



**EDO STATE: Election Security Threat Assessment**

**Key Risk Factors:**

- History of competitive elections and violence in Edo State politics.
- Inflammatory statements and allegations of plans to rig the election.
- Indirect mobilisation to violence by politicians under the guise of mandate defense.
- Deployment of soldiers without making their rules of engagement public.

**Key Mitigating Factors:**

- Early presentation of indicators of threats to security, which has enhanced response strategies.
- Better coordination among security agencies under the platform of the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICES).
- 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**

Unlike the recent gubernatorial elections in Cross Rivers, Bayelsa, Adamawa, Sokoto and Kogi States, which were largely contests of unequal parties and candidates, the Edo State governorship election scheduled to hold on July 14, 2012, promises to be the most keenly contested in the recent history of the state. Mobilizations toward the election are already heating up the polity as reports of political violence and allegations of plans to rig the election dominate the airwaves. This edition of CLEEN Foundation's Election Security Brief (ESB) examines the risk factors to peace and security during the election as well as mitigating factors.

**Brief History of Edo State**

Edo State was one of the two states created out of the defunct Bendel State on August 27, 1991, by the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida. The other being Delta State. It has a population of approximately 4 million people and a population density of 168 persons per square kilometre. With Benin, the ancient city as the capital, Edo State shares borders with Ondo State to the west, Delta State to the south and east, and Kogi State to the north. The state has three senatorial districts, 9 Federal House of Representative Seats, 24 State House of Assembly seats, 18 local government areas (LGAs) and 192 political wards. The 3 senatorial districts are roughly delineated along the main ethno-cultural lines of the state. The Edo South Senatorial District, which has 7 LGAs and constitutes 57.54 per cent of the population, is made up of Edo (Bini) speaking people. The Edo North Senatorial District has 6 LGAs and constitutes roughly 25 per cent of the population. It is made up of the Afemai and Akoko-Edo people. The Afemai include the Etsako (12.19 per cent) and Owan (7.43 per cent) while the Ako-Edo speaking people constitute 5.70 per cent of the state population. The Edo Central Senatorial District has 5 LGAs and home to the Esan people that constitute 17.14 per cent of the state's population. Several minority ethnic groups such as the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Igbirra and Ika-Igbo are also found in some LGAs in the state. Most of the ethnic groups however share cultural similarities, which stem from their historical affinities to the ancient Benin Kingdom. However, this kinship, consolidated in the agitations for states creation in the late 50s and 80s, has been severely weakened over the decades by leading politicians in the state who manipulate areas of differences to gain unfair political advantage.



The local government areas are grouped into three senatorial districts:

S/N	Senatorial District	Local government Areas in each district
1.	Edo North Senatorial District	Akoko Edo, Esan South East, Etsako Central, Etsako East, Etsako West,
2.	Edo Central Senatorial District	Esan Central, Esan north east, Igueben,
3.	Edo South Senatorial District	Egor, Orhionwon, Ovia North East, Ovia South West, Ikobaokha, Oredo

### Religious Composition

Edo State is a multi-religious state. It has a good mix of adherents of Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions. In spite of this, the state has not witnessed the kind of religious tensions and violence that have characterized inter-faith relations in other parts of Nigeria, especially the north. One culturally remarkable thing about religion in the state is that many people, especially the Binis, are very proud of their traditional religion and openly practice it. Traditional religion can be said to be the official religion of the Bini monarchy. This is in spite of the fact that the Portuguese missionaries who brought Christianity to the Benin Empire as far back as the 15<sup>th</sup> century succeeded in persuading the Oba and his chiefs to be dressing like Catholic priests. To this day the Benin monarch, his Chiefs, Enogies and other traditional titleholders still dress like catholic priests, alongside other varieties of Benin royal dresses. Islam was introduced in the state towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Nupe warriors who succeeded in planting the religion firmly in the northern parts of the state.

### Politics in Edo State

Historically, elections Edo State have been very competitive and power has often swung between the leading political parties. This history of competitive politics dates back to mobilizations toward the creation of Mid-Western region in the 50s. Aggrieved by reported marginalization and oppression by the dominant Yoruba ethnic group in then Western Region, the Mid West State Movement (MWSM) forged an alliance with the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which had supported their aspirations. This alliance paid off in 1963 when the NCNC, which was a coalition partner of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the Federal Government, influenced the creation of the region out of the Western Region. The NPC and NCNC ostensibly acceded to the demand to undermine the influence of the Action Group (AG), which controlled the Western Region and was the main opposition party in the First Republic. Consequently, the NCNC won majority seats in the first House of Assembly election of the Region and formed the government. However, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), successor of the AG defeated the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in the Second Republic election of 1979, which were successors of NCNC and NPC respectively. Prof. Ambrose Alli who served as governor from 1979 was in turn defeated in the 1983 election by Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia, former military administrator of the state who flew the flag of the conservative NPN.

