### Oil Cards

#### Oil independence efforts cause spiraling protectionism

Dennis Phillips, 6-9-2008; taught foreign policy at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, and American history and politics at Macquarie University, for over 30 years.; America's energy 'independence' <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/31686.html>

Bryce reminds us that, in this election year, the rhetoric of 'energy independence' has saturated the campaign of every presidential candidate. Everyone, it seems, is in favour of the United States freeing itself from the yoke of dependence on energy imports.¶ It is argued that a type of strategic Nirvana awaits. Once achieved, the great goal of energy independence will allow the country to cut its dependence on imported oil, restore stability to its blighted economy, turn its back on authoritarian oil-producing regimes, extricate its troops from the Middle East and live happily ever after.¶ The only problem is that it isn't going to happen - and the results would be disastrous if it did. The global energy business - worth about $US5 trillion a year - is one of the most integrated and interdependent commercial networks in the world. The US imports crude oil from more than 40 different countries, jet fuel from 26 countries and gasoline from 46. Dozens more countries, including Australia, supply the US with strategic mineral commodities (in Australia's case, uranium, manganese, bauxite, tantalum, titanium, nickel, magnesium, etc.)¶ For the US to try to achieve 'energy independence' in a globalised, interdependent world would be the short road to ruin, both for it and for countries like Australia supplying the raw materials. In reality, the rhetoric of 'energy independence' in American politics is a euphemism for foreign policy isolationism. Those sweet sounding words appeal to patriotic impulses and serve as a popular cover for protectionist trade policies.¶ Essentially what Bryce and other realist experts on the energy crisis are telling us is that, if we are to deal effectively with the complex challenges of the energy crisis, we must begin by replacing 'dangerous delusions' and mindless political rhetoric with smart power.

#### Great power wars and terrorism

MichaelPanzner2008**,** faculty at the New York Institute of Finance, 25-year veteran of the global stock, bond, and currency markets who has worked in New York and London for HSBC, Soros Funds, ABN Amro, Dresdner Bank, and JPMorgan Chase (, Financial Armageddon: Protect Your Future from Economic Collapse, Revised and Updated Edition, p. 136-138, googlebooks)

The rise in isolationism and protectionism will bring about ever more heated arguments and dangerous confrontations over shared sources of oil, gas, and other key commodities as well as factors of production that must, out of necessity, be acquired from less-than-friendly nations. Whether involving raw materials used in strategic industries or basic necessities such as food, water, and energy, efforts to secure adequate supplies will take increasing precedence in a world where demand seems constantly out of kilter with supply. Disputes over the misuse, overuse, and pollution of the environment and natural resources will become more commonplace. Around the world, such tensions will give rise to full-scale military encounters, often with minimal provocation. ¶ In some instances, economic conditions will serve as a convenient pretext for conflicts that stem from cultural and religious differences. Alternatively, nations may look to divert attention away from domestic problems by channeling frustration and populist sentiment toward other countries and cultures. Enabled by cheap technology and the waning threat of American retribution, terrorist groups will likely boost the frequency and scale of their horrifying attacks , bringing the threat of random violence to a whole new level. ¶ Turbulent conditions will encourage aggressive saber rattling and interdictions by rogue nations running amok. Age-old clashes will also take on a new, more healed sense of urgency. China will likely assume an increasingly belligerent posture toward Taiwan, while Iran may embark on overt colonization of its neighbors in the Mideast. Israel, for its part, may look to draw a dwindling list of allies from around the world into a growing number of conflicts. Some observers, like John Mearsheimer, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, have even speculated that an "intense confrontation" between the United States and China is "inevitable" at some point. ¶ More than a few disputes will turn out to be almost wholly ideological. Growing cultural and religious differences will be transformed from wars of words to battles soaked in blood. Long-simmering resentments could also degenerate quickly, spurring the basest of human instincts and triggering genocidal acts. Terrorists employing biological or nuclear weapons will vie with conventional forces using jets, cruise missiles, and bunker-busting bombs to cause widespread destruction. Many will interpret stepped-up conflicts between Muslims and Western societies as the beginnings of a new world war.

### 1NC Foreign Policy Impact

#### Romney’s foreign policy starts nuclear wars and blowback around the globe – includes Pakistan collapse, US-Russia, US-China, Iran prolif and strikes, US-Arab relations, peace process, economic collapse

Doug Bandow 5-15-2012; Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan. “Mitt Romney: The Foreign Policy of Know-Nothingism” http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/mitt-romney-foreign-policy-knownothingism

