

Speaker race: Why opposition remains NRM's talent pool

If one were to observe Ugandan politics strictly through party labels, it would appear to follow a reassuring logic. The National Resistance Movement sits firmly in government. The opposition occupies its designated benches, offering critique and resistance. But politics rarely respects tidy diagrams. A closer look reveals something closer to a slow migration. As Uganda edges towards its 12th Parliament, a pattern has become difficult to ignore. Many of the most visible figures within the ruling establishment did not originate there. They arrived from the very opposition spaces meant to challenge the system they now defend.

It is, in its own way, an efficient arrangement. Take Annetta Musinguzi. Today she presides over Parliament with the confidence of someone fully embedded at the centre of power. Yet her political beginnings were in the Forum for Democratic Change. Thomas Tayebwa's journey follows a similar arc, from FDC ranks to the Deputy Speaker's chair.

Norbert Mao's trajectory adds another layer. Long a defining voice within the Democratic Party, he stood for reform before entering a cooperation ar-

day's guardians of ruling party orthodoxy.

Mao's attendance added to the sense that Kyankwanzi is no longer merely a training ground for the ruling party, but something closer to a reunion venue for Uganda's political travellers.

From the perspective of the NRM, this is not a contradiction. It is strategy. Why invest heavily in nurturing talent when the opposition has already done the groundwork?

The opposition, meanwhile, begins to resemble a training academy that produces seasoned politicians who eventually graduate into government service.

There is, however, a twist. The most enthusiastic defenders of the ruling party are often those who joined it most recently. They speak of "our party" with an intensity that sometimes eclipses long-standing members. They defend its positions with a zeal that suggests not just loyalty, but a need to demonstrate it.

Veterans watch with quiet amusement. Having spent decades within the movement, they now find themselves being lectured on commitment by those who, not long ago, occupied the opposite benches.

What emerges is a political ecosystem that is both fluid and stable. Fluid, because individuals move across party lines with relative ease. Stable, because the balance of power remains largely unchanged.

For opposition parties, the implications are less comfortable. Each departure weakens not just their numbers, but their continuity. It is difficult to build a sustained challenge when your most capable figures are drawn into the system you oppose.

To an outside observer, the durability of the ruling party may lie not only in its ability to retain loyalty, but in its capacity to acquire it.

In business terms, it is strategic acquisition. In football, it is the transfer window. In politics, it is a process in which the opposition develops talent and government, at the right moment, extends an invitation.

One might imagine a modest sign outside Parliament: Experienced opposition politicians welcome.

Yet beneath the irony lies a more serious reflection. In a system where movement is constant and boundaries are permeable, the distinction between government and opposition becomes less about where one begins and more about where one eventually arrives.

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Politics

angement with government and assuming ministerial office. The shift was not entirely unexpected. It followed a script now familiar.

At the recent retreat in Kyankwanzi, one of the leading contenders for the Speakership, herself a former FDC diehard, offered a memorable clarification. Cooperation with the opposition, she suggested, should not be misunderstood. It does not extend, as she colourfully put it, "to the bedroom." The remark captured the quiet contradiction at the heart of Uganda's politics. Yesterday's opposition purists often become to-

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