

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FACTORS THAT SHAPED
ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN 2019 BAYELSA STATE
GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION**

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ABSTRACT: This study examined election and electoral violence in Nigeria with special focus on the 2019 Bayelsa State Gubernatorial Election. The purpose of the study was premised on examining the factors that influenced electoral violence in 2019 gubernatorial election in Bayelsa, to bring to fore the impacts of electoral violence on Bayelsan electorates in 2019 gubernatorial election and to suggest ways to curb or reduce electoral violence in Bayelsa State. The Zero-Sum game theoretical framework was found very suitable. In addition, the study reviewed scholarly works on issues related to the focus of the study. The study adopted ex-post facto research design and data for the study were gathered from secondary sources such as journals, magazines, text books, newspapers and materials relating to election and electoral violence in Nigeria. A combination of simple descriptive-analytical and deductive methods was mainly employed to analyze the data while inferences were drawn from writings and commentaries of other scholars. The study deduced that the leading causes of electoral violence before, during and after the 2019 Bayelsa gubernatorial election were violent acts of various cult groups, high level of insecurity, Godfatherism and unlawful acts of party agents. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made, its imperative to amend the electoral law, adequate political education and socialization should be carried to the electorates and provision of adequate security to trouble spots as a way to curb electoral violence in Bayelsa State and Nigeria at large.

Key words: Governance, Electoral Violence, Bayelsa State

INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance is fundamentally predicted on free and fair elections, that provides opportunities for political choice and good governance. Through elections, citizens choose leaders to pursue good and national interest. Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, five general elections have been conducted from 1999-2019 and all has failed to meet the expectations of citizen with regards to the provision of free and fair election in line with global best practices, rather all the citizens have witnessed were elections with high level of violence (Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, 2019, p.1).

Politics and elections in Nigeria have always been characterized by violence which has eaten deep into the Nigerian system. This high level of violence in Nigeria has remained a constant feature in our electoral process due to the inability of the legislative provisions for prosecution of

those who engage in electoral malpractice and all sorts of anti-social behaviour. The Nigerian State could be looked at from the view of Thomas Hobbes state of nature where life is “nasty, brutish and nasty (Thompson, 2012, p.229). He went further to state that “over the years following independence, political life in Nigeria has developed into nothing but throat struggle for power at the federal level”. This struggle for power as cited by Thompson is still very much present in all Nigerian elections both at the federal and state level.

Political violence constitutes threats to lives and property, hinders economic activities and portrays Nigerian democracy in bad light. Harping on the effects of political violence, political underdevelopment and national insecurity, Thompson (2012, p.229), stated that “security does not only mean to be saved or freed from danger but also to have a level playing ground in the struggle for survival which includes economic, security, social security, environmental security, food security, life security and technological security”. Instead of various Nigeria governments and political leaders to promote and protect interests of individual for national security and development, they seem to have limited their responsibilities to how they can perpetuate themselves to power or install their cronies in power.

Elections take place every four years in Nigeria and 2019 elections were the fifth round of elections since Nigeria’s transition from military rule in 1999. In all 36 states, there were elections to the State House of Assembly whereas gubernatorial elections were held in 29 of the states. Among the states without gubernatorial elections in the February, 2019 general election was Bayelsa State. The Bayelsa gubernatorial election of November 2019 is one of the most recent elections conducted in Nigeria since the elections that were conducted in February 2019. The November 2019 election in the Bayelsa State is not without controversy of violence and other electoral malpractices. Bayelsa State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria and is located in the heart of the Niger Delta. The state is one of the six oil and gas producing states in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. The people of Bayelsa State are of the Ijaw ethnic nationality that is scattered all over the Niger Delta. However, the state is multi-ethnic due to language differences. “These language differences are most times used as instruments of mobilization for electoral contests (Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, 2019, p.7). Similar to other Niger-Delta States, Bayelsa has been characterized by conflicts, which are mainly oil related. These conflicts include intra and inter community, intra and inter cult, ex-militants-community conflicts and political conflicts. In the build-up of the 2019 Governorship election, the conflict environment was already characterized by intense and political competition by the two major political parties, People’s Democratic party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC). The environment is vulnerable to violence for a number of reasons. First is the flow of arms and armed gang cult groups in the state. Second, is the desperate struggle for power in the state as well as Nigeria in general. Electoral violence will always be prevalent in Nigeria unless there is a proper legislation on reforming the electoral act in Nigeria and also reduce the high premium placed on political power in Nigeria.

