

THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IN THOMAS AQUINAS' POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: TOWARDS AN EVALUATION OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Democracy as a form of governance has become very popular in contemporary times as the preferred option. Theoretically, it is founded on the principle of the direct or indirect involvement of all in the affairs of governance. However, its practice varies from place to place. In this paper, we critically analyse Thomas Aquinas' understanding of democracy as found in his commentaries on Aristotle's politics. The aim is to evaluate the practice of democracy in Nigeria using the paradigm of Aquinas' understanding of the concept. We argued that the form of government in Nigeria is a travesty of genuine democracy. Consequently, against the current apathy of the citizenry, we propose that they get more practically involved in the affairs of governance, by ensuring that only those who genuinely have the interest of the people at heart are elected to political offices.

Keywords: Aquinas' Political Philosophy, Democracy, Governance, Politics.

Introduction

Political philosophers are concerned about the proper organisation of society. Thus, questions such as (i) What constitutes a state? (ii) How should a state be properly governed? (iii) How can the common good be achieved for the benefit of all within the state? preoccupy their theorisations. Attempts to provide satisfactory answers to these and related questions have led to different political theories and proposals about governance. Some of these theories include: monarchy, oligarchy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism and democracy. This paper focuses on democracy as a system and theory of governance. Specifically, it tries to assess Thomas Aquinas' view of democracy in his extensive and critical commentary on Aristotle's politics with the aim to interrogate the present practice of democracy in Nigeria within the context of Aquinas' notion of democracy. Juxtaposing the practice of democracy in Nigeria with Aquinas' idea of a democratic government,

this paper concludes that the style of government in Nigeria today is a travesty of democracy. Therefore, the paper recommends that for proper practice of democracy, the Nigerian government should redirect its system of governance towards the ideals of democracy as enunciated in Aquinas' political philosophy.

We adopted the expository, analytic and evaluative methods in this paper. We discussed politics as the platform on which governance is executed, and examined democracy as a system of governance. The paper proceeds with a careful study of Aquinas' understanding of democracy and an assessment of the practice of democracy in Nigeria. Following an evaluation of the practice of democracy in Nigeria, the paper concludes with a proposal on how Nigeria can return to the path of true democracy.

Clarifying the Concept of Democracy

Democracy: In its general usage, democracy refers to “a method of group decision making characterised by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the collective decision-making.”¹ Essentially, it is a collective decision making process. As a political theory of governance, it is technically divided into the normative and descriptive/explanatory democratic theories. While the former lays out the moral foundations of democracy and democratic institutions, the latter explicates the moral desirability of democracy as well as the moral principles that should guide the design of democratic institutions. It suffices at this initial stage to understand democracy simply as a form of governance that seeks to realise the common good through collective effort and participation. This would be further clarified later in the paper.

Politics as the Platform for the Execution of Governance

Politics denotes the activities through which people make, preserve and adjust the general rules that guide their lives as members of the same society. It is a set of activities that involves making decisions about the governance of countries.² This set of activities includes achieving and exercising positions of governance, which translates into control over a community of human persons, as in nations and states. As a concept, politics has been mutilated in the process of explanation such that it sometimes carries a negative connotation. For instance, that it is “some disputable art of manipulating one's way into positions of state power for personal and party

¹Tom Christiano, “Democracy,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed March 3, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/moral-political/>.

²Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: MacMillan International Education, 2013), 1.

gains.”³ Such a mutilation in the meaning of politics is possible because politics is about a number of things, which basically is about the relationships among individuals, groups, classes and the state. In the state, there are different institutions and bureaucratic processes that allow persons to exploit and manipulate the system to their individual and personal advantages.

Following its etymological derivation from the Greek word *polis*, politics means ‘affairs of the cities’. In this sense, it is the art of exercising control within a society through a decision-making process and the enforcement of the decisions made. Commenting on this, Mogens Hansen explained that:

As a setting for human production and reproduction, the polis is a society not a state; the term polis designates a conurbation (sometimes including the hinterland) rather than a political community, and all inhabitants are members of the polis. But as a political community, the polis is a state rather than a society, and the term polis designates the adult male citizens only, united by their political institutions, in which the citizens participate completely isolated from women, metics foreigners and slaves.⁴

Whichever of Hansen’s distinctions – *polis* as a society or as a state (political community) – one subscribes to, politics as derived from *polis* refers to the affairs of the ‘polis’; that is, the coordination of activities in the day-to-day lives of the citizens of a given area.

