

The Dynamics of Security Governance Facing the Threats of Violent Extremism in Benin

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Abstract: The bacteria of regulatory policy or the various legislative and institutional measures confirm the desire of the Beninese State to strengthen not only the security system against radicalization leading to violent extremism but also to create a real institutional anchor to bring political dialogue to the national level on national and sub-regional security issues. However, generally speaking, the fight against violent extremism in Benin depends on the one hand on the political, legal, administrative, prospective environment, etc. and on the other hand, the political and strategic competence of decision-makers to focus on prospective development ambitions that unite resources. Overall, the Prevention of Violent Extremism does not seem to be on the political agenda. Indeed, we can note that even if from a legal point of view, there are some legal bases for a practice of the Fight Against Violent Extremism that are still recent, the landing of these legal standards in the modes of governance of the issue security is a problem. The insufficiency of such a landing gives the impression that Benin is placing itself in a sub-regional movement without its actions taking into account the needs of its populations and the particular national context. These actions suffer from a certain extraneity which makes them decontextualized and not very effective in the context of preventing violent extremism .

Keywords: Benin; violent extremism; security governance; regulatory policy; coastal country .

INTRODUCTION

Benin has long remained outside this field of insecurity despite the numerous borders it shares with neighboring countries already affected (3/4 of these immediate neighbors have paid a heavy price to violent extremism for several years) is now in the target of terrorist movements. Indeed, the country's commitment to the fight against Boko Haram as part of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) and some *Multi-National Joint Task Force* (MNJTF), exposes him to reprisals as illustrated by a message posted on *YouTube* in 2015. This is how since 2019, the country has started recording terrorist acts such as the kidnapping of two French tourists in Pendjari Park and the assassination of their Beninese guide in May 2019; the attack on the advanced border police post of Kérérou in the Commune of Banikoara in February 2020; the travel movements detected in the municipalities of Banikoara, Sègbana and Kalalé of suspected motorcycle jihadists during the month of June 2020; the passage of a group of men on board a pick-up and on a motorbike armed with heavy weapons and brandishing a black flag noticed on October 31 by the inhabitants of the village of Kourou, located in the commune of Matéri and the recent clashes between soldiers and terrorists in late 2021 and early 2022 which resulted in several deaths on both camps.¹ Better still, on November

30 and January 6, Benin suffered several deadly jihadist attacks. All targeted the army and took place in the border areas with Burkina Faso.

In reality, since the events of May 2019 which saw the kidnapping of the two French tourists, this is the first time that jihadist pressure has been so strong in Benin. All these incursions are the result of a carefully thought-out process of progressive establishment in a logic of expansion of violent enterprises fueled by violent extremist movements which have the coastal countries in their sights.² Thus, the Beninese state's awareness of this situation allowed Benin to participate in the establishment of joint forces with other countries in the sub-region to fight jihadists at their common borders. But also the establishment of regulatory policy bacteria or various legislative and institutional measures, confirm the desire of the Beninese State to strengthen not only the security

Group for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), P. Lepidi-M. Le Cam, "In Benin, the army suffered the first terrorist attacks in its history. », *Le Monde*, December 3, 2021, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/12/03/au-benin-l-armee-subit-les-premieres-attaques-terroristes-de-son-histoire_6104643_3212.html 11/09/2022 ; Fiacre Vidjninginou, « Bénin : l'étau terroriste se resserre au Nord », *Jeune Afrique*, 2022, p.1. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/auteurs/f.vidjninginou/> 11/09/2022.

²F. Vidjninginou, "Benin: the terrorist grip is tightening in the North", *Jeune Afrique*, 2022, p.1. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/auteurs/f.vidjninginou/> 11/09/2022.

¹These attacks left at least five (5) dead in the ranks of the Beninese army and at least two (2) among the attackers. They are attributed by several security sources to small groups affiliated with the Support

system against radicalization leading to violent extremism but also to create a real anchor institutional to bring political dialogue to the national level on national and sub-regional security issues. Thus, for some time, we have seen that the Beninese State has deployed massive prevention measures via the army in border communities in order to prevent or avoid incursions as much as possible, thus regularly carrying out justified arrests and finally, strengthens the army in human, logistical and technological resources, so that incursions into the territory cannot continue.

