# 1nr Balkans

**Balkan instability is inevitable—structural economic and political problems**

**Gerxhaliu, 07**—PhD Candidate in International Criminal Law (Human Security, Organized Crime and Terrorism Challenges in Kosovo’s Perspective, http://www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user\_upload/humsec/Workin\_Paper\_Series

/Working\_Paper\_Gerxhaliu.pdf, AD)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) presence in Kosovo had as a consequence that people are convinced that security is equal to men in uniforms. But the perception is now changing and a more complex concept of security is evolving. In societies such is Kosovo, which faces severe economic problems, job insecurity is one of the most important issues that average people face in their life. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Kosovo’s Human Development Report of 2004 defines the security sector as “basket of institutions including, but not limited to: those authorized and organized by the state to use coercive force, including the police services, defense forces, civil emergency organizations, intelligence services, paramilitary forces, border control, corrections, and the judiciary. The sector also encompasses civilian institutions charged with management and oversight – the executive (including Presidential/Prime Ministerial offices, National Security coordination bodies, and Ministries such as Defence and Justice), the legislature (Parliament, Assemblies and their relevant Defence, Justice Committees), and financial control mechanisms managed, for example, by the Finance Ministry and Parliamentary Finance Committee.” 9. The discrepancy between demographic trends and economic development in Kosovo constitutes a structural threat to long term security. Every year, circa 20.000 young people are ready to enter the labour market, while the unemployment rate is up to 42,2 %. A large disillusioned and not proper educated population of youth can therefore easily turn into criminality or part of social upheaval movement’s 10. Kosovo’s health care capacities are far below the European Union (EU) average: in 2006 the Ministry of Health allocated 38 euros per person. 11 The right to adequate health care is therefore a fundamental issue for many people in Kosovo. The high level of unem- ployment, the constant increase in population and poverty are becoming structural security related problems. Compared to December 2005, in June 2006 economic and political pessimism increased: 58% of the Kosovo’s population is prone to protest because of the economic situation, whereas 40% would protest because of the political situation. Political and economic insecurities are also the major reasons behind Kosovo’s emigration.14

# balkans—no war

**Balkan war won’t happen**

**Burns, 06** (Nicholas, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Knocking on NATO’s Open Door,” Feb 19, http://zagreb.usembassy.gov/issues/060221.htm)

A decade ago, the countries of Southeast Europe were reeling from the impact of Europe's bloodiest war in half a century. With the determined intervention of NATO, genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia were brought to an end; a few years later in Kosovo, NATO again intervened to end ethnic cleansing in the region. Southeast Europe seemed to some a tangle of intractable inter-ethnic conflicts in which only massive international peacekeeping deployments could keep the warring parties apart. But the United States and its friends in the region looked to tell a different story: one that would require friends to make hard choices for the sake of a peaceful and prosperous future for their people. Today's story is indeed different, in part thanks to the tremendous efforts of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia. The region's nascent democracies have largely normalized their relations. Peacekeeping contingents have downsized, and a return to war is unlikely. The region is not only increasingly stable, but it contributes to international coalitions that work to end conflicts elsewhere. Southeast Europe is on the path to changing from being a consumer to a provider of security. On February 13 in Washington, the United States hosted the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to discuss recent accomplishments of these members of the Adriatic Charter, or "A3." Founded in May 2003, the A3 brings Albania, Croatia and Macedonia into a partnership with the United States to advance their individual and collective candidacies for NATO and other Euro-Atlantic institutions. Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina were present as observers. At the meeting, we reviewed A3 progress on their individual NATO Membership Action Plans, and sought ways to bring NATO membership closer. We also shared lessons learned from deployments in international coalitions. Finally, we recommitted ourselves to our cooperation as friends and, if reforms continue to meet necessary standards, full Allies in the greatest Alliance in history: NATO. Not so long ago, such goals would have been impossible to imagine. The countries of the region have worked hard to gain this new status. With fresh memories of war and dictatorship, the A3 partners share a resolve to strengthen their democratic institutions, market economies and human rights, and to fight corruption and crime. The path to NATO and the European Union promotes a positive cycle of change: the more candidate countries do to pursue reforms required for membership, the more support they get for the accession process. Though difficult, the reforms are key to lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

