DA

Obama will win now – polling data points to swing state leads and a national average

SILVER 9-20

NATE SILVER is an American statistician, sabermetrician, psephologist, and writer September 20, 2012, Sept. 19: A Wild Day in the Polls, but Obama Ends Up Ahead http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/20/sept-19-a-wild-day-in-the-polls-but-obama-ends-up-ahead/

Following the polls on Wednesday reminded me of the aphorism: “If you don’t like the weather in Chicago, wait five minutes.” When there are twenty or more polls published in day, as there were on Wednesday, there are necessarily going to be some stronger or weaker ones for either candidate. There are also going to be some outliers — sometimes because of unavoidable statistical variance, sometimes because the polling company has a partisan bias, sometimes because it just doesn’t know what it’s doing. (And sometimes: because of all of the above.) By the end of Wednesday, however, it was clear that the preponderance of the evidence favored Mr. Obama. He got strong polls in Ohio, Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin and Virginia, all from credible pollsters. Mr. Obama, who had been slipping in our forecast recently, rebounded to a 75.2 percent chance of winning the Electoral College, up from 72.9 percent on Tuesday. The most unambiguously bearish sign for Mr. Romney are the poor polls he has been getting in swing states from pollsters that use a thorough methodology and include cellphones in their samples. There have been 16 such polls published in the top 10 tipping point states since the Democratic convention ended, all conducted among likely voters. Mr. Obama has held the lead in all 16 of these polls. With the exception of two polls in Colorado — where Mr. Obama’s polling has been quite middling recently — all put him ahead by at least four points. On average, he led by 5.8 percentage points between these 16 surveys. If this is what the post-convention landscape looks like, then Mr. Romney is in a great deal of trouble. Perhaps these polls imply that Mr. Obama’s lead is somewhere in the range of five percentage points in the popular vote — national polls suggest that it’s a bit less than that, but state polls provide useful information about the national landscape. Or perhaps they imply that Mr. Obama is overperforming slightly in the swing states. Either way, that’s a pretty big deficit for Mr. Romney to overcome. What’s more, Mr. Obama was at 49.4 percent of the vote on average between these 16 surveys, meaning that he’d need to capture only a tiny sliver of the undecided vote to get to an outright majority. (If we’re being technical, 49.4 percent might be sufficient for him to win these states on its own, since perhaps 1 or 2 percent of the vote will go to third-party candidates.) To be clear: I do not recommend that this is the only data you look at. The forecast model also evaluates polls that exclude cellphones, although it gives them slightly less weight. Those have not necessarily shown a great deal of strength for Mr. Obama. And just as the model looks at state polls to infer the national trend, it also does the reverse, using the national polls (and essentially the assumption of ”uniform swing”) to infer where the states stand. The national polls show a spread right now from an effective tie to an eight-point lead for Mr. Obama. Taken as a whole, they seem to imply more like a three or four point lead for Mr. Obama rather than something in the range of five points. (These distinctions really do make a difference, especially with so few undecided voters left.)

Offshore drilling unpopular – environmental groups

Oil & Gas Journal 12

Oil & Gas Journal, International Petroleum News and Technology, Nick Snow, OGJ Washington Editor, 6/28/12, “DOI announces proposed final 2012-17 OCS leasing program”, http://www.ogj.com/articles/2012/06/doi-announces-proposed-final-2012-17-ocs-leasing-program.html//jchen

The proposed final program also drew fire from environmental and other groups over its planned Arctic Alaska activities. “We are disappointed that the Obama administration’s final 2012-17 offshore program will include the two new Arctic Ocean lease sales despite the opposition of nearly half a million people, including many who live on America’s Arctic coast,” said Kristen Miller, the Alaska Wilderness League’s government affairs director. “The conservation community has long called on the Obama administration to implement a comprehensive management and conservation plan for America’s Arctic before allowing any further steps toward drilling in this fragile ecosystem.”

#### Plan alienates green voters that are key to the election

NOON 4—23—12 executive director for Energy Makes America Great Inc. & the Citizens’ Alliance for Responsible Energy (CARE) [Marita Noon, Environmentalism: Less About Hugging Trees, More About Bringing America To Her Knees, <http://www.westernjournalism.com/environmentalism-less-about-hugging-trees-more-about-bringing-america-to-her-knees-2/>]

Despite his speechmaking touting an “all of the above” energy strategy, President Obama’s reelection could depend his willingness to stand in the way of developing America’s resources. Back in November, at the

 time of the original Keystone XL pipeline decision, environmental groups threatened to pull their backing for Obama if he approved the pipeline. Michael Brune, executive director of America’s largest environmental group, the Sierra Club, is on record as saying that the President’s decision on Keystone would have “a very big impact” on how they funnel their resources—with the obvious implication being that they would not support the President if he didn’t do their bidding. Other environmental groups such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Environmental Defense Fund took a different tack but with the same goal. A press release from the Rainforest Action Network promised the President that if he denied Keystone, he would see a “surge of enthusiasm from the green base that supported you so strongly in the last election.” Environmental groups clearly understand they have the ability to influence the President’s decisions based on their claims to support—or not support—his bid for a second term. So far, they must be pleased with his administration’s efforts. On Wednesday, April 18, leading environmental groups came out with their official endorsement of President Obama—“the earliest” the groups “have ever endorsed in a presidential election cycle.” According to The Hill, “The groups are planning a mix of advertising and on-the-ground work on Obama’s behalf.” However, Glenn Hurowitz, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy, thinks the groups should have waited longer before endorsing the President. He believes the early endorsement removes the “greens’ leverage.” Most pundits agree that the 2012 presidential election will be a hard fought, close race. In order to win, President Obama needs the four million votes from “greens” the groups represent—and they do not want increased domestic resource extraction. According to BusinessWeek, funding from environmental groups is currently less than 50% of what it was through the same period in the 2008 campaign—one of the reasons cited: “renewing offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.”

