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HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, THE FIRST WOMAN WHO GOT CLOSEST TO THE PRESIDENCY IN AMERICA

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, AMERİKA'DA BAŞKANLIĞA EN ÇOK YAKLAŞAN İLK KADIN

Asst. Prof. Dr. Şebnem Cansun

Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University Department of Political Science and International Relations / Visiting Scholar, Brown University Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women

Abstract

This paper focuses on the life of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the first female politician who ran for presidential election of the United States in 2016. Based on the biographies, autobiographies of Hillary Clinton, articles from academic journals and dailies published mostly in the last ten years, the paper comprehends the main characteristics of Clinton's social and political life and highlights her leadership skills and obstacles she has ever encountered. Clinton, a lawyer by training, was an organizer ever since she was a child and a political actor since her college years. She was a First lady (January 1993 - January 2001), a senator from New York (2001 - 2009) and Secretary of State (2009 - 2013). She ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008 and then for the presidential race in 2016. She lost to Barack Obama and Donald Trump respectively. The fact that voters looked for a change after an eight year democratic rule experience, the ongoing FBI investigations related to her use of a private email server when she was the secretary of state, her support of President George W. Bush's Iraqi intervention, her supposed part in the killings of American citizens in Benghazi, and her gender were put forward as the main reasons why Clinton failed. No matter what the result is, Hillary Rodham Clinton did her best in trying to shatter the glass ceiling for women in politics.

Keywords: Hillary Clinton, 2016 American Presidential Election, Gender Politics, Female Politicians, Women Leaders

Öz

Bu çalışma 2016 yılında Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde yapılmış başkanlık yarışına girmiş ilk kadın siyasetçi olan Hillary Rodham Clinton'ın hayatına odaklanmaktadır. Hillary Clinton'ın biyografileri, hakkındaki otobiyografiler, özellikle son on yılda basılmış olan akademik dergi ve de gazete makaleleriyle hazırlanmış olan bu çalışma Clinton'ın sosyal ve siyasal hayatının ana hatlarına değinmekte, sahip olduğu liderlik yetilerinin ve de karşılaşmış olduğu engellerin altını çizmektedir. Avukat olan Clinton,

çocukluğundan itibaren bir organizatör ve de üniversite yıllarından itibaren ise bir siyasi aktör olmuştur. Cumhurbaşkanı eşiği (Ocak 1993 - Ocak 2001), New York senatörlüğü (2001 - 2009) ve de Dışişleri Bakanlığı (2009 - 2013) yapmıştır. Önce 2008 yılında Demokrat Parti'nin başkan adaylığı için, sonrasında, 2016 yılında ise başkanlık için yarışa girmiştir. Sırasıyla Barack Obama ve de Donald Trump'a karşı ise kaybetmiştir. Sekiz yıllık demokrat iktidar deneyimi sonrası seçmenin bir değişim istemiş olması, Dışişleri Bakanlığı yapmış olduğu dönemde özel bir elektronik posta hesabı kullanmış olmasına dair devam etmekte olan FBI incelemeleri, Başkan George W. Bush'un Irak'a müdahalesine vermiş olduğu destek, Benghazi'de öldürülmüş olan Amerikan vatandaşları ile ilgili sorumlu olarak görülmüş olması ve de cinsiyeti, Clinton'un yenilgisinin ana sebepleri olarak gösterilmektedir. Sonuç ne olursa olsun, Hillary Rodham Clinton kadın siyasetçilerin önündeki cam tavanı kırmak için elinden geleni yapmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hillary Clinton, 2016 Amerika Başkanlık Seçimleri, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Politikaları, Kadın Siyasetçiler, Kadın Liderler

Introduction

Feminist scholars have long emphasized the fact that women suffer from underrepresentation in political decision-making mechanisms. "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has advocated ever since 1979 that states should accept equal rights and opportunities among men and women for political and public participation (Article 7). The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Council of the European Union (1995, 1996) and the European Council (1997) have also declared the democratic necessity of equal participation of both genders in the society" (Cansun, 2013: 12). However, according to the United Nations' statistics, "only 22.8 percent of all national parliamentarians were women as of June 2016 (...) 10 women are serving as Head of State and 9 are serving as Head of Government" (United Nations Women Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation, 2016).

