

Political Party's Conflict Drivers in the Niger Delta: The Implications for the Nigeria State Security Architecture and Remedial Measures Used by the Police to Manage Conflicts in the Region

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Abstract

Political parties are the vehicles politicians use to secure power, where a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, go in the pursuit, capture and retention of power for as long as is democratically feasible. Political parties' conflicts in the Niger Delta are of two types, intraparty and interparty and have been dominant features in the region since the fourth republic, with all the major parties having their fair share. The study examined the conflict drivers and the ways the Nigeria Police, a key member of the state security architecture, manages conflicts of political parties in the region. The study adopted a qualitative approach of data gathering through focused group discussions and structured interviews in a population of 40 individuals comprising of members of the state security architecture like the Nigeria Police 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 analyzed data showed four subthemes as main drivers of conflicts namely selfish interests and excessive greed, lack of internal democracy, corruption and the quest to remain in power at all costs, and power struggles and the quest to dominate opponents. The measures to strengthen the Nigeria Police in the effective management of conflicts also yielded four subthemes which are discouraging inter-agency rivalry, sensitization of political leaders against violence, mediation by elders of the party and reformation of the laws guiding elections in Nigeria.

Keywords: Conflict Drivers, Interparty Conflict, Intraparty Conflict, State Security Architecture, Nigeria Police, Conflict Management Measures

Background to the Study

Political parties are the vehicles politicians use to secure power in democratic environments. 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. Political parties form a crucial component of modern democracies. Much as political parties are a recent development in the history of politics dating back only to around 1793/94, they have progressively been refined and have become a standard practice of doing politics in a democracy.

Ordinarily, a party that goes by a particular name should be assumed to be cohesive, ideologically symmetrical and with a pervasive belief in a mission to hold, contest and win elections for its nominated members. This assumption is based on the works of Giannetti and Benoit (2009) which states that party cohesion is a product of the extent to which party members share preferences on different issues; party unity is indicated by how much party members, particularly legislators, coordinate their party behavior. According to Krehbiel (1993), genuine party behavior occurs only

when party discipline forces party members to adhere to decisions that are not in harmony with their preferences. In defining party preferences of the individual members, Laver and Shepsle (1999) identified five conditions. These are (a) the environment and the role of the party (b) politician's tastes "on issues that will certainly, or might conceivably, come up for decision by the party within the time horizons of the actors concerned, (c) factions of party members "with similar tastes in public policy", (d) intra-party decision-making procedures (autocratic vs. majority vote); and (e) party discipline.

Political parties' conflicts in the Niger Delta are generally of two types, intraparty and interparty. 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 that 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 a possible platform for beating the inter-party competition and throw in wealth for party programmes to later recoup their investments which result in hard decisions for emergent governments in the selection and appointment of cabinet and other officers. Intra-party conflicts are those arising over the selection of party leaders and candidates.

The Niger Delta region has been a stronghold of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) until recent times when the All Progressives Congress Party (APC) tried to gain inroads. Although dominated by the PDP, it did not exclude it from different shades of conflicts. According to Okoli (2001), several factors have led to conflicts, instability, and intraparty opposition within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) like personal differences, clash of socio-economic interest, lack of party discipline, the influence of money politics, the power of incumbency and the failure of the party leaders to manage the afore mention factors have generated into conflicts, instability, and intra-party opposition within the Peoples Democratic Party.

Amaraegbu (2011) observed that the corruption of the Nigerian political process that has left the oil mineral-producing communities of the region poor and underdeveloped has produced an unintended consequence: It has created a large class of young men who have no hope of legitimate work that would fulfill their ambitions and are easily recruited into violence ((Human Rights Watch 2003). During the 2003 elections, state governments in the region recruited armed militias to carry out widespread electoral fraud (Walker, 2008). The armed groups were formed and empowered to ensure the victory of the ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) "by any means necessary". The activities of these armed groups are a major setback to peace and stability in political parties as it inflates conflicts to unimaginable dimensions.

