

OJEBEGO AS A LANGUAGE OF TRANSACTIONAL LOYALTY IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT

The expression *Ojebego* commonly translated as “you are going for us”, has become a recurring feature of electoral encounters in Nigeria, particularly during political campaigns. This article examines *Ojebego* as a socio-political language that signals transactional loyalty rather than principled civic commitment. The objective of the study is to analyse the moral and philosophical significance of this expression and to assess its implications for political loyalty and democratic practice in Nigeria. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative philosophical approach, combining conceptual analysis with normative political theory. It draws on social contract theory, African communitarian philosophy, and political economy to interpret *Ojebego* within Nigeria’s postcolonial governance context. Rather than treating the expression as mere political rhetoric or voter cynicism, the study situates it within the lived realities of institutional failure, economic precarity, and weakened civic trust. The findings reveal that *Ojebego* embodies a form of conditional political allegiance shaped by rational survival strategies under conditions of structural injustice. While the expression reflects citizens’ moral agency and demand for performance from political leaders, its normalisation undermines civic virtue, erodes democratic accountability, and reinforces patron–client relations. The study further finds that *Ojebego* represents a distortion rather than a fulfilment of African communitarian ideals of loyalty and collective responsibility. The article concludes that addressing the moral problem represented by *Ojebego* requires more than voter moralisation. It calls for institutional credibility, social justice, and civic reorientation capable of restoring non-transactional political loyalty grounded in trust, accountability, and the common good.

Keywords: *Ojebego*; Transactional Loyalty; Political Morality; Nigeria; Social Contract.

Introduction

In contemporary Nigerian political discourse, particularly during electoral campaigns, the expression *Ojebego* loosely translated as “you are going for us” or “you will deliver for us” has become a recurrent response of electorates to political aspirants. The phrase is commonly uttered at rallies, town hall meetings, and community receptions, often irrespective of the candidate’s ideological orientation, competence, or track record. While on the surface *Ojebego* appears to signify popular support or communal endorsement, a closer examination reveals that it functions less as an affirmation of trust and more as a strategic linguistic gesture that suspends loyalty pending material or symbolic returns. In this sense, *Ojebego* operates as a socio-political language of expectation rather than conviction.

The growing prominence of *Ojebego* must be understood within Nigeria’s broader postcolonial political experience, marked by fragile institutions, elite dominance, and the chronic failure of the state to fulfil its social obligations to citizens.¹ In such a context, political participation is rarely driven by abstract commitments to ideology, public reason, or civic virtue. Instead, electoral engagement is frequently shaped by calculations of access, proximity to power, and anticipated benefits. *Ojebego* thus emerges as a negotiated expression, one that neither fully commits nor outright rejects, but rather keeps political allegiance deliberately conditional.

Philosophically, this phenomenon raises a critical question about the nature of political loyalty. Classical political theory often treats loyalty as a moral disposition grounded in shared values, collective identity, or allegiance to the common good.² However, the logic embedded in *Ojebego* challenges this assumption by redefining loyalty as transactional, provisional, and instrumental. Support is offered not on the basis of principle, competence, or justice, but on the expectation of reciprocal benefit; jobs, patronage, protection, or infrastructural presence. Loyalty, in this sense, becomes less an ethical commitment and more a form of political bargaining.

This transactional orientation reflects what may be described as a crisis of the social contract in Nigeria. Where the state persistently fails to guarantee security, welfare, and dignity, citizens increasingly relate to political authority through informal, negotiated arrangements rather than normative obligations.³ *Ojebego* encapsulates this reality by

signalling a conditional willingness to cooperate with political power, contingent upon the fulfilment of perceived communal or personal interests. It is therefore not merely a linguistic habit but a moral symptom of a fractured relationship between rulers and the ruled.