However, like the measures taken by the Beninese state, it is clear that insecurity still hangs over the populations. Because attacks continue to be perpetrated on national territory. But obviously, it could not be otherwise, given the postures and forms of State that we have in West Africa whose only function, at best exercised, is that of extractive activity³, and the others are trampled underfoot and at the altar of whoever can save citizens located in the peripheries of the territories of these States. Thus, this work aims, on the one hand, to identify and question the actors in the manufacturing and even engineering of Benin's security policy, and on the other hand, to study the conditions of manufacturing and implementation. . Finally, to what extent do such policies contribute to containing the security threat? Furthermore, let us remember that public policies are the expression of a government desire for action or inaction and fall under the notion of program. They can be defined as structured sets, deemed coherent, of intentions, decisions and achievements, attributable to a local, national or supranational public authority⁴. Better, developing a public policy, writes Pierre Muller, supposes: "an image

³Contemporary sociology and systemic analysis consider the State as an open whole, maintaining intense exchanges with its environment. It draws from it the resources without which it would not have the means to act. The activity of the State is therefore dominated by a double movement. Coming from civil society, it "extracts" or mobilizes" resources; conversely, it responds to certain expectations and distributes goods in the broadest sense of the term. G. Almond-B. Powell, Comparative politics. A Developmental Approach, Boston, Little, Brown, 1966, p.190. For an overall presentation of these theses, B. Badie, Le développement politique, Paris, Economica, 1994, p.155.

⁴Thus, we will talk about public health policies, housing, tourist development, and even security depending on the case. P. Braud, Political sociology, Paris, L.G.D.J., 2011, p.642-643.

of the reality on which we want to intervene⁵". This is what he calls the benchmark of a policy. They always take the form of legislative and regulatory acts imposing substantive or procedural rules, which underlines their public power dimension. When it comes to security policy, it is an action plan defined to preserve the integrity and sustainability of a social group. It reflects the strategic vision of the management system or the State. For François Dieu, public security policies would be: "a more or less coherent set of decisions and measures taken by legitimate political authorities, whose objective, expressly defined, is to provide, through the mobilization of security institutions social regulation and, where applicable, other public and private partners, an effective response to the various forms of insecurity induced by the delinquent phenomenon"⁶. Therefore, "analyzing or describing public security policies is therefore observing the State in action through the systems and measures it has taken to ensure this fundamental duty"⁷. It is from this perspective that this paper aims to analyze the way in which the Beninese State approaches the prevention of violent extremism which constitutes a current and real threat to the security and integrity of its territory. Finally, this research uses an ethnographic approach, based on qualitative surveys (immersion, participant observation, individual interview and focus group)

I- A Hyper-Institutional Dynamic

Like most countries in the world today, Benin has not been without an initiative to prevent violent extremism. The country has adopted several measures aimed at combating the establishment and expansion of the phenomenon on its territory. These measures range from the establishment of institutions for prevention (A) and the fight against the phenomenon to structural reforms of territorial administration (B).

A- Building an institution to combat violent extremism

⁵Ibidem.

⁶F. Dieu, Public security policies, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999, p.96.

⁷A. Bauer, Public security policies, Paris, Que sais-je /Puf, 2011, p.2 ; Cf: P. Hassenteufel, Political sociology: public action, Paris, Armand Colin, 2011, p.272.

The security situation in Benin and that of the countries of the West African sub-region raise issues which attract the attention of observers and in particular the government of the Republic of Benin. Because, like its neighbors invaded by the spiral of insecurity linked to jihadist tendencies, the country presents signals of radicalization of certain groups or communities which could lead to acts of violent extremism, due to the existence numerous “social stigmas” resulting from social and historical interactions between communities⁸. Certainly, Benin is not yet affected by massive terrorist attacks of the type suffered by its neighbors – Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso but particular contexts, or the occurrence of new and unfavorable situations or generating discontent among the populations, could constitute this fertile ground for a shift into radicalization which could lead to violent extremism. This is at least the conclusion of two important studies commissioned by the European Union in 2018 and 2019⁹. The two studies analyzed the prevalence of these resentments in 16 municipalities in Benin. Thus, the situation is the subject of particular attention by the government which has put in place several institutions to deal with the issue, including legislative reforms which govern their actions. We can cite in particular the case of the Beninese Agency for Integrated Management of Border Areas (ABeGIEF) at the level of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security (MISP) which deals with the national policy of border management and the development of these; of the National Financial Information Processing Unit (CENTIF) placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance which deals with the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. In September 2016, the Ministry of the Interior created a Special Unit in charge of Border Surveillance (USSF) within the Republican Police by ministerial decree no. 2016-139 MISP/DC/SGM/DGPN/DG-ABeGIEF/SA081SGG16 from September 21,

