ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT: TOWARDS THE 2016 RERUN ELECTION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Introduction

All other things being equal, the people of Rivers state will go to the poll in the federal and state legislative elections on 10 December, 2016. After the contradictions of these elections in 2015 and attendant court verdicts, efforts at rerunning the elections in the past have been futile.

Now that the elections are finally here, the outlook does not seem encouraging. Like all others before it, these elections promise to be, arguably, the most keenly contested in the recent history of the state, especially under the fourth republic. As such, the potentials for violence are obvious. Above all else, the presence of election risk factors, most notably a history of electoral violence, accusations and counter accusations, existence of criminal gangs and militants, among others, remain credible sources of concern. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in particular has constantly, through the state governor, put INEC and security agencies to the sword, expressing its total lack of confidence in these agencies to superintend a free, fair and credible elections in the state. The situation reached a point where INEC had to respond by urging the governor to stop inciting his supporters for violence. So the blame game continues. Moreover, the electoral stakes are very high and the major political parties are strategizing to outdo one another. As an observer pointed out in a personal conversation, 'these elections may be the last duel between the PDP and APC in the state'. The possibility of a divided government between the state and centre becomes an issue. Since the state is under the control of the PDP, having APC dominate the state's seats at the National Assembly could be a source of concern. This is particularly the case when 2019 is around the corner. All these permutations tend to add troubling twists and turns to the situation. The attendant heating up of the political temperature of the state, if not well-managed, could generate violence of immense proportion during and immediate after the election. This places huge responsibility on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, mass media and other stakeholders in the overall governance of the election. The way these agencies comport themselves could help to salvage the situation or exacerbate it. This analysis explores potential security risks and flashpoints during the governorship election in the state. It also reflects some mitigating factors to could help remedy the situation.

A Brief History of Rivers State

Rivers State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria with its capital in Port Harcourt. The state was created in 1967 with the split of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Until recently, specifically 1996 when more states were created, its geography extended to the present day Bayelsa state. It is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta states.

Rivers state is home to a variety of ethnic groups. With a population of about three million people occupying an area of 21,850 sq. km, the dominant ethnic groups are Ijwa, Ikwere, Etche, Ogoni, and Ogba/Egbema. Ijaw and Ikwerre are the most spoken languages although pidgin English is widely used in radio and television broadcasts. Others include Abua, Andoni, Ekpeye,

Engenni, Etche, lbani, Kalabari, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni and Okrika. The inland part of Rivers state consists of tropical rainforest; towards the coast the typical Niger Delta environment features many mangrove swamps.

The capital, Port Harcourt, is the nerve centre of the Nigerian Oil industry and over ninety industrial concerns, including the Shell Petroleum Development Company of (Nigeria) Limited, AGIP, Texaco, Elf, NPRC, Michelin, West African Glass Industry, Alcan Aluminium, Metaloplastica, Risonpalm, NAFCON, Pabod Breweries and many more. This explains why Part Harcourt has been a critical economic hop for the country.

The state has 23 local government areas. These are Ogba/Egbema, Ndoni, Ahoada, Ikwerre, Etche, Andoni/Opobo, Bonny, Okrika, Iyigbo, Ehana, Gokana Tai/Eleme, Obio/Akpor, Emohua, Degema, Aseri Toru, Akuku, Abua/Odial, Omumma, Opobo/Nkoro, Ogu/ BolRo, Ahoada West, Ahoada East and Eleme. These LGAs are divided into three senatorial districts.

Table I: LGAs by Senatorial Districts in Rivers state

S/N	Senatorial District	LGAs
1.	Rivers East	Khana/Gokana/Eleme/Tai/Oyigbo/ Opobo/Nkoro/Andoni
2	Rivers South East	Etche/Omuma/Ikwerre/Obio/Akpo r/ Port Harcourt/Okrika/Ogu Bolo/ Emohua
3	Rivers West	Asari Toru/Akuku Toru/Degema /Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni/Bonny/Abua -Odual/Ahoada East/Ahoada West

The Economy of Rivers State

Rivers state has one of the largest state economies in Nigeria. In 2007, the state reportedly ranked 2nd nationwide with a gross domestic product (GDP) of $21.07 billion and a per capita income of $3,965.

The economy of the state is driven largely by the oil economy as it has vast reserves of crude oil and natural gas. Rivers State has two major oil refineries, two major seaports, airports, and various industrial estates spread across the land. More than 60% of the country's output of crude oil is produced in the state. Other natural resources found within its boundaries are silica sand, glass sand and clay.

Once reputed for its agricultural productivity, especially palm oil and kernel which basically constituted the main revenue source of the country then, the curse of oil has since diminished its agricultural potentials. As such, there has been a sharp decline in the production of oil palm products, rubber, coconut, raffia palm, jute, vegetables, melon, pineapples, mango, pepper, banana and plantain, all of which were produced before the advent of oil economy. With its many rivers too, the state was also known for fishing, which has also been adversely affected by the other side of the oil economy: pollution and attendant elimination f aquatic resources.

