



Fellow citizens, remember it's about you; not the candidates

Asuman Bisiika Minority Report

In a contemporary state, an election is supposed to be a civil and civic exercise; like a census or registration of births. It is not supposed to be a precursor for war.

Yet we must accept that the stakes in this election are so high that it is now a matter of life and death for some. There is a fear of post-election violence. This fear has diverted the population's need and demand for a free and fair poll to having a peaceful process.

But with a free and fair poll, the fear of violence would not even arise. The truth though is that the country is experiencing a national sense of apprehension. There is near unanimity that something is wrong and that things are not working out as would be expected. One can feel it, and even 'see' it; yet cannot touch it.

In normal circumstances, the lethargy and lassitude in the body political would be cured by an election. But no; because very few Ugandans believe an electoral process can settle political issues.

That is why the voting patterns in next week's elections will not be informed by issues in the manifestos.

Our leaders (on both sides of the political divide) are disoriented and unable to inspire the people to meaningfully express themselves, reflect and respond to the situation of apathy engulfing the country.

The cry from the political Opposition is 'President Museveni must go'. Good idea, but how? For President Museveni to go, the Opposition must win an election. For the Opposition to win an election, the process must be free and fair. And asking Museveni to organise a free and fair election is asking too much; because such a free and fair election would disadvantage him.

That's exactly why this election is about you (the Ugandan citizen); not the candidates. Yet we recognise that the power of your vote is not absolute; beyond the victory on polling day, there are other 'asymmetrical' political dynamics that can be brought to bear. Yes, like the military or popular uprising.

We have heard of protecting of votes? But how would one do that? How and why have we reached that level of state lethargy? We pay the Electoral Commission to protect our votes, yet we still have to protect our votes... Of course if Ugandans were assured of a free and fair electoral exercise, there would not be a need for 'protection of our votes'.

We have heard of protecting of votes? But how would one do that? How and why have we reached that level of state lethargy? We pay the Electoral Commission to protect our votes, yet we still have to protect our votes... Of course if Ugandans were assured of a free and fair electoral exercise, there would not be a need for 'protection of our votes'.

There is a feeling of déjà vous; that ethereal sense that one's situation has been experienced before.

Yes, this has a taste and test of Uganda's political situation in 1980; only that this time we don't have a Yoweri Museveni to organise things outside the symmetrical structures of the body politic.

We don't expect anyone to organise outside the legitimate power structures, neither is it our fancy. This puts a lot of responsibility into the citizens. And remember it is about you; not the candidates.

We Ugandans always chide the political Opposition: they should present policy alternatives. Sure, but what hasn't a party like FDC done? They have a party platform (sort of national vision or manifesto) offering policy options.

Like any political party, they have accompanied that with sloganeering, pamphleteering, civil agitation and now to party building...; yet a sense of apathy still subsists. Why? Because the structural organisation of power in Uganda is not founded on policy options and choices but fiat.

Political leadership, hitherto a platform for self expression, has been reduced to a stage where one struts in order to gain visibility and leveraging into overtures from the government.

Fellow citizens, vote wisely. Remember it is about you; not the candidate.

Mr Bisiika is the executive editor of East Africa Flagpost.