

with Mail & Guardian

# The Continent



## ELECTIONS IN ANGOLA

*Will a liberation movement fall?*

# Inside:

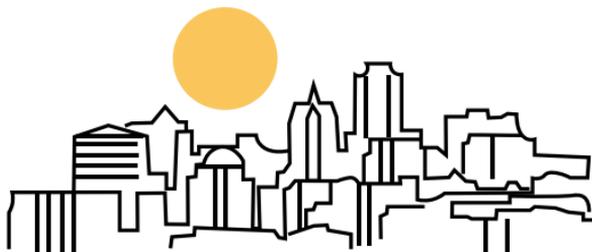
- **Mali:** French troops forced out while Russians welcomed (p7)
- **Nigeria:** Without energy, hospitals turn to unreliable generators (p9)
- **Energy:** Blackouts in China amid a global crisis (p11)
- **Review:** Viewers decide a human's fate in *Justice Served* (p15)
- **Kenya:** Ruto won. How? (p17)
- **Mansa Musa:** What was it like to be the richest person in history? (p23)
- **The Quiz:** Ali Bongo Ondimba is president of ...? That and more inside (p26)

---

Get the latest edition of *The Continent*, plus every back issue (all 95 of them) on [thecontinent.org](https://thecontinent.org). To subscribe (for free!), save *The Continent's* number to your phone (+27 73 805 6068) and send us a message on WhatsApp/Signal/Telegram.

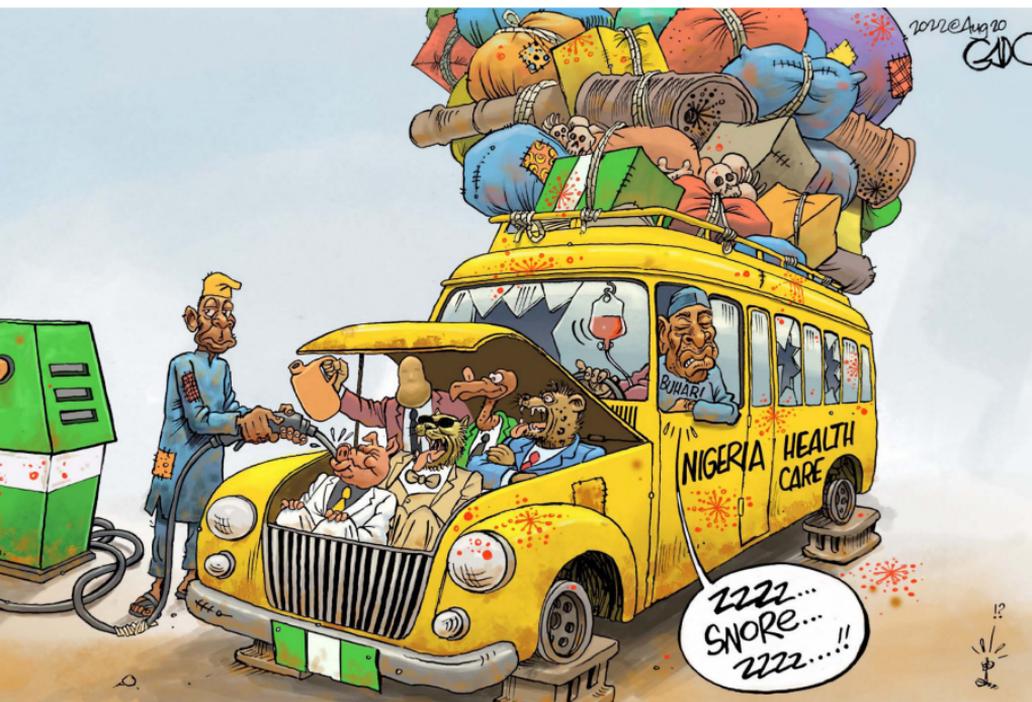


**Cover:** The MPLA has ruled Angola since its liberation in 1974. On Wednesday, it faces its toughest ever electoral challenge against an opposition which is younger and hungrier – and, crucially, has not presided over the squandering of the country's vast oil wealth. Could another venerable liberation party be about to lose power? (p12)



## Write for us

We want more travel pages. Tell us about your city or favourite town on the continent. Ping an email to [letters@thecontinent.org](mailto:letters@thecontinent.org)



## ETHIOPIA

### WHO head blames racism for negligence of Tigray

The director general of the World Health Organisation, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said this week that the situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and has left millions of people without access to basic services. He questioned why it is not getting as much attention as the war in Ukraine. "Maybe the reason is the colour of the skin of the people," he said. Tedros is from Tigray.

## ALGERIA

### Dozens killed and many injured in wildfires

This week, forest fires in northern Algeria killed at least 26 people and injured many more. Four other people died in earlier wildfires. Over 100 fires have broken out this summer. The fires are a seasonal occurrence – they killed 90 people last year, but are reportedly getting worse with climate change. In addition to loss of lives, they threaten Algeria's already sparse vegetation. This year's fires have destroyed about 6,200 acres of forest.

**RWANDA - UK****The cat's out of the bag**

Ministers of the United Kingdom government partially lost their bid to keep secret some of the advice they received on the plan to move asylum seekers to Rwanda. A judge ruled that an official advisor's warnings to ministers – which stated that Rwanda tortures and kills political opponents – can be used as evidence in a court case challenging the \$140-million plan. The ministers have argued that making these statements public would damage the UK's relationship with Rwanda.

**CONSERVATION****150 endangered vultures poisoned**

In two recent incidents, at least 150 white-backed vultures were found dead in Botswana and South Africa, in what conservationists suspect was deliberate poisoning. The white-backed vulture is listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's "red list" of critically-endangered bird species. About 100 birds were found dead in South Africa's Kruger National Park and 50 in Botswana's northern Chobe district. Poachers are known to poison the birds either for their body parts or because they might lead conservationists to their areas of operation.



