

The Nigerian Electorates in Electioneering: A Case of Stockholm syndrome

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Abstract

This article explores the complex psychological dynamics of voter behavior in Nigeria through the lens of Stockholm syndrome, a term describing the phenomenon where hostages develop an emotional bond with their captors. Drawing parallels between this psychological response and the loyalty exhibited by Nigerian electorates towards politicians, the paper highlights how systemic manipulation, violence, and unfulfilled political promises have fostered a troubling attachment. By examining the interplay of Stockholm syndrome and some psychological concepts such as adaptive survival strategies, identification with the aggressor, cognitive dissonance, trauma bonding, and learned helplessness, this study elucidates the coping mechanisms employed by voters in oppressive political landscapes. Blending these with Psychological power/Agentic theory, the analysis demonstrates how voters, experiencing trauma, relinquish personal agency and adopt the goals of the corrupt authority, internalizing the oppressor's perspective to navigate a threatening reality. The purpose of this study is to explore the psychological dynamics that underpin voter loyalty in Nigeria, particularly in the context of systemic coercion and exploitation by political leaders. By applying the framework of Stockholm Syndrome, the research examines how emotional bonds between the electorate and their political captors develop amidst an environment characterized by manipulation, violence, and broken promises. Importantly, this study does not involve any participants or the use of traditional research instruments, as it primarily relies on theoretical analysis and secondary data sources to assess the psychological behaviors of voters. The design of the work is qualitative, focusing on conceptual frameworks to illuminate voter psychology and the factors that contribute to their loyalty. It argues that, amid poverty and insecurity, constituents often resort to appeasement behaviors, motivated by the perceived need to secure immediate relief or minimize harm. Through vivid illustrations of voter experiences, such as the impact of tokenistic generosity during election cycles, the discussion prompts critical reflection on the implications of such psychological constructs for democratic engagement in Nigeria. This article recommends that future research adopt mixed methods approaches that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of the psychological concepts at play in the Nigerian electoral landscape.

Keywords: Adaptive survival strategies, Cognitive dissonance, learned helplessness, Stockholm Syndrome, Trauma, Trauma-bonding, Voters.

Introduction

The term "Stockholm Syndrome," coined by Swedish criminologist Nils Bejerot after a 1973 bank robbery, describes a paradoxical psychological phenomenon where hostages (victims) develop an emotional bond with their captors, as a result of prolonged captivity, dependency, or perceived kindness. This concept is paralleled in the Nigerian political landscape and serves as a background for understanding how voters navigate corruption and intimidation. By applying psychological power/Agency theory, the article examines how citizens may shift into an agentic state, relinquishing personal responsibility to

authoritarian leaders to ensure their own survival. The dynamics at play suggest that citizens may become complicit in their own political disempowerment, as they navigate a challenging environment characterized by vote-buying, electoral thuggery, and pervasive corruption. As voters confront these issues, their endurance may stem from a mixture of fear and a perceived lack of alternatives, leading them to remain anchored to a political class that continues to exploit them.

Furthermore, while Stockholm Syndrome is not classified as an official diagnosis within the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5, it is increasingly viewed as a survival mechanism or coping strategy rather than an actual psychological disorder. It is a psychological response that causes survivors of abuse to sympathize with their abusers. It is considered a coping mechanism, not a mental health diagnosis (Holland, 2019). This article, which assesses voter psychology, delves into the motivations and behaviors of the Nigerian electorate in the context of its tumultuous electoral climate. Echoing the sentiments of notable writers like Chinua Achebe (1983), who identified "leadership" as a central issue for Nigeria, it explores how voters, faced with significant challenges such as violence and poor governance, often continue to support the very politicians who perpetuate their struggles.

While Stockholm Syndrome is not a clinical diagnosis, it is primarily explained through several overlapping psychological concepts, to x-ray the voter behaviour to the predatory politicians such as the Adaptive Survival Strategy: this concept refers to a pattern of behavior and emotional response where individuals in high-threat environments subconsciously align with those in power to mitigate immediate harm or secure scarce resources (Cantor & Price, 2007), developed in response to overwhelming, chronic threat or trauma that helps an individual cope and survive when safety is unavailable. Identification with the Aggressor: an unconscious defense mechanism where a victim imitates, adopts, or embodies the characteristics and behaviors of their tormentor to cope with feelings of helplessness and fear (Ferenczi, 1933; Freud, 1936). Cognitive Dissonance: the psychological discomfort experienced when simultaneously holding two or more contradictory beliefs, values, or attitudes, often causing a person to justify or change their thoughts to reduce tension (Festinger, 1957). Trauma Bonding: an intense, unhealthy emotional attachment that develops between a victim and an abuser, fueled by a cycle of abuse and positive reinforcement or intermittent kindness (Carnes, 1977) and learned Helplessness: a condition where a person who has endured repeated, uncontrollable negative stimuli stops attempting to change their circumstances, believing that they have no control over the outcome (Seligman, 1972). These explore how the human mind adapts to extreme stress, isolation, and power imbalances, trauma bonding, and survival psychology. In a bid to understand why victims develop this syndrome for their captors, the aim is not to blame the voter, but to explore the psychological architecture of their captivity.

By applying the framework of Stockholm Syndrome to this political relationship, the analysis reveals a complex interplay of psychological responses that underpin voter loyalty amidst systemic coercion and exploitation. In addressing those psychological responses, this article reflects on two theoretical hypotheses set out to explore how Nigerian electorates manifest them: First, the Gift Bond Hypothesis: "Nigerian voters who receive short-term material benefits e.g., "stomach infrastructure" (Akpata, 2024) from incumbent political actors during electioneering will exhibit higher levels of system justification and lower levels of support for systemic reform compared to those who do not receive such benefits". Second, Threat-Induced Support for Authoritarian Stability; "Increased perceptions of national insecurity and economic instability in Nigeria will positively correlate with voter preference for "strongman" or incumbent leadership, even when those leaders are perceived as responsible for the current state of decline". In the pages that follow, we shall explore how

Nigerian voters manifest this, as a defensive attachment to the status quo to avoid the perceived "risk" of a complete system change.

Literature review

Lesiak and Gelsthorpe (2025) investigated how domestic abusers create 'trauma bonds' with victims before violence occurs. Their qualitative study, based on interviews with 18 economically independent women who experienced abuse, reveals that these bonds are intentionally manufactured through a strategic approach, including intense early affection, termed "weaponized love," and shared traumas. The authors identify a consistent perpetrator profile characterized by a grooming phase that fosters a deep psychological attachment or "addiction" to the abuser. Survivors reported strong cravings for their abuser, even while recognizing the relationship as harmful. Limitations include a small, non-representative sample of women who had already left their relationships and a reliance on retrospective self-reports. Despite these constraints, the research offers important insights into the manipulative strategies used by perpetrators.

Lahav et al. (2020) investigated the role of identification with the aggressor (IWA) in *the Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, finding that survivors who internalize perpetrator perspectives are more likely to engage in self-harm and outward aggression. Their work validated the Identification with the Aggressor Scale (IAS), suggesting that hypersensitivity to the perpetrator's needs explains continued loyalty and traumatic bonding. This research posits that such behaviors function as survival-based defenses that replace personal agency with that of the aggressor.

In a conceptual analysis and qualitative review, Bailey, Dugard, Smith, and Porges (2023) proposed replacing the term "Stockholm syndrome" with the "neurobiological framework of appeasement" to describe survival strategies in situations of extreme power imbalance. Utilizing Polyvagal Theory, the authors argue that this behavior is not a psychological pathology, but rather an involuntary, reflexive "super social engagement" strategy where the survivor's nervous system acts to calm the perpetrator and minimize injury. The study suggests this shift in terminology helps reduce the stigma associated with compliance by reframing it as an adaptive biological imperative for survival.

A 2025 qualitative study by Levkovich and Altman, analyzing the experiences of 33 Israeli civilians abducted during the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, identified that released abductees employed both intrapersonal and interpersonal strategies to endure extreme conditions, with some strategically building reciprocal relationships with their captors to improve their immediate circumstances. The research, focusing on individuals held for 48 to 55 days, found that these relationships characterized by actions such as talking, cooking, or playing games were not indicative of sympathy, but rather functioned as a deliberate coping mechanism to reduce the severity of captivity, gain trust, and secure necessary resources like food or water. These findings highlight the resilience and adaptability of hostages in using interpersonal strategies, alongside maintaining internal hope and adhering to strict routines, to manage trauma in captivity.

In a recent analysis of political support within authoritarian contexts such as Hungary, Zubizarreta (2024) examined how cognitive dissonance and perceived societal threats drive systemic defense. According to this framework, citizens subconsciously justify oppressive regimes as fair or necessary to alleviate the mental stress of living under such systems. Experimental evidence suggests that when individuals experience high levels of societal threats, such as economic instability or conflict, they are significantly more likely to support authoritarian leaders who promise order, even at the expense of personal freedoms.

This process illustrates how psychological needs for safety and stability can override self-interest, leading to the rationalization of the status quo.

Discussion

This article explored voters' behaviour in the Nigerian electorate defending an underperforming incumbent through the lens of Stockholm syndrome and psychological power/Agentic theory, in which voters in economic distress shift responsibility to politicians who provide 'stomach infrastructure'. This work showed that two powerful mechanisms drive this behaviour. The first hypothesis that voters who accept small gifts or money from politicians are more likely to defend those same politicians' failures because they feel a psychological "debt" to them, was validated by research that "stomach infrastructure" the provision of immediate material benefits functions as a mechanism of system justification, serving as a "survival barometer" that prioritizes short-term needs over long-term systemic reform. This process reduces psychological distress, leading voters to perceive transactional politics as a legitimate, albeit flawed, form of governance that stabilizes the status quo (Stober, 2016). This is corroborated by another study that shows that reliance on material inducements reduces the impetus to demand accountability and points to a behavioral economics phenomenon known as the "crowding-out effect," in which extrinsic rewards diminish intrinsic motivation for change. When individuals or groups are offered material benefits (e.g., cash, resources, perks) to comply with, or accept, a flawed system, they become less likely to demand the structural changes required for true systemic reform (Bratton, 2008). This disillusionment often leads to significant voter apathy, as citizens increasingly view elections as transactional rituals rather than opportunities for genuine choice (Daukere et al., 2024).

The second hypothesis that voters who are most afraid of insecurity or poverty will choose to stay with a bad incumbent leader rather than vote for a new one, fearing that change will only make things worse, was validated by political analyses that Nigeria has experienced a "strongman political syndrome" over the past decade, where, despite increasing insecurity and poor economic welfare (high inflation, cost of living) during administrations, the mentality persists among the electorate that only a "strongman" can manage the crisis, often leading to continued support for the incumbent or a similar figure (Uwazuruike, 2025). This was corroborated by a research study that, despite widespread dissatisfaction with the All-Progressives Congress (APC) government over economic issues and insecurity, the APC maintained power through a combination of incumbency advantages, a "strongman" narrative, and, in some areas, the use of security forces and violence (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023). Interestingly, General behavioral studies confirm that when individuals are primed with threats (like domestic terrorism), they report higher levels of "authoritarian submission", a willingness to accept authoritarian control (Hetherington & Suhaya, 2011). Threat-priming, such as constant exposure to insecurity, likely drives Nigerian voters to support candidates who promise strong-arm, authoritarian tactics rather than democratic norms. This implies a risk of democratic backsliding, in which the electorate's fear of safety outweighs concerns for civil liberties, potentially prioritizing security, however ineffective, over accountability.

The Stockholm Paradox: When Victims Develop Love For Their Captors

Authoritarian submission and the Stockholm Paradox align through survival-driven psychology, where voters facing extreme insecurity bond with or rationalize the behavior of powerful actors. In Nigerian elections, this manifests as voters supporting "strongman" leaders and accepting repressive, ineffective governance as a mechanism for survival, a

phenomenon linked to both threat-induced fear and identity displacement. This interplay of authoritarian submission and Stockholm syndrome is primarily explained through several overlapping psychological concepts.

Adaptive Survival Strategy

Rather than a conscious choice, this syndrome functions as an instinctive survival mechanism among the Nigerian electorate. Individuals often support powerful yet ineffective politicians to navigate an environment marked by extreme poverty and insecurity. When options for systemic change seem unavailable, voters may adopt a "fawn" response, a trauma reaction identified by Pete Walker, where individuals use people-pleasing and appeasement to minimize personal harm or secure immediate relief. Consequently, these gestures reinforce a favorable perception of leaders who are otherwise neglectful, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and maintaining the status quo in the political landscape. Imagine an old woman who has not had electricity in a month, clutching a small campaign gift (a branded loaf of bread or ₦5,000) while waiting to vote for the person who cut her community's funding. Another situation is the Breadcrumb Economy, when the economic climate makes a ₦20,000 vote-buy feel like a "life-saving intervention" rather than a bribe. This leads us to reflect on whether Nigeria's "democracy" is not just a political struggle but also a psychological one, in which the electorate has been conditioned to survive by loving its "captors."

