

# HILLARY RISING

THE POLITICS, PERSONA AND POLICIES  
OF A NEW AMERICAN DYNASTY

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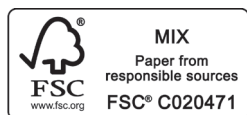
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— INTRODUCTION —

# HILLARY RISING

**B**y any measure, Hillary Diane Rodham Clinton has already lived an extraordinary life. She was the first student at Wellesley College to deliver a commencement speech, the first woman on the Walmart board of directors, the first First Lady with an office in the West Wing of the White House, the first First Lady to seek and win elected office, the first Secretary of State to visit more than 100 countries, and the first woman to seriously challenge for the presidency of the United States. In addition, she was the first First Lady to hold a postgraduate degree and the first First Lady to win a Grammy Award. She has also graced the cover of *Time* magazine more than any woman in history. Only because her skills are so formidable, her talent so obvious and her ambitions

so clear, does this record of achievement not seem adequate. The one role that has eluded her to date is the American presidency. The presidential election of 2016 will reveal whether or not this is to be her destiny.

Having exploded onto the national and international stage in 1992, Hillary Clinton has served in one capacity or another in Washington, DC for twenty-four years: as First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State, as well as sitting on the board of directors at the Clinton Foundation. In these successive roles, Hillary has already held office in Washington, DC far longer than her husband, who was term-limited to his eight-year presidency. Now, with her second quest to claim the White House underway, she has positioned herself to eclipse her husband's achievements and emerge as a significant figure in her own right in US politics and history, both in terms of her electoral achievements and her potential to break the gender lock on the White House.

*Hillary Rising* explores the ascent to the pinnacle of American power by this remarkable woman. It reveals the key stages in her political career and the factors that have influenced her development from a child of conservative Republican parents to the Democratic Party's presumptive candidate for President of the United States. By tracing Hillary Clinton's path from a Republican adolescent and a student activist, through to her time as First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State, *Hillary Rising* addresses the policies she has endorsed, the personalities that have influenced her and the politics that have either helped or hindered her path to power. What emerges from this exploration of Hillary Clinton's past is

the importance of a small number of core principles upon which her career and political ideology are based.

*Hillary Rising* does not claim to be a complete biography of Hillary Clinton's life and career. Instead, it addresses areas that have been overlooked in previous studies, which have fallen into three camps. The first is memoir-driven, written for posterity rather than the general population. They make important additions to libraries and for scholarly research, but are all too often impenetrable and seek to rewrite history from the vantage point of the author. Examples include Hillary Clinton's own memoirs, *Living History* (Simon & Schuster, 2003) and *Hard Choices* (Simon & Schuster, 2014). The second camp either demonises or lionises Hillary with regard to the polarising impact she has had in American politics. Such books include *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham* (The Free Press, 1996) by David Brock, *The First Partner* (William Morrow, 1999) by Joyce Milton and *Hillary's Choice* (Random House, 1999) by Gail Sheehy. The final camp focuses exclusively on one element of Hillary Clinton's career to the exclusion of all others, thereby presenting a narrow portrait of her impact on American political life. Examples include Kim Ghattas's *The Secretary* (Time Books, 2013), Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes's *HRC* (Hutchinson, 2014) and Sally Bedell Smith's *For the Love of Politics: The Clintons in the White House* (Aurum Press, 2008).

*Hillary Rising* aims to distinguish itself from these accounts. It lays out the route that Hillary Clinton has taken from her childhood to the gates of the White House and offers readers an insight into what has driven her on her journey. It draws from a variety of

sources including interviews, diaries and newly declassified materials that have only recently become available to trace the policies, personalities and politics that have defined Hillary's career and helped shape her character, with the aim of providing an insight into what can be expected if she becomes the first female President of the United States.

To understand Hillary Clinton's place in modern American politics, it is vital to appreciate the journey that she has taken, from her birth in Illinois through her formative years at college, her marriage to Bill Clinton and her time in the public arena as an advocate for the rights of women and children in particular. Accordingly, *Hillary Rising* considers the world into which Hillary Diane Rodham was born in 1947, explaining the conservative nature of the United States at that time, the impact that this had on her upbringing and the country, and how this prepared her for life at Wellesley College. It was here that Hillary Rodham first entered the public consciousness, becoming the first student to deliver the commencement address and subsequently appearing in the pages of *Life* magazine. Her time at university saw Hillary Rodham transition from a young Republican to the girlfriend of a future Democratic Governor and President, Bill Clinton, whom she met at Yale Law School in 1971.

After exploring Hillary's formative years, her time in Arkansas must be considered. Indeed, the rationale for her decision to move to one of the poorest states in the union at a time when she could have taken lucrative positions in Washington, DC or New York must be understood in an effort to dismiss oft-repeated allegations

regarding the nature of her relationship with Bill Clinton. As a young, remarkably well-educated northerner, the transition to Arkansas was not easy, and it is important to consider the manner in which Hillary Clinton developed during the years she served as First Lady of Arkansas, the responsibilities she assumed and the success and failures she encountered during this time, as they provide a barometer for future events. Never was this more apparent than during the eight years that Hillary served as First Lady of the United States, a time that perfectly encapsulated the undulating relationship she had with her husband, as well as the one she had with the American public.

