

Possible Futures

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2016 0325

During my career I have been tasked on numerous occasions to 'predict' the future. The purpose of the prediction was to determine if things could be done to change the most probable outcome to one that was more desirable. The process took on a name: Possible Futures (PF).

As I look at the presidential field today, I am struck by a number of possible futures; some of these I will share with you today. They will change on a frequent basis, but this will give you a starting point.

Republicans

There are three Republican contenders: Trump, Cruz, and Kasich. But there are four potential nominees: Trump, Cruz, Kasich, and Mr. X.

PF1: Trump wins enough delegates to secure the nomination.

PF2: Cruz wins enough delegates to secure the nomination.

PF3: No one wins enough delegates to secure the nomination on the first ballot.

In PF1, Trump would either have to do better in the upcoming primaries or Kasich would have to throw his support to Trump.

In PF2, Rubio would need to endorse Cruz and throws his delegates into the Cruz pile.

PF3 is the most probable outcome at this time. No one has a majority at the commencement of the convention.

Analysis

If Trump is the nominee, there are ramifications respecting turnout in November, but it is unlikely that Cruz would run as an independent (PF1).

If Cruz is the nominee, by whatever pathway, Trump is likely to declare that his vow of party unity was predicated on fair treatment by the party and would subsequently declare that he is running as an independent candidate (PF2).

In PF3, the convention could select Trump or could select another candidate. That other candidate could be Cruz, Kasich, or Mr. X. In the following analysis, the candidate Mr. X refers to anyone other than Trump. This would require a rule change, but that is not out of the question.

In any event, Trump is likely to react as in PF2 and become an independent candidate.

Democrats

There are currently two candidates: Clinton and Sanders, but there are three potential nominees: Clinton, Sanders, and Mr. Y.

PF4: Clinton wins the nomination by virtue of holding a majority of delegates.

PF5: Sanders wins the nomination by virtue of holding a majority of delegates.

PF6: Clinton is actually indicted and has to drop out. NB: this does not necessarily mean that Sanders is the nominee.

In PF4, Clinton becomes the nominee but still runs the risk of being indicted at some future date.

In PF5, Sanders becomes the nominee by winning most of the remaining primaries. This is unlikely, but possible.

In PF6, Sanders does not have enough delegates but Clinton has been removed from consideration. The Democratic party leadership would be faced with the same scenario as the Republicans would be in PF3. A new candidate may be selected, Mr. Y. leaving Sanders to declare that he is running as an independent candidate.

Libertarians

The Libertarian candidate will be selected on May 30th in Orlando. There are currently 16 candidates, one of whom may be barred from running due to a disagreement with the Federal Election Commission. The nominee will be referred to hereafter as the Libertarian Party Candidate (LPC).

Outcome

The outcome of the possible futures listed above can best be seen in the possible variations of the ballot. Please note that the possible ballot of Cruz v. Clinton was not included in the list of possible futures because of Trump's often stated position. If that position changes, the PF of Cruz v. Clinton emerges.

1 --- Trump(R) v. Clinton(D) v. LPC

2 --- Trump(R) v. Sanders(D) v. LPC

3 --- Trump(R) v. Mr. Y.(D) v. LPC

4 --- Trump(R) v. Mr. Y.(D) v. Sanders(I) v. LPC

5 --- Cruz (R) v. Clinton(D) v. Trump(I) v. LPC

6 --- Cruz (R) v. Sanders(D) v. Trump(I) v. LPC

7 --- Cruz (R) v. Mr. Y.(D) v. Trump(I) v. LPC

8 --- Cruz (R) v. Mr. Y.(D) v. Trump(I) v. Sanders(I) v. LPC

9 --- Mr. X.(R) v. Clinton(D) v. LPC v. Trump(I)

10 --- Mr. X.(R) v. Sanders(D) v. LPC v. Trump(I)

11 --- Mr. X.(R) v. Mr. Y.(D) v. Trump(I) v. Sanders(I) v. LPC

Results

Assigning probabilities to the above outcomes is largely guesswork. Professional pollsters will tell you different, but the fact is that there are simply too many variables. Some, however, seem more likely than others. For example, it is highly probable that Trump will run as an independent if he is not nominated. Sanders has mentioned running as an independent, but not as emphatically and only if his party selects Mr. Y. and Clinton is not a candidate.

The current Republican situation is most likely to lead to either Trump or Mr. X. being selected. The current Democratic situation is most likely to lead to Clinton being the nominee. That means that the two most likely ballots would be numbers 1 or 9.

The outcome of contest number 1 is too close to call. There are too many variables. The outcome of contest number 9 is also unpredictable, but all else being stable, the outcome is most likely to be in Clinton's favor.

As stated at the beginning, creating possible futures is an exercise designed to allow people to select the future that they prefer and to subsequently work towards obtaining it. If, therefore, you prefer ballot number 3 or 4, pressuring the current administration to indict Clinton might be worth considering. If, however, you prefer ballot number 1, you might consider pressuring Kasich to endorse Trump.

While it is impossible to put a number on the probability of any of these ballots, they can be ranked from most to least probable – with some ties. That list, based on today's information, is presented below.

1 --- at tie --- Trump(R) v. Clinton(D) v. LPC OR Mr. X.(R) v. Clinton(D) v. LPC v. Trump(I)

3 --- Cruz (R) v. Clinton(D) v. Trump(I) v. LPC

The others are all too remote, with too many variables to rank, but all are possible.

Should any of the three ballots listed above be the actual ballot, current polling shows that Clinton will be the next president.

In closing, I urge each of you to look at the above analysis and work to further the possible future that you would prefer. For myself, I will be putting my energy into restoring the backbone of Congress (US House and Senate candidates) so that whomever is elected President will not be elected to a de facto, albeit term limited, monarchy.