Intra-Party Conflicts and Party Stability in Nigeria: A Study of the Alliance for Democracy (AD)

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Abstract
Purpose: The study examined the effects of the strategies employed by the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the main opposition party in the 1999 general elections in Nigeria, to manage its internal conflicts.
Research methodology: This study is qualitative. It analyzed secondary data on Nigeria's Fourth Republic to explain the management of intra-party conflicts in the Alliance for Democracy (AD).
Results: It found that the AD was able to record remarkable successes in the 1998/1999 general elections as a result of its internal mechanism for mediation, bargaining, consultations, and negotiations among the party members. However, its inability to employ effective management strategies to settle internal crises before and after the 2003 general elections signaled the loss of its status as one of the leading parties in the country.
Limitations: Despite being the main opposition party in the 1999 general elections, literature on the AD is scanty. This limited insights into events that culminated in the AD's loss of status as a frontline political party in Nigeria.
Contribution: It enriches the literature on the causes of intra-party conflicts and the effects of mismanaging such conflicts on party stability. It also provides deep insights into the reasons for AD's loss of status from being the main opposition party in Nigeria between 1999 and 2003 to being deregistered in 2020.
Keywords: *Intra-party conflicts, management strategies, political parties, party primaries, party stability*
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1. Introduction

Conflicts are inevitable in every society as members compete to use available societal resources, which are often scarce for the achievement of individual and group interests (Adams & Iwu, 2015; Adewuyi et al., 2021; Awofeso, et al., 2017). If not properly managed, such conflicts would lead to full-blown crises with dire consequences for societal survival. In the same vein, a political party may be rocked by conflicts arising from competition among its members (Adams & Iwu, 2015; Moliki, 2020; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Tsaro et al., 2021). Without the proper management of such conflicts, instability and eventual defeat at the polls become the inevitable result. To avoid electoral defeats, parties adopt strategies to manage the internal crisis. Effective management of the crisis ensures continual loyalty and support of party members. The management strategy further establishes the stability needed for political parties to achieve the desired goal of winning elections to control power and the governing political system.

Since the commencement of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, several political parties have undergone internal turmoil and have been destabilized by conflicting individual interests (Adams & Iwu, 2015; Moliki, 2020; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Tsaro et al., 2021). The political party under study, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), had a sterling performance in the 1998/1999 general elections as intra-party conflicts were resolved through mediation and negotiation. The party, however, suffered losses in the 2003 elections and beyond as a result of an internal crisis that culminated in the imposition of candidates and the politics of appointment of a national chairman leading to a loss of status for the party. The fortunes of the party continued to spiral downward until it was deregistered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in February 2020 for its poor showings in the 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2022; Bonkat-Jonathan & Nandi, 2020; Cheeseman & de Gramont, 2017; Dickson & Ita, 2022; Le Van et al., 2003; Saka et al., 2019).

There abounds a large body of scholarly works on intra-party crisis and its effects on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. However, these works focus on two political parties. One is the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) which bestrode the country's political landscape like a colossus between 1999 and 2015 (Aleyomi, 2013; Moliki, 2020; Yagboyaju, 2021) while the other is the All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated the PDP in the 2015 and 2019 general elections (Moliki, 2020; Yagboyaju, 2021; Tsaro et al., 2021). There seems to be very little research attention to the events that incapacitated the AD, the main opposition party in the 1999 general elections to the extent of being deregistered. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine how the AD managed intra-party conflicts and the events that triggered its loss of status.

Structurally, the paper is divided into four sections. The introductory section sets the tone and direction for the study. The second reviews extant literature on the concepts of political parties, intra-party conflicts and management. It also examines the character of political parties in Nigeria and conducts a historical survey of intra-party conflicts in the country. The third discusses the concept of management strategies in resolving intra-party conflicts as well as the management of conflicts in the AD, especially with regard to party primaries. The fourth summarizes and concludes the study.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Conceptualizing political parties, intra-party conflicts and management
As it obtains many concepts, especially in the social sciences and humanities, there are many and varying definitions of the political party. Three features, bordering on its composition, objective and source of legitimacy, are however considered *sine qua non* to any description of what a political party is. These features also distinguish it from other associations in the state. First, it is composed of men and women with similar political views. Second, its overarching objective is to wield legitimate governmental powers and exercise authoritative control over the institutions of the state. Third, it derives its legitimacy and authority through the will of the electorate. In essence, a political party is an association of people with similar political views who seek to win elections in order to govern the state in which it operates (Aleyomi, 2013; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Saka et al., 2019).

