

# Bayelsa State

*Governorship Election 2019:*



*Socio-Political  
Context*



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# Bayelsa State Governorship Election 2019:

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## **Socio-Political Context**

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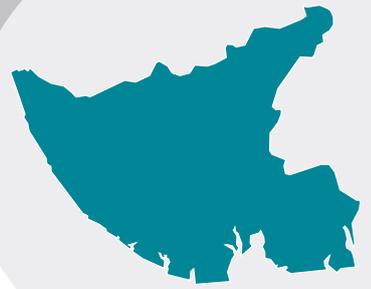
# Executive Summary

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This report examines the socio-political context of the 2019 Governorship elections in Bayelsa State, and has three specific objectives. (1) Analyse the Socio-political context and topographical landscape of Bayelsa State; (2) Identify flash points and areas of high security risk; (3) Develop a well-articulated assessment of the context before the election and possible areas of concern during and after the election. The analysis notes the difficult geographical terrain of the state and highlights the challenges posed to the conduct of free and fair elections, and the work of security personnel who are deployed to secure men and materials during elections. The mobilization of ethnic cleavages defined by dialectical differences in the language spoken for electoral purposes was also discussed, in addition to the implications of the electoral map of the state for peaceful elections and stable polity. The potential challenges to the election highlighted include: violence, poor political education, failure of Smart Card Readers; the commoditisation of the electoral process, possible compromise of electoral officials, difficulty in transporting election materials/INEC staff, and the unprofessional conduct of security personnel on election duty in previous elections. The report notes political campaigns and the associated hate speech and intemperate utterances, contentious political party primaries, high rate of cultism and drug abuse, and the continuing relevance of ex-militant leaders and their supporters as the dossiers of potential conflict that require attention.

A number of recommendations are made for intervention. These include issues on political education, review of security architecture for elections in the state, further decentralization of electoral materials distribution points and the recruitment and training of ad-hoc staff. It is suggested that the training of ad-hoc staff be done for a period of at least two months to ensure proper training and competence, and that ad-hoc staff should be recruited from a pool that satisfactorily pass competence test based on job content. This report also suggests that INEC should explore using boats and helicopters owned by the marine division of the Nigerian Police and Nigerian Navy, so as to avoid hiring transport facilities owned by partisan individuals.





# Introduction

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Democratic governance is fundamentally predicated on free and fair elections, that provides opportunities for political choice and good governance. Through elections, citizens choose leaders to pursue the public good and national interests. Since 1999, Nigeria has conducted five general elections that have failed to meet the expectations of citizens with regards to the provision of free and fair opportunity to make political choice in line with global best practices. This has elicited the interests of stakeholders, who have intervened in different aspects of the electoral process with the goal of improving on its performance. One significant outcome of this is the conduct of national and sub-national election studies which majorly seek to examine all electoral processes and voting behavior with a view to understanding better, the political system in the context of democratic practice. This report is located in this context and consequently interrogates the socio-political context of the 2019 Governorship elections in Bayelsa State. The objectives include the following: (1) Analyse the Socio - Political context and topographical landscape of Bayelsa State; (2) Identify Flash points and areas of high security risk; (3) Develop a well-articulated assessment of the context before the election and possible areas of concern during and after the election





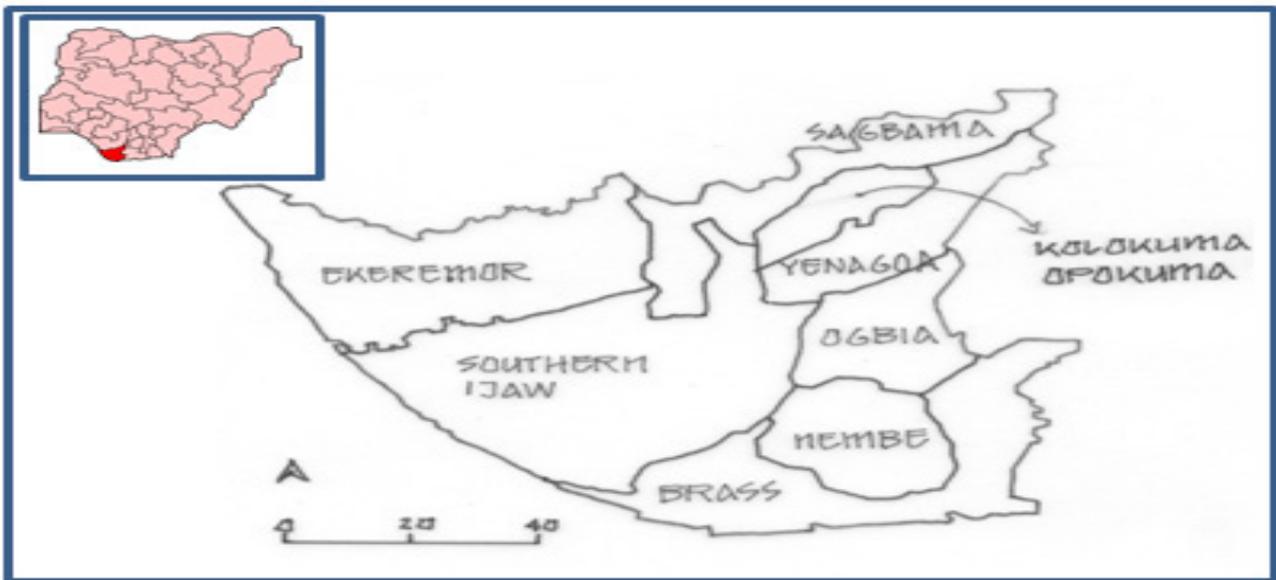
# The Geography and People of Bayelsa State

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## The Geographical Location

Bayelsa State is in the heart of the Niger Delta, and is located within latitudes 4° 15' North and 5° 23' South and longitudes 5° 22' West and 6° 45' East. The State is one of the six oil and gas producing states in the south-south geopolitical zone of the country and is the cradle of commercial crude oil exploitation. The state has a common shore line on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean as its southern frontier. The North–West frontier is bounded by the Niger, Forcados and Ramos Rivers, and the Bomadi creek which marks the western boundary with Delta State. The North–East frontier is bounded by the Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers state, while the eastern frontier is bounded by Akuku-Toru Local Government Area, also of Rivers State, as demarcated by the St. Bartholomew River through the Brass Creek to the Santa Barbara estuary. Bayelsa State is the southernmost state in the country and the southern shores are less than five degrees of latitude north of the equator. Figure 1 highlights the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Bayelsa State and its location in Nigeria