Romney’s overall theme is American exceptionalism and greatness, slogans that win public applause but offer no guidance for a bankrupt superpower that has squandered its international credibility. “This century must be an American century,” Romney proclaimed. “In an American century, America leads the free world and the free world leads the entire world.” He has chosen a mix of advisers, including the usual neocons and uber-hawks — Robert Kagan, Eliot Cohen, Jim Talent, Walid Phares, Kim Holmes, and Daniel Senor, for instance — that gives little reason for comfort. Their involvement suggests Romney’s general commitment to an imperial foreign policy and force structure. Romney is no fool, but he has never demonstrated much interest in international affairs. He brings to mind George W. Bush, who appeared to be largely ignorant of the nations he was invading. Romney may be temperamentally less likely to combine recklessness with hubris, but he would have just as strong an incentive to use foreign aggression to win conservative acquiescence to domestic compromise. This tactic worked well for Bush, whose spendthrift policies received surprisingly little criticism on the right from activists busy defending his war-happy foreign policy. The former Massachusetts governor has criticized President Obama for “a naked political calculation or simply sheer ineptitude” in following George W. Bush’s withdrawal timetable in Iraq and for not overriding the decision of a government whose independence Washington claims to respect. But why would any American policymaker want to keep troops in a nation that is becoming ever more authoritarian, corrupt, and sectarian? It is precisely the sort of place U.S. forces should not be tied down. In contrast, Romney has effectively taken no position on Afghanistan. At times he appears to support the Obama timetable for reducing troop levels, but he has also proclaimed that “Withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan under a Romney administration will be based on conditions on the ground as assessed by our military commanders.” Indeed, he insisted: “To defeat the insurgency in Afghanistan, the United States will need the cooperation of both the Afghan and Pakistani governments — we will only persuade Afghanistan and Pakistan to be resolute if they are convinced that the United States will itself be resolute,” and added, “We should not negotiate with the Taliban. We should defeat the Taliban.” Yet it’s the job of the president, not the military, to decide the basic policy question: why is the U.S. spending blood and treasure trying to create a Western-style nation state in Central Asia a decade after 9/11? And how long is he prepared to stay — forever? On my two trips to Afghanistan I found little support among Afghans for their own government, which is characterized by gross incompetence and corruption. Even if the Western allies succeed in creating a large local security force, will it fight for the thieves in Kabul? Pakistan is already resolute — in opposing U.S. policy on the ground. Afghans forthrightly view Islamabad as an enemy. Unfortunately, continuing the war probably is the most effective way to destabilize nuclear-armed Pakistan. What will Romney do if the U.S. military tells him that American combat forces must remain in Afghanistan for another decade or two in order to “win”? The ongoing AfPak conflict is not enough; Romney appears to desire war with Iran as well. No one wants a nuclear Iran, but Persian nuclear ambitiions began under America’s ally the Shah, and there is no reason to believe that the U.S. (and Israel) cannot deter Tehran. True, Richard Grenell, who briefly served as Romney’s foreign-policy spokesman, once made the astonishing claim that the Iranians “will surely use” nuclear weapons. Alas, he never shared his apparently secret intelligence about the leadership in Tehran’s suicidal tendencies. The Iranian government’s behavior has been rational even if brutal, and officials busy maneuvering for power and wealth do not seem eager to enter the great beyond. Washington uneasily but effectively deterred Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong, the two most prolific mass murderers in history. Iran is no substitute for them. Romney has engaged in almost infantile ridicule of the Obama administration’s attempt to engage Tehran. Yet the U.S. had diplomatic relations with Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia. Washington came to regret not having similar contact with Mao’s China. Even the Bush administration eventually decided that ignoring Kim Jong-Il’s North Korea only encouraged it to build more nuclear weapons faster. Regarding Iran, Romney asserted, “a military option to deal with their nuclear program remains on the table.” Building up U.S. military forces “will send an unequivocal signal to Iran that the United States, acting in concert with allies, will never permit Iran to obtain nuclear weapons... Only when the ayatollahs no longer have doubts about America’s resolve will they abandon their nuclear ambitions.” Indeed, “if all else fails... then of course you take military action,” even though, American and Iranian military analysts warn, such strikes might only delay development of nuclear weapons. “Elect me as the next president,” he declared, and Iran “will not have a nuclear weapon.” Actually, if Tehran becomes convinced that an attack and attempted regime change are likely, it will have no choice but to develop nuclear weapons. How else to defend itself? The misguided war in Libya, which Romney supported, sent a clear signal to both North Korea and Iran never to trust the West. Iran’s fears likely are exacerbated by Romney’s promise to subcontract Middle East policy to Israel. The ties between the U.S. and Israel are many, but their interests often diverge. The current Israeli government wants Washington to attack Iran irrespective of the cost to America. Moreover, successive Israeli governments have decided to effectively colonize the West Bank, turning injustice into state policy and making a separate Palestinian state practically impossible. Perceived American support for this creates enormous hostility toward the U.S. across the Arab and Muslim worlds. Yet Romney promises that his first foreign trip would be to Israel “to show the world that we care about that country and that region” — as if anyone anywhere, least of all Israel’s neighbors, doesn’t realize that. He asserted that “you don’t allow an inch of space to exist between you and your friends and allies,” notably Israel. The U.S. should “let the entire world know that we will stay with them and that we will support them and defend them.” Indeed, Romney has known Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for nearly four decades and has said that he would request Netanyahu’s approval for U.S. policies: “I’d get on the phone to my friend Bibi Netanyahu and say, ‘Would it help if I say this? What would you like me to do?’” Americans would be better served by a president committed to making policy in the interests of the U.S. instead. Romney’s myopic vision is just as evident when he looks