The state also thrives on tourism, especially given the attractiveness of its capital, Port Harcourt that earned it the appellation of 'The Garden City'. This is in addition to its historical sites, long coastline, lakes, forest and cultural events, all with their tourism potentials. However,

excruciating security concerns would appear to have done some damage to the development of the hospitality and tourism business.

Politics in Rivers State

Politics in Rivers has always been highly competitive and intense. During the second republic (1979-1983), by which time the state had been created, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), won the governorship election with Melford Okilo as Governor. During the short-lived third republic (1992-1993), Mr. Rufus Ada George of the National Republican Convention (NRC) 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.

Table 2: Elected Governors of Rivers state, 1979-2016

Name	Title	Took Office	Left Office	Party
Senator Melford Okilo	Governor	October 1979	December 1983	NPN
Rufus Ada George	Governor	January 1992	November 1993	NRC
Peter Odili	Governor	29 May 1999	29 May 2007	PDP
Celestine Omehia	Governor	29 May 2007	26 October 2007	PDP
Rt.Hon. Chibuike Amaechi	Governor	26 October 2007	29 May 2015	PDP
Chief Ezenwo Wike	Governor	29 May 2015		PDP

As the country returned to democracy in 1999, following years of military autocracy, Peter Odili of the PDP was elected Governor of the state. He contested and won reelection for a second term in 2003. In 2007, PDP maintained its stronghold in the state with the election of Celestine Omehia as Governor. His tenure was, however, short-lived as he was in office from 29 May to 26 October, 2007. This was as a result of controversy of the party primary and candidate selection of the PDP. Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, who won the party primary but was substituted with Omehia, had challenged the decision in court. Interestingly, the court ruled in his favour and declared him the rightful candidate for the party. Thus Amaechi became governor without participating in the general election. Amaechi completed two terms as governor in 2016. But before then, a major split had occurred within the PDP at the national level. The inability to resolve the crisis led to the eventual fractionalization of the party, with a significant portion joining the APC. This faction included Amaechi and four other governors, a development that generated tensions across the country but more intensively in Rivers state.

Indeed, this singular development was arguably the single most important factor that shaped the 2015 elections in the state. For the first time, two major parties have now come to slug it out in the state contrary to the past when only one party was always dominant. The attendant tensions between the APC and PDP remain a source of security threats to peaceful elections in the state. The series of inconclusive elections that we have witnessed in the state are good illustrations.

Table 3: Areas where rerun elections will take place in Rivers state

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION
RIVERS STATE
ELECTORAL DATA FOR SUSPENDED ELECTIONS - AREAS FOR DECEMBER 10TH, 2016 RE-RUN/SUPPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS

S/N	LGA	TOTAL RAs FOR RE-RUN	REGISTERED VOTERS	TOTAL PUs FOR RE-RUN	TYPE OF ELECTION		
					SD	FC	SC
1	ABUA-ODUAL	7	11790	35	35	0	0
2	AHOADA EAST	4	8366	15	15	0	0
3	AHOADA WEST	8	29230	40	40	0	0
4	AKUKU TORU	6	5611	14	14	12	0
5	ANDONI	11	96110	173	173	173	173
6	ASARI-TORU	13	48226	226	226	226	226
7	BONNY	12	49766	104	104	104	104
8	DEGEMA	8	13597	30	27	27	30
9	ELEME	10	94070	92	92	92	17
10	EMOHUA	14	31871	66	66	60	0
11	ETCHE	19	100081	207	207	207	104
12	GOKANA	17	99997	219	219	219	219
13	IKWERRE	9	37396	65	62	65	64
14	KHANA	19	137399	295	295	295	133
15	OBIO/AKPOR	8	42,472	33	33	0	0
16	OGBA/EGBEMA/NDONI	12	15766	37	37	0	0
17	OGU/BOLO	3	1775	5	5	5	0
18	OKRIKA	6	6101	12	12	11	0
19	OMUMA	7	2866	12	12	11	0
20	OPOBO NKORO	8	5254	19	19	18	0
21	OYIGBO	6	10,930	20	19	20	0
22	PORT HARCOURT	12	71016	109	109	0	0
23	TAI	3	8079	12	11	12	0
	GRAND TOTAL	**222**	**927769**	**1840**	**1832**	**1557**	**1070**

Source: INEC, 2016

In the race for the 2016 rerun elections, it is important that all stakeholders respect the rules of the game without which the risk of another inconclusive election stares us in the face. We must do all that are humanly possible to avert such a thing. This is partly why we are here.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A. Methodology

In preparing this report, the study adopts a combination of both descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. As such, data collection employs the method of triangulation, involving a combination of several methods in the collection of data. Primary data were collected through the use of pre-election risk assessment protocol and instrument developed by the Electoral Institute of INEC to elicit information from the general public and experts in elections and election-related violence in Rivers state. More specifically, a total of 376 of the instrument evenly distributed between the broad categories of 'General Public' and 'Experts' were administered in the 23 LGAs of the state. This implies that 8 instruments per category of general public and experts were administered in each LGA, making a total of 16 per LGA.

