

RISE AND FRAGMENTATION OF KWANKWASIYYA: EXAMINING THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL MENTORSHIP AND SUCCESSION IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA (2011-2023)

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Abstract

This paper examines the rise, consolidation, and subsequent internal friction within the Kwankwasiyya political movement in Kano State, Nigeria, focusing on the dynamic relationship between political mentorship and succession politics. Originating under the leadership of former Governor Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, the Kwankwasiyya movement evolved from a localized patron-client network into a dominant political platform characterized by populism, institutionalized loyalty, and welfare-oriented policies. Drawing on political patronage theory, prebendalism, and elite consolidation models, the study analyzes how the movement successfully mobilized grassroots support while structured around personalist leadership. However, as mentored protégés assumed executive power, most notably during political transitions, the inherent tensions between godfatherism and gubernatorial autonomy triggered internal fractures, elite defections, and factional realignments. Utilizing a qualitative research design based on primary key-informant interviews and secondary political documentation, the study demonstrates that while political mentorship in Kano facilitated power projection and succession, the failure to institutionalize power-sharing mechanisms rendered the movement vulnerable to structural fragmentation. The findings reveal that the Kwankwasiyya movement initially succeeded by blending populist public policy with a tightly disciplined, personalist patronage structure. However, as revealed by interviews with party insiders, this populist appeal masked a strictly hierarchical power structure, which simultaneously prevented the growth of internal democratic mechanisms for conflict resolution. The paper recommends that political parties must move away from personalist, candidate-imposition frameworks toward transparent, institutionalized nomination processes and the need to reduce hyper-centralization of state resources that makes the governorship a zero-sum prebendal prize.

Keywords: Kwankwasiyya, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, Kano State Politics, Godfatherism, Political Mentorship, Succession Politics, Subnational Governance

1.1 Introduction

In subnational African politics, the interplay between political mentorship and executive succession remains a central driver of governance stability and democratic consolidation. In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, this dynamic frequently manifests as "godfatherism" a socio-

political structure wherein powerful mentors leverage financial capital, social networks, and institutional access to install protégés into executive offices, expecting continued influence over state resources and policy decisions (Albert, 2005; Ibrahim, 2018). While political mentorship can foster ideological continuity, party

discipline, and effective succession planning, it simultaneously introduces structural vulnerabilities when mentored successors seek executive autonomy. Kano State is a Northern Nigeria's primary commercial center and political barometer that presents a compelling laboratory for examining these dynamics through the evolution of the *Kwankwasiyya* movement. Established under former Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, the movement evolved from a tactical intra-party caucus into a dominant populist platform defined by red-cap symbolism, mass welfare schemes, and structured elite cohesion (Yusuf & Omar, 2021; Salihi, 2023).

Despite its initial success in consolidating power, the *Kwankwasiyya* movement has faced severe internal fragmentation, illustrating a persistent governance paradox in subnational Nigerian politics. The transition of executive authority from Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso to his former deputy and handpicked successor, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, in 2015 marked a critical turning point. What was designed as a model of seamless succession rapidly collapsed into intense mentor-protégé rivalry, policy reversals, elite defections, and factional realignments (Mustapha & Abdullahi, 2022). This rift eventually led to the movement's exit from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), the adoption and revitalization of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) and a fundamental reconfiguration of the state's political landscape heading into subsequent election cycles (Page, 2023; Jibrin, 2024). The trajectory of *Kwankwasiyya* demonstrates that while informal political mentorship enables rapid power projection and electoral dominance, its heavy reliance on personalist loyalty often undermines long-term institutional stability.

Understanding this trajectory requires a critical examination of how the *Kwankwasiyya* movement initially institutionalized its brand of populist

mentorship to dominate Kano's political architecture, and what specific structural triggers transformed the Kwankwaso-Ganduje alliance from a unified power bloc into a factional conflict. This inquiry necessitates interrogating the ways in which the formal constitutional powers of an incumbent governor inevitably clash with informal expectations of loyalty to political godfathers, particularly when access to state patronage is at stake. Ultimately, evaluating how the resulting fragmentation of *Kwankwasiyya* has reshaped electoral competition, party realignments, and subnational administration in Kano State provides vital empirical insights into the delicate balance between informal patronage networks and constitutional governance in emerging democracies.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

- a) To examine the mechanisms of mass mobilization and personalist leadership that led to the rise and consolidation of the Kwankwasiyya movement in Kano State
- b) To analyze the political and structural factors that triggered the mentor-protégé rift between Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and Abdullahi Umar Ganduje following the 2015 executive transition.
- c) To evaluate the impact of the Kwankwasiyya fragmentation on subnational party realignments, state patronage distribution, and governance stability in Kano State.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Conceptualizing Godfatherism and Political Mentorship in Nigerian Subnational Governance

The scholarship on African subnational politics consistently highlights informal patronage networks, patron-client dynamics, and personalist leadership as critical determinants of electoral outcomes

and executive stability. In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, these informal structures are broadly conceptualized through the paradigm of "godfatherism" that is a socio-political mechanism wherein well-resourced political mentors leverage financial capital, institutional access, and coercive capacity to install protégés into public office (Albert, 2005; Ibrahim, 2018). While classic political theory often frames mentorship as a mechanism for institutionalizing party discipline, ideology, and leadership succession, the Nigerian political landscape frequently redefines mentorship into a predatory transaction. As Joseph (1987) established through the framework of prebendalism, access to state offices is primarily sought to distribute state resources to clientelist networks.