2016. This Special Unit has, among other missions, to: Deter all criminal intentions; carry out general intelligence and territorial surveillance missions; participate in regional counter-terrorism initiatives; seek out, prevent and prevent all attacks on the internal and external security of the State; contribute to the maintenance and restoration of order in border areas. In 2017, Law No. 2017-41 of December 29, 2017 was promulgated establishing the Republican Police in the Republic of Benin, which is assigned a community policing model as an approach to co-producing security and which aims to establish strategic partnerships with the population with a view to reducing crime by tackling its real causes to find viable and permanent solutions (see Decree No. 2017-503 of October 24, 2017 transmitting to the National Assembly the draft law establishing the Republican Police). In November 2019, the President of the Republic implemented Decree No. 2019-519 of November 22, 2019 establishing the creation, responsibilities and composition of the High Level Committee responsible for the fight against Terrorism and Insecurity at the Borders and the Decree No. 2019-520 of November 22, 2019 establishing the creation, responsibilities and composition of the Unit for Implementing the Strategy to Combat Terrorism and Insecurity at the Borders. Furthermore, the new constitution of Benin adopted in November 2019 provides for the establishment of a High Security Council. Rather in 2018, Benin adopted Law No. 2018-17 of July 25, 2018 relating to the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism in the Republic of Benin. We can also add the creation of a Permanent National Commission to combat radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism and the Court for the Repression of Economic Offenses and Terrorism. Finally, the adoption of Law No. 2021-14 of October 21, 2021 on the Territorial Administration Code in the Republic of Benin which establishes a new structural reform of the decentralization sector is added to the list of important reforms companies in the sector to ensure good governance of the security field. These various legislative and institutional measures confirm the desire of the Beninese State to strengthen not only the security system against radicalization leading to violent extremism but also to create a real institutional anchor to bring political dialogue to the national level on security issues. national and sub-regional.

In particular, the new reform of the decentralization sector initiated through the new

⁸E. Hahonou, Social stigma, decentralization and political representation. Niamey: LASDEL. Niamey: LASDEL (Studies and Works), 2008.

⁹A. Mossi, Study on the risks and potential factors of radicalization and violent extremism in the Republic of Benin. Final report. Cotonou: European Union; Nansounon, Abou Moumouni, & Elijan Djaouga, (2019). *Complementary study to the exploratory study carried out in 2018 on the risks and factors of exploitation of fertile grounds for radicalization which could lead to violent extremism in the Republic of Benin, Cotonou, European Union-PPREV-EU, 2018.*

Territorial Administration Code appears contradictory not only with the context and current security challenges but also with the community approach to the co-production of security promoted by the law establishing the Republican Police.

