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From: PIR [REDACTED] on behalf of PIR
Sent: Monday, June 18, 2012 8:55 AM
To: CDM; John Podesta; Rich Verma; Jake Sullivan; Huma Abedin; Lona Valmore
Subject: Re: Fwd: FP: Hillary Clinton

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I promise I am not the Mandarin/Poobah/Booster!

From: Cheryl Mills [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, 18 Jun 2012 08:42:40 -0400
To: Philippe Reines [REDACTED]; John Podesta [REDACTED]; Rich Verma [REDACTED]; Jake Sullivan [REDACTED]; Huma Abedin<Huma@clintonemail.com>; Lona Valmore [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: FP: Hillary Clinton, the blind dissident, and the art of diplomacy in the Twitter era.

See highlights

Head of State

Hillary Clinton, the blind dissident, and the art of diplomacy in the Twitter era.

BY SUSAN B. GLASSER | JULY/AUGUST 2012

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sat down on a plush yellow couch at the J.W. Marriott late on a Saturday morning in early May. The Beijing skyline sparkled, uncharacteristically sunny and smog-free, out the window of her 23rd-floor suite, and she was wearing sunglasses even though we were indoors, "an eye infection," she said apologetically. Clinton seemed surprisingly upbeat, especially considering that just a day earlier, she had come uncomfortably close to a major public rebuff by the Chinese -- much closer, in fact, than anyone yet realized. "It was a standoff," she told me, "for 24 difficult hours."

Until our conversation, Clinton had said virtually nothing publicly about the case of Chen Guangcheng, the blind Chinese dissident whose fate had become the object of a week of frenetic negotiations when his escape from village house arrest to the U.S. Embassy collided with a visit to Beijing by Clinton herself. Amid the unfolding drama, the secretary had smiled and nodded her way through elaborately choreographed high-level annual talks and a variety of photo ops at which she gamely recited paeans to constructive dialogue and plugged cut-rate cookstoves for the developing world.

But Clinton had in fact spent the last few days in hard-nosed deal-making with the Chinese that nearly ended in an embarrassing failure, until she personally intervened, twice, with her counterpart, Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo: the first time to reassure Dai about a deal to allow Chen to stay in China and study law; then, when Chen balked at that, to secure agreement that he and his family could leave for the United States. "We were in a very difficult position because we had pushed their system just about to the breaking point," recalled a senior official who was present. "We knew it, they knew it, and they knew we knew it."

Her final encounter with Dai came, at her request, in an early-morning session in a room at the Diaoyutai compound where, 40 years earlier, Nixon had stayed when he famously met Mao to reopen U.S.-China relations. It was just hours before the close of the formal Strategic and Economic Dialogue that was the ostensible purpose of Clinton's trip; if Clinton had no agreement by then, they both knew it would open a rift in their relationship and create a political disaster back in Washington, where the secretary and her team were being accused of fumbling an important human rights case by delivering the sick dissident to a Beijing hospital and right back into the hands of his persecutors.

Still, the Chinese did not give in. At one point, an advisor who was present recalled, Clinton finally seemed to catch their attention by mentioning what a political circus the case had become -- with Chen even dialing in to a U.S. congressional hearing that Thursday by cell phone from his hospital bed to say he feared for his safety if he remained in China. The Chinese team was visibly surprised. Eventually, Dai agreed at least to let the negotiations proceed. A few hours later, exhausted U.S. officials announced a deal.

By the next morning when we met, it was already clear this had been the most intense high-stakes diplomacy of Clinton's tenure as secretary of state. She had worked hard to rescue Chen without blowing up the American relationship with China, but it was not yet obvious whether she had accomplished either goal. The Chinese were furious about the embarrassing attention to their human rights abuses. Clinton and her aides were being pilloried at home by everyone from Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney to the human rights community for abandoning Chen at the hospital. And the secretary was still worried about the deal. "Until he's actually out and up with his family," she told me, "it's still touch and go."

Listening to Clinton recount the episode, it was hard not to think of her own journey from idealistic human rights crusader to hardheaded global diplomat. Back in 1995, on her first trip to Beijing as first lady, Clinton's impassioned speech declaring "women's rights are human rights" was so inflammatory the Chinese blacked out the broadcast. By 2009, when she made her first visit as secretary of state, she was determined to avoid that kind of controversy -- so determined, in fact, that she created one by declaring that human rights was just one of many issues she would raise with her Chinese counterparts.