In subnational governance, political godfatherism operates as a dual-edged sword. On one hand, influential godfathers provide political stability, resource mobilization, and electoral machinery necessary for emerging leaders to navigate complex democratic spaces (Omotola, 2007). On the other hand, the relationship is bound by an implicit social contract requiring absolute loyalty and financial or administrative concessions from the protégé once executive power is secured (Adu, 2006). When this informal contract is challenged, subnational administration frequently devolves into institutional paralysis, legislative conflict, and party instability.

1.3.2 Dynamics of Executive Succession and Gubernatorial Autonomy

A central theme within Nigerian political literature is the structural collision between informal political godfathers and the formal constitutional power of incumbent governors. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria grants state governors vast executive powers, including direct control over state

treasuries, public appointments, local government allocation funds, and security apparatuses (Suberu, 2020). This concentration of formal authority creates an inherent paradox for political succession.

While a godfather facilitates a protégé's electoral victory expecting continued deference, the constitutional architecture of the governorship empowers the successor with independent patronage levers (Mahmud & Ozden, 2025). Previous studies on state-level mentor-protégé fractures, such as the historical conflicts between Olusola Saraki and Mohammed Lawal in Kwara State, or Chris Uba and Chris Ngige in Anambra State which both demonstrates that incumbent governors inevitably seek executive autonomy to build their own patronage networks and political survival bases (Albert, 2005; Omotola, 2007). The transition of power from a mentor to a protégé thus represents a highly volatile political juncture, where the successor's drive for autonomy directly threatens the mentor's political hegemony.

1.3.4 Ideology, Populism, and the Structural Trajectory of Kwankwasiyya

Within Northern Nigeria, Kano State occupies a unique position as a historic center of radical populist politics, dating back to the anti-feudal mobilization of Aminu Kano and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) during the First Republic (Yusuf & Omar, 2021). The emergence of the *Kwankwasiyya* movement under Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso represents a modern continuation and adaptation of this populist tradition. Unlike traditional clientelist networks that rely solely on elite bargaining, *Kwankwasiyya* developed a distinct political brand characterized by symbolic identity (the red cap), mass social welfare programs, foreign educational scholarships, and urban infrastructure development (Salihi, 2023).

Scholars debate whether *Kwankwasiyya* represents a genuine ideological shift or a sophisticated elite strategy for electoral domination. Mahmud and Ozden (2025) argue that while *Kwankwasiyya* utilizes populist rhetoric and social programs to build a massive grassroots base, its internal decision-making processes remain heavily centralized around Kwankwaso's personalist leadership. This dual character combining mass popular appeals with elite-driven patron-client dynamics allowed the movement to dominate Kano politics across multiple election cycles.

1.3.5 Factional Realignment and Fragmentation: The Kwankwaso-Ganduje Rift

The post-2015 political trajectory of Kano State provides an illustrative case study in the breakdown of subnational political mentorship. The succession alliance between Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso and his long-time deputy, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, was initially hailed as a rare example of political continuity in Nigeria (Mustapha & Abdullahi, 2022). However, upon assuming office in 2015, Ganduje actively dismantled key *Kwankwasiyya* institutional structures, revoked legacy appointments, and formed a competing political identity (*Gandujiyya*) to assert executive independence (Mahmud & Ozden, 2025).

The resulting rift triggered profound structural realignments in Kano's political landscape. As documented by Jibrin (2024) and Page (2023), the conflict led to elite defections, violent political clashes, the division of traditional institutions (such as the splitting of the Kano Emirate), and Kwankwaso's eventual departure from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to establish the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP). This trajectory demonstrates that without formal institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution and power-sharing, subnational political movements built around personalist mentorship remain

vulnerable to structural fragmentation once executive authority shifts to a successor.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

To systematically evaluate the structural mechanisms governing the emergence, consolidation, and eventual fragmentation of the *Kwankwasiyya* movement in Kano State, this study synthesizes three interconnected analytical lenses: political patronage theory, prebendalism, and elite consolidation models. Together, these frameworks explain how informal power structures interact with formal state institutions in subnational Nigerian governance, providing a holistic explanation for mentor-protégé dynamics and succession crises.

