

## MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS - US Daily Brief 18-08-25

by Adam Burrowes

### The White House *(times subject to change)*

12:00 ET 17:00 BST	European Leaders arrive at the White House
13:00 ET 18:00 BST	President Trump greets Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy
13:15 ET 18:15 BST	President Trump participates in a Bilateral Meeting with Zelenskyy
14:15 ET 19:15 BST	President Trump greets European Leaders
14:30 ET 19:30 BST	President Trump participates in a 'Family Photo' with European Leaders
15:00 ET 20:00 BST	President Trump participates in a Multilateral Meeting with European Leaders

### KEY DATES:

- ❖ End of Congressional recess: September 2
- ❖ Government funding expires: September 30
- ❖ China tariff truce expires: November 10

### Washington

European leaders arrive at the White House at midday ahead of a hastily arranged multilateral meeting with President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

- Trump and Zelenskyy will meet bilaterally at 13:15 18:15 BST, to be followed by a multilateral with European leaders at 15:00 ET 20:00 BST.

Three Republican-led states will deploy National Guard troops to Washington, D.C., escalating the presence of federal troops in the nation's capital. West Virginia, South Carolina, and Ohio have pledged to deploy 300-400, 200, and 150 Guard troops, respectively.

- Semafor notes: "The ramp-up — which Republicans say is aimed at combating crime — comes even as the White House negotiated a deal with the DC police department to prevent a full federal takeover."
- The Associated Press writes that the DC move could "become a model under the imprint of Trump for how cities are policed, cleaned up and run, or ruined."

Trump said in a statement on [Truth Social](#) this morning that he will sign an executive order aimed at reducing alleged 'voter fraud' at the 2026 midterm elections.

- Trump: "I am going to lead a movement to get rid of MAIL-IN BALLOTS, and also, while we're at it, Highly "Inaccurate," Very Expensive, and Seriously Controversial VOTING MACHINES, which cost Ten Times more than accurate and sophisticated Watermark Paper, which is faster, and leaves NO DOUBT, at the end of the evening, as to who WON, and who LOST, the Election."
- Trump told Fox News' Sean Hannity, after his Alaska summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday: "Vladimir Putin, smart guy, said you can't have an honest

election with mail-in voting. He said there's not a country in the world that uses it now."

## Russia-Ukraine

Trump will hold consecutive meetings today with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and a group of European leaders, including UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

- The White House summit comes days after Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska for a bilateral meeting aimed at gauging Moscow's position on a peace deal. The Alaska summit concluded with the status quo largely intact.
- Zelenskyy [wrote on X](#) on Sunday: "I have already arrived in Washington, tomorrow I am meeting with President Trump. Tomorrow we are also speaking with European leaders. I am grateful to [Trump] for the invitation. We all share a strong desire to end this war quickly and reliably. And peace must be lasting. Not like it was years ago, when Ukraine was forced to give up Crimea and part of our East—part of Donbas—and Putin simply used it as a springboard for a new attack."

The presence of European leaders appears primarily aimed at offsetting the risk Zelenskyy could be ambushed in the Oval Office with an unfavourable peace deal. The sequencing of today's events sees Zelenskyy and Trump meeting alone before the European leaders join, meaning that the Ukrainian leader may still face public pressure from Trump to agree to a suboptimal (for Kyiv) peace agreement.

- Axios reports that Fox News' Bret Baier "will get an exclusive interview with Volodymyr Zelensky today after the Ukrainian leader's Oval Office meeting with President Trump. The interview will air on Fox News' "Special Report," [18:00 ET 23:00 BST]."
- Bloomberg notes: "Zelenskyy finds himself in an impossible bind: risk Donald Trump's wrath or accept a quick deal to end Russia's war in Ukraine by paying the disastrous price of ceding territory for vague security guarantees that could see Moscow come back stronger in a few years' time."