Electoral violence has been the regular trademark of elections in Nigeria since the 1960s. After each military interregnum, subsequent elections held in 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and to an extent 2015, have been characterized by violence. These disturbances often manifest before, during or after elections (Thewill Editorial, 2016). Thus, election is war in Nigeria and

for Bayelsa, the stakes are far higher than what obtains in other states (Ojo, 2015). However, since the creation of Bayelsa State, electoral violence has remained a recurring decimal in the state. Prevalent forms of political and electoral violence in Bayelsa State exude in political assassination, arsons, violence-pruned campaigns, thuggery, election-related ethno-religious crisis, and snatching of ballot boxes. Despite the efforts of the Federal and State Governments to stop it, it has continued to grow in leaps and bounds (Thewill Editorial, 2016). For instance, the Governorship election held in December 5th, 2015 was characterized with electoral violence. There were mayhem recorded across state, hence, the election in Southern Ijaw was cancelled as a result of violence and electoral malpractices (Ojo, 2015).

The 2019 election fell short of been violence free despite assurances by the Electoral Commission and state security agencies. Even before the election, precisely on the 13th of November, 2019, members of a political party were having a campaign in Nembe Local Government Area. Some blood-thirsty gun men came to the venue and opened fire without provocation whatsoever, killing scores of law abiding Nigerians (Business Day, 2019).

In the day of the election, armed thugs and gunmen dressed in military uniforms hijacked voting materials and some voting materials were allegedly set ablaze in the Ayanma ward of Ogbia Local Government Area (African Report, 2019). The same gunmen prevented election from holding in Nembe Local Government Area. In Otuoke, the hometown of former President Goodluck Jonathan, party thugs fought over the late arrival and distribution of voting materials.

At Eribo Square in Yenogoa, Bayelsa State, a member of the National Youth Service Corps was said to have gone missing after armed thugs attacked the place. In Angiama community of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, thugs disrupted the electoral process by intercepting and carting away the voting materials meant for the community, while in Ologi ward 03 of Ogbia Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, INEC cancelled voting exercise due to the spate of electoral violence and detention of an electoral official (Dnl Legal and Style, 2019). The election was also cancelled in some stations in the Ogbia area following the abduction of an election official and the burning of voting materials (Punch Newspaper, 2019). Also, four INEC officials were abducted in Bumodi-Gbene, Ekpetiama, Yenogoa and Ologi in Ogbia Local Government Council of the state (Thisday Newspaper, 2019).

In fact, violence, abduction, killing, intimidation, ballot snatching, burning of electoral materials and open vote buying marked the 2019 governorship election in Bayelsa state. Despite provisions of the law which criminalizes electoral violence, it has continued unabated particularly in Bayelsa State. Thus, this study is set out to investigate the factors that influenced and shaped electoral violence in 2019 gubernatorial election in Bayelsa State. It is in the light of this violence that this paper is guided with these research questions; 1. Are there factors that shaped electoral violence in 2019 gubernatorial election in Bayelsa? 2. What are the impacts of electoral violence on Bayelsa electorates in 2019 gubernatorial election? 3. How can electoral violence be curbed or reduced in Bayelsa State?

Conceptual Discourse

Election

Election is a democratic means by which people choose or elect their representatives or rulers. Elections are mostly linked to a democratic government. This is because it allows the participation of people in the determination of government policies directly or indirectly. Election promotes equality and popular sovereignty and gives legitimacy.

Election is a vital part of every democratic setting; it gives the citizens a platform through which they determine freely and fairly their representatives at various levels of government. According to Uchenna (2020, p.198) “election concerns itself with the process of choice agreed upon by a group of people which enables them to select one or a few out of many to occupy one or a number of positions of authority”. Uchenna (2020, p.198) went further to cite Dunmonye, who sees “election as the process of selection of one person or more for an office”.

Obakhedo (2011, p.101) defined “election as an integral part of a democratic process that enables the citizenry determine fairly and freely who should lead them at every level of government periodically and take decisions that shape their socio-economic and political destiny; and in case they falter, still possess the power to recall them or vote them out in next election”. He went further to cite Dye, who defined “election as a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies”.