1.6.1 Political Patronage and Patron-Client Theory

As propounded by James C. Scott (1972), Carl H. Landé (1965), Shmuel N. Eisenstadt & René Lemarchand (1972), the political patronage theory posits that political power in developing democracies is fundamentally anchored in asymmetric, transactional exchanges between resource-endowed patrons and dependent clients (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984; Scott, 1972). Within Nigerian subnational governance, this dynamic manifests as "godfatherism" i.e. an informal institutional arrangement where influential political mentors utilize financial capital, grassroots mobilization networks, and institutional access to secure public office for their chosen protégés. In exchange for electoral sponsorship, the protégé is expected to yield strategic influence, board appointments, state contracts, and policy oversight to the patron. In the context of Kano State, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso functioned as a classic political patron who built a vast clientelist network by delivering targeted public goods such as foreign postgraduate scholarships, mass weddings, and urban infrastructure to cultivate absolute loyalty

among his followers (*Kwankwasiyya*). However, as Patronage Theory asserts, when a protégé ascends to executive office and gains direct control over state patronage levers, the traditional asymmetric power balance shifts. The successor's subsequent attempts to establish independent clientelist networks inevitably breach the informal patron-client contract, sparking severe intra-party friction (Scott, 1972).

1.6.2 Theory of Prebendalism

To explain why control over the state executive becomes the ultimate flashpoint between mentors and protégés, this study integrates Richard Joseph's (1987) Theory of prebendalism. Rooted in Max Weber's concept of prebendal office-holding, Joseph conceptualizes prebendalism as the systemic treating of public offices as personal "prebends" or benefices that can be appropriated by officeholders to serve their personal and communal clientelist networks. In a prebendal political economy, state power is the primary instrument for primitive accumulation and elite survival. When applied to the *Kwankwasiyya* phenomenon, prebendalism explains the material imperatives underlying the Kwankwaso-Ganduje succession crisis. Under the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the executive governor exercises near-total control over state allocations, local government joint accounts, and public procurement. While the mentor expects the protégé to operate the state apparatus as a shared prebend, the constitutional reality of gubernatorial authority allows the incumbent governor to monopolize state prebends. The post-2015 dismantling of *Kwankwasiyya* structures by Abdullahi Umar Ganduje reflects a structural drive to reorient the distribution of state prebends toward new factional elite (*Gandujiyya*). Prebendalism thus highlights how competition over state resources transforms personalist mentorship into open political hostility.

1.6.3 Elite Consolidation and Settlement Models

To conceptualize the macro-level trajectory of political movements from cohesion to fragmentation, the paper draws on elite theory, specifically Higley and Burton's (1989) Elite Consolidation and Settlement Model. Higley and Burton argue that political stability depends on the structure and consensus of national and subnational elites. Elites can be categorized as disunified, characterized by high distrust and zero-sum conflict, or consensually unified, where elites agree on the procedural rules of political competition. *Kwankwasiyya* initially operated as an elite consolidation mechanism, uniting various political caucuses in Kano State under a singular, disciplined command structure. However, because this unity was personalist rather than institutionally grounded, it was inherently fragile. When the transition of executive power triggered an elite crisis between the Kwankwaso and Ganduje camps, the movement reverted to a state of elite disunity. The failure to negotiate a sustainable elite settlement regarding power-sharing and legislative representation led to the structural fragmentation of the movement, culminating in elite defections, party switches, and the realignment of the subnational party system.

By synthesizing political patronage theory, prebendalism, and elite consolidation models, this framework demonstrates that the rise and fragmentation of *Kwankwasiyya* was not merely a personal clash between two political figures. Rather, it was the predictable outcome of an informal, personalist mentorship structure colliding with the formal constitutional powers of an incumbent state executive within a resource-scarce, prebendal political economy.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Research Design

To investigate the structural mechanics of political mentorship, succession, and factional realignment within the *Kwankwasiyya* movement, this study adopts a single-case qualitative research design. A qualitative approach is uniquely suited for examining complex, informal political phenomena such as godfatherism, patron-client negotiations, and elite rivalries where formal political metrics fail to capture the nuanced realities of power dynamics. Kano State serves as an ideal instrumental case study due to its historic role as Northern Nigeria's primary political hub and its distinct experience with organized subnational populism (Yusuf & Omar, 2021; Salihi, 2023).

1.7.2 Sources of Data

This paper relies on a combination of primary and secondary data sources to ensure empirical depth and cross-validation. Primary data was generated through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted across key political stakeholders in Kano State and Abuja. Secondary data was generated through peer-reviewed academic literature, policy briefs, published memoirs, official political party communiqués, constitutional documents, legislative records, and curated investigative reports from verified news media outlets.

1.7.3 Data Analysis and Triangulation

Data were analyzed using Qualitative Thematic Analysis following the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). Transcripts and secondary documents were coded iteratively using specialized qualitative analysis software (NVivo) to extract recurring thematic

nodes, such as *executive autonomy*, *patronage distribution*, *brand loyalty* vs. *state power*, and *factional fragmentation*.

To preserve analytical rigor and mitigate informant bias, the study utilized source triangulation. Claims made by party partisans were cross-examined against constitutional provisions (e.g., Section 7 and Section 162 of the 1999 Constitution), official gazettes, news archives, and scholarly commentaries.

1.8. Data Presentation and Analysis

1.8.1 Key Informant Interview (KII) Metadata Log

A total of 15 Key Informant Interviews were conducted across primary stakeholder categories to map the *Kwankwasiyya-Gandujiyya* trajectory, power dynamics, and factional realignments.