Women encounter "a glass ceiling" in the political sphere in general and on the road to the presidency in particular. "Political culture, socialization, role conflict, and discrimination against women by the political elites, the electorate and the political system" are usually perceived to cause women's underrepresentation (Clark, 1991). Also as far as leadership style is concerned women suffer from a gender double bind: "women who are

considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine" (Jamieson, 1995: 16). In fact, leadership has long been associated with masculinity (Koenig, et al., 2011) and "men can seem usual or natural in most leadership roles, thereby placing women at a disadvantage" (Eagly, 2007: 4). Despite the above mentioned obstacles and the few female heads of government around the world, as of 2016, Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union) in Germany and Theresa May (Conservative Party) in the United Kingdom hold high offices. Many people had thought that Hillary Rodham Clinton (Democratic Party) would become president of the United States on the November 8, 2016 election and that it "would add to a worldwide shift in what power looks like" (Timsit, June 30, 2016). Clinton is not the first woman to run for president in the United States. More than 20 women have run for the office but no one else made it through the primary (Levy & Krassas, 2008, 97). For instance, Victoria Woodhull ran for the presidency in 1872 and Belva Lockwood in 1884 and again in 1888, prior to women's suffrage (Blair, 2015: 2). Additionally Geraldine Ferraro was the first woman to run as the vice-presidential candidate in 1984 (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 97; Estrich, 2005: 1). However, with Clinton, it was the first time American women came really close to the presidency and women all around the world no matter what their politi-

cal party affiliation was exhibited excitement.

This paper intends to highlight the main characteristics of Clinton's social and political life and to explain the reasons for her so-called "failure". Doing so, we pay particular attention to her leadership skills ever since she was a child and to the obstacles she encountered running as a woman.

Methods and Materials

The biographies (Estrich, 2005; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007; Levy & Krassas 2008; Chafe, 2016 [2012]; Héту & Sirois 2016; D'souza, 2016; Boys, 2016) and autobiographies (Clinton, 2003; Clinton, 2014) of Hillary Clinton published mostly in the last ten years form the main pillars of this research. Also taken into consideration are: books dedicated mainly to the media perception of Clinton (Epstein 2010; Falk, 2010; Lawrence & Rose 2010; Parry-Giles, 2014), articles related to her career from peer-reviewed academic journals (for example, Blair, 2015; Leslie, 2015; Mollick, 2015; Scranton, 2015) as well as dailies (for example, Edwards, March/April/May 2014; Gillespie, October 8, 2014; CBS News, November 14, 2016). Biographic themes that are highly emphasized in all materials were read and noted. Furthermore an internet search regarding the evaluation of the presidential election 2016 was conducted.

Results and Discussion

Hillary Rodham Clinton was born in 1947 in Illinois into a Republican and Methodist family with three children, a girl and two boys. Her father Hugh (1911-1993) had a Physical Education degree from Pennsylvania State College and earned his living selling curtains, whereas her mother Dorothy (1919-2011) was a homemaker (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 2; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 15). Clinton describes her father as a "small businessman" (Smith, September 27, 2016) purposefully to emphasize that she had a childhood not much different than other Americans. Hugh was a strict father who was never happy with his daughter's grades and made her study har-

der, whereas Dorothy taught her how to stand up for herself in life. Several biographies mention how Hillary punched a girl bully in the neighborhood because her mother told her that "there [was] no room in this house for cowards" (Rodham Clinton, 2003, 12; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 16; Levy & Krassas, 2008: 5; Héту & Sirois, 2016: 5). This anecdote seems to be representative of how she has always been a courageous person.

Gender barriers she encountered as a teenager, her organizational abilities at a young age and her long standing interest in children's and/or women's rights are also aspects that emerge in several biographies and seem to define the Hillary Clinton we know today. For instance, she wanted to "become an astronaut and was crushed to learn that NASA only trained men for that job" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 7). She showed interest in public service and enlistment in the Marine Corps, "where she was turned away by the recruiter, who cited her age, poor vision and gender" (Idem.: 26). In fact, those interests could be representative of how she wanted to do more than other girls. She was always an extrovert and an organizer from a young age. Hillary Rodham was a Brownie and then a Girl Scout and she worked for bake sales and parades. She participated in raising money for charities and ran for the presidency both in high school and college (Idem.: 5). In high school, in 1964, in Park Ridge, she was the first female student to run for the office and lost badly to the captain of the football team. At Wellesley (Women's) College, in her junior year, she was successful, and as president, she worked on issues such as pass-fail grading, fewer course requirements, and greater enrollment of African-Americans (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 7, 13; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 31; Boys, 2016: 13). Her interest in children's rights came to light when she was at Yale Law School. She focused on custody issues and family law (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 19, 20; see also Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 42). "She wor-

ked with the Yale Child Study Center and the Carnegie Foundation's Council on Children (...). She helped to write an article for the Harvard Education Review that focused on the need to treat children as people, not just as dependents, and liberate them from the legal constraints" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 81; Hétu & Sirois, 2016: 19).