# balkans—alt cause

**Economic problems and ethnic rivalries makes violence in the Balkans inevitable**

Jilani 10 (11/5, Semma, Huffington Post, "Failing the Victims of Genocide in the Balkans...Again," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/seema-jilani/failing-the-victims-of-ge\_b\_777144.html)

Fully ratifying Serbia into the EU would nullify its wartime atrocities and reward a government that is responsible for the slaughter, torture, rape, and ethnic cleansing of thousands of innocents, and that now abets war criminals. The Dayton Agreement, or as Bosnians call it, the Dayton Disagreement, left the fragmented Balkans entrenched in ethnic rivalries. The town of Bratunac holds the highest number of unprosecuted war criminals per capita in all of Bosnia, many of whom serve in the police force and roam freely, taunting Bosnian Muslims at school and beating youth reconciliation groups. During last month's elections, Serb nationalist PM Milorad Dodik was re-elected to the Republika Srpska, reflecting that the Balkans remains paralyzed at milestones of truce.

Plagued by an economic abyss and steady undercurrents of ethnic tensions, the Balkan states are drowning in their own seas of intolerance. Some Serbs have even asked to ban the annual commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide. Commemoration or not, Zlata Mujic will not forget. Neither will Hasan Nuhanovic. A translator for the UN during the war, Hasan told his parents to leave Srebrenica, knowing they would be slain. When we met a few years ago, he recalled falling in love with his girlfriend, now wife, despite being cut off from her during the war. He once traded $1,000 worth of black-market tobacco for a three-minute phone call with her, during which he played her the guitar. "We were abandoned... during the 'open hunting season of Muslims,'" Hasan noted. This disdain for the international community's apathy is reflected in a monument in Sarajevo: a massive replica of the UN food cans that were distributed during the war, which bears the caustic inscription, "With Eternal Thanks to the International Community, From the Grateful Citizens of Sarajevo."

# Conditionality

**Condo good, first our offense:**

2ac pressure good—forces efficiency and skill development which solves their impact cause they can read germane offense on the right flows, the alternative is lazy block repetition.

Potential new affs—they’re inevitable and require a response, condo enables quick strat formation when we lack time to process research or test responses.

Logic—it’s an incoherent model to require us to defend something worse than the status quo, turns the terminal impact to all their arguments.

Neg flex—our ground is reactionary so they’re always more specific and familiar, we can’t avoid pitfalls without flexibility to find the best position on our own terms. There’s also a side bias to correct from speaking last and knowing the lit base better.

Research—condo forces more on a wider range of issues instead of the same dependable stale generic—only skill that’s also educational and no incentive to do it badly.

**Now some defense:**

No time skew—speech times check but speed and procedurals cause it, the point of being neg is strat skew and if we actually double turned ourselves it would help them.

Depth inevitable—2nr checks and 2ac can exert influence over neg shifting.

Our interpretation—one conditional world lets them read offense germane to the squo and a counterplan which solves.

Not a voter—just reject the practice. We don’t have to win offense because practices can be tolerable if not especially good.

# 1nr link

#### Obama is promoting an “all of the above” energy strategy – this allows him to distance himself from prior renewables scandals. The plan makes Obama a target and will cost him the election

**Farnam, 12** (T.W., Washington Post, 6/27, “Energy ads flood TV in swing states,”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/energy-ads/2012/06/27/gJQAD5MR7V_story.html>

Energy issues don’t spark much excitement among voters, ranking below health care, education and the federal budget deficit — not to mention jobs and the economy.

And yet those same voters are being flooded this year with campaign ads on energy policy. Particularly in presidential swing states, the airwaves are laden with messages boosting oil drilling and natural gas and hammering President Obama for his support of green energy. The Cleveland area alone has heard $2.7 million in energy-related ads.

