



ONDO STATE: Election Security Threat Assessment

Key Risk Factors:

- History of competitive elections and violence in Ondo State politics.
- Inflammatory statements, allegations of plans to rig the election and abuse of power of incumbency.
- Activities of political gangs in across the state and presence of militants in Riverine areas
- Porosity of border with neighbouring state

Key Mitigating Factors:

- Early warning and detection of threats to security, allow for proactive response
- Better coordination and synergy among security agencies under the platform of the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES).
- Training of DPOs and Area commanders on Election Security Management.
- Improvement in INEC's preparations for elections, which in the past was a major threat to security.

Introduction

As Ondo State prepares for its 20 October gubernatorial election, emerging signs indicate that not only are the stakes very high, but also that the major political parties are strategizing to outdo one another. The attendant political tension in the state, as evidenced by pockets of violence in parts of the state as well as the allegation of the abuse of power of incumbency, especially with regard to access to state resources such as mass media, has serious implications not only for the security of the election, but the overall effectiveness of its administration, credibility and legitimacy. This edition of CLEEN Foundation's Election Security Brief (ESB) examines the potential security risks, flashpoints and mitigating factors in the Ondo gubernatorial election.

Brief History of Ondo State

Ondo state, popularly referred to as the "Sunshine State", was created from the defunct Western State on 3rd February, 1976. It covers a land area of 14,793 square kilometers with its administrative capital at Akure. The 2006 census puts the population of the state at 3,441,024 comprising 1,761,263 males and 1,679,761 females. Ondo State has a total of 1,646,666 registered voters for the 20 October gubernatorial election in the state.



Located in the southwestern zone of Nigeria, the state is bounded in the north by Ekiti and Kogi States, in the east by Edo State; in the west by Osun and Ogun states and in the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Ondo State is peopled predominantly by Yorubas who speak various dialects of the Yoruba language such as the Akoko, Akure, Apoi, Idanre, Ijaw, Ikale, Ilaje, Ondo and the Owo. The state has three Senatorial Districts; Nine Federal House of Representative seats, 26 State House of Assembly Seat and 18 Local Government Areas. The three Senatorial Districts are Ondo North made up of Akoko North East, Akoko North West, Akoko South East, Akoko South West, Owola and Ose Local Government Areas; Ondo Central consisting of Akure South, Akure North; Ifedore/Igaraoke, Ondo West and Ondo East; and Ondo South, which consists of Odigbo, Irele, Ilaje, Ese Odo, Okitipupa and Ile Oluji/Oke Igbo LGAs. The distribution of LGAs according to Senatorial District is shown in the table below:

The local government areas are grouped into three senatorial districts:

S/N	Senatorial District	Local government Areas in each district
1.	Ondo North Senatorial District	Akoko North East, Akoko North West, Akoko South East, Akoko South West, Owola and Ose
2.	Ondo Central Senatorial District	Akure South, Akure North; Ifedore/Igaraoke, Ondo West and Ondo East
3.	Ondo South Senatorial District	Odigbo, Irele, Ilaje, Ese Odo, Okitipupa and Ile Oluji/Oke Igbo

Economy of Ondo State

The economy of Ondo state is basically agrarian with strong bias in farming, fishing, lumbering and trading. The state is reputed for large scale production of cocoa, palm produce and rubber. Other crops like maize, yam and cassava are also produced in large quantities. Sixty-five percent of the state labour force is in the agriculture sub-sector. The state is also blessed with very rich forest resources where some of the most exotic timber in Nigeria abounds. The State is equally blessed with extensive deposits of crude oil, bitumen, glass sand, kaolin, granites and limestone. Therefore, the state has great potentials for rapid industrial growth in view of its raw materials base. The tourism potentials of the state is also high as its historical sites, long coastline, lakes, forest and cultural events can be developed for tourism. However, these very huge investment potentials in the state remain largely untapped over the years due to a combination of technical and administrative reasons.

Politics in Ondo State

As part of the defunct Western region, what is today referred to as Ondo state could be said to have a deep political history that dates back to the anti-colonial struggles under the influence of the Action Group (AG). It is, therefore, hardly surprising to note that the politics of the state since independence has manifested progressive tendencies associated with the AG, which held sway in the region in the first republic.