Similarly, during the short-lived Third Republic (191-1993), Chief John Odigie Oyegun of then left leaning Social Democratic Party (SDP) was elected governor but when electoral politics returned in 1999, political power went back to the conservative leaning Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), led by Chief Lucky Igbinedion, who was declared the elected governor. The PDP strengthened its hold on the state when Igbinedion secured re-election in 2003. However, the PDP hold on the state was brought to an end in 2007 when Mr. Adams Oshiomhole contested against Prof. Oserhiemen Osunbor of the PDP under the platform of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Although the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC) declared Prof Osunbor winner, Mr. Oshiomhole took over after 18 months of Osunbor rule following the decision of the Court of Appeal to confirm the verdict of the Election Tribunal, which had declared Oshiomhole winner of the 2007 elections. The intense political competition was also evident in the state legislature where PDP was declared winner of 16 seats against ACN's 8. However, ACN levelled up with the PDP by securing 6 more seats through court processes challenging results of the elections and became the majority party in the state legislature following the decamping of a PDP member.

The result of the 2011 general elections again validated the competitive nature of elections in the state against the trend in much of the South-South zone where PDP swept the polls. The ruling ACN won 2 of the 3 senatorial seats, 7 out of 9 federal seats and 19 out of 24 state House of Assembly seats. The opposition PDP picked up the remaining seats. This fierce political competition is very likely to be re-enacted in the forthcoming governorship elections and it is a factor to watch as a possible source of threat to security because of the tendency of supporters of contending parties and candidates in Nigeria’s elections to settle electoral disputes physically as a result of low public confidence in the judicial system.

**Parties and Candidates in the Gubernatorial Election**

Seven political parties are contesting the gubernatorial election and have registered candidates for the election. The parties and their candidates are:

S/N	Political Party	Candidate
1.	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Mr. Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole
2.	All Nigeria Peoples’ Party (ANPP)	Mr. Solomon Edebiri
3.	Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	Mr. Roland Izevbuwa
4.	Labour Party (LP)	Mr. M. Andrew Igwewoh
5.	National Conscience Party (NCP)	Mr. Paul Orumwense
6.	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Maj. Gen. Charles. Airhiavbere
7.	Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP)	Frank Ukonga

However, the July 14 gubernatorial contest in the state is a straight fight between two parties – ACN and PDP - based on analysis of the strength of the parties in the state, resources available for campaigns and popularity of the flag bearers.



**ACN Candidate: Mr. Adams Oshiomhole.**

Mr. Adams Oshiomhole, the candidate of ACN, is going into the election as the incumbent, which in Nigeria’s political parlance confers significant advantage, as political office holders are not effectively regulated against the use of public resources including finance in the pursuit of their political ambitions. However, Oshiomhole comes with an illustrious pedigree in the trade union movement as a former president of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) who led workers to successful battles against unpopular policies of the government. NLC is the largest trade union in Nigeria with branches and factory floor members in the 36 states of the country and Abuja. *Oshio Baba*, as he is fondly called by his supporters, is also widely perceived across the state to have performed comparatively better than his predecessor, especially in the areas of infrastructure development and improvement of the internally generated revenue profile of the state.

He is expected to lock the votes in Edo North where he comes from and gain a sizable bloc of votes in Edo South where the influential monarch, Oba of Benin, is perceived to have endorsed his candidacy. This is buoyed by the fact that his party won two out of three

The ethnic arithmetic of Edo politics appears to also favour his candidature. He is expected to lock the votes in Edo North where he comes from and gain a sizable bloc of votes in Edo South where the influential monarch, Oba of Benin, is perceived to have endorsed his candidacy. This is buoyed by the fact that his party won two out of three

senatorial seats, six out of nine House of Representatives seats and 19 out of 24 constituency seats in the state House of Assembly.

