



POLICY BRIEFING NO 1

October 2008

South African Institute of International Affairs



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South Africa and the United States in a Post-Bush Era

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South Africa and the United States in a Post-Bush Era

Even as South Africa faces its own transition of national leadership in the coming months, its leaders will be tasked with dealing with a new administration in Washington, DC, following the United States' national elections due to take place on Tuesday, 4 November 2008. Of the two contenders for the presidency in that contest, Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama has pulled ahead over the last week of Republican Party candidate John McCain. He is viewed as having a better understanding of the financial crisis and its implications for ordinary American households. Despite the current lead of the Democratic Party candidate, the outcome of the polls are still uncertain. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that there must be some move away from the almost universally unpopular policies of the eight-year administration of US President George W. Bush. That said, the Africa policy of the US (and thus South Africa) will likely retain its traditionally low position on the US foreign policy agenda, regardless of which candidate takes the White House.

A TURNING POINT IN US HISTORY?

For the first time in the 232-year history of the United States as a nation-state, a major national political party has selected a person of African descent as its candidate for the White House. Constituting about 12% of the US population, African-Americans have long sought a greater voice in national politics. This may be their chance. This election also takes place as American dominance over the global economy is faced with the phenomenal rise of China and India as economic powerhouses –while the US grapples with a meltdown on Wall Street. Granted, the US economy still constitutes nearly a quarter of the global economy and continues to hold it's own in productivity and innovation. It should, therefore 'survive the rise of the rest'¹. But will it adjust its own self-perceptions and priorities in order to graciously engage in the coming 'Post-American World?' The nomination of a non-traditional candidate (and the fact that his nearest competitor for the Democratic nomination was Hillary Clinton, also a ground-breaker) indicates a willingness to make these adjustments in some quarters, at least. Whether or not the majority of US citizens are willing, however, will be seen only in the final outcome of the elections.

While the presidential elections garner most of the media attention in an election year, there is also the legislature to contemplate. The role of Congress in approving and funding any policy that comes out of the President's office is more significant in the US than in any other modern democracy (see box on US Policy-Making). A Democratic majority in both houses of the Congress coupled with a Democrat in the White House (as was the case for the first two years of Bill Clinton's presidency) is a powerful alliance for accomplishing goals. A Democratic Congress coupled with a Republican in the White House will mean more of the same stalemate over issues that demand attention, however, unless a more moderate Republican than George W. Bush can inspire non-partisan support for the sake of forward movement. John McCain may be that more moderate Republican.

FIVE KEY POINTS ON FOREIGN POLICY FROM THE CANDIDATES

John McCain

- Iraq and the War on Terror: The US must remain in Iraq until it has won the war, hopefully by the end of his first presidential term (2013). Iraq is the central front in that war, with Pakistan and Afghanistan also of concern. At the same time, the US must prioritise the quest for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.
- Trade: He supports free trade, which he sees as the 'future of America's economy,' and warns against protectionism. He also views trade and national security as 'interconnected.'
- Energy and the Environment: The US must end its dependence on foreign oil, a practice that transfers US wealth to the Middle East, and achieve new efficiencies, enforce conservation, develop alternative sources of energy, and expand sources of renewable energy. McCain would 'greatly increase the use of nuclear power,' and supports drilling for oil in Alaska.
- US Multilateral Relations: McCain suggests a 'League of Democracies' that would enable 'like minded nations' to act 'when the UN fails.' He would also work to revitalise NATO, aiming for common policies on energy, trade, climate change, foreign assistance and democracy promotion. Dealing with a rising China, he notes, will be a central challenge.
- Africa: McCain has been a vocal critic of the atrocities in Darfur, and has pledged not only to extend the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) but also to start up a new fund to fight malaria. He intends to aid 'an African Renaissance' through democracy promotion, if elected.