Political parties are considered crucial to democratic governance for their several functions including serving as agencies for political socialization and participation (Aleyomi, 2013; Saka et al., 2019; Tsaro et al., 2021). Additionally, they also play the input roles of ensuring the aggregation and articulation of political opinions while performing the output functions of policy formulation, implementation and adjudication. The centrality of political parties to representative democracy is, notably, firmly located in their function of providing the platforms for people to choose or be chosen as elected representatives. They help vet and whittle the number of political candidates to a manageable size, depending on the party system in operation. Further to this, they enhance political participation as they provide the connections between the electorates and the candidates for political offices. Thus, it is safe to conclude that, without political parties, the electoral process would become unwieldy and anarchical (Aleyomi, 2013; Ekundayo, 2016; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Saka et al., 2019; Tsaro et al., 2021). As Chidi (2015) notes:

The implication of operating a democratic system without political parties, solely on independent candidature, is frightening; it means people will be governed without a compass or programms usually provided by political parties. The policies of such independent candidates in the position of authority will be subjected to personal whims and caprices; issues that catch their fancies without considering whether they are of benefit to the people are given priority attention. You cannot have an independent candidate without ideology or programm of action and expect a genuinely democratic government (p. 54).

Conflict is a common occurrence in every human society and organization. This issue is the reality that societies and organizations lack the resources to satisfy the needs of all their members. These members thus have to struggle to gain access to the limited resources of the society or organization. The onus is on the leadership of the society to provide strategies to allocate the available resources in a way that would not engender violence. In essence, conflicts ensue when members pursue incompatible goals or seek to achieve individual goals with the limited resources of society (Adams & Iwu, 2015; Adewuyi et al., 2021; Sastrawan et al., 2020). Political parties are also plagued by intra-party conflicts arising out of many factors including godfatherism, elitism, favoritism, lack of clear-cut ideologies, lack of internal democracy and financial issues (Aleyomi, 2013; Moliki, 2020; Momodu & Matudi, 2013). The root causes of intra-party conflicts are associated with the desire for power, resources, identity, ideas, and values. Political parties are made up of individuals who join the party to satisfy their desire to exercise power based on personal ideals, values and establish a cherished identity. As all individuals possess these ideals and the resources available to the party to help in the attainment of these ideals are scarce, there are bound to be conflicts in every political party. In this wise, researchers have shown that intra-party conflicts are mostly caused by party primaries as some members of the party emerge successful in their bid to be the representatives of their political parties while others suffer defeat. It is therefore not surprising that party primaries are considered the greatest threat to party stability (Aleyomi, 2013; Moliki, 2020; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Tsaro et al., 2021).

It is, however, not sacrosanct that all party primaries would result in crisis and lead to party instability. The vulnerability of a political party to instability arising out of its primaries depends largely on the degree of its institutionalization, especially with respect to the level of its organization, discipline, capacity for internal democracy and cohesion. A political party that is weakly organized, condones indiscipline, has autocratic leadership, and lacks mechanisms to ensure cohesion would be susceptible to instability (Omotola, 2010).

Crisis management revolves around the ability of organizations to minimize threats to survival (Alas et al., 2012; Strother, 2016; Zamoum & Gorpe, 2018). As studies have shown, the processes of recruitment into an organization and the level of members' involvement in the decisions have implications for its survival (Bans-Akutey et al., 2021; Pervin & Begum, 2022; Putra & Istiyani, 2022; Sastrawan et al., 2020). By extension, management of intra-party conflicts refers to the process of resolving conflicting interests within political parties. It is essentially about the adoption and employment of strategies to mitigate the negative and destructive influences of conflicts on party stability, especially conflicts arising out of the processes of choosing representatives for general elections (Adewuyi et al., 2021; Awofeso et al., 2017). This process often involves five main procedures, namely consultation, mediation, negotiation, bargaining and power sharing. Consultation is the act of reaching out for information and opinions about intra-party affairs in order to have a better understanding of issues and make informed decisions. It involves contacting major stakeholders in the party to find common grounds between conflicting interests in the party for the purpose of ensuring party stability. The process of consultation is to open formal and informal channels among party members to resolve lingering differences among them (Peters & Pierre, 2020).

