

Academics back Hillary in race for White House

If you thought the fight for Westminster was long-winded, then just take a look at the marathon across the Atlantic...

By Chris Murphy
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A LEADING academic in the county has described Hillary Clinton's confirmation she would be standing in a bid to become the United States' first female president as having "all the excitement of letting a sleeping cat out of a clear plastic bag".

But Kent experts say they believe her chances of making it second time lucky in her bid to rule the White House stand a good chance.

In a move widely expected by political pundits, Mrs Clinton - wife of former president Bill - confirmed via Twitter this week she would be seeking the Democrat nomination.

She took part in the same race in 2008, but lost out in the complex American political party selection process to Barack Obama who went on to become the US' first black president.

Now she will embark on a grueling run-up to the selection process and a series of what are called primaries during which the eventual presidential candidate will be selected.

The American public don't actually go to the polls until November 2016.

Dr George Conyne, a lecturer in American history at the University of Kent, said the news was far from a surprise.

He said: "Ever since she retired from the post of secretary of state two years ago, all of her actions suggested this announcement was coming.

"In addition to the public acts of writing a second memoir and going on a book tour to promote it, speaking in states that are key to the party nomination and victory in the general election, and supporting candidates in the elections last autumn, she has been very carefully attending to a much more important series of functions.

"Since she left the State Department, she has been attending luncheons, dinners, receptions, galas, balls and other 'social' occasions as well as private meetings that she has used to gather up every last dollar that might possibly be given to any potential Democratic presidential candidate.

"She is much more dominant now than she was eight years ago. Right now, the sailing to the party nomination looks as clear as it can be."

Dr George Conyne,
University of Kent academic

"She has had to do this, not only because her planned campaign needs the money but because she had to make sure that the available money did not go to other candidates.

"In the early stages of her attempt to capture the 2008 nomination she did not do this as well as she had to do. The result was that Senator Barack Obama raised \$23m in the first three months of 2007 which was almost as much she raised. Suddenly he was both a fresh face and a serious candidate and her campaign lost its position of unquestioned dominance. It was her first big mistake.

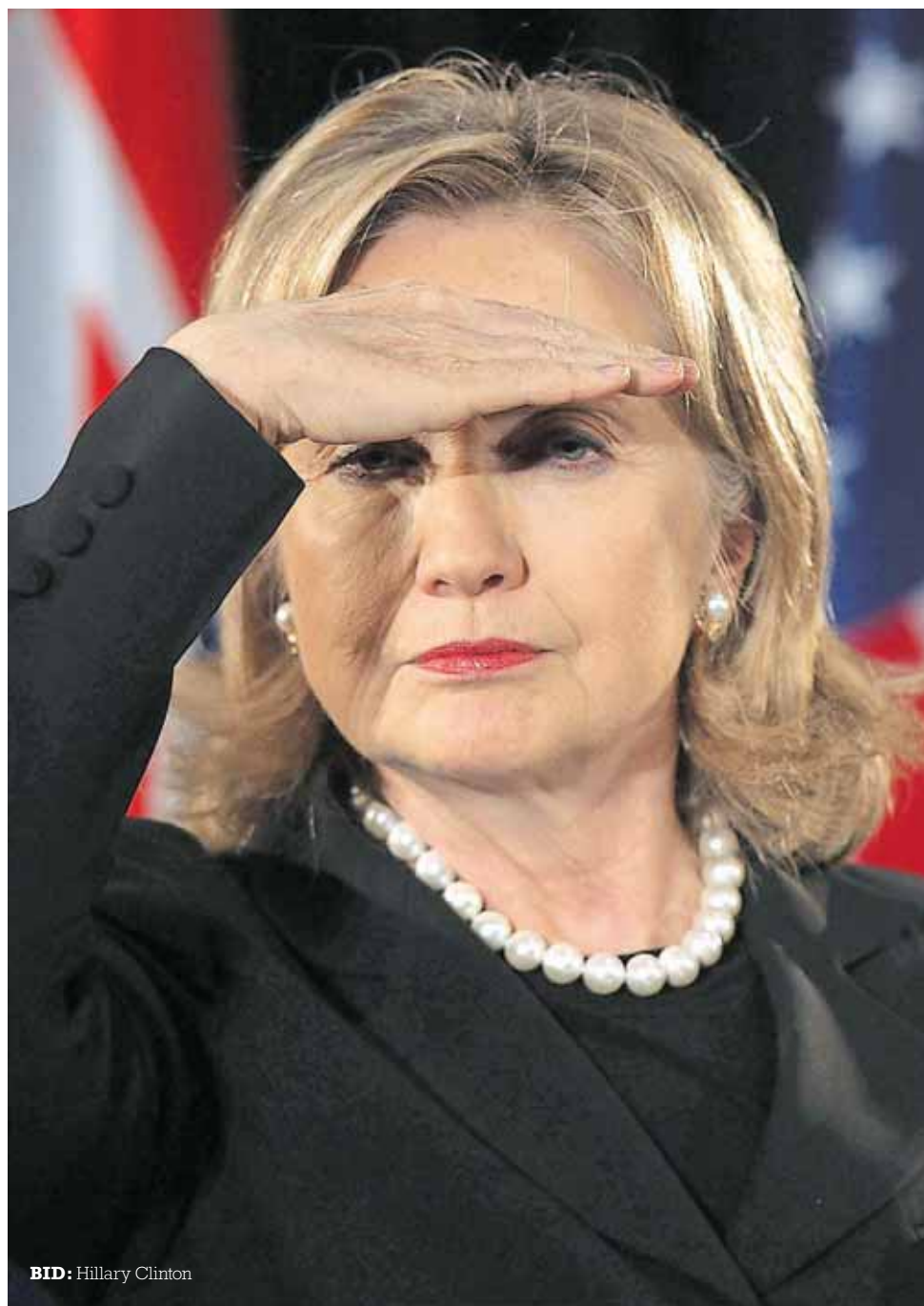
"As an extraordinarily intelligent politician, she hasn't made the same mistake twice, so that her extremely well-funded position is probably more dominant than it was eight years ago and she is less complacent.