There has been multiplicity of interparty conflicts in the Niger Delta particularly as it affects contest for power for political positions at state levels and this has resulted in either violence or other grave consequences. 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 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 confusions within political parties in Nigeria. The use of explosion and

gunfire by recalcitrant rented youths to destabilize a Governorship party rally organized by All Progressives Congress (APC) for their candidate Dakuku Peterside in Okrika, the hometown of President Goodluck Jonathan's wife Patience (Egobueze and Ojirika, 2015)

Ali and Danladi (2022) have categorized the Nigerian security architecture into the following, with each performing specific functions: a) Armed forces: Army, Navy, Air force; b) Intelligence and law enforcement agencies: Nigeria Police Force, State Security Services, Defence Intelligence Agency, Nigerian Intelligence Agency, Nigerian prison Services, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps; c) Para-police regulatory agencies: Federal Road Safety Corp, Nigeria Custom Service, Nigeria Immigration Service, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration.

The authors noted that though the police, being the primary civil force are largely responsible for the election duties, the increasing involvement of various security agencies in the election duty is closely attributed to the high incidence and threat of violence at stages of the electoral process. However, the deployment of various security personnel has in many cases, been associated with irregularities by incumbent authorities such as intimidation, electoral fraud, collusion with politicians to undermine free and fair elections and incompetence in handling problems at polling stations (Report of the electoral reform committee, 2008).

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 Naira destroyed in 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) has 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 hanging of Ogoni and execution by hanging of Ogoni environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa by the federal military government headed by General Abacha in 1995.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous examples of political desperation resulting in conflicts have been observed in different election cycles in the Niger Delta from 1999 to 2023. These bouts of conflicts have occurred in all the States of the Niger Delta. The nature of the conflicts in these areas range from quarrels over elective positions, access to control of political machinery, imposition, favoritism, and abuse of power. In some cases, the incumbent governors and party leaders were accused of undemocratic tendencies, high handedness, lack of equity, justice, fairness, manipulation of the zoning formula and the imposition of candidates during party congresses and general elections.

Examples of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta are: interparty conflicts in parts of Rivers and Bayelsa States where weapons and firearms of various types and sophistication were freely used

(TMG, 2003); interparty conflict in Edo State between PDP supporters of different parties where there were shootouts in Akoko-Edo (Nwolise, 2007); intraparty conflicts in Rivers State PDP arising from the “suspension of the Rivers State Governor, Amaechi, by the Alhaji Bamaga Tukur-led party leadership (Okohue, 2013); intraparty conflicting situation between Governor Godswill Akpabio and a group of 22 aggrieved governorship aspirants of Akwa Ibom who were members of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) where the then governor was accused of undemocratic tendencies, lack of equity, justice, and fairness in preparation to the 2015 gubernatorial elections in the state (Udo, 2015); interparty conflict before the 2015 election when a group of disenchanting members of the PDP led by Hon. Rotimi Amaechi who was chairman of the Governor’s Forum at the time, formed a splinter group under the name ‘New PDP’ and later moved into the All Progressives Congress Party (APC) and worked against the PDP and later won the presidential elections (Goddey, 2016); intraparty conflicts in the Delta State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) due to allegations of imposition of candidates ahead of the 2019 elections which resulted in aggrieved members threatening to dump the party across the 25 local government councils of the state, especially in Burutu, Bomadi, Ughelli, Ndokwa West and East, Oshimili South, North, and others, (Akenzua, 2018); intraparty conflict leading to a factional divide in the All Progressive Congress (APC) between the then Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi and Senator Magnus Abe respectively lasting more than six years by cases of painstaking litigations until the Supreme Court gave a ruling that the party and her decisions are supreme (Azubiuke, 2021).

The Nigeria Police is a key member of the state security architecture and have the objective to safeguard citizens from fear or threats to their values, livelihood, liberty, lives and property. Despite this statutory framework, political party conflicts of damning dimensions have remained unabated in the Niger Delta with the internal security of Nigeria being largely managed by the Police, the State security Service and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps.

The Objective of the study

The study aims to empirically examine the extent to which the Nigeria Police as a key member of the state security architecture manages conflicts of political parties in the Niger Delta.

The broad objective of this study evaluated the effectiveness of the state security architecture in its handling of political conflicts in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Explore the drivers and or causes of political conflicts in the Niger Delta
- ii. Examine remedial measures to strengthen state security architecture and effective management of conflicts in political parties.

Conceptual Clarification

Security according to Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpo-Robaro (2013) refers to a situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions. It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threat to their lives or properties. It embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence.

