

HILLARY CLINTON

Written by Vision Africa Magazine

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Hillary Clinton has not decided whether to run for president again. I have this on good authority, despite a recent barrage of reports detailing the many moves that signal a campaign in the making. People close to Clinton and familiar with her thinking insist that she hasn't made a decision.

Moreover, "it's not a decision she is going to make anytime soon", says one insider.

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But what about the high ranking personnel from President Obama's political brain trust who are moving into jobs in pro-Clinton groups? The sources patiently repeat themselves. Clinton, they inform me, is very busy writing a memoir of her work as secretary of state while also replenishing the coffers of her family charitable foundation to support her work on behalf of women and children. "She's going to continue to go about her life the way she has chosen to", says the insider.

"She's not being coy. When she says she hasn't decided, she hasn't decided.

But what about the recent email blast that retired general Wesley Clark, a Clinton diehard, sent to past supporters whose names are embedded in Clinton's database, exhorting them to rally to Hillary's cause?

People wanting her to decide, or people getting anxious about it, are working on their own timeline, and frankly there is only one person whose timeline counts," says an increasingly exasperated insider.

"Anyway, she could stand on the white house lawn tomorrow and say wasn't running, and no one would believe her".

Perhaps it all comes down, in Clintonian fashion, to definitions. It depends on the meaning of the word decide. And on the meaning of the word run.. In Hillary Clinton, the United States of America is now experiencing a rare, if not unprecedented, political phenomenon; she requires a new lexicon. Clinton is so globally famous, so politically wired and so primed for the presidency after two campaigns at her husband's side and one epic race of her own that her life as a private citizen has become virtually indistinguishable from her life as a candidate.

We can believe that she hasn't "decided" to "run" because there is almost nothing that a decision would change for her.

It would be like Jennifer Aniston deciding to get her picture in a supermarket tabloid or Warren Buffett deciding to be quotable.

All outward behaviours remain the same. Whether she raises money from wealthy donors for the Clinton Global Initiative or coaxes cash for a presidential campaign, the canapés and grip-and-grins are identical for Clinton. Her stump speeches while accepting awards for past achievements are barely distinguishable from speeches she might give while collecting endorsements in Iowa living rooms. The charming handwritten notes she has been showering lately on far-flung friends serve to nurture political support, whether or not that is the intention, because friendship and politics are inseparable after half a century on the hustings.

Lesser figures- mere governors, senators, vice presidents- face mounting pressure to decide whether to run for president: there are so many pieces to accumulate and put into place. To an astonished degree, Clinton already has all the pieces: universal name recognition, fervently devoted followers across the U.S., a robust donor network, legions of experienced counselors, personal mastery, of the issues. And she has the cream of two generations of democratic operatives scrambling to assemble these pieces on her behalf. Her unofficial apparatus already includes a grassroots operation, ready for Hillary, that has raised more than \$4 million in predominantly small donations; a super PAC called Priorities USA Action, to groom Megadonors to fund future air wars; a rapid-response team, correct the record, primed to shoot down criticism; a think tank, the Center for American Progress, ready to work up white papers and field-test applause lines; and a women's network, Emily's List, eager to rally the sisterhood to smash the glass ceiling at last.

Clinton has not decided whether to run for president because to do so would only slow her down. Lots of people can be a presidential candidate-ask Patrick Buchanan or Dennis Kucinich or Herman Cain. There is only Hillary able to dominate discussion of 2016 even as she sails above it. Indecision serves her well by preserving flexibility in her schedule, by shielding her from answering every internet controversy and by allowing the republican opposition to take shape and draw fire.

How long can this go on? Longer than you might think. The typical reasons for a candidate to decide- credibility with donors and voters, access to media, ability to recruit staff, leverage to secure endorsements- wouldn't move Clinton because she already has those things. There's not a door she can't open nor a camera she can't command. Last year, Clinton told interviewer Barbara Walters that she would make a decision in 2014, but some sources in her camp, who generally speak about 2016 only if granted anonymity, suggest that it was a ballpark figure. By saying 2014 while the calendar said 2013, Clinton was merely indicating that her decision was a

long way off. If you polled 25 smart political people and you asked them on a strategic tactical level if a presidential candidate should be doing anything in 2014, they would tell you no, said one insider. “No one in the history of the republic has started to run this far out”.

There's that word again: run. We know from biographers that team Clinton actually started running for president sometimes in the 1960's, when young bill fretted about preserving his political viability while avoiding the Vietnam draft. If they ever stopped running, it was only in a semantic sense. Along with her husband, the former first lady is the embodiment of the so-called permanent campaign, in which years blur into an endless loop of staged events and solicitations for money and skirmishing for control of the next news cycle. If that's not running, what is?

The gravity

When Clinton's press secretary Nick recently answered some questions from time about his boss's plans by declaring in an email that “there is no candidate, there is no campaign”, I found myself flashing on the image of a black hole-the astrophysical phenomenon that manages to be both invisible and superpowerful at the same time. Scientists confirm the presence of a black hole by measuring its effects on nearby stars as it bends their orbits and heats the gases swirling in its galactic vicinity.

The existence of Clinton's 2016 campaign cannot be directly observed through a formal announcement ritual or by linking to documents at the federal election commission. But its massive influence on the stars and gases of Washington is unmistakable. Most of her fellow democrats are signaling scant interest in taking her on. Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren, a hero of the left, has repeatedly said she would not challenge Clinton in the primary. Likewise, Senators Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota- who might otherwise vie to be the first female president- have said they would support her candidacy. “I think if another woman ran against Hillary, she would bring down the wrath of women around the country”, said one veteran democratic strategist, echoing a widespread view inside the party that Clinton earned another shot at history when she surrendered gracefully to Barack Obama in 2008.

Vice President Joe Biden would love to run, through he would be 74 by inauguration day and past donors and former staff report that he sees little room for himself in a field with Clinton. Ambitious governors like Martin O'Malley of Maryland, Andrew Cuomo of New York and Deval

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Patrick of Massachusetts are young enough to wait another cycle or two. To find a democratic openly courting the race you have to visit the unlikely terrain of big sky country, where former Montana governor Brian Schweitzer has been enjoying a minor burst of publicity as he flirts with a dark-horse challenge.

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