### Prolif

**And arguments for slow proliferation are wrong—it will snowball and put everyone on hair trigger—that makes all their impacts worse**

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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.

### Winners Win

#### winners-win. He needs one

THE HILL 3 – 20 – 13 [Amie Parnes and Justin Sink, Obama honeymoon may be over, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/289179-obama-honeymoon-may-be-over>]

The second-term honeymoon for President Obama is beginning to look like it is over. Obama, who was riding high after his reelection win in November, has seen his poll numbers take a precipitous fall in recent weeks. A CNN poll released Tuesday showed Obama’s favorability rating underwater, with 47 percent approving and 50 percent disapproving of Obama’s handling of his job. Much of the president’s agenda is stuck, with climate change regulations delayed, immigration reform mired in committee negotiations and prospects for a grand bargain budget deal in limbo at best. On Tuesday, in a decision that underscored Obama’s depleting political capital, the White House watched as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) announced only a watered-down version of Obama’s gun control proposals would be considered on the Senate floor. Republicans, sensing the sea change, are licking their chops. They point to the lack of movement on Obama’s signature issues, noting the contrast to the ambitious plans outlined in the early weeks of his second term. “The president set very high goals for himself during his State of the Union, but the reality is very little of his agenda is actually moving,” Republican strategist Ron Bonjean said. “He allowed himself to get caught up in the legislative quicksand, [and] the cement is beginning to harden. “ History isn’t on Obama’s side. The last four presidents who won a second term all saw their poll numbers slide by mid-March with the exception of Bill Clinton, whose numbers improved in the four months following his reelection. Clinton may have only been delaying the inevitable. His numbers dropped 5 points in April 1994. Even Ronald Reagan, buoyed by a dominant performance over Walter Mondale in the 1984 election, saw a double-digit erosion by this point in his second term. Obama has yet to complete the first 100 days of his second term. But without a signature achievement since his reelection, he faces a crossroads that could define the remainder of his presidency. White House aides maintain that the 24-hour news cycle makes comparisons to previous presidents difficult. “I think the nature of our politics now is different than Ronald Reagan’s honeymoon,” one senior administration official said. “The ebb and flow of politics doesn’t follow that model anymore.” But observers say a drop in popularity is typical for second-termers. “There may be some typical second-term honeymoon fade happening,” said Martin Sweet, an assistant visiting professor of political science at Northwestern University. “Honeymoon periods for incumbents are a bit more ephemeral.” But like most other presidents, Sweet added, “Obama’s fate is tied to the economy.” “Continuing economic progress would ultimately strengthen the president but if we are hit with a double-dip recession, then Obama’s numbers will crater,” he said. The White House disputes any notion that Obama has lost any political capital in recent weeks. “The president set out an ambitious agenda and he’s doing big things that are not easy, from immigration to gun control,” the senior administration official said. “Those are policies you can’t rack up easily, and no one here is naive about that.” The White House is aware that the clock is ticking to push its hefty agenda, but the official added, “The clock is not ticking because of president’s political capital. The clock is ticking because there’s a timetable in achieving all of this. [Lawmakers] are not going to sign on because the president’s popular.” And administration officials believe they still have the leverage. “There’s a decent amount of momentum behind all of this,” the official said. “It looks like immigration is closer [to passage] than ever before.” Republican strategist Ken Lundberg argued that current budget fights “have cut short the president’s second-term honeymoon.” He said this could also hurt the president’s party, warning “the lower the president’s approval rating, the bigger the consequence for vulnerable Democrats.” “Voters want solutions, and if they see the president headed down the wrong path, lockstep lawmakers will be punished in 2014,” he said. Democratic strategist Chris Kofinis maintained that as long as he’s president, Obama still has the leverage. “Immigration reform doesn’t get impacted by whether Obama’s poll numbers are 55 or 45,” Kofinis said. “Does it make certain things a little more difficult? Possibly. But while his numbers may have fallen, he’s still more likeable than the Republicans are on their best day.” Kofinis said the real question for Obama is what kind of emphasis he’s going to place on his second term because the public will have less patience than they did during his first. “The challenge in a second term is the American people look at certain things and have a higher tolerance in a second term,” he said. “When they know you’re not running for reelection again, they hold you to a higher standard.” Bonjean and other Republicans are aware that Obama could potentially bounce back from his latest slip in the polls and regain his footing. “He has the opportunity to take minor legislative victories and blow them up into major accomplishments – meaning if he got something on gun control, he can tout that that was part of his agenda and the work isn’t over. If he were able to strike a grand bargain with Republicans, that’d be a legacy issue.” Still, Bonjean added, “It’s not looking so good right now.”