While the details of the Trump-Putin summit are vague, Trump appears to have pivoted away from a ceasefire in favour of a comprehensive peace deal. On Truth Social this morning, Trump appeared to endorse key Russian conditions that Kyiv cede territory and commit to ending NATO membership aspirations.

- Trump wrote on [Truth Social](#): "It was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a Peace Agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which often times do not hold up."
- In a separate message on Truth Social, Trump said that Zelenskyy can "end the war with Russia almost immediately, if he wants to, or he can continue to fight. Remember how it started. No getting back Obama given Crimea (12 years ago, without a shot being fired!), and NO GOING INTO NATO BY UKRAINE. Some things never change!!!"

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told NBC that the aim of today's meetings is not establishing a ceasefire, but an end to the war: "Now, whether there needs to be a ceasefire on the way there, well, we've advocated for that. Unfortunately, the Russians, as of now, have not agreed to that. But the ideal here, what we're aiming for here, is not a ceasefire. What we ultimately are aiming for is an end to this war."

- When pressed on the 'severe consequences' Trump promised if Putin failed to agree to a ceasefire in Alaska, Rubio said: "Ultimately, look, if we're not going to be able to reach an agreement here at any point, then there are going to be consequences, not only the consequences of the war continuing, but the consequences of all those sanctions continuing and potentially new sanctions on top of it as well,"
- However, Rubio managed expectations that sanctions could push Putin to accept Ukraine's terms: "I don't think new sanctions on Russia are going to force him to accept the ceasefire. They're already under very severe sanctions. You could argue that that could be a consequence of refusing to agree to a ceasefire or the end of hostility."
- Bloomberg notes: "Zelenskyy finds himself in an impossible bind: risk Donald Trump's wrath or accept a quick deal to end Russia's war in Ukraine by paying the disastrous price of ceding territory for vague security guarantees that could see Moscow come back stronger in a few years' time."

Putin's remarks in Alaska gave few indications that he is willing to moderate his maximalist demands to end the war. Critics argue that the Alaska summit provided Putin a platform to advance his agenda.

- "We're convinced that in order to make the settlement lasting long term, we need to eliminate all the primary roots, the primary causes of the conflict we've settled multiple times, to alter all legitimate concerns in Russia and to reinstate a just balance of security in Europe and in the world as a whole," Putin said.

Olga Tokariuk, a fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), said in an analysis of the summit: "It was clear from the presidents' statements that Putin had no intention to give up on his maximalist demands amounting to Ukraine's capitulation—and apparently faced no pressure from Donald Trump to do so. It seems the onus is once again on Ukraine to make concessions and agree to an unspecified deal."

- Tokariuk continued "[And Russia], which started the war and shows no intention of stopping it,...faces no increased pressure or no sanctions... Undoubtedly, Putin is coming back from Alaska even more convinced that he can get away with everything, and further emboldened to expand his aggression against Ukraine and Europe."

## **Contours of a peace deal**

A Russian proposal for ending the war appears to centre on Kyiv ceding control of the Donbas region, comprised of the two Russian-speaking industrial regions of the east of the country, Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia currently controls nearly all of Luhansk and around 75% of Donetsk.



- The New York Times [notes](#): “Without a cease-fire, the battle for the Donbas is almost certain to stretch into next year and cost tens of thousands of lives, military analysts say.”
- A Russian proposal is likely to also include the transfer of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, two regions in the southeast that would provide Russia with a ‘land bridge’ to Crimea. In September 2022, Russia annexed both regions, but has never controlled them entirely.
- A Trump advisor told Axios: “There’s a way to make a deal: Get the buyer and the seller in the same room at the same time discussing it. What we’re trying to figure out is if both sides really want a deal and what the contours look like.”

It is unclear what Russia might offer to Ukraine as part of a comprehensive deal. The New York Times reports that Putin offered to freeze the conflict along the front lines and “provide a written promise not to attack again,” if Kyiv cedes the Donbas.