State security architecture otherwise described as national security has been explained by various researchers with each of them emphasizing different vital factors. Brennan (1961) holds that national

security is the protection of national survival while Ray (1987) postulated it is to be understood in terms of the desire and capacity for self-defense. Goldstein (1999) defined national security as closely connected efforts towards the preservation of the borders of a state as mainly construed in terms of the power to maintain government sovereignty within its territory as well as the avoidance of conflicts and the preservations of the lives of people in the society. However, O'Brien (1995) in explicating a somewhat different idea of national security argues that security is construed as more than just safety from the violence of rival militaries. It is the absence of violence whether military, economic, environmental or sexual and this has been expounded in modern times to how much freedom the people enjoy. Accordingly, it has been associated with freedom from danger to life and property and the presence of a conducive atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate interests within society (Sen, 1999; Bassey, 2004; Imobighe, 1990).

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 on 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.

The development of state security architecture is based on demographic threats occasioned by human and natural disruptions and other events causing fear, bodily harm, death, destruction of properties and danger thus provoking effective emergency response to protect citizens from the impact. State security architecture is therefore developed to handle both internal security/threats and external security/threats. Internal security/threat includes all actions designed to emplace, uphold and deploy national laws, strategies, policies and state law enforcement agencies towards the maintenance of peace, law and order. The objective is to safeguard citizens from fear or threats to their values, livelihood, liberty, lives and property. The other dimension of state security architecture is the deployment of various state apparatus to protect and preserve the nation's territorial borders, preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from external agents/forces. While the internal security of Nigeria is largely in the hands of the Police, the Military is saddled with the preservation of its territorial integrity.

Insecurity of various forms has been a major challenge in the Niger Delta possibly due to several factors. 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 largescale violence at different times since the discovery of Oil in marketable quantities in the 1950s.

Bala (2020) described the violent threats that Nigeria's internal security architecture faces as irregular ones that have the military powers and tactics of the belligerents (a standing, professional army against an insurgent or militia group(s)) significantly different, a scenario that differs greatly from

the traditional kinetic threats where the belligerents have comparable powers and resources. He concluded by stating that the asymmetric violent threats being prosecuted by different violent groups expound ethnic and religious sentiments as reasons for their action against the state and the country is consequently confronted by sub-national (indigenous or surrogate forces), highly networked groups with a wide variety of objectives that are dangerous for the country's internal security and corporate existence.

State Security Architecture in Nigeria: The Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

The Nigerian security architecture was derived from the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which ended wars in Europe and radically transformed and changed what is today known as nation-states in legal terms and conferred on states the legitimacy and monopoly of the use of force. This security technique is known as the traditional or classical approach. Nigeria developed its state-centred and militaristic definition and strategies for containment of security threats from the treaty by assigning to the state the custodian and ultimate beneficiary of the legitimate monopoly of the use of force. This formed the platform with which the strategic security thinking and structure were established. It is important to note that each state within this Westphalian system benefitted as much as the power at its disposals permitted. Hence, the safety of the state, its people and the integrity of its boundaries could be guaranteed by this power. Under the circumstance, national security was equated with power, and power is synonymous with military might. Ever since then and till today especially in Nigeria, the concept and strategies for curtailing security threats have remained closely associated with military might. A general look at post-independence Nigeria has shown that since independence in 1960 most of the security challenges confronting the Nigerian state are internally induced and generated and have largely attracted military response for containment.

The Nigeria Police Force is a legacy of the British colonial Administration which started in 1861 with a 30-man consular guard. From 1879 through 1914 after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, the Royal Nigeria Constabulary, the Lagos Police Force, and the Niger Coast Constabulary were also merged. In 1930, the Northern and Southern Protectorates Police Forces were merged to form what is now known as the Nigeria Police Force under the command of an Inspector General of Police (Alemika, 2010).

By this nationalization of the Nigeria Police Force, the Inspector-General of Police was in control of the general operation and administrative duties. He is supported at the headquarters by a deputy inspector-general and in each state by Police Commissioners. The Nigerian Police Force is a specialized agency established by law with the responsibility of maintaining law and order. According to section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution as well as the Police Act 1943 (now Cap 4. of 1967), there shall be established for Nigeria a Police Force to be known as the Nigeria Police Force with responsibilities for, the prevention and detection of crime. Section 4 of the Police Acts and Regulations lists the duties of the police force to include: The prevention and detection of crime; The apprehension of offenders; The preservation of law and order; The protection of life and property; The due enforcement of laws and regulations with which they are directly charged; The performance of such military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of them by or under the authority of the police act or any other act.