However, political analysts argue that the present constitution of the State House of Assembly may not be a true representation of the reality on ground, as a number of the seats being held by the ACN were initially not products of election, but that of defections from the PDP prior to the 2011 State House of Assembly election. Mr. Oshiomhole's weakest link though is Edo Central, where the strong man of Edo politics, Mr. Tony Anenih, hails from. Mr. Anenih, who goes by the sobriquet "Mr. Fix it" because of his dexterity in the godfather politics of Nigeria has not hidden his desire to return the state to the PDP like the other south-south states and enjoys the backing of the PDP-led federal government. A lot therefore depends on the ability of the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), led by the respected Prof. Attahiru Jega, to organize the election in a manifestly credible manner that may make the outcome acceptable to the contending parties. Any attempt to manipulate the outcome of the election may spell trouble for the state given the level of political mobilization by the major parties.

#### **PDP Candidate: Maj. Gen Charles Airhiavbere (rtd)**

Until he emerged as the candidate of the PDP in the gubernatorial election, Major General Charles Airhiavbere (rtd.) was relatively unknown in Edo politics. He retired from the Nigerian army in 2011 after 37 years of service and is an accountant by profession. While in the army, he held several positions including Director of Army Finance Corps and Director of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, which his supporters argue, adequately prepared him for the governorship position. However, his emergence as the candidate of the PDP above other leading lights of the party in the state such as Prof. Oserhiemen Osunbor has been attributed to the political manoeuvrings of Mr. Tony Anenih.



General Airhiavbere's chance of winning is hinged on the fact that he is the only strong contender for the governorship position from the Edo South Senatorial District, which has the highest voting population in the state. Being a Bini man and son of a traditional titleholder in the Oba's palace, the projection is that his candidature would force a divide of the dominant Bini vote in spite of the perceived support of the Oba of Benin to Mr. Oshiomhole. It is also believed that he comes with a deep pocket being a former director of Army Finance Corp.

However, opponents of the PDP candidate are advancing the same reasons to undermine his electoral prospects. He is portrayed as a stooge of the godfathers who is out to run the state aground again. There is also a possibility that the 'ethnic card' being played by the PDP may boomerang, as there is a strong view in the state that the Edo North should be given the chance to have second term in office as Edo South did between 1999 and 2007 under Mr. Lucky Igbinedion.

General Airhiavbere's campaign organization does not appear to be bothered by this as they claim that their candidate is the only aspirant that has visited and campaigned in the 192 political wards of the state in a bid to sensitize and mobilize the people for the PDP and his aspiration ahead of the election. They insist that wherever they went they were well received and assured of victory.

#### **Synthesis of security threats**

The following are the key threats to security in the July 14 Edo governorship election:

##### ***Fear of Possible Outbreak of Violence***

With the number of prominent people reportedly killed in the building up to the governorship election, many stakeholders in the Edo election are fearful of a possible outbreak of violence during and after the July 14 election. Shortly after commencement of campaigns, Governor Adams Oshiomhole alleged that he was the target of the truck that crashed into his convoy killing three journalists. Allegations of conspiracy were reinforced by the assassination of Mr. Olaitan Oyerinde, private secretary of Mr. Oshiomhole by unknown gunmen who invaded his residence. Moreover, Mr. Liou Odion, commissioner of information alleged that gunmen invaded his residence few

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days after he was threatened by a leading PDP stalwart in the state. These incidents of violence have raised fears that the major contenders are mobilizing towards violence. While the ACN candidate has alleged that security agencies were being mobilized to invade Edo during the elections, the PDP claims Oshiomhole is training thugs in a neighbouring state who would be given police uniforms on election day. Based on these alleged plans to rig the elections, the leading candidates have been urging their supporters to prepare to defend their votes, which may be interpreted to mean by any means necessary including deployment of violence.

### ***High stakes Politics***

Both the ACN and PDP have boasted that they will win the election and are staking everything in the process, which raises concerns about what will happen during the election and if one of them loses. Oshiomhole is upbeat about retaining his position till 2016 to complete his 'good work' for the people. His party, the ACN, equally has an agenda to ensure that the entire states of the old Western Region are in their kitty before the 2015 elections. This means that the party will do the utmost to win again in Edo and take-over Ondo State where governorship election is scheduled for November 2012. On its part, the PDP machinery is insisting that Edo State must return to the fold. Some party chieftains have hyped the situation by claiming that winning the state is a necessary condition for the re-election of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 thereby tapping into sentiments at the federal level. The stakes are even higher because political potentates in the state have put their egos and reputations on the line. Anenih has reportedly boasted that he would unseat Oshiomhole the very same way he unseated Ambrose Alli in 1983 in spite of the latter's acclaimed performance in office. Thus, the election is being seen by the main contenders as a 'do or die affair'.

