



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: June 17, 2026 - June 24, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

Executive Summary

During the period of June 17-24, 2026, Mongolia actively pursued a multi-vector foreign policy, significantly enhancing its international security and diplomatic engagements. A key development was the commencement of the multinational military exercise Khaan Quest 2026 in Ulaanbaatar, co-hosted with the United States and involving 18 nations, underscoring Mongolia's commitment to global peacekeeping and interoperability. Concurrently, Mongolia strengthened bilateral defense ties with Türkiye through new cooperation agreements, while high-level diplomatic visits from China and India reaffirmed strategic partnerships and economic collaboration. However, the nation faced persistent cybersecurity threats, with a China-aligned Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group actively targeting Mongolian government entities. These developments highlight Mongolia's strategic balancing act between its powerful neighbors and "third neighbors" amidst an evolving regional security landscape.

Key Security Developments

- Multinational Military Exercise Khaan Quest 2026 Commences

The 23rd edition of the multinational military exercise Khaan Quest 2026 officially began on June 20, 2026, at the Five Hills Training Area in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and is scheduled to run until July 3. Co-hosted by the Mongolian Armed Forces and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the exercise involves over 1,100 military personnel from 18 countries, including India, Germany, and South Korea. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and cooperation in peace support operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, with new components focusing on the use of unmanned aerial systems.

- Renewed Defense Cooperation with Türkiye

Mongolia's Defense Minister D.Batlut conducted an official visit to Türkiye, where significant defense cooperation agreements were signed. These include a military training cooperation protocol, a defense financial cooperation agreement, and a protocol on implementing financial assistance. This marks the first renewal of the intergovernmental military cooperation framework between Mongolia and Türkiye in 11 years, signaling a strategic move to strengthen long-term defense ties and cooperation on regional and international security issues.

- High-Level Diplomatic Engagements with China

Following Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Mongolia from June 13-15, discussions on deepening bilateral ties continued into the reporting period. On June 23, Mongolian Prime Minister N. Uchral met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang during the Summer Davos forum in Dalian, China. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening political mutual trust, supporting each other's core interests, and expanding practical cooperation in trade, infrastructure, mining, energy, and the digital economy.

- Indian External Affairs Minister Visits Mongolia

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar arrived in Ulaanbaatar on June 22, 2026, for a two-day official visit, reaffirming India's role as Mongolia's "third neighbor" and a key strategic partner. During his visit, Jaishankar held talks with Mongolian Foreign Minister Batmunkh Battsetseg and other Mongolian leadership, reviewing progress in bilateral ties and exploring new avenues for cooperation in development partnership, trade, education, culture, capacity building, critical minerals, and defense.

- Persistent Cybersecurity Threats from China-aligned APT

A China-aligned Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group, identified as "GopherWhisper," has been actively targeting Mongolian government entities since at least November 2023. The group utilizes Go-based malware, loaders, and backdoors, and leverages legitimate communication platforms such as Slack, Discord, and Microsoft Outlook for command and control and data exfiltration. This ongoing cyber espionage highlights significant vulnerabilities in Mongolia's digital infrastructure.

- Compromise of Mongolian Government Data Center

Kaspersky Lab assessed that a threat actor has compromised a government data center in Mongolia, using its access to compromise websites for subsequent watering-hole attacks. This incident further underscores the elevated cybersecurity risks faced by the Mongolian government.

- Mongolia-Japan Engineering and Sapper Forces Exercise

The theoretical training component of the joint exercises "Road-2026" between the Armed Forces of Mongolia and the engineering unit of the Japan Self-Defense Forces concluded in Japan on June 19, 2026. This program, which started in 2014, aims to enhance the engineering skills of Mongolian Armed Forces personnel for UN peacekeeping operations, with practical field exercises scheduled to take place in Mongolia in August.

- EU Engagement on Economic Diversification and Critical Raw Materials

A policy brief from June 17, 2024, highlighted the European Union's interest in strengthening ties with Mongolia to support its economic diversification and reduce overreliance on its powerful neighbors. The EU seeks to enhance its economic security by securing alternative import supply chains of critical raw materials from Mongolia.

Discussions in May 2026 also covered cooperation on cybersecurity, data protection, and a potential visa facilitation agreement.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security posture during this period is characterized by its continued adherence to a "Third Neighbor Policy", strategically balancing its relationships with its two powerful neighbors, China and Russia, by cultivating stronger ties with other global powers. The commencement of Khaan Quest 2026 with the United States and 17 other nations, including India and South Korea, demonstrates Mongolia's commitment to multilateralism and its role in regional peacekeeping efforts. This exercise not only enhances Mongolia's military capabilities and interoperability but also signals its alignment with Western security frameworks, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Simultaneously, Mongolia maintained robust diplomatic and economic engagements with China. The high-level meetings between Mongolian and Chinese officials, including Prime Minister Uchral and Premier Li Qiang, underscore the deep economic interdependence and China's significant influence as Mongolia's largest trading partner. Mongolia's reaffirmation of the "one-China principle" and commitment not to harm China's interests, regardless of other relations, highlights the delicate balance it maintains to secure economic benefits while preserving its sovereignty.