The composition, establishment and operational control of the Police Force are clearly stated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, 1989, and 1999 (1999 CFRN: 214-216). These

provisions are reinforced in the Police Act and Regulations (LFN, 1990:359) which classified the duties of the Police. The above functions are also endorsed by the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) and Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) (CPA: 26-27, 53 & 55, CPC: 90, 112 & 412). Also, the 1999 Constitution provided for a Police Service Commission that is responsible for the Policy, organization, administration, and finance of the Nigeria Police Force. Among the primary functions are the prevention of crime and the protection of lives and property. They are to ensure that peace, order, and stability are guaranteed by detecting crime, arresting and prosecuting offenders among others. The Nigeria Police operates a command structure and has offices in all the States in the Niger Delta.

Political Party's Conflicts in the Niger Delta

Politics is a battlefield where the players struggle for power and the strongest usually wins. When the strongest wins, they are rewarded with the control of the state resources as the price of victory. The state with its varied means of control has a powerful impact on society and political decisions go a long way toward determining who has power, wealth, and prestige. Most importantly, politics is used to maintain social and economic inequality. The vehicle used in winning political battles is the political party.

Political parties are made up of individuals with divergent opinions, values, interests and 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. They are the vehicles politicians use to secure power in democratic environments. Political parties have been described as the media for aggregating interests and opinions within a polity where personalities in a liberal democracy are constantly shaped and reshaped by ever-recurring conflicts among the different actors within their folds, Omotola (2010). The functioning of every democratic system whether in advanced or developing democracies depends to a large extent on the nature, character, composition, organization, ideals, and institutionalization of political parties which in turn begets the consolidation of democracy (Maiyo, 2008, Ogundiya, 2011). With the introduction of party politics, it was expected that the principles of democracy which signify sovereignty of the people, freedom, fairness, justice, and equality which demands nationhood, patriotism, unity, rationality, progress, and dignity should ease tension and attract peaceful coexistence.

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; Zartman (1997) sees it as a normal state of human interaction; as an inevitable aspect of human interaction, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions. Otite (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, rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach value, which could be material or non-material.

Generally, a conflict exists when there is an interaction between two or more individuals, groups, or organizations where at least one side sees their thinking, ideas, perceptions, feelings or will as contradicting that of the other side and feels that they cannot get what they want because of the other side. Party conflict refers to contradictions arising from individual or group differences in terms of interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations, and precipitous tendencies of their members. For instance,

both within the Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Party have members who though are of the same political family share different interests, ideas, orientations, and ideologies. These contradictions can be inherent, visible/invisible, insipient, factional, or based on social, economic, ethnicity, religion or demographic pillars which are shared values of a sect, a faction, group or block. These may exist at the individual, group, institutional, regional, national, and international levels. Conflict is thus a pervasive phenomenon in human relationships and has been seen as the ‘basic unit for understanding social existence’ (Nnoli 1998). The existence of a conflict shows that something in a relationship—or the whole relationship – between involved parties cannot continue as it was. It is an opportunity for adjustment and for constructive change. Party conflicts can either be interparty or intraparty and could result from any or a combination of the factors listed below:

- Political sources: -power struggles, differences in ideologies, etc.
- Religious sources: - power struggle, differences in doctrine, etc.
- Cultural conflict: - when two cultural traditions compete for dominance
- Economic privileges: -where some people feel marginalized
- Natural resources e.g., land, etc.

Political party conflicts have occurred in different geopolitical zones of Nigeria and the Niger Delta has had its fair share. Although Okoh (2005) has identified four conflict variants in the Niger Delta which are classified as Inter-community, Intra-community, Community versus oil companies and Community versus (federal, state or local) government, the focus of this study is different from that of Okoh as it researches into the different classes of political party conflicts being witnessed in the Niger Delta which can be briefly described as follows:

- Conflict arising from control of party machinery.
- Conflict arising from imposition of candidates.
- Conflict between godfathers
- Conflict between a godfather and a godson
- Conflict of contestation of power and control of resources
- Conflict of stomach infrastructure
- Conflict of domination by one ethnic group over another
- Conflict arising from clashes of militias and cult groups.

The difference from previous research particularly that carried out by Okoh did not focus on interparty and intraparty conflicts, thus showing the gap in existing literature which this study seeks to investigate. The findings of this research will contribute to the body of knowledge in this area of conflict management.

