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**The US midterm elections
results and scenarios of the
2016 presidential race:
a brief review**



This study was conducted in the period from August 2014 to March 2015.

The first goal of the study was to understand the dynamics of electoral processes in the United States through the analysis of political technologies that were used by candidates to gain victory. The second goal is to estimate the odds of potential US presidential candidates.

Since the outcome of the elections to the House of Representatives was clear, we focused on the study of a number of campaigns for elections to the Senate. For a detailed case-study analysis we selected the most competitive, unpredictable and costly Senate toss up campaigns in the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa and New Hampshire.

The following methods were used in the study:

- Open source analysis (mass media materials, party committees' websites, candidates and non-profit organizations, video and visual ads issued by candidates and independent organizations);
- Analysis of electoral statistics;
- Analysis of sociological data (published polls and information from candidate's headquarters);
- Expert surveys (more than 60 politicians, campaign staff, analysts, political consultants and journalists);
- Campaigns in Florida, Illinois and New York participant observation.

We would like to mention the original research guideline. We tried to focus on the political tools and technologies that can be applied in other countries, including Russia, taking into consideration the uniqueness of the American experience.

Summary and main conclusions. US midterm elections 2014

1. Results of the elections to the House of Representatives were largely predetermined by the political cycles, which are typical to the United States. The ruling party in most cases lost midterm elections during the president's second term due to his declining popularity. In 2006, during the second term of George Bush Jr. presidency, Republicans faced a similar wave in the midterm elections, but only in favor of the Democrats;
2. The key point of the campaign in 2014 for the Republican Party was the wide use of unpopularity of President Barack Obama. Democrats attempted to distance themselves from the current President by promoting topics related to their ideological agenda (raising the minimum wage, equal pay for men and women, etc.) but they were hit by the «semantic jaws». On the one hand Republicans actively criticized Barack Obama personally, his healthcare reform - the "Obamacare" and the situation in US economy in general. On the other hand they combined hard criticism for current federal policy with promoting constructive and positive local agenda. An attempt by Democrats to create an «enemy image» in the face of the conservative billionaire sponsors (the Koch brothers) was unsuccessful;
3. The last gerrymandering (2011) gave Republicans serious advantage for elections to the House of Representatives;
4. From a technological point of view trump democratic cards (such as sophisticated online campaigns, advanced databases for microtargeting messaging) were offset by GOP investments in

- paid advertising in traditional media (especially TV) and using the campaign tactics of the "carpet bombing" (message delivering to all voters, not just active or potential supporters);
5. Democrats appealed to minorities with traditional ideological messages (the rights of racial minorities, women, LGBT, etc.) but, due to a record low turnout, the strategy proved to be ineffective. Democrats failed to attract Latino voters to the extent they planned, mostly because they refused to initiate immigration reform shortly before the elections;
 6. The true winners of the elections are Republican (conservative) Super PACs. Republicans get a record majority in the Senate mostly because of direct finance support during the primaries in toss up constituencies. In this regard, it can be assumed that Democrats will try to correct the electoral legislation, while clearly realizing the futility of their efforts under the Republican control of Congress. The main reason of pushing this agenda forward is to benefit the electoral and propaganda effect for next elections;
 7. Republicans receive serious advantage in gubernatorial elections and local legislatures by using the local agenda with the unpopularity of President Obama;
 8. The Republican control over state legislatures created conditions for further correction of the electoral legislation (strict «Voter ID», changing the rules of distribution of electoral votes into proportional ones). However, it should be noted that these changes are actively contested in the courts;
 9. The ideological differences within the parties are more dramatic than the differences between moderate Republicans and moderate Democrats;
 10. To a large extent the 2014-midterm elections became a triumph of the establishment of both parties. During the primaries Republicans seriously pushed their radicals and Democrats established Hillary Clinton as their favorite presidential nominee. She is understandable and acceptable to big business. However, nominating moderate candidates from both parties may run the risk of playing against the radical wings of the parties - up to possible strong nominees from minor parties;
 11. A significant number of Super PACs does not play a role in the parties or in ideological politics. Such Super PACs are used to promote concrete issues that are important to their creators - the environment, gun control, women's rights, etc. These agendas can be pushed forward through communication with specific congressmen (regardless of party affiliation) and also directly on the state and municipal levels, for example through referendums.

