

MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS – US Daily Brief 12-05-22

By Adam Burrowes

The White House

10:15 ET 15:15 BST	The President and The Vice President receive the President's Daily Brief
14:30 ET 19:30 BST	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki
17:30 ET 22:30 BST	The President welcomes the Leaders of ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretary General to the White House and takes a family photo as part of the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit
18:00 ET 23:00 BST	The President hosts a dinner for the Leaders of ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretary General

Midterms Countdown: Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania Primaries: 5 days.
2022 Midterm Elections: 183 days. The 2024 Presidential Election: 911 days

Roe Vs Wade

- The United States Senate again failed to advance abortion rights legislation. All Republican Senators and Joe Manchin (D-WV) voted against the measure.
- The Senate leaders provided polarising takes on the issue:
 - Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY): 'Elect more MAGA Republicans if you want to see a nationwide ban on abortion, if you want to see doctors and women arrested, if you want to see no exceptions for rape or incest.'
 - Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY): 'Our Democratic colleagues want to vote for abortion on demand through all nine months, until the moment before a baby is born. A failed show vote that will only prove their own extremism.'
- A notable development this week is the terms 'MAGA,' 'ultra-MAGA agenda,' and 'MAGA King' being peppered throughout Democrats speeches. This is an apparent strategic directive from Democrat HQ designed to reframe the midterms as a contest between a 'moderate' Democrat party and an 'extreme' GOP, controlled by a dangerous minority.
- It is not dissimilar to the 'woke' and 'liberal' discourse being pushed by many in the Republican Party. This midterm campaign season will certainly be a bitter contest for control of the 'extremist' narrative.

- Following the failed Senate vote a number of Democrat Senators made pointed references to the difficulties of legislating with an unreliable Senator (Manchin).
- Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA): 'It's hard, we have the responsibility of being in the majority, without being able to count on all of the votes in our column. And that's tough.'
- Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI): 'It's a majority that comes and goes. Sort of like the tide.'
- The Supreme Court justices will meet today for the first time since the leaked Roe vs Wade ruling.
- A Monmouth University report released today has shown that the ruling has contributed to a collapse in approval of the court. 52% of respondents say they disapprove of the job the Supreme Court is doing, up from 42% in March.

Chart 1: Do you approve or disapprove of the job the US Supreme Court is doing?

TREND:	May 2022	March 2022	Sept. 2021	March 2016
Approve	38%	42%	42%	49%
Disapprove	52%	42%	45%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	16%	12%	17%
(n)	(807)	(809)	(802)	(1,008)

Source: Monmouth University

Inflation

- President Biden was again on the road yesterday trying to hammer home the White House message inflation is a global crisis caused by the effects of COVID-19 and the Russian war in Ukraine.
- Biden said: 'I know that families all across America are hurting because of inflation. I understand what it feels like. I come from a family where, when the price of gas or food went up, we felt it.'
- Obama Advisor David Axelrod: 'We have a very expansive view of the president's ability to impact events, but some things are beyond the powers of a president to control. But the president gets the blame. And even progress made on unemployment and wages have been eaten up by inflation.'
- *In Poll of the Day below we have a summary of a report showing how perceptions of the power of the President are contributing to Biden's poor approval rating.*
- Politico: 'White House aides now ruefully note that the "twoGs" – gas and groceries – are not just the areas where Americans most feel the pinch but also happen to be the two commodities whose surging prices, thanks to roadside billboards and checkout counters, are most well-known.'

Food Security

- European Union officials and the US are set to announce a new strategy to ship Ukrainian grain out of the country via rail and road, although planners acknowledge that land routes won't be able to match the volume that can be moved by seaport.
- Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is in Germany for a G7 agriculture ministerial. He will also travel to Warsaw, Poland, on Sunday to meet with his counterparts to discuss issues relating to the war in Ukraine and escalating food crisis.

ASEAN

- President Biden will host leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the White House today for a two-day summit.
- The summit is expected to focus heavily on the war in Ukraine despite strong ties to Russia amongst many of the participating countries. The White House is expected to encourage the Southeast Asian nations to join the US led sanctions program against Russia.
- NYT: 'Biden plans to host the leaders of Southeast Asian nations at the White House on Thursday and Friday, delivering a message of solidarity — and aiming to provide a bulwark against Chinese influence in the region — even as much of his administration remains focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.'
- A Biden administration official told reporters that Biden 'would not single out any one leader for bilateral meetings, but would have a quick, private time' with each of them.