The disconnect between what voters say they care about and what they’re seeing on TV lies in the money behind the ads, much of it coming from oil and gas interests. Those funders get the double benefit of attacking Obama at the same time they are promoting their industry.

Democrats also have spent millions on the subject, defending the president’s record and tying Republican candidate Mitt Romney to “Big Oil.”

Overall, more than $41 million, about one in four of the dollars spent on broadcast advertising in the presidential campaign, has gone to ads mentioning energy, more than a host of other subjects and just as much as health care, according to ad-tracking firm Kantar Media/Cmag.

In an election focused heavily on jobs and the economy, all of this attention to energy seems a bit off topic. But the stakes are high for energy producers and environmentalists, who are squared off over how much the government should regulate the industry. And attention has been heightened by a recent boom in production using new technologies such as fracking and horizontal drilling, as well as a spike in gas prices this spring just as the general election got underway.

When asked whether energy is important, more than half of voters say yes, according to recent polls. But asked to rank their top issues, fewer than 1 percent mention energy.

Still, so much spending focused on a topic low on the public agenda should not be a surprise, given the interest of the ad sponsors, said Bob Biersack, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

“It’s always been true that people’s financial involvement in politics tends to reinforce their self-interest,” he said.

The policy debate coincides with a flurry of criticism of the Obama administration’s loan guarantee for Solyndra, a bankrupt solar-power company that defaulted on more than $500 million. Among the company’s investors was the family foundation of a major donor to Obama.

“Half a billion in taxpayer money gone, and Obama said this was a model of growth,” says an ad from the conservative group Americans for Prosperity. “Tell President Obama that workers aren’t pawns in your political games.”

Obama spokesman Ben LaBolt said the campaign welcomed the fight over the administration’s energy policies, saying the president can win on the merits.

“This debate has offered us the chance to highlight the success of the president’s all-of-the-above energy strategy – domestic oil production at a 12-year high and our dependence on foreign oil at a 16-year low, domestic natural gas production at an all-time high and doubling our renewable energy production,” LaBolt said.

Republicans are also attacking Obama for rejecting permits for the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry oil from tar sands in Canada to refineries on the Gulf Coast. Romney opened the general election with an ad prominently featuring the Keystone issue, with the candidate saying he would reverse Obama and approve the pipeline on his first day in office.

Americans for Prosperity, one of the major funders of the ads, has sponsored five television spots against Obama, two of them focused on Solyndra and another critical of government spending on clean energy.

The organization, which has promoted tea party candidates, has devoted more than 90 percent of its ad spending to energy-related commercials, according to Kantar.

The Obama campaign and other Democrats have been critical of the group, saying, among other things, that its billionaire backers, brothers Charles and David Koch, are using it to promote the interests of the chemical conglomerate they own. David Koch is a founder and chairman of the organization. A Koch spokesman declined to comment.

Obama answered Americans for Prosperity’s message in his first ad of the campaign.

“Secretive oil billionaires attacking president Obama with ads fact checkers say are not tethered to the facts,” a narrator says in the spot.

Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity, said the group focused on Solyndra because the firm’s federal loan guarantee exemplifies cronyism and big government, with bureaucrats choosing economic winners and losers in the way they dole out public money.

“To us, Solyndra encapsulates everything that’s wrong with the economic policies of President Obama,” Phillips said. “It’s not just the energy, although the energy is important.”

The group also ran millions of dollars of advertising in 2009 and 2010 opposing the president’s health-care plan, Phillips said.

All of these messages could very well do what their funders have in mind and shape public opinion, tarring renewable energy as a government boondoggle, said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

“Ads can create an agenda-setting effect and frame an issue,” she said. “If renewable energy comes to be seen as Solyndra, that’s a problem for that sector, not simply for future government investment in that sector.”