The visit by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar further solidified India's position as a crucial "third neighbor," with discussions focusing on strategic partnership, development, and critical minerals. This engagement, alongside renewed defense cooperation with Türkiye and ongoing dialogues with the EU, illustrates Mongolia's proactive approach to diversifying its partnerships. These efforts aim to reduce its geopolitical vulnerability and secure economic and security benefits from a broader range of international actors, thereby contributing to a more stable, albeit complex, regional dynamic.

Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense strategy during this period continues to emphasize peacekeeping capabilities and interoperability with international forces. The Khaan Quest 2026 exercise, co-hosted with the U.S. and involving 18 nations, is a cornerstone of this strategy, providing critical training in peace support operations under the UN Charter. The inclusion of new components like unmanned aerial systems (UAS) training indicates a focus on modernizing tactics and adapting to contemporary

security challenges. This ongoing multinational engagement allows the Mongolian Armed Forces to exchange professional expertise and strengthen their ability to operate in complex multinational environments.

Beyond peacekeeping, Mongolia is actively pursuing bilateral defense cooperation to enhance its capabilities. The recent agreements with Türkiye, including a military training cooperation protocol and a defense financial cooperation agreement, are significant. These agreements, renewing a framework after an 11-year hiatus, are expected to expand joint military education and training, personnel exchanges, capacity building, and potentially equipment modernization. This diversification of defense partners aligns with Mongolia's "Third Neighbor Policy" and aims to reduce overreliance on any single external power for its defense needs. The ongoing "Road-2026" exercises with Japan, focusing on engineering and sapper skills for UN peacekeeping, further demonstrate a targeted approach to capability development. While specific defense spending trends for this exact period are not detailed, the nature of these exercises and agreements suggests a continued investment in specialized training and strategic partnerships to bolster its defense posture.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia will continue to be a hub for international military cooperation, with Khaan Quest 2026 running until early July. This exercise will likely lead to increased diplomatic exchanges and further discussions on peacekeeping contributions. The momentum from recent high-level diplomatic visits with China and India is expected to translate into concrete progress on agreed-upon economic and infrastructure projects, particularly those related to trade, energy, and critical minerals. Mongolia's efforts to diversify its economic base and export markets, supported by partners like the EU, will remain a key focus. The upcoming 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) in Ulaanbaatar in August 2026 will provide another significant multilateral platform for Mongolia to showcase its diplomatic dexterity and environmental leadership.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The primary risk area for Mongolia remains cybersecurity. The persistent targeting of government entities by sophisticated APT groups, such as "GopherWhisper," coupled with low compliance rates in information security audits, indicates a significant vulnerability. This could lead to further data breaches, disruption of critical services, and potential foreign influence operations. Geopolitically, while Mongolia skillfully balances its "Third Neighbor Policy," the increasing competition between major powers (China, Russia, US) in the region could present challenges, requiring careful navigation to avoid being drawn into larger power struggles. Economic reliance on its immediate neighbors, particularly China,

also poses a risk if external economic conditions or political relations shift unfavorably.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the outcomes and follow-up actions from Khaan Quest 2026, particularly any new defense agreements or expanded military cooperation initiatives. Progress on major infrastructure projects with China (e.g., cross-border railways, energy, and mineral resource development) and India (e.g., oil refinery) will be crucial for economic stability. In cybersecurity, any public reporting on new attacks or, conversely, improvements in government cybersecurity posture and compliance rates will be vital. Diplomatic statements and joint communiqués following high-level visits, especially concerning Mongolia's "Third Neighbor Policy" and its stance on sensitive regional issues, should also be closely watched.

Strategic recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize a rapid and comprehensive upgrade of its cybersecurity infrastructure and capabilities, including implementing robust audit and risk assessment frameworks and investing in training for cybersecurity professionals. International cooperation in cybersecurity, particularly with "third neighbors" like the EU and the US, should be actively pursued to leverage expertise and technology. Militarily, continued participation in multinational exercises like Khaan Quest and diversification of defense partnerships (e.g., with Türkiye and Japan) should be sustained to enhance capabilities and reduce strategic dependence. Diplomatically, Mongolia should continue to leverage its "Third Neighbor Policy" to attract diversified investment and partnerships, ensuring that economic cooperation with major powers is balanced with strategic autonomy and adherence to international norms.

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