- Ahead of the Alaska summit, Zelenskyy and European leaders warned that such a deal would provide Russia a springboard for future aggression. Zelenskyy last week rejected giving up any territory not already under Russian control, “we cannot leave the Donbas” he told reporters.

## Security Guarantees

Semafor notes: “Trump’s friendly meeting with Putin... was a setback for Ukraine and its European allies. But Kyiv was left with one glimmer of hope: a U.S. proposal to create security guarantees for Ukraine, designed to deter future Russian aggression.”

- Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, told CNN yesterday that Putin agreed to accept the US and Europe providing Ukraine with ‘Article 5-like’ security guarantees, referring to the NATO mutual defence mandate. Such an agreement could feasibly offset the need for Ukraine’s NATO membership, but European leaders will likely be sceptical that such guarantees will hold the same ‘iron-clad’ backing as NATO’s Article 5.
- Witkoff said: “We were able to win the following concession: That the United States could offer Article 5-like protection, which is one of the real reasons why Ukraine wants to be in NATO.” He added that it “was the first time we had ever heard the Russians agree to that” and called the agreement “game-changing.”
- European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at a press conference in Brussels with Zelenskyy: “We welcome President Trump’s willingness to contribute to Article 5-like security guarantees for Ukraine and the ‘Coalition of the willing’ — including the European Union — is ready to do its share.”

## Reaction

Russia expert, Fiona Hill, who served as an advisor in Trump’s first term, told Politico: “Trump has completely ceded narrative control to Putin. What Ukraine is just basically getting as a concession is for the Russians to stop fighting. And this is Putin’s way all the way through the 25 years of his presidency, which is: ‘I’m going to beat you up and my concession is that I stopped beating you up.’”

- Hill continued: “It’s clear that Putin intends to take as much territory by force and kill as many Ukrainian forces and civilians as he can so that Ukraine is in an even weaker position when the time eventually comes to sit down.
- “Then Putin might decide to ‘bank’ his territorial gains, and bog the Europeans and U.S. down in peacemaking/keeping operations in support of ... Ukraine, while he applies other forms of pressure to undermine Zelenskyy and Ukraine. Imagine the chaos he can sow in an enforced Ukrainian election as part of a peace deal. He will diminish Ukraine one way or another.”

Former British defence minister Ben Wallace [wrote on X](#): “Things to remember and to watch for in Washington today. 1. It is assessed by many Military leaders in Nato, UK & US that for Putin to take by force the 4 Oblasts will take a further 2 million Russian Casualties & 4.4 years. Without Trump, Putin doesn’t hold all the cards.”

- Wallace said that security guarantees “are not the goal in themselves they must be guarantees that protect a “just” peace acceptable to Ukraine as well,” and warned an imperfect deal risks, “tying up ‘000’s of Western Troops while the Kremlin re-arms and threaten us all elsewhere. It is likely Russia will use “non-aligned militia” to seize and provoke on the front line.”
- Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, now co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations, [wrote on X](#): “It’s official: Trump has capitulated to Putin by dropping the demand for a ceasefire. Instead, the fighting will go on until there is a peace agreement that satisfies Putin. His terms are well known. This was a hugely successful outcome for Putin. We are heading towards a longer war.”

## Congressional Business

The House is OUT until September 2

The Senate is OUT until September 2

**Committee Schedule –**

## Banking

A federal appeals court ruled Friday that the Trump administration can resume mass layoffs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, overturning a lower court’s temporary block.

- Reuters notes: “However, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit said its decision would not take immediate effect, allowing lawyers representing CFPB workers and pro-consumer organizations to seek reconsideration by the full court of appeals, meaning any dismissal notices were likely to have to wait for now.”
- CNN notes: “Groups that represent CFPB employees or use the agency to protect consumers from predatory banking sued months ago, after Trump replaced the agency’s director shortly after he took office and the administration paused the CFPB’s efforts. The administration then canceled the agency’s lease for its