Mediation refers to a process through which a credible third party provides avenues for party members or groups in conflict to resolve their differences. The mediator arrives at solutions to conflicts in the group by creating an enabling environment for aggrieved parties to discuss and find common ground on their interests (Mavalla et al., 2016, Zartman, 2019). Negotiation is a process directed towards reaching some form of agreement between parties to the conflict. This process is

achieved by creating alternatives that would satisfy the interests of all the aggrieved parties. Negotiation offers parties to the conflict the opportunity to air their grievances and find alternatives to their expectations if the main interests are no longer available. The negotiation process involves making concessions to ensure party stability (Debus & Gross, 2016; Zartman, 2019).

Power sharing is another important strategy used in managing intra-party conflicts. It involves granting significant groups in a political party the capacity to take decisions on important party issues including the selection of party representatives. It assists in reinforcing and converging the interest of political parties, especially from the dominant elites in favor of the marginal elite group of a political party. It covers the nature of political arrangements, institutions, and policies aimed at providing a fair representation of the dominant and marginal elite groups of a political party. The political party used power sharing as a means to manage intra-party conflicts. It is implemented through arrangements such as zoning positions of political party offices, party standard bearers during elections as well as political appointments of party members for a government position (Papagianni, 2008; Pierson & Thomson, 2018). Bargaining is also an important strategy for resolving intra-party conflicts. It involves the discussions between the members and leaders of a political party to reach an agreement on power sharing among them. It involves an agreement on what to do to pacify party members and party loyalists for a particular interest. Bargaining is a distributive form of a negotiation process that is both a competitive and professional. It involves competitive bargaining strategy in which party members share political offices such as money, and other resources of the political party among its members (Debus & Gross, 2016; Zartman, 2019).

2.2 Character of political parties in Nigeria
The party system in Nigeria originated from the clamor for self-independence during the colonial period and the opportunity afforded by the Clifford Constitution of 1922 to grant limited measures of political participation to Nigerians (Dickson & Ita, 2022; Ekundayo, 2016). Thus, the major objective of political parties before Nigeria's independence in 1960 was to serve as platforms for nationalities to prosecute the drive for independence. The achievement of independence in 1960 changed the objective and, by extension, the character of political parties in the country. The quest to gain political power to achieve individual and sectional interests has resulted in heightening intra- and inter-party conflicts since the country's independence (Aleyomi, 2013; Ekundayo, 2016).

The character of political parties in the country has also been shaped by the country's political history including the mismanagement of ethnic diversity in the country (Adenuga, 2022) which led to most of the parties assuming ethnic identities, especially in the first and second republics (Adegbami & Uche, 2015; Chidi, 2015; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). Military interventions in politics, which brought abrupt ends to the first, second and third republics, have also been seen as reasons for the inability of political parties to develop internal democratic practices and act as agents of entrenching democratic consolidation in the country. It is instructive to note that the military ruled the country for almost three decades and this fostered an autocratic culture that resonated in decision-making processes within political parties. And it is noteworthy, too, that overbearing leadership styles provide reasons for conflicts within political parties (Adegbami & Uche, 2015; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019).

Against what obtains in other climes where political parties are grounded in political ideologies and their differences are dictated by their ideological leanings, Nigerian political parties lack ideologies. The ideological impotence of Nigerian political parties is dictated by the rentier nature of the Nigerian state. The state is perceived as an instrument and center of accumulating and distributing the resources of the state. The patronage the capture and control of political power provides turns political participation into a business venture devoid of political ideologies (Ekundayo, 2016; Gidado, 2018; Tsaro et al., 2021). Since the political party is the veritable platform for political participation, its capture is seen as tantamount to capturing political power in the state. Thus, competition to be the representatives of parties in general elections is always attended by a high level of acrimony.

2.3 Historical survey of intra-party conflicts in Nigeria

Party nominations in Nigeria's First Republic were conducted with much bitterness majorly because elective political positions were considered passports to a new life of affluence and influence (Ekundayo, 2016; Chidi, 2015; Ogbeidi, 2010; Yagboyaju & Simbine, 2020). There was also the tendency of aspirants who failed to get the nominations of their parties to stand as independents, which means those unsupported by any political party, and this had dire consequences for the parties they detached from. Sometimes, these independents were encouraged and financed by rival political parties to split the votes of the independents' former parties so as to boost the chances of getting sponsors' candidates elected (Adenuga, 2000).