Importantly, this paper does not treat *Ojebego* as a simplistic indicator of political corruption or voter irrationality. Rather, it approaches the phenomenon as a morally ambivalent response to structural deprivation and historical exclusion. As scholars of African political thought have argued, moral reasoning in contexts of scarcity often prioritises survival and communal protection over abstract universalism.⁴ Nevertheless, the normalisation of *Ojebego* carries profound implications for democratic accountability, civic trust, and the cultivation of public-spirited citizenship.

Accordingly, this study sets out to examine *Ojebego* as a language of transactional loyalty, interrogating its philosophical significance and ethical consequences within Nigeria's democratic experiment. By engaging political philosophy, social contract theory, and African communitarian thought, the paper seeks to illuminate how everyday political expressions reveal deeper moral orientations shaping political life in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification of *Ojebego*

The term *Ojebego* originates from colloquial political speech in parts of South-Eastern Nigeria and has gradually diffused into wider Nigerian electoral vocabulary. Linguistically, the expression conveys affirmation which is "you are going for us" or "you will act in our favour", yet its pragmatic meaning extends beyond mere endorsement. In political encounters, *Ojebego* often functions as a performative utterance, one that signals openness to political alignment while withholding unconditional commitment. Its meaning is therefore context-dependent, shaped by the asymmetrical power relations between political aspirants and economically vulnerable communities.

From a philosophical standpoint, it is crucial to distinguish *Ojebego* from genuine political consent or ideological support. Consent, in classical political theory, presupposes a rational and voluntary alignment with a political authority or programme, grounded in trust and shared normative commitments.⁵ By contrast, *Ojebego* operates within a logic of anticipation rather than conviction. It expresses neither dissent nor endorsement in the strict sense, but a strategic ambiguity that keeps political loyalty negotiable. The utterance becomes a linguistic placeholder for future reciprocity. This ambiguity is reinforced by the socio-economic conditions under which *Ojebego* is typically deployed. In many Nigerian communities, electoral campaigns represent rare moments of direct engagement between political elites and ordinary citizens. The language used in such encounters is therefore heavily instrumentalised. *Ojebego* allows communities to project acceptance while preserving leverage; it is a way of saying "we are watching" rather than "we believe." In this sense, the term performs a transactional function, signalling that political allegiance is contingent upon post-election fulfilment of expectations.

Culturally, *Ojebego* resonates with broader patterns of negotiated social relations in African societies, where obligations are often personalised rather than institutionalised.⁶ However, its political usage reflects a significant shift from communal reciprocity to electoral bargaining. Traditional communal support systems were embedded within moral economies of mutual care and long-term obligation. *Ojebego*, by contrast, is embedded within a short-term calculus shaped by campaign promises, material inducements, and elite visibility. The communal "we" invoked by the phrase is therefore not necessarily a moral collective but a bargaining unit.

Analytically, *Ojebego* can be understood as a form of political speech that blurs the boundary between symbolic affirmation and moral commitment. J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts helps to illuminate this ambiguity.⁷ While the utterance appears constative describing support, it functions performatively by creating an expectation of exchange. The speaker does not merely express a belief but initiates a conditional moral relation. Political loyalty, in this sense, is not presumed but offered as a negotiable good.

This conceptual clarification is important because it prevents a reductive interpretation of *Ojebego* as mere political deceit or voter cynicism. Rather, it reveals the term as a rational linguistic adaptation to political uncertainty and institutional unreliability. Where political promises are rarely honoured and accountability mechanisms are weak, citizens develop modes of speech that protect their interests without fully exposing them to betrayal. *Ojebego* thus embodies a cautious moral posture, one that keeps hope alive while guarding against disappointment.

Nevertheless, the normalisation of such conditional language carries ethical consequences. When political support is routinely expressed without principled grounding, the moral vocabulary of citizenship is gradually hollowed out. Words that ought to signify trust and commitment become tools of negotiation, and political loyalty loses its normative depth. This section therefore establishes *Ojebego* as a key concept for understanding how language mediates the moral economy of Nigerian politics.

