

# Now, what's in store for Africa?

Holding Trump to fact, not opinion, has failed so far. But there are ways to weather the climate change storm, writes

**John Stremlau**

EVERY four years the CIA's National Intelligence Council (NIC) provides the incoming president and his administration with an assessment of the most powerful global forces likely to affect foreign and domestic affairs. Known as the CIA's Global Trends, the report is also available to the public and normally has a time horizon of five years and beyond.

Donald Trump would probably be prompted to dismiss the 235-page 2017 edition with a tweet after getting just half-way down the first summary page.

The next five years, the report says, will close an era of American dominance following the Cold War.

Trump would undoubtedly see this as a personal affront to his promise that he will "Make America Great Again".

Ironically, Trump's own behaviour during his presidential campaign and transition only lends credence to one of the report's general forecasts that the next five years will see rising tensions within and between countries.

So far Trump has stirred tensions with a range of countries. He has made controversial statements that have offended, among others, Europeans, Asians and, of course, Mexicans.

The report provides a useful starting point to reflect on what's in store for Africa over the next five years. And how the continent should think about responding to challenges it identifies in the context of a Trump presidency.

A case in point is the report's findings set against Trump's stance on climate change. The Global Trends 2017 puts greater emphasis on the urgent need to mitigate and adapt to global warming and other man-induced climate change than earlier editions.

But Trump's climate denial rhetoric and the prominent deniers he is including in his cabinet, contradict all available evidence-based judgments.

This might suggest that the continent and Trump are on a collision course given that Africa will suffer more than

most regions from the threat of climate change. This needn't be the case. There are some low-cost ways African Union members, individually and together, could undertake to slow down and even derail Trump and his climate deniers.

Shrewd diplomats would do well to use the report as a useful reference for prodding US negotiators. They might also use it for gauging levels of public and Congressional support for Trump's controversial policies.

**Clues to Trump's views on Africa**

There have been few indications of Trump's interest in sub-Saharan Africa. But a few clues of how his administration views the continent have been reported by the *New York Times*.

The report was based on a leaked four-page list of questions about Africa his transition team sent to the State Department and Pentagon. The questions indicate a general scepticism about the value of foreign aid or even US security interests in sub-Saharan Africa, suggesting Africans have squandered American money and effort.

**Questions included:**

- With so much corruption in Africa, how much of our funding is stolen? and in relation to the African Growth and Opportunity Act
- And in relation to the African Growth and Opportunity Act, why do we support that massive benefit to corrupt regimes? and regarding US business interests
- And regarding US business interests, are we losing out to the Chinese?

Based on these questions, it's possible that Trump will opt for an American retreat from the bipartisan development, humanitarian, and security assistance goals of previous administrations. Even so, policies he pursues on global issues such as trade and climate change will have a dramatic impact on the continent.

**Trends facing Africa**

The Global Trends report conclusion is that prospects for progress on the continent clearly outweigh the dangers. It



US President Donald Trump speaking at the CIA headquarters, in Langley, Virginia, on Saturday.

says that in the next five years African countries will focus on internal issues as they struggle to consolidate the gains of the past 15 years and try to resist the geopolitical and economic headwinds that threaten them.

It identifies the key challenges, among them the familiar issues of rapid population growth and rural-urban migration, environmental and health risks, radicalisation, and failures of governing institutions. The report's emphasis on climate change is particularly telling. It cites credible scientific evidence of global warming and forecasts dire consequences for countries across the world, including in Africa.

The report endorses the findings and process approved by 194 countries participating in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The Obama Administration was a global leader in the IPCC and agreements reached in Paris in 2015 on reducing greenhouse gases emissions in a voluntary process now endorsed by virtually all UN members.

Obama was also committed to a bilateral agreement with China, obligating the world's two largest emitters to major reductions. And he made a pledge vital to Africa of \$3 billion (about R41bn) toward



The seal of the CIA on the floor at the US intelligence agency's headquarters.

an initial IPCC \$10bn fund to assist the most vulnerable and under-resourced countries adapt to global warming. This fund is scheduled to grow to \$100bn annually by 2020.

Trump, however, has repeatedly threatened to renege on all these US commitments.