**Figure 1: Map of Bayelsa State showing the eight LGAs and the capital Yenagoa**



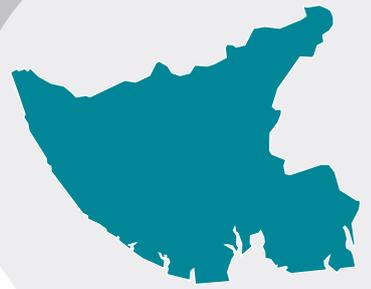
Source: *Brisibe and Pepple, 2018, 173*

The state is criss-crossed by several lakes, rivers and creeks, which in addition to the swampy terrain constitutes about 75 percent of its land mass covering an area of about 11,109 square kilometres. Figure 2 show the Ijaw settlements at the lower part of the map, demonstrating the difficult terrain of the area. Rainfall is heavy, and is more persistent between April and November. The temperature ranges between 20 and 30 degrees centigrade. Its physical features can be categorized into three belts namely; fresh-water swamp area, sandy beach ridges, and salt water swamp area. It is also characterized by annual seasonal floods which last between July and November.

**Figure 2: Map of Ijaw Nation showing the coastal/swamp settlements**



Other groups, Itsekiri and Urhobo share a little part of the riverine with the Ijaw, but they are mainly found in the upland with the other groups – Isoko, Ukwuani, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Etche, etc.



## Implications of the Geography

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The difficult terrain of the state has several implications for politics and development. Due to the high cost of developing the swamp communities, elite preference and the phenomenon of urban bias in resource allocation, the swamp communities are worse off in terms of development; lacking basic social infrastructure and amenities such as roads, communication facilities, etc. Whereas this condition aids the exacerbation of poverty and poor living conditions, it also makes access difficult for security operatives and consequently hampers their efficiency in dealing with crime and criminality. This makes it easy for political thugs to engage in electoral malpractices and violence. Using their knowledge and adaptation to the environment, political thugs are able to outwit security personnel, as they easily snatch election materials and disappear into the swamp or creeks. Similarly, electoral officials are vulnerable to manipulation, intimidation and compromise as the threat of being drowned is too real to disregard. Sometimes, a single boat is assigned to more than a community, meaning that at some point on election day, some electoral officials are cut off, having no means of transportation to leave a community when under threat or pressure to compromise.

The difficult terrain also adds to the logistics challenges faced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Boats for marine transportation are usually not enough due to the high volume of persons who usually travel to their communities to vote. As part of mobilization, politicians hire several boats for registered voters, leaving limited number of boats for INEC. As a strategy of winning elections, politicians deliberately create transportation difficulty by paying off boat drivers and owners to take their boats out of circulation. Because the support provided by the Nigerian Navy is usually inadequate to transport materials, and particularly electoral officials, this contributes to the late arrival of electoral officials and materials. In critical situations, INEC depends on boats provided by individuals who in most cases are politicians; leading to the tampering, diversion or snatching of electoral materials.

## The People

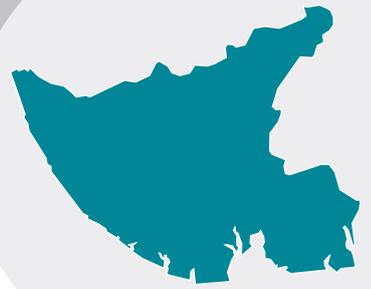
The people of Bayelsa are of the Ijo ethnic nationality that is scattered all over the Niger Delta. However, the state is multi-ethnic due to dialectical differences. The state is made of nearly 500 communities, and 20 Clans including: Apoi, Basan, Olodiana, Oporoma, Ogboin, Tungbo, Kolokuma, Opokuma, Gbarain, Zarama, Okordia, Biseni, Ekpetiama, Tarakiri, Boma, Akassa, Nembe, Epie, Atissa, and Oruma. The Ijo language spoken by the people of Bayelsa State is divided into the following Ijoid groups.

**Table 1: Sub-Divisions of Ijo Language**

Ijoid Group	Dialect Spoken	LGAs where it is spoken
Nembe-Akaha	Nembe and Akaha (Akassa)	Brass and Nembe
Izon,	Bumo (Buma, Bomo), Tarakiri (East), Tarakiri (West), Oporomo (Oporoma), Olodiana (East), Basan (Bassan), Apoi (East), Ogboin, Ekpetiama, Gbarain (Gbaran), Kolokuma, Tungbo, Ibeni or Oyakiri (Oiakiri), Kabou (Kabo, Kabowei), Kumbo (Kumbowei), Mein, Ekeremo (Oporomo, Operemo), Iduwini.	Yenagoa, Southern-Ijaw, Ekeremor, Sagbama, Kolokuma-Opokuma
Inland Ijo,	Biseni (Buseni), Akita (Okordia), and Oruma (Tugbene).	Yenagoa
Southern Edoid,	Isoko and Urhobo	Sagbama
Delta Edo	Epie-Atissa, and the Zarama.	Yenagoa
Central Delta	Ogbia subdivided into the Oloibiri, Anyama, Agholo (Kolo), the Kugbo, and Abureni (Mini).	Ogbia

Source: Adapted from Alagoa, 1999, 73-74

The Izon variant of the language is spoken in five different LGAs, while Nembe is the language for two LGAs. The Inland Ijo, Southern-Edoid, Delta Edo and Central Delta dialects are spoken in one LGA each. Furthermore, unlike the Nembe, Izon and Central Delta (Ogbia dialect) which are the dominant languages in the LGAs where they are spoken, the Inland Ijo, Southern Edoid, and Delta Edo are spoken in selected communities that constitutes the minority. The groups that speak Izon are thus the dominant group while all the others pass for minority groups.



# Implications for Politics

These dialectical differences are sometimes used as instruments of mobilization for electoral contests, and explains descriptions such as core Ijo and peripheral Ijo, and contestations and agitations for zoning and equitable distribution of political offices that heightens political tension.

