



Hillary 2016

Will a Second Clinton Era Arise?

Senior Editorial Staff

Abstract

Given Hillary Clinton's role as Secretary of State over the past four years, how electable of a candidate would she be for the presidential election in 2016? The PPR senior editorial staff briefly summarizes the past four years and evaluates her chances at a 2016 bid.

Keywords: *Hillary Clinton, US foreign policy, State Department, 2016 election*



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Perhaps due to the boredom of the ongoing Republican primary or frustration with President Obama's tenure, many political pundits are already looking forward to the 2016 presidential race. Among the many questions to arise is one of whom the Democratic Party will turn to in that election. Without doubt, Hillary Clinton is still one of the most prominent Democratic figures. Largely due to her past political successes and her effective record as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton is a natural choice for the Democratic Party in 2016. Although she has made it clear that a presidential run is not in her future; Hillary Clinton's record is a model of electability.

James Carville, a notable Democratic strategist, said of a potential Clinton 2016 bid, "I always assume that if people run, they will run again."¹ Other supporters include former New York City Mayor and US Representative Ed Koch and current New York Senator Kristen Gillibrand.² Her support is not just limited to the partisan political sphere; a 2011 Gallup poll reported that 66 percent of Americans had a favorable view of Clinton in her Secretary of State role.³ Despite her immense popularity in the Democratic Party, the Clinton name still carries a tinge of controversy.

Furthermore, her age may prove a daunting factor; she would be 68 if elected in 2016, one year short of Ronald Reagan's 69 upon taking office. However, these drawbacks are not strong enough to prevent her

election. This commentary piece will briefly analyze the successes of Clinton's past four years in the State Department and evaluate them in the context of a 2016 presidential bid.

Clinton has acknowledged that her tenure as Secretary of State will be limited to one term, giving her four years to create political separation from the often divisive Obama White House. Although a connection to President Obama may be a weakness, her accomplishments as Secretary of State remain the latest in a long line of accomplishments. President Obama's record over the past four years is tepid at best, but he has had considerable success in the realm of foreign policy with Clinton playing a role in a good deal of it.

From now famous speeches on women's rights across the globe, to the historic photograph of her, President Obama, and the National Security team on the night of Osama Bin Laden's death, Hillary Clinton has forged an image for herself as a strong, decisive leader.

Evaluating Secretary Clinton's role in the global sphere as a member of President Obama's administration reveals a relatively uncontested record of achievement. Her unique position as a politician who already enjoyed relationships with many world leaders has surely helped her continue to improve and forge new relations with these countries. Additionally, she has built on her past successes as a champion for women's rights by using her new global position to be a spokesperson for female welfare in foreign nations.

She has not merely relied on the strength of old friendships; much

of Clinton's success in the past four years has resulted from forging new bonds Asia—a region with which she had little previous experience—and her now well-known "great pivot" towards Asia.⁴ As US-China



Source: Official White House Photo

relations become increasingly important, Clinton has had to occupy and navigate a crucial diplomatic role with respect to largely new sectors such as information technology and internet privacy. Clearly, her success as Secretary of State does not put her in direct position for a presidential run. Rather, it builds her already impressive political resume, granting her both more executive and foreign policy experience.

Clinton's most lasting legacy within the State Department may prove to be the reform put in place by the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, which establishes both short and long term goals from resource and policy standpoints for the department. By doing this, Clinton has been able to clearly define diplomatic objectives, and more importantly, recognize

and assembly" in Libya.⁶ Additionally, Secretary Clinton was the first cabinet-level official to visit the newly liberated Libya. On October 18, 2011, Hillary Clinton landed in Tripoli, reaffirming US-Libya ties in a post-Gadhafi era.⁷ Clinton was also responsible for persuading Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to abstain on a United Nations resolution that authorized direct strikes on Gadhafi's forces.⁸ This skill at negotiation overcame the reflex to veto US-led military intervention that has been a trademark of Russian diplomats in the Security Council for years. Through the Libyan Civil War, as well as a host of other international events, Hillary Clinton has gained a renowned international reputation as a world leader and has become the face of a more responsible, thoughtful



Source: Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

the connection between diplomacy and the development of countries. Among these aims, for example, is an initiative to battle global hunger by recognizing the role of farmers worldwide rather than merely appropriating food to countries in need.⁵

Perhaps her greatest diplomatic role remains her influence in the US intervention in Libya. Clinton was a focused voice within the administration, speaking out repeatedly against now deceased Muammar Gadhafi's regime in Libya. On February 21, 2011, only days after the uprising began, Secretary Clinton released a statement condemning the Libyan government's actions and calling for "free expression

US foreign policy.

