

**A Review of Simon Kolawole's *Fellow Nigerians, It's All Politics: Perspectives on the Nigerian Project*.  
(Lagos: Cable Books, 2022)**

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The author is a well-known and equally well-respected journalist and public affairs commentator who was once editor of *This Day* newspaper but currently publisher of an online daily, *The Cable*. He is reputed for deep analysis on the maladministration in Nigeria. Simeon Kolawole is a prolific and insightful analyst by all standards. He has written on Nigeria for over two decades and is still writing, perhaps not giving up on a country so blessed, yet trailing behind in all developmental indices on account of bad politics, fuelled by toxic leadership. The author starts by inferring that the Nigerian condition is made worse by its tribe of political actors.

This book is a reaffirmation of Nigeria's pathetic story, a story well known and felt by its citizenry since independence. It is about the toxic leadership, failure to take the best policy direction and bad politics foisted on a citizenry increasingly frustrated and brutalised by the bad quality of governance made by the political class. A brilliant, insightful and thought-provoking analysis indeed. The book admits that Nigeria is faulty but did not stop there. He lamented the evil done by its political elites but professes an undying love for the country and insists that the country can be turned around with good governance made possible by a patriotic class of political actors. He insists that if only Nigeria can be rebooted, the country will manifestly become great indeed and in truth. Holding the politicians responsible for the underdevelopment of the country, he particularly

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denounces our brand of politics as uninspiring and unedifying. Lamenting, he insists that it is about time for Nigerians to demand accountability from their parasitic leaders as an antidote to the bad governance exacerbated by bad politics.

The book is a collection of articles written about the politics and governance structure of Nigeria and is a 336-page book divided into eight sections. The first section of the book chronicles the unpublished works of the author, while the other sections are filled with published articles across several years but the themes are as relevant as when they were published in the *This Day* newspaper. The excuse of the author for not publishing the works were two. The first was that event overtook some, while some were not time bound.

Part two chronicles articles that the author judges to be the most popular of his writings, but he was quick to add that, 'it does not mean the best'. He came to the conclusion that they were popular because those articles elicited the most reaction by readers. Being popular, they provoked a rash of reactions, both positive and negative. As with opinions expressed in the public arena, the author was hailed by those who shared his sentiments and vilified strongly by those who are opposed to his views and those who didn't expect him to share such sentiments did not spare him their wrath.

Part three is filled by what the author considers the 'core' of his treatise. It contains a series on politics and politicking. He explained how politicians masked their selfish interests and conveyed them as national interest. He explained their strategy which he called 'gymnastics and rhetoric' which they use in perpetuity and stated that politics in Nigeria is never devoid of intrigues, which he claims he does not fall for. He affirms that the citizenry should ensure that political actors are held accountable for their words and actions.

Part Four warehouses articles on the leadership challenge in Nigeria. Strange as it appears, politicians in Nigeria do not count on changing their ways anytime soon. Indeed, they appear indifferent about their reputations. This underscores the necessity for citizens to become more involved in the political process of the country as a matter of urgency. It is a popular aphorism that Nigeria is backward and seriously way off the mark of

development because of the failure of leadership. Many have postulated that all the crises assailing Nigeria can be traced to the kind of leaders it is endowed with. In part five, the author chronicles the ups and downs of nation-building which have continued to threaten national unity. He maintains that the instability in Nigeria is a potent reason for lack of progress as relative peace is indeed required for socio-economic development.

The sixth section is on “Democracy and Democratisation.” It contains articles that detailed the slow pace of democratic growth and culture in Nigeria. In this section, Kolawole laments the landmines that continue to pose as huge obstacles on the imperative for democratic growth, which, in turn, could mitigate crises foisted on the account of democratic abuse. The seventh part is on economic policies. He argued that the economy needs revamping and for that to happen, the leaders have a responsibility to re-tool the economy to meet the challenges of this present era. A mono-cultural economy requires diversification to measure up to the essence of a modern economy.

Even though the book is replete with a most vivid picture of the political eco-system in Nigeria, some of the articles, matter of fact, most of the articles hit the sore point that politics in Nigeria has been hijacked by mostly undesirable elements and they have succeeded in making Nigeria in their own image- ugly and prostrate on all counts. Our politics is devoid of ennobling ethos and thus we all are victims of their brand of politics. If the author was silent on anything without stating it clearly, he demands for active participation of all men and women of goodwill and good conscience to reclaim the land with the sole aim of rescuing Nigeria from the jugular of the buccaneers bent on killing the country. The book comes highly recommended for everyone inclined on saving a country well-endowed but deeply fractured on account of bad politics by its ruling and political elites.

For some, it can be called a book of lamentation, while for others it is as illuminating as the light at the end of a tunnel. Whichever way, it is a necessary read for Nigerians. It is an actionable manual. A manual on how Nigeria can achieve much more than what it is now. The author shares his preachment of the possibility of the dawn of a greater and better Nigeria, one which can indeed be a land of milk and honey if we are prepared to do

the needful- just by making the necessary sacrifices. He canvasses the need for renaissance. He maintained that we cannot hit it big within the league of nations without changing our ways. He shared adequate blames across board, but maintains that if Nigeria will be revamped, then only Nigerians can undertake the rescue operation.

I recommend this book to all Nigerians interested in the much-required rescue operations of the country, a task needed to revamp the country cannot be easy but it is all the same needed. It is not an easy work nor a stroll in a park, it will require a lot of hard work and limited pontifications on recommending western prescriptions for all our ills. We live and operate within our own environment, while indeed, we do not live in isolation, more so, in view of globalisation. However, not all our ills can be cured using western medications. We have to be intentional about building a great country. The author's perspectives on the Nigerian project are worth reading and capable of inspiring the much-needed positive change which most Nigerians crave for.