Transactional Loyalty and Political Morality

Loyalty occupies a central place in moral and political philosophy, often understood as a virtue that binds individuals to communities, institutions, and shared values. In classical and modern political thought, loyalty is typically associated with fidelity to the common good, respect for political authority, and commitment to collective decision-making.⁸ However, the emergence of transactional loyalty in contexts such as Nigeria complicates this moral ideal by redefining allegiance as conditional, interest-driven, and reversible. The language of *Ojebego* exemplifies this shift, transforming loyalty from an ethical disposition into a negotiable political resource contributed by poor leadership.⁹ Transactional loyalty may be described as a form of political allegiance grounded not in principle or shared moral commitment, but in anticipated exchange. Support is extended on the basis of what can be gained rather than what ought to be upheld. This orientation aligns with a broader instrumental view of politics, in which political relationships are evaluated primarily in terms of utility and immediate benefit.¹⁰ Within such a moral economy, loyalty loses its intrinsic value and becomes a strategic means to an end. The citizen is no longer a co-author of the political order but a bargainer seeking returns from political power.

From the standpoint of moral philosophy, this development raises significant concerns. Virtue ethicists have long argued that political communities depend upon stable moral dispositions such as trust, honesty, and loyalty, to sustain collective life.¹¹ When loyalty becomes contingent upon reward, it ceases to function as a virtue and instead resembles a market transaction. The moral language of commitment is thereby replaced by the logic of contract without the safeguards of justice and reciprocity that typically accompany formal agreements.

Nevertheless, it would be philosophically inadequate to dismiss transactional loyalty as merely unethical or corrosive. Moral evaluation must take seriously the social conditions under which such forms of loyalty arise. In societies where political authority has consistently failed to deliver public goods, citizens may reasonably come to view unconditional loyalty as irrational or even self-defeating.¹² Transactional loyalty thus emerges as a pragmatic adaptation to systemic unreliability. *Ojebego* signals a willingness to cooperate while simultaneously protecting oneself against the moral cost of misplaced trust.

This tension reveals a deeper moral ambiguity. On the one hand, transactional loyalty undermines the normative foundations of democratic citizenship by weakening accountability, encouraging elite manipulation, and reducing political participation to exchange relations. On the other hand, it reflects a form of moral agency exercised under conditions of constraint. Citizens are not morally indifferent; rather, they recalibrate loyalty in response to repeated political disappointment. As such, transactional loyalty may be interpreted as a symptom of moral injury inflicted by governance failure rather than a cause of democratic decay.

Social contract theory further illuminates this ambiguity. Where the implicit contract between state and citizen is persistently breached, the moral obligation of loyalty becomes unstable.¹³ Citizens may continue to participate in political rituals, but their allegiance is no longer rooted in trust or obligation. Instead, it is sustained through negotiation, calculation, and cautious optimism. *Ojebego* becomes a linguistic expression of this recalibrated moral stance.

However, the danger lies in the long-term normalisation of such recalibration. When transactional loyalty becomes entrenched, it reshapes political culture itself. Political actors come to expect conditional support, while citizens come to accept selective delivery of benefits as sufficient justification for allegiance. This mutual adjustment entrenches patron-client relations and displaces the language of rights, justice, and public reason.¹⁴ In this environment, political morality is reduced to a cycle of promise and reward, devoid of enduring ethical commitment.

This section therefore argues that transactional loyalty, as exemplified by *Ojebego*, occupies a morally liminal space. It is neither fully defensible nor entirely condemnable. Its persistence reflects both rational self-protection and ethical erosion. Any serious philosophical engagement with Nigerian political life must grapple with this dual character, recognising transactional loyalty as both a response to injustice and a contributor to its perpetuation.