**Homebound: José Eduardo dos Santos.** Illustration: Wynona Mutisi

**ANGOLA****Court allows Dos Santos' widow custody of his body**

A Spanish court ruled on Tuesday that the body of former Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos be given over to his widow, Ana Paula Cristovao dos Santos, for repatriation and burial in Angola. Prior to Dos Santos' death, one of his daughters had lodged a complaint of "attempted homicide", alleging that the wife had a hand in his ailment. The Tuesday court ruling said Dos Santos died a "natural death" brought on by "chronic cardiorespiratory failure".

# FIGHT FAKE NEWS WITH REAL NEWS.

Disinformation is often shared on closed networks like WhatsApp. That's why *The Continent* exists. Help us fight fake news by subscribing to high quality journalism, and share that instead.



Get your copy delivered to your phone or inbox every Saturday. And if you like what you read, forward it to your friends, family and colleagues – not indiscriminately, but only with people who might appreciate it.



## HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

**Email:** [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za) with 'SUBSCRIBE' in the subject box

**WhatsApp/Signal:** Save +27 73 805 6068 on your phone, and send us a message saying 'NEWS'



Share real news.

**The Continent**

with Mail Guardian

**ZAMBIA****Barbra Banda included in provisional COSAFA team**

The Zambia women national football team has released a provisional squad for the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (Cosafa) championship, with Barbra Banda as captain. Banda was controversially kept out of the Women's African Cup of Nations tournament in Morocco by so-called gender verification tests, which have also kept other African sporting stars, like South Africa's Caster Semenya as well as Kenyans Maximilla Imali and Evangeline Makena out of competitions. The Cosafa championships



Photo: Twitter/BarbraBanda11

tournament is slated for 31 August - 11 September in South Africa.

**CAMEROON****Anglophone peace activist arrested**

Reknown Muslim scholar and peace activist Abdul Karim Ali is in detention again. There have been no official charges against him since his arrest on 11 August but Human Rights Watch says he is being accused of "apology for terrorism" because of a video found on his phone that shows alleged human rights abuses by Cameroonian soldiers against civilians in the country's restive Anglophone region. The activist was also arrested and held for weeks in 2019.

**TANZANIA****The cloud in the clouds**

Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, now has high-speed internet connectivity, according to Tanzanian information minister, Nape Nnauye. He added that in October internet connectivity will reach the mountain's highest point - Uhuru Peak, which is 5,895m above sea level. Previously, climbers could not make even regular phone calls beyond the base camp which is at 1,860m, limiting options for help and rescue in case of medical emergencies on the treks.

# Mali

## Junta bids adieu to French forces

**And swiftly replaces  
one colonial power with  
another**

**O**n Monday afternoon, the last French soldiers in Mali packed up their things and boarded a military transport plane. It took off and headed east. As it crossed the border into Niger, so France's nine-year military intervention in the country came to an abrupt end.

This intervention, when it was launched in a matter of weeks in early 2013, was designed to prevent rebel groups from marching on the capital Bamako and seizing control of the state. It achieved that limited goal. However, even with a deployment of 5,000 French soldiers, it failed in its broader ambition of restoring security and eliminating terrorism.

In the time the French have been there – supported by both a regional and international peacekeeping force – insecurity has only worsened. Armed groups carried out more than 800 deadly

attacks in 2021 alone, according to Al Jazeera.

Nor was France able to prop up the civilian government that it was ostensibly there to protect. After months of protests in 2020, it was overthrown and replaced by a military junta. During the protests, France's military presence became a flashpoint, with protesters burning French flags and calling for the troops to leave. It did not help when a French airstrike killed at least 19 civilians at a wedding in January 2021, and France refused to even investigate the atrocity – nevermind take responsibility.

Just hours after the French left Gao, two planes landed at the base. According to German troops with the United Nations peacekeeping mission, the planes were operated by Russian security forces.

To fill the French void, Mali's military junta has turned to Russia to help fight the rebels – effectively replacing one colonial power with another. Already, Russian mercenaries have been implicated in the massacre of several hundred civilians in at least nine separate incidents between January and April this year.

Thousands of French troops remain operational in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger. France maintains permanent military bases in Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon and Senegal. ■

---

# Nigeria

---

## **Inflation approaches 20% as oil production hovers at 30-year low**

**Even though global oil prices are soaring and cushioning producers, Nigeria missed the mark on production and instead hit a record on inflation**

**N**igeria's inflation has hit a 17-year record high. According to its National Bureau of Statistics annual inflation in July was nearly 20%, driven by increasing prices for basically everything – from fuel and food to renting a nice dress.

At the start of the year, inflation hovered between 15.4% and 15.9% but shot to 16.8% in April and has been climbing since, with states like Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Kogi, seeing the sharpest increases.

Most countries around the world are experiencing inflation. In June inflation in both the US and UK was 9.1%, a 40-year record for both countries. In the European Union, it went to 8.6%, the highest it has ever been since that monetary union was established.

But Nigeria has the one asset that has helped some countries ride the inflationary tide: oil. It has not helped Nigeria. If anything, the country has failed to meet its Organisation of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries production quotas, meaning it has not taken advantage of the soaring prices on the world market to earn more for itself.

Nigeria can produce up to 2.2-million barrels of oil a day but in May, its output hit a 30-year low at 1.23-million per day. Key oil fields and terminals are struggling because they have not been sufficiently re-invested in, and more than 10% of what is produced is stolen by people who tap the pipelines. One major oil line, the Trans-Niger Pipeline, was being tapped in about 150 places, oil workers said earlier this year. With producers receiving as little as 5% of the oil being sent through it, the pipeline has not transported any oil since June, according to *Bloomberg*.

Meanwhile, the country is still spending billions to import foodstuffs like wheat whose prices have skyrocketed during the war in Ukraine, and fuel, since most of its own oil is exported as crude. ■

---

# Nigeria

---

## Hospitals are operating in the dark amid chronic blackouts

**A fraction of Nigeria's power grid is working and hospitals have had to buy generators to keep up vital work and life-saving operations. But often even these are not enough.**

**Tijani Abdulkabeer and  
Olayide Oluwafunmilayo Soaga**

**I**t was 10 o'clock at night at Cottage Hospital in Adamawa, in the north-east of Nigeria. Doctor Tella Quadri was notified of an emergency – an expectant mother due for labour was having difficulty giving birth. A Caesarean section would be needed. By midnight, he was operating. But then everything turned off, and he found himself in the dark.