Many biographies highly emphasize several points in her youth as having an impact on who she became afterwards. One is her contact at First Methodist Church in Park Ridge with youth minister Donald Jones. Jones "created a program called 'University Life' in which he took students outside of their safe, sterile life and exposed them to the world beyond their sheltered suburb" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 8)¹. She saw the experiences of less fortunate people, especially African-Americans and Hispanics, and was interested in learning more about them (Idem.: 8; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 20; Boys, 2016: 11). Other major influences were the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement and especially the assassination of Martin Luther Jr. King (Gerth & Van Natta, 2007, 31; Levy & Krassas, 2008, 12; Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 41). At college, she was "devastated by the death of Martin Luther (...). She lobbied effectively for the appointment of more black faculty members, the recruitment of more black students, and the development of more Black Studies classes" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 41). "One of her first heroes and role models was gone" (Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 34). Although she always had leadership skills, we can argue that all of these aspects as well as her acquaintance with Bill Clinton at Yale University had an impact on her transformation as a Democrat.

Hillary Rodham's encounter in 1971 (Boys, 2016: XX; Levy & Krassas, 2008: 17)

¹ In fact, church and praying have always been part of Hillary Clinton's life (Estrich, 2005: 204). The Clintons turned to religion in the difficult periods of their marriage (Chafe, 2016 [2012], 122) and Hillary Clinton "developed a greater sense of religious commitment in the 1980s following the arrival of her daughter" and "intrusions into her privacy" (Boys, 2016: 38, 39).

with William "Bill" is certainly important because they both wanted to change America and agreed on working together² (Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 9). They got married in 1975 and had Chelsea in 1980 (Gerth & Van Natta, 2007; Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 104). According to the American historian William Shafe, "Hillary recognized that she has a better chance of achieving her goal of transforming America if she did so in partnership with Bill. He, in turn, understood that he could never achieve his goal of becoming president without the discipline and strategic focus that Hillary gave him" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 2, 91, 92). Opponents argue that theirs "was a real romance that gradually became a marriage of convenience by two business partners" (Morris & McGann, 2016: 13). Some go even further and say that this was a "stealing partnership" (D'souza, 2016: 25).

Due to her relationship with Bill, Hillary Clinton spent eighteen years in Arkansas "as the wife of the Governor of a deprived, rural state routinely identified as one of the poorest in the nation" (Boys, 2016: 28). In those years, she had the experience of teaching at the Law School in Fayetteville and becoming a member of a private law firm. She also took leaves of absence to help her husband with campaigning and with reforming education for Arkansas as the commission chair (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 25, 27, 31; Boys, 2016: 29; Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 94; Scranton, 2015: 15, 20). In fact, the reform project she initiated "improved Arkansas' low reputation in education" and some senate members joked about how they have "elected the wrong Clinton" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 120). Her efforts in education reform were highly important in Hillary Clinton's career, since "she transitioned from identifying herself primarily as a lawyer who was also a political wife to being a political wife-with-portfolio, engaged in a public service

² Before dating Bill Clinton, Hillary dated Geoffrey Shields, a Harvard student, and David Rupert, a Georgetown student (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 41, 43; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 30).

mission of her own" (Scranton, 2015: 19). In her Arkansas years, she "was twice named one of the 100 most influential attorneys in the United States" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 31). What is also particularly interesting during the Arkansas years is that although she had decided to keep her maiden name after marriage and had never had an interest in her appearance before, when Bill lost the re-election in 1980, she took her husband's name and went through a personal image change (Boys, 2016: 40; Héту & Sirois, 2016: 27, 40; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 70). "She started to wearing soft contact lenses instead of her trademark thick glasses. She cut her hair, bought new clothes, made an effort to always leave the house wearing makeup, and even took to going to a hairstylist before special occasions" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 28, 29). In fact she conformed to what was expected from her and became more of who we know today as Hillary Clinton. These changes were supposed to augment the chance of winning for her husband and eventually for herself.