The election is critical for US-Russian co-operation – Romney destroys relations, Obama improves them

Larison 12

Daniel Larison is a Ph.D. graduate from the University of Chicago,He is contributing editor at The American Conservative and writes a column for The Week online. June 20, 2012 “The Presidential Election’s Effects on U.S.-Russian Relations” http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-presidential-elections-effects-on-u-s-russian-relations/?print=1

Andrew Weiss considers [1] the reasons for U.S.-Russian tensions, and finds the presidential elections in both countries to be partly responsible: A third big drag on U.S.-Russian relations comes from the so-called silly season that accompanies presidential campaigns in both countries. Of course, 2012 was always supposed to be a dead year in U.S.-Russian relations. Back-to-back presidential campaigns have overshadowed just about everything on the bilateral agenda, and practically no one in Washington or Moscow had been predicting that significant progress could be made this year on the toughest issues. Take missile defense, for example. Putin has shown little interest in cutting deals on major arms control issues with a U.S. president who might not be around in just a few months time to implement them. Not only does Putin have no strong incentive to take risks in pursuing new deals with Obama before the election, but he has good reason to believe that a Romney administration would halt or reverse most or all of Obama’s initiatives related to Russia. If Romney wins in November, Putin has even less incentive to cooperate with the U.S., because he will assume (correctly) that the incoming administration is going to be much more antagonistic. Arms control isn’t likely to be a top priority in a Romney White House. To the extent that he has said anything about arms control, Romney is openly hostile to new agreements and unwilling to make even the smallest concessions on missile defense. The good news is that U.S.-Russian relations might start to recover once the election is over, but that depends on the outcome. Romney’s election would represent the confirmation of Russian hard-liners’ suspicions that the post-2008 thaw in relations was a fluke and couldn’t be sustained. Indeed, the Republican nominee seems to have crafted his Russia policy to maximize distrust and paranoia in Moscow. The 2008 and 2012 campaigns have been unusual in the post-Cold War era for the intensity of anti-Russian sentiment expressed by the Republican nominees in these cycles. If it had just been the 2008 cycle, it could have attributed to McCain’s longstanding anti-Russian attitudes and dismissed as such. The re-emergence of Russophobia as a major theme of Republican foreign policy makes that impossible. Weiss also points to the danger that Putin will contribute to wrecking the relationship for opportunistic domestic reasons: Still, Putin knows how to cater to the two-thirds of the Russian electorate that voted for him in March and reside primarily in Russia’s smaller cities and countryside. He may find it hard to resist the temptation to play upon their worst fears and anti-Western stereotypes. Sacrificing the past several years of dramatic improvement in the U.S.-Russian relationship may seem like a small price to pay if it breathes new life and legitimacy into his rule. If Romney is elected, his desire to scrap good relations with Russia would make it extremely easy for Putin to do just that.

Russia-US standoff would Russia cause proliferation, terrorism, and nuclear war.

Alexei Arbatov, Ph.D., fellow, Russian Academy of Sciences, fmr. Deputy Chair, Duma Defense Committee, September 2007. [Russia in Global Affairs (2), Is a New Cold War Imminent? P. **http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/20/1130.html**]

Other “centers of power” would immediately derive benefit from the growing Russia-West standoff, using it in their own interests. China would receive an opportunity to occupy even more advantageous positions in its economic and political relations with Russia, the U.S. and Japan, and would consolidate its influence in Central and South Asia and the Persian Gulf region. India, Pakistan, member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and some exalted regimes in Latin America would hardly miss their chance, either. A multipolar world that is not moving toward nuclear disarmament is a world of an expanding Nuclear Club. While Russia and the West continue to argue with each other, states that are capable of developing nuclear weapons of their own will jump at the opportunity. The probability of nuclear weapons being used in a regional conflict **will increase significantly.** International Islamic extremism and terrorism will increase dramatically; this threat represents the reverse side of globalization. The situation in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Middle East, and North and East Africa will further destabilize. The wave of militant separatism, trans-border crime and terrorism will also infiltrate Western Europe, Russia, the U.S., and other countries. The **surviving disarmament treaties** (the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty) **will collapse**. In a worst-case scenario, there is the chance that an adventuresome regime will initiate a missile launch against territories or space satellites of one or several great powers with a view to triggering an exchange of nuclear strikes between them. Another high probability is the threat of a terrorist act with the use of a nuclear device in one or several major capitals of the world.

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Text

The United States Federal Government should remove export restrictions on American natural gas

Counterplan solves Japan relations

Cronin et al 1AC AUTHOR 12 (Dr. Patrick, Senior Advisor and Senior Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program – Center for a New American Security, Paul S. Giarra, President of Global Strategies and Transformation, Zachary M. Hosford, Research Associate – Center for a New American Security, Daniel Katz, Researcher – Center for a New American Security, “The China Challenge: Military, Economic and Energy Choices Facing the US-Japan Alliance,” April, CNAS, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS\_TheChinaChallenge\_Cronin\_0.pdf)

The United States and Japan should identify complementarities in their energy strategies. As part of a newfound prioritization of energy security, government and industry officials in both the United States and Japan should work collaboratively to further connect their strategies in ways that will benefit both countries. For example, the United States government should not enact export restrictions on American natural gas. Although some major American manufacturers rely on cheap supplies of domestic natural gas, the federal government should permit companies to export their product to foreign customers on the open market, including Japan, thereby boosting revenues and increasing jobs in the United States and providing cheaper natural gas to Japan.

It’s also key to solve trade leadership

Levi 1AC AUTHOR 12 (Michael, Senior Fellow for Energy and Environment – Council on Foreign Relations)

(The Case for Natural Gas Exports <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/16/opinion/the-case-for-natural-gas-exports.html?_r=0>)

A related political and economic debate has emerged. A string of companies have applied for permission to export liquefied natural gas, or L.N.G., to countries that don’t have special free-trade agreements with the United States. Under federal law, the Energy Department has to find such exports to be consistent with the “national interest” before they can occur, though the term isn’t clearly defined.

Last week, more than 40 members of Congress urged President Obama to move forward with approval, citing the benefits of free trade and the prospect of creating more jobs as demand for exports leads to growth in gas production.

Critics pose a contrary set of arguments. They fear that demand for gas exports might encourage hydraulic fracturing, threatening water supplies, and they worry that siphoning off domestic gas for export will raise costs for domestic consumers and disadvantage American manufacturers that benefit from low-cost fuel.

There are also national security concerns. Some see an opportunity to frustrate the two biggest holders of natural gas reserves: Russia and Iran. Critics would prefer that natural gas be used to replace oil in American automobiles.

In a recent study I estimated that American firms could make up to $3 billion per year by producing and exporting liquefied natural gas. It’s true that gas-dependent industries would have to pay more because of higher gas prices, but those costs would be substantially smaller than the benefits. But there are bigger stakes involved than just money. A decision to constrain natural-gas exports could have dangerous reverberations for American trade.

For example, the United States has filed with the World Trade Organization a challenge to Chinese restrictions on exports of so-called rare earth minerals, which are crucial for new technologies like wind turbines, missiles and smartphones. If Washington hypocritically limits gas exports, it might as well write the Chinese brief.