#### Renewables are massively unpopular –Budgetary concerns

**Von Schirach, 12 -** International Economic Development Consultant

(Paolo, International Affairs Commentator and Writer, May 11, “[Renewable Energy In The US – Subsidies Politically Unpopular – Natural Gas A Much Cheaper Alternative – USG Should Focus On R&D](http://schirachreport.com/index.php/2012/05/11/grim-prospects-for-renewable-energy-in-the-us-subsidies-politically-unpopular-natural-gas-a-much-cheaper-alternative-usg-should-focus-on-rd/),”

<http://schirachreport.com/index.php/2012/05/11/grim-prospects-for-renewable-energy-in-the-us-subsidies-politically-unpopular-natural-gas-a-much-cheaper-alternative-usg-should-focus-on-rd/>, d/a 7-20-12

American enthusiasm for renewable energy, not too deep [to begin](http://schirachreport.com/index.php/2012/05/11/grim-prospects-for-renewable-energy-in-the-us-subsidies-politically-unpopular-natural-gas-a-much-cheaper-alternative-usg-should-focus-on-rd/)with, has gone away. In part this has to do with loss of interest in “climate change” and its dire consequences. Unfortunately, climate change has been and is mostly an issue of political belief, rather than upholding science. And as the intensity of the political fervor somehow waned, in large part replaced by more immediate economic fears, so did political support for all the renewable energy technologies that were supposed to create, relatively quickly it was thought, workable alternatives to carbon based energy. An additional reason for waning support is that keeping renewable energy alive means also subsidizing it for a few more years. And this is less and less politically palatable at a time of budgetary constraints at every level. Paying more for electricity simply because this kind is clean looks like an unaffordable luxury, whatever the consequences of burning more (cheaper) fossil fuels may be.

# 1nr winners win

#### 17% of voters are undecided

**Kuhnhenn, 10/5**/12 - Jim Kuhnhenn covers politics and the White House for The Associated Press. (Jim, “Analysis: Lower jobless number give Obama a positive trend line; is public feeling it?” Washington Post,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/analysis-lower-jobless-number-give-obama-a-positive-trend-line-is-public-feeling-it/2012/10/05/88e6bd88-0f39-11e2-ba6c-07bd866eb71a_story.html>

A recent Associated Press-GfK poll found that the vast majority of voters already have settled on a candidate, but 17 percent of likely voters are considered persuadable — either because they’re undecided or showing soft support for Obama or Romney.

#### Only 9 states matter

**Giroux, 9/12**/12 – Bloomberg (Greg, “Republicans End Michigan Ads While Pushing Wisconsin Onto Map,” <http://www.sfgate.com/business/bloomberg/article/Republicans-End-Michigan-Ads-While-Pushing-3859230.php>)

The American presidential campaign has become a contest that will be decided in as few as nine states, creating a narrower and less-forgiving path for Republican Mitt Romney to secure the 270 Electoral College votes he needs to oust incumbent President Barack Obama.

The former Massachusetts governor and his allies have shifted television advertising dollars to reflect the state of play following the two parties’ nominating conventions.

“We all know the presidential campaign is not a national election; it’s an election in individual states,” said Alex Vogel, a Republican consultant who isn’t working with Romney. “Around this time, the focus shifts from how much money the campaigns are raising to where they are spending and not spending.”

Romney’s campaign spent $4.2 million this week on its first advertising blitz after the Republican convention in Tampa, Florida and the Democrats’ nominating session in Charlotte, North Carolina, according to a media buyer who tracks such purchases. His 15 different commercials, which carry messages tailored to each region, are airing in Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, Nevada, Iowa and Colorado. This week, he reserved time for a 16th ad in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, according to Federal Communication Commission records.

Outside groups helping Romney, including Americans for Prosperity and American Crossroads, also have trained their advertising firepower on those same states, according to a review of data from New York-based Kantar Media’s CMAG, which tracks advertising.

Electoral Math

Obama and supportive Democrats have scaled back resources in states where Romney and his backers aren’t advertising, suggesting both sides have settled on the same nine states, which have a combined 110 electoral votes.