Elections are very vital to all democratic societies because it helps in the preservation of democratic values. It aims to bring to limelight the beauty of a democracy through free, fair and credible elections which in turn builds trust, good governance and acceptability among the people. Adesote, et al (2014, p.141) defines election as “the act or process of organizing systematic election (permitting mass participation and method of choosing) a person or persons by vote for a public office position in which state authority is exercised”.

Violence

According to Wikipedia, violence is defined as “the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy”. For Iain (2003, p.560) violence is “an act of force exerted to impart physical harm or injury on another person”. He went further to state that violence is also defined as the direct or indirect physical attack, injury, or psychological abuse of a person or animal.

Violence could be general or political violence. This was why Iain (2003, p.560) stated that “what distinguishes general violence from political violence is that an act of violence is political when it involves the actual or potential violation of someone’s basic rights”. Obakhedo (2011, p.101) defined political violence as “a sum total of violence that are associated with the political process. It could come from within or outside the country and manifest in various forms. He went further to state that violence could be political when the use or threat of physical act or a considerable destructive use of force carried out by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or group of individual, with the intent to cause

injury or death to persons and/or damage to property and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances implementation and effects have political significance, that is intended to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangements of a power structure; or directed to a change in the politics, systems, territory of government and hence also directed to changes in the lives of individuals within societies". According to Adesote, et al (2014, p.141), sees violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation".

Electoral Violence

Violence is understood from different viewpoints. It has been defined as an act against an individual or group with the intention of inflicting harm or death. Hence, in general term one can define electoral violence as all forms of violence that emanate at any stage during the process of an election. According to Obakhedo (2011) there is no agreeable definition of electoral violence because of the contentious issue of "violence begets violence" developed by Frantz Fanon in the era of anti-colonial struggle. The Franonian argument according to Obakhedo is predicated on the fact that violence provokes violence. So those who retaliate to the first violence of political opponents do not agree that they are perpetrating violence. Obakhedo (2011, p.102) "electoral violence to connote all forms of violence (physical, psychological, administrative, legal and structural) at different stages engaged in by participants, their supporters and sympathizers (including security and election management body staff) in the electoral process". Thompson (2012, p.231) defined "electoral violence as the employment of force by political parties or their supporters to intimidate opponents and threaten to a democratic regime; this has often accounted for seizure of political power by the use of undemocratic means such as force".

Adesote, et al (2014, p.141), defined electoral violence as "any random or organized act that seeks to undermine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced protection, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination". Noted that electoral violence has to do with "all forms of organized acts or threats- physical, psychological, and structural- aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process".

It is important to note that all forms of violence that take place before elections, during elections and after or post-election, and could be intra- or inter-party all constitute electoral violence.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative and non-experimental study; it is based on a single case ex-post facto design. This design is a quasi-experimental study which examines how an independent variable that is present prior to a study affects a dependent variable. Quasi-experimental design is a use tool in a situation where true experiments cannot be used for ethical or practical reasons. The 2019 Bayelsa state Gubernatorial Elections has taken place and the researcher cannot control or influence it and this makes the design suitable for this study. The ex-post facto analysis of the

independent variable (x) and the dependent variable (y) where based on the cause-effect relationship. In this scenario, the study is on how violence (cause) (x) impacted (after) on the Bayelsa State 2019 gubernatorial election (y).

Theoretical Framework

Theory is defined as a reliable knowledge that is generally accepted for a systematic explanation of events. It establishes a relationship between variables. As a discipline the essential feature of any study of politics is the preponderance of theories. This was why Kerlinger, (1973, p.9) defined theory as “a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and proposition that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena”. As regards to the nature of the topic “an assessment of election and electoral violence in Nigeria: a case study of 2019 Gubernatorial elections in Bayelsa State” the researchers found the Zero-Sum game of Game theory more appropriate in its explanation.

