

MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS – US Daily Brief 16-05-22

By Adam Burrowes

The White House

09:30 ET 14:30 BST	The President receives the President's Daily Brief
11:45 ET 16:45 BST	The President awards Public Safety Officer Medals of Valor for 'extraordinary valour above and beyond the call of duty'
14:30 ET 19:30 BST	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre
15:30 ET 20:30 BST	The President holds a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of the Hellenic Republic to 'celebrate 201 years of Greek independence'
17:00 ET 22:00 BST	The President and The First Lady host a reception in honour of the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic and Mrs. Mitsotaki

Midterms Countdown: Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania Primaries: 1 days.
2022 Midterm Elections: 179 days. The 2024 Presidential Election: 907 days

Republican News

- Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and three other Senate Republicans are the latest US lawmakers to travel to Kyiv to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.
- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) led a CODEL of House Democrats to Kyiv two weeks ago, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin have also made trips to the city to meet their counterparts.
- McConnell told reporters on Sunday that he expects the USD\$40 billion Ukraine aid package to pass the Senate with strong bipartisan support this week.
- McConnell downplayed Republican opposition to the aid package. Former President Donald Trump had this to say on the matter: 'The Democrats are sending another \$40 billion to Ukraine, yet America's parents are struggling to even feed their children.'
- McConnell: 'There's always been isolationist voices in the Republican Party. There were prior to World War II. That's perfectly alright. This is a debate worth having, it's an important subject. I think one of the lessons we learned in World War II was not standing up to aggression early is a huge mistake.'

Russia

- US defence secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu on Friday for the first time since the war began.
- Austin issued a statement saying that he called for an 'immediate ceasefire.' Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said: "Secretary Austin urged an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and emphasised the importance of maintaining lines of communication."
- Austin's conversation with Shoigu came as western allies also increased direct communication with Moscow. German chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke with Russia President Vladimir Putin and Finnish President Sauli Niinistö spoke with Putin to discuss Finland's decision to formally apply for NATO membership.
- The US State Department issued a number of statements related to the war in Ukraine: 'Russia is blocking Ukraine's ports; it's destroying its farmland, warehouses, roads, equipment. That's not only striking a major blow to Ukraine's economy, but it's also designed to inflict pain on the rest of the world to weaken support to the Ukrainian people.'

UN

- US Secretary of State Blinken confirmed that food security will be on the UN agenda: 'Later this week in New York, we will be convening an emergency session of the UN Security Council and also the foreign ministers to focus on the steps that we can take together to address the immediate challenges for food and to address food insecurity, as well as to look at some of the medium-term and longer-term answers to food insecurity.'

Ukraine

- In a press availability following this weekend NATO ministerial in Berlin, Blinken told reporters that: 'American diplomats have returned to Ukraine after several weeks working out of Poland. We're reopening our Embassy in Kyiv – we're taking all necessary precautions, but that work is underway – and we will resume operations very soon.'
- On the Ukraine aid package: There's a cloture vote in the US Senate on the bill today. If cloture is invoked, as expected, then that would set up a final vote on the package for Wednesday.

NATO

- US Secretary of State Blinken provided a preview for the Madrid NATO summit: 'We also spent time here in Berlin laying the groundwork for next month's summit in Madrid. NATO is going to release its new Strategic Concept laying out how the Alliance will sustain and strengthen transatlantic security in the face of President Putin's aggression as well as other emerging threats. And we'll look ahead to our continuing efforts to fortify our force posture on NATO's eastern flank and to strengthen our defence

partnerships beyond the region – for example, with Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, all of which will be represented in Madrid.’

- Blinken also responded to questions on the prospect of Turkey blocking Sweden and Finland’s NATO membership. ‘...I did have a chance to talk to my Turkish counterpart, the foreign minister. When it comes to Sweden and Finland and their potential accession to NATO, this is a process. And NATO is a place for dialogue; it’s a place for discussion. It’s a place for talking about any differences that that we may have. I don’t want to characterize the specific conversation that we had either with the foreign minister or within the NATO sessions themselves, but I can say this much: I heard, almost across the board, very strong support for Finland and NATO joining the Alliance if that’s what they choose to do. And I’m very confident that we will reach consensus on that.’