The administration of the instrument was preceded by a number of activities aimed at simplifying the task and boosting the reliability and credibility of the exercise. One of the most notable activities was the recruitment and training of field assistants who administered the instruments. This was further enhanced with the presence of field supervisors to monitor and ensure compliance with the rules of the game, including strict adherence to all relevant ethical considerations.

The representativeness of respondents across various categories of analysis was given adequate attention. In terms of geography, for example, the three senatorial districts were not only adequately represented since all LGAs were captured in the sample population, but almost in an equitably too.

Table 5: Gender Distribution of Respondents (General Public)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	70	20.0	76.9	76.9
	Female	21	6.0	23.1	100.0
	Total	91	26.0	100.0	
Missing	System	259	74.0		
Total		350	100.0		

Table 6: Gender Distribution of Respondents (Experts)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	50	14.9	79.4	79.4
	Female	13	3.9	20.6	100.0
	Total	63	18.8	100.0	
Missing	System	273	81.2		
Total		336	100.0		

The gender dimension of respondents was also significant. Though low at 21 out of the valid 91 respondents, it still stands at 31.8%. as revealed in Table 5 above. However, this dropped significantly among the experts where only 13 of the 63 valid entries were female, the remaining 50 male. In both cases, the seemingly low level of female representation may be as a result of the too many missing cases in the statistical analysis.

The analysis of data was done using the qualitative and quantitative techniques, the former employing content analysis and the latter frequency distribution, simple percentages, tables, and charts.

We acknowledge the limitation of our small sample size, as well as the high level of missing cases. We attempt to make up for these shortcomings through the use of other reliable means of primary data collection, most notably Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and FGDs in the state. We also gathered secondary data through the use of media reports and reliable internet sources.

In predicting and measuring the possibility and by extension the degree of violence at both the aggregate (state-wide) and specific (LGAs) levels, we adopt a classificatory scheme involving a range of scores indicating the probable degrees of violence with lower and upper limits. In particular, RED ink is used to illustrate the highest level of election risk factors with a range of scores between 30-100%. This is followed by AMBER with a lesser degree of violence and a range of scores from 10-29%; and GREEN indicating a highly peaceful atmosphere with very limited likelihood of violence at 0-9%.

Table 7: Measuring Indicators of Possible Degree of Violence

Colour	Range of Scores (%)	Remarks
Red	30-100	Very violent
Amber	10-29	Violent
Green	0-9	Peaceful

B. Key Findings I: Aggregate Level Data, Q1 (General Public)

At the aggregate level (across the whole state), data generated from the study suggest that the 26 November, 2016 governorship election could generally be peaceful, devoid of any serious threats of violence. This much is evident from the instruments administered across the state. This finding is curious and hardly supported by findings from other sources.
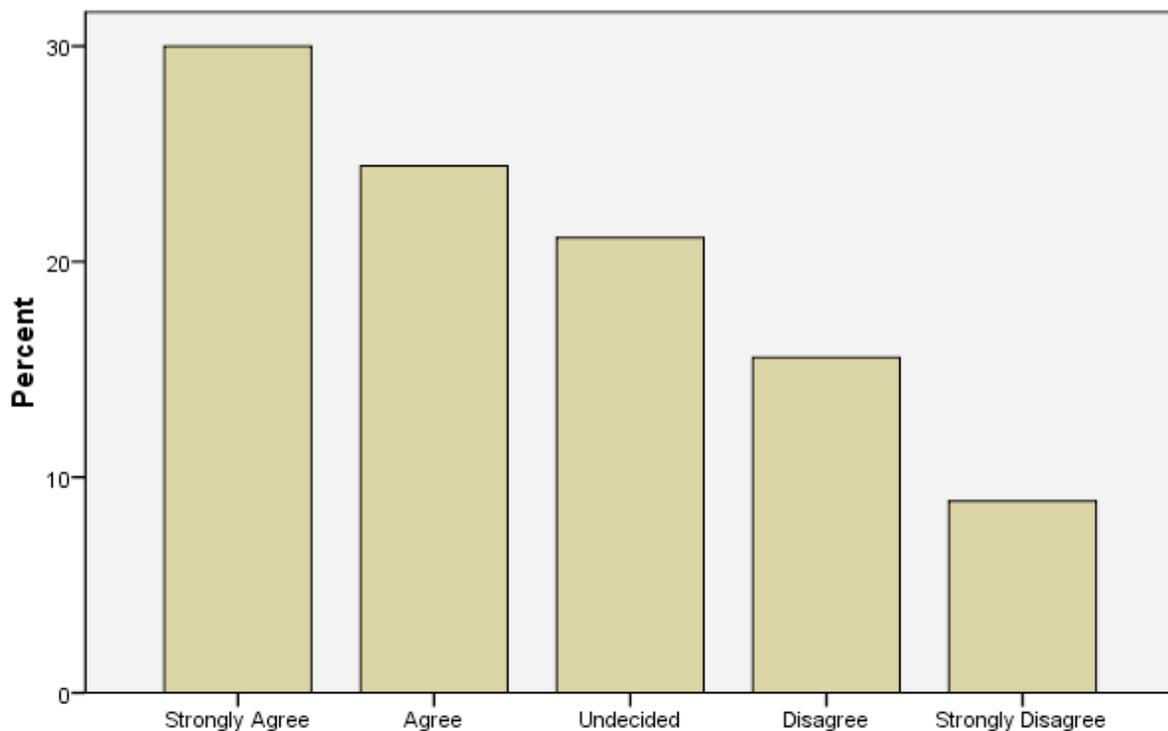
Table 8: Responses to Q1 - Do you agree that election in this area will be peaceful?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	27	7.7	30.0	30.0
	Agree	22	6.3	24.4	54.4
	Undecided	19	5.4	21.1	75.6
	Disagree	14	4.0	15.6	91.1
	Strongly Disagree	8	2.3	8.9	100.0
	Total	90	25.7	100.0	
Missing	System	260	74.3		
Total		350	100.0		