The effects of independent candidates on the electoral performances of their former political parties in the 1959 general elections were some of the defining features of party politics in the First Republic. For example, Chief Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's decision to stand as an independent candidate in the Abeokuta constituency greatly affected the electoral fortunes of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the constituency. She had failed to get nominated as the candidate of NCNC and her independent candidature was the major reason for the defeat of the NCNC by the Action Group (AG) in the election as she split the votes of the NCNC. In the same vein, the AG swept the polls in the Ibadan Division because of the decisions of some NCNC members to contest the election as independent candidates. The Mobolaje, a group of people that were initially affiliated with the NCNC, aggrieved over the inability of their preferred candidates to get the nominations of the NCNC, supported seven independent candidates which made the NCNC lose to the AG in the elections (Adenuga, 2000; Byfield, 2016; Strobel, 2001).

The Second Republic was also characterized by intense intra-party politicking. Six main political parties took part in the electoral processes including the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) and the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP). The formations of some of these parties show the intensity of intra-party conflicts. For example, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim left the NPP to form the GNPP due to disagreement over party nominations in the NPP (Ndubuisi, 2018; Yagboyaju, 2021).

Out of all the nominations that were held in the Second Republic, the governorship nominations were the most intense. The experiences of the UPN and the NPN in the 1983 governorship elections in the five states of the South-West comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Bendel and Ondo, would suffice as examples of this assertion. These five states were under the control of the UPN prior to the 1983 elections and, therefore, the NPN's party nominations in these states were geared towards breaking the hold of the UPN in them. Out of the five states, it is notable that, in the three states of Lagos, Ogun and Ondo, the governorship aspirants who finally emerged as the party's candidates crossed over to the NPN from the UPN as a result of the nomination crisis in the UPN. In Bendel and Oyo states, the NPN imposed candidates who it felt could stand up to the candidates of the UPN in the elections (Adenuga, 2000; Ogbeidi, 2010).

In the aborted Third Republic under General Ibrahim Babangida, a two-party system was employed as against the multi-party system of the first and second republics. The two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), were foisted on the nation by the Babangida regime in a bid to curb ethnic/regional conflicts that characterized the earlier republics. Intra-party relations, especially nominations in the republic were also characterized by belligerency. In Lagos State, for example, political campaigns and relations between the two main rival governorship aspirants, Femi Agbalajobi (the SDP) and Dapo Sarumi (NRC), turned acrimonious. The fractionalization of the party during party primaries eventually led to its defeat by the candidate of the NRC despite the fact that the SDP had a stronger membership base in the state (Adenuga, 2000; Ismail, 2013; Osaghae, 1992).

Nigeria's Fourth Republic commenced in 1999 though registration of political parties began in the previous year. Out of the twenty-six political associations that indicated that sought registration to

contest the December 1998 Local Government election, only nine were granted provisional approval. These were the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the All People's Party (APP), the Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), the National Solidarity Movement (NSM), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), the United Democratic Party (UDP), and the United People's Party (UPP). Following their performances in the election, only three, viz., the AD, APP and PDP were registered to contest the 1999 general elections (Adenuga, 2000; Chidi, 2015; Ekundayo, 2016; Obiyan, 1999; Saka et al., 2019). INEC later granted official recognition to ninety-two political parties before seventy-four were deregistered in February 2020 for failing to meet the constitutional requirements needed for a national political party (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2022; Bonkat-Jonathan & Nandi, 2020). Intra-party conflicts continue to define the political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Aleyomi, 2013; Chidi, 2015; Moliki, 2020; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Ndubuisi, 2018; Saka et al., 2019; Tsaro et al., 2021; Yagboyaju, 2021).

2.4 AD and management of intra-party conflicts
The Alliance for Democracy's (AD) origin could be traced to the Institute of Civil Society Group (G-34), a pressure group that was formed to resist the dictatorial regime of General Sani Abacha and dissuade him from transmuting into a civilian president. The Peoples' Consultative Forum (PCF), a group which was comprised mostly of members of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and the Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba group, was a member of this group. The G-34 later metamorphosed into the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in 1998 to contest the 1999 general elections. Citing irreconcilable differences as its motive, the PCF pulled out from the group and went ahead to align with the Conference of Fused Association (CFA) to form the All Peoples' Party (APP). Shortly before the official launching of the APP, the PCF left and registered a political party called the Alliance for Democracy (AD) (Adenuga, 2000; Omenma & Onyishi, 2014).