In this environment, Obama could secure re-election just by winning Florida and one of the remaining eight battleground states. That’s because the president is favored to win the 207 electoral votes from states that he carried four years ago by at least 15 percentage points. Michigan is among those. He also has the edge in Minnesota, which has 10 votes, and Pennsylvania, which has 20. That would bring Obama to 237 electoral votes.

#### Only 9 states matter

**Mahtesian, 9/10/12 –** Politico’s National Politics editor (Charles, Politico, “9 states where the race will be won,”

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/80971.html?hp=t1)

The presidential race has narrowed to a core of nine states, a collection of margin-of-error battlegrounds spread across nearly every region.

From New Hampshire in the Northeast to Nevada in the Rocky Mountain West, there is little disagreement between the two campaigns about the places where the election will be won and lost. Aside from those two swing states, there are seven others: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Some of them are familiar presidential battlegrounds, accustomed to playing a pivotal role every four years. Others are relative newcomers to the swing state roster. Every one of them was carried by President Barack Obama in 2008.

#### Energy policy will determine the election

**Gardett, 8/23/12** (Peter, “As Voters Focus on Energy, API Chief Begs: 'Turn Us Loose',” <http://energy.aol.com/2012/08/23/as-voters-focus-on-energy-api-chief-begs-turn-us-loose/>)

The US oil and natural gas business has been an unusual bright spot for the American economy over the past four years, and that success has helped highlight energy issues as a major factor in the 2012 election cycle.

Energy has not traditionally been a focus of electoral politics beyond prices at the gasoline pump, but this year the broader focus on the economy and the government's role in directing it have brought to light the successes, the potential and the risks of energy development in the US.

"We're only in the early stages of a very robust debate on energy issues," American Petroleum Institute (API) CEO Jack Gerard told AOL Energy in a recent interview.

API has played its part in surfacing energy and the sector's role as an economic engine in a large awareness building campaign called Vote4Energy, revealed in Washington, DC to great fanfare at the beginning of this year. Unlike many industry group-led campaigns, API has implemented a long-term and fully committed strategy across the year as part of the campaign, and will be present at the upcoming Presidential nominating conventions planned for Tampa, Florida and Charlotte, North Carolina over the coming weeks.

The campaign will intensify over the remaining months of 2012 with particularly robust outreach planned for voters in five key states, including Virgina, Ohio, Florida, Colorado and North Carolina.

"We've broken through to a new means of engaging with the public," Gerard said, adding that he thinks the Vote4Energy campaign has been "wildly successful" so far. A recent poll conducted by API demonstrates what it says is broad-based and bipartisan support for the economic issues that in turn underpin the group's pro-energy development agenda.

#### Energy will be the deciding factor in the election

**Belogolova 12 –** reports on energy and environment policy for National Journal and manages the bi-monthly Energy and Environment Insiders Poll, holds bachelor’s degrees in Journalism and European Studies from Boston University. She studied abroad at Oxford University, was one of 10 American journalism students selected for a press trip to Jordan. (Olga, May 17th, “Insiders: Outreach to Oil Industry Won’t Help Obama” http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy/insiders-outreach-to-oil-industry-won-t-help-obama-20120517) Jacome

“It may be harder now for Republicans to land punches related to oil and gas, because the administration has called off the dogs, but many voters still think the president would like to thwart production and consumption of fossil fuels,” said one Insider. “Every time the president singles out the oil and gas industry for unfavorable tax treatment, voters are reminded of the White House's true goals."

Insiders said that energy issues will continue to be a sticking point in this election — to the very end.

“Energy is one of the president's biggest vulnerabilities. From Solyndra to 'cap and tax,' the administration has pursued one energy flop after another. The president's campaign team must agree, since their first ad was a defensive spot on their energy record, and the follow-up was a campaign swing through the country's energy heartland,” said another Insider. “Republicans are going to continue to pound away on the president's energy record to make sure he doesn't get away with trying to mask it.”