elsewhere. For instance, he offered the singular judgment that Russia is “our number one geopolitical foe.” Romney complained that “across the board, it has been a thorn in our side on questions vital to America’s national security.” The Cold War ended more than two decades ago. Apparently Romney is locked in a time warp. Moscow manifestly does not threaten vital U.S. interests. Romney claimed that Vladimir “Putin dreams of ‘rebuilding the Russian empire’.” Even if Putin has such dreams, they don’t animate Russian foreign policy. No longer an ideologically aggressive power active around the world, Moscow has retreated to the status of a pre-1914 great power, concerned about border security and international respect. Russia has no interest in conflict with America and is not even much involved in most regions where the U.S. is active: Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Moscow has been helpful in Afghanistan, refused to provide advanced air defense weapons to Iran, supported some sanctions against Tehran, used its limited influence in North Korea to encourage nuclear disarmament, and opposes jihadist terrorism. This is curious behavior for America’s “number one geopolitical foe.” Romney’s website explains that he will “implement a strategy that will seek to discourage aggressive or expansionist behavior on the part of Russia,” but other than Georgia where is it so acting? And even if Georgia fell into a Russian trap, Tbilisi started the shooting in 2008. In any event, absent an American security guarantee, which would be madness, the U.S. cannot stop Moscow from acting to protect what it sees as vital interests in a region of historic influence. Where else is Russia threatening America? Moscow does oppose NATO expansion, which actually is foolish from a U.S. standpoint as well, adding strategic liabilities rather than military strengths. Russia strongly opposes missile defense bases in Central and Eastern Europe, but why should Washington subsidize the security of others? Moscow opposes an attack on Iran, and so should Americans. Russia backs the Assad regime in Syria, but the U.S. government once declared the same government to be “reformist.” Violent misadventures in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya demonstrate that America has little to gain and much to lose from another attempt at social engineering through war. If anything, the Putin government has done Washington a favor keeping the U.S. out of Syria. This doesn’t mean America should not confront Moscow when important differences arise. But treating Russia as an adversary risks encouraging it to act like one. Doing so especially will make Moscow more suspicious of America’s relationships with former members of the Warsaw Pact and republics of the Soviet Union. Naturally, Romney wants to “encourage democratic political and economic reform” in Russia — a fine idea in theory, but meddling in another country’s politics rarely works in practice. Just look at the Arab Spring. Not content with attempting to start a mini-Cold War, Mitt Romney dropped his nominal free-market stance to demonize Chinese currency practices. He complained about currency manipulation and forced technology transfers: “China seeks advantage through systematic exploitation of other economies.” On day one as president he promises to designate “China as the currency manipulator it is.” Moreover, he added, he would “take a holistic approach to addressing all of China’s abuses. That includes unilateral actions such as increased enforcement of U.S. trade laws, punitive measures targeting products and industries that rely on misappropriations of our intellectual property, reciprocity in government procurement, and countervailing duties against currency manipulation. It also includes multilateral actions to block technology transfers into China and to create a trading bloc open only for nations genuinely committed to free trade.” Romney’s apparent belief that Washington is “genuinely committed to free trade” is charming nonsense. The U.S. has practiced a weak dollar policy to increase exports. Washington long has subsidized American exports: the Export-Import Bank is known as “Boeing’s Bank” and U.S. agricultural export subsidies helped torpedo the Doha round of trade liberalization through the World Trade Organization. Of course, Beijing still does much to offend Washington. However, the U.S. must accommodate the rising power across the Pacific. Trying to keep China out of a new Asia-Pacific trade pact isn’t likely to work. America’s Asian allies want us to protect them — no surprise! — but are not interested in offending their nearby neighbor with a long memory. The best hope for moderating Chinese behavior is to tie it into a web of international institutions that provide substantial economic, political, and security benefits. Beijing already has good reason to be paranoid of the superpower which patrols bordering waters, engages in a policy that looks like containment, and talks of the possibility of war. Trying to isolate China economically would be taken as a direct challenge. Romney would prove Henry Kissinger’s dictum that even paranoids have enemies. Naturally, Romney also wants to “maintain appropriate military capabilities to discourage any aggressive or coercive behavior by China against its neighbors.” However, 67 years after the end of World War II, it is time for Beijing’s neighbors to arm themselves and cooperate with each other. Japan long had the second largest economy on earth. India is another rising power with reason to constrain China. South Korea has become a major power. Australia has initiated a significant military build-up. Many Southeast Asian nations are constructing submarines to help deter Chinese adventurism. Even Russia has much to fear from China, given the paucity of population in its vast eastern territory. But America’s foreign-defense dole discourages independence and self-help. The U.S. should step back as an off-shore balancer, encouraging its friends to do more and work together. It is not America’s job to risk Los Angeles for Tokyo, Seoul, or Taipei. Romney similarly insists on keeping the U.S. on the front lines against North Korea, even though all of its neighbors have far more at stake in a peaceful peninsula and are able to contain that impoverished wreck of a country. The Romney campaign proclaims: “Mitt Romney will commit to eliminating North Korea’s nuclear weapons and its nuclear-weapons infrastructure.” Alas, everything he proposes has been tried before, from tougher sanctions to tighter interdiction and pressure on China to isolate the North. What does he plan on doing when Pyongyang continues to develop nuclear weapons as it has done for the last 20 years? The American military should come home from Korea. Romney complained that the North’s nuclear capability “poses a direct threat to U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere in East Asia.” Then withdraw them. Manpower-rich South Korea doesn’t need U.S. conventional support, and ground units do nothing to contain North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. Pull out American troops