There are other problems with the opponents’ arguments. To truly keep America’s natural gas within our borders would require restrictions on exports to our big trade partners Canada and Mexico, and that would put the North American Free Trade Agreement at risk. Forswearing exports would also eliminate a valuable tool for American trade negotiators: countries like Japan want privileged access to United States gas, and American negotiators can seek concessions in return.

1NC Solvency

#### New EPA rules proves government regulations will be lenient

Plumer 12

Brad Plumer, reporter at the Washington Post writing about domestic policy, particularly energy and environmental issues, 4/18/12, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/as-fracking-booms-the-epa-treads-cautiously/2012/04/18/gIQAxCvLRT\_blog.html

And, as calls grow for fracking oversight, there are questions about how strictly the Environmental Protection Agency will clamp down. On Wednesday, the EPA finalized its first-ever rules on air pollution from natural gas wells and offered hints of its approach on this — the government plans to tread quite cautiously.

#### All offshore areas with high resource potential are currently available

Department of the Interior 12

Department of the Interior 6/28/12, “Interior Finalizes Plan to Make All Highest-Resource Areas in the U.S. Offshore Available for Oil & Gas Leasing,” <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Interior-Finalizes-Plan-to-Make-All-Highest-Resource-Areas-in-the-US-Offshore-Available-for-Oil-and-Gas-Leasing.cfm>

WASHINGTON – As part of the Obama administration’s all-of-the-above energy strategy to expand safe and responsible domestic energy production, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Director Tommy Beaudreau today announced the release of a proposed final offshore oil and gas leasing program for 2012-2017 that makes all areas with the highest-known resource potential – including frontier areas in the Alaska Arctic – available for oil and gas leasing in order to further reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. Consistent with the President’s direction, the Obama administration’s Proposed Final U.S. Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program makes available areas focused on the most likely recoverable oil and gas resources that the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf is estimated to hold. It schedules 15 potential lease sales for the five-year period, including 12 in the Gulf of Mexico and three off the coast of Alaska. “Put simply, this program opens the vast majority of known offshore oil and gas resources for development over the next five years and includes a cautious but forward-looking leasing strategy for the Alaska Arctic,” said Secretary Salazar. “President Obama has made clear his commitment to expanding responsible domestic oil and gas production in America as part of this all-of-the-above energy strategy, and with comprehensive safety standards in place, this plan will help us to continue to grow America’s energy economy and further reduce our dependence on foreign oil, while protecting marine, costal and human health.” Today’s announcement builds on a series of actions taken by the Obama administration to meet President Obama’s directive to continue to expand safe and responsible production of America’s important domestic resources. Successful offshore lease sales held by the Department of the Interior in the Western and Central Gulf of Mexico in recent months have made available approximately 60 million acres of resource-rich areas for industry leasing that will bring additional domestic resources to market.

#### Lands are opened to drilling faster than the industry can drill

Brookings 12

Brookings 6/27/12, http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/06/27-cheap-gas-baily?rssid=LatestFromBrookings&utm\_source=feedburner&utm\_medium=feed&utm\_campaign=Feed%3A+BrookingsRSS%2Ftopfeeds%2FLatestFromBrookings+%28Latest+From+Brookings%29

But government support isn't the main problem. Drilling is being authorized today at rates that exceed the industry's capacity to drill. The real problem is that drilling for shale gas and oil could be slowed or stopped if disputes over fracking are not resolved in a way that addresses the public's concerns. Activity has already been suspended in some promising areas.

#### Offshore production is uneconomic – shale gas is too cheap

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management 12

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management 6/12, “Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017,” <http://www.boem.gov/uploadedFiles/BOEM/Oil_and_Gas_Energy_Program/Leasing/Five_Year_Program/2012-2017_Five_Year_Program/PFP%2012-17.pdf>

Much of the growth in natural gas production comes from shale plays with high concentrations of natural gas liquids and crude oil, which have a higher value in energy equivalent terms than dry natural gas. EIA anticipates the United States will become a net exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by 2016, exporting as much as 0.74 tcf by 2035. U.S. net pipeline imports of natural gas, primarily from Canada and Mexico, are expected to decline by 15 percent from 2012 to 2035, while pipeline gas exports to Mexico would grow by over 400 percent over the same period. This conversion from net importer to exporter reflects reserve depletion in foreign countries, a growing demand from other markets outside of the United States, and an abundant natural gas supply and accompanying low prices in the United States. The AEO 2012 shows annual offshore natural gas production for the GOM increasing from 2.12 tcf to 2.60 tcf over the period studied, representing an increase of a little less than 1 percent annually. Unlike onshore production, EIA predicts GOM natural gas production will decrease slightly in the intermediate term since many undiscovered offshore fields are uneconomic at the natural gas prices projected over the next few years. Total offshore natural gas production fluctuates between 2.0 and 2.8 tcf per year over the period studied as new large projects directed towards liquids development are started over time. While GOM natural gas production thus contributes a small percentage of the Nation’s natural gas supplies over the next two decades, it remains an important and stable source of domestic natural gas.

#### Offshore is unnecessary – shale will keep production high for over a century

Pierce 11

Richard J. Pierce Jr., Law Professor, George Washington, 10/17/11, “Natural Gas: A Long Bridge to a Promising Destination,” Utah Environmental Law Review, Forthcoming, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=1945412&http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=1945412

New uses of two old technologies—horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing—have enabled the U.S. to increase its natural gas reserves by 75% during the period 2004-2011.4 The supply of gas from fracturing of shale formations has increased at the rate of 48% per year since 2006, and the Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts a continuation of that trend for many more years.5 In the short-term, that increase in reserves has increased deliverable quantities of gas by 14 per cent6 and allowed us to displace 10 per cent of the coal we were using to generate electricity just three years ago.7 It has also resulted in a price of gas that is only about thirty per cent of the price of oil and approximately equal to the price of coal.8 This remarkable change in conditions in the U.S. gas market is likely to yield more significant results in the future. Most experts believe that our gas resource base is now sufficient to meet U.S. demand for over a century and to allow us to use gas as our primary generating fuel for the foreseeable future.9

#### Deregulation causes public backlash that will shut down drilling – far more costly than regulation

Levi 12

Michael Levi, senior fellow for energy and the environment and director of the Program on Energy Security and Climate Change at the Council on Foreign Relations, July/August 12, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists vol. 68 no. 4, http://bos.sagepub.com/content/68/4/52.full