The Ancient Greek society consisted of independent city-states, each with its own system of government. Athens, which is often purported to be the cradle of government, was the largest and most influential of the Greek city-states. According to Arjun Appadorai,⁵ Athens describes her constitution as a democracy; therefore, he claims that democracy as a form of governance is traceable to Athens. According to Chukwemeka Okechukwu,⁶ Appadorai’s assertion implies that the Athenians together undertook the responsibility and task of governing the city-state through collective decision-making. If this is the case, it means that democracy as a form of government has a long history.

³Amaresh Ganguly, “What is Politics?” accessed March 4, 2019, <https://sol.du.ac.in.>Part>.

⁴Mogens Hansen, *The Ancient Greek City-State* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1993), 17.

⁵Argun Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 4.

⁶Chukwemeka E. Okuchukwu, “Democracy and Democratic Experiment – The Nigerian Experience: A Historical Analysis,” *International Journal of Applied Research* 1, no. 4 (2013): 13.

Democracy as a Form of Governance

As a political concept, democracy is defined in various ways and it has been subjected to antagonistic interpretations and contradictory practices, which betray the lack of agreement among scholars on the exact meaning of the concept. Democracy derives its meaning from two Greek words: *demos* and *kratos*, meaning ‘the common people’ and ‘rule’, respectively. It is in this sense that Aristotle understands democracy as the rule of the poor and the rule of the majority, which himself does not believe is a good system of governance as it does not lead the city-state to its *telos* – the good life for its citizens. In his consideration, Aristotle believes that a rule of the majority must be non-virtuous in practice because it is too difficult to find a majority who can be virtuous. Therefore, he considers Aristocracy, which he conceives as a rule based on merit, a better form of governance.

In his 19th November, 1863 address, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, at the Dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery, Abraham Lincoln is accredited to have famously described democracy as the “the government of the people, by the people, for the people”.⁷ Lincoln’s description captures the popular understanding of democracy as a form of government in which the supreme power of a political community is domiciled in the sovereignty of the entire population. In this sense, we understand democracy as a system of governance that “seeks to realize a generally recognised common good through collective initiation, and discussion of policy questions concerning public affairs and which delegates authority to agents to implement the broad decisions made by the people through majority vote.”⁸

In terms of practice, democracy can either be direct or representative. It is direct democracy when all the citizens participate directly in the process of decision-making and implementation. This was the case with the Greek city-states. Such a direct participation became practically unfeasible as population increased. With the complexity of modern states, such a practice would, today, be impossible. Representative democracy, on the other hand, is a system in which the people exercise their power to rule by periodically electing their representatives to participate in the process of decision-making and implementation.⁹

Modern-day democracy rests on five basic foundations: (i) social equality, (ii) majority rule, (iii) minority rights, (iv) freedom, and (v) integrity. These principles are themselves based on the fundamental ethical principle of mutual

⁷Adeyinka T. Ajayi and Emmanuel O. Ojo, “Democracy in Nigeria: Practice, Problems and Prospects,” *Developing Country Studies* 4, no. 2 (2014): 108.

⁸Dawood O. Egbefo, “Fifteen Years of Democracy, 1999-2014: Reflections on Nigeria’s Quest for National Integration,” *African Research Review* 9, no. 2 (2015): 63.

⁹Okuchukwu, “Democracy and Democratic Experiment,” 13.

respect for diversity, with emphasis on the notion of ‘mutual’. In this context, the fundamental principle of democracy would be the source of the authority of the government, which is the consent of the governed. Consequently, it follows that the legitimacy of a democratic government rests on the consent of the governed. Although we cannot provide universally accepted specific principles acknowledged by all as the basic principles of democracy, because different people tend to identify different principles of democracy, we can, nonetheless, point out that the consent of the governed is recognised by all as the hallmark of democracy. The consent of the governed is implicit in the idea of representative government, where government consists of those elected by the citizens to represent them. When properly practiced, it means that the overall control of the government is in the hands of the people. Proper practice in this sense implies that the elected representatives of the governed are not in government to pursue their own agenda but that of the electorate who have given them the mandate to represent them. Such representatives of the electorate would have to regularly consult the constituency they represent, promote the cause of the members of the constituency, and regularly be accountable to their constituency on how they are implementing the trust and mandate reposed in them as their representatives. In this way, the voice of the governed plays the tune of governance.

