

# MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS – Week Ahead

## August 10-16

*by Tom Lake*

All timings subject to change. The Political Risk Week Ahead may be truncated over the coming weeks as the measures taken to combat the spread of COVID-19 sees political summits, meetings, and elections cancelled or postponed. All relevant and timely political events and public holidays will still be included.

*Monday 10 August:*

- **United States:** Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee is certain to make the announcement of his vice-presidential pick at some point during the week of August 10. Biden has already missed several self-imposed deadlines for announcing his decision, but with the Democratic National Convention taking place virtually from August 17-20 Biden is running out of time to make his decision. US Senator from California Kamala Harris remains the frontrunner.
- **Germany:** Foreign Minister Heiko Maas hosts his South Korean counterpart Kyung-wha Kang in Berlin for bilateral discussions. This will be followed by a joint press conference.
- **UK-France:** UK Immigration Minister Chris Philip to engage in talks with his French equivalents over the issue of increasing numbers of migrants crossing the English Channel in recent months. The UK government has expressed its disappointment with the actions of French forces, which have failed to stop the numerous daily crossings of migrant boats, despite the UK paying in excess of GBP100mn to the French government in order to disperse migrants in northern France seeking to travel to the UK.
- **Trinidad and Tobago:** Presidential and primary election. A tight race is expected between incumbent Prime Minister Keith Rowley's big-tent People's National Movement and opposition leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar's centre-left United National Congress for a majority in the House of Representatives.
- **Japan:** Public holiday for Mountain Day.
- **South Africa:** Public holiday for National Women's Day.
- **Singapore:** Public holiday for the observance of Singapore National Day.

*Tuesday 11 August:*

- **United States:** Congressional primaries in Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Vermont will also hold primaries for its gubernatorial election. Some focus on congressional primary in Minnesota, where high-profile freshman Democrat Ilhan Omar, part of the so-called 'squad' of progressive female Democrats in the House, is on course to retain her party's nomination for the state's fifth district.
- **United States:** Secretary of State Mike Pompeo begins five-day visit to Central Europe. Starts in the Czech Republic on August 11, before travelling to Ljubljana, Slovenia on August 13; Vienna, Austria on August 14; and Warsaw, Poland on

August 15. Visit is likely to entail discussions about US role in European defence following President Trump's announcement of the withdrawal of thousands of troops from Germany, as well as relations between China, Europe, and the US.

- **Russia:** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hosts talks with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in Moscow. Topics of discussion likely to centre on security situations in Ukraine, Libya, and Syria. Maas has previously said that finding solutions to these security crises requires Russian action.

*Wednesday 12 August:*

- **Egypt:** Voting concludes for the Egyptian Senate. The Senate is a new upper chamber of the country's bicameral legislature, established following the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood-majority Shura Council in 2013 following the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi. Parties loyal to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi are expected to dominate the new chamber. Results expected on September 16.
- **Russia:** The Russian Defence Ministry and the Gamaleya Research Institute are set to announce the registration of the world's first COVID-19 vaccine. The drug's trial data and documents are currently under review. Deputy Health Minister Oleg Grindev stated that if the vaccine is approved medical professionals and the elderly will be the first to be inoculated.

*Thursday 13 August:*

- **United States:** Vice-President Mike Pence to visit Des Moines, Iowa to deliver remarks on the Trump administration's economic agenda before joining a 'Heritage Action Town Hall' to launch the 'Fight for America' campaign. President Trump retains a narrow 1-2% lead over Democrat Joe Biden in Iowa in opinion polling.

*Friday 14 August:*

- **Indonesia:** President Joko Widodo set to announce the country's 2021 budget as well as his government's economic plan for Indonesia for the next 12 months. Government spending as part of the pandemic stimulus package and an expected fall in tax revenue is already forecast to push the budget deficit to its widest point in more than a decade.

*Saturday 15 August:*

- **Global:** 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the announcement of the surrender of Japanese imperial forces in WWII by Emperor Hirohito. Event, known in the West as Victory over Japan day or V-J Day, to be marked by celebrations, commemorations and memorials around the world.

*Sunday 16 August:*

- **US-Canada:** A new set of US tariffs on some Canadian aluminium set to come into force. The 10% ad valorem tariff comes at the behest of US President Donald Trump just months after the signing of the USMCA trade deal, which replaced NAFTA. The US had previously attempted to force Canada to place quotas on the export of the

metal to the US, with Trump stating that "Canada was taking advantage of us — as usual,".