There is one way, though, that the cost of natural gas could rise further: fierce public opposition to production, which could keep shale gas in the ground. Indeed, fracking for natural gas has become the focus of immense controversy over the past couple years, particularly in states like New York and Pennsylvania that aren’t used to large-scale oil and gas development. Environmental worries, aside from climate change, span three main areas: People worry about threats to clean water, about impacts to local communities from large-scale industrial activity, and, most recently, about small earthquakes that appear to be triggered by fracking-related activity. All of these concerns mix real problems (like safe treatment of toxic fluids that flow back to the surface after fracking, damage to local roads, and induced seismicity from poorly placed disposal wells) with manufactured ones (like the possibility that fracking fluids will seep into water supplies through cracks in shale). Unless companies and public policy address both types of concerns effectively, local opposition to development could become a big barrier to extraction, particularly in the Northeast. Gas industry advocates who insist on blaming “public misunderstanding” for many of the concerns (seemingly intent on replicating the worst mistakes of the nuclear industry) are missing a critical point: The public ultimately decides whether or not gas gets produced. If industry and its allies stubbornly resist steps that could build public confidence—like mandatory transparency rules and some sort of inclusion of shale gas development under the Safe Drinking Water Act—on the grounds that the fears in question aren’t justified, they may find their access to reserves cut off. This would be far more costly than spending small sums to comply with new regulations. The net result would be bad for the United States—but, by driving up the price of natural gas, it would be good for nuclear power.

1NC Energy Revolution

Multipolarity’s inevitable – economic realities make hegemony unsustainable.

Layne 12 [Christopher Layne is professor and Robert M. Gates Chair in National Security at Texas A & M University’s George H. W. Bush School of Government and Public Service. His next book, for Yale University Press, is After the Fall: International Politics, U.S. Grand Strategy, and the End of the Pax Americana. The (Almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing January 27, 2012 http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/almost-triumph-offshore-balancing-6405?page=1]

The DSG is a response to two drivers. First, the United States is in economic decline and will face a **serious fiscal crisis** **by the end of this decade.** As President Obama said, the DSG reflects the need to “put our fiscal house in order here at home and renew our long-term economic strength.” The **best indicators** of U.S. decline are its GDP relative to potential competitors and its share of world manufacturing output. China’s manufacturing output has now edged past that of the United States and accounts for just over 18 or 19 percent of world manufacturing output. With respect to GDP, virtually all leading economic forecasters agree that, measured by market-exchange rates, China’s aggregate GDP will exceed that of the United States by the end of the current decade. Measured by purchasing-power parity, some leading economists believe China already is the world’s number-one economy. Clearly, China is on the verge of overtaking the United States economically. At the end of this decade, when the ratio of U.S. government debt to GDP is likely to exceed the danger zone of 100 percent, the United States will face a severe fiscal crisis. In a June 2011 report, the Congressional Budget Office warned that unless Washington drastically slashes expenditures—including on entitlements and defense—and raises taxes, it is headed for a fiscal train wreck. Moreover, concerns about future inflation and America’s ability to repay its debts could imperil the U.S. dollar’s reserve-currency status. That currency status allows the United States to avoid difficult “guns-or-butter” trade-offs and live well beyond its means while enjoying entitlements at home and geopolitical preponderance abroad. But that works only so long as foreigners are willing to lend the United States money. Speculation is now commonplace about the dollar’s long-term hold on reserve-currency status. It would have been unheard of just a few years ago. The second driver behind the new Pentagon strategy is the shift in global wealth and power from the Euro-Atlantic world to Asia. As new great powers such as China and, eventually, India emerge, important regional powers such as Russia, Japan, Turkey, Korea, South Africa and Brazil will assume more prominent roles in international politics. Thus, the post-Cold War “unipolar moment,” when the United States commanded the global stage as the “sole remaining superpower,” will be **replaced by a multipolar** international **system.** The Economist recently projected that China’s defense spending will equal that of the United States by 2025. By the middle or end of the next decade, China will be positioned to shape a new international order based on the rules and norms that it prefers—and, perhaps, to provide the international economy with a new reserve currency.

Heg doesn’t solve conflict.

Fettweis 11 [Christopher, Prof. of Political Science – Tulane, Dangerous Times?: The International Politics of Great Power Peace Page 73-6]