To begin with, majority of respondents at both the general public and expert categories are of the view that the elections would generally be peaceful. When asked to express their views as to whether the election in their respective locality will be peaceful or not, the responses were generally positive, as presented in Table 8 above. In specific terms, 27 (30%) and 22 (24.4%) of

the respondents selected 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively. This gives a total of 49 (54.4%) of the respondents across the 23 LGAs of the state with positive response. Only 14 (15.6%) and 8 (8.9%) of the respondents selected 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' respectively, amounting to a total of 22 (24.4%).. 19 (21.1%) were, however, undecided. Situated within our measuring indices, these data suggest that the 10 December rerun elections in Rivers state will be relatively peaceful, with the likelihood of violence standing at 24.4%. This falls within the category of Amber. Though low at 24.4%, it is still a little higher than that of Ondo state which stood at 22%. These responses are depicted in Figure I below.

Q1. Do you agree that election in this area will be peaceful?

C: Key Funding II: Aggregate Level Data, Q70 (General Public)
We attempted to establish the reliability of the responses to the above question through another general question, which happens to be the last on the instrument. Specifically, respondents were asked how, after going through a number of other questions on specific election risk factors in their locality, they thought the election would go on the whole. The responses are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Responses to Q70 - On the whole, how do you think that this election will go?
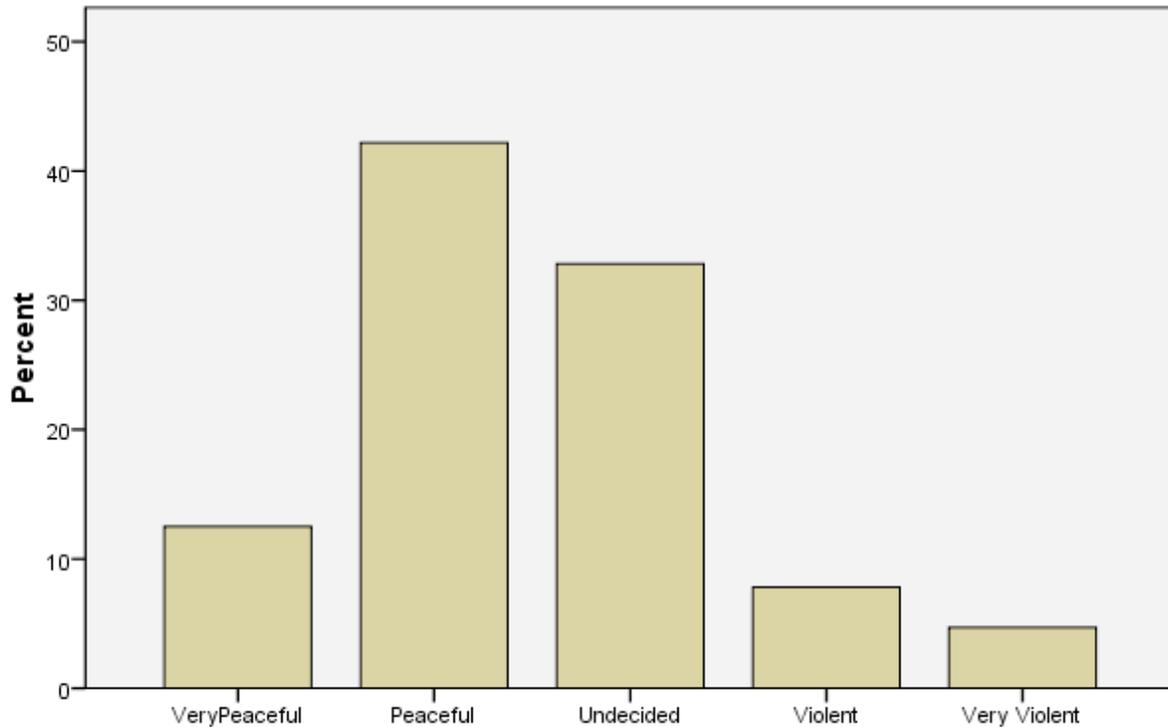
Q70. On the whole, how do you think that this election will go?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Peaceful	8	2.3	12.5	12.5
	Peaceful	27	7.7	42.2	54.7
	Undecided	21	6.0	32.8	87.5
	Violent	5	1.4	7.8	95.3
	Very Violent	3	.9	4.7	100.0
	Total	64	18.3	100.0	
Missing	System	286	81.7		