"There's a whole symphony of different notes that can be played and need to be played, depending on what you're trying to achieve," Clinton told me when I asked her about the 2009 incident, the shadow of this latest China imbroglio hanging over the conversation. The talk-show hosts back home were clamoring for a dramatic gesture, for her to whisk Chen away to freedom in her Boeing 757, but Clinton had no intention of doing any such thing.

And so what? she said: "I'm very outcomes-oriented -- what's the best way to get there? Sometimes it's being diplomatic, and sometimes it's being harsh. Some people criticize me for saying that Russia and China's veto on Syria was despicable. Well, I think it got their attention. So you just have to calibrate and figure out what is the end state you're trying to get to, because there are times when being podium-pounding and bully-pulping are on their own worthwhile or as part of a larger plan, other times when it would be counterproductive. It depends upon what you're trying to achieve."

BY THE TIME WE SPOKE in Beijing, Clinton had been President Barack Obama's secretary of state for nearly three and a half years, and it was clear she sees her job as a nearly endless series of such negotiations, not only like those over Chen's fate but between what she wants to get done -- and what she can do. Nearly every person I spoke with called Clinton a pragmatist, a doer, a person who likes to make things happen. "We are a can-do country," Wendy Sherman, her undersecretary for political affairs, told me. "And the secretary is absolutely a can-do person."

Diplomacy is not always a great fit for such people. Grand sweeping deals that change the world with the stroke of a fountain pen are in short supply these days. It has been 40 years since Henry Kissinger secretly flew into Beijing to open talks with the Chinese, and besides, as Clinton herself noted recently, can you imagine Kissinger today getting away with covertly leaving Pakistan for China and simply disappearing from the public radar for two days? It's just not possible in the age of Twitter.

And it's certainly not possible for Clinton, who, in her whirlwind final year on the job, has become not only a contender for the most globe-trotting secretary of state ever but also the most popular national politician in America, with approval ratings standing in the high 60s. She is, quite simply, inescapable in American public life after more than two decades in the spotlight, increasingly celebrated as a class act who has managed to reinvent herself, yet again, from losing presidential aspirant to world-class problem-solver. Few secretaries of state have had to worry about paparazzi -- did anybody really care what Warren Christopher wore to the office? -- but Clinton is such a celebrity that the tabloids still put her on the front pages when she changes her hairstyle -- again! -- or takes her staff out for a beer in Colombia. A bad-ass photo of her in sunglasses in Time magazine, wielding her BlackBerry like a power tool, recently went viral on the Internet. The picture even spawned a Tumblr site of what purported to be "Texts from Hillary," in which the putative secretary of state offered snappy, imagined comments on photos of other famous people. (Romney asking, "Any advice?" Clinton replying: "Drink.") The old Hillary wouldn't have known what Tumblr was, or would have feared she was being mocked by it. The new Hillary submitted a joke text of her own to the site's twentysomething creators, signing it, "Thanks for the many LOLZ Hillary 'Hillz.'"

All this publicity has inevitably given rise to a new round of the old Clinton parlor game: Will she run in 2016? Although Clinton will turn 69 on the eve of the next presidential election and has said she's leaving the State Department exhausted and ready for her daughter Chelsea to make her a grandmother, no denial is likely to put such speculation to rest, and many Democratic insiders told me they believe the nomination is hers for the taking. Clinton, as her longtime aide Andrew Shapiro, now the assistant secretary for political-military affairs, put it, will be an object of presidential curiosity "literally until the day that somebody clinches enough delegates to get the nomination."

But there's a paradox about this latest Hillary hoopla: Few Americans have any idea what Clinton has actually been up to as secretary of state, or even what a secretary of state is supposed to do in this day and age. In the rarefied circles of the Washington foreign-policy establishment, where they've been paying closer attention, Clinton gets big points for style and for taking her brand of "people to people" diplomacy international at a time when America desperately needed just her kind of star power to revive an image tarnished by a near decade of George W. Bush's cowboy unilateralism. Aside from that, as one of the city's mandarins put it to me recently in one of numerous nearly identical conversations, "What has she done?" The poohbah reeled off a long string of Important Global Issues, from Middle East peace to negotiating a political end to the long-running war in Afghanistan, from which Clinton appears to have been sidelined by the Obama White House or is simply out of the picture. To those traditionalists, Clinton is something of a puzzle; clearly, she's a success in the "soft power" department, a relentless cheerleader for Brand America. But they can't help disdaining her focus on issues such as women's rights and development economics -- surely not the stuff of real diplomacy -- and see her attention to them as proof of how marginalized she's been by the Obama White House on the geopolitics that count. "That's the rap," sighed one Clinton booster.

