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The Obi–Kwankwaso Question

A coalition that exists more in commentary than in mechanics. We map what would actually have to happen — and what each side gives up.

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The Obi–Kwankwaso Question

A coalition that exists more in commentary than in mechanics. We map what would actually have to happen — and what each side gives up.

In Nigerian political commentary, the Obi–Kwankwaso alliance is treated as a binary: it will happen, or it will not. The framing is wrong. Eighteen months out from the 2027 general elections, the operational question is not whether the alliance forms — it is what specific structural arrangement allows it to form without either principal being seen as having lost to the other. That distinction is where the politics actually lives, and it is the only frame that matches what is happening inside both parties' working groups today.

This brief sets out the three structural arrangements currently under serious discussion, the political constraints each principal is operating under, and the indicators institutional readers should track over the next two quarters to distinguish between scenarios. It draws on direct sourcing within both Labour Party and NNPP advisory circles, and on a structured review of party communications since the start of 2026.

Why the binary frame fails

The 2023 election produced a result that the combined opposition arithmetic did not require. Atiku Abubakar (PDP, 29.1%), Peter Obi (LP, 25.4%), and Rabiu Kwankwaso (NNPP, 6.4%) collectively received over 60% of votes cast against Bola Tinubu's 36.6%. Internal party reviews in both the LP and NNPP — documents we have reviewed at the working-group level — identified the inability to coalesce around a single opposition candidate as the proximate cause of an outcome that did not have to occur.

The conclusion drawn from that review is not that fragmentation must be avoided in 2027. The conclusion is that fragmentation is now politically priced — and the cost of running independent campaigns is a cost both principals have publicly indicated they recognise. That is a precondition for alliance, not the alliance itself.

The three arrangements actually under discussion

Arrangement 01 — Joint ticket, separate party platforms

Both parties remain organisationally distinct. The presidential candidate runs on one party platform; the running mate runs on the other. The campaign is operated jointly through a coordinating structure. This arrangement preserves brand identity for both bases — important to LP supporters who will not accept subordination to NNPP, and equally important to NNPP supporters whose loyalty is heavily personality-driven.

The arrangement carries operational complications. Ballot order, party-symbol display, and the constitutional question of a running mate's party affiliation all require resolution. INEC's interpretive posture on these questions is currently uncertain — and is itself a moving variable in scenario assessment.

Arrangement 02 — Merger into a third vehicle

Both parties dissolve into a newly constituted party that absorbs the leadership and apparatus of each. This is structurally cleanest and historically precedented (the APC's 2013 formation), but politically expensive. It requires both principals to accept that their existing party machinery — recently rebuilt at material cost — must be subordinated to a new structure neither principal has full ownership of. The 2013 APC merger required substantial external mediation; the equivalent mediation infrastructure for an LP–NNPP merger does not currently exist.

Arrangement 03 — Coordinated convergence on a single candidate

Both parties run separately through primary stages, but commit to a coordinated convergence on a single candidate at a defined point in the cycle. This produces less brand consolidation than option 02, but preserves more political optionality for both principals — and crucially, it allows each principal to argue, to their respective bases, that they have not "lost" to the other.

"The arrangement most likely to actually materialise is the one that lets each principal explain the alliance to their base as a strategic concession rather than a personal defeat. That is option 03."

The constraint structure on each principal

To understand which arrangement materialises, the relevant analysis is not preferences but constraints. Each principal is operating inside a specific political envelope.

Peter Obi

Obi's 2023 campaign drew its appeal substantially from an anti-establishment posture that Kwankwaso's career is structurally inconsistent with. The LP base — particularly its urban and youth components — does not view Kwankwaso as a coalition partner. Obi cannot simply announce alliance and expect his base to follow; the alliance must be framed as preserving the LP's distinctive political identity, not subordinating it. This is the constraint that makes arrangements 01 and 03 viable for Obi and arrangement 02 difficult.

Rabiu Kwankwaso

Kwankwaso's appeal is concentrated in Kano and adjacent parts of the North-West. It is heavily personality-driven and does not transfer well to a broader LP framework. Kwankwaso also operates within a broader Northern political ecosystem in which alliance with a Southern Christian candidate carries specific costs that must be priced into any arrangement. The constraint structure makes arrangement 03 the most viable from Kwankwaso's side as well — it preserves his independent base while opening the option of late convergence at a moment of his choosing.

What we are tracking

Three indicators distinguish between the arrangements over the next two quarters:

01. **Joint communications.** Coordinated public appearances, joint communiqués, and shared event scheduling — particularly in jurisdictions where both parties have meaningful presence. Coordinated public posture is the most reliable early indicator of arrangement 03 forming.
02. **Working-group infrastructure.** Whether the parties establish joint policy working groups, joint campaign-strategy committees, or shared operational infrastructure. Movement here would suggest arrangement 02 is becoming more credible than current evidence supports.
03. **External mediation activity.** Whether senior figures outside both party structures (former heads of state, multilateral institutions, religious leaders) take on visible mediation roles. Mediation infrastructure is what made the 2013 APC merger possible; its absence in 2026 is what makes arrangement 02 unlikely.

Bottom line

The Obi-Kwankwaso alliance is not a yes-or-no question. It is a structural-arrangement question. Three arrangements are under serious discussion; arrangement 03 — coordinated convergence on a single candidate — is the operational base case based on the constraint structure each principal is operating under. Arrangement 01 (joint ticket) is the secondary scenario. Arrangement 02 (merger) is unlikely without

mediation infrastructure that does not currently exist.

For institutional readers tracking sovereign credit, capital flows, or operational exposure to Nigerian markets, the relevant analytical move is not to predict whether the alliance happens. It is to monitor which arrangement materialises — because each carries materially different implications for how the 2027 electoral outcome distributes, and therefore for how exposure should be priced.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

01. The Obi–Kwankwaso alliance is not a yes-or-no question. It is a structural-arrangement question — and the three arrangements currently under discussion produce materially different political outcomes.
02. Arrangement 03 — coordinated convergence on a single candidate after independent primary stages — is the operational base case. It is the only arrangement that allows each principal to explain the alliance to their base without admitting a personal defeat.
03. Arrangement 01 (joint ticket, separate party platforms) is the secondary scenario, contingent on INEC's interpretive posture on cross-party running-mate eligibility.
04. Arrangement 02 (merger into a third vehicle) is unlikely without external mediation infrastructure comparable to what made the 2013 APC formation possible — and that infrastructure is not currently in place.
05. Three indicators over the next two quarters distinguish between arrangements: coordinated public communications, joint working-group infrastructure, and external-mediation visibility.
06. Institutional readers should monitor which arrangement materialises rather than whether the alliance happens — each carries different implications for sovereign credit, FX dynamics, and capital flow trajectories.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Richard is the Founder and Senior Principal of ELDR Group Inc., an advisory, intelligence, and technology firm operating across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Nigeria. He has led documentation, GRC, and enterprise technology mandates for organisations including Apple, IBM, Mastercard, Capital One, SAP, PwC, ServiceNow, and the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

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