"Obama was on her horizon then - there is nobody now. Right now, the sailing to the party nomination looks as clear as it can be.

"But her announcement of her candidacy had all the excitement of letting a sleeping cat out of a clear plastic bag."

It also flags up the fascinating political clash of dynasties as another Clinton seeks election, potentially running against Jeb Bush - brother of George W and son of George Bush; both former presidents.

Adds Dr Conyne: "Former Florida governor Jeb Bush is generally seen as the leader in a crowded field, but hasn't gained as broad support as he'd hoped. He appears to be leading in the fundraising race but, contrary to what a lot of people think, you need an attractive message to go with that money. American political history is



BID: Hillary Clinton

littered with wealthy candidates who failed because they did not have a popular message. So far, Bush hasn't coined that message. While he's the leader, his lead is far from secure.

"So if I had to bet £5 on the winner right now, I'd put it on Clinton, but I would not feel confident that I had a 'sure thing' - there's a long way to go in this one."

US presidents can only stand for two terms in the White House before having to make way for a replacement. The Democrat Barack Obama secured his two terms and will now stand down. His legacy is most likely to be one who failed to deliver on the enthusiasm and optimism he ushered in. However, he has been a firm hand on the world's strongest political power and helped ease the way on key political issues - most recently bringing Cuba back in from the cold.

Dr John Fitzgibbon, the senior lecturer in politics at Christ Church University, Canterbury, added: "She faces no significant opposition for the nomination from within the Democratic

Party, and barring some unforeseen event will be the party's candidate for the presidential election in November 2016. This is in contrast to the Republican Party where no real favourite has emerged among a crowded field of three confirmed and nine other potential candidates."

He points out there are major pros and cons to Mrs Clinton's already heightened public profile.

Dr Fitzgibbon said: "Hillary is by far the most high profile figure in the field. This has both positives and negatives for her. Positive in that people actually know who she is and so she does not have to spend money just to get her name out there.

"Negative, in that voters have already formed their opinions about her with a 50/50 split between favourable and unfavourable.

"At this very early stage Hillary has to be the favourite not just to win the Democratic nomination but to win the presidency as well. This is due to her high profile, strong support from the Democratic Party, huge financial

backing and an emerging sense that it is time for a woman to win."

Dr Matthew Jones, lecturer in political science at the University of Greenwich, added: "Since the 1960s, US politics has seen certain surnames, in particular Kennedy and Bush, reappear.

"Now to that list we can add Clinton. For a country that has constitutionally banned inherited power, certain surnames and familial ties do appear to be advantageous.

"Indeed, Jeb Bush has also publicly expressed an interest in running for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination.

"The 2016 US presidential election may result in it being a contest between Clinton and Bush. Whilst Chelsea Clinton has not publicly expressed an interest in pursuing a career in politics, her surname will certainly provide her with an advantage."

Bill Clinton was a hugely popular and charismatic American president, who served between 1993 to 2001.