Set out to solve the puzzle, and you immediately see why it's so hard: The everyday business of being Hillary Clinton right now means navigating between the hands-on president who gave her the job and a never-ending series of global obligations for which somebody -- and often as not these days that somebody is Clinton -- must show up. No wonder Clinton's public schedule is a seemingly endless procession of talking

points-ridden events at which she tirelessly hails the work of women's empowerment networks or takes questions in a "towninterview." Her traveling press corps may roll their eyes; her exhausted aides may barely look up from their BlackBerrys. But there is Clinton, upbeat and chipper.

Which is why it's so striking to talk to Clinton away from the perky photo ops and anodyne press conferences. She may be relentlessly on message, but she's no automaton. Ask anyone who's watched her work politics on the global stage these last few years, and they'll tell you the same story: Clinton is an adept behind-the-scenes operator, a tough negotiator not afraid to play the bad cop -- or make fun of the macho posturings of her many tough-guy interlocutors.

And so the Chen case, as accidental as it was, was also in its own way the perfect example of the secretary at work. Not necessarily Clinton as she'd like to be, but of what she has chosen to do in the world as she's found it.

In our interview, I had asked her about the blind dissident, and the perennially tough set of choices between the human rights advocacy that means so much to her and the pragmatic politics that are so often required in her job. She answered instead by talking about an emotional three-hour meeting she recently had with one of her heroes, Aung San Suu Kyi. The frail Burmese activist had won a Nobel Peace Prize for her brave defiance of her country's military junta, before making the surprise decision this year to run for parliament and cooperate with Burma's reformist new leader. "She could have been on a pedestal her entire life," said Clinton. "But she wants to be in the real world and see if she can make a difference."

The more Clinton waxed on about Aung San Suu Kyi, the more I thought she was also talking about herself - a celebrity first lady who could have chosen to opt out of politics entirely but instead launched a whole new career as an ambitious U.S. senator turned combative presidential candidate before morphing yet again over the last few years.

"When I was first lady," recalled Clinton, "I could say anything I wanted to say, and I often did." Here she stopped for one of her trademark deep laughs before adding, "for better or worse." It's a laugh that makes her very human -- and also one that immediately called to mind the many controversies of Clinton's long career. Remember the "vast right-wing conspiracy" that was out to get her husband during the Monica Lewinsky scandal? And her defiant taunting of Obama during the 2008 primaries, when she said her future boss wasn't experienced enough to take that 3 a.m. phone call?

Now Clinton has a different role and a different set of dilemmas: If she speaks too forcefully about human rights, she'll be chided for letting wild-eyed activism get in the way of America's economic interests. If she fails to bash the Chinese over their harsh treatment of dissidents like Chen and brutal suppression of free speech, she'll be called a sellout. Her shape-shifting career guarantees that Clinton will be criticized at every turn, but it also gives her the opportunity, as she noted about Aung San Suu Kyi, "to put into practice everything she's been thinking about and working on her entire adult life."

WHEN BARACK OBAMA SHOCKED everyone -- including his own campaign team -- by asking Hillary Clinton to be his secretary of state in late 2008, many of the new president's foreign-policy advisors were furious. "She was the enemy," one of them recently recalled. "People rightly worried that the Clintonistas would all come back in force.... We didn't know if we could trust them."

On the campaign trail, Obama had laid out a series of idealistic foreign-policy promises, many of them derided by his rival Clinton, when he optimistically vowed to open direct talks with enemies like Iran and North Korea, make a major push on a long-term peace deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and forge new global diplomacy on climate change -- all while winding down the American-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and closing the Guantánamo Bay prison and other leftover excesses of Bush's "global war on terror."

It wasn't at all clear at first where Clinton factored into that ambitious list. In addition to the hostility from Obama's White House team, Clinton was a novice in international affairs; she had no background in diplomacy, speaks no foreign languages, and was mocked during the campaign for claiming that her foreign trips as first lady qualified her as a bona fide internationalist. And from the start, she appeared to be marginalized after Obama named a series of czars designated to handle most of the toughest issues of their shared agenda: diplomatic heavy-hitters like her old friend Richard Holbrooke for Afghanistan and Pakistan, seasoned envoy Dennis Ross for Iran, and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell for the Mideast peace talks. Even some of her advisors told me it was a steep learning curve -- the carefully calibrated language of diplomacy, said one, was a "dialect she wasn't fluent in."