Identification with the Aggressor

In Nigeria, the electorate often manifests a defense mechanism akin to that described by Anna Freud, where individuals unconsciously adopt the traits and viewpoints of their political leaders, particularly from their ethnic or religious groups. This psychological dynamic can be observed when voters defend corrupt practices or electoral violence as simply "how the game is played." By aligning themselves with "strongman" politicians, they momentarily feel a sense of control and participation in power rather than a sense of victimization. Additionally, many citizens internalize the divisive rhetoric employed by these leaders, for instance, from "Emi lo kan (Tinubu, 2022) to Awa lo kan" (Obasanjo, 2023), "master strategist" or "city boys vs village boys movement", effectively becoming "willing tools" (Iyekekpolo, 2020), for the elite. As a result, they may rationalize their leaders' actions and overlook the detrimental impacts on their own lives, perpetuating a cycle of loyalty to those in power even when they do not benefit from their governance. Showing they have mirrored the values of those oppressing them, or a situation where state-sponsored thuggery creates a "Hostage Situation" atmosphere where voting for the "strongman" feels like the only way to ensure peace in the village (Ibrahim, 2007; African Journal of Social Sciences, 2015).

Cognitive Dissonance

The electorate in Nigeria often navigates a complex web of cognitive dissonance, particularly when professors engage in electoral malpractice to favor specific political figures, only to later participate in strikes with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Professors, who typically see themselves as moral educators, may experience a profound internal conflict when they overlook, or even facilitate, electoral rigging under external pressures such as financial incentives or political influence. Instances of such ethical compromise are documented in the 2019 and 2023 general election reports, notably highlighted by the 2021 conviction of Professor Peter Ogban (*The State v. Professor Peter Ogban*, 2021) and the subsequent sentencing of Professor Ignatius Udu (*The State v. Professor Ignatius Udu*, 2022) for falsifying election results. This contradiction becomes manifest when, having compromised their integrity, they rationalize their actions as

unavoidable for professional survival or as necessary to protect the educational system. Consequently, when faced with the fallout of political decisions that betray their ethical values, these academics may mobilize for strikes, asserting their commitment to the integrity of education. Such actions reflect a broader societal tendency among voters and educators alike to suppress feelings of anger and disappointment, ultimately aligning further with established power structures in a quest for psychological stability.

Trauma Bonding

The Nigerian electorate's relationship with politicians often reflects a cycle of emotional attachment shaped by periods of neglect and sporadic reinforcement. Many citizens experience prolonged hardship due to systemic poverty and inadequate governance, which aligns with the concept of weaponized poverty, where politicians may intentionally maintain these conditions to keep voters in a state of desperation. As elections approach, these leaders frequently return with the cycle of "Crisis → Palliatives → Relief approach, as escribed in the works of Stephen Nwaloziri, as usual with promises of cash handouts or infrastructure projects, providing brief moments of relief that create a powerful emotional bond between the electorate and the politician. This dynamic skews voter loyalty, as the electorate often clings to its representatives for security and comfort, despite the long-term damage caused by neglect, fostering a cycle in which short-term gains overshadow the need for lasting systemic change. Another side of this trauma bonding is vivid when the government causes a fuel hike and then offers a tiny subsidy; the brain interprets the "abuser" as a "savior." It could also be seen in another situation in Information Blackout: exploiting how illiteracy is used as a tool of war, when voters cannot read policy, they rely on "political rumors" curated by the captors.