The foregoing general clarifications situate our examination of the notion of democracy in Thomas Aquinas’ political philosophy as a framework for the evaluation of the practice of democracy in Nigeria. It is important to note from the outset that Aquinas’ political ideas, ditto his notion of democracy, stem primarily from his commentary on Aristotle’s politics.

Democracy in Thomas Aquinas’ Political Philosophy

Political philosophy, for Aquinas, is an extension of moral philosophy. It is the consideration of the appropriate choices to be made by those entrusted with the responsibility and authority of deciding for the community on political matters. Political matters are issues about collectively achieving, preserving and sustaining the common good. “It is a systematic explanatory account of the forms of political arrangement that experience and empirical observation show are available, with their characteristic features, outcomes, and advantages.”¹⁰ According to Peter Koritansky, Aquinas’ political philosophy is at the crossroads between the

¹⁰John Finnis, “Aquinas’ Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N Zalta (ed.), accessed March 3, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/moral-political/>.

Christian gospel and Aristotle's political doctrine.¹¹ This implies that Aquinas simply modified Aristotelian political thoughts in the light of the Christian gospel. Apart from his letter *On Kingship*, which he wrote as a favour to the king of Cyprus, we cannot find a completed thematic discussion of politics in Aquinas' extremely well-organised and systematic treatises. Even the letter *On Kingship* would be considered brief and unfinished in comparison with his other works, and therefore, cannot be said to present a comprehensive account of his political philosophy. Same goes for his commentary on Aristotle's politics, which many consider less than half complete; and some scholars do not even consider it a presentation of Aquinas' own thoughts on political philosophy. Rather than this implying that Aquinas had no political teaching or a political philosophy, it only emphasises the fact that he does not have a systematised presentation that we can expressly call a political philosophy. Nonetheless, his political thoughts are extractable from his treatises that discuss issues with political implications. As Koritansky puts it, "in the *Summa Theologiae*, ... Aquinas engages in long discussions of law, the virtue of justice, the common good, economics, and the basis of morality ... [t]hese texts provide a crucial insight into Aquinas' understanding of politics and the place of political philosophy within his thought."¹²

Aquinas' position on democracy is rooted in his conception of the state. Based on Aristotle's rational explanation of the state, Aquinas attributed positive value to social and political institutions as grounded in the very nature of man.¹³ For him, man has the intrinsic (natural) inclination to live in society, which implies that the state is a natural emergence from man's actualisation of this inclination. While Aquinas' position agrees with that of the Greeks, it contrasts with Augustine's idea that "government was a necessary evil brought into being in response to human perversity."¹⁴ The implication of Augustine's position is that political government is a necessary evil resulting from human perversity – a punishment accruing from the fall of man. By inference, in Augustine's understanding, if man had remained in his state of innocence, there would not have been any need for political government.

Contrary to Augustine's position, Aquinas argued that man is naturally a social being, and as such, even in the state of innocence, man would still live a

¹¹Peter Koritansky, "Thomas Aquinas: Political Philosophy," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 3, 2019, www.iep.utm.edu.

¹²Koritansky, "Thomas Aquinas: Political Philosophy."

¹³163N. P. Swartz, "Thomas Aquinas: On Law, Tyranny and Resistance," *Acta Theologica* 30, no. 1 (2010): 145-146.