Informant ID	Stakeholder Category / Profile	Factional Alignment / Role	Primary Focus Area	Date / Mode
KII-A1	Former Cabinet Member (2011–2015)	Kwankwasiyya Loyalist	Executive decision-making & dual authority	Aug 2023 / In-person
KII-A2	Former Senior Special Assistant	Kwankwasiyya Loyalist	Foreign scholarship program & mass weddings	Aug 2023 / In-person
KII-A3	NNPP State Executive Member	Kwankwasiyya / NNPP	Grassroots mobilization & red cap symbolism	Sep 2023 / In-person
KII-B1	State Assembly Member (APC)	Gandujiyya Loyalist	Legislative friction & LG Joint Account controls	Sep 2023 / In-person
KII-B2	State Executive Council Member (2015–2023)	Gandujiyya Loyalist	Review of legacy contracts & patronage shift	Oct 2023 / Remote
KII-B3	APC Kano Chapter Official	Gandujiyya / APC	Creation of Gandujiyya caucus & party defection	Oct 2023 / In-person
KII-C1	Senior Civil Servant (Kano State Ministry)	Neutral / Career Bureaucrat	Civil service restructuring & administrative shifts	Nov 2023 / In-person
KII-C2	Kano Emirate Council Official	Traditional Institution	Decentralization of Emirate system	Nov 2023 / In-person
KII-C3	Political Science Scholar (BUK Kano)	Academic / Political Analyst	Prebendalism, godfatherism, & elite friction	Dec 2023 / In-person

Source: Field Work (2023)

The dataset above provides a balanced qualitative sample matrix for this paper. The data was gathered through key informant interviews conducted between August and December 2023, the data captures the immediate aftermath of the May 2023 executive transition of power

from the All Progressives Congress under Abdullahi Umar Ganduje to the New Nigeria People's Party under Abba Kabir Yusuf and Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso. The methodology employs a balanced, three-pronged sampling structure across nine key informants, dividing participants equally into three distinct subgroups of three informants each to minimize bias and

cross-examine partisan narratives against objective institutional observations.

The first cluster of informants, comprising Kwankwasiyya loyalists and NNPP officials, reflects the perspective of the new ruling political movement. The primary focus of the respondents centers on executive decision-making under dual authority dynamics, where formal state offices intersect with the influence of political godfathers. The respondents emphasized that populist social programs served as primary mechanisms for legitimacy, notably the continuation of foreign scholarship initiatives and state-sponsored mass weddings. Additionally, this group highlights how visual identity, such as the signature red cap symbolism, drives grassroots mobilization and enforces ideological discipline across party cadres.

In contrast, the second group represents the Gandujiyya faction and APC stakeholders, focusing on the mechanics of political opposition and institutional pushback. The interviews highlight friction between executive authority and legislative actors, particularly surrounding control over Local Government Joint Account funds. This faction captures the operational impact of the executive transition, detailing the systematic review of legacy contracts, shifts in state patronage, land allocations, and the creation of internal party caucuses designed to manage political defections.

The final group offers an external analytical perspective from career bureaucrats, traditional leaders, and academic analysts at Bayero University Kano. These respondents had shifted focus from political maneuvering to the structural consequences of elite friction on

governance. Most respondents emphasized how administrative restructuring and politicized appointments disrupt civil service stability, while highlighting the contentious decentralization and political targeting of the Kano Emirate Council. Through academic lenses such as prebendalism and godfatherism, this neutral cohort frames the state's policy decisions from contract revocations to institutional reforms as direct manifestations of personalistic elite conflict rather than routine administrative changes.

1.8.2 Primary Document & Empirical Record Inventory

Primary qualitative and quantitative evidence was retrieved and archived from official state publications, legislative records, and party documents.

Document Code	Document Title / Source	Date	Key Data Extracted
DOC-01	Kano State Executive Council Approved Budget Reports	2011–2015	Allocation breakdown for foreign postgraduate scholarship schemes and urban infrastructure.
DOC-02	Official Gazette: Kano State Gazette on Emirate Restructuring	2019	Creation of 4 new emirates (Bichi, Gaya, Rano, Karaye) to break traditional centralized authority.
DOC-03	Kano State House of Assembly Hansard (Proceedings)	June 2015	Early legislative debates on executive appointments and loyalty oaths.
DOC-04	INEC Official Election Returns (Kano State)	2015, 2019, 2023	Longitudinal vote totals, party transitions (APC $\rightarrow$ PDP $\rightarrow$ NNPP), and Assembly seat distribution.
DOC-05	NNPP Kano State Manifesto & Campaign Records	2022–2023	Branding strategies, red cap symbolism, and grassroots ward mobilization structures.

Source: Author (2023)

The above dataset traces the political dynamics, executive-legislative power struggles, institutional restructuring, and electoral realignments in Kano State between 2011 and 2023.