Despite being regarded as an ethnic/regional party, given its origins, the AD soon gained prominence as one of the leading political parties in the country (Chidi, 2015; Ekundayo, 2016; Saka et al., 2019). It was one of the only three political parties registered to contest the 1999 general elections in the country, following its strong showings in the December 1998 Local Government elections. It came third in the December 1998 elections with 100 chairmanship seats and 744 councillorship seats in its kitty after APP's 182 chairmanship and 1,450 councillorship seats and PDP's 389 chairmanship and 3,342 councillorship seats (Obiyan, 1999; Saka et al., 2019). The AD was able to achieve this feat because nominations for the election were consensual. The party leadership of every local government was directed to meet and produce candidates who would be acceptable to all members of their local chapters (Adenuga, 2000; Ojo, 2019).

Nominations for the state elections were, however, characterized by intra-party conflicts. This was mainly a result of the political status of the gladiators vying to become the governors of their respective states on the platform of the party. For example, in Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, a former Senator in the Third Republic and a leading member of NADECO and Dr. Wahab Dosumu, a former Minister of Works and Housing, indicated their interests to become the standard bearers of the party in the general elections. Other aspirants with significant political standing in the state included Engineer Funsho Williams, a former Commissioner of Works in the state, Senator Kofoworola Bucknor-Akerele and Alhaji Rasheed Shitta-Bey (Adenuga, 2000; Badmus, 2021; Ojo, 2019).

In Ekiti State, political stalwarts including Otunba Niyi Adebayo, Otunba Reuben Famuyibo, Chief Paul Alabi, Chief S. K. Babalola, Mr. Obafemi Adewale and Dr. Jide Olajide indicated interest to contend for the party ticket. Aspirants in Ogun State included a former governor of the state, Chief Segun Osoba, Dr. Ayinde Ibikunle, Chief Olu Oyesanya, Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi and Chief Femi Coker. For Osun State, prominent members of the party who wanted to become governors included Chief Iyiola Omisore, Chief Bisi Akande, a former Deputy Governor of old Oyo State and Chief Abiola Morakinyo, a former Commissioner in old Oyo State. Other aspirants were Prince Adedamola Aderemi, Dr. Duro Famujuro and Chief Lere Adebayo. In Ondo State, Chief Ade Adefarati, a former Commissioner in the state and the erstwhile state party chairman, Chief (Mrs.) Mobolaji Osomo, a former Minister of Establishment, Engineer Ogunleye, Professor Olu Aderounmu and Chief Segun

Adegoke were the notable aspirants. In Oyo State, Alhaji Lam Adeshina, Alhaji Kolawole Gbadamosi and Chief Mufutau Salau were the frontline aspirants (Adenuga, 2000; Badmus, 2021; Mimiko, 2007; Ojo, 2019; Omotola, 2012; Popoola, 2004).

The gubernatorial primaries of the party were held on December 21, 1998, and the results showed variations in the conduct and response of the aspirants. In Oyo and Osun, respectively, consensual candidates were produced with Lam Adeshina and Chief Bisi Akande as the standard bearers of the party without dissensions. In Ekiti State, Otunba Niyi Adebayo emerged as the winner of the primary election which was rancor-free. In Ogun State, two aspirants, Chief Femi Coker and Dr. Ayinde Ibikunle protested that the primary election, which led to the emergence of Chief Segun Osoba as the gubernatorial candidate of the party, was not free and fair. In Ondo State, conflicting reports showed that Chief Ade Adefarati and Chief (Mrs) Mobolaji Osomo were returned as the winners of the primary election. In Lagos State, about three sets of results were announced with Senator Bola Tinubu, Engineer Funsho Williams and Dr. Wahab Dosumu variously touted as the winners of the primary election in the state (Adenuga, 2000; Badmus, 2021; Mimiko, 2007; Ojo, 2019; Omotola, 2012; Popoola, 2004).

To resolve the deadlock on who emerged as the AD's governorship candidates in Lagos, Ondo and Ogun states, the party set up a seven-man committee to look into petitions on the primary elections. The committee was mandated to discuss with all the candidates and ensure peaceful resolutions of conflicting interests. The committee was able to resolve all conflicts arising from the primary elections in the three states as Senator Bola Tinubu was accepted by all the aspirants as the standard bearer of the party in Lagos State while Chief Ade Adefarati and Chief Segun Osoba were also confirmed as the party candidates in Ondo State and Ogun State respectively (Adenuga, 2000; Mimiko, 2007; Ojo, 2019; Omotola, 2012; Popoola, 2004).