B- Structural Reforms of Territorial Administration

The new Territorial Administration Code includes a lot of innovation which is inspired by the numerous dysfunctions recorded in the implementation of decentralization over the past two decades. This reform aims to separate administrative functions from technical ones; put in place financing mechanisms for municipal investments; encourage the reissue of accounts at the municipal level. The innovations of this reform relate particularly, among other things, to the creation of a function of municipal executive secretary, the separation of the function of municipal budget authorizer, and the demarcation between the functions of mayor and that of deputies. However, this law maintains unchanged the number and names of the municipal technical bodies that are the commissions unless they clearly and visibly take into account the security sector. This is drowned in social, sporting and cultural affairs. This law maintains in the hands of the supervisory authority the control of public forces, particularly the police with regard to security management. As such, article 10 paragraph 2 stipulates that “The Republican police units in deportation are, independently of the police hierarchy, placed under the direct authority of the prefect in their security and order maintenance missions. The same applies to units contributing to relief in their civil protection mission.” This competence attributed to the prefect is also reinforced by article 11 which states that “The prefect shall take, by regulatory means, the measures appropriate to ensure policing, the maintenance of public order and civil protection”. Dans ces conditions, le maire en tant que première autorité communale n’a aucune autorité sur les unités de police établies sur son territoire et ne peut donc en commander. The role of the municipality seems to be limited to a secondary role and essentially consists of a contribution to maintaining order, including on its territory. This is at least the meaning conveyed by article 29 paragraph 2 which states that the Municipality “contributes to the establishment of the public security plan, the fight against delinquency and crime in the municipality and provides, if

necessary, notwithstanding any provisions to the contrary, support for the units in charge of security and civil protection”

Ultimately, the law states that “The Mayor is responsible for the administrative police in the municipality. To this end, it ensures the maintenance of public order and ensures public tranquility and public health and is, for these purposes, holder of regulatory power” (article 105-2). This regulatory power is exercised in particular for, among other things, “the repression of attacks or public tranquility such as brawls and disputes accompanied by riots in the streets, tumult in places of public assembly, crowds, noise and nocturnal gatherings which disturb the peace of homes and all acts likely to compromise public tranquility” (article 105-7). Certainly the new Territorial Administration Code recognizes the Mayor's powers in matters of judicial police, but this is a prerogative under the supervision and control of the judicial authority. This is at least what is expressed in article 109 which states that “The mayor carries out, under the control of the judicial authority, the judicial police acts which are authorized to him by the provisions of the code of criminal procedure and all other Particular dispositions. The mayor organizes civil protection.”

The least we can say about this reform is that it ignores the central role that local elected officials can play in security governance. It maintains this prerogative in the sovereign domain of the central State. However, the security context of the sub-region which gives rise to new challenges as well as the numerous conflict situations (inter-community conflicts, farmer-breeder conflicts, conflicts around access to land and natural resources, delinquency and consumption of various narcotics) to which municipalities are exposed should call for more innovations in the sector and place municipalities at the center of security governance. It emerges from observation of the security situation in the communes that inter-community/inter-ethnic relationships and dynamics are marked by community conflicts, the most important of which are farmer-herder conflicts and land conflicts. These conflicts are sources of insecurity and destabilize “living together”; they are also breeding grounds for the local establishment of entrepreneurs of violence. Under these conditions, municipalities should be the epicenter of the development and implementation of appropriate territorial security strategies. Top-down approaches to developing

public security policies cannot suffice to take into account the difficulties of municipalities in this area. Indeed, these policies are often decontextualized, inflexible and modeled on generic “travel models”¹⁰. They generally do not take into account endogenous solutions and do not promote local adaptations and innovations which could nevertheless prove effective. In addition, their application often runs the risk of worsening inter-community divisions or stigmatizing social categories.¹¹ Generally out of step with socially accepted local practices and values, these security policies imported into local territories do not promote peaceful cohabitation between the parties in conflict. In addition, they are implemented by security forces in situations of conflict and disaffection with the populations. Indeed, despite the reforms introduced in the body of the defense and security forces in general and that of the police in particular, it is clear that they have not always succeeded in gaining the confidence of the populations which could promote a good collaboration.

Finally, given the insufficient numbers and material deprivation of the security units scattered throughout the national territory, they cannot alone ensure the security of property and people. The support of the population on the enlightened leadership of municipal authorities is important in such conditions. Otherwise, municipal elected officials who benefit from democratic legitimacy as representatives of the people and who have a good knowledge of their respective territories as well as the security problems they face, can play a decisive role in terms of mobilization and organization of the different active forces likely to contribute to the co-production of security.

Under these conditions, the new law on territorial administration, bringing about a structural reform of the decentralization sector, places little emphasis on a community approach to producing security. Such a policing approach would involve placing elected officials at the center of security

Olivier de Sardan, *Traveling models tested by contexts and practical standards: the case of maternal health*. In D. Pourette, C. Mattern, C. Bellas Cabane, & B. Ravololomanga, *Women, children and health in Madagascar: Comparative anthropological approaches*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2018, pp.2-20.