The financial allocation breakdown from the 2011 to 2015 budget reports highlights the human capital development and urban modernization programs under Governor Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso's administration. Overseas postgraduate scholarship schemes and large-scale infrastructure investments functioned both as developmental policy and as a mechanism for political patronage, building a deeply loyal constituency that formed the core foundation of the Kwankwasiyya movement.

Following the 2015 elections, state legislative records capture early efforts by Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje's

incoming administration to consolidate executive authority. Assembly debates concerning executive appointments and political loyalty oaths underscore the immediate push to secure legislative alignment and assert executive control during a critical post-election power transition within the All Progressives Congress.

By 2019, state legislative power was deployed to alter Kano's traditional governance structure through the official gazetting of the Kano Emirate restructuring. The gazette justified splitting the historically unified Kano Emirate into five distinct domains, i.e. Kano, Bichi, Gaya, Rano, and Karaye emirates respectively. This event served as an avenue to fragment and weaken the centralized authority of the traditional monarchy, specifically targeting the then-Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II during a

period of escalating conflict with the state executive.

The electoral returns spanning 2015 to 2023, alongside campaign documentation from the New Nigeria Peoples Party, demonstrate remarkable political fluidity and mobilization capabilities in Kano State. The trajectory from the All Progressives Congress to the Peoples Democratic Party, and ultimately to the New Nigeria Peoples Party, illustrates how the Kwankwasiyya movement successfully

leveraged symbolic branding, such as the signature red cap, alongside ward-level grassroots organizing to establish a dominant third-party platform that reclaimed executive power in 2023.

1.8.3 Thematic Qualitative Coding Matrix

Raw interview transcripts and policy documents were coded into primary themes, supporting sub-themes, and verbatim empirical quotes.

Primary Theme	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
Personalist Hegemony	• Red Cap (Jar-Hula) • Top-Down Oversight • Unmediated Bond	"The red cap was not just a uniform; it was absolute loyalty."
Prebendal Conflict	• Contract Reallocation • LG Account Starvation • Emirate Fragmentation	"When the administration changed, contracts moved immediately."

Source: Author (2023)

The above data reflects mechanics of patronage politics, factional conflict, and state capture, drawing on dynamics characteristic of post-colonial statecraft specifically the political landscape of Northern Nigeria, where references like the red cap (*Jar-Hula*) and emirate fragmentation point directly to Kano's political history. At its core, the dataset contrasts two interlocking dimensions of power: the symbolic, personalized control over the populace and the extractive, competitive warfare among political elites over state resources.

The first major theme, Personalist Hegemony, illustrates how authority is concentrated in an individual leader rather than embedded within formal democratic institutions. The red cap serves as a vivid visual marker of clientelism, converting political alignment into an all-encompassing identity where allegiance is visually declared and strictly enforced. By establishing an unmediated bond directly with the public, the leader bypasses institutional checks and balances, cultivating an emotional, populist loyalty that demands complete fidelity. Under this structure, governance relies heavily on

top-down executive oversight, reducing public administration to a vehicle for personal authority and subordinating democratic deliberation to the dictates of the ruling hegemon.

The second theme, Prebendal Conflict, exposes the material consequences of this personalized power when applied to resource distribution and elite rivalry. State offices and public funds are treated as spoils of victory, triggering a zero-sum political economy whenever power shifts. This is clearest in the immediate reallocation of public contracts to reward new loyalists, as well as the deliberate starvation of local government accounts to neutralize rival bases of support. Furthermore, the strategic fragmentation of traditional institutions, such as historic

emirates, demonstrates a deliberate effort to dilute the influence of non-state authorities who might challenge executive dominance.

Ultimately, the data paints a picture of a political system where public institutions are continuously weaponized and re-engineered for factional survival. Mass support is secured through populist symbolism and personal loyalty on the surface, while behind the scenes, state machinery is deployed to starve opponents and reward political clients. Governance in this context ceases to be a neutral exercise in public service, operating instead as a continuous battleground for elite dominance and resource control.

1.8.5 Longitudinal Electoral Realignment Data (Kano State: 2015–2023)

Quantitative proof of Kwankwasiyya's movement from an incumbent power bloc to an oppositional force, and its eventual electoral resurrection via the NNPP:

Electoral Cycle	Main Political Vehicle	Gubernatorial Outcome	House Assembly Control	Key Shift / Tactical Realignment
2015	APC (Unified)	Won (APC - Ganduje)	APC Majority (Supermajority)	Kwankwasiyya-APC coalition sweeps Kano state elections.
2019	PDP (Kwankwasiyya Defection)	Lost (Contested APC Victory)	APC Majority	Kwankwasiyya defected to PDP; lost access to state prebends.
2023	NNPP (Mass Mobilization)	Won (NNPP - Abba Kabir Yusuf)	NNPP Majority	Tactical exit to NNPP; defeated incumbent APC state machinery.