The primary attack on restraint, or justification for internationalism, posits that if the United Stets were to withdraw from the world, a variety of ills would sweep over key regions and eventually pose threats to U.S. security and/or prosperity, nese problems might take three forms (besides the obvious, if remarkably unlikely, direct threats to the homeland): generalized chaos, hostile imbalances in Eurasia, and/or failed states. Historian Arthur Schlesinger was typical when he worried that restraint would mean "a chaotic, violent, and ever more dangerous planet."69 All of these concerns either implicitly or explicitly assume that the presence of the United States is the primary reason for international stability, and if that presence were withdrawn chaos would ensue. In other words, they depend upon hegemonic-stability logic. Simply stated, the hegemonic stability theory proposes that international peace is only possible when there is one country strong enough to make and enforce a set of rules. At the height of Pax Romana between 27 BC and 180 AD, for ex¬ample, Rome was able to bring unprecedented peace and security to the Mediterranean. The Pax Britannica of the nineteenth century brought a level of stabil¬ity to the high seas. Perhaps the current era is peaceful because the United States has established a de facto Pax Americana where no power is strong enough to challenge its dominance, and because it has established a set of rules that are gen¬erally in the interests of all countries to follow. Without a benevolent hegemon, some strategists fear, instability may break out around the globe.70 Unchecked conflicts could cause humanitarian disaster and, in today's interconnected world, economic turmoil that would ripple throughout global financial markets. If the United States were to abandon its commitments abroad, argued Art, the world would "become a more dangerous place" and, sooner or later, that would "re¬dound to America's detriment."71 If the massive spending that the United States engages in actually provides stability in the international political and economic systems, then perhaps internationalism is worthwhile. There are good theoretical and empirical reasons, however, to believe that US **hegemony is not the** primary **cause of** the current era of s**tability**. First of all, the hegemonic-stability argument overstates the role that the United States plays in the system. No country is strong enough to police the world on its own. The only way there can be stability in the community of great powers is if self-policing occurs, if states have decided that their interests are served by peace. If no pacific normative shift had occurred among the great powers that was filtering down through the system, then no amount of international constabulary work by the United States could maintain stability. Likewise, if it true that such a shift has occurred, then most of what the hegemon spends to bring stability would be wasted. The 5 percent of the world's population that 2\* m the United States simply could not force peace upon an unwilling 95. At the nsk of beating the metaphor to death, the United States may be patrolling a neighborhood that has **already rid itself of crime.** Stability and unipolarity may besimply coincidental., order for U.S. hegemony to be the reason for global stability, the rest ome World would have to expect reward for good behavior and fear punishment to/ bad. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has not always proven to be especially eager to engage in humanitarian interventions abroad. Even rather incontrovertible evidence of genocide has not been sufficient to inspire action. Hegemonic stability can only take credit for influencing those decisions that would have ended in War without the presence, whether physical or psychologi-cal, of the United States. Ethiopia and Eritrea are hardly the only states that could go to War without the slightest threat of U.S. intervention. Since most of the world today is free to fight without U.S. involvement, something else must be at work. Stability exists in many places where no hegemony is present. Second, the limited **empirical evidence** we have suggests that there is **little connection** between the relative level of U.S. activism and international stability. During the 1990s the United States cut back on its defense spending fairly substantially. By 1998 the United States was spending $100 billion less on de¬fense in real terms than it had in 1990.72 To internationalists, defense hawks, and other believers in hegemonic stability, this irresponsible "peace dividend" endangered both national and global security. "No serious analyst of American military capabilities," argued Kristol and Kagan, "doubts that the defense budget has been cut much too far to meet America's responsibilities to itself and to world peace."73 If the pacific trends were due not to U.S. hegemony but a strengthening norm against interstate War, however, one would not have expected an increase in global instability and violence. The verdict from the past two decades is fairly plain: The world grew more peaceful while the United States cut its forces. No state seemed to believe that its security was endangered by a less-capable Pentagon, or at least none took any action that would suggest such a belief. **No militaries were enhanced to address power vacuums; no security dilemmas drove mistrust and arms races; no re-gional balancing occurred** once the stabilizing presence of the U.S. military was diminished. The rest of the world acted as if the threat of international War was not a pressing concern, despite the reduction in U.S. capabilities. The incidence and magnitude of global conflict **declined** while the United States cut its military spending under President Clinton, and it kept declining as the Bush Administra-tion ramped spending back up. No complex statistical analysis should be neces-sary to reach the conclusion that the two are unrelated. It is also worth noting for our purposes that the United States was no less safe. Military spending figures by themselves are insufficient to disprove a con- nection between overall U.S. actions and international stability. One could pre- sumably argue that spending is not the only, or even the best, indication of he- LTm? T 15 inSt6ad US" foreign Political and security commitments Zcre7Tn I ^ ndther was -gnificantly altered during this period, mcreased conflict should not have been expected. Alternately, advocates of heg¬emonic stability could believe that relative rather than absolute spending is de¬cisive in bringing peace. Although the United States cut back on its spending during the 1990s, its relative advantage never wavered. However, even if it were true that either U.S. commitments or relative spend-ing accounts for international pacific trends, the 1990s make it obvious that stability can be sustained at drastically lower levels. In other words, even if one believes that there is a level of engagement below which the United States cannot drop without imperiling global stability, a rational grand strategist would still cut back on engagement (and spending) until that level is determined. As of now, we have no idea how cheap hegemonic stability could be, or if a low point exists at all. Since the United States ought to spend the minimum amount of its blood and treasure while seeking the maximum return on its investment, engagement should be scaled back until that level is determined. Grand strategic decisions are never final; continual adjustments can and must be made as time goes on. And if the constructivist interpretation of events is correct and the global peace is inher-ently stable, no increase in conflict would ever occur, irrespective of U.S. spend-ing, which would save untold trillions for an increasingly debt-ridden nation. It is also perhaps worth noting that if opposite trends had unfolded, if other states had reacted to news of cuts in U.S. defense spending with more aggressive or insecure behavior, then internationalists would surely argue that their expec-tations had been fulfilled. If increases in conflict would have been interpreted as evidence for the wisdom of internationalist strategies, then logical consistency demands that the lack thereof should at least pose a problem. As it stands, the ordy data we have regarding the likely systemic reaction to a more restrained United States suggests that current peaceful trends are unrelated to U.S. military pending. Evidently the rest of the world can operate quite effectively without ^e presence of a global policeman. Those who think otherwise base their view on faith alone. tf the only thing standing between the world and chaos is the U.S. military Presence, then an adjustment in grand strategy would be exceptionally counter-productive. But it is worth recalling that none of the other explanations for the decline of War—**nuclear weapons, complex economic interdependence, international and domestic political institutions, evolution in ideas and norms** necessitate an activist America to maintain their validity. Were America to be-co\*e more restrained, nuclear weapons would still affect the calculations of the would-be aggressor; the process of globalization would continue, deepening the complexity of economic interdependence; the United Nations could still deploy Peacekeepers where necessary; and democracy would not shrivel where it cur-\*7 exis\*s. Most importantly, the idea that war is a worthwhile way to resolve conflict would have no reason to return. As was argued in chapter 2, normative evolution is typically unidirectional. Strategic restraint in such a world would be virtually risk-free. Finally, some analysts have worried that a de facto surrender of U.S. hege¬mony would lead to a rise of Chinese influence. Indeed, China is the only other major power that has increased its military spending since the end of the Cold War, even if it is still a rather low 2 percent of its GDP. Such levels of effort do not suggest a desire to compete with, much less supplant, the United States. The much-ballyhooed decade-long military buildup has brought Chinese spending up to approximately one-tenth the level of that of the United States. It is hardly clear that restraint on the part of the United States would invite Chinese global dominance. Bradley Thayer worries that Chinese would become "the language of diplomacy, trade and commerce, transportation and navigation, the internet, world sport, and global culture," and that Beijing would come to "dominate sci¬ence and technology, in all its forms" to the extent that soon the world would witness a Chinese astronaut who not only travels to the Moon, but "plants the communist flag on Mars, and perhaps other planets in the future."74 Fortunately one need not ponder for too long the horrible specter of a red flag on Venus, since on the planet Earth, where War is no longer the dominant form of conflict resolution, the threats posed by even a rising China would not be terribly dire. The dangers contained in the terrestrial security environment are less frightening than ever before, no matter which country is strongest.

Retrenchment solves war.