Learned Helplessness

Finally, the Nigerian electorate often manifests Stockholm Syndrome through a complex interplay of learned helplessness and political apathy, rooted in their exposure to systemic electoral fraud and violence (Omole, 2024). Many citizens, facing the recurring reality that their votes seem ineffective in altering the status quo, develop a sense of powerlessness that detaches them from the democratic process. This results in widespread political disengagement, as voters come to believe that participation is futile, leading to a phenomenon referred to as "constrained optimism" (Davis & Turnbull, 2024). Consequently, some individuals resort to sycophancy, aligning themselves with political figures they perceive as dominant or victorious, in the hope of gaining marginal benefits or political patronage. This paradoxical bond between the electorate and a political class that perpetuates hardship ultimately perpetuates a cycle of dependency, hindering genuine democratic engagement and reform. This is viewed as, after years of rigged outcomes, the illiterate voter's brain shuts down the "hope" center and activates the "survival" center, making them settle for the immediate cash-in-hand.

Chained By Choice: When the Captive Is Not Aware of the Captivity

Often attributed to Fyodor Dostoevsky (1862/2015), the saying that "*the best way to keep a prisoner from escaping is to make sure he never knows he is in prison*". The most polarized space that creates cyberbullying today in Nigeria is political matters on social media, which often involves the divides of ethnicity and religious affiliation. Again, according to the National Park Service (2017), Harriet Tubman famously stated, "*I freed a thousand slaves, I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves.*" Both sentiments are deeply consistent with the explorations of freedom, consciousness, the

"invisible chains," and the psychological prison of societal conditioning. These ideas align with the Psychology of Unconscious Limits, where individuals are restricted but conditioned to accept their state as normal. As noted by Ochonu (2019), when the Nigerian electorate remains unaware of its captivity by political elites, democratic processes become mere rituals rather than tools of governance. Let us pause for a moment and ponder this: How do we begin to talk about liberation when the captive is not even aware that he or she is a captive? When the captive is not aware of the captivity, how do you reason about freedom? When the Nigerian electorate is unaware of its "captivity" by political elites, it leads to a cycle of systemic dysfunction where democratic processes are performed as a ritual without delivering real governance. This is analyzed and described as "political Stockholm Syndrome," in which the psychological and structural grip of the elite prevents the emergence of a genuinely representative government. This profound statement highlights the challenge of psychological captivity, where an individual or group is restricted, oppressed, or controlled but has been conditioned to accept this state as usual or is unaware of alternatives. It suggests that the most effective form of control is one that keeps the subject ignorant of their imprisonment, rendering traditional concepts of liberation difficult to apply because the captive does not feel the need for freedom.

While the National Park Service now actively debunks the famous quote attributed to Harriet Tubman, "*I freed a thousand slaves; I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves,*" historians agree it is a 20th-century fabrication (Sernett, 2007; Morgan, 2008; Larson, 2023). Nevertheless, the sentiment behind this "unrecognized captivity" remains a potent metaphor for modern political behavior. This is particularly evident when viewed through the lens of psychologist Keith Payne's research in *Good Reasonable People* (2024). Payne posits that voters are driven less by coherent ideology and more by social identity, fueled by a fundamental need to perceive their own group as "good and reasonable" while viewing others as a threat. What could be described as the psychology behind our political divide. The divide in the Nigerian electorate manifests through this deeply ingrained ethnic and religious tribalism. Politicians leverage this by turning political competition into a "us-vs-them" existential struggle, where voting for a candidate is treated as a defense of one's social identity rather than a policy choice. This results in a toxic, emotional, and often violent political culture where citizens are manipulated into fearing other groups, thus perpetuating a cycle of disunity that keeps the electorate fragmented along identity lines or religious affiliations.

The primary consequences of this unrecognized mental captivity include the normalization of inefficiency. Voters, long accustomed to poor leadership, often perceive significant systemic change as a risk, thereby perpetuating a cycle of ineffective governance. Furthermore, poverty-driven transactional voting remains prevalent; politicians exploit economic desperation through vote-buying, reducing the democratic process to a commercial transaction rather than a mechanism for accountability. A marked erosion of trust in institutions compounds this. Even landmark reforms, such as the 2022 Electoral Act, are met with skepticism by a populace convinced that outcomes are dictated more by monetization and corruption than by the collective will of the voters. This democratic devaluation is reflected in historical data; according to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) records, voter turnout in the 2023 general election dropped to a record low of approximately 27%, signaling a profound withdrawal from the formal democratic process (Yiaga Africa, 2025).

