

MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS - US Daily Brief 04-10-22

By Adam Burrowes

The White House

10:15 ET 15:15 BST	The President and The Vice President receive the President's Daily Briefing
13:00 ET 18:00 BST	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

Elections Countdown:

- ❖ 2022 midterm elections: 35 days
- ❖ 2024 presidential election: 763 days

Republican News

The Republican candidate in the crucial Georgia Senate race, Herschel Walker, is facing a potentially terminal scandal just the gaff-prone nominee has drawn level in polling with incumbent Democrat Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA).

- The Daily Beast reported on Monday that Walker paid for the abortion of an ex-girlfriend in 2009. In response, Walker promised he would file a lawsuit against the Daily Beast.
- Walker said: "I never asked anyone to get an abortion. I never paid for an abortion, and it's a lie."
- Politico: "While other Republicans have avoided talking about abortion restrictions recently, Walker has leaned into the issue. He endorsed Sen. Lindsey Graham's (R-SC) proposed 15-week national ban, which other Republicans have run away from, and he has repeatedly said he favours a total national ban on abortion, including in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is threatened."
- Herschel Walker's son, Christian Walker took to Twitter and posted a number of messages criticising Walker's public image as a family man: "Every family member of Herschel Walker asked him not to run for office, because we all knew (some of) his past. Every single one."
- The Georgia Senate race between Walker and incumbent Democrat Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) is looking increasingly competitive, and is currently tipped to be one of the tightest Senate races of the midterms.
- Walker has proven remarkably resilient to scandal during this campaign season, but this might be one scandal too far.

- Erick Erickson, a conservative pundit in Georgia said: “I’ll see what sort of response he mounts, but given text messages tonight, Georgia GOP’ers are praying for Dr. Oz to win. Walker hasn’t mounted a good response to any attack, and this is brutal, probably a KO.”

Congressional Business

The House is out

The Senate is out

Committee Schedule -

Ukraine

Ukrainian forces continue to make significant gains in Kherson and Donbas Oblasts, reasserting control over the key logistics hub of Lyman.

- A Pentagon Spokesperson said capturing Lyman is a “significant operational accomplishment and impacts the ability [of Russia] to resupply forces along the forward line of troops ... in the Kharkiv region along down near Bakhmut and as far south as Kherson.”
- US National Security Spokesperson John Kirby said: “They are also making gains in the south, incremental to be sure, but they are making gains in their counteroffensive down in the south in the Kherson Oblast and not too far from the city of Kherson. They’re absolutely on the move here and like you’ve heard President Biden saying, we’re going to continue to make sure we can give them the weapons and capabilities they need to continue that kind of progress.”
- Russian Defence Ministry Spokesperson Igor Konashenkov conceded yesterday that Russian forces had been forced to withdraw: “With numerically superior tank units in the direction of Zolota Balka and Oleksandrivka, the enemy managed to forge deep into our defenses.”
- CNN has reported that Kyiv is providing the US with oversight of targets in an attempt to ease US concerns over supplying long-range missile systems.
- CNN: “The remarkable transparency essentially gives the US veto power over Ukrainian targeting of Russia and is meant to convince the administration that providing the critical weapons would not lead to strikes inside Russian territory.”
- Ukraine wants Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) a missile system which has a range around four-times greater than HIMARS, the system which has unpinning the Ukrainian counteroffensive. The US will still be reluctant to supply ATACMS, seeing the risk of escalation greater than the reward.

South America

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a key meeting with Colombian President Gustavo Petro yesterday in Bogota. The bilateral meeting is part of a weeklong tour to the region where Blinken will meet with the leftist presidents of Colombia, Chile, and Peru and attempt to convince the leaders that the US is a more desirable partner than China.