In their responses, 8 (12.5%) and 27 (42.2%) were of the view that the election would be 'very peaceful' and 'peaceful' respectively. This gives a total of 35 (54.7%) positive responses, compared to 49 (54.4%) in the first question, showing a marginal difference of 0.3%. On the other hand, 5 (7.8%) and 3 (4.7%) were of the view that the election would be 'violent' and 'very violent' respectively, totaling 8 (12, 5%). However, 21 (32.8%) of the respondents were undecided. These responses are represented: in Figure II

8

below:

Q70. On the whole, how do you think that this election will go?

Q70. On the whole, how do you think that this election will go?

Though not without some minor variations, there is a high degree of coherence in the pattern of responses to the two main questions. Over-all, the data suggest the possibility of a peaceful election with pockets of violence in the category of Amber.

D. Comparison with Expert Data

At the aggregate level, there exists some level of synergy between responses of the general public and those of the experts. For the latter, 22 (31.9%) and 17 (24.5%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the election would be peaceful across the state. This amounts to 39 (56.5%) of positive response. 16 (23.2%) were undecided, while 3 (4.3%) and 11 (15.9%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. It gives a total of 20.2% in negative responses. This is in agreement with the findings from the general public where 54.4% and 24.4%of the respondents gave positive and negative responses respectively.

Similarly, some degree of synergy was also observed in the responses to Q70 where 10 (17.9%%) and 17 (30.4%) were of the view that the election in the state would be very peaceful and peaceful respectively, making a total of 27 (48.2%). This is slightly lower than the data from

the general public where 8 (12.5%) and 27 (42.2%) were of the view that the election would be very peaceful and peaceful respectively, with a combined positive response of 35 (54.9%).

E. DISAGGREGATED DATA BY LGAS

The aggregate data presented in the preceding sections suggest that the rerun elections in Rivers state may be peaceful. This contradicts the findings from other sources, including personal communications (KIIs) and FGDs. In this section; we reply more on data from other sources to present possible scenarios for each of the 23 LGAs in the state. The LGAs are presented in alphabetical order.

Abua/Odual Local Government Area

Previous elections in the area have been violent. So it has a long history of electoral violence and sustained pattern of cult activities. We visited Omelema, Emilaghan Odaga, Otari, Omalem, Okana and Emabul communities. People expressed fear of violence during the rerun election as they said had usually been the case. Wards 1 and 3 were particularly singled out for attention due to what respondents called 'the large number of registered voters to be harvested in the wards'. Members of armed groups in the area were also said to be a source of threats of violence during the rerun.

Category: Red

Ahoda East LGA

The area has a history of violence, including cult activities and militancy. Moreover, Osy Ideozu, the PDP Senatorial candidate, who won but had his election nullified by the court is from the LGA. He is still in the race and that has its own twists and turns.

Category: Red

Ahoda West LGA

It has a history of electoral violence. It also has a history of cult activities and militancy. However, respondents are of the view that the recent amnesty in the state would appear to have moderated events.

Category: Amber

Akuku Toru LGA:

It has a history of electoral violence. It is also reputed as one of the major strongholds of Niger Delta militancy, with a series of cult violence. However, a kind of peace of the graveyard tends to exists there now because most, if not all the key political actors and militants tilt toward a particular political party. Hotspots include Abonnema, Obonoma, Kula and Soku.