Besides, Clinton was still personally reeling from the embarrassing defeat to Obama in the Democratic presidential primary. Not only had she squandered a frontrunner's lead -- and more than \$13 million of her and husband Bill's money -- but sordid accounts of her campaign's self-destructive infighting and poor management seemed to reflect directly on Clinton's leadership abilities.

So Washington was primed and ready for the fireworks to start as soon as Clinton and Obama took office in January 2009.

But the explosion never happened.

Three and a half years later, there have been remarkably few accounts of feuding between Obama's White House and Clinton's State Department -- and virtually none between the president himself and his celebrity diplomat. The two meet privately each week -- Tuesday afternoons, usually -- and "check signals," as Obama's deputy national security advisor Denis McDonough put it, whether on matters of grand strategy or just getting through that week's tactical battles. "It doesn't mean they always agree," he told me. "You can see them influencing each other's views."

But for all that, no one asserts that Clinton and Obama have forged more than a solid professional relationship. If there's an inner circle of Obama decision-making, she's not in it. "It's fair to say the conceptual framing of Obama foreign policy has taken place within the White House and not within the State Department," one close Obama advisor told me. When I asked McDonough to characterize the division of labor between Obama's White House and Clinton's State Department, he replied: "She's really the principal implementer."

That ambitious foreign-policy agenda, meanwhile, has inevitably collided with reality; long since jettisoned are many of the early ideas about reshaping the world for the Obama era, from talking directly to Iran's ayatollahs to forging a durable Mideast peace built on an American-led push to end Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Instead, Obama has become an unlikely tough guy as he campaigns for reelection, touting his decision to launch the risky special-ops raid that killed Osama bin Laden (Clinton agreed) as well as his moves to draw down the American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan (Clinton along with then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates argued in favor of Obama's 2009 Afghanistan troop surge). Both Obama and Clinton have been quick to note that they are playing the hand Bush dealt them, focused by necessity on winding down the last decade's wars -- as well as by a new economic age when America's unchallenged post-Cold War hegemony no longer seems a given.

Even the Arab Spring, the most dramatic rescrambling of the world order on their watch, has produced few opportunities for American leadership -- not to mention a confused, ambiguous series of outcomes, with fallen dictators in Egypt and Libya but also a bloody stalemate in Syria and the rise of unpredictable and often virulently anti-American Islamist political leaders across the region. "It's not like the reunification of Germany or democratic elections in the Czech Republic," said Jake Sullivan, Clinton's policy-planning chief. "It's going to be much more complicated and difficult than that over time. And so, the downside of that if you're secretary of state is that you're not going to get feathers in your hat for these kinds of things in the same way.... Outcomes are a lot less determinate and will play out against a much longer period of time."

That leaves Clinton to promote a list of accomplishments that are somewhat short of transformative if still substantial, from the extensive personal diplomacy she poured into mobilizing the NATO coalition that launched airstrikes to topple Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi to her advocacy of a strategic U.S. "pivot" to Asia and away from the conflicts of the Middle East -- announced by Clinton in an article in Foreign Policy last fall.

More broadly if less tangibly, she has put new emphasis at a time of global financial crisis on the role of what she calls "economic statecraft," including appointing the State Department's first chief economist; launched a major reboot of American development efforts modeled on the Pentagon's quadrennial strategic reviews; and touted the need for an "Internet freedom" agenda that would mobilize new technology on behalf of democracy activists and dissidents the world over, an agenda that has seemed both problematic -- bad guys have these tools too -- and prescient in anticipating the technology-fueled protests that swept the Middle East during last year's Arab Spring.

Then there's managing her inbox, where never a day goes by without some new global headache being added to the mix, a headache that will inevitably require a Clinton phone call or meeting or even being told by Obama to fly halfway around the world after just having gotten off a plane. "You have to be a little bit of an incrementalist in these jobs," a top State Department official told me. "You have to define what success means. It doesn't always mean that you're going to necessarily get a peace agreement in the Middle East, but it is getting the Jordanians in the middle of a discussion with the Palestinians and the Israelis about what the future looks like.... So if you're a get-stuff-done person, which she is, you have to calibrate. Because you can't just wave your magic wand and things just happen."

