

Forecasting Models Cautious On Clinton 2016: Every major poll shows former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, with no major primary challenger yet to come forward. So how likely is it that Mrs. Clinton will win the 2016 general election if she secures the nomination?

In a recent *National Journal* [article](#) Dr. Alan Abramowitz, a political scientist at Emory University, said it is too early to predict the outcome of the 2016 election. However, his well-known “Time-For-Change” model shows Mrs. Clinton faces a difficult road. Dr. Abramowitz created his model before the 1988 election. Since then, it has accurately predicted the winner of the popular vote in every election, including Vice President Al Gore (though he lost the Electoral College). The original model consisted of three variables: the incumbent’s net approval rating, GDP in the second quarter of the election year, and the number of terms the candidate’s party has been in the White House. His 2012 model was adjusted to include a fourth variable, polarization.

According to “Time-For-Change” model rules, President Barack Obama’s approval rating needs to increase five points and GDP must reach 3.5% in order for Mrs. Clinton to secure 50% of the general election popular vote. This is a tall order for Mr. Obama, and one he’s unlikely to reach.

Predictions and Errors for the “Time-For-Change” Model, 1988-2012

Election	Incumbent Party Nominee	Forecast*	Vote	Deviation
1988	George H.W. Bush	51.5%	53.9%	-2.4%
1992	George H.W. Bush	48.0%	46.5%	1.5%
1996	Bill Clinton	55.0%	54.7%	0.3%
2000	Al Gore	51.1%	50.3%	0.8%
2004	George W. Bush	51.0%	51.2%	-0.2%
2008	John McCain	47.4%	46.3%	1.1%
2012	Barack Obama	50.6%	51.0%	-0.4%

* Adjusted to include polarization variable

Note: Based on share of major party vote for incumbent party candidate.

Source: Abramowitz, Alan, “Forecasting in a Polarized Era: The Time for Change Model and the 2012 Presidential Election,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Oct. 2012), pp. 618-619.