¹¹J. Dubois, « Mali - Violences intercommunautaires : comment en est-on arrivé là ? », Récupéré sur [www.lepoint.fr: https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/mali-violences-intercommunautaires-comment-en-est-on-arrive-la-11-10-2018-2262267_3826.php#](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/mali-violences-intercommunautaires-comment-en-est-on-arrive-la-11-10-2018-2262267_3826.php#); 2018.

decisions in their territory by encouraging the establishment of community policing instruments based on local security institutions.¹² However, this is the ambition displayed since 2012 by interministerial decree n°2012-143 of August 10, 2012 relating to the creation, attribution, organization and operation of local security committees in the Republic of Benin. Through this decree, the Beninese State established joint committees (population, defense and security forces and local elected officials) to ensure the co-production of security in an atmosphere of collaboration. These committees should ensure the role of security monitoring and diagnosis in the districts to produce reports to be submitted to the territorially competent police units with a view to taking appropriate measures. They are responsible for ensuring the role of sensor of information on the facts of insecurity, watchman and guardian of local peace, contributor to the performance of the defense and security forces by supporting them in the fight against insecurity, by organizing with it prevention and deterrence upstream of acts of delinquency and by supporting them to secure property and people (see interministerial order n°2012-143 of August 10, 2012).

II-A Dynamic Dependent on the Exclusion of Social Groups in the State

The empirical measurements taken of the phenomenon generally reveal that the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PEV) in Benin does not seem to be included in the political agenda.¹³ Indeed, we can note that even if from a legal point of view, there are some legal bases for a practice of the Fight Against Violent Extremism (L/CEV) that are still recent, the landing of these legal standards in the modes governance of the security issue poses a problem. The insufficiency of such a landing gives the impression that Benin is placing itself in a sub-regional movement without its

¹²SECUCOM-EU project, Baseline study of the security co-production project and concerted prevention of violent extremism in the border areas of Burkina-Faso, Ouagadougou, Hanns Seidel Foundation, 2021; SECUCOM-EU project, Baseline study of the SECUCOM-EU project in Benin and Burkina-Faso, Cotonou, Citizenship Laboratory, 2020.

¹³J. Padioleau defines the political agenda as “all the problems perceived as requiring public debate, or even the intervention of legitimate political authorities”. J. Padioleau, *L'Etat au concret*, Paris, Puf, 1982, p.25. On a concrete case, L. Boussaguet, *Pedophilia, public problem*, France, Belgium, England, Paris, Dalloz, 2008.

actions taking into account the needs of its populations and the particular national context. These actions suffer from a certain extraneity which makes them decontextualized and not very effective in the context of preventing violent extremism. Better still, the fight against violent extremism in Benin depends on the one hand on the political, legal, administrative, prospective environment (A), etc. and on the other hand, the political and strategic competence of decision-makers to focus on prospective development ambitions that unite resources (B).

A- A Misguided Security Policy of Reference

The aridity of reference from which the security dynamics of Benin suffers, is this incapacity of the security policy has carried out a decoding of reality with regard to the rise of violent extremism in northern Benin. In principle, and thanks to the intervention of intellectual operators who make it possible to reduce the opacity of the phenomenon by defining new points of support for action, we will be able to carry out a recoding of the phenomenon through the definition of operating modes capable of defining a public action program specific to the Beninese case. In reality, the reference or cognitive framework of a public policy is, secondly, the relationship which is constructed in the intellectual representations between an identifiable sector and global society.¹⁴ Better, any public policy, whether security, health, housing, environmental, etc., is always sectoral but its objective is to manage the misalignments of this sector with its environment, that is to say other segments of global society. In truth, the lack of reference is due to the fact that the dynamics or security governance underweigh the multiple factors of a potential threat of radicalization in spaces. These are mainly socio-economic factors; political and strategic and those linked to the failure of the State in its sovereign missions.