Then came the years she served as First Lady (January 1993-January 2001). During both the presidential campaigns and the years of Bill Clinton's presidency, two particular points draw attention. The first is that Bill Clinton was accused of having affairs several times and his wife defended him and discredited those women each time; the other is that Bill Clinton publicly promised they would work together for the presidency and, in fact she eventually had more power in the White House than any other former First Ladies. In current writings about the Clintons, the names of Gennifer Flowers during the 1992 campaign, Paula Jones in 1996, and Monica Lewinsky in 1998 emerge (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 34, 68, 71; Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 110, 143, 144, 268, 280; Clinton, 2003). The Monica case is different from the rest, because Hillary Clinton "was not initially aware of the relationship". Once the truth was revealed she did not defend her husband, but she did not pub-

licly challenge him either (Levy and Krassas, 2008: 71, 73)³. She often argued that her "strong feelings about divorce and its effects on children have caused [her] to bite [her] tongue more than a few times during [her] own marriage" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 131). She did what she thought Eleanor Roosevelt would do. Every time she ran into trouble her motto was to "fight to the death" (Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 184).

As for Hillary Clinton's power in the White House, let us remember that Bill Clinton "suggested that electing him would benefit voters because the public would be getting two for the price of one" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 42). He promised before the election that he and Hillary would accomplish things together, like always. "Thus the Clinton campaign consciously represented a brand-new phenomenon in American politics: a modern feminist partnership" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 138). In this sense, talk of "Hillary as President" or "co-president" is not a new phenomenon but dates back to 1992 (Han, 2015: 1). Hillary Clinton was perceived as "the president's key advisor" but some people also considered her "a power-hungry feminist" (Levy & Krassas, 2008, 51, 52). In fact, "she had her own West Wing office right next to that of her husband and Vice President Al Gore (...) she took command of the White House's program for health care, the most important initiative of the entire administration" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 2, 169; Héту & Sirois, 2016: 41). Opponents have named this "a classic case of nepotism" (D'souza, 2016: 1; Boys, 2016: 36) but "more than 60 percent of

³ It is worth mentioning that despite the initial drop in his presidential approval ratings, during the impeachment process both Bill and Hillary Clinton had high approval rates. Americans did not care about the affair, because "the economy was strong (...) the president generally took popular positions on issues (...) the public found President Clinton charming (...) [and] most Americans felt that the issue was a private one to be dealt with between Bill and Hillary Clinton" (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 73, 74; see also Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 194).

the American people approved of Hillary's new role" in the beginning (Chafe, 2016[2012]: 207). Later on, when she suffered a defeat on the health care plan (Epstein, 2010: 54) she "literally withdrew" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 240). Then, in 1995 she started her trips to foreign countries such as Pakistan, India and China. In her foreign visits, she "focused primarily on human rights, particularly those of women and children" and gave an unforgettable speech at the Beijing international conference on women arguing that "Human rights are women's rights (...) And women's rights are human rights, once and for all" (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 241; Gerth & Van Natta, 2007: 149-152). Although she had suffered from a political defeat, she wanted to be in a leadership position and did not accept failure.

Hillary Clinton campaigned to become a senator before Bill Clinton's second term was over. She won a seat in the New York Senate in 2001 and served until 2009. After her terms were over, she was appointed Secretary of State in 2009 and served until 2013. As a senator, she worked in several committees, among them Armed Services, Environment and Public Works, and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 76; Boys, 2016: 99). In fact she "evokes a rhetoric of public service, rather than personal ambition, to explain her political career" (Smith, 2015: 82). She calls this ethic the "service gene" (Clinton, 2014: 593; Smith, 2015: 82). Her leadership style can be summarized as "smart power strategy: the readiness to use hard power such as military action, and soft power, such as diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and cultural influence, as each situation demands" (Smith, 2015: 83). She also continued her work on women's rights and children's health (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 319). "Her popularity skyrocketed during her years in the Senate" (Shafe, 2016 [2012]: 320; Han, 2015: 1). As a senate member, she demonstrated her ability to get along with Republicans and as the secretary of state, with other global women leaders (Mollick, 2015: 47, 48).

Despite good achievements, several issues from her years as a New York senator and as the secretary of state continued to haunt her during her presidential campaigns. The most damaging were her support for the Bush administration in relation to the intervention in Iraq (Levy & Krassas, 2008: 101; Héту & Sirois, 2016: 67), the Benghazi incident (Shafe, 2016: 343; Han, 2015: 26; Morris & McGann, 2016: 21; Boys, 2016: 246) and her use of a private server rather than the state department's server for her emails (Chafe, 2016 [2012]: 348, 349; Héту & Sirois, 2016: 97). She deeply regretted her vote on Iraq as a senator "especially when the Bush administration's claims that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons and possessed multiple weapons of mass destruction proved to be completely false" (Shafe, 2016: 319). When she was the Secretary of State, during the liberation of Libya, Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans were killed, and Republicans transformed this incident into a blame campaign (for Hillary Clinton's own perspective on the issue, see Clinton, 2014: 382-415).