The Tenant Revolt: Shifting from Political Hostage to National Landlord

To break away from the psychological and political cycle of Stockholm Syndrome, the Nigerian electorate must transition from a state of dependency to one of active accountability. The path to liberation requires a shift from a "fawn" response to "positive resistance," targeting the deep-seated voter apathy that led to record-low turnout in recent cycles. Breaking the spell involves a "New Mirror" for the electorate, particularly for illiterate voters, reframing their role from "beggars of crumbs" to the "landlords of government." Drawing on the work of Sælid and Nordahi (2016), psychological interventions like Rational Emotive Behavioral Education (REBE), which help overcome the "learned helplessness," would lead Nigerian electorates who believe their votes do not count, by replacing it with the understanding that the political class is actually terrified of the hostages' realization of their own power.

Ultimately, dismantling this invisible prison necessitates structural and ideological reforms that move Nigeria beyond "transactional politics." By January 2026, over 57% of Nigerians had called for a total overhaul of the Electoral Act 2022 to restore trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Yiaga Africa, 2024). Despite the shenanigans of the National Assembly with the electoral acts, recognizing that power always belongs to the people, through youth-led engagement and the demand for clear party ideologies over "strongman" cults, the electorate is beginning to challenge the silent alliances of wealthy financiers. This is driven by the desire to prevent a recurrence of the credibility gaps exposed during the 2023 elections and to move away from a system dominated by influential individuals toward one ruled by stronger, impartial institutions.

As the nation nears the 2027 cycle and subsequent elections, the goal is a cognitive break from the jailer: realizing that the cell door has been open for years, and the first act of freedom is to stop thanking the captor for the very air they breathe. It is important to note that the positive feelings in Stockholm Syndrome are generally not considered "love" in the traditional sense, but rather a complex psychological response to trauma that acts as a survival or coping mechanism. Victims develop a distorted perception where they confuse a lack of abuse for an act of kindness. Breaking this cycle requires more than just technical reforms by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); it demands a moral and psychological "pattern interruption" that forces the academic and middle classes to recognize that by rigging the ballot, they are not securing their future but are instead fortifying the very walls that diminish their own professional and national dignity. The role of the youth cannot be underestimated in this movement for change; as the country's largest voting demographic, young people hold the key to breaking this cycle of political captivity. With access to social media and increased political awareness (Isaac, 2024).

The youth, aside from others, having the power to demand better governance, should embark, as discussed in the report on the 2023 general election cycle (INEC, 2024), on a youth-led "Vernacular Enlightenment" and town hall accountability, which are critical for stripping politicians of their invincibility and ensuring national budgets are translated into local impacts, such as infrastructure and healthcare. This Vernacular Enlightenment is where the voter elites translate abstract national budgets into tangible losses, such as the specific number of "bags of rice" stolen from a village's potential development. Moreover, to further explain the cost-benefit math of vote buying by accepting a ₦50,000 bribe for a four-year term, a voter effectively sells their future for a mere ₦34 per day. To counter this, using local dialects and pictorial storytelling to help these uneducated voters bridge the cognitive gap between a ₦10,000 bribe and the subsequent four years of dilapidated infrastructure and absent healthcare.

Hence, explaining to them that these politicians' gifts of food or cash, which appear as life-saving interventions, close their eyes to the fact that these "palliatives" are merely tiny fragments of the vast public wealth stolen from their communities. The use of town hall meetings and social media to "name the prison." Forcing politicians to publicly defend their refusal to reform often, through aggressive "Town Hall" accountability strips them of their aura of invincibility. It breaks the psychological bond between the captor and the captive. Finally, there is a need for Civic Parallel Registries, where Communities can use private technology to verify their own numbers, creating a "moral mandate" that exposes the gap between official results and public will (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

In conclusion, as we approach the next election cycle and beyond, this article is a simple call for awareness. As Dostoevsky often implied, "*naming the prison is the first act of rebellion*". This is so because the jailer is more afraid of the prisoner than the prisoner ever was of the cell. We need to do the Mirror test, in a self-reflective question: Are you a citizen, or a hostage with a ballot paper?" Have tribalism and religious affiliation made bread cheaper for anybody? Knowing full well that if a person does not recognize they are constrained, they will never seek liberation. The politician does not own the oxygen in your village; he only steals your lungs and sells you back the breath. It is time to know that the ultimate act of freedom is not just casting a ballot; it is finally realizing that the cell door has been open for years; Nigerian electorates need to stop thanking the jailer for the air they breathe.

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