

## Lessons about power, public trust and institutions

Parliament has elected Jacob Oboth-Oboth as Speaker and Thomas Tayebwa as Deputy Speaker of Uganda's 12th Parliament. But beyond who occupies the chair, the bigger national question remains the same: can Parliament restore public trust?

One of the biggest misunderstandings about leadership and power is the belief that public downfall begins with scandals, arrests, or humiliation. Most times, it begins much earlier.

It begins when institutions slowly lose public trust. It begins when leadership stops being seen as service and starts being seen as distance, privilege, and power for its own sake.

Watching the recent events around Anita Among unfold in Uganda, one cannot avoid reflecting on some of these wider lessons about leadership, institutions, public trust, and political culture. This article is not about declaring guilt or innocence. Courts and institutions exist for that. It is about what young African leaders should learn from moments like this.

And to reflect on this moment honestly, one must first acknowledge something important: Among was not politically weak. She was politically skilled. She understood mobilisation,

ing. That perception was amplified by visible political mobilisation, luxury optics, growing visibility, and the increasing perception of personalisation of public institutions.

Then came social media. Previous eras of politics were largely controlled through newspapers, radio, party structures, and elite conversations. But social media changed political accountability completely. The Parliament Exhibition period transformed Parliament from an institution into a viral public conversation. Today, one TikTok clip can damage a public image faster than a whole Opposition rally. Because Among had become the dominant public face of Parliament, much of that frustration concentrated around her personally. But beyond personalities, Uganda must ask itself a more important question: What kind of leadership culture are we building?

Ugandans are not angry because leaders are successful. Ugandans actually admire success. The problem starts when public institutions begin looking like private kingdoms while ordinary citizens are constantly being told there is no money for hospitals, jobs, medicines, schools, or service delivery.

That is where public trust begins collapsing. And this is why the conversation about value for money matters so much. If a road costs billions, citizens should see the road. If Parliament spends public money, citizens should see public value.

If leaders speak of service, institutions should reflect service.

Uganda is also entering a broader political transition. President Museveni's long leadership has shaped nearly every major institution in the country. At the same time, the 12th Parliament already reflects signs of generational change. Several long-serving political figures lost their seats, while many new faces entered Parliament across the country.

That transition creates both opportunity and danger. Opportunity, because Uganda needs fresh leadership energy and ideas. Danger, because transition periods can tempt leaders into building visibility faster than credibility, influence faster than trust, and ambition faster than institutional grounding.

Part of the lesson may therefore not simply be about power itself, but about timing, balance, and political maturity during transition.

Ambition is not the problem. Uganda needs ambitious leaders. But sustainable leadership is built progressively, not aggressively. It is built through legitimacy, institutional trust, public confidence, and discipline.

### The problem starts when public institutions begin looking like private kingdoms.



**Emmanuel Wabwire**  
Laws of power

symbolism, coalition-building, parliamentary procedure, and institutional control. That is precisely why she rose so quickly.

But leadership contains a dangerous paradox: the same qualities that help leaders rise can also create distance between institutions and the public if not carefully managed.

Over time, the public image around her increasingly became intertwined with the identity of Parliament itself. To many Ugandans, she became the face of Parliament during a period when frustration around governance, accountability, and public expenditure was grow-

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