The hospital doesn't have much in the way of formal power supply, so it relies on generators. These shut down abruptly, leading to a total blackout in the hospital.

While non-medical staff fought with the generators, Quadri kept operating with the aid of lamps and torches. Shortly after, the cry of a newborn echoed around the theatre.

### **A national problem**

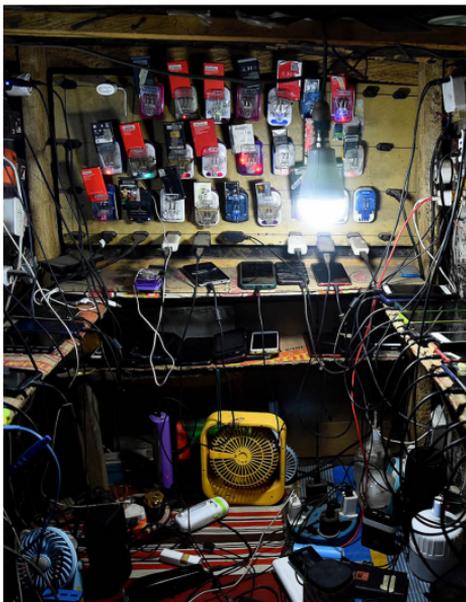
This challenge is not unique to Adamawa.

Nigeria has 28 working power plants, the majority of which are powered by gas. In theory, these give the country 16,000-megawatts of installed energy capacity. That's around a third as much as South Africa, the next largest economy on the continent. But South Africa only has a third of Nigeria's 200-million population.

On a normal day, only 4,000-megawatts is functional. That's equivalent to Senegal, with a population of just over 16-million people.

And even this is precarious. The Transmission Company of Nigeria says the grid has collapsed 146 times in the last 12 years.

A 2017 study – “energy policy for low carbon development in Nigeria – estimated that Nigerians need up to 12 times more energy than is supplied. The World Bank estimates that 85-million Nigerians don't have access to electricity from the national grid, making it the country with the largest energy access



**Overload: Phones of clients without electricity charge in a shop in Ojodu, Lagos.** (Photo: Pius Utomi Ekpei/AFP)

deficit in the world.

In the last few months, 14 power plants have ceased to work, dropping capacity to 2,000-megawatts. A fifth of the energy generated is also lost in old and faulty transmission lines before it can be used.

For places that need a stable supply of electricity, such as hospitals, this is a life-threatening problem.

In Ibadan, Nigeria's second-biggest city, the University College Hospital uses 75 generators to do its work. The head of the country's Federal Medical Centre, Abeokuta Adewale Musa, last month said that the hospital spends \$105,000 a month on diesel.

### The human cost

In Adamawa, Quadri said the incessant

power failures put patients' lives at risk. This is particularly true for people on life support machinery and premature children. Anaesthetic, dialysis and incubation machines all need electricity. As do the myriad other pieces of technology needed in a modern hospital. At best people's conditions worsen. At worst, they die.

When the power goes out, Quadri said everyone has to act, running up and down whenever there is a power outage "because a patient could die before we switch to another power source".

A longer stay in hospital also increases the cost. With a stuttering economy, where inflation is near 20% and employment at around 10%, this is a cost people cannot afford.

For hospitals, extra costs are incurred in buying new generators, maintaining them and feeding them with diesel and petrol. Both of those have only gotten more expensive this year on the back of global price hikes. While Nigeria is a big fossil fuel exporter, little of that is refined so the country has to import fuel.

For doctors, this pressure is an added incentive to move. A paediatrician who spoke to *The Continent* said: "When Nigerian doctors migrate to other countries, we do not do so solely because of the money but also because of the burden of working in an uncondusive environment."

This, they added, was made all the worse by constant power outages.

The Nigerian Medical Association estimates that 9,000 doctors have left the country in the last two years alone. ■

---

# Climate

---

## Extreme heat hits global energy production

From Germany to China, major economies are stuttering amid a climate-induced power crunch

### Sipho Kings

**S**ichuan province in China's southwest is home to over 80-million people. It is a key producer of the world's solar panels and semiconductors. It has the country's biggest lithium mines, which go into batteries for electric vehicles. In a few decades it has gone from an agricultural region to one of the world's major industrial nodes.

Last weekend, the provincial government ordered the shutdown of factories in major cities for six days.

The heatwave that started in early August had only intensified. It is now the worst in 60 years. Temperatures in the provincial capital, Chengdu, hovered above 40 degrees celsius. The turbines in the hydroelectric dams that have powered Sichuan's growth didn't have enough water to spin properly. And demand from things like air-conditioning units was surging. With not enough energy, the province decided to prioritise people's access to power over that of industry.

Across China, heat and floods meant a

similar scenario has played out elsewhere in the country this summer.

And it is the same story across the northern hemisphere. In Europe, with an energy system built for a wet and mild environment, extreme heat and low rainfall have dried out rivers. In France, nuclear power plants are running at reduced capacity because there isn't enough water to safely cool them. Where there is water, it is too hot to properly cool things like coal power plants. In Germany, the Rhine river is so low that barges can barely navigate it – barges that bring coal upriver.

Without that coal, the power plants that helped drive the climate crisis cannot work.

In the United States, which just passed its first-ever meaningful climate legislation, extreme weather is crashing into high energy costs to drive inflation.

Fossil fuel lobbyists have responded by pushing more gas as the solution to this rolling energy crisis. Its pollution traps heat in the atmosphere and drives global heating. ■

# Angola's ruling party could lose this election

**The MPLA is haunted by its failure to share the country's vast oil wealth, and is facing an energised and organised opposition for the first time**

**Cláudio Silva in Luanda**

**O**n Wednesday, Angolans will vote in the fifth general election since its multiparty democracy was established in 1992, after 17 years of one-party rule. The stakes couldn't be higher. For the first time in its history, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) – which has been in power since independence from Portugal in 1975 – has a real chance of losing the vote.

How different things seemed 20 years ago, when it defeated long-time rivals UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and vanquished their rebel leader Jonas Savimbi on the battlefield. What followed was what can only be described as an economic bonanza, with high oil prices making Angola one of the fastest-growing countries in the world. With an entire country to rebuild after the civil war, tens of billions of dollars were poured into ambitious reconstruction projects, and multinational companies were eager for a slice of the action.