## Conflict in Bayelsa State

Similar to other Niger Delta States, Bayelsa has been characterized by conflicts, which are mainly oil related; although not limited to oil. The conflicts which occur in the State include intra and inter - community conflicts; oil company- community conflicts; intra and inter cult group conflicts; ex-militants - community conflicts and politics related conflicts.

**Table 2: Types/ Actors of Conflict in Bayelsa State**

S/ No	Types of Conflict	Actors in Conflict/Mode of Aggression
1	Intra-community conflict	<p>Community factions:            (a) Urban elites against local elites  <b>Urban Elites:</b>            Hijack of community resources; disregard for local elites.  <b>Local Elites:</b>            Incite youths and chiefs against the urban elites.</p>
		<p>(b) Youths against Elites  <b>Youths:</b>            Destruction of properties owned by the elites; harassment of relations.  <b>Elites:</b> Fractionalization of youth Bodies through partisan support and patronage. Attack on rival groups.</p>

		<p>(c) Youths against youths  (d) Youths against community  <b>Youths:</b> Over throw of community leadership and usurpation of power.  <b>Community:</b> Inequity distribution of resources leading to the short changing of youths</p>
		<p>(e) Claims Agents against Community  <b>Claims Agents:</b> Short changing of community members  <b>Community:</b> Refusal to pay agreed fees; double dealing.</p>
		<p>(f) Youths against Chiefs  <b>Youths:</b> Dethronement of chiefs; attack on chiefs.  <b>Chiefs:</b> Fractionalization of Youth Bodies through partisan support and patronage kidnapping; encroachment on land and fishing grounds; attack on community members(s).</p>
2	Inter – community conflicts	<p>Youths, chiefs and elites  <b>Community:</b> Attack on oil installations/ equipment; work stoppages; seizure of property, kidnapping of workers</p>
3	Community against oil company	<p>Youths, chiefs, elites, oil MNC’s and security operatives  <b>Oil Company:</b> Fractionalization of community leaders; refusal to pay compensation; breach of MOU; payment of inadequate compensation.</p>
4	Community against state	<p>Community youths and security operatives  <b>Community:</b> Disruption of oil production; attack on security operatives  <b>State:</b> Attack by security operatives; neglect and deprivation.</p>
5	Inter-ethnic	<p><b>Youths, elites and chiefs</b>  Encroachment of land; domination and exclusion.</p>
6	Intra-militia/cult/ confraternity groups	<p><b>Youths</b>  Inequality in resource distribution;</p>
7	Inter-militia/cult/ confraternity groups	<p><b>Youths</b>  Encroachment on area of control or oil theft zone or area of influence</p>
8	Political/Electoral	<p><b>Youths/Politicians</b>  Attack of political opponents, thuggery, election rigging</p>
9	Ex-militia Combatants against community factions	<p><b>Ex-Militant Leaders &amp; followers/ Community Youths</b>  Attacks and counter-attacks relating to control of community governance structures.</p>

Source: Adapted from Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2010, 224

In the build up to the 2019 Governorship elections, the conflict environment is characterised by intense and bitter political competition by party chieftains and supporters of the two major political parties, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC). The environment is vulnerable to violence for a number of reasons. First is the proliferation of arms and armed gang's cult groups. Second, the desperate struggle for power and the associated "politics of warfare" . Third is the incentivisation of violence by programmes such as the Federal Governments Amnesty Programme and the state government's amnesty programme for repentant cultists and commoditisation of violence in the electoral process. Third, the proliferation of arms, and politics of warfare makes the state prone to violence. This reality is however reinforced by the objective conditions of poverty exacerbated by governance deficits and evidenced by the misuse, misapplication and embezzlement of public funds. With the huge oil revenue inflow into Bayelsa Sate, it is expected that the socio-economic conditions of citizens would be qualitatively good. However, this is not the case as the state is among the states with very high unemployment figures. Table 3 provides comparative data on unemployment rate and revenue figures from the Federation Accounts.

**Table 3: Unemployment Rates and Revenue Distributed to States from the Federation Account**

State	FAAC Allocation (2018)	Unemployment Rate Q3 2018	State	FAAC Allocation (2018)	Unemployment Rate Q3 2018
Abia	55,326,313,520.15	31.6	Kano	84,205,898,067.21	31.3
Adama-wa	49,510,206,574.39	20.8	Katsina	61,651,483,460.57	14.3
Akwa Ibom	202,365,072,519.99	37.7	Kebbi	54,580,176,454.58	20.1
Anambra	55,249,945,897.31	17.5	Kogi	53,376,978,657.33	19.7
Bauchi	54,020,849,574.37	23.5	Kwara	44,573,231,265.18	21.1
Bayelsa	153,104,866,273.55	32.6	Lagos	119,024,027,795.54	14.6
Benue	55,441,078,188.72	20.1	Nassarawa	47,550,214,527.97	27.4
Borno	63,271,702,953.51	31.4	Niger	57,521,609,575.96	20.9
Cross River	36,954,686,823.13	30.6	Ogun	39,644,151,088.39	16.4

Delta	213,634,192,630.29	25.4	Ondo	64,686,727,822.91	14.2
Ebonyi	44,955,009,442.29	21.1	Osun	22,837,305,434.54	10.1
Edo	69,169,646,683.36	25.1	Oyo	59,289,159,988.50	10.3
Ekiti	39,325,661,893.63	20.2	Plateau	43,885,148,418.59	29.8
Enugu	53,104,455,149.92	18.7	Rivers	172,627,019,316.69	36.4
Gombe	43,808,127,576.80	27.0	Sokoto	54,460,056,835.47	26.0
Imo	54,181,645,137.52	28.2	Taraba	47,877,801,462.16	19.0
Jigawa	60,327,926,310.65	26.5	Yobe	52,874,949,262.92	18.0
Kaduna	68,849,941,237.76	26.8	Zamfara	40,831,825,094.60	24.4

NBS, [www.nigerianstat.gov.ng](http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng)

Table 3 provides example to show the contradictory reality between volume of revenue that flows into Bayelsa State and the socio-economic conditions. In 2018, the state received the 4th highest revenue in the country after Delta, Akwa-Ibom, and Rivers States which received the first, second and third largest revenue respectively. However, it ranked 3rd among the states with the highest rates of unemployment; again just behind Akwa-Ibom and Rivers States that placed first and second respectively. This situation, a logical outcome of governance deficit has not only deepened poverty, but also provided justification for the commoditisation of votes of by electorates.