¹⁴William F. Lawhead, *Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 180.

social life, since the social and political life go together. As he claims in his *Summa Theologiae*, “a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one.”¹⁵ Aquinas’ conception of the social life of man corresponds to what we can call the civil society or state; therefore, for him, the civil society is natural and requires no justification. Swartz articulated this when he noted that, “Aquinas followed Aristotle in deriving the idea of the State from the very nature of man. This means that the justification of the State must be sought in the very nature of man.”¹⁶ This idea, which is central to Aquinas’ idea of a political society, is principally derived from Aristotle. Aquinas maintains that the human nature, which necessitates the social life, makes the political life inevitable, and political life amounts to organising a civil society. Therefore, man’s social life entails the exercise of governance – the institution of a government, especially as it relates to the common good. The question that arises is: What form of government would promote the realisation and sustenance of the common good? In his response to this enquiry, Aquinas projected his views on democracy.

Democracy in Aquinas’ View

According to Aquinas, it is important, in fact, indispensable, to establish a right order by which we produce leaders if we are to truly consider the good of the people. By the good of the people, he means the common good. In his words, “the beautiful ordering of a people depends on the right establishment of its rulers.”¹⁷ He argued that if the state and the citizens are to be well organised for the attainment of the common good, the leadership of the state must be rightly established. To achieve the right establishment of leadership, he proposed two important considerations that must not be taken for granted:

- i. All should take some share in the government; for this form of constitution ensures peace among the people, commends itself to all, and is most enduring.
- ii. Consideration should be given to the kinds of government, or to the different ways in which the constitutions are established.¹⁸

Consideration (ii) indicates that Aquinas advocates democracy as an inclusive type of government that would comprise the positive aspects of other forms of governance; precisely, he opined that a good government should consist partly of

¹⁵Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers Printers, 1971), I, q. 96, a. 4.

¹⁶Swartz, *Acta Theologica*, 146.

¹⁷Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I – II, q. 150, a. 1.

¹⁸Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I – II, q. 150, a. 1.

monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. However, he maintained emphatically that “the best form of government is ... wherein one is given the power to preside over all; while under him are others having governing powers; and yet a government of this kind is shared by all, both because all are eligible to govern, and because the rules are chosen by all.”¹⁹ A good interpretation of this assertion would be that one presides over all but shares the power of governance with others; the one who presides over all is chosen by all and therefore, all share in the governance by virtue of their choosing power, as well as the fact that all are eligible to be chosen to preside over all. Consequent upon this interpretation, we understand the explicit endorsement of the democratic style of government by Aquinas. The emphasis of the interpretation is on the participation of all in governance through their elective power. This is explicitly expressed in consideration (i) above.

Explaining his understanding of democracy further, Aquinas considers it as “the best form of polity; being partly kingdom, since there is one at the head of all; partly aristocracy, insofar as a number of persons are set in authority; partly democracy, i.e. government by the people, insofar as the rulers can be chosen from the people, and the people have the right to choose their rulers.”²⁰ That the government must be chosen from the people and by the people clearly expresses Aquinas’ preference for democracy. To further demonstrate this preference, Aquinas alludes to the biblical account of Yahweh asking Moses to select seventy elders of repute to partake in the affairs of governance with him (Num. 11:16-17). Aquinas understands Yahweh’s instruction to Moses as a democratic move insofar as the seventy elders were chosen from among the people to participate in the governance of the people of Israel.

Although Aquinas has neither systematised political philosophy nor an articulated philosophical view on democracy, his extensive commentaries on Aristotle’s political philosophy provide his views on democracy in which he clearly demonstrated a preference for the democratic process of governance. His emphasis was clearly on the participation of the people in the governance of their community. This participation is representative – the polis freely chooses those amongst them who would represent their interests in the decision-making processes and the implementation of the decisions made.

Practice of Democracy in Nigeria vis-à-vis Aquinas’ Idea of Democracy

Since the dawn of political independence in Nigeria on the 1st of October, 1960, there have been various attempts to initiate a democratic form of government. Until

¹⁹Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I – II, q. 150, a. 1.

²⁰Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I – II, q. 150, a. 1.

1999, these attempts – the parliamentary rule before the 1966 military coup and the Shagari administration – have been short-lived as they were punctuated by extended military interventions. The years of military rule were years of total dissociation from the principles of democracy, which explains why the return to democracy in 1999 was greeted with hope and a sense of freedom. Our interest in this paper is whether the practice of democracy in Nigeria since 1999 has genuinely been democratic within the context of Aquinas' understanding of the concept.