Asked how she approaches the job, Clinton often replies by saying she has to do it all; she has to watch, as she puts it, "the headlines and the trend lines." But she's nothing if not the pragmatist ("She doesn't tilt at windmills," said Anne Marie-Slaughter, her first policy-planning chief) -- and what often matters most in American politics is the crisis right in front of you. "You have to keep your eye on those long-term dangers," she told me, "but you've got to deal with the here and now too, every day."

THAT'S WHERE CHEN ENTERS the story, as a walk-in to that already overflowing inbox. On the morning of Thursday, April 26, the call came into the U.S. Embassy in Beijing: Chen had made a near-miraculous escape from village house arrest some 350 miles away. But now he was injured, with a broken foot and unspecified other medical problems. Would the Americans come rescue him?

All the way up the chain it went, from the embassy's human rights officers, who took the call; to the embassy's second in command, Robert Wang; to the State Department's Asia desk back in Washington. From there, it went to Clinton's activist assistant secretary for East Asia, Kurt Campbell. He called Sullivan, who despite his policy-planning title is by all accounts an indispensable presence at Clinton's side. It was late Wednesday night Washington time, and Sullivan convened the department's top brass before calling the secretary herself at home. He also briefed McDonough and others at the White House. In the second of what a participant called two "extensive conversations," Clinton made the decision. Let's do it, she said. But the crisis planning went on all night: Would the Chinese cancel the strategic dialogue with Clinton outright? Scrap her meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao?

It had been more than two decades since the United States had harbored a Chinese dissident in its embassy, when it took in academic Fang Lizhi, fleeing the carnage of Tiananmen Square -- and then spent the next 13 months negotiating to get him out of the country. No one wanted a repeat. And with Clinton set to fly into the midst of the story, her negotiators would have less than five days to figure out a solution -- without overwhelming the Strategic and Economic Dialogue Clinton had pushed so hard to create in the first place.

Ironically, Clinton the would-be president had little to say on the campaign trail about the rise of China (nor for that matter had Obama), but from her first meetings after Obama tapped her for the job, she was urged to "look east," said one of her close advisors. Republican former secretaries George Shultz and Henry Kissinger had the same advice: "You've got to look to Asia because there's a lot of work to be done there. There's a sense out there that we've kind of turned our back on them, that we're just not as present, as engaged, and China's going like gangbusters," the aide recalled.

Clinton, prodded by her new Asia chief, Campbell, decided to make the continent her first trip, a break with tradition meant to signal the region's newfound strategic importance. "Look," he had told her, playing to her get-things-done side, "this is where the opportunity is." But then came her comment about the limited role human rights would play on her agenda with the Chinese.

She had done it on purpose, in part to signal that this was no longer the first lady of the Beijing human rights speech they were dealing with -- but it was immediately termed a gaffe, both by her old human rights allies and, privately, by some of her new colleagues in the Obama administration. "I didn't realize it was going to be controversial as much as it turned out to be," Clinton said in our interview. "I also needed to send a signal to them saying, 'Look, I'm now secretary of state, I carry this whole portfolio, and human rights is an important, essential part of it. But there's a lot of other business we have to get done.' So yes, am I going to raise human rights? Absolutely, but I'm also going to be raising economic issues and Iran and North Korea and all the rest of it. So that was certainly the signal I was sending to them: that I'm somebody you can do business with, and I will forever disagree with you on all the things I've already told you I disagree with you about for the past 20 years, but I'm going to represent the entire portfolio."

In the White House, the Obama advisor told me, there was much concern. "After the mistake in China -- even though what she had said, lots of people actually agreed with -- it was just worrying. Can she do this job?" he recalled. What this aide and others termed the intense "micromanagement" of the celebrity new diplomat did not end for some time.

But as Obama and his team focused on the many crisis items in their own inbox, Asia remained a key part of Clinton's portfolio, and she began working it relentlessly, showing up at an alphabet's soup worth of regional forums, proposing decidedly unglamorous new programs like a Lower Mekong Initiative to help the four countries along the river. When China angered its neighbors with increasingly assertive claims to territory in the South China Sea, Clinton was there to take advantage at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations security meeting in 2010; suddenly, America seemed popular again in the region, and countries from Japan

to Vietnam were talking about the benefits of a U.S. presence. "There's nothing that works in diplomacy like success," said Campbell. At the same time, Clinton continued to work the Chinese too, promoting much more intense engagement than in the past. By late last year, when she announced the administration's "pivot," it seemed as if American diplomacy had spent the previous three years working up to it.

