Hillary Clinton announces presidential campaign

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13 April 2015

Former First Lady Hillary Clinton officially announced Sunday she would seek the Democratic nomination for president of the United States in the 2016 election.

In addition to being the Democratic frontrunner, Clinton, having served as Secretary of State under Obama, is the candidate most closely tied to the incumbent administration. Given the centrality of the Clinton campaign to the 2016 election and the American political system, the announcement sets the tone for the entire election.

Eschewing a traditional speech at a campaign rally, Clinton made her announcement in a two-minute online video that is almost entirely devoid of political content and noteworthy for its striking banality, even by the standards of American politics.

The first minute and a half of Clinton's announcement video consists of actors (or people who seem to be actors) portraying "ordinary" Americans speaking about their plans in the coming years. This includes one anonymous couple declaring, "We've been doing a lot of home renovations, but most importantly we just want to keep our dog from eating the trash."

Three quarters of the way through the video, Clinton makes her first appearance, declaring, "I'm getting ready to do something too. I'm running for president."

In other words, Clinton is declaring her bid for an office from which she could, at virtually her sole discretion, incinerate most of mankind in a nuclear apocalypse, in almost the same breath as random people talking about their dogs.

That the most significant candidate in the election chooses to announce her candidacy in such entirely vacuous fashion is an expression of the well-advanced decay of democratic norms in the United States, and the enormous chasm that exists between official politics and the sentiments and concerns of the great majority of the population.

That her candidacy is announced without calling for any particular policies underscores the fact that the election is not about the American people deciding the course of policy, but rather the vetting of candidates to serve the interest of the financial oligarchy.

Indeed, the utter lack of political content in the announcement is a testament to how little voters actually mean in an election decided by a handful of billionaires, together with the military/intelligence apparatus.

The purpose of the saccharine video is not to convince the population that Clinton represents their interests, but rather to mobilize her base among the affluent upper-middle class while making no statements that would draw criticism from the Republican right.

The remaining content of Clinton's campaign announcement, in its entirety, is as follows: "Americans have fought their way back from tough economic times, but the deck is still stacked in favor of those at the top. Everyday Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion.

"So you can do more than just get by, you can get ahead. And stay ahead, because when families are strong America is strong. So I'm hitting the road to earn your vote, because it's your time, and I hope you'll join me on this journey."

There is, of course, no acknowledgment that Clinton was part of an administration that oversaw and continues to oversee the greatest transfer of wealth from the bottom to "those at the top" in US history.

Clinton's new campaign website is equally empty. There is not a single word on the entire site about what the nominee stands for, only a brief biography of

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Clinton with personal and family photos and forms to donate and volunteer.

Referencing the content of video, *Politico* commented that Clinton "is under intense scrutiny, however, to show that she has learned lessons from her unsuccessful prior run, in which she was seen as out-of-touch with middle-class sensibilities."

In June 2014, Clinton told the *Guardian* she is "unlike" the "truly well off," despite the fact that she had made $5 million in speaking fees over the previous 15 months, putting her within the top 0.1 percent of income earners.

Earlier that month, Clinton told ABC News she and her husband Bill Clinton "came out of the White House... dead broke." Yet between 2000 and 2007, Bill and Hillary Clinton earned a combined $109 million in speaking fees, charging as much as $300,000 per appearance.

The video fails to note Clinton's record as Obama's secretary of state between 2009 and 2013. But as *Time* magazine wrote last year: "As Secretary of State, Clinton backed a bold escalation of the Afghanistan war. She pressed Obama to arm the Syrian rebels, and later endorsed air strikes against the Assad regime. She backed intervention in Libya, and her State Department helped enable Obama's expansion of lethal drone strikes. In fact, Clinton may have been the administration's most reliable advocate for military action. On at least three crucial issues—Afghanistan, Libya, and the bin Laden raid—Clinton took a more aggressive line than Gates, a Bush-appointed Republican."

The benign, motherly posture of Clinton in the video does not quite square with the cold-blooded character of the former secretary of state who upon hearing of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi's lynching by US-backed Islamic fundamentalist forces laughingly told a reporter, "We came, we saw, he died."

Among the main aims of the video announcement is to portray Clinton, a multi-millionaire who is well-connected with the highest echelons of the military and intelligence apparatus, as an "ordinary" American, who is "in touch" with the "middle class." It is entirely telling that Clinton attempts to convey this phony message without addressing any of the realities of American life, from mass unemployment to falling wages, police killings and the danger of war.

The end result is something that resembles a life insurance commercial more than a political statement, and stands as a testament to the sclerotic character of American politics.

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