***Ojebego* and the Social Contract**

Social contract theory provides a useful philosophical lens for interrogating the moral logic underlying *Ojebego* as a language of transactional loyalty. At its core, the social contract presupposes a reciprocal relationship between political authority and citizens, in which obedience and loyalty are exchanged for protection, justice, and the provision of basic goods.¹⁵ Where this reciprocity is intact, political loyalty is sustained by trust in institutions and confidence in the legitimacy of authority. However, where the contract is persistently violated, the moral basis of loyalty becomes fragile. And consistent absence of positive expectation in Nigerian state is an evidence that government has no regard for this contract.¹⁶

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's account of the social contract is particularly instructive in this regard. Rousseau conceives political legitimacy as arising from the collective agreement of free and equal citizens who submit their individual wills to the general will in pursuit of the common good.¹⁷ Loyalty, within this arrangement, is not owed to rulers as individuals but to the moral authority of the collective itself. The citizen obeys the law because, in a fundamental sense, the law expresses their own rational will. Under such conditions, political allegiance is principled rather than transactional.

The practice encapsulated by *Ojebego* stands in sharp contrast to this ideal. Rather than presupposing a shared commitment to the common good, *Ojebego* reflects a political environment in which the general will is either absent or deeply contested. Electoral encounters are not moments of collective self-legislation but opportunities for negotiation between unequal actors. Citizens approach political authority not as co-authors of law but as claimants seeking recognition and benefit. Loyalty, in this context, is no longer an expression of collective rationality but a provisional response to perceived advantage.

This divergence can be traced to the historical and structural conditions of postcolonial governance in Nigeria. The colonial state, designed primarily for extraction and control, failed to cultivate a genuine social contract between rulers and the ruled.¹⁸ Post-independence political elites largely inherited this structure, reproducing patterns of exclusion, centralisation, and elite capture. As a result, the state came to be experienced not as a moral community but as a distant and often predatory entity. In such circumstances, unconditional loyalty appears morally unwarranted.

Ojebego thus emerges as an informal renegotiation of the social contract at the level of everyday political interaction. By expressing conditional support, citizens implicitly signal that loyalty must be earned through tangible action rather than assumed as a civic duty. This posture reflects what might be described as a minimalist conception of political obligation, one that demands evidence of reciprocity before commitment.¹⁹ The utterance becomes a moral checkpoint, holding political aspirants to an unspoken standard of performance.

Yet this renegotiation comes at a cost. Rousseau warns that when private interests eclipse the common good, the social contract degenerates into a mere aggregation of competing wills.²⁰ *Ojebego*, while rational in its immediate context, risks reinforcing this degeneration by entrenching a politics of particularism. Political actors are incentivised to deliver selective benefits rather than universal goods, while citizens are encouraged to evaluate governance in terms of proximity and reward rather than justice and legality.

Moreover, the personalised nature of *Ojebego* undermines the impersonality that is essential to modern political obligation. Loyalty becomes attached to individuals rather than institutions, echoing patron–client dynamics rather than civic equality. This shift weakens the normative authority of the state and erodes the possibility of a shared political identity. Instead of a social contract binding citizens together, what emerges is a patchwork of informal contracts, each negotiated under conditions of inequality.

Nevertheless, to interpret *Ojebego* solely as a rejection of the social contract would be misleading. It may also be read as a demand for its restoration. By refusing unconditional allegiance, citizens articulate albeit implicitly a critique of political failure. *Ojebego* expresses the expectation that political authority must justify itself through action, not rhetoric. In this sense, it represents both a symptom of contractual breakdown and a muted appeal for moral renewal. This section therefore situates *Ojebego* within the tension between the ideal of principled political obligation and the reality of conditional loyalty in Nigeria. The expression reveals how citizens navigate the moral gap between what political authority ought to be and what it has become.

African Communitarian Perspectives on Loyalty

African communitarian philosophy places strong emphasis on the moral primacy of community in shaping individual identity, obligation, and political allegiance. Unlike liberal individualist traditions that ground political loyalty in personal rights and consent, African communitarian thought understands loyalty as arising from shared life, mutual dependence, and collective responsibility.²¹ Within this moral vision, loyalty is not merely a strategic choice but a constitutive aspect of personhood, sustained through enduring social relationships and reciprocal care.