Perhaps, it could be argued that the vast geographical size, population, ethnic diversity, legacies of colonial rule and the various military leaderships made Nigeria a nation of complexity. Therefore, we cannot but commend the effort to enthrone democracy in the country. Nevertheless, we would not be blind to the flagrant abuse of democratic principles inherent in the current practice of democracy since its re-inception in Nigeria. According to Cheta Nwanze, "in Nigeria today, the voice of the people is not being reflected in the choices of our elected officials. Instead of asking how a policy might help Nigerians, officials ask how it would win them the next elections – how it would enrich campaign donors and party godfathers and how much it would generate for the election war chest."²¹ If Nwanze is correct, which we think he is, because his description aptly portrays the observable state of affairs in Nigerian politics, then democracy in Nigeria falls short of the fundamental objective of the idea of democracy as a form of government that guarantees the common good.

For Aquinas, democracy is a form of government where the people participate in governance by exercising their right to choose their leaders. Since the return of democracy in 1999, Nigeria has had six general elections. These elections are supposedly expressions of the participation of the people in choosing their leaders. But is it actually the case that the so-called elected leaders were chosen by the people? Considering the flaws that characterised these elections, some of which were deliberately created, can we say the leaders or representatives that emerged were the choices of the people? Has the election umpire (INEC) been faithful to the conditions that promote free and fair elections?

The electoral process in Nigeria is bedevilled by electoral malpractices, such as illegal use of ballot boxes, illegal printing of voter's cards, falsification of votes cast, stuffing of ballot boxes with fake ballot papers/votes, manipulations with registration of voters, snatching of ballot boxes and political thuggery at voting polls. Let us take the last general elections of 23rd February, 2019 as case study. According to *This Day* editorial of Sunday 3rd March 2019, "although majority of

²¹Cheta Nwanze, "The Madness of Democracy in Nigeria," *Politics*, November 8, 2018, <https://m.guardian.ng>.

the local and international observers have adjudged the 23rd February presidential and national assembly elections fairly okay, what transpired during the exercise highlight the challenges of holding free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria.” It further asserts that violence has become a defining feature of elections in Nigeria, as the 23rd February elections showcased “outright brigandage, abduction of election officials, burning of election materials and shooting to death of some innocent citizens.” The thugs who perpetrated these acts were aided in some cases by security agents, as was the case in Lagos where polling centres were invaded and voters were manhandled. This was also the case in the 2015 general elections in Rivers State, as it was again in the 23rd February 2019 general elections.

Aside the electoral process, it is difficult to hold that those who seek political power and positions in Nigeria have the common good of the citizenry at heart. Politics in Nigeria has become very lucrative and provides a platform for brigands and outlaws to muscle their way to positions of authority to access the nation’s commonwealth. Aided by the prevailing pervasive corruption in the country, which in the first place is the stock-in-trade of Nigerian politicians, holding a political office affords the Nigerian politicians the opportunity to enrich themselves from the commonwealth. This accounts for the desperation with which they seek power at all costs. The fact that we do not have any report of anybody ever prosecuted and convicted for creating violence during elections makes it rewarding for politicians to indulge in it with impunity. Although the interest of the downtrodden is always fronted as the cannon fodder, it is hardly ever served. When Nigerian politicians get into positions and offices, their eyes are fixed on the spoils of office that the Nigerian version of democracy has gracefully attached to the country’s political positions, from the presidency to local councillorship.

Contrary to the position of Aquinas that the common good should be the interest of those in government, Nigeria’s experience of democratic government visibly side-tracks the common good for the good of the persons in positions of authority. This is manifested in the huge sums of money allocated to running political institutions like the National Assemblies and the emoluments the legislators appropriate to themselves. What we have as democracy in Nigeria today is more an ‘authoritarian rule by an institutionalised oligarchy’ that continues to present itself as an obstacle to authentic democratic rule in Nigeria. Egbefo graphically describes this thus:

