

MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS - Week Ahead 5-11 January

by Tom Lake

(MNI) London – All timings are subject to change.

Monday 5 January:

- **US-Venezuela:** Deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro will appear in federal court in New York City at 12:00ET (17:00GMT, 18:00CET) alongside his wife, Cilia Flores. Both are set to be charged with narco-terrorism conspiracy, cocaine importation conspiracy and weapons offences. At 17:30ET (22:30GMT, 23:30CET) the congressional '[Gang of Eight](#)', as well as the chair and ranking member of the House and Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations/Affairs committees, will receive a classified briefing on the military operation that resulted in the capture of Maduro. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defense/War Pete Hegseth, the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine, CIA Director John Ratcliffe and Attorney General Pam Bondi are expected to attend. There has been pushback from Democrats and Republicans in Congress to President Donald Trump's actions in approving the operation against Maduro without gaining congressional approval first. Before both of these events, a special UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Venezuela takes place in New York City at 10:00ET (15:00GMT, 16:00CET).
- **Ukraine:** A meeting of chiefs of the general staffs of European countries (the countries' seniormost military officers) takes place in Kyiv. The meeting is "*designed to ensure additional coordination of actions with allies in the security dimension,*" according to Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Rustem Umerov and comes after a meeting of European national security advisers hosted by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 4 January.
- **China-South Korea:** Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted South Korean President Lee Jae-myung in Beijing as part of a state visit. Following their meeting, Lee talked up a reset in ties between the two countries both in the context of the signing of a raft of memorandums of understanding aimed at bolstering economic ties, and in encouraging peace on the Korean peninsula. Ahead of the meeting, North Korea tested its latest hypersonic missiles. Lee is set to meet with other senior officials, including Premier Li Qiang during his visit.
- **France:** The Council of Ministers holds its first meeting of 2026, chaired by President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace. The government of PM Sebastian Lecornu faces the significant task of piecing together a parliamentary majority for a 2026 state budget as soon as possible. Following the passage of a special law at end-2025, the government is currently relying on funding allocated via previous legislation, unable to hire civil servants or enact new spending measures.
- **Japan:** PM Sanae Takaichi held the prime minister's annual new year press conference in Mie prefecture. During the conference, Takaichi [stressed](#) that she wanted to maintain dialogue with China amid a cooling of relations between the two

countries. The PM refused to be drawn on whether she will call a snap House of Representatives election in 2026.

- **Israel-Syria:** The US is set to mediate a meeting between senior Israeli and Syrian security officials in Paris. The US is looking to push both sides towards a new security agreement, with the aim of de-escalating the decades-long tensions along the disputed border, and potentially laying the groundwork for diplomatic normalisation. These will be the fifth round of talks, but the first in two months, and come after Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with President Donald Trump at end-2025.
- **United States:** Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA)'s resignation from Congress becomes effective, further narrowing Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA)'s majority in the House. Following her vacating the seat of Georgia's 14th congressional district, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) must issue a writ of election within 10 days. The election must then take place no less than 30 days after the issuance, setting up for a special election in February/March.
- **Turkey:** President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to hold a call with his US counterpart, Donald Trump. Erdogan said the call would focus on the peace process between Ukraine and Russia, as well as issues related to the Gaza ceasefire. The situation in Venezuela is also likely to be discussed, given there had been speculation before Nicolas Maduro's capture that his exile to Turkey could be a likely scenario.
- **United Kingdom:** Parliament returns from Christmas recess. Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper is expected to deliver a statement to the House of Commons on the situation in Venezuela at ~15:30GMT.
- **United States:** The Senate is due to return from its Christmas recess. At 17:30ET senators will vote on [Keith Bass](#)' nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs in the Department of Defense.

Tuesday 6 January:

- **Ukraine:** French President Emmanuel Macron hosts a meeting of leaders from the 'coalition of the willing' in Paris. Macron has stated that at this meeting, Kyiv's allies will agree on "concrete" commitments to supporting Ukraine's security. This will be the first opportunity for European leaders to talk to Zelenskyy following his meeting with US President Donald Trump at the end of 2025. The Ukrainian president has spoken recently of a peace agreement being '90%' agreed, but there remain important caveats around US security guarantees and Russia's stance.
- **United States:** President Donald Trump is set to hold a closed-door meeting with House Republicans at the Kennedy Center (recently rebranded the 'Trump Kennedy Center') in Washington, D.C. The US military operation in Venezuela, conducted without congressional approval, has elicited a mixed reaction among GOP lawmakers. The meeting is expected to last most of the day. The House of Representatives returns from Christmas recess.
- **United Kingdom:** PM Sir Keir Starmer holds his first Cabinet meeting of 2026 amid continued speculation regarding the prospect of a [leadership challenge](#) being launched against him during the course of the year, either before or after the May

local/devolved parliament elections in which the governing Labour party are expected to be dealt significant losses.