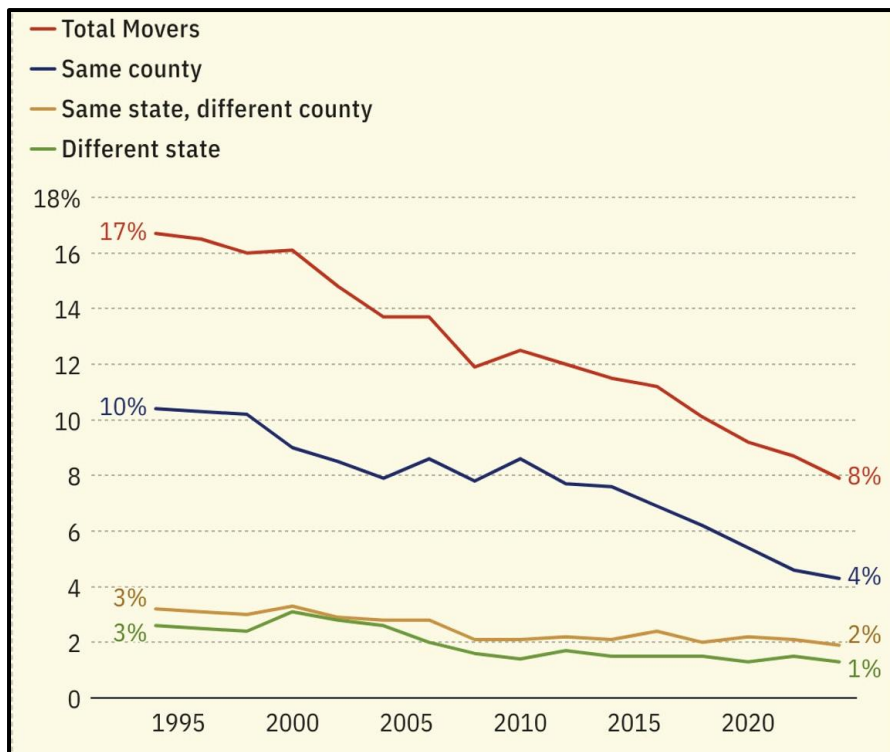
headquarters building, and terminated or planned to cut more than 80% of the agency's workforce."

## Economy

Semafor reports that, "Americans are moving between cities at historically low rates, with drastic consequences for the country's economy and politics. Experts worry the lack of internal migration may put the country's historic dynamism at risk: More people are keeping their homes, and their jobs, resulting in fewer opportunities for younger ones."

- Semafor continues: "Some smaller cities are trying to address the issue by offering bonuses to lure remote workers, hoping to help reverse a longrunning brain drain. The US was characterized by moves toward opportunity, but a recent book by the historian Yoni Appelbaum argues that "a country that once made it possible for its people to move freely and chase a better life has steadily strangled that mobility over time.""

**Figure 1: Share of Americans Moving Annually**



Source: Semafor, US Census Bureau

## India

Peter Navarro, Trump's senior counsellor for trade, penned an [op-ed](#) in the Financial Times outlining the administration's case against India's tariff regime and support for Russia.

- Navarro writes: "As Russia continues to hammer Ukraine, helped by India's financial support, American (and European) taxpayers are then forced to spend tens of billions more to help Ukraine's defence. Meanwhile, India keeps slamming the door on American exports through high tariffs and trade barriers. More than 300,000 soldiers



and civilians have been killed, while Nato's eastern flank grows more exposed and the west foots the bill for India's oil laundering."

- Navarro claims that the Trump administration is confronting India's 'corrosive' trade in Russian oil: "A recent executive order issued by the president will impose a 25 per cent national security tariff on Indian goods to address the threat posed by India's continued importation of Russian oil. This new tariff is in addition to the 25 per cent reciprocal tariff already in place.
- "This two-pronged policy will hit India where it hurts — its access to US markets — even as it seeks to cut off the financial lifeline it has extended to Russia's war effort. If India wants to be treated as a strategic partner of the US, it needs to start acting like one."