**What Africa needs to do**

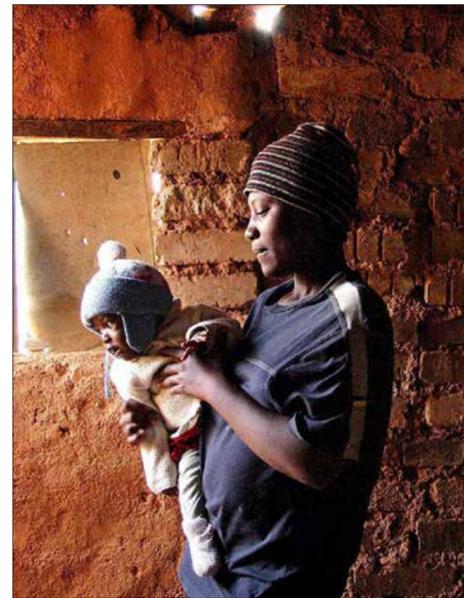
Here are some low-cost ways AU members, individually and together, can undertake to slow and even derail Trump and his climate deniers:

Seize every opportunity in bilateral talks and multilateral forums to reference the findings presented in Global Trends 2017. Although prepared during the Obama administration, it is the work of non-partisan civil servants.

Devise and implement public diplomacy campaigns in partnership with civil society groups, environmental activists, and the African Diaspora. Recalling lessons from the highly effective anti-apartheid

movement of the 1970s and 1980s could be helpful.

Develop a better understanding of and links to America's booming alternative energy sector. Costs of solar, wind, and other clean energy sources have fallen dramatically to the point that economics, rather than politics or ethics, now drive most major reductions of America's dangerous emissions. There may be positive business opportunities for African companies and countries



A woman carries her baby in a shack in Muldersdrift, outside Johannesburg.



Shacks in Masiphumelele, Cape Town.

to exploit for economic growth, development and dealing with the effects of global warming.

Actively support Americans (and anyone else) who support a carbon tax, with generous allowances for low-polluting African countries.

With Obama gone, China alone appears poised for global leadership on climate change. South Africa could help by using its membership in Brics and close ties to China and Brazil to press India, and especially Russia, to meet their obligations. Perhaps it might even get the group to increase its contributions to the special fund for seriously affected African countries.

Reassure potential American donors and partners that funds allocated for helping Africans adjust to climate change will be accounted for through

a voluntary, transparent process of planning and reporting. Such accountability is a key vision of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and its African Peer Review Mechanism.

Finally: tap into African expertise. Arguments should make full use of the continent's small but growing community of climate scientists and their many links to America's scientific community.

Holding Trump to facts, not opinion, has failed so far. But evidence suggests public sentiment and economic incentives increasingly favour better climate management.

Africa's appeals to America for fairness can be as effective as they once were for freedom.

● This piece first appeared on *The Conversation.com*

## Look of fondness on Obama presidency

**KANTHAN PILLAY**

ALMOST exactly 199 years ago, Percy Bysshe Shelley penned these immortal words: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

It was a reflection on the life of the Egyptian pharaoh, Ramesses II of which Shelley intoned: "Nothing beside remains. / Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Shelley's words always remind me that the measure of the legacy of any leader lies not in what he or she has achieved, but rather the extent to which those achievements endure through history.

Barack Obama has given his last public speech and delivered his last press conference. He, Michelle, Sasha, Malia, Bo, and Sunny have moved out of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20500. Using Ozymandias as a measure, how will Obama's presidency stand the test of time?

Four years ago when Obama was standing for re-election against Mitt Romney, I took a look at the list of promises he had made in the build-up to his first election.

I found an astonishing list of promises kept: 179 of them. Here are some of those I found significant: "Direct military leaders to end the war in Iraq"; "End the use of torture"; "Seek verifiable reductions in nuclear stockpiles"; "Grant

Americans unrestricted rights to visit family and send money to Cuba"; "Release presidential records"; "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (about gays in the military); "Sign a universal health care bill"; "Reverse restrictions on stem cell research"; and of course "We will kill Bin Laden".

But are any of these likely to have a significant impact on the course of history?

