

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-an-improbable-trump-victory-could-happen-1466440481>

POLITICS | CAPITAL JOURNAL

How an Improbable Trump Victory Could Happen

Hillary Clinton starts the general-election season clearly in front. But it is possible Donald Trump could win in this unconventional year.



Though Donald Trump is behind in polls he could win the election through several scenarios.

PHOTO: ROSS D. FRANKLIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS



By

GERALD F. SEIB

June 20, 2016 12:34 p.m. ET

A few weeks ago, after Donald Trump locked down the Republican presidential nomination, a series of polls showed him roughly even with or a bit ahead of Hillary Clinton, and Democrats went into a slight panic.

Last week, after Mrs. Clinton had locked down the Democratic nomination, a series of polls showed Mr. Trump falling well behind Mrs. Clinton, in two cases by 12 percentage points, and Republicans went into full-scale panic. Perhaps in response, Mr. Trump on Monday parted ways with his longtime campaign manager, Corey

Lewandowski.

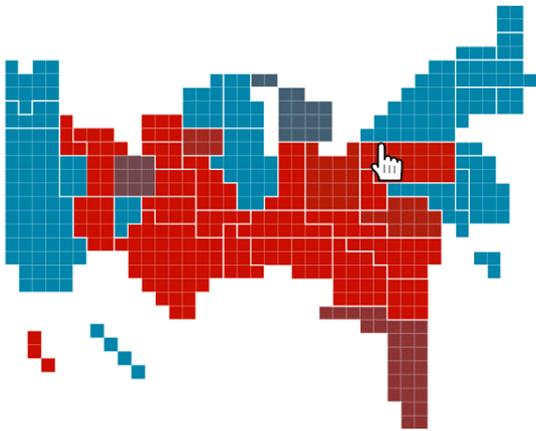
So this is a good time to take a deep breath and remember a few basics. Some of the recent poll movement is the inevitable result of the two candidates consolidating their own parties. Some is the result of Mr. Trump's unartful handling of the Orlando terror attack and his fight with a federal judge.

READ MORE ON CAPITAL JOURNAL

Capital Journal is WSJ.com's home for politics, policy and national security news.

- Trump Severs Ties With Campaign Manager (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-severs-ties-with-campaign-manager-corey-lewandowski-1466432338>)
- Clinton to Target Trump's Business Record (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/clinton-to-target-trumps-business-record-1466337601>)
- House Speaker Offers Republicans an Out for 'Very Strange Situation' of Donald Trump (<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2016/06/19/house-speaker-offers-republicans-an-out-for-very-strange-situation-of-donald-trump/>)

Draw the 2016 Electoral College Map



Meanwhile, here are the basic facts: The four-plus months remaining before the election is a long time. Mrs. Clinton starts the general-election season clearly in

front. But Mr. Trump could win. Is that the most likely outcome? Probably not. Is it possible in this unconventional year? Absolutely.

The simple political math tells you there are three things Mr. Trump would need to do to make that happen:

First, he has to start performing better among white, college-educated women. These voters are the Trump Achilles' heel.

Polling suggests he is winning among white men who have less than a college degree by more than some 40 percentage points. He's winning among white women who don't have a college degree by 10 points or so.

But among white women with a college degree, he is losing by almost double digits. That's a group Republican Mitt Romney won four years ago. To carry key suburban areas in swing states such as Pennsylvania

and Colorado, Mr. Trump would have to improve among them.

Second, he has to hope third parties suck away some of the Clinton vote.

One of the most striking aspects of this campaign is the high level of animosity toward both major candidates, which leaves more voters than normal open to considering somebody else.

And there are two somebodies else out there: former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson running on the Libertarian Party ticket, and Jill Stein, presumptive Green Party nominee. Early polling suggests it's possible they could steal more votes from Mrs. Clinton, perhaps among disgruntled supporters of Democratic Sen. Bernie Sanders. In some states, a few percentage points could be enough to tip the balance.

Third, he has to put together the right set of states.

This is the tricky part. Any Republican nominee faces an electoral college map that tilts in favor of the Democrats, given current demographic and voting trends in key states. Of course, the unconventional Mr. Trump has the potential to produce an unconventional map—which could be either a good thing or a bad thing for him.

A reasonable starting point for doing Electoral College math is the 2012 election, in which President Barack Obama beat Republican Mitt Romney by 332 to 206 electoral votes, giving him well more than the 270 needed to win.

The states Mr. Obama won represent a pretty good picture of the Democratic base, with some key swing states such as Colorado, Iowa and Virginia thrown in. Mr. Trump would have to replicate the Romney performance and then add a series of states.

Mr. Trump has talked of winning heavily Democratic New York and California and turning New Jersey his way. The first two represent a fantasy, and the third an extremely tall order.

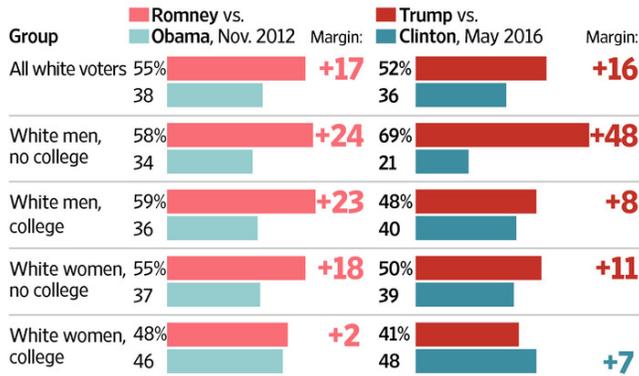
A better question is how he could win without such a miracle. There are two basic paths by which he could do this: The Florida path, in which he wins the giant Sunshine State and its 29 electoral votes, and the non-Florida path.

The Florida path is much easier. If Mr. Trump wins that state, and then tacks on, for example, Ohio, Iowa, New Hampshire and Maine—all possibilities—he would get to 267 electoral votes, just three short of what he needs. He'd then have to win just one other state from a list of possibilities: Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Michigan, or, yes, New Jersey.

The non-Florida path is a lot tougher. If Mr. Trump loses Florida but wins Iowa, Maine and New Hampshire as well as both rust-belt giants

Trump's Support Among White Voters

Donald Trump has far stronger appeal among white men who lack a four-year college degree—one way of designating working-class men—than did GOP nominee Mitt Romney in 2012. But Mr. Trump lags behind Mr. Romney in support from several other groups of white voters, notably women with college degrees.



Source: WSJ/NBC News telephone polls, most recent of 1,000 registered voters conducted May 15-19; margin of error: +/- 3.1 pct. pts. THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Pennsylvania, he'd reach only 258 votes. He then would have to tip Virginia, New Jersey or Michigan, or some combination of two other swing states, to get over the top. And he'd have to keep Democrats from swinging their way the previously Republican states of Arizona, Georgia and Utah, all seemingly in play.

A tough assignment, yes—but not impossible in a year in which the improbable already has happened.

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com



TODAY'S MARKETS
Stocks Slip Amid Post-Brexit Fallout



MIDDLE EAST NEWS
In Syria's Broken Society, Brides Are Celebrating Without the Groom



U.S. NEWS
How Hillary Clinton Shifted Leftward



POLITICS AND POLICY
House to Vote on Mental Health Bill



FILM
'Café Society': Designing 1930s Hollywood for Woody Allen



HEARD ON THE STREET
Low-Yield Blues? Corporate Bonds Are the Last Ones Paying