## Redistricting

California Democrats are expected to formally introduce their proposal to gerrymander the state's congressional map today, cancelling out a likely five-seat Republican gain in Texas ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

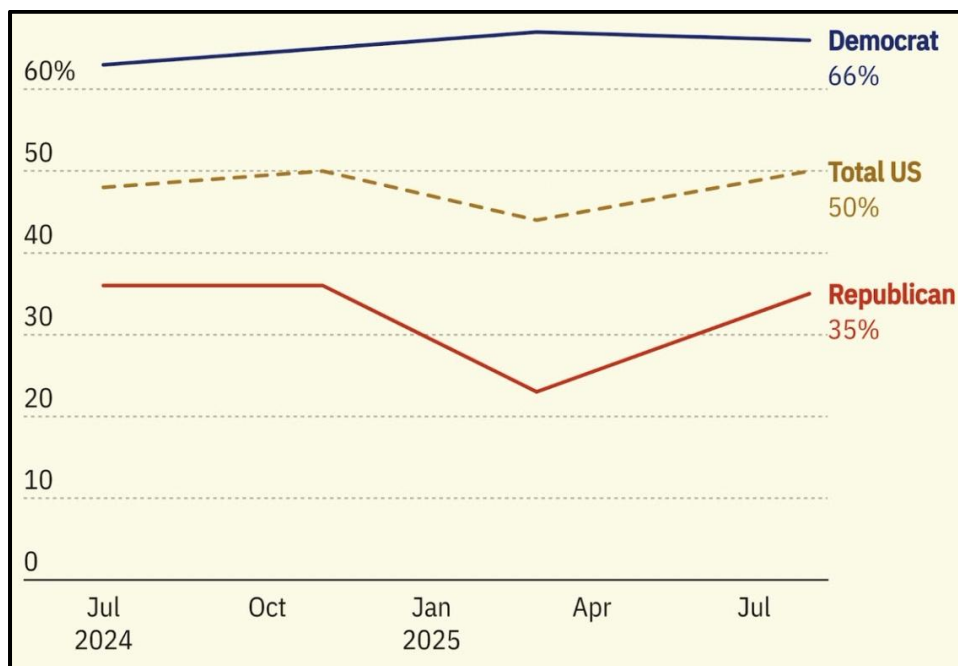
- Politico notes that the move, "will presage a rapid sprint to get it passed through Sacramento, before the plan to supersede the state's independent redistricting process for now goes before voters in November."
- CBS notes that Texas state Democrats, who fled the state to delay action on the gerrymandered map, are gradually returning to Austin, "each on their own timeline."
- The Texas Tribune reports: "It's not yet clear whether today will be the day the chamber reaches quorum. A state Senate committee yesterday once again approved the plan as an openly partisan move, despite strong public pushback."
- Punchbowl News writes: "While redistricting is the major wild card, Democrats' chances of taking the House will depend on their ability to effectively wield that anti-['One Big Beautiful Bill'] messaging in places like Arizona, where Trump won by more than five points last year. That's especially true in the toss-up 6th District."

## Chart of the Day

A slate of recent polls show that Americans are increasingly likely to support Ukraine. A University of Maryland Critical Issues [poll](#) "found that support for Ukraine among the American public is at its highest since early 2023."

- The survey report notes: "Americans remain overwhelmingly more sympathetic to Ukraine than to Russia, with a marked increase in sympathy Republicans feel toward Ukraine since March."
- A Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll taken shortly before the Trump-Putin summit found that the American public, "support for sending military and economic aid to Ukraine has increased since March—especially among Republican Party supporters. These changes in GOP opinion could reflect Trump's recently shifting policies and rhetoric and Trump's own growing frustration with Putin's "tapping him along."
- A Pew Research Center survey found that 50% of Americans now say the US has a duty to help Ukraine, with Republican support rising to 35%.

**Figure 2: Share of Americans who say the US has a Duty to support Ukraine**



Source: Semafor, Pew Research Center

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