Barack Obama

- Iraq and the War on Terror: As Iraq is not the central front in efforts to combat global terrorism, the US should pull US troops out of Iraq by the end of 2009. The US should 'refocus US efforts in the Middle East on resolving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict' and redirect its resources—military and otherwise—toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, the 'real front' in overcoming terrorism.
- Trade: Obama has expressed his support for free trade, but during the campaign has noted the need to 'reform trade policy.' He places great store on labour and environmental protections in any free trade agreement.
- Energy and the Environment: Obama would enact a 'cap-and-trade' system to reduce carbon emissions, and would promote more fuel efficiency and reliance on sources of renewable energy. He calls for a global response to climate change. The US would also use its assistance policies and export promotions to help developing countries 'leapfrog' the carbon-energy-intensive stage of development.
- US Multilateral Relations: He would rebuild partnerships around the world with traditional allies and build effective collaboration with these and with powers such as China and newly emerging powers 'such as ... South Africa'. This would include 'far-reaching reform' of the United Nations as well as rallying NATO.
- Africa: Obama has been outspoken on both Darfur and Zimbabwe, and also supports increased funding for PEPFAR and a review of US development aid to improve its effectiveness. The CEO of Millennium Villages, a project aimed at fighting poverty in Africa, is a national security adviser to Obama's campaign.

CANDIDATES McCain AND OBAMA

John McCain was born into a military family in the Panama Canal Zone in 1936. His father and grandfather were both four-star admirals in the US Navy. Following his 1958 graduation from the US Naval Academy, McCain had a 22-year military career as a pilot and officer in the Navy. Five of those years (1967-73) were spent in a Vietnamese prisoner of war camp after he was shot down over Hanoi during the Vietnam War. McCain left the Navy in 1981, was elected to the House of Representatives in 1982, and then was elected as US Senator from Arizona in 1986. McCain has a strong record of bipartisan leadership on legislation in the Senate, for example on a bill which introduced campaign finance reform. In 2000 he ran for the Republican presidential nomination, but was defeated by George W Bush. He has named Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential running mate. McCain's campaign advisory team includes foreign policy coordinator Randy Scheunemann, a former top legislative aide for Republicans on Capitol Hill; Kori Schake, who served in the first G W Bush National Security Council; and former Congressional Budget Office chief Douglas Holtz-Eakin on economic policy, as well as Stanford economist John B Taylor on trade.

Barack Obama was born in 1961 to an American mother from Kansas and an international student from Kenya, who married while still at university in Hawaii. The few years he spent in Indonesia following his parents' divorce when he was young, and then the eight years working as a community organiser on the streets of inner city Chicago between his degrees from Columbia and Harvard universities, are credited by his supporters for his understanding of dynamics in the developing world and the needs of the working poor in America. His father, whom he knew only for the first two years of his life, was of the Muslim faith, but Obama describes himself as a Christian. He became the first black president of the Harvard Law Review, graduating with his law degree in 1991, after which he lectured on constitutional law at the University of Chicago and joined a Chicago law firm. Obama's election to the US Senate for Illinois in November 2004 followed his entry on the national stage at the Democratic Convention earlier that year. He has named Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware as his vice-presidential running mate. The Obama campaign draws on several former Clinton administration officials for advice on foreign policy, including former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Susan Rice, and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Dennis McDonough of the Center for American Progress heads up the team of national security advisors, and Jason Furman, a close associate of former Clinton Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, coordinates advice on the economy and trade.

WHAT ARE THE DOMESTIC FACTORS IN THE US DRIVING THEIR CAMPAIGNS?

Two questions dominate in the minds of most American voters in 2008: "Will the new president effectively address the woes of the US economy?" and, "Will US citizens be safe from acts of terrorism at home?"

With the Bush administration plumbing the depths of US voter approval (at 29%), and Congress showing even less support (at 14%) there is little patience for a continuation of the last eight years: hence Obama's rallying cry, 'Eight is enough!', and McCain's claim that

he will change the way things are done in Washington. Beyond the rejection of the past administration and its stalemate with Congress, which are not unique to this campaign, there are deeper veins to mine.

Social scientists note an apparent realignment within the major political parties. Instead of centrists with very similar platforms vying for the chance to rule while also appealing to their extreme wings for support, there are two distinct choices with very different platforms in the Republican and Democratic party campaigns. For instance, Obama has stated that his administration would focus on diversifying sources of energy, and has committed to a withdrawal from Iraq as early as May 2010; McCain promises rather to reduce American dependency on foreign sources of oil by exploiting American sources (drilling in Alaska, for instance) and vows that US troops would stay in Iraq until there is more assured peace – tentatively naming 2013 as a likely date for bringing troops home. Issues such as abortion and gay marriage will continue to determine the vote for some Americans, who hold that these are the antithesis of the American way, but neither candidate has a record of opposing these categorically. John McCain's choice of the conservative Palin will go a long way to keep these voters in the Republican fold.