Even with the widespread irregularities that have come to plague elections in countries without strong institutions and

democratic norms, MPLA handily won the 2008 legislative elections with 82% of the vote. Two years later they changed the Constitution to effectively abolish direct presidential elections. Long-time President José Eduardo dos Santos coasted to victory in 2012 on the back of MPLA's still significant popularity.

However, such was the party's acute inability to translate Angola's newfound wealth into actual sustainable development, and such was their absolute devotion to corruption and self-enrichment, that they were unable to capitalise on the country's general wealth gain and became increasingly unpopular.

Discontent became sufficiently widespread that the MPLA lost 10% of the vote in each of the 2012 and 2017 elections – even with the usual illegalities and irregularities in the voting process.

## **Out of touch**

Throughout this period, two notable factors further contributed to MPLA's fall in popularity: demographic change and the quality of the opposition.

Angola has one of the highest fertility rates in the world and about 73% of its population is under 30 years of age, with



**Gloom: Traditional leaders join supporters of People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola as they gather while Angola incumbent President Joao Lourenco addresses an elections rally in Luanda in July. (Photo: Julio Pacheco Ntelam/AFP)**

little to no memory of the civil war. They demand an escape from crippling poverty, unemployment and repression, and see these elections as a way for them to vote for much-needed reforms.

The quality of the opposition is another matter altogether. For years, one of the MPLA's main strategies to maintain their grip on power is to repeatedly weaken, buy-off, intimidate, or otherwise co-opt members of the opposition. Sometimes, it goes as far as creating political satellite parties to divide its opponents.

It has been unable to do so with this iteration of UNITA.

The opposition's charismatic leader, Adalberto Costa Júnior, has managed not only to attract serious support throughout Angola, specifically among its youth and in urban centers, but has also managed to unite several opposition parties to

his cause. Among his allies are Abel Chivukuvuku, his candidate for the vice-presidency and one of the most influential politicians in Angola; and Justino Pinto de Andrade, a widely respected former MPLA dissident and political prisoner who is directly related to one of MPLA's founders and first president.

Now, according to Afrobarometer data released in May, the ruling party has just a seven point lead over the opposition (29% compared to 22%), with half the electorate still undecided.

As Costa Júnior's popularity rises, so that of President João Lourenço – who is running for a second term in office – is falling.

Lourenço's election in 2017 was a historic moment for Angola, as it marked the first time in 38 years that the country's president was called something other than

José Eduardo dos Santos. So unpopular was Dos Santos at the time he finally stepped down that João Lourenço, or JLO as he's colloquially known, sought to immediately distance himself not only from his predecessor but from members of his own party, who he accused of corruption and mismanagement.

JLO was handpicked by Dos Santos to be his successor, and his anti-corruption stance was seen as an act of bravery. Public optimism, popularity and support in the beginning of Lourenço's tenure were also fueled by his promises of economic reforms, privatisation schemes, greater press freedom, free political speech, and competent management.

And JLO really did appear to deliver in those heady first few months. His appointed Attorney General brought charges against citizens that were previously thought to be untouchable, including members of Dos Santos' own family. Fiscal policy was greatly improved, much to the delight of foreign investors. The IMF was brought in. Economic reforms were implemented and bloated state companies began taking steps towards privatisation.

### **End of an era**

But Lourenço's stance against corruption appeared to be selective – people in his own cabinet were credibly accused of similar wrongdoing, but were seemingly protected, left alone and uncharged. He refused to implement much needed reforms in the judicial system, which is severely hampered by years of corruption and malfeasance. Cases languished in

court, with no end in sight. He reneged on his promise to implement local elections, and unilaterally instituted controversial electoral reforms without the input, support or approval of civil society and opposition parties.

He began to resemble his predecessor in the way he dealt with criticism, dissent and any type of perceived affront. Crucial aspects of Angola's notorious securitised state were not only maintained but enhanced, as the president continued to spend lavishly in that sector to the detriment of others that needed urgent intervention. The fall in oil prices during his tenure, coupled with the onset of the global pandemic, had a very negative effect on his economic agenda.

## **Dos Santos' death marked the end of an era in Angolan politics. This election may be similarly momentous.**

Last month, José Eduardo dos Santos died in exile in Barcelona. The former president had been in ill health for several years, but Lourenço and his party seemed unprepared for his death, and were even accused of being disrespectful towards the former president. This highlighted divisions between the ruling party and the Dos Santos family, to the extent that one of Dos Santos' daughters is now an active opposition supporter.

Dos Santos' death marked the end of an era in Angolan politics. This election may be similarly momentous. ■

# This particular revolution is televised



## Wilfred Okiche

**I**n the opening scenes of *Justice Served*, a provocative yet familiar entry in Netflix's slate of South African television, justice is a dish best served piping hot.

A white army veteran is caught on video shooting a fleeing young black man. This senseless act is meant to be commentary on how random acts of violence have appeared to envelop South African society. Across the show's six episodes, there will be graphic scenes of violence like this one that belabour this point. Some of it is

valid, sure, but how much represents series creator Tshepo Ty Skosana's propensity for embracing casual shocks just to attract and retain butts in seats? Thin line.

The murderer is apprehended and put on trial but before a verdict can be reached, the courtroom is hijacked by a group of armed rebels led by a deeply scarred, self-styled revolutionary figure, Azania Maqoma (an intense Hlomla Dandala). The Numoor, as the rebels identify themselves, proceed to put on a reality show — live streamed of course — that demands citizens to vote in real time to decide if Harvey lives or dies.

Embedded within the bombast and politics of *Justice Served* is an intriguing show that indicts the criminal justice system as not fit for purpose, tethered as it is to the country's violent past. But that's not all that there is. *Justice Served* depicts how the failure to take the lessons of history lead to a cyclical repetition that stagnates meaningful development and imperils the future. The messaging may be muddled but it also highlights how victims become perpetrators.