MacDonald and Parent 11 [Paul K. MacDonald is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Williams College. Joseph M. Parent is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Miami. The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment International Security, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Spring 2011), pp. 7–44]

Contrary to these predictions, our analysis suggests some grounds for opti- mism. Based on the historical track record of great powers facing acute relative decline, the United States should be able to retrench in the coming decades. In the next few years, the United States is ripe to overhaul its military, shift bur- dens to its allies, and work to decrease costly international commitments. It is likely to initiate and become embroiled in **fewer militarized disputes** than the average great power and to settle these disputes more amicably. Some might view this prospect with apprehension, fearing the steady erosion of U.S. credi- bility. Yet our analysis suggests that retrenchment need not signal weakness. Holding on to exposed and expensive commitments simply for the sake of one’s reputation is a **greater geopolitical gamble** than withdrawing to cheaper, more defensible frontiers. Some observers might dispute our conclusions, arguing that hegemonic transitions are more conºict prone than other moments of acute relative de- cline. We counter that there are deductive and empirical reasons to doubt this argument. Theoretically, hegemonic powers should actually find it easier to manage acute relative decline. Fallen hegemons **still have formidable capabil- ity**, which threatens grave harm to any state that tries to cross them. Further, they are no longer the top target for balancing coalitions, and recovering hegemons may be influential because they can play a pivotal role in alliance formation. In addition, hegemonic powers, almost by definition, possess more extensive overseas commitments; they should be able to more readily identify and eliminate extraneous burdens without exposing vulnerabilities or exciting domestic populations. We believe **the empirical record supports these conclusions.** In particular, periods of hegemonic transition do not appear more conflict prone than those of acute decline. The last reversal at the pinnacle of power was the Anglo- American transition, which took place around 1872 and was resolved without armed confrontation. The tenor of that transition may have been inºuenced by a number of factors: both states were democratic maritime empires, the United States was slowly emerging from the Civil War, and Great Britain could likely coast on a large lead in domestic capital stock. Although China and the United States differ in regime type, similar factors may work to cushion the impend- ing Sino-American transition. Both are large, relatively secure continental great powers, a fact that mitigates potential geopolitical competition.93 China faces a variety of domestic political challenges, including strains among rival regions, which may complicate its ability to sustain its economic performance or en- gage in foreign policy adventurism.94 Most important, the United States is not in free fall. Extrapolating the data into the future, we anticipate the United States will experience a “moderate” decline, losing from 2 to 4 percent of its share of great power GDP in the five years after being surpassed by China sometime in the next decade or two.95 Given the relatively gradual rate of U.S. decline relative to China, the incen- tives for either side to run risks by courting conflict are minimal. The United States would still possess upwards of a third of the share of great power GDP, and would have little to gain from provoking a crisis over a peripheral issue. Conversely, China has few incentives to exploit U.S. weakness.96 Given the im- portance of the U.S. market to the Chinese economy, in addition to the critical role played by the dollar as a global reserve currency, it is unclear how Beijing could hope to consolidate or expand its increasingly advantageous position through direct confrontation. In short, the United States should be able to reduce its foreign policy com- mitments in East Asia in the coming decades without inviting Chinese expan- sionism. Indeed, there is evidence that a policy of retrenchment could reap potential beneªts. The drawdown and repositioning of U.S. troops in South Korea, for example, rather than fostering instability, has resulted in an im- provement in the occasionally strained relationship between Washington and Seoul.97 U.S. moderation on Taiwan, rather than encouraging hard-liners in Beijing, resulted in an improvement in cross-strait relations and reassured U.S. allies that Washington would not inadvertently drag them into a Sino-U.S. conºict.98 Moreover, Washington’s support for the development of multilateral security institutions, rather than harming bilateral alliances, could work to en- hance U.S. prestige while embedding China within a more transparent re- gional order.99 A policy of gradual retrenchment need not undermine the credibility of U.S. alliance commitments or unleash destabilizing regional security dilemmas. In- deed, even if Beijing harbored revisionist intent, it is unclear that China will have the force projection capabilities necessary to take and hold additional ter- ritory.100 By incrementally shifting burdens to regional allies and multilateral institutions, the United States can **strengthen the credibility of its core commit- ments** while accommodating the interests of a rising China. Not least among the beneªts of retrenchment is that it helps **alleviate an unsustainable finan- cial position**. Immense forward deployments will only **exacerbate U.S. grand strategic problems and risk unnecessary clashes.**101

Hegemony spurs proliferation.

Monteiro 12 [Nuno P., Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University. Unrest Assured Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful, International Security Volume 36, Number 3, Winter 2011/12]

What, then, is the value of unipolarity for the unipole? What can a unipole do that a great power in bipolarity or multipolarity cannot? My argument hints at the possibility that—at least in the security realm—unipolarity does not give the unipole greater influence over international outcomes.118 If unipolarity provides structural incentives for nuclear proliferation, it may, as Robert Jervis has hinted, “have within it the seeds if not of its own destruction, then at least of its modification.”119 For Jervis, “[t]his raises the question of what would remain of a unipolar system in a proliferated world. The American ability to coerce others would decrease but so would its need to defend friendly powers that would now have their own deterrents. The world would still be unipolar by most measures and considerations, but many countries would be able to protect themselves, perhaps even against the superpower. . . . In any event, the polarity of the system may become less important.”120 At the same time, nothing in my argument determines the decline of U.S. power. The level of conflict entailed by the strategies of defensive dominance, offensive dominance, and disengagement may be acceptable to the unipole and have only a marginal effect on its ability to maintain its preeminent position. Whether a unipole will be economically or militarily overstretched is an empirical question that depends on the magnitude of the disparity in power between it and major powers and the magnitude of the conflicts in which it gets involved. Neither of these factors can be addressed a priori, and so a theory of unipolarity must acknowledge the possibility of frequent conflict in a nonetheless durable unipolar system. Finally, my argument points to a “paradox of power preponderance.”121 By [End Page 39] putting other states in extreme self-help, a systemic imbalance of power requires the unipole to act in ways that minimize the threat it poses. **Only by exercising great restraint can it avoid** being involved in **wars.** If the unipole fails to exercise restraint, other states will develop their capabilities, **including nuclear weapons—restraining it all the same.**122 Paradoxically, then, more relative power does not necessarily lead to greater influence and a better ability to convert capabilities into favorable outcomes peacefully. In effect, unparalleled relative power requires unequaled self-restraint. [End Page 40]

Prolif means small conflicts go nuclear.