# The Electoral Map of Bayelsa State

## Political Constituencies

The eight LGAs in Bayelsa State are Brass, Ekeremor, Yenaoa, Sagbama, Southern-Ijaw, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ogbia, and Nembe. With an estimated population of about two million persons, the State is divided into five federal constituencies, 24 state constituencies, three senatorial districts and 105 electoral wards as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Political Constituencies**

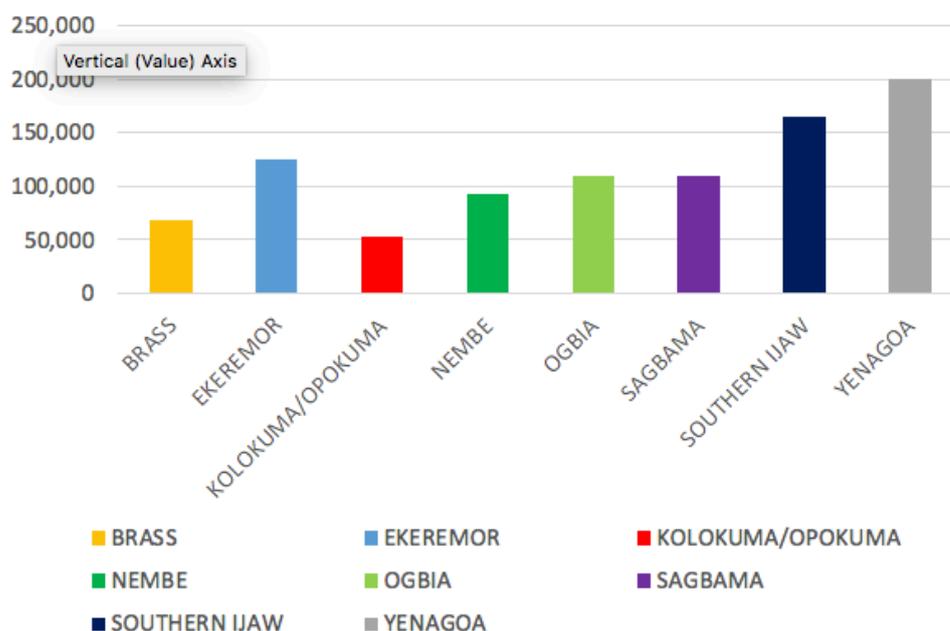
Senatorial Dis- tricts	Federal Con- stituencies	LGAs	Number of State Constitu- encies	Number of Electoral Wards
Bayelsa Central	Yenagoa	Kolokuma/Opoku- ma	2	11
		Yenagoa	3	15
	Southern Ijaw	Southern Ijaw	4	17
Bayelsa East	Brass/ Nembe	Brass	3	10
		Nembe	3	13
	Ogbia	Ogbia	3	13

Bayelsa West	Sagbama/ Ekeremor	Sagbama	3	14
		Ekeremo	3	12

The delineation of both state and federal constituencies clustered communities that are contiguous, and because people who speak similar or the same dialect had settled close to each other, the political constituencies significantly coincides with the boundaries of sub-dialectical or ethnic groups. This has aided the mobilisation of ethnic power for elections, as the political constituencies reinforces the cleavages among the people and as it gives advantage to some groups. For example, those who speak Izon, the largest dialect, are located in the central and western senatorial zones; making them the largest power block and thus creating conditions for intense political competition. The central zone is made of three local government areas- Southern-Ijaw, Yenagoa and Kolokuma/Opokuma. Whereas the clans in Southern –Ijaw and Kolokuma/Opokuma speaks different Ijaw dialects that are mutually intelligible, the Atisa and Epie clans in Yenagoa LGA speak distinct languages. Although the Zarama, Okordia and Biseni also speak peculiar languages, they are closer to the languages spoken by the other clans in Yenagoa LGAt and the clans in Souther-Ijaw and Kolokuma/Opokuma local government areas. This is also applicable to the Eastern senatorial zone where the Ogbia, Nembe and Akassa speak distinct languages. These dialectical differences have thus defined identity politics in the state.