Elegantly filmed, *Justice Served* juggles too many balls in the air and borrows tropes from a long line of Netflix action thrillers draped in real-world headlines. *Queen Sono* is an obvious inspiration, as is *Money Heist*. The production values are top-notch, though, with committed actors and solid directing working to elevate a pretty underwhelming screenplay. ■

---

*Justice Served* is streaming on Netflix

# For leadership on gender equality, don't look to Nigeria

Maybe you would think that Nigeria – Africa's most populous nation, an economic power, and a global player – would also be a continental leader in 21st-century attitudes.

Maybe you'd be surprised, at least when it comes to gender equality. Afrobarometer's 2022 survey in the country found that women trail men in asset ownership, and face considerable resistance to basic fairness.

Compared to men, women are significantly less likely to have post-secondary education (17% vs. 29%); to own assets such as a mobile phone (73% vs. 87%) and a motor vehicle (14% vs. 40%); and to say they decide how household money is

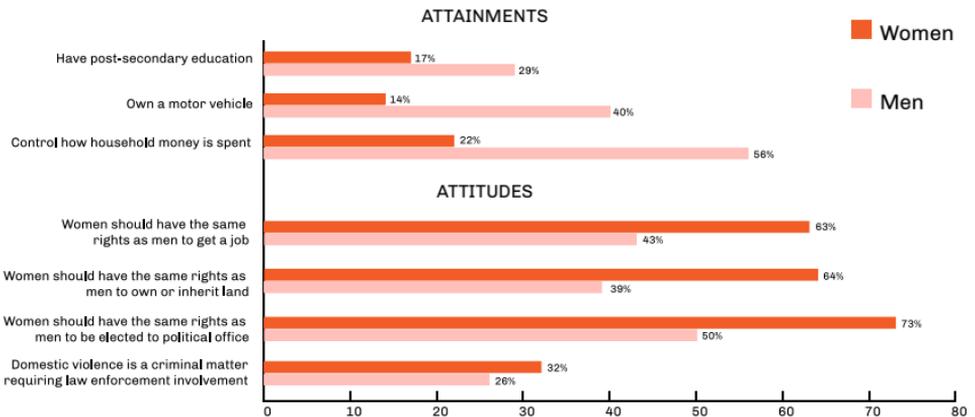
spent (22% vs. 56%).

If you're looking to a brighter (near) future, gender attitudes aren't promising. Only about half of Nigerians say women should have the same rights as men to get a job (53%) and to own and inherit land (51%). Among men, only 43% and 39%, respectively, support these basic equalities.

Just half (50%) of men – vs. 73% of women – think women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.

And while most Nigerians (79%) say it is "never justified" for a man to physically discipline his wife, only 29% see domestic violence as a criminal matter that should involve law enforcement.

Gender disparities: Attainments and attitudes | Nigeria | 2022



Source: Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.





Photo: Patrick Meinhardt/AFP

## How Ruto won

**Kenya's deputy president is now the president-elect. To get there, he had to climb 'The Mountain' – defying President Kenyatta in the process.**

**Mwongela Kamencu**

**O**n Monday, nearly a week after the vote, Deputy President William Ruto was declared to have won Kenya's presidential election. He received 50.49%

of the vote, according to official figures. The results have been disputed by the opposition, led by Raila Odinga, and may be challenged in court.

For now, however, Ruto is the president-elect, and is due to be sworn into office on 30 August.

To get to this point, Ruto overcame major challenges. The biggest was arguably incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta's endorsement of his rival. This narrowed Ruto's path to victory considerably. It meant that to have any chance of winning, he would have to persuade Uhuru's co-ethnics – the Kikuyu of Central Kenya – to defy the counsel of their muthamaki (king).

The results prove that Ruto succeeded. Enough Kikuyu opted to cast their lot with Ruto – a Kalenjin and a self-proclaimed ‘hustler’ – to push him over the winning line. Given that he surpassed the constitutional threshold of 50% plus one by less than 100,000 votes, the strong support from central Kenya was essential, according to the figures presented by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. Questions have been raised about the validity of these results.

In Kiambu county, home to the Kenyatta family, Ruto took 606,000 votes to Odinga’s 210,000, with a 65% turnout. He also won in Martha Karua’s home polling station – the deputy president on Odinga’s ticket. The pattern plays out across the nine counties in central Kenya.

### **Scaling ‘The Mountain’**

Central Kenya’s refusal to follow Kenyatta’s lead marks a major shift in Kenyan politics. Some writers have argued that this means that ethno-political affiliation, particularly in Central Kenya, has been supplanted by issue-based politics – or, at the very least, the politics of economic solidarity (although Ruto is now one of Kenya’s richest men, his campaign made a big deal of his humble roots as a chicken farmer).

The reality is not quite so simple. Odinga is from the Luo ethnic group, and the animosities between the Luo and the Kikuyu date back to the colonial era. These animosities have been perpetuated by subsequent regimes, which have been mostly controlled by a Kikuyu ruling

class assisted by elites from the Meru and Embu communities, who are considered to be their “ethnic cousins”.

### **Central Kenya’s refusal to follow Kenyatta’s lead marks a major shift in Kenyan politics.**

These identities would be amalgamated into a political monolith that goes by several names: GEMA (the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association); Mount Kenya; and, more recently, ‘The Mountain’. This monolith is designed to protect the interests of the Kikuyu ruling class. In contrast, the Luos are described by some of its members as *nyamu cia ruguru* (animals of the west).

It was against this backdrop that the events of the last decade unravelled.

Uhuru Kenyatta was elected president in 2013 and 2017 with the support of his running mate William Ruto, promising to support Ruto’s presidential bid at the end of his last term. In both of these elections, Kenyatta and Ruto depicted their main rival, Odinga, as a dangerous and divisive saboteur who was responsible for sending them to the International Criminal Court (where they were charged with crimes against humanity for their role in the 2007 post-election violence. Both charges were ultimately dismissed). This played into existing tensions and suspicions, further demonising Odinga’s leadership.

Having spent so long demonising Odinga, Kenyatta took everyone by surprise with the famous handshake



**In Kenyatta territory: Ruto campaigning in Kiambu County.** Photo: Twitter/WilliamsRuto

between the pair in 2018. After this, Kenyatta brought Odinga into the fold – partly to reduce his reliance on his deputy president Ruto. But when Kenyatta eventually endorsed Odinga instead of Ruto, the president and his allies overestimated their ability to force an unpopular candidate on their support base.