Summary and main conclusions. Presidential race 2016

1. A person of the President becomes less important to the corporate world. It is more important to retain the presidency in a moderate range, not allowing right and left radicals to gain power. The system of checks and balances and a large number of opportunities to lobby at the federal and local levels enable the business world to achieve it's goals without presidential authority;
2. Primaries will be the most challenging moment for both parties in the upcoming presidential campaign. Usually, the politicians mobilize ideologically charged supporters with radical views (as opposed to concentrating on the center as a key to success in the national elections). In this

component, the advantage is on the side of the Democratic Party, which has an absolute favorite - former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. If Jeb Bush becomes an official candidate of the moderate wing of Republicans, he will have dramatically increased the Republican chances of winning the primaries. Republicans are planning to reduce the number of intra-party debates and regulate them more strictly in hope to reduce raising the anti-rating effect for future nominees;

3. The Democrats have a clear favorite, which is both their strength and weakness. The main problems facing Hilary Clinton are age and limited experience of participation in elections (two Senate campaigns, unsuccessful primaries in 2007-08, and not so brilliant results in supporting candidates for 2014 midterm election). Still, there are problems with motivation and political management. If victorious, she can become a «one-term president» due to her age. This also can help her get elected, because not all voters want to see a Democrat in the White House for another 8 years. One term for Hillary Clinton may be a good compromise. Unlike Republicans, the Democrats do not have a strong second-tier candidates. If Hillary Clinton leaves the race, the Democrats become «naked». The second democratic tier consists of an elderly Vice President Biden and former Governor of Maryland Martin J. O'Malley, neither of whom started a campaign on their own as candidates, as well as the far left Elizabeth Warren, who can perform successfully in the primaries, but appears to be too radical to win the national elections;
4. The Republican Party has at least two federal «heavyweights» (Jeb Bush and Rand Paul) and a line of promising governors and senators among them African-American and Hispanic candidates (Ben Carson, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio). It is noteworthy to mention that the range of potential GOP candidates is more representative in generational terms (as opposed to a more democratic age of applicants). This advantage gives the Republican Party the opportunity for building an electorally attractive balance in "the president and his running mate" pair;
5. The political climate on the eve of the presidential election will be largely determined by struggle between the Democratic presidential administration and the Republican Congress;
6. A possibility of new political crisis created by the decisions of the Congress blocked by the White House and vice versa grows. A new government shutdown will undermine even more the confidence of Americans towards "professional politicians" and discourages voters of both parties. That is why establishment from both parties will try to avoid it. Nevertheless, it is in the interests of the radicals since crisis of this kind may change the political landscape and increase their chances in the upcoming 2016 elections;
7. A call for “change” that led to Obama’s victory, is replaced by a call for “competence”. This reduces the chances for ideologues-politicians (in particular, Paul and Warren).
8. High turnout across the population and among minorities in particular increases the chances of the Democratic Party candidate. Objective cycles of the US political process play on the Republican side (good time for the party in office change), GOP also has wide opportunities to battle for the Hispanic electorate¹;
9. Republicans will use the successful fundraising experience in the primaries. Its efficiency will rise even more, especially thanks to Super PACs by Karl Rove and Koch brothers, both of

¹ It is worth important to emphasize that the in 2016 Hispanic vote will still not play a decisive role in 2016 presidential elections, but in the long-term trend, both parties will be more and more focus on gaining their support. The white vote now accounts now for 61.72 percent of the US population, but at 2045 they it will be lower than 50%.

which played a consistent game during last election. Koch brothers have already announced budget of \$ 889 million on the campaign 2016²;

- Moderate and indistinguishable nominees are the most likely scenario for presidential race. It may highlight the socio-demographic characteristics of candidates (after African – American president the first Hispanic or the first woman will be elected).

Candidates for US Presidency (as of March 2015)

We divided all politicians into four divisions for the convenience of considering their complex issue. The first tier only one candidate is presented — Hillary Clinton, the second tier consists of possible sparring partners for Hillary Clinton from the Democratic party and key Republican candidates for the nomination. The third tier is all about dark horses from both parties who are ready to bypass more classy players in the case of any surprises. In the last tier one can find candidates whose chances are statistically insignificant, but their position in theory could have a significant impact on the outcome of nomination in each party. These candidates can be regarded as a bench players.

Table divisions of candidates for the US presidency

	Democrats	Republicans
First division	Hillary Clinton	
Second division	Joe Biden Elizabeth Warren Martin O'Malley	Jeb Bush Scott Walker Rand Paul Michael Huckabee Ben Carson Chris Christie
Third division	Andrew Cuomo John Kerry John Hickenlooper Brian Schweitzer	Ted Cruz Marco Rubio Rick Perry Richard Santorum John Richard Kasich
Bench	Jim Webb Julian Castro Evan Bayh Bernie Sanders ³	Michael Pence Susana Martinez Cory Gardner Bobby Jindal Carly Fiorina Lindsey Graham

² <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/01/26/koch-brothers-network-announces-889-million-budget-for-next-two-years/22363809/>

³ independent candidate

Additional factors for presidential candidates selection

- Most of the experts we have surveyed consider the fact that if in 2008 the main issue of the campaign was the appeal to change, then in 2016, a key request of the nation will be competence and experience. This will reduce the chances of candidates without an executive experience (for example, Rand Paul) and increase the chances of politicians with a biography and rich practical experience. In particular, good chances for the nomination will have former governors of both parties. Aged politicians will also have some odds;
- Voters are concerned about the socio-economic problems in the first place. Candidates with success story of management (running their own business or, for example, a state) will have an advantage.