Literature Review/theoretical framework

Liberal Theory of the State

The liberal theory of the state is a political theory that explains the basis of the state or civil society in which individuals are free and equal. This theory is based on the ideas of classical liberal thinkers such as John Locke (1632-1704), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Locke advocated a limited state and political sovereignty while Rousseau talked about a democratic state based on his theory of general will and popular sovereignty.

According to the liberal theory as earlier expounded by Thomas Hobbes, individuals lived in an imaginary place called the state of nature, without any form of government or authority, which was dominated by insecurity and in order to get rid of it, they laid the foundation of the state. Without the state, the lives of the people would be solitary, brutish, nasty, and short. As a result, the safety of the people became the business of the Leviathan, which is also called the common good or the state. Consequently, the citizens and the state had to come together to sign a social contract. The contract implied that the state should provide security and the citizens consented to its authority (Luckam, 2007). In this state, individuals have complete freedom but also face the risk of insecurity and conflict. This leads individuals to seek a social contract that establishes a governing authority to protect their rights and maintain order.

With the coming of the liberal state, some significant changes were occurring in the political organisation of the society like representative and constitutional forms of government, the rule of law, and governments based on the consent of the ruled. Grizold, (1994) identifies five features of national security. These are: ensuring the existence of the state as a political community and the physical survival of its population; protection of territorial integrity; maintenance of political independence; ensuring equality of lives; and embedding the vital interest of the state in the national security policy. These features show that security is the responsibility of the state. Traditionally, state sovereignty and legitimacy depend on the level of independence of that state and its ability to govern its territory without external interference. Another important aspect of the traditional conception of security is the support the government gets from the citizens (Newman, 2010).

Smith (1976), therefore, identifies three purposes for which the State exists to include the duty to protect society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; the duty to protect subjects from injustice, by establishing a system of justice; and the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and institutions that will cater for the well-being of the subjects. The authority of the Nigerian state security architecture comprising of the Military, the Nigeria Police, the Department of State Security Service, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and other agencies therefore derive their existence and power from the principles and concepts of the State.

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 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 Nigeria Police as a key member of the state security architecture actors 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
TOPIC OF INQUIRY 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
TOPIC OF INQUIRY 2	What remedial conciliatory measures are useful in strengthening state security architecture and effective management of conflicts in political parties?	1. Discouraging Rivalry 2. Reformation of the Laws Guiding Elections 3. Sensitization of Political Leaders 4. Mediation by the Elders of the Party

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. 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.

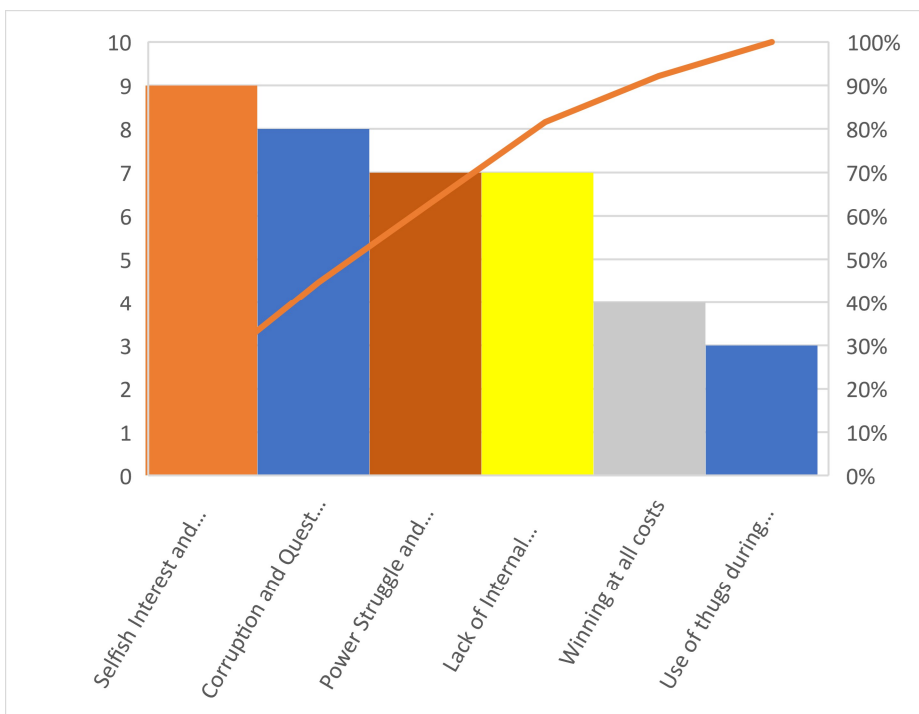


Figure 1: Showing the Frequency Distributions of Causes of Political Party Conflicts in the Niger Delta

In dealing with the major drivers of these conflicts, the Nigeria Police in coordination with other agencies have adopted several approaches to remediate the situation and essentially strengthen the state security architecture to enhance the effective management of conflicts of political parties in the region as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Useful Remedial Conciliatory Measures Used by The Police for The Effective Management of Conflicts in Political Parties.