During the second republic (1979-1983), by which time the state has been created, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), AG's successor in the South West, continued to dominate the politics of the state. During the period, the late Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin of the UPN won the governorship election of 1979. However, by the second election of 1983, Akinwole Michael Omoboriowo, Ajasin's deputy from 1979-1983, decamped to the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the ruling party at the centre, to contest the governorship race with Ajasin. As it turned out, Omoboriowo was officially declared winner of the governorship election by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The declaration heralded an unprecedented level of post-election violence across the state, popularly referred to as *operation wet e*, during which many lives were lost and properties worth several billions of Naira destroyed. The state was, as a source puts it, 'the house of war' during the period. Ajasin of the UPN eventually reclaimed its mandate and Omoboriowo fled the state.

During the short-lived third republic (1992-1993), Chief Bamidele Olumilua of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) won the governorship election. His reign was, however, cut short with the abortion of the republic via the annulment of 12 June 1999 presidential election by the Babangida regime. As the country returned to democracy in 1999, following years of military autocracy, Chief Adebayo Adefarati of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) was elected Governor of the state. Adefarati, however, lost in his re-election bid in 2003 when Dr Olusegun Agagu of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was elected the governor of the state. Agagu, who was earlier declared to have won his reelection bid in 2007, eventually lost to the incumbent governor of the state, Olusegun Mimiko of the Labour Party (LP), who happened to be a member of his inner cabinet, after protracted legal battles over the winner of the election.

The race for the governorship seat in the 20 October, 2012 election is being keenly contested among there major parties, namely the LP, ACN and PDP. The spate of decamping, especially from the LP to other parties, has added more intensity to the race. The fact that no governor/party had been able to do two terms in the

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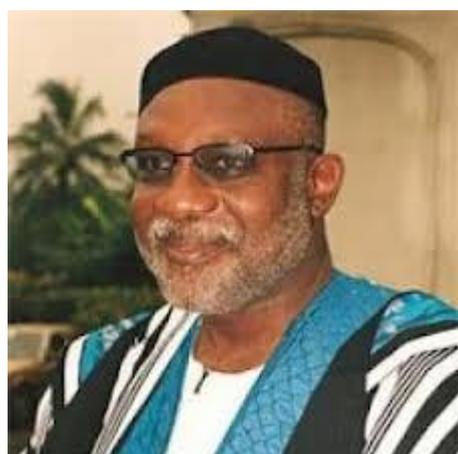
state under the fourth republic represents another dimension to the contest. Whether history will repeat itself or not will be tested by the outcome of the forthcoming governorship election.

Parties and Candidates in the Gubernatorial Election

The race for the *Alagbaka* Government house is a keen contest with twelve political parties fielding candidates. The parties and candidates are:

S/N	Political Party	Candidate
1.	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Rotimi Akeredolu
2.	Allied Congress Party (ACP)	Adept Taye
3.	All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP)	Adeyemi Bolarinwa
4.	Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP)	Ayodele Olusegun
5.	Change Advocacy Party (CAP)	Omoyele Olorunwa
6.	Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	Olusoji Ehinlanwo
7.	Labour Party (LP)	Olusegun Mimiko
8.	National Conscience Party (NCP)	Oladipo Lawrence
9.	National Solidarity Democratic Party (NSDP)	Abikanlu Olatunji
10.	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Olusola Oke
11.	People for Democratic Change (PDC)	Victor Adetusin
12.	Progressive People Alliance (PPA)	Omoregha Olatunji

However, the contest for the governorship race seems to be among three main contenders, namely the ACN, LP and PDP.



ACN Candidate: Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN

Oluwarotimi Akeredolu served as Attorney General of Ondo State from 1997-1999 and was made a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 1998. As an activist, he served the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) at various levels starting as the Secretary General of the Ibadan branch in 1985 and has been a member of the National Executive Council of the Association since then. He served as the Publicity Secretary during the regime of the late Alao Aka Bashorun (1988-1989). He was also a member of Legal Aid Council of Nigeria from 1989 to 1991 and became its Chairman in 2005. He was a member of the Governing Council, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies between 2008 and 2010, a member of Council of Legal Education, a member of Council, International Bar Association and Pan African Lawyers Union during the same period. He served as president of the NBA between 2008 and 2010. He currently serves as NBA representative in the National Judicial Council (NJC).