Category: Amber

Andoni LGA

Expectations are that the elections may not be too peaceful in the area. The state Chairman of the APC and the former Deputy Governor to Amaechi that defected to PDP are from this LGA. Secondly, rerun in holding in all the 11 wards of the LGA and across all the three categories of election in the state. Specific hotspots identified are Asarama, Uyeada, Afaba and Iluru communities.

Category: Red

Asari Toru LGA
It is identified as one of the main troubled LGAs in the rerun elections. One, Otelamba Dan Amachree, the APC senatorial candidate for the zone is from the LGA. He is reputed to have some political clout, having served as Deputy Speaker and Speaker of the state House of Assembly in the past. Two, it is also the country home of Asari Dokubo, a leading ex-militant. Three, Dokubo's sister (sibling) is the PDP candidate for the HoRs election in that constituency. Yet, the area has a history of violence and militancy.

Category: Red

Bonny LGA:
Elections in the area are said to be generally peaceful, with pockets of violence in Finima, Peterside and Ward 7. But there has not been any history of bloody elections as in other parts of the state. The expectations are for a peaceful election provided stakeholders play their roles effectively.

Category: Green

Degema LGA
We covered Bille, Obuama, Degema town, Tombia, Usokun, Ke. One of the main challenges here relates to its topography being located in the river-rine area of the state. Degema town was identified as a possible flashpoint due to the presence of political big wigs in the area. Obuama was also listed as a hotspot because it is home to most of the ex-militants who are known for political thuggery and cult activities. Clash of interests between PDP and APC is also said to be rampant in the area.

Category: Red

Eleme LGA:
Our field assistants visited Alesa, Alode, Agbonchia, Ogale, Ebubu, Eteo, Akpajo, and Onne. Findings reveal that tensions are already very high in the area. There have been cases of electoral violence in the past in places like Ebubu, Ogale, Agbonchia, and Alode. Also it was noted that activities of cult groups (NEWELL AND DEBAM) within these communities have been devastating. Yet, the PDP senatorial candidate, Olaka Nwogu, is from this LGA, which makes it a centre of attention. So these communities are afraid that such cult groups could be deployed for the elections, as has usually been the case in the area. Worse still, community members also expressed loss of confidence in the capability of security agencies to offer adequate electoral

security during the elections. Agbonchia, and Alode were singled out hotspots for violence, and community members anticipate violence during the re-run in the communities.

Category: Red

Emoha LGA
It has a history of violence, cultism, kidnapping, etc. One is not sure how the amnesty can affect the level of violence in the area. However, the fact that Andrew Uchendu, the APC candidate for the Rivers Central is from the area, makes it potentially volatile.

Category: Red

Etchie LGA
We covered Opiro, Mba, Akpoku, Okehi, Orwu and Okomoko communities. It is characterized by a variety of criminal activities such as robbery, kidnapping and pockets of oil-theft activities along the Imo River axis. Akpoku, Okehi, Orwu (ward 10) and Okomoko (ward 6) were identified as possible hotspots due to the prevalence of a general feeling of insecurity in the area.

Category: Amber

Gokana LGA:
The area has a history of electoral violence. There were fears that key stakeholders, especially political parties, INEC, security officials and other interest groups may not play according to the rule of the game, thereby engendering violence. Yeghe, Bomuu and B'Dere were seen as hotspots because of the presence of rival politicians belonging to the different political parties with large support base. Moreso, there has been the presence of rival cult groups,for example, DEEBAM and DEWEL which allied themselves to the various politicians and their parties; The area also has a history of inter-community conflicts. Moreover, Magnus Abe, the APC senatorial candidate in River South East is from the LGA, making it a deeply contested area.

Category: Red

Ikwerre LGA
Our field work covered four communities, namely Elele, Egbeda, Obudoogan and Obila. It came across as one of the most politically sensitive areas in the rerun election. This is not just because of the activities of various cult groups in the area. It is also the LGA of former Governor Rotimi Amaechi. The Amaechi factor, including federal might, and the power of incumbency from the state, makes the area very sensitive. Residents have serious fear that the election could be very violent in the area.

Category: Red

Khana LGA
Past elections in the area have been violent. The march towards the rerun elections has also been tension-soaked. There are signs that the rerun elections could be violent. For example, a few killings have been reported in the area. The recent defection of the caretaker Chairman of the

LGA to APC has also generated its own tensions. Again, the INEC office in the LGA was once set ablaze in July this year. People point at the fact that the LGA is very large probably the largest in the state. Cult activities, including killing and kidnapping are also a major issue in the area.

Category: Red

Obi/Akpor LGA
We visited some communities in this LGA, including Rumuagholu, Eneka, Rumualogu, Nkpolu, Igwurata, and GRA. Finding reveal that the area has a history of electoral violence, a deve3lopment many believed has dampened the moral of the people of the area. In Rumualogu, respondents confirmed that there have always been cases of electoral violence at every election in the community. Party chieftains from the two main parties (PDP and APC) in the area are said to indulge in arming youths/thugs with dangerous weapons and buy votes at polling units on the day of elections. Identified hotspots include Rumualogu, Eneka, Rumuagholu and Igwuruta.