Sokolski 9, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, serves on the U.S. congressional Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, (Henry, Avoiding a Nuclear Crowd, Policy Review June & July, http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/46390537.html)

At a minimum, such developments will be a departure from whatever stability existed during the Cold War. After World War II, there was a clear subordination of nations to one or another of the two superpowers’ strong alliance systems — the U.S.-led free world and the Russian-Chinese led Communist Bloc. The net effect was relative peace with only small, nonindustrial wars. This alliance tension and system, however, no longer exist. Instead, we now have one superpower, the United States, that is capable of overthrowing small nations unilaterally with conventional arms alone, associated with a relatively weak alliance system ( nato) that includes two European nuclear powers (France and the uk). nato is increasingly integrating its nuclear targeting policies. The U.S. also has retained its security allies in Asia (Japan, Australia, and South Korea) but has seen the emergence of an increasing number of nuclear or nuclear-weapon-armed or -ready states. So far, the U.S. has tried to cope with independent nuclear powers by making them “strategic partners” (e.g., India and Russia), nato nuclear allies (France and the uk), “non-nato allies” (e.g., Israel and Pakistan), and strategic stakeholders (China); or by fudging if a nation actually has attained full nuclear status (e.g., Iran or North Korea, which, we insist, will either not get nuclear weapons or will give them up). In this world, every nuclear power center (our European nuclear nato allies), the U.S., Russia, China, Israel, India, and Pakistan could have significant diplomatic security relations or ties with one another but none of these ties is viewed by Washington (and, one hopes, by no one else) as being as important as the ties between Washington and each of these nuclear-armed entities (see Figure 3). There are limits, however, to what this approach can accomplish. Such a weak alliance system, with its expanding set of loose affiliations, risks becoming analogous to the international system that failed to contain offensive actions prior to World War I. Unlike 1914, there is no power today that can rival the projection of U.S. conventional forces anywhere on the globe. But in a world with an increasing number of nuclear-armed or nuclear-ready states, this may not matter as much as we think. In such a world, the actions of just one or two states or groups that might threaten to disrupt or overthrow a nuclear weapons state could check U.S. influence or ignite a war Washington could have difficulty containing. No amount of military science or tactics could assure that the U.S. could disarm or neutralize such threatening or unstable nuclear states.22 Nor could diplomats or our intelligence services be relied upon to keep up to date on what each of these governments would be likely to do in such a crisis (see graphic below): Combine these proliferation trends with the others noted above and one could easily create the perfect nuclear storm: Small differences between nuclear competitors that would put all actors on edge; an overhang of nuclear materials that could be called upon to break out or significantly ramp up existing nuclear deployments; and a variety of potential new nuclear actors developing weapons options in the wings. In such a setting, the military and nuclear rivalries between states could easily be much more intense than before. Certainly each nuclear state’s military would place an even higher premium than before on being able to weaponize its military and civilian surpluses quickly, to deploy forces that are survivable, and to have forces that can get to their targets and destroy them with high levels of probability. The advanced military states will also be even more inclined to develop and deploy enhanced air and missile defenses and long-range, precision guidance munitions, and to develop a variety of preventative and preemptive war options. Certainly, in such a world, relations between states could become far less stable. Relatively small developments — e.g., Russian support for sympathetic near-abroad provinces; Pakistani-inspired terrorist strikes in India, such as those experienced recently in Mumbai; new Indian flanking activities in Iran near Pakistan; Chinese weapons developments or moves regarding Taiwan; state-sponsored assassination attempts of key figures in the Middle East or South West Asia, etc. — could easily prompt nuclear weapons deployments with “strategic” consequences (arms races, strategic miscues, and even nuclear war). As Herman Kahn once noted, in such a world “every quarrel or difference of opinion may lead to violence of a kind quite different from what is possible today.”23 In short, we may soon see a future that neither the proponents of nuclear abolition, nor their critics, would ever want.

1NC LNG

#### US decoupled from international prices

Akerlof et. al. 12

George A. Akerlof, Economics Professor, UC Berkeley, et. al., 6/12, POLICY BRIEF 2012-04, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/6/13%20exports%20levi/06\_exports\_levi\_brief.pdf

The divergence of world prices for natural gas appears to have created an opportunity for U.S. firms to sell natural gas overseas at a profit. Until about five years ago, natural gas prices in the United States, Europe, and Asia were closely linked, but with the shale gas revolution in North America, this relationship has been, at least temporarily, broken (Figure 1). In 2012, the spot price for one thousand cubic feet of natural gas fell below $2 in the United States, while the same amount of natural gas sold for $11 in Europe and over $15 in Asia. Relatively high international gas prices and low prices in the United States have made the prospect of exporting natural gas attractive to some American businesses, and several have applied for permits to ship LNG. Less than ten years ago, the United States was expected to be dependent on imports of natural gas indefinitely. Analysts now predict that if exports of natural gas are allowed, the United States could export as much as six billion cubic feet of natural gas per day by the end of the decade.

#### US exports will be too small to swing the market

Ebinger 12

Charles Ebinger, senior fellow and director of the Energy Security Initiative at Brookings, former professor in energy economics at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, Kevin Massy, Assistant Director of the Energy Security Initiative, and Govinda Avasarala, Senior Research Assistant, 5/12, “Liquid Markets: Assessing the Case for U.S. Exports of Liquefied Natural Gas,” http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2012/5/02%20lng%20exports%20ebinger/0502\_lng\_exports\_ebinger.pdf

Although it will be important to global LNG markets, it is unlikely that the emergence of the United States as an exporter of LNG will change the existing pricing structure overnight. Not only is the market still largely dependent on long-term contracts, the overwhelming majority of new liquefaction capacity emerging in the next decade (largely from Australia) has already been contracted for at oil-indexed rates.108 The incremental LNG volumes supplied by the United States at floating Henry Hub rates will be small in comparison. But while U.S. LNG will not have a transformational impact, by establishing an alternate lower price for LNG derived through a different market mechanism, U.S. exports may be central in catalyzing future changes in LNG contract structure. As previously mentioned, this impact is already being felt in Europe. A number of German utilities have either renegotiated contracts or are seeking arbitration with natural gas suppliers in Norway and Russia. The Atlantic Basin will be a more immediate beneficiary of U.S. LNG exports than the Pacific Basin as many European contracts allow for periodic revisions to the oil-price linkage.109 In the Pacific Basin this contractual arrangement is not as common and most consumers are tied to their respective oil-linkage formulae for the duration of the contract.110 Despite the increasing demand following the Fukushima nuclear accident, however, Japanese LNG consumers are actively pursuing new arrangements for LNG contracts.111 There are other limits to the extent of the impact that U.S. LNG will have on global markets. It is unlikely that many of the LNG export facilities under consideration will reach final investment decision. Instead, it is more probable that U.S. natural gas prices will have rebounded sufficiently to the point that exports are not commercially viable beyond a certain threshold. (Figure 11 illustrates the estimated costs of delivering LNG to Japan in 2020.) This threshold, expected by many experts to be roughly 6 bcf/day by 2025, is modest in comparison to the roughly 11 bcf/day of Australian LNG export projects that have reached final investment decision and are expected to be online by 2020. Also, the impact of U.S. LNG exports could be limited by a number of external factors that will have a larger bearing on the future of global LNG prices. For instance, a decision by the Japanese government to phase-out nuclear power would significantly tighten global LNG markets and probably displace any benefit provided by U.S. LNG exports. Conversely, successful and rapid development of China’s shale gas reserves would limit the demand of one of the world’s fastest-growing natural gas consumers. However, to the extent that U.S. LNG exports can help bring about a more globalized pricing structure, they will have economic and geopolitical consequences.