and eliminate North Korea’s primary threat to the U.S. Then support continuing non-proliferation efforts led by those nations with the most to fear from the North. That strategy, more than lobbying by Washington, is likely to bring China around. Romney confuses dreams with reality when criticizing President Obama over the administration’s response to the Arab Spring. “We’re facing an Arab Spring which is out of control in some respects,” he said, “because the president was not as strong as he needed to be in encouraging our friends to move toward representative forms of government.” Romney asked: “How can we try and improve the odds so what happens in Libya and what happens in Egypt and what happens in other places where the Arab Spring is in full bloom so that the developments are toward democracy, modernity and more representative forms of government? This we simply don’t know.” True, the president doesn’t know. But neither does Mitt Romney. The latter suffers from the delusion that bright Washington policymakers can remake the world. Invade another country, turn it into a Western-style democracy allied with America, and everyone will live happily every after. But George W. Bush, a member of Mitt Romney’s own party, failed miserably trying to do that in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The Arab Spring did not happen because of Washington policy but in spite of Washington policy. And Arabs demanding political freedom — which, unfortunately, is not the same as a liberal society — have not the slightest interest in what Barack Obama or Mitt Romney thinks. Yet the latter wants “convene a summit that brings together world leaders, donor organizations, and young leaders of groups that espouse” all the wonderful things that Americans do. Alas, does he really believe that such a gathering will stop, say, jihadist radicals from slaughtering Coptic Christians? Iraq’s large Christian community was destroyed even as the U.S. military occupied that country. His summit isn’t likely to be any more effective. Not everything in the world is about Washington. Which is why Romney’s demand to do something in Syria is so foolish. Until recently he wanted to work with the UN, call on the Syrian military to be nice, impose more sanctions, and “increase the possibility that the ruling minority Alawites will be able to reconcile with the majority Sunni population in a post-Assad Syria.” Snapping his fingers would be no less effective. Most recently he advocated arming the rebels. But he should be more cautious before advocating American intervention in another conflict in another land. Such efforts rarely have desirable results. Iraq was a catastrophe. Afghanistan looks to be a disaster once American troops come home. After more than a decade Bosnia and Kosovo are failures, still under allied supervision. Libya is looking bad. Even without U.S. “help,” a full-blown civil war already threatens in Syria. We only look through the glass darkly, observed the Apostle Paul. It might be best for Washington not to intervene in another Muslim land with so many others aflame. Despite his support for restoring America’s economic health, Romney wants to increase dramatically Washington’s already outsize military spending. Rather than make a case on what the U.S. needs, he has taken the typical liberal approach of setting an arbitrary number: 4 percent of GDP. It’s a dumb idea, since America already accounts for roughly half the globe’s military spending — far more if you include Washington’s wealthy allies — and spends more in real terms than at any time during the Cold War, Korean War, or Vietnam War, and real outlays have nearly doubled since 2000. By any normal measure, the U.S. possesses far more military resources than it needs to confront genuine threats. What Romney clearly wants is a military to fight multiple wars and garrison endless occupations, irrespective of cost. My Cato colleague Chris Preble figured that Romney's 4 percent gimmick would result in taxpayers spending more than twice as much on the Pentagon as in 2000 (111 percent higher, to be precise) and 45 percent more than in 1985, the height of the Reagan buildup. Over the next ten years, Romney's annual spending (in constant dollars) for the Pentagon would average 64 percent higher than annual post-Cold War budgets (1990-2012), and 42 percent more than the average during the Reagan era (1981-1989). If Mitt Romney really believes that the world today is so much more dangerous than during the Cold War, he should spell out the threat. He calls Islamic fundamentalism, the Arab Spring, the impact of failed states, the anti-American regimes of Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela, rising China, and resurgent Russia “powerful forces.” It’s actually a pitiful list — Islamic terrorists have been weakened and don’t pose an existential threat, the Arab Spring threatens instability with little impact on America, it is easier to strike terrorists in failed states than in nominal allies like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, one nuclear-armed submarine could vaporize all four hostile states, and Russia’s modest “resurgence” may threaten Georgia but not Europe or America. Only China deserves to be called “powerful,” but it remains a developing country surrounded by potential enemies with a military far behind that of the U.S. In fact, the greatest danger to America is the blowback that results from promiscuous intervention in conflicts not our own. Romney imagines a massive bootstrap operation: he wants a big military to engage in social engineering abroad which would require an even larger military to handle the violence and chaos that would result from his failed attempts at social engineering. Better not to start this vicious cycle. America faces international challenges but nevertheless enjoys unparalleled dominance. U.S. power is buttressed by the fact that Washington is allied with every industrialized nation except China and Russia. America shares significant interests with India, the second major emerging power; is seen as a counterweight by a gaggle of Asian states worried about Chinese expansion; remains the dominant player in Latin America; and is closely linked to most of the Middle East’s most important countries, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. If Mitt Romney really believes that America is at greater risk today than during the Cold War, he is not qualified to be president. In this world the U.S. need not confront every threat, subsidize every ally, rebuild every failed state, and resolve every problem. Being a superpower means having many interests but few vital ones warranting war. Being a bankrupt superpower means exhibiting judgment and exercising discretion. President Barack Obama has been a disappointment, amounting in foreign policy to George W. Bush-lite. But Mitt Romney sounds even worse. His rhetoric suggests a return to the worst of the Bush administration. The 2012 election likely will be decided on economics, but foreign policy will prove to be equally important in the long-term. America can ill afford another know-nothing president.

