



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: March 07, 2026 - March 14, 2026

This report was produced using automated 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

Mongolia's security posture during March 7-14, 2026, was primarily shaped by active diplomatic engagement and ongoing military cooperation with key regional powers. A significant development was the commencement of the "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training with China in Dornogovi Province, focusing on counter-terrorism operations. Diplomatically, