

Political Party Conflicts in the Niger Delta and the Approaches in Managing these Conflicts by the State Security Service

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Abstract

Conflicts in the Niger Delta have been occurring as far back as the pre-colonial period and the early 1960s, but political conflicts assumed a notorious dimension particularly since the fourth republic in 1999 when the region became highly mobilized thus resulting in the deaths of high-profile politicians. The focus of the research was the investigation of the various causes of intraparty and interparty conflicts in the two dominant parties in the region (the Peoples Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress) and other stakeholders, exploiting the frustration aggression theory. The study showed the major causes of political party conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta region as selfish interest, excessive greed, lack of internal democracy, corruption and quest to remain in power by the politicians' contesting elections, those angling for power struggle and in a quest to dominate opponents by whatever costs. The result show that the State Security Service a key member of the state security architecture) has managed political conflicts through strategic management of key actors, conflict prevention, reduction, and control through intelligence gathering, prosecution of offenders, police intervention and conflict management as well as maintaining law and order during party meetings and gatherings. In doing this, the agency adopts conflict management approaches which include invitations, inclusive mediation, arrests, investigation, and prosecution to ensure offenders are brought to justice. Successes achieved through these efforts have given confidence to citizens in the region that their safety is being prioritized by the government agency.

Keywords: Political Party, Conflicts, Approaches, Managing Conflicts, Niger Delta, State Security Service.

Background to the Study

The Niger Delta lies within the lower beds of River Niger, with the delta crisscrossing the creeks and mangrove forest. The area is inhabited by about forty (40) ethnic groups speaking about two hundred and fifty (250) different dialects. These ethnic groups include the Efik, Bini, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Yoruba, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwani, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni etc. The Niger Delta has experienced different waves of conflicts, leading to large-scale violence at different times since the discovery of Oil in marketable quantities in the 1950s. Coser (1956) sees conflict as the struggle over values, claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the opposing parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals. Conflicts may take different forms: human, ethnic, religious, resource, political and civil but the most dominant cutting across all communities is political. Party conflict refers to contradictions arising from individual or group differences in terms of interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations, and precipitous tendencies of their members. These contradictions can be inherent, visible/invisible, insipient, factional, or based on social, economic, ethnicity, religious or demographic pillars which are shared values of a sect.

Okiki (2008) reports that "Conflict" is derived from a Latin root word termed 'confligere', which means "to strike together". The modern-day interpretation of conflict includes debate, argument, contest, disagreement, struggle, state of unrest, turmoil, or chaos. dispute or quarrel. Nwolise (2004) argued that "conflict can be caused by other factors such as a dispute over inheritance, land, boundaries, bunkering, citizenship rights, greed, predatory rule, autocracy, dictatorship, alienation, ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance, illiteracy, infrastructural decay, poverty, debt, unemployment and many more can be a great cause of conflict, as unresolved grievances, territorial ownership, chieftaincy titles, sex matters as they concern wife or daughter and family properties are all causes of conflict in traditional African societies. Olaoba (2002) argued that "conflict can be caused by several factors including, clashes of personality, a confrontation between man and his community, and inter-community". Furthermore, he believed that the pursuit of values and claims to scarce resources, power and status are a potential stimulus to conflict.

Yahaya (2020) has reported that conflicts in the Niger Delta have been occurring as far back as the pre-colonial period and the early 1960s when there were protests against the marginalization of the region. In the early 1990s, there were also non-violent protests in Ogoniland against the degradation of the environment by Oil companies. After this series of uprisings, a new wave of protests characterized by militancy began in 2003. Violence during this period grew out of the political campaigns in 2003. As they competed for office, politicians in Rivers State manipulated the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), led by Ateke Tom, and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo, and used these groups to advance their aspirations, often rewarding gang members for acts of political violence and intimidation against their opponents (Bekoe, 2005).

Rossiasco (2011) has decried the paradox of poor human and social development of the Niger delta in an environment of riches. The region's abundant natural resources, especially its oil, offer a potential foundation for development and prosperity. Instead, while providing Nigeria with most of its wealth, the delta remains underdeveloped and afflicted by conflict and violence. A national debate over how to share oil revenue between federal, state, and local levels, and between oil-producing and non-producing states remains an ongoing point of political contention. The proceeds of Nigeria's oil production have increasingly fed corruption, violence, and the associated militarization of political and civic life. In nearly all cases, these conflicts are a fallout of political pursuit, resource control, economic and social disparities, extreme poverty, individual economic stagnation, poor government services, high unemployment, environmental degradation, gender inequality, unequal distribution of power, climate crisis, ethnical tensions, genocides, and power struggles within different societies.

Although there has been a focus on communal insecurity/violence, interethnic conflagrations, host communities and oil companies' conflicts but little attention has been paid to political conflicts. On most occasions, what is most reported are incidents of political violence which are only asymptotic of political conflicts. Conflict has a multiplicity of definitions, but they all point to the same thing. Francis (2006) defines it as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups; for Oquaye (1995), it is the sequence of interactions between groups in society, between groups and governments, and between individuals. Otiye (1999) views conflict as a natural announcement of an impending reclassification of society with changed characteristics and goals with new circumstances of survival and continuity, and this entails struggle, competition and rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach value, which could be material or non-material.

Ibeanu (2006) examined the trajectory of political conflicts, especially conflicts linked to party politics, and concluded that a contest for political power, which is expected to be free, fair, and open in a democracy, has become a major source of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. It is estimated that over 30,000 people have died in gang violence and property worth hundreds of millions of figures from the Niger Delta since 2003, including Dr. Marshall Harry in March 2003 and Chief A.K. Dikibo in February 2004, both top politicians of Niger Delta origin, have been emblematic of widespread political violence in the region. Igwe and Amadi (2021) have observed that there has been political violence arising from militia groups such as the defunct militant groups in the Niger Delta, South-South, Nigeria, and in Ogoni in the mid-1990s, violent clashes led to the killing of nine Ogoni political leaders believed to be ‘vultures’ or saboteurs (pro federal government and oil multinationals), through massive youth uprising. The violent crisis resulted in the arrest and execution by the hanging of Ogoni 9 and execution by the hanging of Ogoni environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa by the federal military government headed by General Abacha in 1995.

Conflict is a precursor to insecurity. According to Ishola (2022), insecurity is a major concern for everybody in Nigeria and this has created a lot of fear and uncertainty in the society. Every region in the country is battling with various challenges of insecurity (Mahmoud & Madori, 2013) which include the activities of Boko Haram in which millions of lives have been lost and the increasing cases of kidnapping. In the last eighteen years, the Federal Government earmarked not less than N10 trillion for the defense of the territorial integrity and internal security of the nation (Falana, 2010). The various state governments equally allocated hundreds of billions of Naira to law and order. In fact, individual citizens and communities pay levies and salaries to young men and women engaged to secure them and their properties. In spite of the huge funds spent on security, it is common knowledge that the country is currently grappling with the menace of kidnapping, hostage-taking, terrorism and armed robbery.

Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2017) has advanced the opinion that previous methods of conflict management in Nigeria have been adversarial, such that communication between the various stakeholders has been tactical and withholding, argumentative, fault-finding and blame-trading. This evidently shows that political structures and functions usually follow such pre-existing fault lines which invariably influence the nature, composition, structure, and functions of the political parties (Aleyomi, 2014). The study is an attempt to further research into political parties’ conflicts in the Niger Delta and deeply investigate the state security architecture’s role, particularly the State Security Service in the management of conflicts of political parties in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Egboh and Aniche (2012) have noted that the nature or character of post-independence elections in Nigeria can be classified into two which are, one, elections of transition from civilian rule to civilian rule, and two, elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule. The elections of transition from civilian rule to civilian rule in 1964/1965, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 were generally characterized by electoral malpractices, violence, ethnic slurs (profiling), inter-party conflicts, electoral petitions, emasculation of opposition parties, post-elections carpet-crossing / defections and incumbency factor sometimes with the military providing covert assistance to the ruling party.

Interparty conflicts manifest in various ways and dimensions, and this may include candidates who won the election under a party and decamping to another party or those who lost elections or

nomination in one party decamping to another party to realise or pursue their ambitions. This phenomenon has been described by Ibrahim and Abubakar (2015) as worrisome to the development of democracy in Nigeria based on the occurrence, dimension, multitude, and impact of intra-party disputations. This is because Nigerian political parties are not driven by party manifesto but by candidate work plans. Everybody's plot is to access power and or influence for personal reasons. There is no party man but there are variegated interests of individuals and groups which oftentimes clash and cause confusion within political parties in Nigeria.

The non-adherence to the zoning arrangement by the PDP members has also led to conflicts in the party. It has led to division and crisis between the North and south at national level and between contending senatorial districts at state levels. The breach of this agreement was a bone of contention in the PDP prior to the presidential primaries of the 2023 election where Alhaji Atiku Abubakar participated obtained the ticket, beating his closest rival, Hon. Ezenwo Nyeso Wike, the then executive governor of Rivers state. The contestations for the gubernatorial tickets in Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Rivers and Delta states have also been under severe contention due to politics of imposition and lack of respect for fairness, justice, and equity.

The struggle for political supremacy has created both intraparty and interparty conflicts. Since the fourth republic began in 1999, the Niger Delta politics has been dominated by the Peoples Democratic Party and the prevailing political conflict was largely intraparty. However, the All Progressives Congress (APC), an amalgam of several political parties (Action Peoples Congress, All Peoples Party, (APP), United Nigeria Peoples Party, (UNPP), All Nigeria Peoples Party, (ANPP), Action Congress of Nigeria, (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change, (CPC) and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, (APGA)) started gaining prominence in the region. These various groups constituted beds of strange fellows which created internal fault lines as each of them struggled to control the internal dynamics of the party.

In conflict situations, members of a political party experience frustration when an individual's behavioral sequence to obtaining a goal is interrupted or prohibited. Such goals could be an election as a delegate, being a flag bearer to an elective office, denial to hold party positions or being marginalized from participating in party functions. These profound cases have created conflicts within political parties, with an ultimate goal by their members directed at winning and holding on to power or political office at all costs.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to empirically examine the extent to which state security architecture manages conflicts of political parties in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Explore the causes of political conflicts in the Niger Delta
- ii. Investigate the approaches to managing political conflicts by the State Security architecture.
- iii. Interrogate the level of synergy between the Nigerian Police, the State Security Service and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps in managing conflicts between political parties.

Conceptual Prologue of Political Conflicts

Okiki (2008) reports that "Conflict" is derived from a Latin root word termed 'confligere', which means "to strike together". The modern-day interpretation of conflict includes debate, argument, contest, disagreement, struggle, state of unrest, turmoil, or chaos. dispute or quarrel. Nwolise (2004) argued that "conflict can be caused by other factors such as a dispute over inheritance, land,

boundaries, bunkering, citizenship rights, greed, predatory rule, autocracy, dictatorship, alienation, ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance, illiteracy, infrastructural decay, poverty, debt, unemployment and many more can be a great cause of conflict, as unresolved grievances, territorial ownership, chieftaincy titles, sex matters as they concern wife or daughter and family properties are all causes of conflict in traditional African societies. Olaoba (2002) argued that “conflict can be caused by several factors including, clashes of personality, a confrontation between man and his community, and inter-community” furthermore, he believed that the pursuit of values and claims to scarce resources, power and status is a potential stimulus to conflict.

Perhaps, a more comprehensive definition of the concept of conflict is that given by Miller (2005) as a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends (which) may be either manifest, recognisable through actions or behaviours, or latent, in which case it remains dormant for some time, as incompatibilities are unarticulated or are built into systems or such institutional arrangements as governments, corporations, or even civil society. Conflicts can be expressed in various ways – physical assault on persons, property, accusations, threats etc. It might also not be expressed overtly as denial and avoidance.

Odunayo (2021) observed that intra-party conflicts existed in Nigeria before the fourth republic and have been a permanent feature among political parties in Nigeria to date. Obiora and Chiamogu (2020) defined intra-party conflict as the situation that arises as a result of irreconcilable interests which drives members of a political party to access, use and or consolidate vantage public positions and their lucre to themselves and this situation arises mainly from party nominations/primary elections (candidate recruitment) but not limited to it. In appropriating these vantage positions, party chieftains and financiers who are in pursuit of influence on government see the political party as possible platform for beating the inter-party competition and throw in wealth for party programs to later recoup their investments which result in hard decisions for emergent governments in the selection and appointment of cabinet and other officers. According to Eme (2011), an intra-party crisis can be seen as a period of great distress, trouble and pain created in a political party due to the failure of the party concerned to provide solutions and effectively reunite its internal disagreements or conflicts.

Theorizing Political Party Conflicts

Political party dispute/conflict is used in describing a situation in which at least two parties (individuals, groups) are involved, and who: i) strive for goals that are incompatible, to begin with or strive for the same goal, which, can only be reached by one party; and/or ii) want to employ incompatible means to achieve a certain goal within the context of a political party." (Lund, 1997, Galtung, 1996, Zartman, 1985). Agbaje (2004) defines a political party as a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture, and retention for as long as democratically feasible of government and its office. In another breath, In the same direction, Wilson (2010) defines a political party as a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office by supplying them with a label; a party identification by which they are known to the electorate. The views of Agbaje and of Wilson are similar in the sense that, they both refer to a political party as any group that seeks to elect candidates to public office in a democratic setting.

Nigeria's experience with party politics dates to the colonial time (Aristotle, 2012, Babatope, 2012), and party politics in the country is replete with rigging, schisms, thuggery, bribery, corruption,

violence, and arson (Babatope, 2012, Tyoden, 2013). With the return to democratic rule on 29th May 1999, the most glaring influence on the nature of inter-party relations and conflicts in the current dispensation has been the mode of the emergence of the first three registered political parties; the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). These first set of registered political parties in 1998/1999 were said to be a child of necessity and were formed within the shortest transition program in the history of Nigeria (Ogundiya 2011). This goes further to affirm that when parties were forced to emerge, they usually tend to reflect such prevailing circumstances with no clear character or identity than just to win power and control the government (Tyoden, 2013).

Scarrow (2005) has indicated that conflicts within political parties can be largely intra-party or inter-party. Conflicts in political parties in the Niger Delta can be largely be traced to the struggle to control the political structures of the party, control the decision-making apparatus of the party, power to appoint party officers, and congress members and nominate loyal members as flag bearers during elections, to work for individuals of their choice to win elections, thwart the efforts of their opponents or enemies to ensure their defeat, appoint loyal party members into executive positions, accumulate and appropriate benefits/booties of election victories to advance their personal interests and generally control the resource machinery of the party.

These conflicts snowball into verbal/physical attacks, forceful abductions, assassinations, switches, decamping, dumping, litigations, denigration, splits, factions, opposition, defections, etc. The study of this occurrence will be examined against the background of prevailing political forces that are at play in both intraparty and interparty frameworks in the Niger Delta. Oche (2000) identifies these conflicts as incompatibility in a multi-party or multi-issue situation, describing it as a state of affairs in which two or more irreconcilable views or opinions are posited toward the solution of a particular problem. This description of the conflict seems to explain the reasons for contention between feuding party members who are in a state of competition and contest for the acquisition of the end that would not be of many benefits to the other.

State Security Architecture in Nigeria: The State Security Service (SSS)

The State Security Service (SSS) was formed after the dissolution of the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) following the issuance of Decree Number 19 by the Babangida administration in June 1986. Earlier, the Nigerian Security Organisation was established as a secret service organisation in 1976 and was generally believed that the police and the various security branches of the armed forces were capable of maintaining political stability and public security. Under this law, the NSO was split into three agencies each with its own mandate. The three agencies are the Defence Intelligence Agency, (DIA), with the responsibility to detect and prevent crimes of a military nature against the security of Nigeria and to protect and preserve all military classified matters concerning the security of Nigeria both within and outside the country. The National Intelligence Agency, (NIA), is responsible for the general maintenance of the security of Nigeria outside the country in matters that are related to military issues particularly on issues pertaining to intelligence outside Nigeria. The State Security Service, (SSS), is charged with the task of detecting and preventing within Nigeria any crime against the internal security of Nigeria and the protection and preservation of all non-military classified matters concerning the internal security of Nigeria.

Ugochukwu (1997) posits that the National Security Decree ostensibly transferred the mandate of the then NSO to the State Security Service, as their functions were similar. The activities of the SSS cover all plans, acts and schemes that threaten the security of the state. These include (i) obtain by secret sources or other means accurate intelligence regarding persons or organisations whether within or outside Nigeria, engaged in acts of espionage, subversion, or sabotage against Nigeria, or engaged in acts which may threaten the security of Nigeria; (ii) Identify and where appropriate apprehend or assist in the apprehension of persons believed to have committed any crime against the security of Nigeria; (iii) Collect, collate, assess, and disseminate intelligence information affecting Nigeria's state security and the maintenance of public order; (iv) Detect and investigate all acts of subversion, espionage, and sabotage against the country; (v) Maintain records of individuals and organisations engaging in subversive activities; (vi) Investigate the reliability of persons who may have access to classified information or material and who may be employed in sensitive or scheduled posts; (vii) Advise and assist in the implementation of protective security measures in government establishments and sensitive installations; and (viii) Provide personal security to very important personalities.

Literature Review/theoretical framework

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The frustration-aggression theory is associated with the works of Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears (1939), the core assumption of which is that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration”. The authors argued that individuals are motivated to achieve life ambitions and fulfill destiny, but when these expectations are thwarted, frustration sets in. In their line of thought, the occurrence of aggressive behaviour presupposes the existence of frustration; and that “the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression”. Frustration occurs when an individual striving to obtain a goal experience an interruption that conflicts with the attainment of that goal.

Frustration is posited to occur when an individual's behavioral sequence to obtaining a goal is interrupted or prohibited. If no substitute exists for obtaining the valued goal or outcome, the individual's frustration may elicit an aggressive action (Dollard et al., 1939). The extent to which an aggressive response will be provoked by one's frustration directly varies with the level of punishment anticipated for the aggressive act. Aggression may develop because of having been exposed to an extremely frustrating condition sufficient to provoke the experience of hopelessness. It is noteworthy that deliberately blocking goal progression will likely produce a more direct aggressive response, particularly retaliation towards the source of frustration.

Assessment of Interparty and Intraparty Conflict in the Niger Delta

Conflicts within political parties can either be interparty or intraparty. Nmomo (2013) has created a distinction between intraparty and interparty conflict. He defined intra-Party Conflict as a conflict within a given political party where members struggle for the limited social value within the group in terms of prestige, wealth, positions even recognition and usually caused by some element of usurpation, tight-handedness, unnecessary rigidity of party lords over members, greed, and some other personal idiosyncrasies of leaders. Most of these struggles are on the selfish grounds, sometimes collective but are carried out through the processes of sycophancy, name-calling,

sabotage, sell-outs, and other negative behaviours in order to be noticed, settled or destroy the collective gain of the party.

On the other hand, he explained inter-Party Conflict to mean a conflict between two or more political parties arising from differences in formation, leadership, manifestoes and ideologies who are competing to control the state in a democratic setup. The differences serve as the springboard for individual ambition, factionalism, ethnic and religious bigotry, a crisis of confidence and finally the quest for power control. It is the inter-party conflict that makes democracy possible and thick, thus these variegated groups wearing different ideological colours that come together to form parties. Essentially, Intra-Party Conflict is a conflict within a given political party where the group dynamics create imbalances thereby affecting the individuals, their psychological and the decision-making process. It is the usual natural conflict of human beings to struggle for that limited social value within the group in terms of prestige, wealth, position even recognition. One of the major problems of intra-party conflict is the idea of trying to cast everybody or member into one mold, philosophy, or belief.

Inter-Party Conflict occurs between two or more parties where each group builds up its preferences against the other/s. Inter-Party Conflict is an obvious, expected conflict because of differences in formation, leadership, manifestoes and ideologies competing to control the state in a democratic setup. The differences serve as a springboard for individual ambition, factionalism, ethnic and religious bigotry, a crisis of confidence and finally the quest for power control. It is the inter-party conflict that makes democracy possible and thick, thus these variegated groups wearing different ideological colours that come together to form parties. Given the internal dynamics of the parties, and the inherent ideological contradictions, political observers do predict inevitable conflict in party formations. Office and policy are the two main objectives of inter-party conflicts in coalitions and the likelihood a party must achieve its own goals depends on the distribution of the aforementioned resources. Office conflicts can be “qualitative” (who gets what) or “quantitative” (who gets how much). They appear both during government formation and later.

The internal processes of party politics are riddled with all shades of scheming that often entrench bitterness, alienation, distrust, decamping and assassination. When this happens, aggrieved party members resort to litigation as a means of addressing perceived irregularities. Gradually but inevitably, the process of litigation has structured and conditioned the way political disputes are managed. It is common to see aggrieved party members scouting for evidence by taking pictures of perceived irregularities with the caveat ‘we will meet in court’. The mentality that the court holds the key to the management of party disputes has not only challenged the optimal functionality of political parties but threatened the democratic and governance processes generally. The process of litigation has unwittingly provided the framework for protracted and sustained party disputes leaving in its trail weak political parties without internal cohesion, damaged interpersonal relationships, financially drained litigants, suspicion, and distrust. The true winner in the process of litigation is always the attorney, whose primary evidence of victory is the judgement delivered and his professional fee. The disputant who got judgement loses the relationship.

The Niger Delta has been largely associated with different kinds of conflicts. The earliest forms of these conflicts began with the social movement activities of Isaac Adaka Boro and of Ken Saro-Wiwa whose activities centred on the call for fair dealing in the resource allocation and administration in the Niger Delta. In describing the state of despoilation of the Niger Delta due to oil mining, Saro-Wiwa (1996) argued that twenty years after the civil war, the system of revenue

allocation, the development policies of successive Federal administrations and the insensitivity of the Nigerian elite have turned the delta and environs into an ecological disaster and dehumanized its inhabitants. He argued further that the notion that the oil-bearing areas can provide the revenue of the country and yet be denied a proper share of that revenue because it is perceived that the inhabitants of the area are few in numbers is unjust, immoral, unnatural, and ungodly. These were the primordial driving forces of several socio-economic crises that bedeviled the region. A summary of the political party conflict variants in the Niger Delta is shown below:

- Absence of politics of change and development. Oyeshile (2014) has posited that any politics that does not promote the well-being of the people would only promote political conflict. In the Niger Delta, the driving inordinate personal desires of the actors are to secure power for themselves and their cronies and not to develop the area. This lust for power and control of regional resources has been a key source of conflicts in the region.
- Massive corruption fueled by greed. Virtues like patriotic zeal and selfless service have been replaced by greed and extreme corruption tendencies. Adebajo (2006) has observed that this tendency of corruption fueled by greed rather than patriotism has resulted in the average Nigerian seeing governance and government as a vehicle for exploitation and self-aggrandizement. While the Nigerian populace craves for leadership to lift them out of economic and social doldrums, the political elites maintain mercantilism as their watchword and do everything in the hope of monetary gains and kickbacks.
- Godfatherism and money influence politics. Godfathers are powerful individuals who determine who, what, when and how things operate and are usually in the corridors of power. Many godfathers in present-day Nigeria operate like the mafia by displaying similar violent scheming and aggressive ‘politicking’ coupled with manipulating devices of having their way by any means. They rely on Machiavelli’s slogan, “the ends justify the means”. The illegal use of money in politics belongs to the realm of the godfather. Godfatherism has become a factor in Nigerian politics such that very few politicians can achieve success without the stalwart support of godfathers. In Nigeria, the desire of individuals to rule at all costs has sold political leadership to the highest bidders, as whopping sums of money are needed for electoral manipulation. Therefore, desperate politicians who wish to win elections usually seek after godfathers. The implication of this in Nigerian politics is that the country is yet to make appreciable progress in transparent governance because godfathers usually create setbacks, which hinder democratic growth and development in Nigeria. Uyi (2010) identified godfathers as a new “elitist” group that offer the services of their support to their “godson” only in anticipation of financial returns that are alarmingly huge and extravagant as opposed to that of their service to the people. Gillner (1979) has argued that this practice of paternalism is not recognized by the 1999 Constitution in Nigeria. It is also an aberration to the presidential system of government in practice in the country. It has therefore created numerous problems for the nation.
- Expression of democratic freedom. During the years of military dictatorship, communal clashes and ethnic conflicts were rather minimal because they were suppressed by military might. However, in the current democratic dispensation, every citizen tends to have more room and opportunity for self-expression, but at times, this right is often misunderstood as a vulgarity. The resultant effect is conflicts amongst the ethnic groups, tribes, kindred and even clans.
- Misuse of power of incumbency. Most party and government executives have applied all forms of tactics to overreach themselves and manipulate both electoral and policy provisions

to their advantage and those of their cronies against established guidelines and the generality of the interest of stakeholders.

- Absence of internal democracy. To the above, Okoye (2015) added wrongful and illegal substitution of candidates, mean use of the power of incumbency, division in political parties, the powers of the Independent National Electoral Commission to qualify and or disqualify the candidate and electoral irregularities and malfeasance.
- Lack of party ideology. What appears to be the dominant ideology of political parties in Nigeria is the craze for the primitive accumulation of wealth. Driven by this primitive tendency, party structures are personalised by the so-called 'godfathers'. These are party men who see politics not as a call to public service, but as a business enterprise. This coheres with the position of Yahaya and Ibrahim (2015) when they declared that the lack of ideology accounts for the reason why politics is seen as an avenue for the primitive accumulation of wealth in Nigeria and the incessant rate of cross-carpeting because of a clash of interest.

Methodology

The study population comprised of 40 individuals and the qualitative data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty (22) interested stakeholders and three (3) focus group discussion (FGDs) sessions. The participants in the study involved the state security architecture actors like the Nigeria Police, the Department of State Security (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) and political leaders/politicians, traditional rulers, religious and civil society organisations who are directly or indirectly involved in the management of political party conflict in the Niger Delta. The responses from all the participants were translated, coded and transferred into a big file in order to generate themes. The analysis was performed through queries that involved a number of continuous and thorough reviews of the interview data. Key words and phrases were identified, which were visualised through cloud. The aggregate data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to derive the themes for the proper interpretation of data. Based on analysis, the following higher-order themes were derived: Firstly, the causes of political conflicts in the Niger Delta (four subthemes) and secondly, the measures to strengthen state security architecture and effective management of conflicts in political parties (four subthemes).

Data Analysis

The research involved the State Security Service as a key member of the state security architecture and political leaders/politicians, traditional rulers, religious and civil society organisations who are directly or indirectly involved in the management of political party conflict in the Niger Delta. The participants provided their insight into the extent to which state security architecture supports the management of conflict of political parties in the Niger Delta and generated two higher order themes: 1) the causes of political conflicts in the Niger Delta (four subthemes); 2) the measures to strengthen state security architecture and effective management of conflicts in political parties (four subthemes). Each theme, and respective subthemes, are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes Developed from Coding That Fall under Specific Topics of Inquiry

	Themes	Sub-themes
RESERCH QUESTION 1	What are the causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta?	1. Selfish Interest and Excessive Greed 2. Lack of Internal Democracy 3. Corruption and Quest to Remain in Power 4. Power Struggle and Quest to Dominate Opponent
RESERCH QUESTION 2	What approaches are being used by the State Security Service in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta?	1. Strategic Management of Key Actors 2. Conflict Prevention, Reduction and Control through Intelligence Gathering
RESERCH QUESTION 3	To what extent does the level of synergy between the State Security Service, the Nigerian Police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps affect the ability to manage conflicts between political parties in the Niger Delta?	1. Need for Collaboration and Synergy among the Agencies 2. Transparency and Competency in Leadership

Source: Research Fieldwork, 2023

The research unraveled the causes of intraparty and interparty conflicts which manifests as personal differences, clash of socio-economic interest, lack of party discipline, the influence of money politics, the power of incumbency, godfatherism, instability and violence, and the failure of the party leaders to manage the afore mentioned factors despite the abundant resources in the region. Data obtained showed that participants consistently reported that the causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta are. selfish interest and excessive greed, corruption, and quest to remain in power, power struggle and quest to dominate the opponent, lack of Internal Democracy use of thugs during elections and the burning desire to win at all costs.

Table 2: What are the causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta?

THEME	Sub Themes	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
What are the causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta?	Selfish Interest and Excessive Greed	9	23%
	Power Struggle and Quest to Dominate Opponent	7	18%
	Corruption and Quest to Remain in Power	8	21%
	Winning at all costs	4	10%
	Use of thugs during elections	3	8%
	Lack of Internal Democracy	7	18%

Source: Fieldwork 2023

In aggregate terms as shown in Figure 1, the predominant drivers or causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta are selfish interest and excessive greed (23%), corruption, and quest to remain in power (21%), power struggle and quest to dominate the opponent (18%) and lack of Internal Democracy (18%), amongst others.

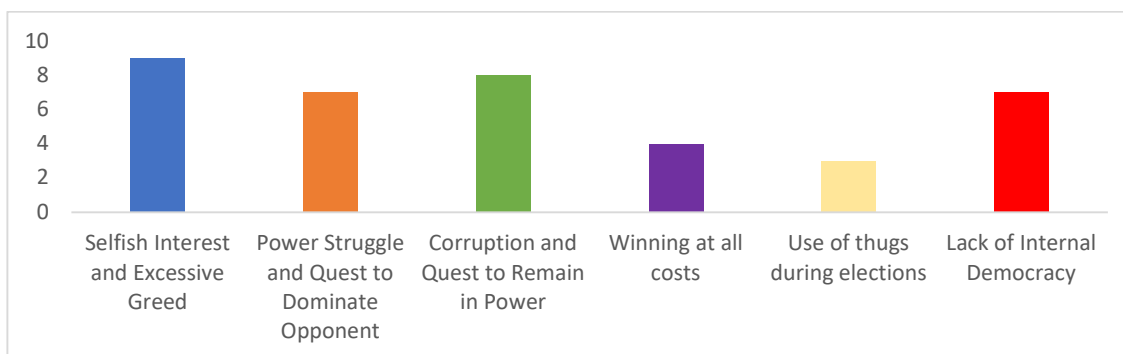


Figure 1: Showing the Frequency Distributions of causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta

In all the conflicts that have engulfed the region, these forces of attrition have shaped the types of crises witnessed in the region, thus leaving behind violence, bloody encounters, arson, deaths and destruction of properties.

Table 3: What approaches are being used by the State Security Service in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta?

THEME	Sub Themes	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
What approaches are being used by the State Security Service in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta?	Strategic Management of Key Actors	5	41%
	Regular Education of Voters	2	16%
	Effective Negotiation	1	8%
	Conflict Prevention, Reduction and Control through Intelligence Gathering	4	33%

Source: Fieldwork 2023

A variety of approaches are being employed in conflict management efforts by the Department of State Security Service. However, participants in this study reported that some of the strategies they used included bringing the conflicting parties together to establish a mutual agreement, compelling them to utilize previously established means of resolution or containment and deploying proactive intelligence mechanisms to prevent conflicts even before they occur.

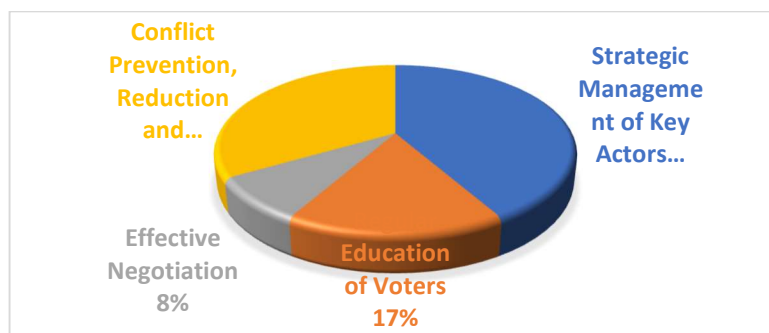


Figure 2: Showing Approaches Being Used by The State Security Service in Managing Political Conflicts In The Niger Delta

Table 3 contains sub-themes and categories related to utterances provided by participants as they explained the approaches that are being used by the Department of State Security Service in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta. According to the participants, the most significant approaches being used by the State Security Service in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta were 1. Strategic Management of Key Actors (41%), 2. Conflict Prevention, Reduction and Control through Intelligence Gathering (33%), 3. Regular Education of Voters (16%) and 4. Effective Negotiation (8%).

Table 4: The level of synergy between the State Security Service, the Nigeria Police, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps and how this affects the ability to manage conflicts between political parties in the Niger Delta

THEME	Sub Themes	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
The level of synergy between the State Security Service, the Nigerian Police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps affect the ability to manage conflicts between political parties in the Niger Delta	Need for Collaboration and Synergy among the Agencies	7	46%
	Proper Relationship Management	1	6%
	Transparency and Competency in Leadership	5	33%
	Better Understanding	2	13%

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Table 4 show that the emerging themes required to foster synergy based on the responses from the participants as, the Need for Collaboration and Synergy among the Agencies, Proper Relationship Management, Transparency and Competency in Leadership and Better Understanding. The need for Collaboration and Synergy among the Agencies had 7 occurrences representing 46%, Transparency and Competency in Leadership had 5 occurrences (33%), Better Understanding occurred 2 times (13%) and Proper Relationship Management had 1 occurrence (6%).

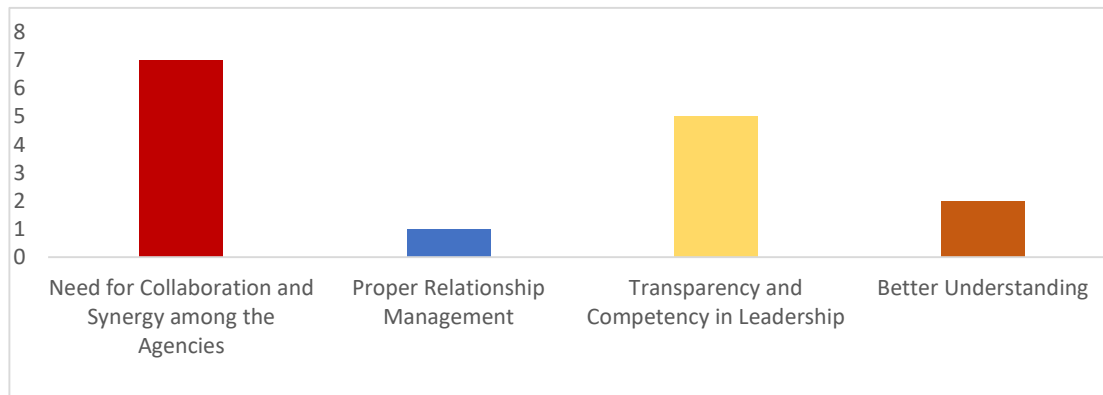


Figure 3: Showing frequency of the requirements to achieve synergy between the State Security Service and other agencies and how this affects the ability to manage conflicts between political parties in the Niger Delta

Discussion of findings

Insecurity of various forms has been a major challenge in the Niger Delta possibly due to several factors. Throughout the discussion, participants consistently reported that the causes of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta are selfish interest and excessive greed both from the party members and the people running for elective positions, who always want to undo themselves, and to do that they will step on someone else's toes, resulting in frustrations and provocation and this progresses until conflict unfolds. The study shows that a significant amount of the conflict was created by the politicians themselves.

The study also found that power struggle and the quest to dominate opponents are some of the main causes of conflict. Political parties are always in opposition with one another. For example, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) & the All Progressives Congress (APC), they are in opposition and are supposed to share different ideologies. Consequently, when these parties present two candidates contesting for one seat of power with different ideologies, there must be the clash of interests. One party will want to outsmart the other, and by so doing, conflict becomes inevitable. Most parties and executives of presiding governments either at state or federal levels have applied all forms of tactics to overreach themselves and manipulate both the electoral and party policy provisions to their advantage and those of their cronies, against established guidelines and the generality of the interest of stakeholders.

The lack of internal democracy was one of the causes of conflict in the management of the affairs of political parties. Lack of internal democracy is a form of internal incumbency factor within a party, which enables it to impose a candidate by giving incumbents automatic tickets or foisting party executives upon the party. In other words, it prevents the party from conducting credible primary elections, and such deepens the intra-party crisis. Political parties are made up of individuals with divergent opinions, values, interests and serve as platforms for recruiting personnel to occupy public offices. Political parties cannot but be an arena of conflict arising from mutually exclusive views, thoughts, and interests. Before the situation in these political parties manifest as full-blown conflicts, the circumstances generally go through seven stages. These stages are i. frustration, ii. provocation, iii. annoyance, iv. anger, v. aggression, vi. conflict and vii. violence. The components of these seven stages are as follows:

- **Frustration.** This involves feelings of disappointment or uncertainty experienced by a political party member arising from actions of denials by the party leaders aimed at blocking or creating barriers on the way to achieving their aspirations and the quest to fulfill their life goals. The intensity of these challenges creates great anxieties and discomfort to these members.
- **Provocation.** This is when the party members become agitated because of felt acts of injustice, denials, lack of equity and fairness thereby creating extreme fear, rage, or excited nervousness in an ordinary person and decides to openly contest actions and inactions of the party organs to anyone who cares to listen.
- **Annoyance.** This is emotional state of irritation being exhibited by an individual arising from acts of frustration and/or provocation. Annoyance behaviours include rudeness, disrespect, and toxic comments.
- **Anger.** Anger is a manifest display of antagonism/negative feelings by party members and leaders toward other members, leaders or other parties based on the assumption and feeling of unfairness and injustice.
- **Aggression.** Aggression occurs when a member feeling injured or cheated resorts to self-help by physically, verbally or through other harmful means apply force with the readiness to attack, confront or intent to inflict harm or injury on another person or group.

- **Conflict.** A conflict is a clash of interests, opinions, or dispute between two individuals or more parties competing for the same desire similar outcomes but are either opposed to one another or fails to accommodate the other's interest.
- **Violence.** This is the intentional use of physical force or power, whether by threat or actual, against members of the party or outsiders with a high likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm or by making them feel pain.

This has been shown in the conflict scale diagram as shown in Figure 4.

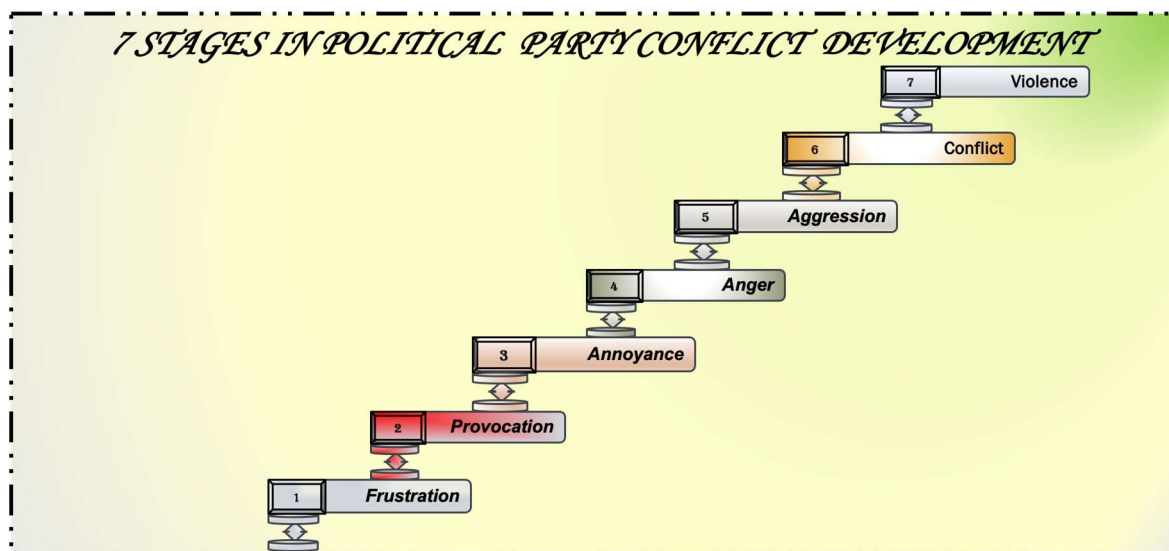


Figure 4: The Seven 7 Stages in Political Party Conflict Development

The study looked into various approaches used by the State Security Service operatives in managing political conflicts in the Niger Delta and revealed four major strategies namely strategic management of key actors, conflict prevention, reduction and control through intelligence gathering, regular education of voters and effective negotiation. The participants in the study explained that State Security Service operatives normally act as facilitators, arranging meetings, setting agendas, guiding productive discussions, reaching mutual agreements and arrest of violent members. This usually helps in the conflict management process and in the resolution of any atrocious issues between the parties. In managing conflicts, the participants shared that it is not easy, it requires strategy and constant communication. Holding meetings with party leaders and key actors, effective communication, and sensitization with the stakeholders before any political gathering are key elements of the peace building-process.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that conflict avoidance mechanisms are being deployed in most cases through intelligence gathering and conflict prevention approaches. Most of the participants in this study spoke about controlling the situation before it gets out of hand. They look for ways to proactively reduce to the barest minimum, the possibility of any conflict occurring. Political conflicts are to be managed in the party they occur, by the officials of the party using the institutional and corporate byelaws that guide their formation. Where these fail, the actors usually approach a third party for reconciliation or procurement of justice against wrongs they suffered whether real or imaginary. Nigeria since the advent of democracy in 1999, the country has been embroiled in one

form of political conflict or the other. According to Sisk (2003), democracy is promising as a conflict management strategy because the principles, institutions, and rules associated with democratic practice seek to manage inevitable social conflicts in deeply divided and less conflicted societies alike.