Category: Amber

Ogba/Egbema/Ndom LGA

Previous elections in the area are said to have been very violent. Criminal activities have also been deeply entrenched in the area. There are said to have been community displacements, violent cult activities, kidnapping. These issues are said to have assumed political colourations, though their roots may be elsewhere. The state chairman of PDP is also from this LGA. There have been unreported cases of killings running into 1000s spreadacross many communities, especially Okposi; abduction of village heads, assassination of perceived opponents, infighting between rival cults, notably Icelanders and the Greenlanders, etc. There have been reported cases of gun shots in the last couple of days. The election here may be bloody.

Category: Red

Ogu/Bolo LGA
Previous elections here are said to be general peaceful. One major reason adduced for this is that it is a predominantly PDP area. Expectations are that the trend will continue during this rerun election. The PDP senatorial candidate in the zone, Senator George Thopson Sekibo, is from the LGA. However, there is need for caution as other parties may want to make an inroad into the area. The Ikpokiri Island also requires adequate security. Owo-Ogono and Ikpokiriwere were however seen as hotspots.

Category: Amber

Okrika LGA
We visited Abam-ama, Ibaka, Kalio-Ama and Ogan communities. The area has a history of communal violence between the two dominant ethnic groups, namely Ogoni and Okrika. This tendency tends to be extended, and indeed escalate during elections. It is the country home of

Ateke Tom, a leading ex-militant. Notable hotspots include Kalio-Ama, Okochiri, Ogan, Ibaka, Kalio-Ama, Okochiri and Ogan communities.

Category: Red

Omuma LGA
We visited communities such as Eberi, Obiohia, Obibi, Umuogba, Ofe and Oyoro, These communities are said to be remote and characterized by robbery and recent history of kidnapping. Some parts of the LGA, for example Ofe community, are said to be frequently exposed to activities of armed bandits from Osisima LGA of neighboring Abia state. While the people look forward to the polls; they are however afraid of alarming rate of criminal activities like robbery, cultism and kidnapping in the area. Obiohia, Eberi and Ofe communities were identified as violent hotspots for various reasons: Obiohia is the highest ward with most populated polling units; Eberi for pride and who wins the council headquarters; Ofe is the hub of criminality in the area; criminals frequently enter the community through Osisioma in Abia state;

Category: Red

Opobo/Nkoro LGA:
It is one of the LGAs under the Rivers South East where Magnus Abe is the Senatorial candidate. Our field work here covered Queen's town and Kalibiami main town. The area is said to be generally peaceful, with limited or no history of electoral violence. Moreover, only federal elections will be conducted in a few units. No hot spots were also identified.

Category: Amber

Oyigbo LGA
The LGA is considered a potential trouble spot for various reasons. Specifically, Wards 2, 3 Egberu, 6 and 9 are violence prone essentially ward 3 and 6 have many escape route that will make it difficult for security agencies to contend with. Ward 9 is urbanize and mainly acclaimed Biafran known to be passionate about a given political party.

Category: Amber

Port Harcourt LGA
As the state capital, Port Harcourt has always been the hob of political activities in the state. This is not surprising, given the high number of votes spread across 20 wards. Finding reveal that turnout may be low here due to fear of violence. Cult violence and kidnapping are rampant in the city. Supporters of the two leading parties, the PDP and APC were said to be 'combat ready' for the rerun election. Some also expressed fear that INEC and security agencies may be compromised to work against the PDP in the state. It was also identified as a potential battle ground for both pre- and post-election protests. Specifically, Wards 17, 18 and 19, Mile 1, 2 and 3 were identified as volatile areas for violence because of the presence of political big wigs in the area. Also is ward 5 Port Harcourt township area due to porous nature of the environment.

Category: Red

Tai LGA
The LGA has a history of violent elections. People were of the view that the inability of security agents to deal with emerging threats could trigger violence in the rerun elections. They also noted that inadequate election materials had triggered violence in the area in the past. There is a very fierce contest between the PDP and APC candidates in the area. There is also a history of inter-communal conflicts in the area. Still, criminality and cult violence are rampant in the area. Above all else, the recent High Court ruling over the results of previous election from the LGA has become a source of controversy with both PDP and APC claiming victory over the matter. The chances are that INEC's interpretation of the judgement wills me 'reinterpreted' by affected party. This is a dangerous sign that should be watched. Flashpoints include: Nonwa, Ke-bara, Koroma, Kpita, Sime, Baryeria, Bunu, Ken-Nkoro, Botem and Ban-Egoe

Category: Red

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SYNTHESIS OF KEY RISK FACTORS