#### Political opposition prevents exports

Levi 12

Michael Levi, senior fellow for energy and the environment and director of the Program on Energy Security and Climate Change at the Council on Foreign Relations, July/August 12, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists vol. 68 no. 4, http://bos.sagepub.com/content/68/4/52.full

What about consequences beyond the United States? So far the boom in natural gas production has been an exclusively American story. As a result, its impact on nuclear power has been limited globally. Shale gas has not been produced at scale elsewhere in the world. And, since transporting natural gas overseas is an expensive business—it can cost between $4 and $5 to move a thousand cubic feet of natural gas from the United States to Europe or Asia—cheap gas in the United States won’t automatically mean rock-bottom gas abroad, too. In addition, little export of liquefied natural gas from the United States is currently allowed by law; new large-scale gas exports, which are even more politically controversial than coal exports (because they threaten to undermine cheap electricity prices), would need to be approved before US and overseas markets would be fully linked. But there is reason to believe that overseas markets could eventually enjoy some of the benefits of the shale gas boom. Advanced Resources International, a respected consultancy, has estimated that the sheer volume of Chinese shale gas resources exceeds that of US resources, and Argentinean resources are close (EIA, 2011b). Other countries—including South Africa, Brazil, Poland, and France—are also believed to have significant stores. Yet cheaply producing these resources is a separate question. Public opposition has shut down shale gas development in France. The recent nationalization of YPF, the dominant oil and gas company in Argentina, will likely scare away foreign investment and, with it, the technology needed to develop unconventional gas. China may have the strongest prospects for large-scale development—yet too little is known about its shale resources to determine whether it can produce gas at prices anywhere close to those seen in the United States. For the time being, the nuclear power companies outside North America may be safe from the threat of a burgeoning natural gas industry.

The plan doesn’t solve trade leadership – restrictions on exporting to non-FTA countries will still exist – the plan just changes restrictions on production not exports.

And things like the stalled Doha talks, services, agricultural subsides are more important to trade.

#### US LNG would be shipped to Europe, not Asia – it’s much closer

Giberson 12

Michael Giberson, Center for Energy Commerce, Rawls College of Business, Texas Tech University, 2/21/12, “Is Asia the next big LNG market for the US?” http://theenergycollective.com/michaelgiberson/77169/lng-exports-view-brookings-institution

The Brookings Institution’s Energy Security Initiative has been looking at the changing natural gas market including, among other things, potential issues surrounding LNG exports from the United States. Overall it looks like reasonable stuff. But one claim made in a recent Brooking report [pdf], highlighted in a Wall Street Journal article today, had me scratching my head. From Brookings: Owing to growing gas demand, limited domestic supply, and a more rigid and expensive pricing structure, Asia represents a near-to-medium term opportunity for natural gas exports from the United States. The expansion of the Panama Canal by 2014 will allow for LNG tankers to traverse the isthmus, thereby improving the economics of U.S. Gulf Coast LNG shipments to East and South Asian markets and potentially allowing for an even shorter shipping route than from the Gulf Coast to the U.K. This would make U.S. exports competitive with future Middle Eastern and Australian LNG exports to the region. The WSJ quotes from the middle sentence, and I’m having trouble believing it. No matter how I look at it, shipping from the U.S. Gulf Coast to the U.K. appears to be a shorter route than shipping from the U.S. Gulf Coast to any East and South Asian market. (I.e., Houston to Bristol is about 4800 nautical miles, Houston through the Panama Canal to Toyko is about 9400 nautical miles. Hong Kong and other major Asian ports are farther than Toyko. See shipping distance calculator here.) The WSJ article is titled “Natural-Gas Glut Could Bypass Europe,” but if I were a European energy analyst, I wouldn’t bet on it. Sounds more like wishful thinking from Gazprom rather than reasoned analysis.

Japan alliance high and sustainable.

Weitz 11 [Richard, World Politics Review, Global Insights: Japan Doubles Down on U.S. Alliance 28 JUN 2011 http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/9307/global-insights-japan-doubles-down-on-u-s-alliance]

The triple catastrophe represented by Japan's March 11 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear emergency has thus far had two main effects on Japan's national security policies. First, the crisis has focused the attention of Japanese security managers inward toward domestic humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Second, it has reinforced the Japanese-U.S. alliance, which had already been strengthened by the Japanese government's decision to abandon its earlier quest for a more independent security policy in light of increased external threats from the East Asian mainland. Given this increased salience of external threats, Japan's earthquake-induced domestic preoccupation may prove to be of short duration.

Alt causes to ocean biodiversity outweigh – your evidence.

Pereltsvaig 12 (Asya, lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at Stanford University, “Resource exploration and environmental issues on Sakhalin Island,” GeoCurrents, 4-11, http://geocurrents.info/place/russia-ukraine-and-caucasus/siberia/resource-exploration-and-environmental-issues-on-sakhalin-island)

The Russian Far East is one of the world’s Last Great Wilds: home to numerous indigenous cultures, spectacular biodiversity, and one-of-a-kind ecosystems. But illegal logging, pirate fisheries, and reckless oil exploitation threaten this unique area. Sakhalin Island in particular has become a battleground between big Western oil companies, the Russian government, and environmentalist groups, with the Pacific salmon, gray whales, and the indigenous Nivkh people suffering

And this is just about one ocean – obviously global biodiversity is resilient and not affected by one pipeline in Japan-Russia – deepwater horizon and Exxon valdez prove oil spills aren’t catastrophic.