Now, both Clinton's State Department and Obama's White House are eager to take credit. Clinton's advisors say it was part of a calculated plan that involved years of the secretary's "unsexy" diplomacy. The White House contends that it's in charge, with national security advisor Thomas Donilon and Vice President Joe Biden, who recently played host to Chinese heir apparent Xi Jinping, taking the lead. "Kurt Campbell will say he's the author of the strategic shift," said the Obama advisor. "But Tom Donilon is the author of our China policy."

By the time the Chen case exploded, though, the White House was little in evidence. The blame, or credit, would be all for Clinton.

WHEN THEY FIRST MET in 2009, Dai Bingguo famously greeted Hillary Clinton with the undiplomatic observation that she was "much prettier and much younger in person" than he had expected. ("We're going to get along just fine," she laughingly responded.) But this time he had more than just pleasantries. It was Wednesday evening, just after the small formal dinner meant to kick off the strategic dialogue. The meal went well enough, filled with chitchat over Dai's granddaughter and the two leaders exchanging 30,000-foot views of a world in which the rising power of China has to coexist with the established American dominance. But later, after the roast duck and hand-pulled noodles, the formal tea and the handing over of gifts (Clinton got a large decorative plate -- with a portrait of herself painted in the center), the two principals retreated to a private session in a villa that had once been the quarters of a 16th-century Chinese empress. There, Clinton heard a litany of Chinese complaints over the Chen case; she was left saying, in essence, what do you expect? As she recalled it in our interview, "I said, 'Look, you know, we have to follow our values. You know that. You've dealt with us for many years.'"

At the time, it seemed a sort of ritual exchange. Just minutes before Clinton left for the dinner, her aides had announced what appeared to be an end to the drama: Chen, they told the press traveling with Clinton, had been driven to Chaoyang Hospital, where he'd been reunited with his wife and two children. The Chinese authorities, they said, had promised Chen that he could live safely outside his village and study law at a prestigious Chinese university. The American negotiators were teary-eyed and emotional. "We think we have helped to secure for him a better future," said one.

But there was a problem: Chen was already having second thoughts. Indeed, by the time Clinton and Dai had their exchange, Chen's doubts were being broadcast far and wide by his supporters on Twitter. "The minute we saw that, it was a five-alarm fire," one aide said. Minutes after Clinton returned to her hotel from dinner, the Associated Press published an interview with Chen in which he said he now wanted to go to America. Even Chen's comment to Clinton in broken English on a borrowed telephone that afternoon that he wanted to "kiss" her was now being denied. Clinton's team huddled in her top-floor suite in the Marriott and broke the news to her: The hard-won deal appeared to be off.

Making matters worse, the disciplined Clinton team seemed like it had bobbled the ball. They spun and argued and denied that Chen had changed his mind for hours after it was apparent that he had. ("Sheer nonsense," read one of their testy emails to a reporter late that night.) Worse, they had left Chen at the hospital with no reassuring American presence and couldn't even manage to connect with him that night by cell phone after his worries became public. From 10 p.m. on, an embassy official dialed Chen's number every 20 minutes, but never got through -- even though Chen managed to speak to many of his activist supporters and international news organizations, from Newsweek and Reuters to the Washington Post and New York Times.

By the time the American diplomats acknowledged what had happened and went back to cut a new deal for Chen, the Chinese were in no mood to talk. In the meantime, Clinton herself was pulled away by the hours of unrelated meetings that had brought her to Beijing in the first place. The two sides had used the dialogue to schedule an intensive series of small discussions with Clinton and Dai on the most pressing -- and divisive -- issues between the countries, from thorny nuclear talks with Iran and what to do about North Korea's erratic

new leader to the bloody crackdown in Syria and the mounting crisis between the Philippines, a major U.S. ally, and China over disputed waters in the South China Sea. It was quite a performance by both sides; no one mentioned Chen. "This was all taking place in the eye of the storm," said one Clinton aide.

