

Campaigns and Elections

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- Importance of name recognition

Outline

- 1 Predicting Elections
- 2 Do campaigns matter?

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Prediction versus explanation

FiveThirtyEight's Senate Forecast

Each party's chance of controlling the Senate, through Election Day



FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

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Most political science (and social science more broadly) research is aimed at **explaining** how the world works, not **predicting** the future

Elections is one area where political scientists regularly apply their theories of how the world works to the task of predicting outcomes

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- Incumbency: incumbent presidents seeking reelection have won 79% of the time since 1900
- State of the economy
- War and peace

Incumbent presidents running for reelection in times of **peace** and **prosperity** are almost guaranteed to **win**

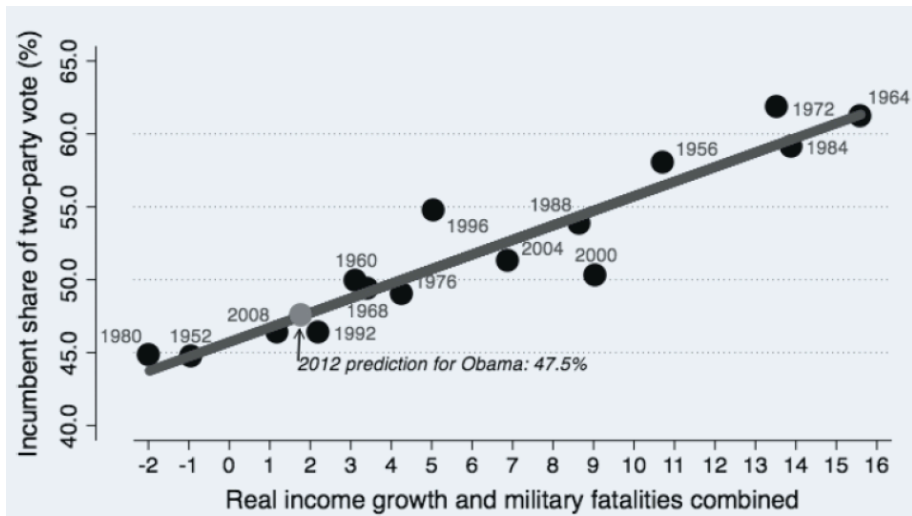
Forecasting presidential elections

- Notice that none of these “fundamentals” have anything to do with the campaign and are largely out of the control of individual candidates

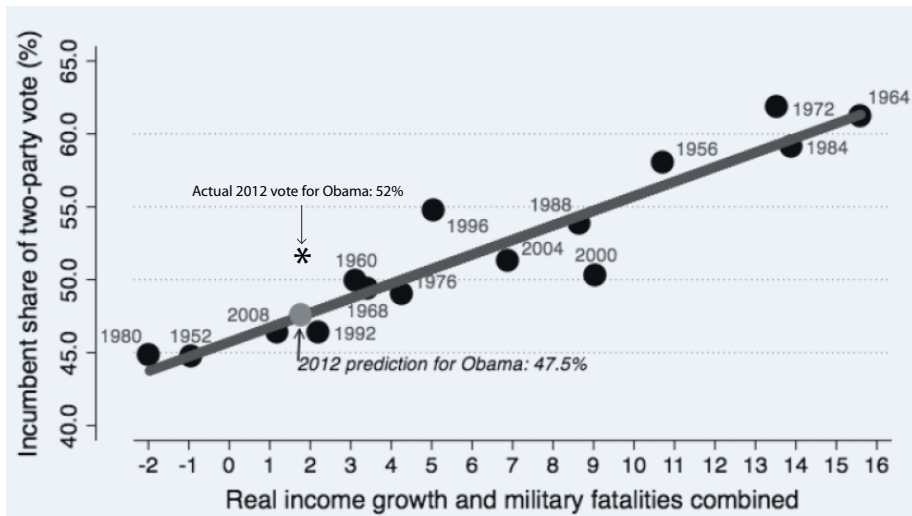
Forecasting presidential elections

- Notice that none of these “fundamentals” have anything to do with the campaign and are largely out of the control of individual candidates
- Because they’re so strongly tied to election outcomes, it’s possible to get highly accurate forecasts for presidential elections well before the fall campaign starts
- One well-known forecasting model is Hibbs’s “bread and peace” model, which predicts the incumbent party’s presidential vote share based on income growth and military fatalities in the preceding year

The “Bread and Peace” Model and the 2012 Election



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Wait, what?

If we can accurately predict the outcome of an election in the summer before, does this mean that the campaigns don't actually matter?

Are we just wasting a ton of time, money, and attention during the campaign?

Alternative approach to predicting elections

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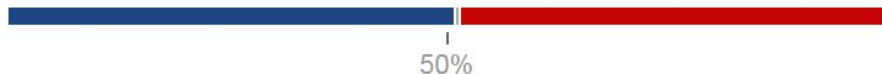
50.8%

+0.4 since Oct. 30

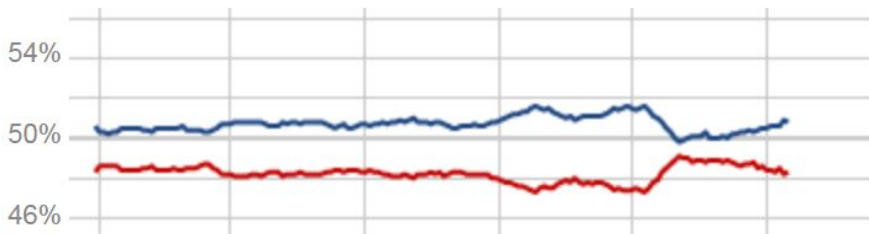
Popular vote

48.3%

-0.2 since Oct. 30



50%



If campaigns don't matter, then why is there so much fluctuation in the polls?