#### Energy policy will determine the election

**Handley, 8/21/12 -** business reporter for U.S. News & World Report (Meg, “3 Energy Issues No One's Talking About,” <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2012/08/21/3-energy-issues-no-ones-talking-about>)

If recent campaign events by both the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates are any indication, energy policy is going to be a major political chip in the race for the White House.

President Obama and Mitt Romney have diametrically opposed views on energy security, efficiency, and innovation. That brings seemingly minute issues such as a wind tax energy credit (crucial to Iowans, coincidentally) to the forefront as well as more philosophical issues such as whether the government should subsidize companies researching and producing renewable energy sources.

# 1nr uq

### 2nc Obama win

Obama will win but it will be very close – our **1nc Blumenthal** evidence says that Obama is behind in national polls but he is maintaining an advantage in the battleground states that will determine the election.

#### Prefer Blumenthal:

a. it’s based on 6 new recent polls and he incorporates them into a model that averages all polls to prevent outliers

#### b. the newest polling data is based on a superior polling methodology than most other polls

**Blumenthal, 10/11/12 -** senior polling editor of the Huffington Post and the founding editor of Pollster.com (Mark, Huffington Post, “2012 Polls Show Romney Gaining, But Key Swing States Still Tip To Obama” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/11/2012-polls_n_1957189.html?utm_hp_ref=@pollster>)

These new surveys are closely watched partly because they probe attitudes beyond the horserace and partly because, unlike many other state-level surveys, they use live interviewers to call voters over both landline and cellular phones. This is a critical factor, given that a third of adults have only wireless service and roughly half of adults receive all or almost all of their calls via cell phone.

#### Romney only has a 32% chance of winning – accounts for the aggregate of all polls and Obama is still ahead in every swing state

**Silver, 10/11/12** (Nate, “Oct. 10: Is Romney Leading Right Now?” <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/oct-10-is-romney-leading-right-now/>)

Although Mr. Romney’s standing declined by two points in the Gallup national tracking poll, he improved slightly in four other tracking surveys, from Rasmussen Reports, Ipsos, Investors’ Business Daily and the RAND Corporation. And the state polling data that came in on Wednesday was generally consistent with about a three-and-a-half-point bounce for Mr. Romney, similar to previous days.

There is some spotty evidence that Mr. Romney’s bounce may have been as large as five or six points in polls conducted in the 48 hours after the debate, so perhaps the most recent data does reflect something of a comedown for him. But if his bounce started out at five or six points and has now settled in at three or four, that would still reflect an extremely profound swing in the race — consistent with the largest shifts produced by past presidential debates. We’ll see what happens once the news cycle turns over, such as after Thursday’s vice-presidential debate.

For the time being, however, Mr. Romney continues to rocket forward in our projections. The forecast model now gives him about a one-in-three chance of winning the Electoral College (more specifically, a 32.1 percent chance), his highest figure since Aug. 22 and more than double his chances from before the debate. Mr. Romney may have increased his chances of becoming president by 15 or 20 percent based on one night in Denver.

The more troubling sign for Mr. Romney, however, is that although he’s made gains, he does not seem to have taken the lead in very many state polls. That trend, if anything, has become more entrenched. Of the half-dozen or so polls of battleground states published on Wednesday, none showed Mr. Romney ahead; the best result he managed was a 48-48 tie in a Rasmussen Reports poll of New Hampshire.

#### Prefer state polls to national polls

**Silver, 10/11/12** (Nate, “Oct. 10: Is Romney Leading Right Now?” <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/oct-10-is-romney-leading-right-now/>)

Reasons to Prefer National Polls to State Polls

There are some reasons to prefer national polls to state polls. First, they probably come from slightly stronger polling firms on average and they often have larger sample sizes, although there are exceptions on either side.

Second, they’re more straightforward to interpret — especially if you want to derive an estimate of how the national popular vote will break down. The alternative requires you to “add up” the polls from individual states, as well to estimate what share of the national turnout each state will represent.