THEME	Sub Themes	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
Recommended useful measures for strengthening state security architecture and effective management of conflicts in political parties.	Discouraging Inter-agency Rivalry	7	25%
	Sensitization of Political Leaders	6	22%
	Regular Training	1	3%
	Mediation by the Elders of the Party	5	18%
	Reformation of the Laws	6	22%
	Guiding Elections		
	Effective Funding	2	7%

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

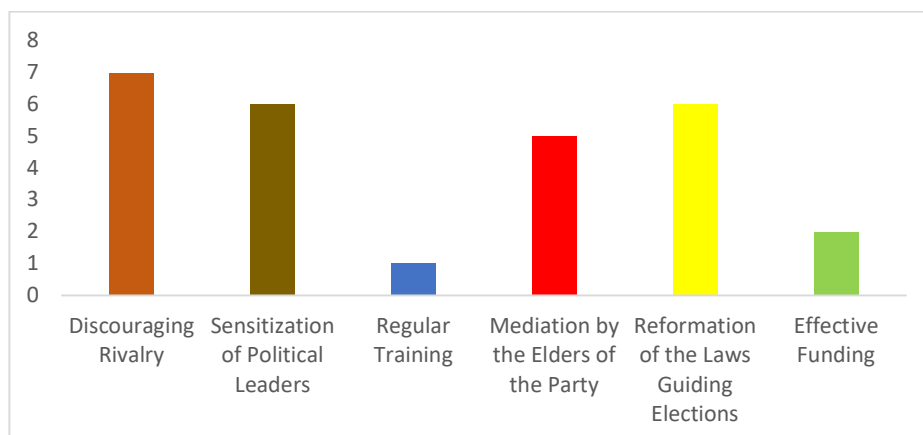


Figure 2: Showing Useful Remedial Conciliatory Measures for Strengthening State Security Architecture and Effective Management of Conflicts in Political Parties.

Figure 2 show that discouraging inter-agency rivalry, sensitization of political leaders, reformation of the laws guiding elections, mediation by the elders of the party, effective funding and regular training are the major steps to be adopted as remedial conciliatory measures for strengthening the Nigeria Police and other state security operators in the effective management of political party conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Discussion of Findings

Table 2 has showed 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.

Selfish interest and excessive greed emerged as the most common theme among the participants, whether it was from the party members or the people running for elective positions. Politicians on the individual level in their quest to grab power step on one toe or the other and whenever they are aggrieved, they seek revenge. Politics has become very attractive, and general society values are on the decline. For instance, you'll hardly see a Ph.D. holder boasting of #150,000-#200,000 as take-home income. In politics, even if you are a secondary school holder, if you can make your way to become a governor of a state or become president with your qualifications, you will in fact, determine who gets what at the end of the day. The benefits that follow these positions are huge and any anybody will fight to get such an opportunity. These politicians therefore make fun of those seeking higher education and individuals striving to better society legitimately.

At the national level, party leaders because of their selfish ambition support their prodigies or supporters by fielding candidates that are not qualified irrespective of party laws and regulations to occupy party or political offices. This usually leads to pre-and post-election conflicts as they circumvent party rules and policies to their individual advantages. This is indicative that a significant amount of the political party conflicts is created by the politicians themselves as they fight to control the existing political structure on ground due to unwonted desire to be in-charge or in control of the ward party structure or resources, thereby fueling party conflicts. They do this not wanting to go through the democratic process of credible congresses but preferring imposition of their choice candidates against laid down procedures. If politics is made unattractive, it will go a long way to

reduce thuggery, without any security measures put in place and the enormous resources deployed for both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to fighting crime and criminality in society will diminish.