However, participants in this study reported that some of the strategies the State Security Services used included bringing the conflicting parties together to establish a mutual agreement. The most profound methods used by the State Security Service in managing conflicts in the Niger Delta as shown in the study are as follows:

- **Invitations.** Whenever there is an outbreak of conflict whether interparty or intraparty, the SSS extends invitations to the actors to meet with their operatives. These meetings are used to procure explanations in writing, counselling the individuals and groups on the need to be law-abiding and extract a pledge of good behaviour from the conflictors.
- **Surveillance.** The SSS profiles and keep track of the parties to the conflict through surveillance, monitoring, field investigations and tracking of actions, statements and activities that could promote hate, violence, breach of peace, attacks and /or retaliatory attacks.
- **Inclusive Mediation.** Inclusive mediation is a key policy of the SSS in preventing and stopping violence between proponents of the same political party or between one group and another. Mediations are usually carried out by the agency that acts as a neutral third party to assist two or more parties in order to help them negotiate an agreement on a matter of common interest. In the process, political leaders fronting disputes with the required appreciable reach are invited for dialogue and conciliatory talks. During the mediation process, causative factors of conflict that promote mistrust, disagreement or those that trigger violence are identified and subjected to debates.
- **Executed Agreements.** The State Security Service and the Nigerian Police have developed agreement that are usually signed by leaders of political parties with a promise to keep the peace and be law abiding prior to and after elections. This arrangement entails that all political parties attesting to the agreement must submit the details of their key members and schedule of campaigns such that no two political parties can hold rallies in the same locality at the same time to avoid clashes. Besides, the agreement compels the parties to control the excesses of their supporters to avoid conflict, violence, breakdown of law and order or other forms of criminality associated with party conflicts.
- **Arrests.** Whenever it becomes obvious that a party or parties to a conflict engages in acts that are prejudicial to public peace and national security, the agency effect arrests of the principal actors preparatory to prosecution. Arrest can be described as when a legally authorized person, such as the police, private security, or citizen, puts an individual under custody, especially because of his/her involvement in a crime. Akaraiwe (2013) defines arrest as part of a process involving the custody, detention, or deprivation of the liberty of a suspect, for the purposes of investigation into the alleged crime. The power of arrest is a statutory authority given to law enforcement agencies, and this includes the SSS. An arrest can be carried out after a court of competent jurisdiction signs the arrest warrant but, in most cases, the agency acts without following due process thus giving rise to cries of human rights abuses. A person arrested by the Agency can be granted bail if they comply with specified bail conditions within about 48 hours representing the dimension of appreciable stop or be charged before a magistrate within 48 hours and granted the privilege to access their lawyers and family members.
- **Investigation and Prosecution.** The State Security Service usually undertakes an investigation of security and criminal breaches by individuals and groups to facilitate

presenting the case in a criminal trial in a court of law against an individual or groups accused of breaking the law. The process progresses from arrests, investigation, arraignment, trial, sentencing, and correction for those found guilty. The principle of the prosecution rests on the solemn responsibility of discovering the truth in a case by applying criminal laws properly and promptly while ensuring the maintenance of public welfare and guaranteeing fundamental human rights.

This finding is in line with Ifesinachi and Ezirim (2009) who emphasized on first bringing the conflicting parties together to establish a mutual agreement. According to Akpuru-Aja (2007), conflict management basically means the use of dialogue to assist opponents or parties not only to have agreements against hostile images or actions but also to comply with earlier agreed resolutions and strategies. This strategy encompasses compelling the parties involved in a conflict to utilize previously established means of resolution or containment and deploying proactive intelligence mechanisms to prevent conflicts even before they occur.

Additionally, the study reviewed the level of synergy between the State Security Service and other security agencies and identified the need for collaboration and synergy among the agencies, proper relationship management, transparency and competency in leadership and better understanding. To maintain law and order, the security agencies may not need to work in isolation. There is a compelling need for effective collaboration and synergy among the agencies. The study shows that effective synergistic working relationships by the different security agents in managing the political conflicts in the Niger Delta can go a long way to control both actual and potential crises. It is very important for the Government at all levels in the Niger Delta to come to a consensus and provide that synergy between these security operatives and harness better collaboration. This collaboration is important because there are key individuals and organizations that can provide particular impetus because of their special relationships with other organs at higher or lower levels.

Conclusions

Insecurity has become a major concern for everybody in Nigeria and this has created a lot of fear and uncertainty in the society (Ishola, 2022). Every region in the country is battling with various challenges of insecurity (Mahmoud & Madori, 2013) including the Niger Delta region. Insecurity of various forms has been a major challenge in the Niger Delta possibly due to several factors.

Political conflicts, especially conflicts linked to party politics and contest for political power, which is expected to be free, fair and open in a democracy, has become a major source of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. Having researched into the activities of the State Security Services who are directly or indirectly involved in the management of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the study concludes as follows:

- 1) The major causes of political party conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta region are selfish interest, excessive greed, lack of internal democracy, corruption and quest to remain in power by the politicians' contesting elections, those angling for power struggle and in a quest to dominate opponents by whatever costs.
- 2) The approaches in managing political conflicts by the State Security Service are strategic management of key actors, conflict prevention, reduction, and control through intelligence gathering, arrests, peace agreements, mediation, prosecution of offenders and interventions as well as securing law and order during party meetings and gatherings.

- 3) The level of synergy between the the State Security Service and other security agencies is below optimal, as there is need for effective collaboration and synergy among the agencies to enhance conflict management. Moreso, transparency and competency in leadership is needed for a sustainable synergy, and discouraging rivalry between the different security operatives is a pivotal measure in strengthening state security architecture, in order to ensure effective management of conflicts in political parties.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- 1) Politicians who are contesting elections should help to reduce political party conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta region by avoiding selfish interests, reducing greed, promoting internal democracy, eradicating corruption and quest to remain in power, and reducing power struggle and quest to dominate opponents.
- 2) The State Security Service should manage political conflicts through strategic management of key actors, conflict prevention, reduction, and control through intelligence gathering, prosecution of offenders, police intervention and conflict management as well as maintaining law and order during party meetings and gatherings.
- 3) The State Security Service and other security agencies should improve their levels of synergy and collaboration in managing conflicts between political parties in order to enhance conflict management. Moreso, these security agencies should enhance transparency and competency in leadership as these are requirements for discouraging rivalry and strengthening state security architecture, to ensure effective management of conflicts in political parties.

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