Hillary Clinton's initial time as First Lady of the United States was dominated by efforts to implement healthcare reform and the flaws in this effort reveal much about her and how she might function as President. The figure of Monica Lewinsky is unavoidable. However, she will not be addressed in the context of her affair with Bill Clinton, but instead by her impact on Hillary and her career after her husband's presidency. *Hillary Rising* takes the contentious position that the humiliation experienced by Hillary Clinton was essential for her to emerge as a candidate for the Senate in 2000, a move that established her own political power base for her future presidential bids. It is clear that Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky had a direct impact on the Democratic Party's eligibility in 2000, aiding George W. Bush's election as President, and thereby contributing to the conditions that led to the Iraq War. If this is true, then by extension it must be acknowledged that the affair provided the public expressions of support for

Hillary Clinton that enabled her run for the Senate in 2000 and could, therefore, very well lead directly to the first female presidency in the history of the United States.

The many highs and all-too-public lows of Hillary's time in the White House provided the platform for her next endeavour, as a United States Senator from New York. Her years in the Senate risk being overlooked due to the roles that preceded and followed it, but they demonstrate her ability to work with others and achieve political results, both essential qualities in a President. It is important, therefore, to explore the years that Hillary spent representing the Empire State to understand what she did, how she did it and how she was perceived by those around her. From the moment she won election to the Senate, Hillary Clinton was expected to run for the White House, which she did in 2008. What no one expected, however, was that she would lose to a virtually unknown African-American Senator. To appreciate the campaign that Hillary will wage in her attempt to secure the presidency in 2016, it is vital to understand what occurred in her previous campaign: what went right and what went spectacularly wrong. If she is to persevere in 2016, personal, structural and political flaws from the 2008 campaign must be acknowledged and overcome.

Following the disappointment of her 2008 campaign, Hillary Clinton was appointed Secretary of State by President Obama. This four-year period saw her travel almost a million miles as she circumnavigated the globe advancing the cause of the United States in an effort to regain hearts and minds following the perceived failings of the George W. Bush years. This constituted a remarkable



opportunity for Hillary to establish solid foreign-policy credentials with which to launch a second campaign for the presidency. Any consideration of her potential presidency must evaluate this time period with care and recognise the role that she has played as a global ambassador for the United States.

Having served four years as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton stepped back from electoral politics and the role of Cabinet officer to recharge her batteries and consider the future. During this time she prepared her second memoir, *Hard Choices*, and joined the Clinton Foundation, a vehicle for global philanthropy established by Bill Clinton shortly after he left the White House. Doing so raised a series of questions, some old and some new, about the role of the foundation, its appropriateness and its relationship with foreign governments.

Irrespective of the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, the impact of the Clinton family on American political life since 1992 has given rise to speculation about the emergence of a new American political dynasty. Following in the footsteps of the Adamses, Kennedys, Rockefellers, Bushes and Roosevelts, the public fascination with powerful political families appears to be at odds with the founding principles of American political life, premised as the latter is on the concepts of equality and meritocracy. Indeed, the appropriateness of placing the Clinton family in this pantheon of American leadership is open to speculation. To date there has only been one generation of Clintons who has held office, albeit it at a senior level, but never at the same time; as Bill Clinton's elected career ended, Hillary Clinton's began.

Despite this, talk of a Clinton dynasty continues to thrive, with some even looking ahead to a political career for Chelsea Clinton, whose marriage and subsequent child have enabled Hillary to embrace a new role on the 2016 campaign trail that may prove decisive: grandmother.

If ‘pragmatism’ best described Bill Clinton, then perhaps ‘endurance’ best defines Hillary. Her career to date has been a seemingly endless journey of challenges, both personal and professional, and her tale is one of achievement, overcoming obstacles and heartbreak in the quest to push the boundaries of what is possible. She has seen her most precious ambitions rise and ebb, seen friends fall by the wayside and has become simultaneously the most vilified and admired woman on the planet. Married to the most powerful man in the world, she became the most publically wronged wife in the world, yet used this experience to forge her own unique role in American political life. By the dawn of the 2016 presidential electoral cycle, Hillary Clinton, remarkably enough, has become the grand dame of the Democratic Party; having arrived in Washington, DC in her mid-forties, she finds herself vying to become America’s second-oldest President, bested only by Ronald Reagan.

The extent to which she can position herself within the Democratic Party, and within the nation, as a viable candidate for the presidency remains to be seen. Vilified by the right and never entirely trusted by the left, it was David Brock, whose initial writings caused so much damage to the Clinton presidency, who concluded in 1996: ‘Hillary should be approached as neither an icon or a demon but as

a real person who has had a remarkable life and, it could be argued, has been more important to America than her husband.<sup>1</sup> Almost twenty years later, Hillary Clinton's achievements have become all the more pronounced. However, when she ran for the presidency in 2008 many Democrats feared a sense of inevitability about her approach to the candidacy. In 2015, little has changed, as some within the party still hanker after a competition, not a coronation, seemingly more determined to be idealistically pure than victorious in the general election. However, as Hillary Rodham noted in her 1969 Wellesley College commencement speech: 'We arrived at Wellesley and we found, as all of us have found, that there was a gap between expectations and realities. But it wasn't a discouraging gap ... It just inspired us to do something about that gap.'<sup>2</sup> Almost fifty years, and countless personal and political reinventions later, Hillary Rodham Clinton finds herself facing, and once again needing to overcome, the gap between expectations and realities in her quest for the presidency of the United States.