### 2nc – Obama win

#### Obama has an 85% chance of winning despite his narrowing lead

**Silver, 10/2**/12 – statistician (Nate, “Is the Presidential Race Tightening Heading Into the Debates?”

<http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/02/oct-1-is-the-presidential-race-tightening-heading-into-the-debates/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter>

There were nine national polls published on Monday, which are listed in the table below. On average, they showed Mr. Obama with a 3.5 percentage point lead over Mr. Romney.

That’s smaller than the leads we were seeing in national polls last week, which seemed to be concentrated more in the range of a five- or six-point lead for Mr. Obama. It also suggests a smaller lead than recent state-by-state polls seem to imply.

So has the race already shifted back toward Mr. Romney some? Perhaps, but this is less apparent from the trendlines within these polls.

If you compare the nine surveys released on Monday against the last time they were published (in all cases, the comparison poll postdates the Democratic conventions), only four showed a shift toward Mr. Romney. An equal number, four, showed Mr. Obama gaining ground instead, while one poll remained unchanged.

In all cases but one, the shift was extremely modest — within one percentage point in one direction or the other. The exception was a new CNN national poll, which had Mr. Romney closing his deficit from six points to three points.

On average, however, the polls showed only a 0.2 percentage point gain for Mr. Romney — not a meaningful shift in either a statistical or a practical sense.

And yet this simple version a trendline analysis does not tell the whole story either. Mr. Romney had appeared to lose further ground in the polls following the public release of his “47 percent” comments.

All of polls that are used for comparison were released after the Democratic convention, but some predated the “47 percent” tape. It’s good for Mr. Romney that his national numbers on Monday looked more like those from just after the Democratic convention, when they weren’t great, rather than those from the past week or two, when they were worse.

The FiveThirtyEight forecast model can account for these various contingencies, looking at exactly when the prior editions of a survey were released in order to calculate the consensus trendline. Viewed in this way, the national polls on Monday did contain modestly good news for Mr. Romney.

But that doesn’t tell the whole story either, because there has also been a large volume of state polls released over the past day or two. Those polls can also be informative about the trend in the race. And in the state polls, it’s been harder to find evidence for a favorable trend for Mr. Romney.

If anything, the opposite seems to be true. This was particularly the case in a University of New Hampshire survey published on Monday, which had Mr. Obama leading by 15 points in the Granite State — up from just a five-point lead in a poll taken just after the Democratic convention.

The University of New Hampshire poll has a history of being fairly volatile, perhaps in part because voters in New Hampshire can be fickle with their political opinions. The poll certainly qualifies as an outlier relative to the consensus evidence in New Hampshire. At the same time, it’s not the kind of thing you’d expect to see if Mr. Romney were gaining ground in the race.

Mr. Obama, not Mr. Romney, has also gotten highly favorable trendlines in a recent set of state-by-state polls released by the firm We Ask America, many of which show him with a considerably larger lead than he had before the conventions in those same states.

The gap between state polls and national polls, which looked to have narrowed some last week, seems to be widening again.

Perhaps appropriately given the mixed evidence on Monday, the FiveThirtyEight models produced something of a split verdict.

Mr. Obama came off his highs in our “now-cast,” which projects what would happen if the election were held today. That version of the model had previously given Mr. Obama a 5.9 percentage lead in the national race, but it declined to 5.5 percentage points on Monday.

Why are these “now-cast” numbers higher than the most recent national polls seem to suggest? In part because of the factor that I mentioned before — the “now-cast” uses state polls along with national polls to calculate its estimate of the national popular vote, and the state polls are a bit stronger for Mr. Obama. Also, last week’s national polls, which were more in the range of a five- or six-point lead for Mr. Obama, still have some influence upon it.