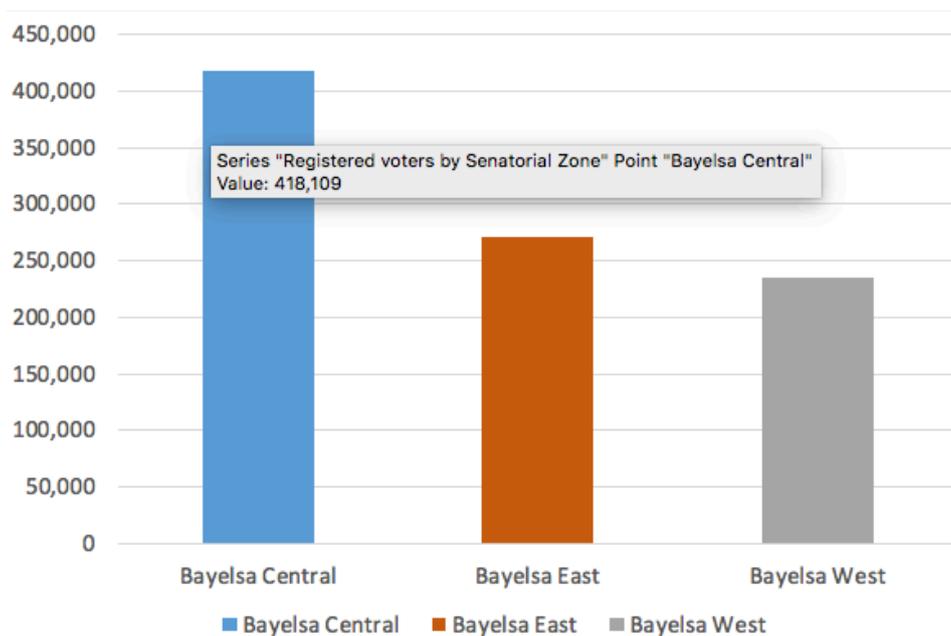
## Registered Voters

**Figure 3: Registered Voters by LGAs for 2019**



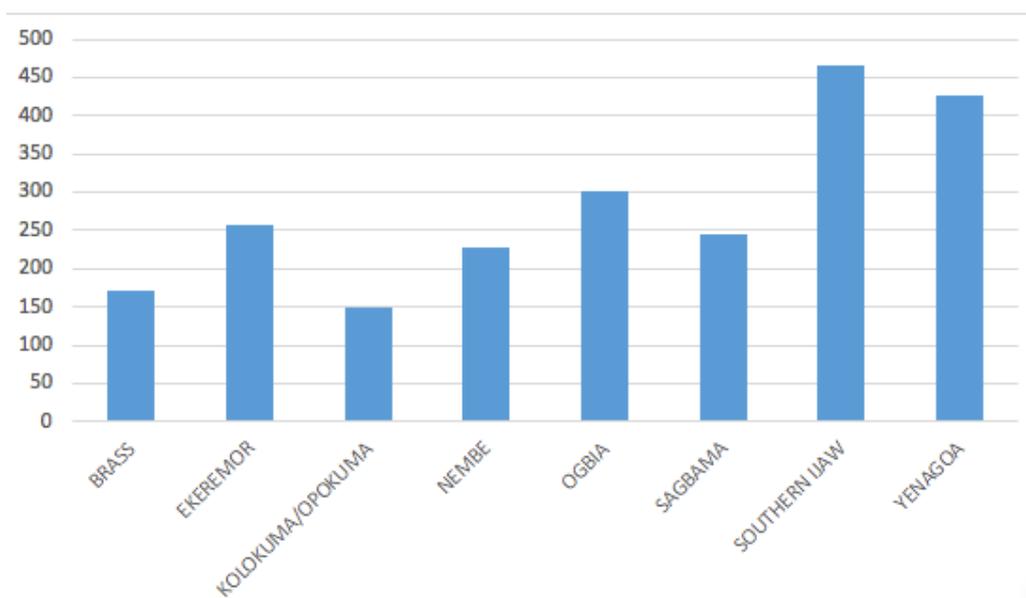
A total of 923,182 eligible voters were registered in 2019. The details are: Brass LGA (67804); Ekeremor LGA (125189); Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA (52765); Nembe LGA (92717); Ogbia LGA (109903); Sagbama LGA (109460); Southern Ijaw LGA (165449); and Yenagoa LGA (199895). Analysis of the voting strength of the different LGAs shows that Yenagoa LGA has the highest number of registered voters. This is followed by Southern-Ijaw, Ekeremor, Ogbia and Sagbama LGAs. Together, these five hold a total of 709,896 or 76.9 percent of the total number of registered voters, making them the strategic LGAs for voter mobilization and engagements by political parties. This gives an idea of the LGAs that would be hot spots for the contest of votes by the political parties. Although Yenagoa LGA has the highest number of registered voters, several voters are non-indigenes who have very little stake in local elections except they are mobilized. Further analysis based on senatorial districts also suggests the pattern of mobilization and the voting strength of the different sub-groups in the state.

**Figure 4: Registered voters by senatorial zones for 2019**



The Izon speaking group that dominates the Central and western senatorial zones have a total voter population of 652,758 or 70.7 percent. The details for each zone are: Central Senatorial Zone (418,109); East Senatorial Zone (270,424); and West Senatorial Zone (234,649). This indicates how the proponents of zoning would mobilise votes. The distribution of voting points by LGAs (see Figure 3) further points to the possible pattern voter mobilization would take, just as it suggests the logistical challenges INEC would face. For example, Southern-Ijaw LGA has the highest number of voting points despite the difficulties associated with transportation.

**Figure 5: Distribution of Voting Points by LGAs**



Source: Adapted from INEC, 2011

### Stronghold of Political Parties

Bayelsa State has the APC and PDP as the dominant political parties. Since 1999, PDP has dominated the political scene, having won all gubernatorial elections and also controlled the House of Assembly. Similarly, the PDP has won nearly all seats into the Senate and House of Representatives since 1999. Presently, it is the party in power, and has become an entrenched incumbent that requires a strong and tactful challenger to beat. Its control of all tiers of government in the state, and the multiple and numerous political offices its members occupy gives it an advantage in the mobilisation of support, particularly at the grassroots. The control of the state machinery and the access to state finances and institutions such as the media gives it an advantage over other political parties. However, the emergence of the APC in the state in 2015 and the outcome of the 2019 elections has whittled down the dominance of the PDP following the winning of one senatorial seat out of three, and two House of Representatives seats out of five by the APC. The APC also won four out of the 24 House of Assembly seats. It is therefore imperative to explore the strongholds of the parties in order to provide a guide for election outcome and interventions for peaceful and best practice elections. The results of the 2019 National Assembly election results are used here as the basis of analysis.

**Table 5: 2019 Senatorial Elections Result**

Senatorial District	Candidate	Party	Votes	% of Total Votes scored by APC and PDP

Bayelsa East	Biobarakuma Degi-Eremienyo	APC	43,303	57.2
	Blessing Izagara	PDP	32,363	42.8
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>75,666</b>	<b>100</b>
Bayelsa West	Matthew Karimo	APC	20,219	28.8
	Lawrence Erud-jakpor	PDP	49,912	71.2
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>70,131</b>	<b>100</b>
Bayelsa Central	Festus Daumiebi	APC	70,998	45.8
	Douye Diri	PDP	83,978	54.2
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>154,976</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Adapted from INEC, 2019, [www.inec.gov.ng](http://www.inec.gov.ng)

**Table 6: 2019 House of Representatives Election Results in Bayelsa State**

Federal Constituency	Candidate	Party	Votes	% of Total Votes scored by APC and PDP
Yenagoa-Kolokuma	Blankson Osomkime	APC	16,943	24.7
	Stephen Azaiki	PDP	51,639	75.3
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>68,582</b>	<b>100</b>

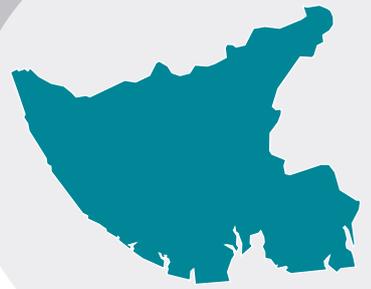
Ogbia	Samuel Ogbuku	APC	7,995	26.8
	Jude Rex-Ogbuku	ADC	9,805	32.8
	Fred Obua	PDP	12,048	40.4
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>29,848</b>	<b>100</b>
Southern Ijaw	Preye Oseke	APC	56,804	62.5
	Kombowei Benson	PDP	34,104	37.5
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>90,908</b>	<b>100</b>
Brass-Nembe	Israel Sunny-Goli	APC	41,150	68.1
	Marie Ebikake	PDP	19,279	31.9
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>60,429</b>	<b>100</b>
Ekeremor-Sagbama	Famous Daunemigha	APC	19,159	28.5
	Frederick Agbedi	PDP	48,076	71.5
<b>Total Votes scored by APC and PDP</b>			<b>67,235</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Adapted from INEC, 2019, [www.inec.gov.ng](http://www.inec.gov.ng)

The results suggest that the PDP is dominant in the House of Representatives elections respectively. The PDP and the APC however seem to have equal strength in both the Bayelsa Central and East senatorial districts. Whereas it is important to note that a number of factors including the personality of party candidates, vote buying and other forms of electoral malpractices, and partisan support or role of security operatives influence election outcome, the critical role of party supporters and voters cannot be overlooked. Based on this premise,

it would be proper to argue that the election results cited above provides a guide to the determination of the strongholds of the APC and PDP. Knowledge of this context is important for the determination of flash points /battle grounds for peace intervention and effective election observation.





# Tracking Conflict Dossiers for the 2019 Elections

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## Political Campaigns

The use of hate speech, fake news, blackmail and intemperate language is becoming a common feature of political gatherings, and it is expected to continue when campaigns begin. Descriptions such as core Ijaw, peripheral Ijaw, and outright insults such as “you are a criminal, bushman, uncivilized, cultist, etc. could become rallying points of mobilization that may pitch groups against each other.

## Party Primaries

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 are sign posts of possible violence.

**Table 7: List of PDP Aspirants**

S/N	Candidate	Local Government	Senatorial District
1.	Pastor Keniebi Okoko	Yenagoa	Central
2.	Great Joshua Maciver	Southern Ijaw	Central
3.	Dr. Franklin Osaisai	Southern Ijaw	Central

4.	Chief Ndutimi Alaibe	Kolokuma/Opokuma	Central
5.	Mr. Benson Agadaga	Ogbia	East
6.	Hon. Frederick Agbedi	Ekeremor	West
7.	Architect Reuben Okoya	Yenagoa	Central
8.	Senator Douye Diri	Kolokuma/Opokuma	Central
9.	Rt. Hon. Talford Ongolo	Southern Ijaw	Central
10.	Hon. Kemela Okara	Yenagoa	Central
11.	Rear Admiral Gboribiogha John Jonah (rtd)	Nembe	East
12.	Rt. Hon. Kombowei Benson	Southern Ijaw	Central
13.	Amb. ( Dr.) Godknows Igali	Southern Ijaw	Central
14.	Mr. Johnson Kiyaramo	Southern Ijaw	Central
15.	Senator Emmanuel Paulker	Yenagoa	Central
16.	Mrs. Tariela Oliver	Southern Ijaw	Central
17.	Barr. Anthony George-Ikoli	Ogbia	East
18.	Hon. Robinson Etolor	Ekeremor	West
19.	Dr. Nimibofa Ayawei	Southern Ijaw	Central
20.	Mr. David Alagoa	Nembe	East
21.	Mr. Tobin Igiri	Yenagoa	Central

The PDP held delegate elections for its party primaries scheduled for September 3rd, 2019 on Friday and Saturday 23rd and 24th August, 2019 respectively, and was characterised by gun shots, detonation of dynamites and protests by aggrieved sub-groupings within the party. Party faithful's have concerns that the party may experience crisis if the primaries are not managed

in a free and transparent manner. Three scenarios or possible outcomes have been suggested as follows:

1. Party factions may hold parallel congresses, and subsequently, the party may have multiple candidates that would make campaigns difficult;
2. Following one above, factions may head to the courts for a determination of who is the actual candidate of the party. This, many think would weaken the cohesion of the party ahead of the elections and possibly result in a defeat at the polls;
3. A faction or factions may use judicial intervention to restrain the party from conducting the primary election. Presently, the party has the following sub-groups – PDP Integrity Group, PDP Reformation Group, PDP Forward Movement with Bayelsa, and PDP Monitoring Group;
4. The primary election may be disrupted, and given that it is just two days away from the deadline issued by INEC for the conduct of primary elections by political parties, the PDP may not have a candidate to present for the elections. The PDP primary is scheduled for September 3rd, 2019, while the INEC deadline for the conduct of primary election is September 5th, 2019.
5. There could be mass defections from the PDP to other parties, particularly the APC. This may result to losing the election

The possibility of violence occurring as a result of these contestations is high due to the proliferation of arms and armed cult groups.

There is also anxiety and palpable tension in the APC over the mode of primary that should be adopted as party faithful's are divided over using direct or indirect method. Unlike the PDP, the APC has just six aspirants, the primary election earlier scheduled for August 29, 2019 has been shifted to August 31, 2019. The stakes are very high and the National Working Committee of the party has decided on the use of direct mode of primary; meaning that party faithfuls would gather in each of the 105 electoral wards to vote for an aspirant of their choice. The process and the outcome would be critical for the fortunes of the party.

**Table 8: List of APC Aspirants**

S/N	Candidates	Local Government	Senatorial District
1.	Mr. Preye Preye Aganaba	Kolokuma/Opokuma	Central
2.	Dr. Frankland Briyai**	Southern Ijaw	Central

1 \*\* Disqualified for not being a member of the party for a minimum period of one year

3.	Sen, Heineken Lokpobiri	Ekeremor	West
4.	Mr. David Lyon	Southern Ijaw	Central
5.	Mrs. Diseye Nsirim-Poweigha	Yenagoa	Central
6.	Prince Ebitimi Amgbare	Southern Ijaw	Central
7	Prof. Ongoebi Etebu	Kolokuma/Opokuma	Central

The decision of Chief Timipere Sylva (leader of the party in the state) not to contest the Governorship elections has thrown up new alignments and groupings. Reports that Chief Sylva has chosen one of the aspirants ( Chief David Lyon) has deepened cleavages within the party and reinforced the counter preferences for the direct or indirect mode of primaries. The emergence of Chief Sylva’s preferred aspirants as the party’s flagbearer would most likely be seen as an imposition with likely consequences of instability within the party. There are fears that defection, litigation, sabotage, development of apathy and anti-party activities by party members may undermine party cohesion and chances of winning the elections. The rancor among members of the APC makes the party primary vulnerable to violence.

### **Prevalence of Cultism**

The serene and idyllic lifestyle of communities in Bayelsa State has disappeared giving way for a pervading culture of violence. Crime rate in the communities has increased in recent years while some areas in the Yenagoa metropolis, the state capital, have become notorious for anti-social behaviours. Between Obele and Gwegwe streets behind Bishop Dimeari Grammar School (BDGS) Yenagoa , OMPADEC area in Amarata, Tombia Junction, Swali, Arietalin Road, among others, are known for cultism, gang wars and armed robbery. Rivalry among cult groups and the consequent violent attacks and counter attacks has made residents to live in constant fear. The ease with which residents are robbed and attacked in commercial vehicles and street corners with guns, and incidents of armed robbery with sophisticated weapons such as AK47 clearly suggests the availability of a market with violence as the commodity for politicians to patronise. The situation in Yenagoa is partly worsened by poor urban planning that inhibit the efforts of security agencies to properly prevent and fight crime.

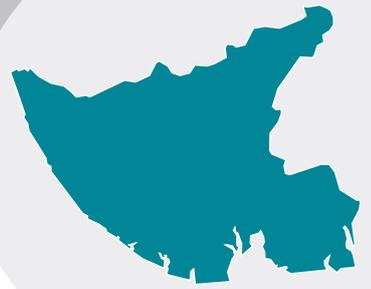
## **High rate of Drug Abuse/Use among Teenagers and Young Adults**

The use of hard/narcotic drugs is common place in Bayelsa State, as teenagers and young adults regularly abuse and use drugs such as Tramadol, Indian Hemp, and variety of mixtures with names such as “conquer mixture”, “seven keys to power”, “monkey tail”, etc. Given the established link between drug use and violence, this situation provides a fertile ground for violence.

## **The continuing relevance of Ex-Militant Groups**

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 Fighters, 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 People Salvation Front. Despite the amnesty programme, the structure of militant groups, loyalty to the leadership and patronage of members by leaders have remained intact. Because they possess arms, politicians easily mobilise them to pursue negotiated roles. In Bayelsa, ex-militant leaders are concentrated in the Southern-Ijaw LGA, a situation that contributed to the violence of the 2015 Governorship elections. This situation has not changed, it is very likely that they would be mobilised 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.





## Potential Challenges to the Election

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Similar to other elections held in the state, the 2019 Governorship election may face some challenges, and knowledge of these could help preemptive and remedial intervention by stake holders. Some are identified and discussed below.

### Poor Political Education

Poor knowledge of the electoral law and guidelines by electorates, aspirants, security operatives, and the media. This could disrupt the elections or make the processes ineffective.

### Equipment Failure and Poor Management of time or Logistics

Card Reader failure and possible disenfranchisement; inefficient distribution of electoral materials, missing electoral materials particularly result sheets and poorly trained and subsequently inefficient INEC ad-hoc staff.

### Electoral Fraud

Collusion between party agents and INEC ad-hoc staff to manipulate voting and election results at the point of collation. There are different modes of election in Nigeria that are widely practised in Bayelsa State.

**Table 9: Modes of Election Rigging in Nigeria obtainable in Bayelsa State**

Polling-Day Rigging	Post-Election Rigging
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaboration between polling officials and political parties to subvert electoral rules. For example, distribution of fake result sheets.</li> <li>2. Late or non-supply of election materials to opposition strongholds</li> <li>3. Delay in opening polling centers located in opposition strongholds</li> <li>4. Stuffing of ballot boxes</li> <li>5. Under-Age Voting</li> <li>6. Multiple voting</li> <li>7. Inducement of voters with money, food and other items</li> <li>8. Threatening voters with violence</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Destruction of or refusal to count ballots from opposition strongholds</li> <li>2. Changing results between voting centers and collation centers</li> <li>3. Declaration of false results</li> <li>4. Annulment of elections in situations where the results are unacceptable to incumbents or other parties</li> </ol>

Source: Adapted from Ibrahim, 2006, p.13

The commoditisation of the electoral process is very prominent in Bayelsa State as vote buying is ubiquitous during elections. In the 2015 Governorship elections, voters received between N500.00 to N30,000.00 to vote for a candidate. Similarly, Electoral officials were paid various sums of money by candidates and their parties in the following order: Assistant Presiding Officer (N20, 000.00); Presiding Officer (N30, 000.00); Supervising Presiding Officer (N150, 000.00) and Returning Officer (N 300,000.00). In like manner, political parties and candidates distributed different sums of money to community leaders and party leaders at the ward level. The sums paid ranged from N150,000.00 to N1.3 million to every electoral ward. Also, some candidates paid party agents of their opponents the sum N10, 000.00 to N15, 000.00 in order to compromise them. Such payments which are likely to recur in the 2019 elections, results in compromises and breach of electoral guidelines, thus undermining the transparency and credibility of elections. The announcement of results which are not in sync with reality most often results in protests and sometimes violence

## Logistics

Due to the difficult geographical terrain and the associated challenges with marine transportation, the transportation of men and materials may be hampered if proper arrangements are not made. Late arrival and hijack of materials may disrupt elections in some areas if INEC depends on individuals to provide boats as was the case in previous elections.

## Security Operatives

Security operatives on election duty are governed by a code of conduct and strict adherence to it helps to ensure that elections are transparent and free of violence. Where the code of ethics is breached, as is expected in the upcoming elections, it would be disruptive and subsequently undermine the integrity of the elections.





## Flash Points to Watch

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Since 1999, elections in Bayelsa State have almost always been violent, as politicians and political thugs engage each other in violent confrontation; or attack INEC officials to hijack electoral materials or results. Table 9 below explores some flash points based on previous cases of violence and disruption of elections.