Aided by a younger generation of political elite from “The Mountain”, Ruto capitalised on the resentment of this generated by portraying Kenyatta and Odinga as dynastic scions bent on keeping power for themselves at the expense of Kenya’s hard working ‘hustlers’. This narrative was fuelled by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, along with the memory of the brutally-enforced nationwide curfew that was imposed during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the polls neared, voters in central Kenya were more likely to believe that Kenyatta had done wrong by breaking his promise to Ruto than that the

former deputy president had suddenly transformed into a man with whom the Kikuyu could not do business. An additional reason for this was the perception that Kenyatta was looking to protect his personal interests rather than that of the community. Compared to this, Ruto’s promise of a bottom-up economy that would focus on empowering ordinary Kenyans appeared to represent real change.

So where does this leave us? The decision of “The Mountain” can be read as a protest against Kenyatta, and was clearly shaped by the way that Ruto’s hustler narrative resonated with the masses. But it would be naïve to believe that ethnic prejudice had nothing to do with it. It is too early to signal the death of ethnic politics in Kenya. ■



*Mwongela Kamencu is a hip-hop artist and researcher. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa*

---

# Kenya

---

## Slow progress for women in Kenyan politics

**Women are winning more elective seats in Kenya but still fall below the constitutionally-mandated minimum**

**Maureen Kasuku in Nairobi**

**T**he just concluded general election in Kenya saw an increased number of women run for office and win. Voters elected 29 women to parliament, meaning that 21% of legislators will now be women – the 29 will join 47 women county representatives and five others who were nominated to special interest groups. Seven women became county governors, up from three, in the 2017 election.

With William Ruto and Rigathi Gachagua winning the presidential ticket, Kenya didn't get its first woman vice-president, as many had hoped Martha Karua would be. But women were running mates for the other three presidential and 62 gubernatorial candidates.

It is progress, even though the numbers still fall short of the standard set by the country's constitution. This requires the state to take steps to ensure that no more than two thirds of all elective and appointive positions are held by people of the same gender.

But as gender becomes more pronounced in the national political discourse, questions do arise about whether more representation translates into power and improvement of the material conditions of ordinary women in the country.

Women won eight elective seats in Nakuru county, including Susan Kihika, the new governor, and Tabitha Karanja, the senator elect. In the same county, in the past two months, five women were murdered under mysterious circumstances.

**This requires the state to take steps to ensure that no more than two thirds of all elective and appointive positions are held by people of the same gender.**

In her victory speech Karanja said, "now sit back and see what women can do when they are in office". Time will now tell if having women in top offices translates to the prioritisation of, and justice for, femicide and gender based violence. ■

# Meet the first intersex person to run for office in Kenya

**The country's Constitution still does not recognise intersex people, and the community face exclusion and discrimination**

Amy Moyi

**F**ransisca Kwamboka is the first recorded intersex person to run for a political seat in Kenya, after being cleared to do so by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Kwamboka – who was assigned female at birth but identifies as male – said they hope to serve Mukuru Kwa Njenga as a member of the county assembly on the United Democratic Alliance ticket. The election was scheduled to take place last week, alongside the presidential vote, but was postponed until 23 August.

“There are those who try and mock me for being intersex but I have learnt to accept myself and concentrate on making myself a better person,” they said, adding that their goal is to “ensure access to better

quality services”.

Getting to this point has been tough. Under the Births and Deaths Registration Act, Kenya has an established system that registers a child's gender solely as male or female on the birth certificate based on their genitalia.

An intersex person is someone who is born with physical characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

Milka Wahu, the founder of the Amka Africa Justice Initiative, told *The Continent* that when such binary identification isn't possible, that part of the application document is left blank. Or with a question mark. This means that a child cannot get a birth certificate. And without a birth



**Fransisca Kwamboka accepts the UDA nomination ticket.** Photo: supplied



**Fighting for justice: The Amka Africa Justice Initiative works across Kenya.**

Photo: supplied

certificate, people lose out on a lifetime of official documents.

An intersex person who is unable to acquire a birth certificate lacks citizenship identity status. They cannot access basic government education and health services like enrolling in school and the national health insurance fund.

In some cases, parents of intersex children choose their child's gender identity. During puberty, however, that child may go through physical changes that do not necessarily correspond to the gender listed on their birth certificate.

At present, Kenyan law does not permit a change of gender on birth certificates meaning an intersex person is forced to stay within their assigned-at-birth gender identity even if it does not align to their physical presentation.

To try and help, Wahu launched an initiative in conjunction with the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology to give people legal aid. Their big goal is to change the Constitution so people can have their birth certificate, national identity cards and passports aligned to their gender identity.

Lawyer Colbert Ojiambo said that without this, “the documents carried by intersex persons and the names appearing that do not align with their gender identity can be a source of gender distress. It becomes difficult to get employment”.

Coupled with a lack of awareness, this forgotten demographic often faces discrimination.

In 2005, Richard Muasya, an intersex person who identifies as male, was wrongfully accused and convicted of robbery with violence. He was imprisoned in a male prison where he was beaten, raped, tortured and ridiculed for being intersex. He was exonerated five years later.

Among the Luo people there have long been allegations of rural midwives crushing the skulls of children they believe to be intersex. In the Pokot community, the newborn intersex child is said to be abandoned in the forest. Wahu said this stigma can result in profound mental distress.

With so much in need of change, the nomination of an intersex person by a political party to vie for a political seat is an important first step. ■



To Timbuktu:  
Heinrich Barth  
painting of  
Mansa Musa.