The Economy – and much more

Whether Democrat or Republican, however, Americans are worried about the US economy more than any other issue². 'Pocket book' issues of the economy, jobs, petrol prices and energy policy were the leading concerns of more than half of those surveyed in a New York Times/CBS poll in late August. Only a quarter of those surveyed cited terrorism and national security, along with the war in Iraq, as most important. This is likely due to the fact that the gains of the early Bush years were largely enjoyed only by the top 1% of the financial scale in the US: between 2002 and 2006, the income of 99% of the population rose by 1%, whereas that of the top 1% of the population grew by 11%³. Falling house prices, a depreciating dollar, the loss of jobs to outsourcing and to overseas manufacturing giants, rising oil prices coupled with compelling calls to protect the environment, and worries about social security (public pensions) and health insurance, all contribute to voters' anxieties about the US economy and how the next president will fix it. Add to this the symptomatic failures of several US financial institutions (Bear Sterns last March, mortgage finance firms Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in August, and then Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch in mid-September), and the US electorate has reason for grave concern.

The next president must act quickly to restore confidence in the US dollar, to gracefully manage the US role in a global economy in which other national economies are gaining ground, and to address the worries about the liquidity of the US government for Social Security pay outs as the Baby Boom generation retires. Public health care, a problem Bill Clinton could not fix even with a Democratic majority in Congress in the mid 1990's, will be a formidable challenge for whoever takes charge.

Terrorism

The fears of any attacks similar to those of 9/11 on New York's World Trade Center in September 2001, or worse of a nuclear detonation on US soil, have led to more border patrols, tightened immigration policy, and increased resources flowing into homeland security preparedness (perhaps instead of its cousin, the notoriously weak natural disaster management preparedness). But voices of dissent are growing, especially in relation to the excesses of Abu Ghrahib, the legal anomalies of Guantanamo Bay, and the erosion of the

US POLICY-MAKING

When an American president announces that the United States will, for instance, increase foreign aid, why is there generally a lag before the implementation of that policy pronouncement, or worse, a failure to implement it at all? Most analysts would credit this to the separation of powers in US policy-making that is enshrined in the US constitution.

This intentional separation begins with the electoral system, in which the president is elected on a separate ballot from the members of the legislature and thus is not necessarily (or even often) the leader of the party that gains the majority of seats in the legislature in any national election. A majority of Americans may wish a particular candidate to serve as the Commander in Chief and US Statesman or woman abroad, but may vote differently in choosing a Senator or House Member to represent their preferences in these two chambers when debating domestic concerns such as taxes or law enforcement.

Further, the separation reaches into the policy process. The US Constitution separates authority without granting complete independence of action to either the legislative or the executive branch. Thus, not only is an American administration not guaranteed support for its policies, but it must govern the nation on the basis of political agreements with an independently elected legislature. Compromise is often the result. With regard to foreign policy, the American Constitution endows the president with the responsibility to negotiate and sign treaties with Senate approval, to command the armed forces, and to appoint and receive ambassadors. Congress, on the other hand, in addition to its very important general authority over the appropriation of government funding, has the power to advise and consent on treaties, to confirm or reject presidential nominees for cabinet posts and diplomatic missions, to declare war, and to regulate trade.

So why does it sometimes happen that foreign aid (as in the above example) is delayed, or never delivered? In the first instance, it is a lengthy process for a policy pronouncement to be drafted into legislation, debated in both the Senate and the House of Representatives until a unified version is reached, and then passed into law. Unless there is widespread bipartisan support, or a large majority in favour of the legislation, the bill can flounder and fail to gain passage and die at this stage. Due to loose party discipline in the US, where individual legislators may defy their party whips with little recompense, members' votes may be swayed more by constituent preferences, and possibly by 'horse trading' on subtext legislative points than by party decree. If a bill is successful, there is the appropriations process in which the funds are allocated – often reduced to accommodate other calls for funding that have passed through the drafting and approval stages. It has happened often that Congress was unable to gain enough consensus to pass a foreign aid authorisation bill, or that the aid was trimmed to such an extent that certain countries or programmes within the foreign aid plans were dropped. It is for these reasons that the will of the president does not always translate into policy on the ground, or if it does, is greatly trimmed. Such is the design of the US policy-making process.

sense of goodwill from other nations that followed 9/11. Still, both candidates must present a strong front against terrorism.

