.

III.3. Natural resources

Bas-Uélé is full of enormous natural potential. This includes the soil with forests containing various species of plants and animals; the subsoil with deposits of gold, diamond, iron, mercury, coltane, silver..., the hydraulic resources with an impressive number of rivers and streams, all full of fish in this case Mbomu, Uélé, Uére (Api), Bomokandi, Bima, Rubi, Tele, Likati, Itimbiri, Gangu, Bili, Libogo, Yoko, Faka.... Postcard from Bas-Uélé: 2015).

This host of resources found in Bas-Uélé requires their organized exploitation in order to produce wealth.

To do this, it is more than necessary to mobilize national and international investors, by creating the Public-Public and public-private partnership to invest in Bas-Uélé.

The objective of regionalism being the self-development of the regionalized entity, we propose for this study, a polar exploitation plan presented as follows:

1st Pole: Commercial Activities: towns of Buta and Aketi;

2nd Pole: Industrial Forestry: Aketi Territory;

3rd Pole: Industrial Mining: Territory of Bondo, Ango, Bambesa and Poko;

4th Pole: Mechanized Agricultural Exploitation: Territory of Bambesa, Poko, Buta and Aketi;

5th Pole: Industrial Fisheries: The Uélé River as a whole.

It will also be important to maintain national roads in the state through the good management of resources from the National Road Maintenance Fund (FONER), develop agricultural service roads and consider, within the framework of partnership, relaunching the work construction of the LEPUDUNGU hydroelectric power station.

CONCLUSION

The regionalized management mode accepted in the constitution of the DRC relieves the central government to make the regions (provinces) responsible for self-development. The province of Bas-Uélé is lagging behind in this regard, despite its abundant potential.

From 2015 to 2022, five personalities succeeded one another at the head of this regionalized entity, without being able to bring about development in this vast province with a quasi-continental dimension.

To do this, the population must inevitably make a judicious choice of their representatives who, in turn, will do the same for the provincial executive, finding suitable leaders keen to make history in this new province. These leaders must prioritize the general interest and not the particular interest. They must fight to transform the potential of the province into wealth in order to promote this province on the national and even international stage.

The polar exploitation plan presented in this study is a reflection allowing the development of Bas-Uélé, in diversified sectors.

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