## A glimpse into the life of the richest human of all time

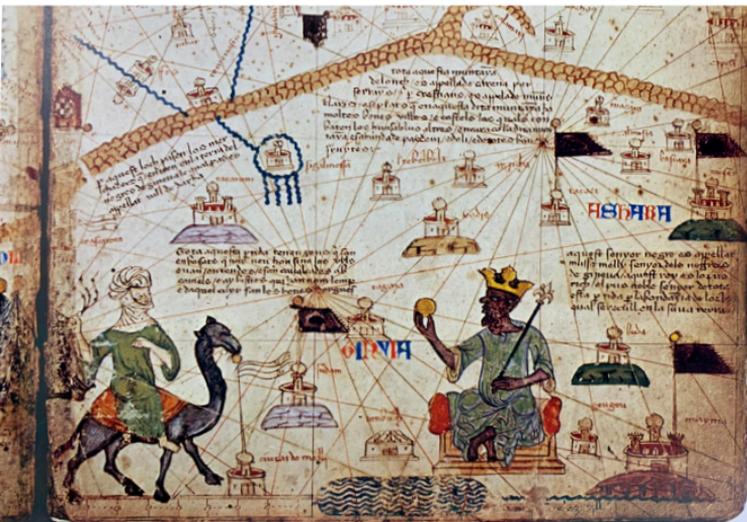
**Mansa Musa ruled Mali when it produced much of the world's gold. He travelled and created great institutions of religion and learning. But we know precious little about him**

**Luke Feltham**

**T**he 1375 Catalan Atlas is one of the most significant maps in the Western mediaeval world. Centuries of exploration, theft and colonisation were built on top of its depiction of the world across the Atlantic and Mediterranean. In its corner, an African ruler is depicted, sitting cross-legged on his throne,

adorned with a robe and pointed crown. In one hand he grips a sceptre; in the other a golden orb he is holding up to the sky. The caption (once translated) reads: "This Black ruler is named Musse Melly (Musa of Mali), lord of Guinea. This king is the richest and noblest ruler of this whole region because of the abundance of gold that is found in his lands."

It is the earliest surviving map to depict



**Golden rule:**  
Mansa Musa, King of Mali, holding a sceptre and a piece of gold as represented in the Catalan Atlas, by the Jewish illustrator Cresques Abraham, 1375.

Mansa Musa, the ruler of Mali between 1312 and 1337. His empire encompassed modern-day Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Gambia.

Its wealth was built on gold. Its legacy was enshrined in an ambitious building scheme, centred on Timbuktu after Musa annexed it as part of a campaign where he conquered his neighbours. That city would become a crucial focal point of the Islamic world. Bringing in architects and scholars that he met on his travels, he built repositories of knowledge — Djinguereber Mosque and Sankoré Madrasa University stand to this day.

Musa's legacy features prominently in the British Library's Gold exhibit (on until 2 October). This looks at the power of the malleable, yellow substance across history. The manuscripts on display show how important West Africa has been to world history — a role that has been all-but erased by the triumph of Western

historians.

In the 14th century, nobody had more gold than Musa.

This was largely unknown as the gold crossed the Sahara on caravans, putting their producers far away from the people who would use that gold. Shipping routes around the western bulge of Africa had not yet flourished. In an attempt to change this reality, to learn more about the world and so he could do his own pilgrimage, Musa went to Mecca in 1324.

The trip spawned legends of his unfathomable wealth.

Accounts would speak in awe of the ruler that travelled through their lands in a grand caravan, containing tens of thousands of slaves, civilians, soldiers and camels laden with gold bricks. On the way he stopped in Cairo, Egypt. There it was said he gave to the poor, hoarded everything of fancy at the bazaars and even took the time to commission the construction of multiple mosques. His

profligacy was so great that the price of gold was devalued and the local economy beset by inflation for years afterwards.

On his return, Musa focused on building Mali as a centre of learning.

But his story was recorded by historians north of the Sahara. First it was those he met while he was in Cairo. Then in maps long after his death. Musa – a symbol of the prosperity of the region – continued to be depicted, invariably bedecked in bangles and other gold accomplishments. One Italian map, produced around 1529, portrays him with white skin, playing a fiddle-type instrument.

The incongruity notwithstanding, its caption demonstrates the genuine reverence the West had for Musa and

his kingdom. “This king Mansa Musa rules the province of Guinea and is no less prudent and knowledgeable than powerful,” it reports. “He has with him excellent mathematicians and men versed in the liberal arts, and he has great riches.”

The depictions of wealth in Mali would lead European countries to creep down the African coast, initially trading their wares for the region’s gold. This trade helped to finance adventures further afield, to Asia and the Americas. It would eventually lead to the sale of millions of Africans — a trade which underpinned the dramatic explosion of wealth in Europe, driving that region’s colonialism and the pillaging of Africa for gold and anything else portable. ■

**Sacred trek: Mansa Musa on his way to Mecca.** Artist: Unknown. Photo: Getty Images



# THE QUIZ

0-3

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

4-7

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

8-10

"I may not be a lion but I roar like Simba."



Photo: Lucapa Diamond Company

- 1\_** Tiger sharks can be found off the coasts of Africa. True or false?
- 2\_** Modibo Keita was the first president of which country? (1960)
- 3\_** Uhuru Peak is Africa's highest free-standing peak on which mountain?
- 4\_** What does "Simba" mean in Swahili and Shona?
- 5\_** Footballer Karim Benzema was born in France. Where are his parents from?
- 6\_** The 170-carat Lulo Rose diamond was recently discovered in which country?
- 7\_** Which country's president is Ali Bongo Ondimba?
- 8\_** What is Burundi's currency?
- 9\_** Who was Angolan President João Lourenço's predecessor?
- 10\_** In which country did the Marikana massacre take place?

## HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za)



Photo: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

## On human rights in Africa, the US is an absent ally

The country's laudable words must come with concrete action

**Kate Hixon and  
Muleya Mwananyanda**

**E**arlier this month, the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken shared the US sub-Saharan Africa Strategy in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the strategy launch he acknowledged the troubling state of human rights protection on the continent. Despite this, the US remains an absent ally of civil society working to address human rights abuses and hold governments to account across the continent.

Human rights across sub-Saharan

Africa are under grave threat. Amnesty International's 2021 global state of human rights found threats to human rights and people's enjoyment of these rights in nearly every country.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo – where Blinken stopped after South Africa – President Felix Tshisekedi, heralded as a fresh change, is presiding over a country facing a number of human rights problems, including suppression of peaceful dissent. He has extended a State of Siege in the east of the country 22 times, denying people a right to fair trial among other human

rights violations.