In his electioneering campaigns, Akeredolu has emphasized the abuse and mismanagement of state resources by the incumbent government and promised to redress such if elected. His intimidating legal credentials and vision for the state notwithstanding, many are of the view that his greatest undoing was that he did not have

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sufficient political experience in competitive politics vis-a-vis his main challengers. Many also think that he has limited pool of resources, especially financial, from which to draw for the project. However, the huge amount of support from other ACN states has been seen as a viable source of strength for Akeredolu.

LP Candidate: Olusegun Mimiko

Olusegun Mimiko, the incumbent governor of the state, is seeking re-election, a feat that has not been accomplished in the state since 1999. A medical doctor by training, he was involved in politics during the military period and in 1992, was made the State Commissioner for Health, a position he again occupied when the military left governance in 1999. He resigned from the government of Chief Adebayo Adefarati when he was schemed out of the party governorship primaries to pitch his tent with the PDP under which he was made the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) in 2003.



A vacancy in the slot of Ondo in the Federal Executive Council saw him being appointed as Minister for Housing and Urban Development in 2005, a position he held till the end of 2006 when he again, resigned from government and the PDP to float the LP under which he contested and won the April 14, 2007 governorship election. He was, however, not declared winner until after 22 months of legal tussle to reclaim the 2007 mandate from Dr Olusegun Agagu of the PDP.

Mimiko prides himself as one who has delivered on his promise in moving Ondo state to the next level. As such, he has always emphasized the fact that in the three and half years of his leadership, he worked for the people with renewed vigour towards a better Ondo. He pledged to consolidate on his administration's seven-plan agenda. While many believe that the power of incumbency may work in his favor, some others feel it is historical since 1999 for any governor to do a second term in the state. Yet, the number of high-profile defections from the LP party has been seen as a major challenge to his re-election. Above all, the LP in the state seems isolated as it has no recognizable presence in any other state in the south west, and indeed the entire federation. Many see this as a big minus.



PDP Candidate: Olusola Oke

Olusola Oke is a lawyer and ventured into politics, initially as a member of the Ondo State Board of Internal Revenue in 1991 before he got elected into the Lower Chamber of the National Assembly as a representative of Ilaje/Ese-Odo Constituency in 1992 on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

At the return of democracy in 1999, he became a member of the board of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) representing Ondo State. When the tenure of the board expired, Oke became the Chairman of the Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), and in the 2003 general elections, he was denied the seat of Ondo South Senatorial District in controversial circumstances after getting his party's (PDP) ticket and announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the winner of the election. Oke was a member of the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) in 2005 and had served as Chairman of the Boards of the Federal Polytechnic, Bida and the Steel Raw Materials Exploration Agency, Kaduna as well as a member of the Technical Committee of the Federal Government on Niger Delta. He is the immediate past National Legal Adviser of the PDP.

Many think his membership of the PDP, which controls the federal government, remains his strongest strength. This endows him with political structures spread across the state and financial resources to prosecute the governorship race. Besides, his political experience over the years is seen as an asset to could boost his chances. He will have to contend with the weakness of the PDP in the south west.

Synthesis of security threats

The following are the key threats to security in the 20 October Ondo governorship election:

- The state has a history of electoral violence, most notably the 1983 post-election violence -the Adekunle Ajasin/Omoboriowo saga- which a public commentator described as the 'house of war';
- Pre-election violence: Electioneering campaigns have been characterized by various forms of violence, most notably killing and sporadic gunshots. These have manifested in places such as Akure, Owo, Akungba, Iwaro Oka Akoko, among others.
- The activities of various violent political gangs across the state, most notably the dreaded *Ade Basket Boys* with stronghold in Akure and subsidiaries across the state and *Orita Fogo Boys* predominantly in the Akungba axis, constitute serious security threats;
- Presence of militants in the Riverine (*Ori Omi*) areas of the state, who have been engaged in the resource struggle of the Niger Delta can be exploited by desperate politicians who want to capture power at all costs;
- Allegations of exclusion/marginalization from government patronage by some groups in the state, especially from the Akungba axis, also raises cause for concern;
- Allegations of exclusion/marginalization of opposition parties from the use of state resources, particularly the mass media and Akure City Hall, is a potential source of violence;
- The fact that Ondo state is the only state of the South West not under the control of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), coupled with the seeming determination of the ACN to capture the state, heightens security concerns in the election. The LP campaign that the ACN has an imperial/colonial agenda to subjugate the state to the external control of Lagos state can inflame anger and violence;
- There also exists the fear of interference 'from above' through the use of federal might in favour of the PDP, who many believe is desperate to regain the office it lost in 2003;
- The relatively high level of youth unemployment and poverty in the state also constitute security risk;
- The relative porosity of borders, especially with Edo state, may provide avenues for the importation of political thugs from neighbouring states.