Source: Author (2023)

The above table illustrates political trajectory and adaptability of the Kwankwasiyya movement, led by Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, in Kano State across three consecutive electoral cycles. Across these years, the movement's primary strength lay in its organic grassroots brand rather than rigid loyalty to any single political party. By transitioning through three distinct political vehicles i.e. from the All Progressives Congress in 2015 to the People's Democratic Party in 2019, and ultimately to the New Nigeria Peoples Party in 2023, the Kwankwasiyya movement demonstrated an ability to retain its core electorate regardless of platform.

The electoral outcomes highlighted a consistent pattern of straight-ticket voting in Kano State. Whenever the Kwankwasiyya movement secured the governorship, as seen in 2015 with Abdullahi Umar Ganduje and in 2023 with

Abba Kabir Yusuf, it simultaneously captured a majority in the Kano State House of Assembly. This co-terminus executive and legislative control allowed the Kwankwasiyya movement to establish immediate structural dominance over the state's governance architecture.

Conversely, the contested loss in 2019 underscores the severe operational challenges faced by Nigerian political factions when cut off from state power and institutional resources. Defecting to the PDP left the Kwankwasiyya movement without access to state leverage and prebends. However, ability of the Kwankwasiyya to survive four years in opposition without fragmenting paved way for the 2023 breakthrough, where mass mobilization under the NNPP successfully defeated the incumbent state machinery and re-established the Kwankwasiyya movement's regional hegemony.

1.8.6 Summary Matrix of Theoretical Application

Theoretical Model	Primary Theorist(s)	Application to Empirical Kano Evidence
Prebendalism Theory	Richard Joseph (1987)	State office treated as a prebend to distribute economic rents; control over LG joint accounts and contracts drove the Kwankwasiyya-Gandujiyya split.
Constitutional Supremacy vs. Godfatherism	Suberu (2020)	Inherent conflict between informal godfather oversight and Section 176 constitutional powers vested in the governor.
Elite Consolidation & Personalist Hegemony	Salihi (2023); Jibrin (2024)	Personalist political brands without internal dispute resolution lead to factionalization, defection, and party realignment.

Source: Author (2023)

This above data presents a multi-dimensional theoretical framework for understanding state-level political conflict, governance dynamics, and intra-elite struggles in Kano State, Nigeria, focusing specifically on the political rift between former governors Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso and Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, alongside their respective Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya factions. Rather than viewing this conflict as a simple personal fallout, the model demonstrates that the instability stems from an interplay of economic incentives, legal friction, and weak party structures.

At its core, the economic foundation of the conflict is illuminated by Richard Joseph's Prebendalism Theory, which posits that state office is treated as a personal fiefdom or "prebend" used to capture and distribute economic rents. In the context of Kano State, control over state procurement, major contracts, and especially the Local Government Joint Account serves as the primary source of political patronage. The transition of power from Kwankwaso to Ganduje inevitably triggered an intense elite rivalry because control over these lucrative resource pools shifted, disrupting pre-existing patronage networks and revenue-sharing expectations among political clients.

Compounding these resource battles is a fundamental institutional tension between informal political arrangements and formal constitutional power, as analyzed by Rotimi Suberu. Under Section 176 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the executive authority of a state is vested exclusively in the incumbent governor. When Kwankwaso attempted to maintain informal godfather oversight over his successor, Ganduje was able to leverage the absolute legal powers of his office to assert independence. This institutional asymmetry ensures that any clash between an informal godfather seeking continued influence and a constitutionally

empowered governor will almost certainly escalate into a severe political crisis.

Finally, the work of Salihi and Jibrin highlights how elite consolidation and personalist hegemony drive party system instability. Because political organizations in Kano centered on charismatic personal brands like Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya rather than shared ideological principles or strong institutional rules, internal dispute resolution mechanisms quickly break down. When competing ambitions could no longer be reconciled within the party framework, the resulting friction led directly to party fragmentation, high-profile defections, major realignments such as the emergence of the NNPP in Kano, and persistent political volatility.

In summary, the data systematically shows that political instability in Kano State is an institutional, financial, and legal inevitability. It is driven by state-centric rent allocation through local government accounts, the constitutional centralization of executive authority in the governorship, and weakly institutionalized political parties dominated by personalist loyalties.

1.8.7 Data Analysis

The empirical dataset comprising the Key Informant Interview logs, primary document archive, thematic coding, and longitudinal electoral transitions reveals a structural, economic, and institutional logic driving the Kwankwasiyya-Gandujiyya crisis. At its core, the movement's early trajectory highlights the structural paradox of personalist institutional deficits. Kwankwasiyya achieved mass mobilization by blending populist social investments, such as foreign postgraduate scholarships, mass weddings, and urban infrastructure, with strict top-down control. However, this relies on a single source of authority rather than rule-based dispute resolution

mechanisms. As long as Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso commanded both state prebends and party leadership during his second gubernatorial term, internal dissent was suppressed through direct oversight. When executive power shifted in May 2015, the movement lacked an institutional framework, such as an independent party arbitration committee or institutionalized power-sharing rules, to resolve conflicts between the political mentor and his successor. Consequently, organizational cohesion depended entirely on personal loyalty to the leader rather than adherence to formal party bylaws.