During a lunch break, Clinton huddled with her aides and authorized Campbell to make a renewed offer to the Chinese, this time asking them to allow Chen to come to the United States to study. But they refused to entertain it. The standoff lasted a full day and night, by which time Chen's case -- and the State Department's fumble -- had already become a front-page headache back in Washington. Romney was busy denouncing it as a "dark day for freedom" and "a day of shame for the Obama administration." Chen was continuing to give interviews, and he even managed to testify by cell phone to that congressional hearing, called by Republican Chris Smith, who regularly jabs the Democratic White House for being less than zealous about human rights issues.

That night, the entire Clinton negotiating team trooped over to the embassy for a secure call to the White House. Then, just before 7 a.m. Friday morning, Clinton had had enough. Get in touch with Dai, she told an aide; I need to see him. They agreed to talk after one of the Beijing set-pieces, a morning roundtable with CEOs. They met in a side room with sliding doors, but even after Dai agreed to resume negotiations, there was still a whole day of painstakingly choreographed meetings and photo ops to attend. At the formal news conference just before the deal -- sealed minutes earlier -- was announced, a poker-faced Clinton publicly uttered Chen's name for the first time. "Progress has been made to help him have the future that he wants," she said cryptically.

By Saturday afternoon, Clinton had flown off to Bangladesh, and life for America's celebrity diplomat had more or less returned to normal. Which meant: hours of meetings about the troubling political developments in Dhaka; a private session with Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning microfinance guru, to brief her on "development innovations"; and a banner on the Drudge Report with an unflattering photo of her over the headline, "Hillary au Naturelle." On Sunday, Biden made news by mistakenly referring to Obama as "President Clinton" and then jokingly suggesting that he could run for president himself in 2016, with Clinton as his running mate. By the time she got home, in the middle of the night that Tuesday, Clinton had hit her

friend Madeleine Albright's record for most countries visited by a secretary of state, after logging 96 nations, 320 days on the road, and 778,157 miles in the air.

Exactly two weeks after she left Beijing, on Saturday, May 19, Chen Guangcheng, his wife, and their two children flew to the United States on board United Airlines Flight 88. The State Department put out a statement in the name of its spokeswoman, Victoria Nuland, welcoming the move. Hillary Clinton had no comment.

WHEN I SPOKE WITH ONE of Clinton's senior advisors, he reflected on the different models America has had for its secretaries of state in recent years: the global statesman like Kissinger, the presidential confidant like James Baker was for the first George Bush and Condoleezza Rice was for Bush's son. Some secretaries of state play an inside game, like Colin Powell, who was popular in Foggy Bottom for his perceived willingness to stand up for the professionals and his insistence on bringing the stodgy department into the information age. (Incredibly, Powell in 2001 was the first secretary even to have a computer on his desk.) Others opt for international swagger or spend their time jockeying for White House influence.

By those standards, where does Clinton fit in? Several of her advisors pointed out that she is the first secretary of state since Edmund Muskie in Jimmy Carter's presidency to have gone to the job directly from the U.S. Senate.

She is still in many ways a politician -- both in terms of "connecting the dots with American audiences about why foreign policy and national security policy matters," as William J. Burns, the career diplomat who is her deputy secretary, put it, and in terms of her relationships with other world leaders, politicians in their own right with whom Clinton does not hesitate to talk nuts-and-bolts details of what they really care about-how to get and stay in power. (This comes in handy, too, when her interlocutors complain, as they inevitably do, about U.S. demands for greater press freedom and the like. As Philip Gordon, assistant secretary for Europe, put it, "She can just cut them off and say, 'You know, Mr. President, with all due respect, give me a break. That

comes with the territory, buddy. Get used to it, roll with the punches, and, yeah, that's what you have to put up with in a democracy.'")

Several times during our interview, Clinton herself returned to this theme. "Having come to this job from the political world," she noted at one point, "I have a certain level of understanding or sensitivity to what people's political problems are, even in authoritarian regimes, because everybody's got politics."

So at the end of our conversation, I asked her the question: What would it take for her to run again for president in 2016? "Nothing," she replied quickly. Then she laughed. Even the Chinese, she said, had asked her about it at Wednesday night's dinner, suggesting she should run. They were "saying things like, 'Well, you know, I mean 2016 is not so far away.... You may retire, but you're very young,'" Clinton recalled.

Maybe, I ventured, that's why they had in the end been willing to accommodate her on Chen; they were investing in a future with a possible President Clinton.

She wouldn't answer. At least not for the record.

DGH