Game theory is the study of mathematical models of strategic interaction among rational decision makers. It has applications in all fields of social science, as well as in logic, systems science and computer science. Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics defined game theory in the following words: “A game is any situation in which the outcomes (pay offs) are, the product of the interaction of more than one rational player. The term therefore includes not only games in the ordinary sense, such as chess and football, but an enormously wide range of human interactions”. It also defined it as a body of thought dealing with rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimize losses. The mathematical study of strategies for dealing with competitive situations where the outcome of a participant’s choice of actions depends critically on the actions of other participants, therefore theory of games is a type of mathematical study to deal with competitive or sometimes conflicting situations.

The application of games to social sciences particularly economics and political science has always been in the mind of scholars. In 1932 P.G Cambray published, “The Game of Politics: A study of the principles of British Political Strategies”. Perhaps this is the earliest and most methodical work about game theory. In 1943, Neumann and Morgenstern published “Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour”. After Neumann and Morgenstern large number of scholars dealt with the subject and some of them are Schelling, Riker, Kaplan, Raiffa etc.

Game theory has been used with increasing frequency since 1960s. There are different types of game theory namely; Zero-Sum game, Positive-Sum game, Chicken Sum game etc. For appropriate analysis of the topic the researchers adopted the Zero-sum game.

The propounders of game theory have devised different types of theory of games and the most common form is zero-sum games of two persons. The game is played by two persons and this is a very simple type of game. Chess, bridge and poker fall in this category. Naturally, if one person gains the other person will incur loss. So what is gain to one may be loss to the other. If one person launches an assault upon the other person and achieves some advancement, it means

the loss to the other man. According to Britannica.com/game theory, “Zero-Sum game is a situation in which the total of wins and losses adds up to zero and thus one party benefits at the direct expense of another”.

Elections in every country of the world is viewed as a game, in some countries is seen as a Positive-Sum game while some view it as a zero-sum game. Elections in Nigeria is viewed as a zero-sum game due to the fact that high premium is placed on the political power by all political actors. The view the elections and electoral process of the country as one in which their team is playing football final for a coveted price of a medal and a cup and only one winner will emerge.

Due to the fact that only one winner will emerge during the cup, each team tend to do anything possible to manoeuvre the other team in other to win the coveted trophy. This ideology of only one party taking the most valued assets (political power) during an election in Nigeria is a propelling tool to the spate of violence always experienced in Nigeria during every election most recently the 2019 Gubernatorial election in Bayelsa State. The level of violence in Nigeria can only be reduced to lowest minimum when the winner takes all syndrome is removed from political actors.

Electoral Violence in Bayelsa State

The use of violence as a political tool has been common in Nigeria and not just peculiar to Bayelsa State. Previous Nigeria governments had used political violence even more brutally and systematically often without any real pretence of operating within a democratic system. Despite the shift from military to civilian rule in 1999, political violence has remained prevalent. This was buttressed further by a research conducted by the Nigerian Watch (cited in Guardian Newspaper 2016, p.2) which revealed that “between June 2006 and May 2014, there were about 915 cases of election violence resulting in about 3934 deaths. A further breakdown of the figures showed that the North Central Geopolitical Zone had the highest casualties among the country’s six zones, recording 1465 deaths. It was followed by the North West with 911 deaths and the South South with 644 deaths. The South East had the least figure of 152 deaths, the North East and South West recorded 319 and 386 respectively”. This shows that the Niger Delta in general and Bayelsa State in particular, have a history of electoral violence. This was why the PIND (2015, p.2); stated that “elections in Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta region are high stakes affairs, often characterized by violence and vote rigging”. They also stated that electoral matters, not only because of its impact on democracy and governance, but also because it hurts economic and human development. Prevalent forms of political violence in Bayelsa State exude in political assassination, arsons, violence-pruned campaigns, thuggery, election-related ethno-religious crisis, and snatching of ballot boxes. Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, the elections been conducted in Nigeria has been marred by electoral violence both at the national and state level. The elections that took place in Bayelsa between 1999 and 2019 were not violence free.

Transition of gubernatorial power has always been fraught with violence in Bayelsa State. According to PIND (2015, p.1); “in 2012 political tensions were high, with reported explosions at party secretariats, cultist violence targeting political aspirants, a reported assassination attempt,

kidnappings, and general political thuggery”. It went further to state that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has fixed 5th December 2015 for the Bayelsa state gubernatorial elections, there were signs that conflict issues are emerging once again.