This structural vulnerability was accelerated by the tension between informal godfather oversight and formal constitutional realism. Kwankwaso viewed Abdullahi Umar Ganduje's governorship as a direct extension of his own political leadership, expecting continued deference in executive appointments, contract awards, and local policy direction. Conversely, Section 176 of the 1999 Constitution vests executive authority exclusively in the sitting governor. Once in office, Ganduje held sole legal control over the state seal, cabinet appointments, budget executions, and legislative relations. Operating a dual-authority structure where the political mentor attempted to dictate state affairs from Abuja while the governor resided in Kano proved administratively unsustainable, creating an inherent constitutional incentive for the incumbent governor to break free from informal mentorship to guarantee his own political self-preservation.

Applying Richard Joseph's Theory of Prebendalism demonstrates that this rift was fundamentally an intense struggle over the monopoly of state patronage. Because the state government serves as the primary economic engine in Kano State, access to executive office is synonymous with the distribution of prebendal

resources. Following the inauguration, the Ganduje administration systematically redirected state awards and major capital projects away from Kwankwasiyya-aligned firms toward contractors loyal to the newly formed Gandujiyya caucus. Concurrently, the state executive leveraged its constitutional control over Local Government Joint Accounts to starve Kwankwasiyya council chairmen and lawmakers of operational funds, coercing them into alignment or facing political exclusion. This prebendal strategy culminated in the 2019 decentralization of the historic Kano Emirate into five distinct domains, a deliberate institutional maneuver designed to fragment the long-standing sociopolitical networks that reinforced the Kwankwasiyya hierarchy.

Despite losing access to formal state patronage, Kwankwasiyya demonstrated remarkable brand resilience through strategic party realignments. The longitudinal electoral data spanning 2015 to 2023 illustrates a notable shift in subnational political dynamics. Defecting first to the People's Democratic Party in 2019 and later adopting the New Nigeria People's Party ahead of the 2023 general elections, the movement proved that its populist political brand, visually anchored by the iconic red cap (*Jar-Hula*), and its grassroots ward networks were entirely portable. By securing the Kano State governorship and a legislative majority under the NNPP banner in 2023, Kwankwasiyya achieved a rare outcome in Nigerian subnational politics: surviving an exit from state-backed patronage structures and defeating incumbent state machinery by substituting formal prebends with disciplined mass mobilization.

1.9 Empirical Findings and Discussion

1.9.1 The Genesis and Consolidation of Kwankwasiyya: Mass Mobilization and Personalist Hegemony

The empirical evidence gathered from key-informant interviews and primary document analysis demonstrates that the *Kwankwasiyya* movement initially succeeded by blending populist public policy with a tightly disciplined, personalist patronage structure. Following Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso's second gubernatorial election in 2011, the movement institutionalized its visual and organizational identity. By deploying symbolic markers most notably the red cap (*Jar - Hula*) alongside high-visibility social welfare programs, such as foreign postgraduate scholarships, mass weddings, and urban infrastructure projects, *Kwankwasiyya* created a direct, unmediated bond between the leader and the electorate (Salihi, 2023).

However, as revealed by interviews with party insiders, this populist appeal masked a strictly hierarchical power structure. Operational decisions, electoral candidacies, and patronage disbursements were heavily centralized under Kwankwaso's direct oversight. Key informants noted that while this personalist hegemony produced unprecedented political discipline and enabled the movement to sweep the 2015 general elections in Kano State, it simultaneously prevented the growth of internal democratic mechanisms for conflict resolution. The movement's cohesion relied almost entirely on absolute loyalty to the political mentor rather than adherence to institutionalized party rules.

1.9.2 The Succession Trigger: Constitutional Authority vs. Godfather Oversight

The transition of power to Abdullahi Umar Ganduje in May 2015 served as the

primary catalyst for the structural fragmentation of *Kwankwasiyya*. The empirical data indicates that the Kwankwaso-Ganduje succession agreement was built upon an implicit, contradictory understanding: Kwankwaso viewed Ganduje's governorship as an extension of his own political leadership, expecting continued deference in key executive appointments, local government oversight, and policy direction. Conversely, Ganduje and his political allies viewed the governorship through the lens of constitutional supremacy, recognizing that Section 176 of the 1999 Constitution vests executive authority exclusively in the incumbent governor (Suberu, 2020).

Within months of the inauguration, friction emerged over the control of state apparatuses and political appointments. As one key informant observed (*KII-Informant-A1*), the mentor's continued exercise of political oversight in Kano while serving as a Senator in Abuja created a dual structure of authority that state cabinet members and local government chairmen found unsustainable. Ganduje's decision to assert his independence by reviewing legacy contracts, replacing *Kwankwasiyya* loyalists with personal allies, and establishing the *Gandujiyya* political caucus marked the formal rupture of the mentor-protégé alliance (Mustapha & Abdullahi, 2022).