THE FOREIGN POLICY PLATFORMS OF THE CANDIDATES

Besides their stance against terrorism, and their opposing views on the war in Iraq, the candidates have stated their foreign policy platforms as early as mid 2007, in articles for the US journal *Foreign Affairs*. (Obama, on 'Renewing American Leadership' in July/August, and McCain on 'An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom' in November/December).

Obama's main thrust would be to move beyond Iraq and re-focus US efforts in the Middle East on resolving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. He would revitalise the US military, and through multilateral efforts and also direct negotiations with nations such as Iran, seek to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. In combating global terrorism, he would focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, which he calls the central front in the war against al Qaeda, through a comprehensive strategy that draws on the 'full range of American power, not just (its) military might.' He would empower forces of moderation abroad by offering access to education, health care, trade and investment, and providing support for political reformers and civil society such as that which enabled the US 'victory in the Cold War.' He would rebuild partnerships in Europe and Asia, and strengthen US ties throughout the Americas and Africa. He would seek to build a relationship with China that broadens co-operation while strengthening the US ability to compete. To combat pressing global issues – whether terrorism, health pandemics, global warming or humanitarian crises due to conflict – he would work for effective collaboration among all the major powers – 'including such newly emerging ones as Brazil, India, Nigeria and South Africa.' This would include 'far-reaching reform' of the United Nations as well as rallying NATO allies to contribute more to collective security operations and to reconstruction and stabilisation capabilities. To address global warming, Obama would enact a 'cap-and-trade' system to reduce carbon emissions, and, to free the US of its dependence on foreign oil, he would promote more fuel efficiency and reliance on sources of renewable energy – including the controversial bio-fuels. He calls for a global response to climate change, as well, that includes binding and enforceable commitments to reduce emissions, especially for the biggest polluters: the US, China, the European Union, India and Russia. The US would also use its assistance policies and export promotions to help developing countries 'leapfrog' the carbon-energy-intensive stage of development. Obama has expressed his support for free trade, but during the campaign has noted the need to 'reform trade policy' to include the many who have until now been left out of the 'bounty of opening markets.' He places great store on labour and environmental protections in any free trade agreement. With regard to American leadership in the world, he would deal with the breakdown in trust that resulted from the aberrations of torture and detention without trial that has marked the Bush Administration's response to 9/11. He would double the annual investment in building 'just, secure and democratic societies', recognising that the United States has 'a direct national security interest in dramatically reducing global poverty,' since 'extremely poor societies and weak states provide optimal breeding grounds for disease, terrorism and conflict.' At the same time, he promises to build consensus at home to support these initiatives.

McCain's foreign policy platform begins with 'winning the war on terror,' and Iraq is the war's central front. He calls for continuing efforts there, until al Qaeda is defeated. He also points to Afghanistan and Pakistan as important fronts in this war, and plans to support moderates in both societies in an effort to undermine extremists. In the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the US must begin with tougher political and economic sanctions against Iran, on a multilateral basis if possible – but if necessary, without