Russia

- US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told Congress yesterday: 'As you look at Putin's calculus, my view - and I'm sure the chairman has his own view - but my view is that Russia doesn't want to take on the NATO alliance.'
- Avril Haines national intelligence director, said yesterday that Putin was 'probably counting on US and EU resolve to weaken as food shortages, inflation and energy shortages get worse.'
- Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley confirmed that Russia had used hypersonic weapons in Ukraine, the first time such weapons had ever been used in combat, but their uses has not had 'significant or game-changing effects' in the war.
- Milley told a House defence subcommittee hearing: 'The Russians have used several hypersonic missiles. Obviously, the distinguishing factor of a hypersonic missile is the speed at which it travels ... but other than the speed of the weapon — in terms of its effect on a given target — we are not seeing really significant or game-changing effects to date with the delivery of the small number of hypersonics that the Russians have used.'

Congressional Business

The House will meet at 10:00 ET 15:00 BST

The Senate will meet at 10:00 ET 15:00 BST

Committee Schedule

- HOUSE Appropriations: 'Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request for the Department of Commerce'
 - Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo testifies
 - SENATE Foreign Relations: Hearings to examine U.S. efforts to support Ukraine against Russian aggression
 - HOUSE Natural Resources Hearing: Reforming the Mining Law of 1872
 - HOUSE Financial Services: The Annual Report of the Financial Stability Oversight Council
 - Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen testifies
 - HOUSE Foreign Affairs: The Way Forward on U.S. North Korea Policy
 - HOUSE Appropriations: FY 2023 Budget Request for the Department of Energy Science and Energy Programs
- The conference committee will meet this morning to begin ironing out the differences in the US Innovation and Competition Act.

Israel

- The death of an Al Jazeera journalist and US citizen Shireen Abu Akleh has strained diplomatic relations between the United States and Israel. Al Jazeera said the Israeli military 'deliberately targeted and killed our colleague.'
- White House deputy press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre condemned the killing and called 'for a thorough investigation.'
- State Department Spokesperson Ned Price also took sharp questioning on the matter at his daily presser yesterday. Price also condemned the killing and declined to call for an independent investigation of the killing, saying that Israel was capable of carrying out a robust investigation.
- The killing of Abu Akleh could complicate President Biden's scheduled trip to Israel this summer. Biden is reportedly considering a visit to predominantly Palestinian East Jerusalem as part of the trip which could be interpreted as a gesture of support for the Palestinians.

Egypt

- Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk are in Egypt this week to meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi and top government to discuss the war in Ukraine and other bilateral issues.

Turkey

- The Biden administration has informally reached out to Congress for approval on a proposed sale of missiles and equipment to NATO ally Turkey.
- The weapons package is understood to be part of an existing request by Ankara, and includes AIM-120 medium-range air-to-air and sidewinder missiles, as well as hardware and software updates for F-16 fighter jets.

Poll of the Day

- Fairleigh Dickinson University has released an expansive report claiming that perceptions of the strength of the executive are highly influential on the President's approval rating.
- FDU claims Biden's 38 percent approval rating is 'largely due to the belief that Presidents have a lot of influence over things that they actually have very little control over.'
- The report continues: 'Political scientists refer to the belief that Presidents could do more if they just tried as "Green Lanternism," referring to the DC Comics superhero whose power is limited only by his willpower, and it has become a major obstacle for Biden and Democrats going toward the 2022 midterm elections.'
- The thrust of the report is that Americans who believe that Biden is restricted by institutional constraints are far more likely to approve of the job he is doing. The full report can be read here: <https://www.fdu.edu/news/fdu-poll-green-lanternism-holding-down-bidens-approval-ratings/>

Chart 2: Approval and Institutional Constraints

<p>Some people say that structural factors, like the composition of Congress and the Courts, make it hard for any modern President to do very much. Other people say that if a President really tried, he could get a lot more done. What do you think?</p>			
	All	Approve of Biden	Disapprove of Biden
President is Limited	45%	70%	26%
President could do more	47%	24%	67%
[Vol] Dont Know	6%	5%	6%
[Vol] Refused	2%	1%	1%

Source: Fairleigh Dickinson University

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