1.9.3 State Prebendalism and the Battle for Resource Monopoly

Applying Richard Joseph's (1987) Theory of Prebendalism provides a clear framework for understanding the material drivers of the succession crisis. In Kano State, where the state government remains the chief dispenser of economic opportunities, access to executive office is synonymous with the control of state prebends. The empirical findings reveal that the rift was not merely an ideological

or personal clash, but an intense struggle over the monopoly of state patronage levers, including:

a. **State Treasury Allocations and Contract Procurement:** Control over state awards and development projects shifted rapidly from *Kwankwasiyya*-aligned firms to contractors loyal to the new administration.

b. **Local Government Joint Accounts:** The constitutional control exercised by the state executive over local government allocations enabled the incumbent governor to systematically starve *Kwankwasiyya* legislative and local council representatives of political patronage.

c. **Traditional and Bureaucratic Reorganization:** The restructuring and eventual decentralization of the traditional Kano Emirate system served as a strategic maneuver to dismantle long-standing sociopolitical networks aligned with the *Kwankwasiyya* hierarchy (Jibrin, 2024; Page, 2023).

d. As prebendal resources were redirected toward the *Gandujiyya* faction, *Kwankwasiyya* loyalists faced institutional exclusion. This structural shift forced the movement to transition from an incumbent power bloc into an oppositional force operating outside the formal state apparatus.

1.9.4 Factional Realignment and Subnational Party Restructuring

The fragmentation of *Kwankwasiyya* produced profound structural shifts in Kano State's subnational party system. Unable to reconcile within the All Progressives Congress (APC), Kwankwaso and his loyalists executed a series of strategic party realignments. The movement first defected back to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) prior to the 2019 general elections, and

subsequently adopted and revitalized the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) ahead of the 2023 electoral cycle (Jibrin, 2024; Mahmud & Ozden, 2025).

The adoption of the NNPP demonstrated that while *Kwankwasiyya* lost access to state-managed prebends, its populist political brand, symbolic cohesion, and grassroots organizational network remained sufficiently resilient to challenge incumbent state power. The 2023 elections confirmed this trajectory: the NNPP secured the Kano State governorship and a majority in the state house of assembly, illustrating a rare instance where a subnational political movement survived an exit from state-backed patronage structures by relying on mass mobilization.

1.9.5 Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

The empirical trajectory of *Kwankwasiyya* confirms the core tenets of the study's theoretical framework. First, it demonstrates the structural limits of Political Patronage Theory in subnational presidential systems: when a political godfather installs a godson, the constitutional powers of the governorship create an inherent incentive for the successor to betray the mentor to ensure political survival. Second, it reinforces Prebendal Theory by showing that in resource-scarce political economies, elite unity cannot endure when access to state offices and prebends becomes a zero-sum contest. Finally, through the lens of Elite Consolidation Models, the Kano experience reveals that personalist mentorship without institutionalized power-sharing mechanisms inevitably produces elite disunity, factional fragmentation, and continuous party realignments.

1.10 Conclusion

This study examined the rise, consolidation, and structural fragmentation of the *Kwankwasiyya* movement in Kano

State, offering critical empirical insights into the complex interactions between political mentorship, executive succession, and subnational governance in Nigeria. By synthesizing Political Patronage Theory, Prebendalism, and Elite Consolidation Models, the analysis demonstrates that while personalist political mentorship can temporarily foster disciplined party organization and electoral dominance, its reliance on informal godfatherism creates profound structural vulnerabilities. The trajectory of *Kwankwasiyya* reveals a fundamental paradox in subnational presidential democracy: the informal expectations of patron deference inevitably collide with the formal, constitutionally embedded powers of an incumbent state executive.

1.11 Policy Recommendations

To mitigate the recurring crises of subnational succession, curb predatory godfatherism, and enhance the institutional sustainability of political parties in Nigeria, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Institutionalization of Internal Party Democracy:** Political parties must move away from personalist, candidate-imposition frameworks toward transparent, institutionalized nomination processes. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should enforce strict compliance with Section 84 of the Electoral Act, ensuring that party primaries are democratically conducted to prevent single-handed candidate handpicking by political godfathers.

2. **Subnational Autonomy and Institutional De-concentration:** To reduce the hyper-centralization of state resources that makes the governorship a zero-sum, prebendal prize, legal and constitutional reforms must strengthen the fiscal and operational independence of local government councils and state legislatures. Enforcing full financial

autonomy for local governments under Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution will decentralize patronage levers, preventing both godfathers and incumbent governors from monopolizing state allocations.

3. **Strengthening Formal Power-Sharing Frameworks:** Subnational political alliances should adopt formal, legally recognized coalition and power-sharing agreements rather than relying on fragile, informal patron-client understandings. Codifying leadership roles, legislative distribution, and policy continuity frameworks within party constitutions can provide institutional mediation mechanisms when mentor-protégé disputes arise.

4. **Depoliticization of Traditional and Civil Bureaucracies:** State assemblies and executive governors should be constitutionally restricted from arbitrarily altering, splitting, or restructuring traditional institutions and civil service frameworks for tactical political advantage. Protecting traditional rulers and civil administrative bodies from factional political reprisal is essential for maintaining governance stability during elite realignments.

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