The FBI's revived its investigation of the email issue just before the election seems to be what had the most negative impact on her loss in 2016. The fact that she ignored the State Department email account and used her own email drew deep criticism. Her emails that should have been "federal property" could not be accessed, "over 30,000 of her emails had been summarily deleted and were beyond the reach of anyone interested in understanding the daily record of America's sixty-seventh Secretary of State and her relationship with her family's foundation or foreign governments" (Boys, 2016: 263). The FBI Director James Comey wrote to Congress, on October 28, 2016 and on November 6, 2016 which discredited her in front of the voters. Another accusation that could be linked to the email is her relationship with the Clinton Foundation. This foundation was created by Bill Clinton in 2001 with the aim of fighting against issues such as poverty, wars, and global

warming; Hillary joined eventually, which cast doubts on her honesty. The Clinton Foundation has more than 3000 employees, and a yearly budget of more than 200 million dollars and made its donors public for transparency purposes. The fact that Saudi Arabia was among the donors revealed a controversy (Hétu & Sirois, 2016: 98) and the finances seemed to be “messy”. Her opponents argued that she used another server to hide “business that could benefit her family financially (Morris & McGann, 2016: 58, 59; D’souza, 2016: 3; Boys, 2016: 246).

There was also another issue that haunted her during her campaigns: her gender. According to a feminist perspective, she encountered “a glass ceiling” and “a gender double bind”. “Prevalent negative stereotypes of women leaders, gender bias in news coverage of women candidates” are parts of the glass ceiling (Han, 2015: 9). Some researchers argue that the media in general treated her with a bias “that dates back to Victoria Woodhull’s 1872 campaign” (Falk, 2010: 1), and particularly online sources criticized her in a sexist way (Lawrence and Rose, 2010). In fact, women’s leadership styles are usually categorized as “male” or “female”, as in the case of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher respectively (Genovese, 1993: 214-215). When women have a traditionally male leadership style, such as competitiveness, toughness and decisiveness, they are seen from a negative perspective (Freeman & Bourque, 2001: 8-9). “A woman entering the political sphere ... [is] traditionally depicted as ‘immodest, impious, masculine, monstrous, and lewd provocateurs’ (Smith, 2015: 79). In fact, Clinton has been categorized as “inauthentic”, because she was a female “intruding into a male-dominated area” (Parry-Giles, 2014: 139). She was mostly accused of being an emotionless woman. For instance, in the 2008 campaign, she “was labeled the “unfeeling, absent mother” (Edwards, 2014). In her

years as secretary of state, she was perceived as “the only man in the Obama administration” (Leslie, 2015). In this perspective, her becoming a grandmother in 2014 was supposed to work in her favor but critiques would not stop. In 2014, Hillary Clinton started to describe herself as a more traditional and maternal woman (Williams, 2015). “Chelsea illustrated her mother’s loving support in relating to [stories] (...) noting that she ‘just hoped that she would be as good a mom for her child as her mom had been for [her]’”. This grandmother status would make Clinton “warmer” and “more relatable” (Edwards, 2014), while she could be a “loving and caring matriarch not only to her family, but to the American family” (Boys, 2016: 244). However, since this new status would have a positive impact on her perception, opponents argued that Charlotte, the granddaughter, was used for “public relations” (Gillespie, 2014). In fact just as Hillary Clinton’s tears were considered “calculated” in the 2008 campaign (Carroll, 2009: 13) her grandmotherhood was questioned in 2016. This clearly shows the gender double bind she encountered. People criticized her no matter what she did.

Conclusion

Hillary Rodham Clinton has always been an extroverted person who got engaged in social and then political work since her youth. A lawyer by training, she wanted to change America and did her best to reach her aim. She was a First lady (January 1993-January 2001), a senator from New York (2001-2009) and Secretary of State (2009-2013). She became the first woman to win a major party nomination for the American presidency in 2016. Although she had certainly more political experience than the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, she was not able to win. The fact that voters looked for a change after an eight year democratic rule (Cillizza, November 14, 2016), the ongoing FBI investigations related to her use of a private email server when she was the Secretary of State,

her support of Bush's Iraqi intervention, her supposed part in the killings of Americans in Benghazi and her gender were put forward as the reasons why she failed. In fact these issues highlighted in this paper reveal it is not her gender per se, but rather a combination of several factors that caused her loss (CBS News, November 14, 2016). No matter what the result is, women around the world are grateful Hillary Rodham Clinton was in the political arena to try to win and did her best in trying to shatter the glass ceiling.

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