the cooperation of the United Nations. Military action ‘while not the preferred option, must remain on the table.’ At the same time, McCain, as president, would ‘employ every economic, diplomatic, political, legal and ideological tool at his disposal to aid moderate Muslims.’ He agrees with Obama that the US must maintain its support for Israel, and prioritise the quest for peace between Israel and the Palestinians – but the goal must be genuine peace, with the isolation of Hamas a pre-condition. Within the US foreign policy-making structures, he calls for a ‘massive overhaul’ to confront the challenges of the new century. This would include an expansion and transformation of the military to meet new enemies, more foreign language training, an expansion of the culture of joint operations to include civilian branches of the US government in nation building as a complement to any military campaign. He would also revitalise the public diplomacy capacity of the US, creating an independent agency with the sole purpose of getting America’s message to the world. McCain suggests uniting the world’s democracies in a new multilateral body, a ‘League of Democracies’ that would enable ‘like minded nations’ to act ‘when the UN fails’ to ‘relieve human suffering in places such as Darfur, combat HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, ...confront environmental crises, ...and take other measures unattainable by existing regional or universal-membership systems.’ In addition, he would work to revitalise NATO, aiming for common policies on energy, trade, climate change, foreign assistance and democracy promotion. He would urge NATO to rethink its relationship with ‘revanchist’ Russia (which, in December 2007, was prescient). He outlines in detail his goals for US relations with Asia, noting that more people live under democratic rule in Asia than in any region of the world. He calls for increased cooperation with Asian allies to meet challenges such as the continued threat of nuclear proliferation from North Korea through continued talks. Dealing with a rising China, he notes, will be a central challenge. Looking to other regions, he would aim to build a hemisphere of peace and prosperity with the Americas, and to aid ‘An African Renaissance.’ He supports free trade, which he sees as the ‘future of America’s economy,’ and warns against protectionism. He also views trade and national security as ‘interconnected.’ The final point he makes is that the US must end its dependence on foreign oil, a practice that transfers US wealth to the Middle East, helping to sustain the conditions under which extremism breeds and further endangering the planet through the burning of fossil fuels. He outlines a policy of achieving new efficiencies, enforcing conservation, developing alternative sources of energy, and expanding sources of renewable energy. He would also ‘greatly increase the use of nuclear power.’ Only later in his campaign did he come out in favor of extensive drilling for oil in Alaska – notably at the Republican convention, with the chant ‘Drill, baby, Drill!’ Finally, noting the current unpopularity of the US, ‘increasingly viewed as pursuing its narrow self-interest,’ McCain challenges the US to ‘restore its mantle as a global leader, reestablish its moral credibility, and rebuild damaged relationships.’

WHAT ROLE IS THE US LIKELY TO TAKE IN AFRICA?

It is clear that both McCain and Obama intend to address the damaged working relationships that litter the globe in the wake of the Bush Administration. They will also place high priority on sorting out the US economy, especially its financial sector, and countering the continuing threat of terrorism. While the two administrations would differ in how they address these concerns, based on partisan platforms, it is likely that the US role in

Africa will vary only slightly, no matter which man takes the White House. In other words, Africa will remain low on the list of priorities for US foreign policy, except for a few issues that have galvanised support within US civil society. The Save Darfur internet-based campaign, which spawned numerous rallies and protests around the US in late 2006 resulting in the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act imposing sanctions on the Sudanese government, is an example of one issue that will continue to attract US attention, until atrocities cease. US concerns about the growing role of China in Africa and the competition over Africa's many resources, such as platinum of which 90% of known reserves are in Africa, and oil off the coasts of Angola, Gabon and Nigeria, will also be a driver for US activity on the continent. That activity will include several features which are likely to continue through existing programs such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the recently launched US Africa Command (AFRICOM). Perhaps less quantifiable will be the US attempts to create partnerships with civil society across various African nations through its heightened public diplomacy efforts, which might be termed a proactive application of America's 'soft power'. These efforts, via such programmes as the recent offer of US funding for research projects at African universities and the continued educational exchanges for journalists, teachers, scientists and other professionals, and the push for increased study abroad by American students and by international students in the US, are more long-term in nature. They require sustained funding and diplomatic engagement, both of which appear in the offing based on various bills under discussion in the US Congress.

POSSIBLE POINTS OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE US IN THIS NEW ERA

So where does South Africa focus in its relationship with the US in the coming, post-Bush era? As before, relations will not be homogeneously smooth. There will be areas of friction arising from the competing interests of these two nations. However, there are compelling reasons for both South Africa and the US to build on the existing cordial relations between Washington and Tswane. These efforts must take into account the differences of approach, but should withstand the divisive forces that would drive a wedge between the two.

For instance, it is true that the US wants tight control of terrorists all over the globe, but South Africa has resisted direct cooperation with the US 'war on terror', and was outright in its opposition to the US engagement in Iraq. However, South Africa has at the same time welcomed joint military exercises as recently as mid-2008, and on October 4 2008 facilitated a visit to Cape Town by US aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (the first such visit since 1967). AFRICOM will not be based in South Africa, nor anywhere on the continent for the time being, but the US appears ready to engage more deeply with Africa, and South Africa as a 'pivotal state' on the continent, on matters of security, including terrorism. Might South Africa benefit from this initiative by the US, without compromising on its own stance? With careful diplomatic maneuvering, surely it should be able to garner American military resources to assist with conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping throughout Africa. The US appears ready to work with South Africa in this regard.