Reasons to Prefer State Polls to National Polls

Our research suggests, however, that when the state polls and the national polls seem to tell a different story about the state of the campaign, the state polls sometimes (not always, by any means) get it right.

One case in point: national polls on the eve of the 2000 election were consistent with about a three-point lead for George W. Bush. But the collective evidence from state polling was suggestive of a nearly tied race. In fact, the conventional wisdom at that time was that Mr. Bush might win the popular vote but lose the Electoral College — exactly the opposite of the outcome that occurred.

The state polling generally told the more accurate story, however, describing a tossup race, rather than one favoring Mr. Bush.

Similarly, in 1996, most national polls showed Bill Clinton winning by double-digits, while battleground state polls seemed to suggest that he would win by a smaller amount. Mr. Clinton’s actual margin of victory was eight and a half percentage points, more in line with the state polling.

What advantages do state polls have? One is just that there are more of them. No, there aren’t more Virginia polls than there are national polls. But among Virginia and Ohio and Colorado and the other 47 states, there are quite a lot more. So even if the typical state poll is slightly less accurate the typical national poll, the collective sum of state polls may be more worthwhile than the collective sum of national polls.

Also, the state polls come from a more diverse set of polling firms, and may provide for a greater degree of independence.

What do I mean by “independence”? Here’s a dirty little secret: pollsters herd. Or to put it less politely: it’s probable that some polling firms, especially those that use less rigorous methodologies, cheat off the stronger ones — seeing what the consensus results are before weighing in on their own.

One piece of evidence for this comes from a paper by the political scientists Joshua Clinton and Steve Rogers, who analyzed polling in the Republican primaries this year. They found that when a low-quality pollster was the first one to poll a state, their results were quite poor. But they did as well as any others once there were high-quality polls already released in the state — possibly implying that the low-quality pollsters were tweaking their assumptions to match the better ones.

My own research is suggestive of a similar phenomenon. I’ve found that the more polls there are of a state, the narrower the spread between them — in a way that is inconsistent with normal statistical variance. Once there is a consensus established in a state, the pollsters may have an incentive to be in line with it. That may make the individual poll more accurate — but reduce the value of aggregating or averaging polls since the “wisdom of crowds” principle is strongest when individual members of the crowd are behaving independently. Otherwise, it becomes more likely that everyone will miss in the same direction.

Even high-quality polling firms sometimes feel compelled to change their methods if they are out-of-step with the consensus. Gallup announced a set of changes to its methodology on Wednesday, for example. Although the changes are defensible on a theoretical basis (and although it’s much better to disclose the changes than not to do so), it’s awfully late in the game to be doing that, and makes it harder to compare recent Gallup results to past ones.

(Whether you like the FiveThirtyEight forecast model or not, one advantage it has is that we don’t change the rules as we go along. The forecasts that you see today are from a program that we designed in the spring, before knowing how the election would play out.)

The potential advantage of state polls is that, to the extent that the pollsters herd, they’re herding relative to 50 state-by-state averages rather than just one national average. So you aren’t putting quite so many eggs into one basket.

#### And Silver’s aggregation that puts Obama ahead is a conservative estimate compared to other poll aggregation sites

**Silver, 10/11/12** (Nate, “Oct. 10: Is Romney Leading Right Now?” <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/oct-10-is-romney-leading-right-now/>)

In the chart below, I’ve compared the results from the FiveThirtyEight “now-cast” as of Wednesday night to those issued by three other polling sites: Real Clear Politics, HuffPost Pollster and Talking Points Memo’s PollTracker. The results cover the 11 battleground states that the campaigns have made a material amount of advertising expenditures in, along with each site’s estimate of the national popular vote.