**Table 10: Possible Flash Points for the 2019 Governorship Elections**

LGA	Likely Flash Point
Brass	Twon-Brsass Okpoma Ewoama
Ekeremor	Ekeremor main town Aleibiri Egbemo-Angalabiri
Kolokuma/Opokuma	NIL
Nembe	Bassambiri Oluasiri

Ogbia	Otuokpoti Otuasega Imiringi
Sagbama	Sagbama main town
Southern-Ijaw	Olugbobiri Olugboboro Amassoma Korokorose Ekowe Azuzuama Peremabiri Aguobiri Amatolo Oweikorogha Otuan
Yenagoa	Opolo Ogbogoro Famgbe Swali Ovom

### Post-Election Responses

The post-election period in Bayelsa State has almost always been peaceful as candidates and parties who lose elections always resort to litigation to address their grievances. When once the courts give their verdict, some retire home while others re-align to get involved with the government of the day. However, crime rate and inter-cult rivalry may be on the increase as with other post-election periods if thugs are armed for the election. The Arming of thugs would most likely result in the proliferation of armed gangs and cult groups



# Recommendation and Conclusion

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## Recommendation

Based on the above discourse, the realities in the state and available time for preparing for the elections, the following are suggested for consideration as policy issues:-

1. The promotion of adequate political education and socialisation to enlighten electorates on the electoral law, procedures and guidelines. This should be the primary responsibility of INEC and the political parties, supported by civil society organisations. Socio-cultural organisations such as the Ijaw National Congress, Ijaw Youth Council, Oguan Congress, among others can also play critical roles. The essentials of this education should be on the responsibilities and obligations of citizens which include the right to vote and requirement to report corruption and breach of the law; the voting procedures and declaration/transmission of results, use of the Card Reader; what constitutes an electoral offence and the penalties; the linkage between voting rights, good governance and economic well-being of citizens, the dangers of electoral violence and necessity of peaceful elections; and the dangers of mobilizing ethnic power to win elections. An effective political education can help to steer some persons away from negative actions that may impact negatively on the elections. Given the short time left for the elections, methods such as peace rallies and campaigns, radio dialogue, and live town hall meetings on radio can be organized. Role models and elites in different strata of society and human endeavor can be mobilized to support the process. Hand bills, banners, T-Shirts and caps can be used as vehicles for information dissemination.
2. Adequate security arrangements should be made to secure men and materials. In previous elections, security was largely focused on the water ways; thus leaving the communities with little or no security presence. Political thugs took advantage of this to perpetrate

electoral fraud. Deployment of security operatives should adequately cover both the water ways and communities so as to counter this trend.

3. To avoid the mass hijacking of electoral materials, INEC should deploy materials to electoral wards. This means that materials would be deployed from 105 centers and thus avoid the concentration of materials in a particular area.
4. The training of ad-hoc staff should be done for a continuous period of at least two months to ensure proper training and competence. Ad-hoc staff should be drawn from a pool that satisfactorily pass competence test based on job content and integrity. Also security profiling of prospective ad-hoc staff would be useful.
5. The hijack of electoral officers and materials mostly occur mainly in the former domains of militant groups. Therefore, these areas, particularly in Southern-Ijaw, Brass, Ekeremor and Nembe LGAs should be given special security coverage.
6. INEC should explore using boats owned by the marine division of the Nigerian Police and Nigerian Navy, and helicopters to convey men and materials to the swamp/riverine communities. Hiring private boats would not help as most of the owners have partisan political interests. Similarly, INEC should explore using vehicles owned by the Armed Forces and Police for the transportation of men and materials. Whereas this appear clumsy, it would help as it is expected that political thugs of all shades would be hired from the two neighbouring states of Rivers and Delta where cultists and ex-militants are also concentrated. The use of private vehicles owned by partisan individuals or transportation companies may likely compromise the integrity of the elections. This suggestion would not be out of place given the fact that it is a standalone election, against the back drop of the "warfare" experience of the 2015 Governorship elections.

It is expected that implementing these recommendations would have challenges, given the short time left for the election, and entrenched culture of cheating and violence that characterizes elections in the state. Nonetheless, visible changes would be noticed if all the suggestions are actualised.



## Conclusion

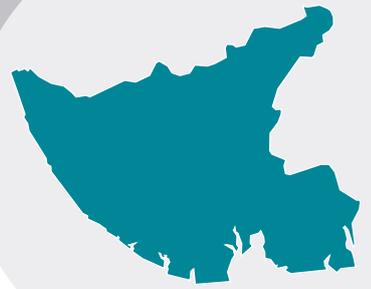
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This report examines the socio-political context of the 2019 Governorship elections in Bayelsa State. The analysis notes the difficult geographical terrain of the state and the challenges posed to the conduct of elections and the work of security agencies. The terrain it observes add to the logistic problems of INEC as boats are usually in short supply on election day, thus hampering the quick and effective distribution of men and materials. In like manner, the terrain makes INEC staff vulnerable to compromise, just as it makes it difficult for security operatives to have access to communities where electoral fraud is perpetrated. The long travel hours on water and insecurity in the water ways made worse by sea piracy exacerbates the security concerns pertaining to INEC and the free and fair conduct of elections.

Furthermore, the multi-ethnic composition of the state, defined by dialectical differences in the language spoken is usually mobilised for election, creating divisions and tensions that undermine the stability of the state and electoral process. This report also highlights the electoral map of the state in terms of the distribution of registered voters by LGAs and senatorial districts, political constituencies, voting points and stronghold of political parties. The potential challenges to the election are also highlighted. In addition to violence, which is significantly influenced by the conflict environment due to the progression of oil-related conflicts from simple protests to armed confrontation led by militia groups, the report notes political campaigns and the associated hate speeches and intemperate utterances, contentious political party primaries, high rate of cultism and drug abuse, and the continuing relevance of ex-militant leaders and supporters as the dossiers of potential conflict that require attention.

The potential challenges to the elections also came into focus, and a number of factors are identified. These include poor political education; failure of Card Readers; the commoditization of the electoral process and associated compromise of electoral officials and manipulation of election outcomes; difficulty in transporting election materials/INEC staff and the disruptive effects on elections; and the unprofessional conduct of security personnel on election duty. The possible post-election environment was highlighted and projected to be free, just as possible flash points were identified for attention.





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### **About Situation Room**

PLAC hosts the secretariat of the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room and is a member of its steering committee. The Situation Room provides a co-ordinating platform for civil society engagement on governance issues. It is also a platform for information sharing among civil society groups working on elections and topical national issues. It intervenes in the electoral process by promoting collaboration, proactive advocacy and rapid response to crisis in the electoral process. The Situation Room provides a forum of advance planning, scenario building, evidence based analysis, constructive engagement with various stakeholders in the electoral process and observation of elections.

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