Radicalization and the probability of the occurrence of violent extremism in the northern part of Benin are underpinned by several factors regardless of the environment considered. Indeed, the perceptions of the actors reveal that it is a multifactorial phenomenon. Also, it must be emphasized that radicalization is uniformly described as a process which gradually increases¹⁵. We recorded, from the speech of the interlocutors,

causes transversal to all the sites, but we also noted, depending on each site, specific causes. Overall, we note that radicalization emerges from the various forms of injustice that social actors feel they are subject to and which lead to their marginalization/exclusion from public debates, spaces and services, to the real or perceived discrimination to which they are subject, precarious conditions which constitute their daily life. It would manifest itself from the adoption of another framework of interpretation of society. This generally consists of rejecting the current societal model and highlighting the impurity and injustice of the world, experienced by oneself or sometimes experienced vicariously by observing the suffering of others, and it offers as the only response violence¹⁶. The violence which constitutes the concrete manifestation of radicalization is expressed in various ways and is fueled by several factors. They differ from one locality to another and are part of the aspirations and interests that each group tries to defend. Without being exhaustive, we can cite, among other things, religious, socio-economic and political factors, linked to access to public services and resources, linked to the failure of the State and its decay in certain areas.¹⁷.

In reality, Benin's geographical location allows it to share 1,989 km of land borders with four neighboring countries.¹⁸ Burkina-Faso, Niger,

¹⁶This is what one of the people we met in Parakou tries to explain through this extract: "If, for example, I am offended and I complain, when the law is not stated, this can lead to terrorism. There are too many injustices in the country. This is actually what is a source of frustration and extremism. When laws are tailor-made and target the interests of some to the detriment of others, this is a source of frustration, revolt and extremism" (Dr. A. G. specialist in Islamic studies and religions, Parakou, 06/07/2018)

¹⁷Op. cit, p.150.

¹⁸The Republic of Benin has 77 municipalities, 36 of which have an opening to four neighboring countries. In total, Benin shares 1989 km of land borders with neighboring countries. It borders – from Burkina Faso to the North-West over 306 km (including 243 km on the Pendjari River and around thirty kilometers of the Atacora ridge line), - from Niger to the far North over 266 km (entirely river, Mekrou and Niger), - from Nigeria to the East over 773 km (including 178 km of river section) and - from Togo to the West over 644 km (with 100 km on the Mono River). The share of natural limits (watercourses and ridge limits) on all of Benin's demarcation lines is around 41%, or approximately 817 km. Concerning the border line with Nigeria, 18

¹⁴P. Muller, Public policies, Paris, Puf, 2011, p.43-44.

¹⁵Report, Program for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin PPREV-UE II, October, 2018, pp.150.

Nigeria and Togo, including three in particular, the territories are under the heavy yoke of permanent hostilities from jihadist groups. However, the porosity of Benin's borders remains a constant determinant of all border segments, which results in numerous entry and exit gates that are uncontrolled or with limited surveillance. Better still, most of Benin's economic potential, particularly its natural resources, is concentrated in 36 border municipalities. These are home to significant reserves of mineral resources and oil. It is also in this area that the largest proportion of cotton and tuber production (especially yams) in the country is recorded.¹⁹ Furthermore, the 36 border municipalities constitute the preferred area for all kinds of trafficking in prohibited products (trafficking in various drugs, veterinary products, human health products, plants, trafficking in children and human organs).²⁰

Finally, the areas subject to violent extremist attacks listed above are border areas (Ségbana, Matéri, Malanville, etc.), where the populations live in total deprivation compared to their compatriots in Cotonou: poor or even very little access. at least basic social services. The delivery of basic social services is almost non-existent, therefore these are difficult to access areas. On the other hand, the populations have easy access to the markets of neighboring countries unlike the large consumption centers in Benin for the sale of their production. . It should also be noted that these municipalities are characterized by situations which expose them to the effects of radicalization which can lead to violent extremism.²¹ We can mention the violence of the sermons, the mutual denigrations and the direct attacks during the sermons, the conflicts of leadership in the dynamics of capture and redistribution of the financial windfall coming from the countries of the Arab Gulf, the proximity and complicity with the radical currents in neighboring countries (Niger, Nigeria), the prevalence of conflicts of autochthony versus non-indigenes, the frustrations linked to the absence of basic public services or exclusion due to state reforms, the rejection of State and these principles, conflicts linked to access to land and resources, etc. All of

municipalities are concerned, i.e. half of the country's border municipalities.