## Rolling Risks

- Global:** The spread of the 2019-nCoV, commonly known as 'Coronavirus' or COVID-19 is the main story gaining political attention around the world at present. Starting in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the disease has reached 213 countries or territories, with 19,876,302 confirmed cases causing 731,570 fatalities according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at John Hopkins University. Travel bans and movement lockdowns were in place in most countries, with many unwinding these measures as the peak of the virus passes. The pace of the unwinding of these measures differs significantly country-to-country depending on how effective each has been in suppressing the spread of the virus, with some notable centres of outbreak such as the US, Brazil, and India.
- Global Protest/Political Violence:** Widespread civil unrest broke out in the United States in the first week of June following the death of African-American George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis, MN in late May. More than 75 cities saw protests against police brutality, with curfews brought in in 40 cities after widespread rioting and looting. Protest movements spread to a number of other Western nations, including the UK and France. The protests and civil unrest have widened into a more general movement seeking to change what protesters say is a racist and unequal society in many Western states. This has spurred a reassessment of monuments in many Western cities, with opponents saying they glorify racist individuals, while defenders argue a nation's history should not be erased due to an individual's views or actions at another point in time. In Hong Kong, there is an increased risk of mass protests and an escalation in street violence in the wake of Beijing's imposition of a new national security law, which opponents say violates the 'one country, two systems' political environment enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration.
- India-China:** Tensions between the world's two most populous nations reached their highest level in decades on June 15 when a skirmish in the disputed Galwan Valley, a remote Himalayan area along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), left 20 Indian and an unconfirmed number of Chinese troops dead. No guns are permitted by either side along the LAC, meaning the skirmish involved brutal hand-to-hand combat. Both sides have blamed the other for the escalation, the first deaths along the border in over 40 years. The LAC between the two sides is not officially demarcated, making the establishment of control difficult. Both sides have sought to de-escalate the situation in recent weeks, but there remains the prospect of more frequent skirmishes in the region with neither side willing to back down.
- Trade War:** The spread of COVID-19 has seen a number of governments around the world issue strong criticism of the Chinese government for its perceived inaction in effectively containing the initial outbreak of the virus. This in turn could see trade relations worsen substantially if any tariffs or sanctions are imposed on China as a punishment. The state of relations between China and many western economies has deteriorated further following Beijing's decision to implement a new national security

law on Hong Kong. Critics have argued the new law threatens Hong Kong's 'one country, two systems' political environment.

- United States:** The Democratic primary race is over as a contest with former Vice President Joe Biden having on June 6 crossed the official delegate threshold required to win on the first ballot at the Democratic National Convention. Biden's win follows a surge on Super Tuesday that propelled him into first place. Left-wing Senator Bernie Sanders saw his chances of winning the nomination crash following a worse-than-expected performance, resulting in his withdrawal from the race on April 8. The withdrawal of centrists Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar on the eve of Super Tuesday and their immediate endorsement of Biden, combined with fellow leftist Elizabeth Warren remaining in the race (subsequently withdrawn) and splitting the progressive vote, dealt the Sanders campaign a body blow. The contest has been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak, with multiple primaries postponed, and the Democratic National Convention to be held virtually, rearranged for 17-20 August, from 13-16 July previously. The delegate count at present is as follows (1,991 pledged delegates required to win on first ballot at convention):

Name	Delegates	States Won
Joe Biden	2,627	AK, AL, AR, AZ, DE, FL, GA, GU, HI, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, PR, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, VI, WA, WI, WV, WY
Bernie Sanders	1,073	CA, CO, MP, ND, NH, NV, UT, VT, Dems Abroad, MP
Elizabeth Warren	63	
Mike Bloomberg	59	American Samoa
Pete Buttigieg	24	IA
Amy Klobuchar	7	
Tulsi Gabbard	2	

- Middle East:** In Syria, the last major enclave of anti-Assad rebels is continuing to hold out against Syrian government troops (backed by Russia) and Turkish forces who are vying for control in the Idlib region. Around half a million people are believed to have been driven from their homes by the intensification in warfare in the region. The violence in Idlib has driven a wedge between Ankara (anti-Assad) and Moscow (pro-Assad), which previously had sought to form a closer strategic partnership. A meeting on 5 March between Putin and Erdogan secured a ceasefire in the region, but it remains to be seen how long this can be maintained.