For the primary elections to determine its representatives in the National Assembly and the presidential elections, the party adopted the consensus method. This method was adopted to avoid the crisis that attended the gubernatorial primary elections. At the end of the exercise, candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives elections were produced while Chief Olu Falae, a former Secretary to the Federal Government, emerged as the presidential candidate of the party (Adenuga, 2000; Adesoji, 2017; Lewis 1999; Ojo, 2019). The AD had a good performance in the general elections as all its governorship candidates in the six states of the southwest (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states) emerged victorious. Concomitantly, it recorded an overwhelming victory in the elections into the states House of Assembly elections in the six states. The party also won the majority of seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate in the National Assembly election in the six states. Though Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP won the presidential election, Chief Olu Falae, the presidential candidate of the AD posted a strong showing in the election as he won the second-highest number of votes. The feat established the AD as one of the leading political parties in Nigeria (Adenuga, 2000; Adesoji, 2017; Badmus, 2021; Lewis 1999; Ojo, 2019).

However, at the end of the 2003 general elections, the party had become a shadow of its former self. The PDP had snatched five of the six states in the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections, leaving only Lagos State as the only AD-controlled state in Nigeria. In the same vein, it earned dismal results in the National Assembly and presidential elections (Cheeseman & de Gramont, 2017; Le Van et al., 2003). Four reasons could be adduced for the poor showing of the AD in the 2003 elections. First, the assassination of Chief Bola Ige, one of the founders of the party and a major stakeholder, was a big dent in the capacity of the party to ensure discipline and enforce party dominance as he was a charismatic leader of the party (Durotoye, 2014; Lewis, 2003). Second, the decision of the party to field the incumbent governors as its standard bearers in the governorship elections resulted in a marked exodus of some stalwarts of the party to other political parties, especially the PDP, easily paving way for the victory of the PDP candidates (Ajayi, 2006; Le Van et al., 2003; Nwanegbo & Alumona, 2011). Third, the avowed determination of the incumbent president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, to win his geopolitical region for the PDP was a strong impetus for the party to dislodge the AD in the southwest (Ajayi, 2006; Durotoye, 2014). Finally, and most importantly, the split of the

party into two rival factions as a result of the leadership tussle between Senator Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa and Chief Bisi Akande, escalated the conflict in the party into a full-blown crisis. While the Afenifere group declared Senator Akinfenwa the authentic national chairman of the party, Senator Bola Tinubu, the Governor of Lagos State and the former governors on the platform of the party threw their weight behind Chief Bisi Akande (Adebanwi, 2010; Eme & Anyadike, 2011).

The decision of the Chief Bisi Akande faction of the party to merge with some parties, including the Justice Party and the Advance Congress of Democrats, to form the Action Congress (AC) in September 2006 was a fatal stroke to the AD as it became difficult for the party to regain its status as one of the leading political parties in the country (Adebanwi, 2010; Eme & Anyadike, 2011). The party failed to win any elective position at all levels of government in the 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. This string of electoral failures accounted for the deregistration of the party by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the country's electoral management body, in February 2020. Specifically, the AD, alongside seventy-three other political parties was deregistered for failing to satisfy the constitutional requirement to garner at least 25% of the votes cast in the 2019 presidential election. The party also failed to win 25% of the votes cast in one local government in the 2019 governorship elections (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2022; Bonkat-Jonathan & Nandi, 2020).

3. Research Methodology
The study is basically qualitative. It analyzed secondary data on Nigeria's Fourth Republic to explain the character of political parties and conduct a historical survey of intra-party conflicts in Nigeria. Extant literature on party politics was also reviewed to reveal the management of intra-party conflicts in the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the events that led to its loss of status as a frontline political party in the country.

4. Conclusions
This study showed that the AD was able to record appreciable successes in the 1998/1999 general elections because the party leadership successfully mediated to resolve conflicts resulting from party primaries through extensive consultations and other strategies. However, unresolved issues over the appointment of the National Chairman of the party and the selection of candidates for the 2003 general elections, led to its fractionalization and serial defeats in general elections since 2003. The party subsequently lost its status as a frontline political party and was eventually deregistered as a political party in February 2020.

To prevent party instability, party leaders have the duty to mediate and manage conflicts with a variety of approaches such as negotiation consultation, bargaining and power sharing between the dominant and marginal elites of the political parties.

4.1 Limitations
Despite being the main opposition party in the 1999 general elections, literature on the AD is scanty. This limited insights into events that culminated in the AD's loss of status as a frontline political party in Nigeria. INEC deregistered over seventy Nigerian political parties in 2020 and further researchers could be conducted to see if the fortunes of these parties align with the findings of the study concerning the AD.

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