Ifeanyi A. Menkiti's influential account of African communitarianism argues that the individual becomes a person through participation in communal life.²² Moral obligations, including political loyalty, are therefore embedded in the network of social relations that precede and transcend individual choice. Loyalty to authority, in this sense, is not blind obedience but an extension of communal solidarity and trust. Political authority is expected to function as a custodian of communal welfare, and allegiance is morally justified insofar as this custodial role is fulfilled.

Kwame Gyekye offers a more moderate communitarian position, recognising both communal embeddedness and individual autonomy.²³ While he affirms the moral significance of community, Gyekye insists that political loyalty must remain subject to ethical evaluation. Authority that undermines human dignity or neglects communal welfare forfeits its moral claim to allegiance. This perspective is particularly relevant for interpreting *Ojebego*, which reflects a conditional orientation towards political authority rather than unquestioned loyalty.

From a communitarian standpoint, *Ojebego* presents an apparent paradox. On the one hand, the use of the collective pronoun: "you are going for us" invokes communal identity and shared interest. The utterance is framed not as an individual demand but as a collective expectation, aligning superficially with communitarian ideals. On the other hand, the transactional logic embedded in *Ojebego* departs from the moral depth of traditional communal loyalty. Support is offered not on the basis of shared destiny or moral trust, but on anticipated benefit and performance.

This departure reflects a broader transformation of African communal ethics under modern political and economic pressures. Traditional forms of loyalty were sustained within relatively stable moral economies, where leaders were embedded within the community and subject to direct moral sanction.²⁴ In contemporary Nigerian politics, however, political elites are often socially and geographically distant from the communities they govern. The erosion of proximity weakens the moral bonds that once underpinned communal loyalty, creating space for transactional substitutes such as *Ojebego*.

Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to interpret *Ojebego* as entirely incompatible with African communitarianism. Rather, it may be seen as a distorted expression of communal expectation under conditions of institutional breakdown. The demand implicit in *Ojebego* that political authority must "go for" the people echoes the communitarian insistence that leadership exists for the sake of communal flourishing. What is lost is not the moral intuition itself, but the ethical confidence that such intuition will be honoured without negotiation.

The ethical challenge, therefore, lies in the gradual recalibration of communal loyalty into a bargaining tool. When loyalty becomes transactional, the moral language of community is instrumentalised, and communal values risk being reduced to slogans in electoral theatre. This shift undermines the normative richness of African communitarian ethics, replacing long-term moral obligation with short-term political calculation.

This section argues that *Ojebego* both draws from and departs from African communitarian understandings of loyalty. It draws from them by invoking collective identity and shared expectation; it departs from them by hollowing out the moral trust that once sustained communal allegiance. The task, then, is not to reject *Ojebego* outright, but to understand it as a sign of ethical strain within African political life, one that calls for the restoration of institutions and practices capable of supporting non-transactional communal loyalty.

Political Economy, Survival, and Moral Ambivalence

The persistence of *Ojebego* as a language of transactional loyalty cannot be adequately understood without situating it within Nigeria's political economy. Moral dispositions do not arise in a vacuum; they are shaped by material conditions, institutional performance, and historical experience. In contexts marked by poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and weak social protection, political behaviour often reflects strategies of survival rather than expressions

of abstract moral idealism.²⁵ *Ojebego* emerges within this terrain as a rational, though ethically ambivalent, response to structural precarity.

Nigeria's postcolonial economy has been characterised by uneven development, rent-seeking, and the concentration of resources in the hands of a political elite.²⁶ Access to state power frequently determines access to economic opportunity, while citizenship alone offers little guarantee of welfare or dignity. In such a system, electoral moments become critical points of negotiation, where communities attempt to secure material recognition from those seeking office. The language of *Ojebego* reflects this reality by signalling openness to political alignment conditioned upon tangible benefit.