An example of selfish interest and excessive greed in the Niger Delta have been cited in various states where the governors have been accused of concentrating projects and using their commonwealth to develop their localities against the principle of fairness and equity. For instance, Bar Nyesom Wike as governor of Rivers State constructed roads/flyovers massively in local government areas of Ikwerre extraction during his eight (8) years and this was not evenly replicated in other LGAs occupied by other ethnic groups. This has created a power struggle among the ethnic groups who believe that being in the helms of power translate to enjoying unmerited favor by their kinsmen and geographical regions.

Secondly corruption and the quest to remain in power has been another driver of political conflicts in the region. The notion that winners takes all and whoever has access to power has access to state wealth and unquestionably utilizes it as they so desire is driving political leaders to fight for positions at all costs, whether by hook or crook. Some politicians have the feelings that “If I lose out of this election, that means for the next four (4) years or couple of years, I will be irrelevant in the political space” and because “politics is about who gets what, when and how”, they resort to conflicting behaviours to either sustain their position or succeed in removing the existing power/position occupant and institute their own person.

Forcibly, elections are no longer determined by superior votes rather, it is won by the ability to compromise the electoral umpire, the security agents and the judicial officers through monetary inducements. Today, you hear of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) going to court to defend itself like they are part of those who contested for the election, instead or remaining as unbiased umpire. On election days, both the party agents, voters and agents of the electoral body are subjected to financial inducement by politicians who have corrupted the process and are bent on winning the polls. This has fueled incidents of ballot box snatching and hoodlums loyal to these politicians engaging in violence, electoral malpractices, fighting and disruptions of the voting process, thus creating commotion and chaos.

Another key driver of conflicts in political parties is the lack of internal democracy within the parties as some individuals manipulate the process with the aim of installing their own candidates. During pre-elections congresses and primaries, when the approved guidelines for the emergence of candidates are not followed, there is bound to be conflict. When the party’s organ or machinery is hijacked by a person or a group, they dictate ‘what must be or not be’ to other members as against what has been agreed upon by the party leaders or subsisting guidelines. These dictatorial acts are visible during party congresses or nomination of candidates into electoral positions where the godfathers impose their candidates and install them as ward or party leaders against popular opinions.

A post-election conflict is a consequence of elections misconducted or rigging of elections by a party which results in conflicts. Conflicts occur gradually before it becomes a conflagration as rigging does not always occur on the day of elections; it snowballs as elections are usually rigged before the day of elections through a serious of actions aimed at undermining the process. In most cases judicial intervention focusses more on post-election malpractices whereas the greatest harm was done before elections were conducted. These incidents have given rise to litany of court cases as the victims approach the judiciary for redress. Unfortunately, the judicial system has been accused of heavy corruption as politicians are seen to procure judgements that does not reflect justice during

adjudicature, and some judges merely relied on technical loopholes to give judgements against legitimate agitations.

There is intense contestation for power among political parties in the Niger Delta. When a party wants to have access to power and control it and another party wants to do the same, conflict is bound to happen. Power is usually not a thing that is allocated rather, parties struggle for it and they want to win at all costs. That struggle is what leads individuals to fight each other in order to get that position. From the perspective of political parties, there are various interests that drive groups to struggle for power. Ultimately, whoever wins/ succeeds in winning or holding on to the position will be in control of the machinery of resources of the political party. The intra party conflicts experienced in Rivers State prior to the 2023 elections between Senator Magnus Abe and Emeka Bekei of the Hon Rotimi Amaechi faction, both APC, is about conflict over the control of the party machinery. The conflict raged to the point where both factions of the same party went to court. The leadership of the party recognized by the court is the faction led by Emeka Bekei while that led by Magnus Abe's faction was not recognized. The crux of the conflict was a product of who has the control over the state party structure, thereby using it for its own advantage and opposing other aspirants not coming from their faction.

The remedial conciliatory approaches to political party's conflict management involves a process in which third parties try to bring the parties in conflict to an agreement by improving communication between them, helping them interpret the issues that divide them, and exploring avenues toward a peaceful settlement. For the State Security architectures to become more effective in the management of political party conflicts, the rivalries existing between them must be discouraged and reduced to the minimum through a conciliatory approach. Where they see any threat either to life or dignity, they should alert such political figures so as to build up security around the threatened personalities. The Nigeria Police should treat all parties in a conflict equally and not pay deference to those with capacity for patronage nor regard compliments and disregard those who do not compliment them. As a leading member of the state security architecture, the Nigeria Police should prioritize intelligence sharing with other members and intelligence information from other agencies should be taken seriously, since the different agencies are all working under one goal which is the peaceful co-existence between political parties, their members and the citizens of Nigeria.