The Nov. 6 forecast, however, our signature product, is already assuming that Mr. Obama’s numbers will decline some, in large part, because it continues to weigh economic factors along with the polls. Those economic factors, in view of the formula, are more in line with only a very narrow win for Mr. Obama, on the order of two or three percentage points, similar to the margin by which George W. Bush defeated John Kerry in 2004.

As we get closer and closer to the election, these economic factors will receive less weight, until they phase out completely by Election Day. But they continue to exert some influence on the forecast for the time being.

In the Nov. 6 forecast, Mr. Obama’s projected margin of victory in the popular vote declined to 4.1 percentage points from 4.2. However, his probability of winning the Electoral College increased by a trivial amount, to 85.7 percent from 85.1.

#### Economic optimism trends for Obama – it put him ahead in all major swing states

**Beaumont, 9/30**/12 – Associated Press (Thomas, “As race stands, Obama within reach of second term”

<http://www.kpho.com/story/19676475/as-race-stands-obama-within-reach-of-second-term>

Five weeks to Election Day, President Barack Obama is within reach of the 270 electoral votes needed to win a second term. Republican Mitt Romney's path to victory is narrowing.

To overtake Obama, Romney would need to quickly gain the upper hand in nearly all of the nine states where he and Obama are competing the hardest.

Polls show the president with a steady lead in many of them as Romney looks to shift the dynamics of the race, starting with their first debate Wednesday in Denver.

"We'd rather be us than them," says Jennifer Psaki, an Obama spokeswoman.

But Romney's running mate Paul Ryan says there's time for the GOP ticket to win. "In these kinds of races people focus near the end, and that's what's happening now," he told "Fox News Sunday."

If the election were held today, an Associated Press analysis shows Obama would win at least 271 electoral votes, with likely victories in crucial Ohio and Iowa along with 19 other states and the District of Columbia. Romney would win 23 states for a total of 206.

To oust the Democratic incumbent, Romney would need to take up-for-grabs Florida, Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina, New Hampshire and Virginia, which would put him at 267 votes, and upend Obama in either Ohio or Iowa.

The AP analysis isn't meant to be predictive. Rather, it is intended to provide a snapshot of a race that until recently has been stubbornly close in the small number of the most contested states.

It is based on a review of public and private polls, television advertising and numerous interviews with campaign and party officials as well as Republican and Democratic strategists in the competitive states and in Washington.

In the final weeks before the Nov. 6 vote, Obama is enjoying a burst of momentum and has benefited from growing optimism about the economy as well as a series of Romney stumbles. Most notably, a secret video surfaced recently showing the Republican nominee telling a group of donors that 47% of Americans consider themselves victims dependent on the government.

To be sure, much could change in the coming weeks, which will feature three presidential and one vice presidential debate. A host of unknowns, both foreign and domestic, could rock the campaign, knocking Obama off course and giving Romney a boost in the homestretch.

#### Obama’s job approval is at 50% - it translates into tangible swing state leads

**Matthews, 10/1/**12 - covers taxes, poverty, campaign finance, higher education, and all things data for the Washington Post (Dylan, Washington Post poll: How a 2% national lead is giving Obama an 11% swing-state lead, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/wp/2012/10/01/washington-post-poll-how-a-2-national-lead-is-giving-obama-an-11-swing-state-lead/>)

If you looked only at the top-line numbers, today’s new Washington Post-ABC News poll would seem to show a tight race. Obama leads Romney nationally by a razor-thin 49 percent to 47 percent. But if you only look at swing states, he’s leading by double-digits: 52 percent to 41 percent. This discrepancy is explained by Romney’s large margin in solid red states. He leads those by 14 points, 56 percent to 42 percent, while Obama leads solid Democratic states by only 10 points (53 percent to 43 percent). Some other poll highlights:

Romney voters are a little more set in their ways than Obama voters. Eighty-eight percent of Romney supporters say they’ll “definitively” support him, compared to 84 percent of Obama supporters.

Obama voters are slightly more enthusiastic, but not by much. Ninety-one percent of Obama supporters say they’re “very” or “somewhat” enthusiastic about supporting him, to Romney’s 88 percent.

Obama’s approval ratings aren’t stunning. By a four-point margin (50 percent to 46 percent), voters approve of the job he’s doing, but a plurality disapprove of his performance on jobs. His approval margin on international affairs is a tiny one percent, and a whopping 60 percent of voters think the country is on the “wrong track”.

That said, voters aren’t sure Romney will do much better. They’re tied on the question of who’ll handle the economy better, and Obama leads on health care, Medicare, international affairs and taxes. The only issue where voters trust Romney more than Obama is the deficit.