The primaries

The primaries itself pose a problem for both parties because voting minorities usually have radical positions. Therefore, the primaries are won by a candidate with radical views who otherwise has limited abilities to fight for undecided voters.

- There is a problem of an unpredictable game with small parties and independent candidates. At the moment, there is no evidence that one of the small parties will be able to get their candidate in a statistically significant number of states and intervene in the fight between the two hegemonic parties. However, in the case of a split within the party, the dissatisfied radicals can support the candidate of a third party. Several experts predict the possibility of such a split in the Democratic Party in the case of Hillary Clinton nomination;
- An important outcome of the recent midterm elections is an extremely low turnout - 36.6%. This is the lowest level since 1940. This is a result of common frustration of citizens in the political process, fatigue from constant fight between Republicans and Democrats, and consequent lack of results in the solution of numerous serious problems nationwide, as well as distrust in "professional politicians". Therefore, a potential Bush vs Clinton race is undesirable for the establishment. A lot will also depend on how the candidates position themselves in relation to the ruling elite, which is generally unpopular. These influential groups of elites will still largely determine the outcome of elections. Therefore, there is no way for nominees to disassociate themselves from these groups.

Campaign 2016 scenario

The main intrigue in the framework of the democratic nomination is participation of Hillary Clinton and the question of competition during Democratic primaries. Clinton herself has chosen a strategy of "silence" - not to make any sudden claims, not to spill rating and save blurred ideological positioning (not too centrist in order to smoothly win the primaries, and not too radical in order to avoid difficulties in the general elections).

The organizational structure for Clinton is already built and maintained by fundraising. It is supposed to change party primaries into a formal procedure. However, as a result Hillary has become trapped - without offering her own content for future campaigns; she is forced to strike back against attacks on her past. This situation can turn the party establishment to reconsider this uncontested scenario.

In particular, it may be a pretext for nominating Elizabeth Warren - not as an opponent for Hillary but her sparring-partner and forced substitution in case serious problems arise with Clinton's rating. Joe Biden has started an undeclared campaign, with visiting all the states where primaries are traditionally held early. Promoting activity of other politicians, in our opinion, would be a right thing to do for Democrats, because in case of Clinton's failure the Democratic Party can be in a trouble.

Within the Republican Party there is a more diverse picture.

Michael Huckabee is the favorite among the potential candidates from evangelists. However, in our view, a much stronger image has the neurosurgeon Ben Carson, despite facing problems with the establishment and funding. Senator Rand Paul is the "Tea Party" favorite (judging by the results of the survey among the participants of the influential conservative Congress CPAC). One gets the impression that Paul has strategically focused on the 2020 campaign instead of 2016.

After Mitt Romney refusal, Jeb Bush became the most serious candidate from the moderate Republicans and establishment. He has not yet started to lead an active public campaign but focused on fundraising. He is eager to have \$100 million cash in hand at the early start of the campaign and thus discourage potential competitors from participating in the primaries. Media calls this technology a «financial juggernaut by Bush».

However, the prospect of the another Bush family member in the presidential chair is not only a problem for many common voters, but also for a large part of the Republican establishment, which in recent years have deliberately purged Bush family confidants from key positions in the party.

Despite Jeb's statements that he is «his own man», there is a large number of people among his advisers on foreign policy, who previously worked for his brother and father.

Jeb Bush's alternative in the moderate camp becomes Governor Scott Walker, who has recently radicalized his ideological position in order to win more support from conservatives in the primaries.

Walker provoked a direct debate with President Obama after the adoption of the new legislation devoted to the rights of the workers in Wisconsin. He has a chance to become known nationwide by using this confrontation. Walker uses the effect of novelty, but at the same time he is able to show significant results of his job, including performance in the crisis years (unlike Bush, who long ago ceased to be a governor). He won three gubernatorial campaigns in the traditionally Democratic state — which is a serious argument in favor of its eligibility.

The prospect of Bush and Clinton heading into the presidential race faces serious negative perception of a large part of the electorate. If this happens, the turnout may be record low, but demobilization will largely affect the Republican electorate. In such case Clinton, despite the negative campaign against her, will have an advantage.

At the same time pushing into the agenda the confrontation between the two political dynasties can give a significant advantage to the Republicans in the event that Jeb Bush will not win the primaries. His elimination from the candidates will pave the way for other applicants, not burdened by the legacy of the past.

It seems possible that the strategic combination of the three Republican candidates in the primaries will be as follows - Bush will receive all of the negative references, Paul will be a hard critic of Democrats and Walker will play a role of an experienced regional policymaker and crisis manager thus winning the Republican nomination. Fight between Hillary Clinton and politician of a new generation

gives a serious chance of winning to GOP. If it is so, the professionals and political technologies will decide the outcome.

If Hillary Clinton comes out of the race or, less likely, will be defeated in the primaries it will be difficult for the Democratic Party to find a worthy replacement.

A little-known candidate without much charisma (as is the case of candidates from the democratic "bench") will have a chance to win only if the economy over the next year demonstrates an impressive growth, and the support of Barack Obama turns from burden into an advantage.

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