The killing of Osama bin Laden, in hindsight, is almost a non-event. Bin Laden ended his days as a sad figure of a man watching pornography in an isolated building in Abbottabad; never able to venture outside to sample the magnificent beauty of the Kashmir surrounds.

Obama received no credit for this in his re-election campaign. Al-Qaeda's legacy lives on in a myriad of suicide bombers and other fanatics including the Islamic State. Score: 0.

Reversing restrictions on stem cell research simply brought the US in line with the rest of the world. Singapore, Japan, Israel, India, China, and Iran (yes, Iran) have leaped ahead of the rest of the world. Obama simply allowed the US to play catch up. Still, The US has the most vibrant scientific community, and setting them free is good for the human race. Score: 1.

Obama did sign into law the closest thing the US has to a universal health care bill. It is nowhere near the level

of support for public health-care one gets in most First World countries (or South Africa for that matter).

Nevertheless, it has whetted the appetite of the US underclass for affordable health care. Even if the Trump administration scales back on some of the benefits, that door can never be closed again. Score: 1.

On gay rights, which was always a contentious issue for the US electorate, Obama acted passively by allowing all legal challenges to pass through the courts without opposition from the federal government.

Nevertheless, the right of LGBTI individuals to marry whom they choose and have equal protection under law is never going to go away in the US. Also, Obama took this on to the world stage with then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton telling the UN that he US would use diplomacy and aid to help expand the rights of gay people around the world. Score: 3.

On the release of presidential records, the Obama administration did not increase transparency, but did increase surveillance. State-sanctioned spying means that most US citizens have almost no privacy under law. Score: -2.

On the issue of Cuba, Obama went many steps beyond his promise by opening up diplomatic relations with that state after 50 years of unremitting hostility. In part, I'd like to think that former South African president Nelson Mandela's funeral afforded



Barack Obama departs the Brady Press Briefing Room after his last press conference as president at the White House in Washington, DC, last week.

the opportunity to open that door. Score: 3.

On the question of ending the war in Iraq, Obama largely kept his word by withdrawing the bulk of US forces from active engagement.

Islamic State remains a

clear and present danger for now, but Iraqi self-determination is now inevitable. Score: 1.

The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 signed by Obama stripped away the right of companies to legally pay less to women working the same jobs



A woman holds a sign thanking him outside the White House last week.

as men. In even a decade from now, the idea that companies could get away without equal pay for equal work will seem ludicrous. Still, Obama opened up that door too. Score: 1.

Obama was not able to shut down the US torture facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It was not for lack of trying, but the Senate and Congress consistently blocked him. Nevertheless, he did end the use of waterboarding and removed the majority of prisoners from the facility. Score: 1.

Obama managed to right one of the great wrongs of US history, which was the isolation of Iran.

Understand that until the 1950s, Iran was a thriving secular democracy and one of the intellectual and cultural heartlands of the world. Two US engineered coups toppled those democratic governments leading to the revolution and the terrible reign of the

Ayatollahs. Obama, by use of technological warfare and sheer diplomacy, engineered the re-entry of Iran into the family of nations while putting the brakes on their nuclear ambitions - without firing a single shot. Score: 3.

I agree with Obama that, by almost every measure, the US and the world are better places today than they were before he took office. However, his greatest failure was his inability to take the lessons of his own presidential campaign and use it to cement his legacy. I believe the reason why Barack Obama was elected in the first place was because he was an outsider. Unlike Hillary Clinton and John McCain, Obama was not anointed by the military industrial complex and so struck an honest chord with the voters.

Then came the 2016 elections, and instead of throwing his support behind Bernie

Sanders who had the backing of Obama's grassroots base, Obama threw his support behind Hillary Clinton. He had no doubt been convinced that Hillary was the certain bet, and would cement his legacy projects such as health care and sustainable energy.

He was wrong. Hillary, as the soulless representative of Wall Street was never going to resonate with the voters in the way Obama did for two elections.

Simply put, if every person who voted for Obama had voted for Hillary Clinton, she would be president elect today. Obama asked them to vote for her. They did not.

I predicted Trump's victory in a tweet in July 2016. I believe he will be a better president than people give him credit for.

But I also believe Trump will make us look back on the Obama presidency with great fondness.