¹⁹Report, Program for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin PPREV-UE II, October, 2018, pp.150.

²⁰Ibidem.

²¹Ibidem.

this constitutes fertile ground for radicalization that could lead to violent extremism.²²

B- The involvement of traditional and religious legitimacies

If it is true that the security situation in Benin and that of the countries of the West African sub-region raises issues which attract the attention of observers and in particular the government of the Republic of Benin, I am remains no less true that the dynamics of the development of public security policies in Benin is far from being a co-production. It is produced by the State and State agents. Ignoring thus, the social groups in the State: that is to say the populations directly concerned who should be at the center of all strategies to combat insecurity, but especially traditional and religious legitimacies. The involvement of the latter would be more relevant to the extent that the role of religious and traditional leaders is increasingly recognized by local populations for initiatives to consolidate peace and promote the values of tolerance and justice.

In reality, faced with the worsening security situation and the emergence of increasingly complex conflicts, including the persistence of violent extremism, religious and traditional leaders occupy an important place in the socio-political evolution of countries of the region as actors of community resilience. Given this 'natural' role within their respective communities, religious and traditional leaders should therefore logically be challenged or involved in the prevention or resolution of conflicts in the Sahel and beyond.²³

²² Ibidem.

²³In this matter, the specific role of religious actors and leaders, commonly accepted by local communities, is increasingly illustrated by the functions of sultans (in Hausa and Zarma environments), imams and other 'brotherhood' leaders, as well as than the Lamido (in the Fulani area). It is in this same perspective that the social functions of the brotherhood leaders of Senegal and the Muftis in Nigeria should be placed. Traditional leaders as well as members of the clergy and various churches also perform the same social function as actors enjoying religious and traditional legitimacy. It is, in fact, a set of constructive and complementary roles to that of the public authorities on the part of these actors who impose themselves as essential pillars in the essential progressive construction of trust with West African communities and beyond. Sahel. Thus, through different interventions, they fulfill essential functions in these societies marked by extreme complexity of socio-political relationships. Regional Seminar, United Nation: United Nations Office for West Africa and the

However, this important function of mediation and social regulation is not duly taken into account in the design of strategies as in development policies in Benin. While these opinion leaders are for the populations, the first interlocutors and the last ramparts. Let us also reveal that, in West Africa and the Sahel, the States have inherited a mode of religious governance strongly marked by the secular principle while spirituality remains deeply anchored in the lifestyles of the populations. . This religiosity, strongly anchored in traditions and social interactions, is not only in the religious domain but embraces different aspects of social, economic and political life. At the same time, there still persists, in these so-called secular countries, reluctance on the part of States and international organizations to recognize this constructive role of religious actors, thus depriving decision-makers, civil society and the international community of an effective lever. conflict resolution and stabilization of countries affected by multidimensional crises. The role of religious leaders is increasingly recognized by local populations for initiatives to consolidate peace and promote the values of tolerance and justice. But, despite these approaches, which are admittedly often scattered, there is still a real misunderstanding of the mechanisms by international partners who do not understand the meaning and importance of such interventions at the local level. However, these interventions by religious leaders concern areas as varied as mediation, the resolution of intercommunity conflicts, and traditional justice. This is also what explains, it must be remembered, that in April 2015, during a special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly aimed at promoting tolerance and reconciliation to combat the growing threat of violent extremism, the Secretary-General called on religious leaders around the world to use dialogue as an antidote to sectarian tensions. This initiative was in line with the Report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of a culture of peace, dialogue, understanding and cooperation between religions and cultures in the service of peace. Likewise, in 2018, a United Nations inter-agency working group for relations with faith-based organizations and the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, recalled that religious actors “have a responsibility

Sahel, “Contribution of religious and traditional legitimacies to the consolidation of peace, the prevention and resolution of conflicts in West Africa and in the Sahel”, UNOWAS, Dakar / Senegal, December, 2021.

to contribute to the construction peaceful, inclusive societies capable of resisting conflict, violent extremism and atrocities.²⁴

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