### A2 Disarm

#### Non-Unique and Turn – cuts are inevitable, but they are more likely to be drastic under Romney

KREPON 8/31/12 (Michael; Co-Founder of the Henry L. Stimson Center, “Worth the Wait,” <http://krepon.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/3524/worth-the-wait>)

There is now considerable impatience directed at President Obama for not doing more and working faster to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Will it take four decades – or more – to eventually reach Global Zero? Even if he wins a second term, President Obama won’t reduce the U.S. stockpile nearly as much as President George H.W. Bush or George W. Bush. Most probably, under President Obama’s watch, as with his predecessors, more U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons will be retired because of budgetary considerations and old age than because of treaty obligations. Team Obama has taken over a year and convened countless meetings to determine how much of New START’s excess can be trimmed without harm to U.S. national security. The answer, which is likely to create great angst among his political foes and continued impatience among his backers, awaits the outcome of the election.

Since the 1970s, Republican presidents have had a better track record than Democrats in decisively cutting nuclear deals as well as the size of the U.S. stockpile. Hans Kristensen at the Federation of American Scientists has blogged on this topic, and has kindly prepared the accompanying graphic.

Presidents Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama vocalized their vision of a world without nuclear weapons — Carter in his inaugural address, no less — but they, like President Bill Clinton, have been cautious incrementalists on nuclear matters. President Reagan, in stark contrast, demonstrated massive disregard for nuclear orthodoxy. George H.W. Bush signed off on two strategic arms reduction treaties and wisely undertook unverifiable initiatives to reduce nonstrategic nuclear weapons, rather than try to pursue this objective by means of a treaty. Even George W. Bush, whose idea of a reasonable strategic arms reduction treaty was one that would come into effect the same day it was set to expire, oversaw a quiet, hard trim of the U.S. stockpile. The record since 1977 clearly demonstrates that both parties have worked to shrink nuclear forces and stockpiles, but Republican Presidents have had more leeway to do so than Democrats.

Now for the caveats: President Reagan was sui generis – an anti-nuclear, anti-Communist President, who was uniquely able to quiet second-guessers. President George H.W. Bush was the beneficiary of Reagan’s openings. After initial hesitation, he grabbed with both hands opportunities presented by the demise of the Soviet Union to reduce nuclear stockpiles. President George W. Bush had far more excess to trim than President Obama.

Looking ahead, deep cuts in U.S. and Russian nuclear forces will be harder to accomplish in big steps, but are very likely to continue in smaller increments over the long haul. One reason is economics. Another is the progressive weakening of key constituencies in the United States that favor larger numbers and strategic modernization programs. A third is that Russia has still not recovered from the loss of infrastructure that supported the Soviet Union’s strategic modernization programs.

### A2 Appeasement

#### Your argument is bad, and you should feel bad!

Jonathan Rauch 7-25-2012; contributing editor of National Journal and The Atlantic, Love Classic Republican Foreign Policy? Vote For Obama http://www.tnr.com/blog/plank/105384/love-classic-republican-foreign-policy-vote-obama