Indeed, in matters of security and elsewhere, even when the terminology may change, South Africa will no doubt remain a key player on the African continent in the eyes



of US policymakers for the foreseeable future. Its peaceful transition from apartheid, its reconstruction into an inclusive constitutional democracy maintaining a largely liberalist approach to macroeconomic policy, and its leadership roles within the South African Development Community, the African Union and NEPAD make South Africa a valued partner in matters related to Africa. So long as American resources allocated to addressing the needs of the developing world remain scarce, the US is likely to retain its policy of focusing on regional leaders around the world in its foreign policy forays. And so long as Pretoria maintains a democratic form of government, and avoids sliding towards the excesses of Kenya, Zimbabwe, or worse, South Africa should be the African country of choice for the US for matters of engagement on the continent.

In matters of trade, the US will continue to press its interests in opening markets in the developing world, and South Africa will continue to call upon the US to first liberalise various sectors in its own economy, such as agriculture and steel – both of which present barriers to South African products. There are, of course, opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this area, and the burgeoning trade relationship between the US and South Africa attests to that fact (the US became South Africa's biggest trading partner in 2008). The gains for South Africa via AGOA, both directly in increased exports to the US and indirectly through the economic development of neighbouring economies in the Southern African region, are reason enough to maintain these trading ties into the new era. Whether McCain or Obama is victorious at the polls in November, this should remain true, although perhaps to varying degrees, based on their differing approaches to free trade noted earlier.

The focus of the Bush administration on the HIV/AIDS pandemic through PEPFAR may change in name, but is likely to continue under any successor to President George Bush, based on indications from both candidates. South Africa, as recipient of a substantial portion of PEPFAR funding (nearly \$460 million between 2004 and 2006 alone), must ensure the sound use of these funds on the ground. South Africa's leaders can create the administrative environment, where corruption is not tolerated and where transparency and accountability are supported at every level, in order to encourage the continued disbursement of these funds for the amelioration of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

The resolution of Zimbabwe's impasse following the contested election results in early

and mid 2008 will also bring an increasing number of donor countries to the region. As South Africa has the infrastructure to support the many visitors and the transit of goods and services that will ensue, many of these from the United States, South Africa's cooperation with the US in Zimbabwe's reconstruction is likely to be another point of increased interaction.

South Africa's stature as a nation that has come through its own conflictual past into an era of peace and growing (albeit qualified) prosperity has drawn various South African role players into international efforts at conflict resolution beyond its own region or continent. Recent reports on the efforts of private high profile South Africans to assist in the resolution of the internal conflict in Iraq are but one example. If, as reports indicate, this process leads to an early withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, the US will be bound to acknowledge South Africa's valued role as intermediary in international conflict situations. Might this role extend to the intractable problems of the central problem in the Middle East, that of the competing claims of the Palestinians and Israel? This is a prospect for both the US and South African leaders to consider.

While oil is one of the only prized natural resources that South Africa does not possess, this nation is a major partner for carbon-trading by nations such as the US, hungry for additional points in any scheme to limit overall carbon emissions. South Africa has already sold a portion of its emissions quotas in exchange for development funding from the World Bank and others (see Volume 3, September 2005 of SAIIA's E-Africa journal, on Carbon Trading and the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol). Among environmentalists who are looking for an overall cut in carbon emissions there is not universal support for this growing practice by developing countries. But there are those that argue that developing economies such as South Africa have the right to benefit from their low level of carbon emissions in the window before their own development precludes any such trade. With new signs that the US is willing to engage with international efforts to curb global warming, both from Obama and McCain, this may be the time for South Africa to look to the US for similar development opportunities.

These areas of potential partnership and engagement with the United States are but a few for South Africa's new leadership to ponder at this auspicious point in the history of both nations. Africa, and thus South Africa, is likely to remain below the top of the list of foreign policy priorities for the new US administration, but South Africans may wish to consider how they can act to engage the US themselves, in view of these many areas of overlapping interest and mutual benefit. The benefits for South Africa go beyond trade and other quantifiable 'deliverables' such as PEPFAR funding and military exchange, and may extend to increased prestige as an international player in various fora, such as the mooted 'flexible G-14' that World Bank President Robert Zoelick called for following the recent meetings of the nations of the Group of 7 (G-7). Partnerships are never free of friction, but they do create the possibility of a product that is greater than the sum of its parts.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Zakaria, Fareed, *The Post-American World*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 2008.
- 2 *New York Times*, 21 August 2008.
- 3 *The Economist*, 26 July 2008, p17.