PIND (2015, p.2); further demonstrated that “Asari was quoted to say we Ijaws don’t run away from our enemies. Jonathan did a lot for all those who have turned against us. Nobody, wherever he is, can move the Ijaw nation. We’ve never been conquered; the British knows this fact. This fight is beyond Henry Seriake Dickson, it is beyond you and me, it is for all. He will never be disgraced on December 5. They have boasted that they have control of the Army, INEC, Police, Navy and SSS. But we will meet in the battlefield on election day”. The political hegemony of the PDP in Bayelsa State has remained a tough nut to crack for the APC despite the violence that marred the 2015 election.

The two political parties locked horns in the gubernatorial election of Bayelsa in 2019. The Nigeria’s All Progressives Congress (APC) ran a tough campaign in the Niger Delta’s governorship elections to win the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) stronghold of Bayelsa for the first time in the party’s history. The 2019 election fell short of been violence free despite assurances by the electoral commission and state security agencies. Thus according to African report (2019); in Bayelsa, there were numerous reports of armed thugs, and men dressed in military uniforms, hijacking voting materials. In the Ayanma ward of Ogbia LGA, voting materials were allegedly set ablaze. An electoral officer was reported to have disappeared”. The Nigeria Civil Society Report on 2019 Bayelsa Governorship election (2019, p.23) also noted the “continuing relevance of ex-militant groups in Bayelsa elections”. It observes that majority of the militia groups in the Niger Delta are based in the Ijaw land. Out of 15 known militia groups, 13 are of Ijaw origin. These include Niger Delta People Volunteer Force, Adaka Marines, Matyrs Brigade, Niger Delta Volunteers, Niger Delta Militant Force Squad, Niger Delta Coastal Guerillas, The Meinbutus, Arugbo Freedom Frighters, Iduwini Volunteer Force, Egbesu Boys of Africa, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, The Coalition of Militant Action in the Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Front. Despite the amnesty programme, the structure of militant groups, loyalty to the leadership and patronage of members by leaders has remained intact. Because they possess arms, politicians easily mobilize them to pursue negotiated roles.

In Bayelsa, ex-militant leaders are concentrated in the Southern-Ijaw Local Government Area, a situation that contributed to the violence of 2015 Governorship elections. This situation has not changed, it is very likely that they would be mobilized for the elections or in the case where one of their patrons emerges as a candidate of either PDP or APC, they are likely to pursue their own agenda. This is to say that every election that has taken place in Bayelsa State from 1999 to 2019, each militant group always has role to play in the act of violence based on how they are divided along tribal line and where their loyalty lies.

. The state is located in the South-South geopolitical zone where militancy has been raging for over a decade. While it may be true that amnesty programme was instituted in 2009 during which thousands of military hardware including small arms and light weapons were surrendered by the Niger Delta militants in exchange for forgiveness of their economic crimes of kidnapping

and sabotage of Nigeria's oil facilities, the programme did not extinguish the flames of criminality in the Niger Delta region. It only reduced it. Cases of kidnapping for ransom and oil theft are still rampant in many of the six Niger Delta states, especially in Bayelsa (Ojo, 2015).

Specific Cases of Electoral Violence in 2019 Gubernatorial Election in Bayelsa State

Bayelsa state is one of the six states that form the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state, which was carved out from old Rivers State in October 1st, 1996 is mostly descendant of the Ijaw people with eight local government areas namely, Brass, Ekeremor, Nembe, Koluma/Opokuma, Ogbia, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw and Yenago. The large number of aspirants in the PDP, their distribution across the state, the accusations and counter accusations by aspirants, the preference for a candidate by the incumbent Governor and the contestations over zoning is the first catalyst of violence in the Bayelsa State election of 2019. This was captured further by the report of Centre for Democracy and Development on Bayelsa (2019, p.6) which stated that "zoning is always a subject of discussion among political players in the prelude to any election in Nigeria. In Bayelsa State, there has already been intense scheming, alignment, realignment and horse-trading ahead of Election Day and even the primary process. The party primaries of PDP were characterized by violent acts of gun shots and protest dues to the zoning of the Governorship ticket to Koluma/Opokuma Local government. This was captured further by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2019, p.20) when it stated the "PDP held delegate elections for its party primaries scheduled for September 3rd, 2019 on Friday and Saturday 23rd and 4th August, 2019 respectively, and was characterized by gun shots, detonation of dynamites and protests by aggrieved sub-groupings within the party". It further stated that there is also anxiety and palpable tension in the APC over the mode of primary that should be adopted as party faithful were divided over using direct or indirect method.