Pundits and, for that matter, the Obama campaign were right to ding Mitt Romney’s foreign policy address Tuesday for banging the table instead of putting anything substantive on it. But what could Romney do? Obama has given him almost nothing to work with. Foreign affairs won’t decide the 2012 election, but, if it did, President Obama would win walking away. Replying to Romney’s speech, Robert Gibbs, an Obama adviser, said this: “It’s widely accepted that President Obama has an exceptionally strong record on national security issues, and I think, quite frankly, Mitt Romney is having a hard time making an argument against President Obama on these issues.” It pains me, as a supposedly crankily skeptical journalist, to agree with a partisan spin doctor, but here goes: Gibbs is right. I never drank the Obama Kool-Aid in 2008. The then-candidate’s promise of “a new kind of politics,” I wrote in National Journal at the time, “borders on chicanery.” Replace partisanship with pragmatism? Set aside ideology to take the best solutions from both parties and ease the country out of its mess? Fat chance, I said. Well, for the record, I hereby eat half a crow. Whatever you may think of Obama’s domestic and economic records (which we can debate some other time), on foreign policy he has delivered the post-partisan, pragmatic, and generally successful policy he promised. Two major surprises have marked his presidency, one negative, one positive. On the downside, the silver-tongued orator who inspired millions as a candidate turned out to be a mediocre communicator as president. On the upside, the greenhorn candidate who had barely any experience of, or interest in, foreign policy has proved to be an impressively adept presidential diplomat. On almost every front internationally, he has improved the country’s position since 2008. A surprising thing about the other two surprises is they are two aspects of the same phenomenon. The reason Obama exceeds expectations on international relations is the same reason he disappoints at domestic communication: his style is technocratic, undemonstrative, and patient—not so good for galvanizing the public in a time of economic crisis, but great for diplomacy. Great? Well, at least very good. Greatness comes from winning cosmic conflicts like World War II and the Cold War, and at present we are fortunate not to be engaged in any and therefore not to need a great leader. (Remember, in this connection, the wisdom of Calvin Coolidge: “It is a great advantage to a president, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know he is not a great man.”) In ordinarily messy, disorganized times like these, success in foreign policy means navigating treacherous currents safely, avoiding major mistakes, leaving the country stronger than you found it, and hopefully nudging the world forward a little. By that measure, Obama has done well. An exception was his naïvely conceived and clumsily executed run at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His rookie flailing set back the peace process (such as it was) and made him look like a doormat. But he learned from his mistakes. And consider the positive side of the ledger. Ending two wars. He has closed out the war in Iraq on acceptable terms. He is on course to do the same thing in Afghanistan. Ending two wars is a big deal. Stabilizing relations with Russia. Russia-U.S. relations were in a tailspin when Obama entered office. Thanks to the Russia “reset,” they are stable today. Russia could certainly be more cooperative on Iran and Syria, but it is quietly helping us in Afghanistan (where it could instead be a major irritant) and generally not putting bite behind its bark. Stabilizing relations with China. The administration built enough capital with Beijing to smuggle a prominent dissident out of the country with barely a diplomatic ripple—an extraordinary thing, if you think about it. Hardly less extraordinary is that the administration’s “Asia pivot,” which is really a move to counterbalance China, is also clicking smoothly into place. Isolating Iran. Partly thanks to Obama’s show of willingness to negotiate, Europe is joining with the U.S. in boycotting Iranian oil, a remarkable show of solidarity behind exceptionally tough sanctions. Sanctions may yet fail, but Obama’s patient approach has weakened Iran’s position and built a consensus that will make further steps more effective. Oh, and Israel hasn’t bombed Iran and Hezbollah hasn’t bombed Israel. Strengthening America’s brand. In Europe and most of the rest of the world (Muslim countries being important exceptions), the United States is significantly more favorably regarded than when he took office. That is bankable soft power. Prosecuting the war on terror. Obama has been so successful at continuing and refining the most effective elements of Bush’s counterterrorism policy, while taming its provocative excesses, that Republicans don’t even want to raise the issue. Pinch me. No, everything is not hunky-dory. And, no, a short article like this one cannot provide anything close to a textured appraisal of foreign affairs in the Obama years. But I think even a long, detailed, textured article would come in the end to two questions and two fairly clear answers. First: in foreign affairs, are we better off than we were four years ago? Answer: yes. Second: on the geopolitical scene, have we experienced any grave crises or setbacks? Answer: no. And that is why Romney has so little to say. Or, rather, it is one reason. The other is that Obama has planted himself and the Democrats exactly where Romney, by rights, ought to be: on the kind of pragmatic realism that Republicans like Dwight Eisenhower and George H.W. Bush used to own. Lawrence J. Haas, a senior fellow with the American Foreign Policy Council and the author of the excellent new book Sound the Trumpet: The United States and Human Rights Promotion, notes that Obama has expressed admiration for the elder Bush and exhibits a similar approach. Like Bush 41, Haas says, Obama “operates as a classic realist, not a human rights promoter.” Also in the realist vein, Obama “lacks a vision as to where he would like to take the country or the world. He operates from problem to problem.” Two diplomatic officials, one current and one former, balk at calling Obama a realist; he is not coldly manipulative or indifferent to human rights. (For example: Obama has done more to stand up for gay rights internationally than any previous world leader.) But they concur that he is outcome-oriented, a pragmatist rather than an idealist or visionary. “He’s focused on the bottom line: what are our key equities and how do we protect them,” says the serving diplomat. At the Brookings Institution, Tamara Cofman Wittes, a former Obama State Department official, says Obama believes in bending the arc of history, but also believes you can’t bend it at right angles. “He’s playing a long game and doing it pretty well.” The kind of realism Obama practices is founded not on Machiavellian amorality but on a theory about where peace comes from. For Republican hawks and neocons, peace comes from American strength and hegemony; for Democratic doves and internationalists, peace comes from international cooperation and transnational institutions. Obama’s realism, like that of Ike and Bush 41 holds that American strength and international cooperation both have their place, but that peace comes from equilibrium between contending forces. To realists, power may not be admirable, but it must always be dealt with; and, in dealing with it, conserving and effectively deploying America’s power, a scarce and precious commodity, is Priority One, for it is the commodity upon which human rights and U.S. hegemony alike ultimately depend. A realist may choose to upset an equilibrium now and then, but never lightly. Power, like a floodtide surge, has its own hydraulics. Once equilibrium is gone, it can be very hard and costly to restore. For very different reasons, human rights activists and neocons deplore Obama’s slowness to jump into the fray when rotten and antagonistic old orders tremble in places like Iran, Libya, Egypt, and now Syria. Eisenhower and Bush, however, understood well the importance of looking before leaping, whether in Suez and eastern Europe in the 1950s or in Ukraine and the Balkans in the early 1990s. Obama is in their mold. Obama’s quiet accomplishment, in foreign policy, has been to do just as he promised: take the best ideas from the other side, integrate them into his own party’s tradition, and put them to work to strengthen the country’s position. Being a dab hand at foreign affairs will not, it’s true, save him in 2012, any more than it saved Bush 41 from the soft economy 20 years ago. What it has done is kept him viable in a miserable environment, improved the Democrats’ credibility on national security, taken from the Republicans the foreign-policy real estate that they used to own—and left Mitt Romney standing in a puddle of his own shallow verbiage.