Congressional Business

The House will meet at 12:00 ET 15:00 BST

The Senate will meet at 15:00 ET 20:00 BST

Committee Schedule

- HOUSE Rules Meeting: H.R. 7309—Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022; H.R. 7688—Consumer Fuel Price Gouging Prevention Act; H.R. 6531—Targeting Resources to Communities in Need Act of 2022

Summit of the Americas

- The Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June is looking like a potentially fruitless exercise for expanding discourse in the region. The US decision not to invite Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua over human rights abuses precipitated a threat from Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to boycott the event.
- If Mexico declines to attend and Brazil also boycotts, which is looking likely, then half the Latin America’s population will be absent from the conference.
- Such a poor turnout would be a damaging public relations knock to the Biden administration ahead of the midterms.

Democrats News

- The White House has responded to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos’ criticism of President Biden: ‘It doesn’t require a huge leap to figure out why one of the wealthiest individuals on Earth opposes an economic agenda for the middle class that cuts some of the biggest costs families face, fights inflation for the long haul, and adds to the historic deficit reduction the President is achieving by asking the richest taxpayers and corporations to pay their fair share. It’s also unsurprising that this tweet comes after the President met with labour organizers, including Amazon employees.’

Iran

- The US State Department said over the weekend that it appreciated the European Union's efforts to revive JCPOA talks with Iran but there was no agreement on the horizon yet.
- A State Department source told Reuters: 'At this point a deal remains far from certain. Iran needs to decide whether it insists on extraneous conditions and whether it wants to conclude a deal quickly, which we believe would serve all side's interests. We and our partners are ready, and have been for some time. It's now up to Iran.'

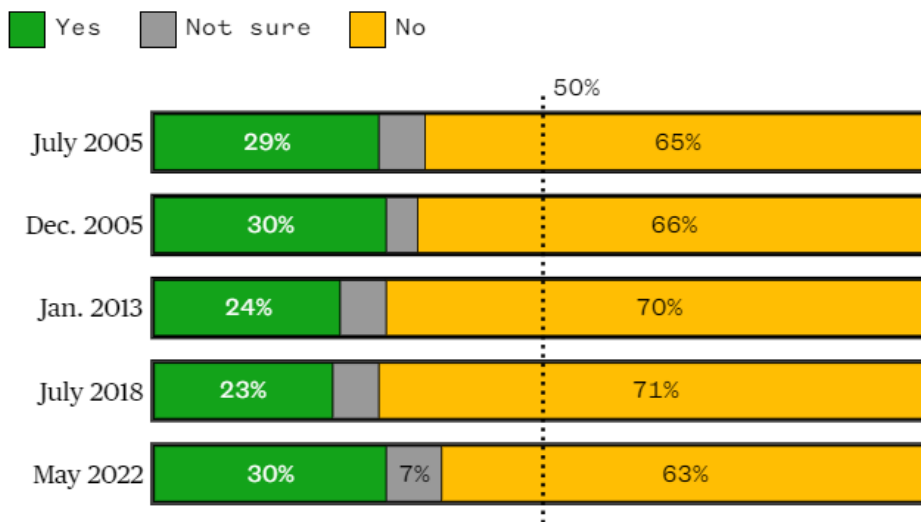
ASEAN

- Leaders of the United States and the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed to upgrade their relationship to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' by November this year.
- This would bring the US in line with China and Australia who already have CSPs with the bloc in place.
- In a joint statement the leaders also said that they reaffirm 'respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity' of Ukraine.

Poll of the Day

- According to a new NBC report, most Americans don't believe that Roe vs Wade should be overturned but it is still unclear how this will influence the midterm elections in November.
- Democratic pollster Horwitt: 'How [abortion] plays out in November is to be determined. but for now, it is injecting some much-needed enthusiasm into parts of the Democratic coalition.'
- President Biden's approval is still touching record lows and a bounce that followed the SCOTUS leak has reversed.

Chart 1: Should Row v. Wade be overturned?



Source: NBC

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