



# THE UNITED STATES STUDIES CENTRE

## MEDIA RELEASE

### AUSTRALIANS, AMERICANS AND THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney today released the results of a major survey on the views of Australians towards the United States and next week's presidential election, undertaken during the financial crisis last month.

Professor Simon Jackman Visiting Professor in the United States Studies Centre and Professor of Politics at Stanford University in California conducted the survey "***Australians, Americans and the 2008 Presidential Election***" that also compared attitudes of Australians with those of Americans on the same issues.

The survey comprises telephone interviews of 800 respondents and an on-line survey of 3,000 respondents. The field work was conducted by Brisbane based Q & A Research.

The survey found that most Australian respondents (80%) believe the US is on the "**wrong track**", mirroring the views of Americans. In contrast, a solid majority (64%) of Australian respondents said Australia is on the "right track".

If Australians could vote in the US presidential election, they would overwhelmingly support the Democrat candidate Senator **Barack Obama** by more than a 4-1 margin.

Almost half (49%) of the Australian respondents think Senator Obama would make a **better president** "in terms of Australia's interests". Only 11% said the Republican candidate Senator John McCain would be better for Australia. Fully one third of respondents said it would make "no difference" if Senator Obama or Senator McCain wins, reflecting confidence in the underlying strength of the US-Australia alliance.

More than two thirds (69%) of Australian respondents felt **anger towards or ashamed of the US** because of "things America has done". A similar number of American respondents (60%) also reported feeling "ashamed of things that America has done".



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About half the Australian respondents think the US should **exit Iraq within twelve months**. This is very similar to the views of Americans on the right strategy in Iraq. But even the one third of Australian respondents who think the US should stay “as long as it takes” still prefers Senator Obama as president by a 3-1 margin. The one third of Americans who think the US should stay in Iraq support Senator McCain by more than 10-1.

Senator Obama being the first African American presidential nominee of America’s two major parties is less important to Australians than to Americans. The survey’s Australian respondents scored considerably lower than American respondents on a “**racial resentment**” scale assessing attitudes towards the treatment and status of African Americans in the US.

On **religion**, many fewer Australians (5%) than Americans (18%) incorrectly think Obama is a Muslim. He is a Christian.

Asked about **American stereotypes**, two-thirds of Australian respondents describe Americans as “violent”, “greedy” and “ignorant”. At the same time, two thirds of Australians described Americans as hardworking.

Australian respondents were twice as likely to think of **China as an “adversary”** of the United States (33%) than as an adversary of Australia (15%). More than half (55%) see China as an “ally” of Australia, almost twice the proportion (29%) that thinks China is an “ally” of the United States. Only 5% of American respondents see China as an “ally”.

Australian respondents were asked to rate both Australian and American political figures on a “**progressive-conservative**” scale. Australians consider Senator Obama to be considerably to the left of Australia’s Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, whereas they consider Senator McCain to be far to the right of Australia’s Liberal leader Malcolm Turnbull, with President George W. Bush even further to the right.

Professor Geoffrey Garrett, CEO of the US Studies Centre, said the results showed that Australians of all political stripes shared with many Americans hopes for transformational change at home and abroad if Senator Obama wins the presidency next week, succeeding what is widely viewed in both countries as a failed Bush administration.

The detailed survey results are available on the US Studies Centre election watch website: [www.uselectionwatch.org.au](http://www.uselectionwatch.org.au)

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*The United States Studies Centre is dedicated to increasing knowledge and understanding of the United States to foster new opportunities for collaboration across the Pacific and globally. The Centre is a joint initiative of the University of Sydney and the American Australian Association with generous support from the Australian and the New South Wales governments.*