On average among the 11 battleground states, we show Mr. Obama with a 2.3 percentage point lead, or 1.9 percentage points as weighted by each state’s turnout in 2008. Among the four methods, we have the worst figure for Mr. Obama in Iowa, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Wisconsin, and the highest in none. Our average result for Mr. Obama among the 11 states is also the lowest of the four systems, although tied with RealClearPolitics if weighted by turnout.

The flip-side is that our estimate of Mr. Obama’s national popular vote is the highest of the four systems: the “now-cast” shows him one and a half percentage points ahead nationally, while HuffPost Pollster shows a tie, and the other two methods have Mr. Romney slightly ahead.

#### Romney’s gains were a post-debate bounce; they are receding

**Cohn, 10/10**/12 (Nate, Electionnate blog for The New Republic, “Is Romney’s Bounce Receding?” [http://www.tnr.com/blog/electionate/108414/the-race-tightening#](http://www.tnr.com/blog/electionate/108414/the-race-tightening))

Yesterday, Gallup released data showing that Obama returned to pre-debate levels over their last two days of interviews, suggesting that Romney’s bounce had already come and gone. Similarly, today’s Gallup poll seems to suggest that Obama’s strong showings are continuing.

There are other hints that Obama has fared better in interviews conducted after October 5th than he did immediately after the debates. Perhaps it was the waning memory of the debate or Friday’s jobs numbers, but there is a case that Obama has performed better in national and battleground surveys (I decided to exclude neurotic polls of MA) where the majority of interviews appear to have been conducted on October 6th or later than those where most interviews were conducted on October 4th or 5th.

And these are not the only polls suggesting that Obama might have rebounded from his post-debate nadir. Over the last twenty-four hours, CNN shows Obama leading by four points in Ohio, while PPP actually shows Obama making gains in Minnesota. And while Rasmussen suggests that Romney has made gains in Pennsylvania, nearly all of their other state polls show the president performing well in the battleground states since Sunday. Similarly, PPP suggested that their interviews on Saturday and Sunday were quite strong for the president and the ABC/Washington Post favorability poll found Obama and Romney near pre-debate levels, with the exception of a very strong night of interviews for Romney on the Thursday following the debates.

#### Obama has a stronger ground game in battleground states

**Michigan Chronicle, 10/11**/12 (“Dems Lead GOP In Voter Registration Efforts In Swing States” <http://www.michronicleonline.com/index.php/rtm-news-reel/7957-dems-lead-gop-in-voter-registration-efforts-in-swing-states>)

A robust registration push by President Barack Obama‘s re-election campaign has resulted in more Democrats than Republicans on the voter rolls in most battleground states, including Florida and Nevada, according to data from state election boards.

But Republicans have had their own registration success, narrowing the Democratic voter advantage since 2008 in many of the battlegrounds, including Iowa. And party officials say they have put more resources into persuading independent voters who are already registered to cast their ballots for party nominee Mitt Romney.

“We do not put as big an emphasis on voter registration programs as we do in talking to and persuading independents,” said Rick Wiley, political director for the Republican National Committee. “I would prefer to go in and talk to an independent who is already registered. They have a voter history.”

The president’s campaign, which promoted the voter registration data Thursday, argues that its ability to register hundreds of thousands of new voters is indicative of battleground state field operations that also have the resources to get voters to the polls, particularly during early voting. And campaign officials say a deeper look at the registration numbers shows an uptick in new Hispanic voters and voters under the age of 30 – voting blocs where the president has an advantage.

Obama’s registration and get-out-the-vote operations in 2008 played a crucial role in his getting elected. With the White House race tightening less than four weeks from Election Day, the Democratic campaign is banking on its organization in the battleground states to give Obama an edge.

Deadlines to vote in the November election have passed in many states, but the registration totals are expected to shift somewhat in the coming days as last-minute entries are counted.

The most current data, available online from state election boards, give Democrats a registration advantage in most of the battleground states with party identification: Florida, Iowa, North Carolina and Nevada. The party also significantly outpaces Republican registration in Pennsylvania by more than 1 million voters. That’s part of the reason Romney’s campaign has not made a serious effort to compete in the state.