

Unity or Irrelevance: The Opposition's moment of reckoning

The recently concluded elections in Uganda have delivered a sobering message to the Opposition. After months of anticipation and years of political activity, the Opposition suffered a significant defeat. While many factors may explain the outcome, one uncomfortable truth stands out: internal divisions, public infighting, and a failure to build strategic unity severely weakened their collective strength. For five years, leading Opposition parties appeared more focused on fighting each other than on presenting a credible and united alternative to the incumbent government.

The divisions were visible across several major Opposition parties. The Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), once a dominant force in Uganda's political history, has struggled with internal disagreements and leadership wrangles that diluted its national appeal. The Democratic Par-

ty supporters deserve better than what was displayed. They deserve leadership that understands the importance of unity, discipline, and long-term planning.

Political competition is healthy, but when Opposition parties fight each other more aggressively than they challenge the incumbent party, they weaken their own cause. Elections are not only about ideology; they are about organisation, coordination, and trust. Where there is a visible division, voters tend to hesitate. Many citizens who desire change may choose stability over uncertainty if the alternative appears fragmented and disorganised.

History offers powerful examples of Opposition parties putting aside their differences to achieve a common objective. For Uganda's Opposition, the path forward must begin with honest reflection. Leaders must acknowledge mistakes, particularly the culture of public quarrels and factional battles that dominated headlines. Internal disagreements should be resolved through established party structures rather than through media exchanges that erode public trust. Opposition parties should invest in strengthening grassroots structures, policy clarity, and collaborative platforms where shared national priorities can be discussed.

Moreover, Opposition leaders must shift their mindset from competition within the opposition to competition against the incumbent. Building alliances, forming joint issue-based platforms, and coordinating on electoral strategy would significantly improve their chances in future elections. Even where full mergers are unrealistic, structured cooperation can prevent vote splitting and confusion among supporters.

Ultimately, political maturity is not measured by rhetoric but by responsibility. Until opposition leaders reach a higher level of political maturity, one that prioritises national interest above personal ambition, the hopes and dreams of their followers will remain unrealised. Supporters yearn for effective representation, credible leadership, and a genuine chance at change. If the opposition fails to learn from this defeat, it risks repeating the same cycle.

Unity, discipline, and strategic cooperation are no longer optional; they are essential. The future of Uganda's democratic competition depends on whether its Opposition can rise above internal battles and embrace a common purpose.

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ty (DP), historically influential and respected, also experienced fragmentation and conflicting factions that undermined its public confidence. The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), long considered a strong pillar of Opposition politics, was consumed by internal power struggles and disputes that created parallel centres of authority. Even the National Unity Platform (NUP), the leading Opposition party in recent years, was not immune to internal disagreements and organisational tensions.

Instead of building bridges among themselves, Opposition leaders often engaged in public criticism and competition for dominance within the Opposition space. This not only confused voters but also discouraged many supporters who hoped to see cooperation and strategic coordination. Voters and Opposi-

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