The oligarchs are composed of self-serving politicians, businesspersons, political fixers, ‘godfathers,’ former military officers, and elite bureaucrats who share a common interest in sustaining oligarchic power... To maintain power, the oligarchs trade offices; coop rivals, distribute concessions and contacts; and bleed the public treasury to fund their private fortunes, clients, political parties, and

political thugs. Unable to show how their salaries could explain their life-styles, fortunes, and patronage, they have institutionalised a political order indifferent to legal, ethical, or even communal accountability.²²

The practice of democracy in Nigeria denies Nigerians their basic human rights, freedom of the press, right to free political choice and right to make deliberative input in governance. There is inequality before the law, with legions of public officials who have committed offences treated differently, depending on which side of the political divide they belong. The rule of law is disregarded as court orders are flagrantly disobeyed by the government when they do not favour it and brutally enforced when such orders favour the cause of the government in power. Public officials and political appointees steal from the nation's purse by including what they steal in the budget proposal. When they find no accommodation for their theft in the budget, the nation's legislators are pecuniary rewarded to enact laws to validate the stolen wealth. With these, we cannot agree that what we practice in Nigeria at the moment is democracy.

Conclusion: Getting Nigeria on the Path of True Democracy

The Nigerian government has long distanced itself from the basic principles of democracy as we find in Aquinas' political philosophy. Leaders are not chosen by the people but are installed by some powerful citizens through electoral malpractices. Consequently, most of our purportedly elected representatives do not care about the common good. Rather, they are more concerned about their personal interests and those of their godfathers. According to Jomo Iroha, "instead of democracy, what we have perfected in Nigeria, as at today is kleptocracy; which is the combination of military bravado in milking Nigeria, and civilian pretence for the same objective."²³ Democracy in Nigeria is tinted with "widespread corruption, marginalisation, intimidation, assassination and all sorts of social vices all in the quest for people's mandate."²⁴ To remedy this situation, we need to get majority of the citizenry involved. This would first require that we make them jettison their present prevailing attitude of just lamenting the situation of the country, and rather get practically involved in challenging the oligarchy of the political class.

The way to dislodge the oligarchy is for "well meaning, totally committed and uncompromising people who can influence the coming together of Nigerians under a unified vision to turn the tide and bring about the much needed change in

²²Egbefo, "Fifteen Years of Democracy, 1999-2014," 65.

²³Jomo Iroha, "Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Issues and the Way Forward," accessed March 4, 2019, www.thewillnigeria.com.

²⁴Iroha, "Democratic Governance in Nigeria."

[Nigeria]”²⁵ to participate in seeking representative political offices. As it is presently, this class of Nigerians prefer to stand aside and watch as events unfold in the country. They do not want to venture into the very dangerous waters within which our present democracy is engulfed, precisely because of the apathy of the citizenry. Therefore, we all have to show interest and commitment to be ready to stand up for what is right as encouragement to honest and well-meaning Nigerians to come forward and take up positions of leadership through the electoral process. Given that the average Nigerian male youth today is as interested in the affairs of government as he is in English Premier League, La Liga, Serie A, and UEFA, and if the ladies give the attention they presently give to ZeeWorld, Telemundo and Televista to the affairs of governance, we would get out of the present mess fast. As it is today, the vast majority of Nigerian citizenry is unconcerned; we look away from cases of abuse of office by government officials, run unproductive commentaries, ridicule serious issues of mal-governance on social media, laugh it off, and life continues as usual. This attitude of the citizenry creates the platform for the oligarchs in political offices and those seeking political offices to look down on the ordinary and poor people on whose votes they claim to ascend positions of power and leadership. This is why we have the ‘stomach infrastructure’ ideology introduced to our politics by the likes of Ayodele Fayose, which was taken to the “next level” in the recent general where Indomine, spaghetti, Kulikuli, Garri and Maggi, among other items, were shared to the ordinary citizens to get their votes. It shows how lowly those privileged to be at the forefront of politics in Nigeria rate the masses who should actually hold and exercise power. If we are to achieve true democracy, the masses would have to rise and reclaim the power to choose, rather than continue to scramble for the scraps that fall off the tables of the present political class. We must encourage the best, the brightest and the fittest among us to get involved in the politics of our nation at all levels. We must support them to reclaim our power, as the people of Nigeria, for us.

²⁵Iroha, “Democratic Governance in Nigeria.”

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