From our findings, a number of election risk factors could trigger electoral violence unless urgent steps are taken to mitigate them. These include:

➢ **A history of electoral violence and activities of thugs:** Rivers state has a history of electoral violence particularly under the fourth republic. This has reached a crescendo since the 2015 general election as a result of the realignment of political forces that altered the balance of power between the PDP and APC nationally and in Rivers state. Ever since, the spate of violence has been on the increase so much so that attempts at conducting the inconclusive elections of 2015 in the state also ended in another round of inconclusiveness as a result of violence. Between the last attempt and now there is little to suggest that anything fundamental has changed for the better. The state has a record of militancy with several militia and cult groups all available for political engagements and deployment. Most of the most notable ex-militants and warlords are from the state and are known to be sympathetic to a political party. These are credible sources of serious security threats;

➢ **The activities of political parties:** This is very central as both experts and the general public were unanimous in this respect. Specifically, 66 (75..9%) and 53 (86.9%%) of the general public and experts respectively either strongly agreed or agreed that the activities of political parties in the state could undermine the electoral process and cause violence. Some of the underlined factors by experts include godfatherism, undue influence of money and the unguarded utterances of political gladiators across the two main parties. In particular, while 90.9% of general public respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that activities of party thugs could be a source of electoral violence, it was 86.9% among experts.

- **The role and activities of INEC:** A total of 67.2% of expert respondents and 58.9% of general public respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that INEC is pivotal to the peacefulness of the election. When we consider the fact that 16.7% and 19.7% of general public and experts respectively were undecided, it shows that very few respondents thought otherwise. For most of the experts, some of the major issue they identified with INEC include its perceived bias in favour of the APC, which they felt could compromise its professionalism and overall performance during the rerun elections. In other questions relating to INEC, for example, 86.3% of respondent in the general public category either strongly agreed or agreed that partiality of INEC officials could generate violence. The response was 91.1% among experts, the remaining 8.8% undecided.

- **The role and activities of security agencies:** The role of security agencies was also identified as pivotal to peaceful election. 64.8% of the general public and 73.3% of experts either strongly agreed or agreed that unless security agents display exemplary professionalism, non-partisanship, the election could lead to violence. Furthermore, 91.5% of the general public and 96.4% of experts either strongly agreed or agreed that partiality of security agencies/agents could cause violence in the rerun election. Experts also alluded to the need to pay good attention to the welfare need of security agents if they must measure up to expectations, adequacy or otherwise , etc.

- **Judicial Institutions:** The judiciary was also identified as an important institution whose conduct could make or mar the election. 43.3% of the general public and 56.7% of experts either strongly agreed or agreed about the salience of the judiciary. One major issue identified by experts relates to the phenomenon of corruption in the judiciary. When the level of trust in the judiciary is poor, people may be tempted to resort to self-help strategies.

- **The Media:** Though the media were identified by 58.3% of experts and 50.6% of the general public as constituting potential source of threats that could instigate violence, especially when they fail to operate within their ethical and legal codes.

- **Traditional institutions:** Traditional rulers are ordinarily the custodians of traditional customs, traditions and values. However, most of them appear to have been contaminated by politics. Little wonder that 73.3% of experts and 48.9% of the general public considered them as potential source of violence during the election.

- Others: many other factors identified by experts of constituting risk factors in the election include the following:

  a) Geographical terrain:
  b) Non-adherence to process and procedures
  c) Problem with payment of election workers
  d) Problem associated with recruitment of adhoc INEC staff
  e) Power of incumbency
  f) Proliferation of small arms and light weapon
  g) Corruption among INEC officials

h) Reliability of election equipment
i) Inadequate training and conduct of security agents
j) Strong opposition
k) Political interference with the work of INEC
l) Involvement of informal policing groups

Though there were variations in the degree of responses to these questions from one LGA to the other, the approval rating to these questions were generally at least average (at 50%) across the LGAs. This further lends credence to the findings presented in this report.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Rivers state legislative rerun elections are scheduled to hold on 10 December, 2016. At the aggregate level, the data presented in this report suggest that the election may likely be violent, with many potential hotspots. With the data from various sources, we have classified the 23 LGAs base on the perceived degree of peacefulness or violent potential of the election in a given area. It is, however, important to note that noting is cast in iron or stone. The mere fact that an area is categorized as GREEN, for example, does not imply that the election in the areas will automatically be violence-free and vice versa. Much depends on proactive measures taken to mitigate identified risk factors across the various LGAs of the state.

Against the background of the following, 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 criminal gangs, militants should be monitored and 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 adhoc election administrators should be adequately trained and monitored to ensure compliance with established rules and procedures;
- All political parties should be encouraged to adhere to the peace agreement they have signed, stating their commitment to eschew violence and work peacefully during and after the election;