Potential Flash Points

While the foregoing security threats apply to the entire state, the probability of degenerating into violence is much more pronounced in some areas than others. This study identifies the most violence-prone areas in the 2012 gubernatorial election as follows:

- Akure: It is not just the state capital, but also has the highest number of registered voters (Akure North has 54,477 while Akure South has 252,771). All parties will strive hard to get their own share of the votes. Besides, it falls within the Senatorial District of the incumbent governor, who has allegedly empowered thugs rooted in the city especially the *Ade Basket Boys*;
- Owo: Not only does it have one of the highest number of registered voters in the state (124,093) but also the country home of Rotimi Akeredolu, the ACN gubernatorial candidate. The strategic importance of Owo to the election was further underscored by the fact that Governor Olusegun Mimiko flagged off his campaign in the city, during which some pockets of violence reportedly occurred;
- Riverine Area (*Ori Omi*): Not only the country home of Olusola Oke, the PDP candidate, but also the maternal home of Rotimi Akeredolu, as well as the country home of his running mate, Dr Akintelure, who is from Egotako. Besides, a culture of militancy has been established over the Niger delta struggle. Yet, the area reportedly harbours some bitterness over the alleged neglect of the state University at Okitipupa by the Mimiko administration. Worse still, administration of election in the area may be confronted by some logistic challenges, most notably transportation;
- Akoko Region: The incumbent Deputy Governor is from Supare and may want to deliver at all costs. The defection of Senator Boroface from the LP to the ACN in Oka Akoko, together with the cry of marginalization in Akungba, remains crucial political issues.

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Threats mitigation factors

The following are observed mitigation factors that may dilute the potency of the threats analysed above:

- The emerging signs have pointed to the possibility of election-day and post-election violence. Such early warning signs allow for proactive responses by election administrators, including INEC, security agencies, civil society (election observers) in dealing with such security threats;
- The oft-repeated assurances of the federal government that it would not interfere in the election, as well as the assurances by INEC to be neutral and transparent in conducting free and fair election may help calm frayed nerves;
- Being the only election for the day, there will be sufficient human resources for all associated agencies, namely INEC, security agencies and election monitors to ensure free conduct of the election;
- The performance of INEC in the Edo case, despite accusations and counter-accusations, as well as some lapses, offers some assurances that INEC will do the right thing;
- The ongoing sensitization of the populace by civil society organizations on the need to eschew violence during and after the election, can help mitigate violence;
- The destructive legacies of the 1983 post-election violence remain in the collective sub-consciousness of many in the state. That may help reduce the proclivity to violence; and
- Sensitization and training of security officers on their roles during election remains crucial to the security of the election.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As this security threat assessment reveals, the potential for violence during the 20 October gubernatorial election in Ondo state is high. The signs are already there for all those who care to see as evidenced by cases of pre-election violence across several parts of the state. In other to mitigate these threats, the following recommendations are considered imperative:

- There is need for all institutions connected with the administration of the election to embark on confidence building with all political stakeholders in the election, most notably the ruling and opposition parties, civil society organizations and the people at large. In particular, INEC and security agencies should meet periodically with these actors to assure them of their neutrality, impartiality, willingness and ability to act in a way that will ensure free, fair and credible election;
- There is need for timely distribution of election materials and personnel to ensure timely commencement of voting across the state. This is, however, much more crucial for the riverine areas where the challenges of transportation seem to be more entrenched;
- Notable potential flash points during the election should be given more security protection, together with more election observers, in such a way that no ballot station will be left uncovered;
- Activities of notable political thugs/gangs such as the *Ade Basket Boys* and the *Orita Fogo Boys* should be curtailed;
- There is need for demilitarization of the mind through social mobilization of the people on the need to shun violence during and after the election. This is a task for political parties, INEC, civil society organizations, mass media and the generality of the people;
- All ad hoc election administrators should be adequately trained and monitored to ensure compliance with established rules and procedures;
- All political parties should be persuaded to sign a peace memorandum, stating their commitment to eschew violence and work peacefully during and after the election; and
- It is time to ensure that election offenders are timely prosecuted and punished accordingly.