

## Hillary Seeking a Graceful Exit?

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, October 30, 2012

[Voice of Russia](#)

*[I]nstead of ending the two wars, Obama and his foreign policy and security team have bogged down in one of them for an unspecified time, and would have done the same in Iraq as well had they not irritated the host country to the extent its leaders could not stand it any longer.*

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On Friday, the Washington Post published an interview with the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, outlining her plans for the time after Barack Obama's next inauguration (assuming that he wins the November 6 election). According to the Post, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has told President Barack Hussein Obama that she will stay in office until her successor is confirmed, but said in an interview that "this is not an open-ended kind of time frame."

"I'm aiming to leave shortly after the inauguration; that's my plan. But I haven't been able to sit down and talk to the president yet because he's trying to win an election...And then we will talk through how to do the transition," said Ms. Hillary.

It looks like the full stop has been put in an issue which has been discussed for years - ever since Ms. Hillary (before that Barack Obama's competitor in the race for democratic nomination) accepted his offer to join his team as the Secretary of State. Some analysts, though, back in 2009 pointed out that the offer in fact worked the other way round - it was an offer made to Barack Obama which he was unable to turn down.

In any case, foreign policy has been one of the floppiest endeavors of the current administration even against the background of other domestic challenges. Back in 2008, during the election campaign, there were two main promises Obama made - that is to end the war in Iraq and to end the war in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq was ended with about 40,000 US "instructors" remaining there until the Iraqi government kicked them out.

The war in Afghanistan, despite the highly publicized plans of troop withdrawal by the end of 2014, is far from over. It still remains unclear whether the US troops will remain in Afghan thereafter. Or, rather it is clear that they will, but doubts remain as to their number and exact mission.

So, instead of ending the two wars, Obama and his foreign policy and security team have bogged down in one of them for an unspecified time, and would have done the same in Iraq as well had they not irritated the host country to the extent its leaders could not stand it any

longer.

In addition, Obama enthusiastically participated in the aggression his European NATO allies launched against Libya, making Hillary Clinton cry in joy at hearing the news of Muammar Gaddafi's murder.

One may add to that the whole business of rattling the saber in regard to Syria and Iran, which is done by President Obama, his State Secretary and the rest of foreign policy and security team.

Then why is Ms. Hillary announcing her retirement after the inauguration?

The answer is simple. In cases of a successful presidency, it is always useful to be a member of the president's team by the end of his second term. It usually gives a boost similar to the one experienced by incumbents who have a natural advantage of up to 20 percent against newcomers.

Ms. Hillary definitely has not abandoned her hopes ruined by Barack Obama in 2008. Formally, a third presidential term is not something which the US constitution encourages. But the nominal president in 1993 - 2001 was not Hillary Rodham, it was the sax player, womanizer and nice guy Bill Clinton. So, legally speaking, nothing prevents Hillary from at least trying once again to return to the White House.

But then again, Barack Obama's presidency is far from successful. His reelection on November 6 which looks imminent should not misguide anyone - in any case it won't be Obama who wins, it will be his contender who loses.

But if in 2016 the GOP comes up with a more attractive candidate, being on the acting president's team, instead of an advantage will become an obvious obstacle. Ms. Hillary is wise enough to realize that, and hence her decision to quit Obama's team before it is too late.

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