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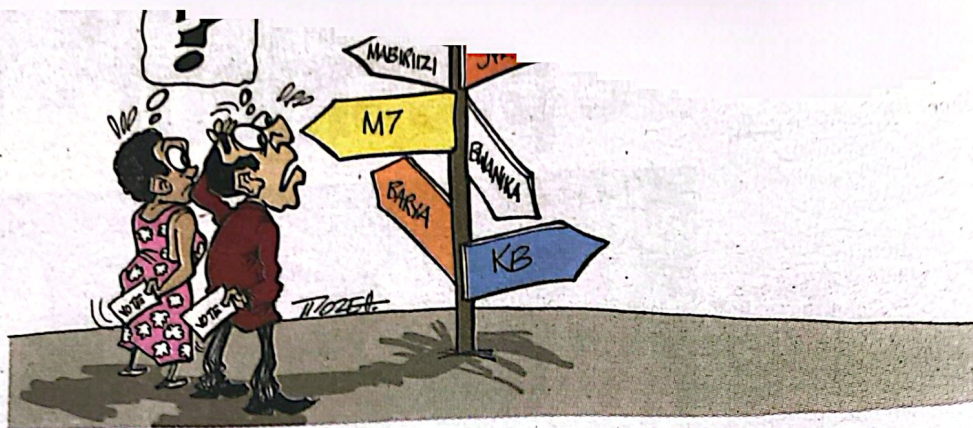
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What happens after the 2016 general election?

Karoli Ssemogerere Talking Point

By the end of today, radio and television will break into song relaying results of the first round of voting in the 2016 general election. The 110 days of campaigns are now triple what they were in 1996 (39); 2001 (45); 2006 (60) and so on. Generally, people have been heard.

A few voting patterns are also apparent with immediate implications: Urban youth are voting sharply against the incumbent. Rural youth vote is split. Women generally have broken for the incumbent in the past. Churchgoers similarly have cast their vote for the status quo. A few days before the vote, these constituencies did the normal signaling to their followers to do the needful.

There is a history behind these numbers; the Idi Amin years and the 1980 elections and the bush war that ensued thereafter. In the north, the insurgency which only ended in 2005, has left a delayed after effect.

Some issues have received more attention than others. The incumbent President Museveni has campaigned on his economic record promising more spending. He wants to more than double expenditure on agriculture to Shs 1 trillion. But the breakdown is dominated by expenditure on a single item; hand hoes rather than technology to harness climate change. Benon Biraaro has pushed back hard promising more technology and investment to improve productivity.

The most stinging remarks have been heard from the second tier of candidates mostly in their 40s (Kyalya, Bwanika,

Mabiirizi and Baryamureeba). Wherever they have gone they seem to have spent a lot of time on fact-finding rather than vote canvassing. Ms Kyalya delivered a stinging rebuke to Uganda's non-wage policy slamming cents on the dollar weekly wages that dominate the countryside; Mayuge's sugar mills, Oyam's gineries, etc. No candidate talked about the obvious that the country is labouring under record unemployment; and the so-called self-employment is a cloud for under employment.

The mature adults in the conversation; Mbabazi and Besigye spoke more in general terms. Mbabazi wants a new dispensation; governance tilting towards the grassroots; and Besigye took broad shots at an outline of a more accountable democratic government. Little was heard on the current cost of public administration or specifics for reducing the size of Parliament, which will swear in a record 458 members when it convenes for the first time in May.

The oil debate came in very late in the campaign. In 2015, oil companies began retrenching workers as it became clear oil prices in the medium term were far below the \$70.00 a barrel deemed commercially viable in Uganda (the global average is \$47.00 a barrel). In 2016, prices have fallen lower averaging \$35.00 a barrel and as low as \$26.00 a barrel sending oil dependent countries into a financial tailspin. Nigeria is on the brink of a major bailout from the IMF to stabilise its finances while Venezuela is teetering towards bankruptcy. The

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Besigye-Museveni debate exchange to answer the question, "whose oil it actually is?" will go down in memory.

Term limits should have taken on a more prominent role in the campaign. But as the endgame shows, the defiance campaign has a lot of similarities to the resistance movement flagship. Quite short on the details. Julius Kambarage Nyerere was just 62 in 1985 when he handed over power to Ali Hassan Mwinyi in Tanzania. Daniel arap Moi was 78 when he left power after respecting the two term limit imposed by the 1992 democratic reforms. Unfortunately, those are the only two examples we have in the eastern African sub-region stretching from the Horn of Africa to the borders of South Africa. Yet it is clear that for even the best intentions, the cost of each new presidential term carries a long term cost that is reflected in the future cost of delaying this important transition. When the presidential candidates sat at the roundtable debate last Saturday, this fact became ignominiously clearer but this and other important issues will be swept over by the elections.

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