### ***Inflammatory statements***

The campaign for the governorship election has so far been characterised by politics of bitterness. The key contenders have largely not concentrated on issues. Rather they have demonised their opponents with unprintable words. Unsubstantiated accusations and counter accusations are being traded from both sides of the political spectrum. It is feared that the bitter campaigns may lead to clashes between supporters of the main parties.

### ***Competing use of incumbency factor***

Competing use of incumbency factor between the ACN at the state level and PDP at the federal level may be a threat to security in the Edo election. The contending parties have accused each other of manipulating incumbency factor to secure electoral advantage. The PDP claims the ACN is monopolising political space in the state for its campaign, alleging that government buildings, schools and public spaces have been saturated by Oshiomhole's campaign posters and bill-boards while posters and bill boards of opposition party candidates have been destroyed. The ACN, on its part has accused the PDP of planning to use its control of federal agencies such as INEC and the police to rig the elections. To douse a potentially explosive situation, INEC had to cancel supplementary voters' registration exercise in state when some of its data capturing machines were reportedly found with some PDP chieftains. There are also allegations of bias and exclusion in media coverage.

### ***Deployment of Soldiers to the State***

Apparently in response to fears of violence in the Edo elections, the federal government deployed a total of 3,500 soldiers on election duty to Edo State. Ordinarily, this should have been considered a mitigation factor but the asymmetrical relationship between the federal and state governments in the control of security forces, especially during election, has raised suspicion of stakeholders in the state about possible abuse of their presence to favour the PDP. The situation is not helped by the fact that the Rules of Engagement for the deployment has not been made public and civil society groups do not know what they are permitted to do or not so that their conduct could be monitored during the elections. This deployment is therefore a source of anxiety in the build up to the election.

### **Threats mitigation factors**

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

- Early presentation of symptoms has enhanced prospects for early response. It is believed that the fact that the political violence started early during the campaign would have enabled the Nigeria police and INEC to start early to prepare to stop security breaches in the election.

- It is believed that violence may be averted because there are enough security officers to be deployed to the state. Since this is the only election that will be held on July 14, it is believed that security agencies would have the requisite number of members and quantity of material needed to police the elections.
- It is also believed that the containment of key suspected perpetrators of election violence reduces the prospects of election violence. Oshiomhole is believed to have offered political appointments to some of the big 'hit men' to prevent them from working against him.
- The observance of the guidelines spelt out by the Police Service Commission (PSC) for Security Officers on Election Duty. This is enhanced by the decision of the PSC and the National Human Rights Commission to monitor security personnel on election duty;
- Training of all Area Commanders and Divisional Police Officers in the State on election security management by the DFID's Justice for All (J4A) programme through the CLEEN Foundation has contributed to enhancing the capacity of the officers to undertake their assignment confidently and more effectively.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The events and trends that are emerging from the mobilizations toward the July 14, 2012 governorship election raise concerns about the prospects for free, fair and credible elections. Of particular concern are some of the security challenges discussed in this assessment. The following recommendations are advanced to address these concerns.

- There is need for INEC to address all issues likely to undermine credibility of the elections. This includes posting of electoral officers and early deployment of election materials. The ACN has already complained about plans to use civil servants rather than corps members as have been the case in other elections since 2011;
- Security agencies need to enforce regulations issued by the Police Service Commission on election security. It is heartening that the state commissioner of police has already told politicians that they will not have escorts on the polling day;
- There is need for voter education by the political parties, INEC, NOA, the police, the media and NGOs. One issue that such education should address is mandate protection. Voters who are keen to protect their mandate should be educated about what mandate protection is all about. This is necessary to counter the current misperception that mandate protection entails inflicting violence on perceived perpetrators of electoral fraud;
- Security agencies should deploy intelligence to map potential hotspots in the elections in order to facilitate strategic deployment of personnel. It is feared that some communities, especially the riverine ones in the battle ground Edo South Senatorial District, are potential hotspots;
- Election observer groups should deploy their observers across the state and not only in the cities, as their presence have proven effective in deterring opportunistic electoral malpractices in previous elections, especially by security agencies;
- The rules of engagement given to all security forces posted on election duty in Edo State should be made public to enable election observers monitor their conduct to ensure compliance and report on abuses.