Clinton has operated well in the framework of the traditional American approach to authority in international politics, but she has shifted attention to a new kind of power: smart power. While not the originator of the term (that credit belongs to Suzanne Nossel), Clinton adopted it as the focus of the Obama administration from the outset. At her confirmation hearing she elaborated:

The President-Elect and I believe that foreign policy must be based on a marriage of principles, and pragmatism, not rigid ideology. On facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice. Our security, our vitality, and

our ability to lead in today's world oblige us to recognize the overwhelming fact of our interdependence.

I believe that American leadership has been wanting, but is still wanted. We must use what has been called "smart power," the full range of tools at our disposal—diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural—picking the right tool, or combination of tools for each situation.

With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy. This is not a radical idea. The Roman poet Terence, who was born a slave and rose to become one of the great voices of his time, declared that "in every endeavor, the seemly course for wise men is to try persuasion first." The same truth binds wise women as well.⁹

All of the tools Clinton has been using, from development aid to new media approaches (the State Department now has 192 Twitter feeds to join in what Clinton calls the "age of participation"),¹⁰ have been in pursuit of repositioning the United States in the global arena. From driving around Tripoli with rebel groups to negotiating with major powers, Clinton has knitted together a framework for how to artfully promote US interests. In a globalized world with rising powers and multiple centers of influence, traditional hard power approaches that the US has championed in the past may not be as effective. Clinton's philosophical track for the State Department will thus have substantial impacts on the future direction of US foreign policy and how Americans interact with the rest of the world.

Despite these foreign policy successes, Clinton's personal staff reject the possibility of a 2016 run.¹¹ Perhaps this is rational calculation; after all, presidential elections are never decided solely on foreign policy. However, Clinton is a household name and has a strong progressive legislative record from her time in the Senate. Her 2008 campaign efforts were by no means a complete failure and she still has a strong support base within the party. Her aforementioned record since 2008 has addressed many of her perceived weaknesses. Despite this, weaknesses will remain: among them is the dark cloud of a failed healthcare reform bill, an issue that President Obama has come

into contact with as well. Given her strong performance in the role of the nation's top diplomat, it seems apparent that among the Democratic Party constituency, Hillary Clinton has established herself as a worthy presidential candidate for 2016.

Notes

¹ "Carville: Hillary in 2016," *Washington Examiner*, March 19, 2012, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

² Talia Ralph, "Senator Kirsten Gillibrand: Hillary Clinton Should Run in 2016," *Global Post*, March 22, 2012, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

³ Rachel Weiner, "Hillary Clinton's Popularity Reaches Near-Record High," *The Washington Post*, March 31, 2011, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

⁴ "What Hillary Did Next," *The Economist*, March 24, 2012, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

⁵ "The Department of State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review," US Department of State, July 10, 2009, Internet (accessed March 31, 2012).

⁶ "Secretary Clinton: 'Libya Has a Responsibility to Respect the Universal Rights of the People,'" DipNote Blog, February 21, 2011, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

⁷ Elise Labott, "Clinton Makes Unannounced Visit to Libya," CNN, October 18, 2011, Internet (accessed March 30, 2012).

⁸ Massimo Calabresi, "Hillary Clinton and the Rise of Smart Power," *Time Magazine*, November 7, 2012, Internet (accessed April 6, 2012).

⁹ Laura Rozen, "HRC confirmation hearing: smart power, little drama," *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2009, Internet (accessed April 6, 2012).

¹⁰ Calabresi, "Hillary Clinton and the Rise of Smart Power."

¹¹ *Ibid.*