From the perspective of moral philosophy, this raises difficult questions about responsibility and blame. Transactional loyalty is often criticised for enabling corruption, vote-buying, and elite manipulation. Yet such criticism risks moral abstraction if it ignores the structural constraints under which political choices are made. Where the state fails to provide basic goods, citizens may reasonably prioritise immediate survival over long-term democratic ideals.²⁷ In this sense, *Ojebego* can be interpreted as a morally intelligible adaptation to political and economic vulnerability.

This adaptation, however, is marked by deep ambivalence. On the one hand, transactional loyalty empowers citizens to extract concessions from political elites, however limited or symbolic. It transforms passive spectators into negotiators, capable of leveraging electoral relevance for short-term gain. On the other hand, it reinforces the very structures that produce vulnerability by legitimising selective distribution and patronage. Political actors learn that targeted rewards are sufficient to secure compliance, thereby avoiding the harder task of systemic reform.²⁸

The moral ambivalence of *Ojebego* is further complicated by its communal dimension. Communities often deploy the language collectively, framing demands in terms of roads, schools, healthcare facilities, or employment opportunities for youths. Such demands are not inherently immoral; they reflect legitimate grievances arising from prolonged neglect. The ethical problem arises when access to basic public goods is treated as a favour to be negotiated rather than a right to be claimed. Transactional loyalty thus subtly transforms justice into generosity and obligation into benevolence.

Political economy scholars have described this dynamic as a cycle of dependency, in which citizens become reliant on episodic political largesse rather than institutional provision.²⁹ *Ojebego* functions within this cycle by normalising conditional support and episodic delivery. The moral cost of this normalisation is the erosion of collective expectations regarding governance. When survival depends on proximity to power, political morality is recalibrated to reward access rather than accountability.

Yet it would be unjust to place the moral burden solely on citizens. The ethical weight of transactional loyalty ultimately rests with political institutions that have failed to establish credible systems of welfare, justice, and accountability. As long as political office remains one of the few viable routes to economic security, electoral politics will continue to attract instrumental reasoning. *Ojebego* is therefore best understood as a moral symptom of structural injustice rather than a primary moral failing.

This section thus argues that *Ojebego* occupies a space between moral agency and moral compromise. It reflects citizens' capacity to act strategically under constraint, while simultaneously revealing the ethical distortions produced by systemic failure. Any attempt to transcend transactional loyalty must therefore address not only moral attitudes but also the political and economic structures that make such loyalty appear rational.

Democratic Implications of *Ojebego*

The normalisation of *Ojebego* as a language of transactional loyalty has far-reaching implications for democratic life in Nigeria. Democracy presupposes more than periodic elections; it relies on a moral culture of accountability, trust, and principled participation.³⁰ When political allegiance is routinely expressed as conditional and negotiable, the ethical foundations of democratic citizenship are weakened. *Ojebego* thus serves as both a symptom and a catalyst of democratic fragility.

One immediate implication is the erosion of political accountability. In a political environment shaped by transactional loyalty, electoral success is often secured through targeted promises and selective distribution rather than coherent

policy programmes or institutional reform. Political actors learn that loyalty can be purchased or temporarily secured, reducing incentives to govern in the public interest.³¹ The language of *Ojebego* reinforces this dynamic by signalling that what matters most is post-election delivery to specific constituencies, not adherence to universal standards of justice or legality.

Closely related is the weakening of civic trust. Democratic trust depends on the belief that political institutions operate according to shared rules and moral expectations. Transactional loyalty, however, thrives on scepticism and guarded engagement. While such scepticism may be rational given Nigeria's political history, its institutionalisation corrodes the possibility of collective political hope. Citizens come to expect disappointment and therefore invest minimally in democratic processes beyond immediate gain.³² *Ojebego* encapsulates this guarded posture, expressing hope without trust and participation without commitment.