- Petro's reformist agenda looks set to fundamentally shake-up the relationship with Washington. He said at a joint presser with the Secretary of State: "...we discussed topics such as narcotics trafficking, undoubtedly a subject of interest to both countries for several decades now and is a common topic on our binational agenda. But we looked at it from a different perspective, a perspective that I would deem is more flexible, that has a more comprehensive view of drug consumption and production in our hemisphere.
- Petro continued: "... Colombia is drug trafficking because it does not produce. Then how can we stop producing drugs? Well, by focusing and investing in agriculture and farming."

China

The Biden administration is expected to announce new measures, as soon as this week, which will restrict Chinese companies from accessing certain US tech which could be used in next generation weapons and surveillance systems.

- The NYT writes that the measures, "would be some of the most significant steps taken by the Biden administration to cut off China's access to advanced semiconductor technology. They would build on a Trump-era rule that struck a blow to the Chinese telecom giant Huawei by prohibiting companies around the world from sending it products made with the use of American technology, machinery or software."

Former President Trump

Former President Donald Trump has filed a federal lawsuit against CNN for defamation, seeking USD475 million in punitive damages.

- Trump's legal team claims that CNN, "has sought to use its massive influence — purportedly as a 'trusted' news source — to defame the Plaintiff in the minds of its viewers and readers for the purpose of defeating him politically, culminating in CNN claiming credit for '[getting] Trump out' in the 2020 presidential election."

OPEC+

The group of oil producing countries OPEC+ is expected to announce a significant cut in oil production at a ministerial session in Vienna tomorrow.

- Some industry experts believe the production could be cut by as much as two million barrels per day, but the production cut is more likely to be in the range of 1-1.5 million barrels per day.
- Any cut to oil production will be a blow to the Biden administration who has tried to prod OPEC leader Saudi Arabia into hiking production.
- In particular, a trip made by Biden to Saudi Arabia in July, criticised at the time by opponents as undermining the values of the Biden administration, will be viewed as politically damaging without advancing US energy security.

- NYT: “Analysts say that the Saudis appear determined to bring oil prices up to about \$90 a barrel. Oil prices, about \$85 a barrel on Friday for Brent crude, the international benchmark, have fallen by roughly a quarter since their June high.”
- Helima Croft, head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets: “We certainly see a significant chance that the producer group will opt for a substantial cut to try to signal that there is indeed an effective circuit breaker in the market.”

North Korea

Secretary of State Antony Blinken held called with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa yesterday after North Korea launched a ballistic missile over Japanese territory.

- According to the State Department, “Secretary Blinken, Foreign Minister Park, and Foreign Minister Hayashi strongly condemned the launch and its blatant disregard of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and its deeply destabilizing implications for the region. Secretary Blinken underscored that the U.S. commitment to the defence of the ROK and Japan remains ironclad.”
- President Biden will hold a call with his Japanese counterpart Prime Minister Fumio Kishida today to formulate a joint response.

Poll of the Day

A Monmouth University report has shown that voters’ issues priorities are leaning towards areas of traditional strength for the Republican Party.

- Monmouth: “When asked which group of issues is more important in their support for Congress this year, concerns about the economy and cost of living (54%) outpace concerns about fundamental rights and democratic processes (38%) among all Americans. Republicans prioritize the economy (71%), while Democrats prioritize rights (67%). Independents are more likely to give preference to economic issues (61%) than concerns about rights and democracy (29%).”
- Patrick Murray, director of Monmouth University Polling Institute: “Democrats are all over the place when it comes to their key issues. This makes it difficult for the party to create a cohesive messaging strategy to motivate its base. Republicans, on the other hand, just have to hammer away at rising prices and ‘the wolf is at the door’ to get their voters riled up.”

Chart 1: America’s Issue Priorities

	Extremely or very important	Approve Biden's handling
Inflation	82%	30%
Crime	72%	32%
Elections & voting	70%	43%
Jobs, unemployment	68%	43%
Immigration	67%	31%
Infrastructure	57%	43%
Abortion	56%	31%
Racial inequality	53%	41%
Gun control	51%	30%
Climate change	49%	42%
Covid pandemic	32%	50%
Student loan debt	31%	41%

Source: Monmouth University

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