- **Croatia, Romania:** Market holiday for Epiphany.

Wednesday 7 January:

- **Czechia:** PM Andrej Babis chairs a meeting of the national security council, with the intention of discussing the future of the ammunition initiative for Ukraine that was started by his predecessor, Petr Fiala. The scheme is led from Prague, but sees countries including Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands provide financing alongside Czech military officials and defence contractors to purchase ammo from around the world to keep Ukraine's armed forces supplied. All parties forming Babis' right-wing coalition voiced opposition to the scheme during the election campaign.
- **Peru-Chile:** Peruvian President José Jeri hosts Chilean President-elect José Antonio Kast for the latter's third international trip since winning the presidency in December 2025. Kast is set to meet with senior government figures as well as business leaders in Lima. Comes ahead of Kast's inauguration in March and Peru's general election on 12 April. The prospect of a 'humanitarian corridor' to address migration and security issues in both countries is at the top of the agenda, while the situation in Venezuela (a key contributor in recent years to the immigration flows and increase in criminal activity) is likely to feature in discussions.
- **European Union:** A ceremony takes place in Nicosia as part of the formal handover of the chair of the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. Cyprus took over from Denmark on 1 January, and will hold the position until the end of June, when it passes the baton to Ireland. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and other senior EU figures are expected to be in attendance. Notable that the two countries holding the Council presidency in 2026 are both neutral, non-NATO members.
- **Russia:** Market holiday for Orthodox Christmas.

Thursday 8 January:

- **United States:** California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) is due to deliver the 'State of the State Address' in front of a joint session of the California legislature in the morning. Newsom has been one of President Donald Trump's most vocal national critics, and is viewed as one of the frontrunners for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028.
- **South Africa:** President Cyril Ramaphosa is due to deliver a high-profile statement intended to set the tone for the political year ahead for the governing African National Congress (ANC). Municipal elections take place across South Africa in 2026, with the ANC looking to regain ground lost in the 2021 contests. After this on 10 January, Ramaphosa will speak at a rally in Moruleng, North West province to commemorate the 114th anniversary of the founding of the ANC.
- **United States:** House Republican leaders could put a three-bill 'minibus' funding package on the floor as soon as 8 January, with money for Commerce-Justice-Science, Interior-Environment and Energy-Water included. With the deadline of 30 January looming to get a federal funding package in place, there is seen to be little

desire from Republicans or Democrats to engender another lengthy government shutdown.

- **EU-Jordan:** The first-ever EU-Jordan summit takes place in the Jordanian capital, Amman. European Council President António Costa and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will hold talks with King Abdullah II. Bilateral relations and deepening political and economic links in the context of the 2025 EU-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership will be the prime focus, alongside migration and regional security.
- **Canada:** Main opposition Conservative Party of Canada leader Pierre Poilievre takes part in fundraisers in British Columbia as he looks to drum up grassroots support. Later in January, Poilievre faces a leadership review. Following a disastrous general election in April 2025 where the Conservatives failed to oust the Liberals after leading in polls by up to 20% just months ahead of the vote, and the defection of two Conservative MPs to PM Mark Carney's Liberals, Poilievre faces a tough review.

Friday 9 January:

- **European Union:** A Coreper II meeting of EU ambassadors is due to take place in Brussels. At this meeting, permanent representatives are expected to discuss the situation vis-à-vis the EU-Mercosur trade agreement, which was due to be finalised in late 2025. However, opposition from a number of sizeable EU member states, including France and Poland, resulted in the postponement of its implementation. A supplementary text has been drafted to ensure additional safeguards. If ambassadors agree, this could result in the FTA being signed on 12 January.
- **BRICS:** South Africa hosts the multinational 'Will for Peace' naval exercises. The exercises will be led by China and include naval vessels from Russia and Iran, and are likely to be closely monitored by the US and other Western militaries. Continues to 16 January.
- **United States:** Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) leads a delegation of Republican US senators to visit the US-Mexico border, with Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) set to be in attendance. The ostensible reason for the visit is to hold a presser touting the impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on combatting illegal immigration at the border. For Thune and the GOP senate leadership, they are keen to boost Cornyn's election campaign, given he faces a stern primary challenge from hardline conservative Texas AG Ken Paxton.

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