The practice also reshapes the meaning of political participation. Voting, campaigning, and public endorsement are no longer understood primarily as civic duties but as bargaining opportunities. This instrumentalisation of participation undermines the educative function of democracy, which ideally cultivates public-spiritedness and moral responsibility.³³ When citizens engage the political process chiefly as negotiators, the language of rights, deliberation, and collective responsibility is displaced by the language of exchange.

Furthermore, transactional loyalty entrenches inequality within the democratic space. Communities with greater electoral value or strategic importance are more likely to extract benefits, while marginal or less visible groups remain excluded. Democracy thus becomes unevenly experienced, reinforcing perceptions that political inclusion depends on leverage rather than equal citizenship.³⁴ *Ojebego*, by operating within this logic, inadvertently legitimises selective governance and deepens democratic asymmetry.

However, it is important to acknowledge the ambivalent democratic potential embedded in *Ojebego*. The conditional nature of the utterance can function as a rudimentary form of political scrutiny. By withholding unconditional loyalty, citizens express an implicit demand for performance. In contexts where formal accountability mechanisms are weak, such informal expectations may serve as a limited check on political power.³⁵ Yet this potential remains fragile and easily co-opted, especially when performance is narrowly interpreted as material reward rather than institutional integrity.

Ultimately, the democratic danger of *Ojebego* lies in its capacity to normalise a minimal conception of democracy, one in which elections are reduced to moments of transaction rather than expressions of collective self-rule. When loyalty is decoupled from principle, democracy risks becoming procedurally intact but morally hollow. The challenge, therefore, is not merely to discourage transactional language but to reconstruct the conditions under which principled political loyalty becomes rational and meaningful.

Here we contend that *Ojebego* reflects a democratic culture caught between survival and aspiration. Its persistence signals both citizens' agency and democracy's moral vulnerability. Addressing its implications requires more than moral exhortation; it demands institutional credibility, social justice, and the re-education of political imagination.

Conclusion

This paper has examined *Ojebego* as more than a casual political expression, arguing that it functions as a language of transactional loyalty within Nigeria's contemporary political life. Through conceptual analysis and philosophical engagement, *Ojebego* has been shown to embody a moral posture shaped by historical exclusion, institutional failure, and economic precarity. It is a linguistic response to broken promises and unreliable authority, signalling conditional allegiance rather than principled commitment.

By situating *Ojebego* within political morality, social contract theory, African communitarian thought, and political economy, the study has illuminated the ethical ambivalence at the heart of transactional loyalty. On the one hand, *Ojebego* reflects rational moral agency exercised under constraint. Citizens who repeatedly experience governance as episodic and selective have little reason to offer unconditional loyalty. On the other hand, the normalisation of such conditional language undermines the ethical foundations of democratic citizenship by reducing political participation to exchange and weakening collective commitment to justice, accountability, and the common good.

The analysis has further shown that *Ojebego* both departs from and distorts African communitarian ideals. While it invokes collective identity and shared expectation, it lacks the moral trust and enduring obligation that traditionally sustained communal loyalty. Similarly, from the perspective of social contract theory, *Ojebego* exposes a deep rupture between citizens and the state, where political obligation is renegotiated informally in the absence of credible institutional reciprocity.

Importantly, the paper does not advocate moral condemnation of citizens who employ *Ojebego*. Such condemnation would ignore the structural conditions that make transactional loyalty appear reasonable. Rather, the ethical challenge lies in restoring the conditions under which non-transactional political loyalty becomes both rational and morally compelling. This requires institutions that deliver public goods as rights, not favours; political leadership oriented toward the common good rather than selective reward; and civic education that reclaims loyalty as a moral virtue rather than a bargaining instrument.

In conclusion, *Ojebego* stands as a mirror held up to Nigeria's democratic conscience. It reveals not only how citizens speak to power, but why they speak that way. Addressing the moral problem, it represents demands more than linguistic reform; it calls for a reconstitution of political trust, institutional justice, and ethical imagination in Nigeria's democratic project.³⁶

Endnotes

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