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- People who work/volunteer for campaigns are not ideologically moderate, so why should we think they would be good convincing moderates to come to their side?

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- Campaigns might not switch people's preferences, but they can get people to turn out when they might not otherwise

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If the economy is shrinking, the out-party reminds people that things have never been worse in the history of the universe and the world will end if they aren’t elected



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Name recognition before the primaries

- Oh yeah, I know that person
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 - Ted Cruz, Bernie Sanders, Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, Rand Paul

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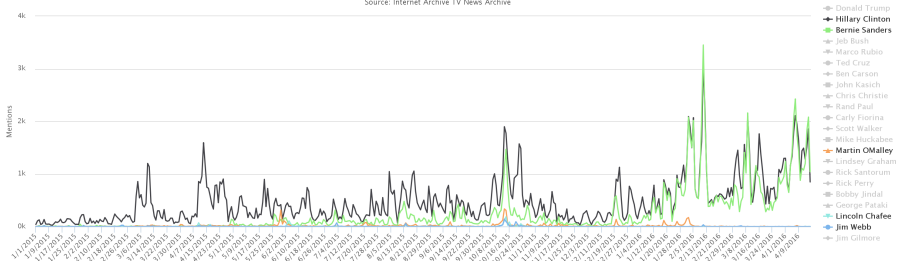
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 - Ted Cruz, Bernie Sanders, Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, Rand Paul
- No, seriously, who is that?
 - Lincoln Chafee, Bobby Jindal, Jim Gilmore

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Television Mentions By Candidate

Source: Internet Archive TV News Archive

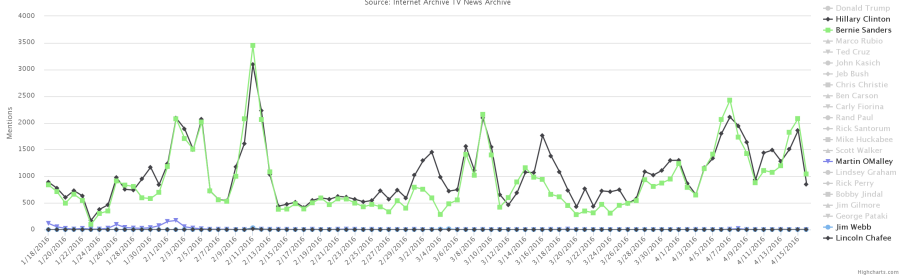


Highcharts.com

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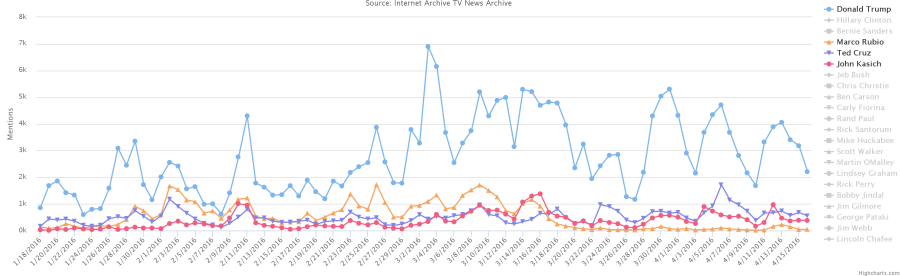


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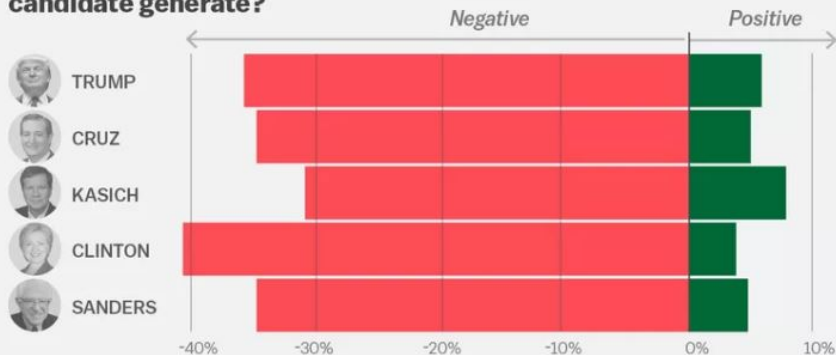
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Highcharts.com

No such thing as negative press

How much negative media coverage does each presidential candidate generate?



SOURCE: Crimson Hexagon

Vox

Data from Crimson Hexagon; graphic by Vox's Javier Zarracina

A new analysis from Crimson Hexagon shows Hillary Clinton getting the most negative coverage of the presidential candidates. The data is based on hundreds of thousands of online news stories published since January 1, 2015.