The use of peace agreements or pacts to hold party members accountable to avoid inter party conflict and protect peace has taken stronghold in the nation's political party conflict management strategy. The use of peace accord as strategy for managing inter-party conflicts have been embraced by the Nigerian Police and other organisations and peace accords have been inaugurated in all states of the Niger Delta prior to major elections to avert conflicts and breakdown of law and order. According to Iheanachor (2019) the Rivers Debate Group arranged a peace accord signing exercise in the presence of European Union representatives and other international organisations and communities between candidates of five political parties - People's Democratic Party, PDP, African Democratic Party, ADP, Labour Party, LP, Accord Party, and Social Democratic Party, SDP. In the belief of the group, the accord if respected would cushion violence in the governorship and state legislative polls. This strategy was validated during the research where it was found that peace accords were usually signed at the Police Command headquarters with the various political parties in participation.

Further still, sensitization of political leaders on social impact of their decisions has been helpful because most of the conflicts that arise are due to the decisions of the party leaders. The rank and file of the Nigeria Police are involved in engaging members of the political parties and key stakeholders

to control whatever situation that might cause conflict through the actions/inactions of their leaders. For example, leaders are advised to move their conversation away from 'I must rule you by force' or 'I must rule you because I am selected' to be more democratic and allow for properly conducted elections as the acceptable channels for emergence of political leaders. This has the potential to eliminate the obvious dangers posed by selection or imposition of candidates. A shared understanding and adherence to existing guidelines by the party leaders in all cases is necessary because the parties will be bound by the opinion of the decision-makers rather than simply being obligated to 'consider' an opinion or recommendation from an adhoc group. According to Otite, (1999), the management of these conflicts will require "the clarification of communication and the checking of perceptions which in turn invoke speaking out what is in one's mind or heart, listening carefully, expressing strong feelings appropriately, remaining rational, asking questions, telling others one's opinion."

Moreover, mediation by the elders of the party can also be deployed in conflict management. This involves managing conflicts amicably through elders, traditional leaders, and healing, and reconciliation rituals. Every political player has an interest in engaging in politics. If there is a conflict between two or more members that is tearing the party apart, the party leadership intervenes by setting up a disciplinary committee. The committee is usually headed by the Legal Adviser of the political party either at the L.G.A, State or National level, alongside with the secretary of the party and the members of the working committee, depending on the level of conflict. Members of the central working committee constitute the panel that looks into the conflict among the feuding members. When the member is not satisfied with the party's outcome of the internal mediation, they can approach the court and go as far as the Supreme Court to get justice.

Mediation, according to Moore (1996), is the intervention in a negotiation or conflict of an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but assists the involved parties in voluntarily reaching a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute. There are instances where mediation has worked, no matter the odds. For instance, in the follow up to the PDP 2023 gubernatorial party primaries in Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara and other contestants vied for the governorship ticket. Strong oppositions arose because Siminalayi Fubara was perceived as an imposed candidate by the then governor Nyesom Wike, but party elders step up mediation and resolved the crisis.

Conclusions

Insecurity has become a major concern for everybody in Nigeria and various forms of it have 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 looked at the activities of the State security architecture actors like the Nigeria Police and political leaders/politicians, traditional rulers, religious and civil society organisations 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 conflict drivers responsible for 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 remedial measures the Nigeria Police has used for effective management of conflicts in political parties are:
 - i. The use of peace agreements or pacts to avert conflicts and breakdown of law and order and hold party members accountable. The Nigerian Police in collaboration with other organisations have inaugurated the signing of peace agreements in all states of the Niger Delta prior to major elections.
 - ii. Mediating in issues that could cause conflict by Elders of the political parties in the region and initiating a process in which third parties try to bring the parties in conflict to an agreement by improving communication between them, helping them interpret the issues that divide them, and exploring avenues toward a peaceful settlement.
 - iii. Regular sensitization of political leaders, by the Nigeria Police and other security forces to enhance 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 the quest to remain in power, and reducing power struggle and the quest to dominate their opponents at all costs.
- 2) The Nigeria Security Architecture and indeed the Nigeria Police 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 Nigeria Police should increase effective intelligence gathering in order to significantly reduce the intensity of political party conflicts by appropriately profiling party members during elections and party events, so as to control thuggery within political parties in the Niger Delta.
- 4) The Nigeria Police 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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