Sudan – where armed forces have raped and killed protestors – has received minimal attention from senior American officials. On Cameroon, where both government forces and armed separatists commit human rights violations and abuses, the administration of President Joe Biden has been silent.

Despite the fanfare around the Africa strategy launch, the administration does not have a clear, actionable human rights agenda for sub-Saharan Africa as the examples above demonstrate. Secretary Blinken talked about resetting the US-Africa relationship to one of partnership and problem solving together. This is positive and necessary. However, the reset needs to engage African civil society as well.

Yes, the United States understandably wants to build partnerships with governments and foster economic growth, but it should also use its influence to hold human rights violators accountable – particularly when civil society partners are urging it to do so. By failing to be vocal on key human rights issues, the US is signalling to governments that it will ignore human rights violations if that is the cost of building partnerships.

This is damaging to perceptions of the US amongst allies and partners across the continent.

Furthermore, while Blinken's speech focused on the benefits of American partnership and US humanitarian assistance, it did little to demonstrate how this administration will actually engage differently. For example, given the current

signals so far, it is unlikely that the US-Africa Leaders Summit in December will include any civil society activists in person, despite acknowledgement of the key role civil society plays in realising many US priorities for the continent.

It is not too late for the Biden administration to elevate and prioritise human rights in its foreign policy approach. First of all, it must centre human rights as it prepares to hold the Africa Leaders Summit this year. The US can further cement its support to African people by elevating African civil society in the summit and allowing equal participation with elected leaders. The administration must also begin to forcefully call out human rights violations and deliver on promises of justice and accountability in situations where egregious human rights violations are occurring.

In a world where pragmatism often trumps human rights ideals, the US must put human rights at the core of its Africa strategy and bilateral relationships, even when the partner in question is a key counter-terrorism ally or economic priority. With Blinken acknowledging that a number of Africans live under threat to their human rights, it is vital the US continues to support efforts to secure and ensure the enjoyment of these rights.



---

*Kate Hixon is the Advocacy Director for Africa at Amnesty International USA. Muleya is the Deputy Regional Director for Amnesty International's Southern Africa Regional Office.*

# Looking for the perfect match



## Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

It has been an intense week across the continent and the world – when is it not? – and we at Drift have been distracting ourselves with some gentle escapism in the form of the Netflix show *Indian Matchmaking*. The show follows a Mumbai-based professional matchmaker as she tries to assist people in their search for a soulmate (or if nothing else, a nice lady to cook for you, serve your parents and be at your beck and call).

This made us think of our favourite leaders of course, and their romances, bromances and sometimes toxic relationships with their populace.

A new relationship flourished this week.

William Ruto was declared winner of the 2022 Kenyan election. As Ruto strolled into the voter tallying centre for the final announcement, by his side was his running mate Rigathi Gachagua. We wondered if, for a moment, Ruto recalled the times that he walked that same path on the arm of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

In happier years, the two would pose together for photoshoots with their sleeves rolled up; they were even

known to coordinate their wardrobes and their International Criminal Court appearances.

But love is a fickle thing, and Ruto soon discovered that Kenyatta's wandering eye had been turned by someone else: his one-time rival Raila Odinga. Now it was Kenyatta and Odinga posing for the cameras as they shared long, lingering handshakes and gazed into each other's eyes.

But Ruto would have his revenge. In the ultimate popularity contest, Kenyans showed who had captured their affections by giving him a five-year presidential mandate – although it is still far too early to determine whether his presidency will be a match made in heaven, or hell.

Kenyatta, perhaps unsurprisingly, has yet to congratulate his old friend. Odinga, meanwhile, continues his own romantic quest to win the presidency. He has branded the results null and void and said he would pursue all avenues to challenge it.

## Foreign affairs

Another messy break-up that is playing out through newspaper headlines is that of Mali and France. What is it with those colonial powers? It's been six decades since independence, but they still can't let go. Worsening relations resulted in the last French troops being kicked out of the country this week. French is supposed to



**Third wheel: William Ruto (far left) watched on as Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga's relationship blossomed.** Photo: Tony Karumba/AFP

be the language of love (although for us it's Kiswahili), but in this case only one phrase comes to mind: *Au revoir!*

Like a jilted lover dishing the dirt on an ex, Bamako chose to air its grievances in the most public possible fashion – in a letter to the United Nations accusing France of aggression, espionage, violating Mali's airspace and supporting terrorist groups.

France denies all these allegations, and says it was just misunderstood.

In neighbouring Guinea, love is certainly not in the air – though teargas is. The military junta which seized power last year appears to be overstaying its welcome. Opposition and civil society groups held an anti-junta protest that was violently suppressed by security forces – opposition group FNDC says that two young men were shot dead. The shootings allegedly took place as the convoy of junta leader Colonel Mamady Doumbouya

passed through the area.

If we've learnt anything from *Indian Matchmaking* it is that the search for love is rarely straightforward. The same goes for Africa politics, where the course of true democracy never did run smooth – with devastating consequences at times.

Just this week, South Africans gathered to mark the tenth anniversary of the Marikana massacre, in which 34 striking miners were shot dead by police. Their families are still awaiting justice. And in Algeria, raging forest fires – which have got worse because leaders all around the world have failed to take climate change seriously – have led to at least 26 people being killed. That's not the kind of heat that we are looking for in a relationship.

So if we are going to do some matchmaking of our own, how about we start with our leaders – and tell them to match all their fine words and promises with concrete action? ■

# The Big Picture

Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

**Image crisis:** This photograph shows riot police shooting teargas at supporters of Raila Odinga, after William Ruto won last week's election. International media have used images like this to reinforce existing stereotypes about African elections: that they are dangerous, and violence-prone. Yet the real story of these Kenyan elections is that they were calm and peaceful. This image was the exception, not the rule.



The Continent is published by the Adamela Trust, a not-for-profit organisation founded by Mail & Guardian journalists that is dedicated to fostering quality journalism. It is produced with the M&G, Africa's leading independent newspaper, and upholds strict editorial standards. For queries and complaints, or to make a donation, please contact [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za).