One of the few cases of violence during the 2019 Governorship election of Bayelsa was recorded in Ogbia Local government area. According to Kimpact Development Initiative (2019, p.14) "from the survey, the possibility of violence is unlikely in Kolokuma/Opokuma local government area while Sagbama, Yenagoa and Ogbia are projected to somewhat likely experience violence". It went further to note that the reason for the violence in Ogbia is as a result of Ogbia local government sharing borders with Southern Ijaw, Nembe and Brass, three of which have a high likelihood of experiencing violence. This act of violence was further captured by Punch Newspaper (2019); which reported that "in Bayelsa, the election was cancelled in some stations in the Ogbia area following the abduction of an election official and the burning of voting materials". It also stated that in Otuoke, the hometown of former President Goodluck Jonathan, party thugs fought over the late arrival and distribution of voting materials.

According to Business Day Newspaper (2019), "on Wednesday the 13th of November, 2019, a political party was having a campaign in Nembe LGA. Some blood-thirsty gun men came to the venue and opened fire without provocation whatsoever, killing scores of law abiding Nigerians". It further stated that the same gunmen prevented election from holding in Nembe Local Government Area. Thisday Newspaper (2019); stated that in "Bayelsa, violence, intimidation, allegations of ballot snatching and open vote buying marked the governorship election in the state, which was a starlight contest between PDP's Diri and APC's Lyon". It further stated that

the election was also characterized by the abduction and release of four officials of INEC in Bumodi-Gbene, Ekpetiama, Yenagoa and Ologi in Ogbia Local Government Council of the state.

Dnl Legal & Style (2019), noted that “in Fangbe, Bayelsa State, a young man was beaten to the state of unconsciousness by unknown young men. At Eribo Square in Yenogoa, Bayelsa State, a member of the National Youth Service Corps was said to have gone missing after armed thugs attacked the place”. Continuing, it stated that “in Angiama community of Southern Ijaw LGA, thugs disrupted the electoral process by intercepting and carting away the voting materials meant for the community, while in Ologi ward 03 of Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa State, INEC cancelled voting exercise due to the spate of electoral violence and detention of an electoral official”. There are several other cases of electoral violence which took place in the Gubernatorial election of Bayelsa State in 2019, but the most pronounced cases were those of Ogbia Local Government Area and Nembe Local Government Area.

Despite provisions of the law which criminalizes violence, it has continued unabated. For instance, Section 227 of the 1999 Constitution as amended, and Section 81 of the Electoral Act 2010, provides that “No association shall retain, organize, train or equip any person or group of persons, for the purpose of enabling them to be employed for the use of display of physical force, or coercion, in promoting any political objective or interest, or in any such manner as arouse reasonable apprehension that they are organized and trained or equipped for that purpose.” (Thewill Editorial, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The focus of this paper is to analyze Election and Electoral violence in Nigeria: An assessment of 2019 Bayelsa State gubernatorial election. From the analysis of the paper it was deduced that the leading causes of electoral violence before, during and after the 2019 Bayelsa gubernatorial election were violent acts of various cult groups, high level of insecurity, Godfatherism and unlawful acts of party agents. These acts of violence created voter apathy and almost put the election credibility in doubt.

Based on the findings the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Amendment of the electoral act: There is need to amend the electoral act most importantly the area that will strengthen the electoral process and ensure credibility and transparent conduct of the election.
2. Security Agency: The security agencies most especially the Nigerian Police and Civil Defence have a greater role to play towards curbing electoral violence. The security agencies must be fair, firm and honest in carrying out their duty. This will help in building trust between the security agencies and the citizens. Adequate security should be provided during elections as it will help in upholding integrity of the electoral process.
3. The promotion of adequate political education and socialization should be carried out to enlighten electorates on the electoral law, procedures and guidelines.

4. The hijack of materials and electoral officers mostly occur in the former domains of militant groups. Therefore, security priority should be given to these areas namely Southern Ijaw, Ogbia, Nembe, Brass and Ekeremor Local Government Areas.

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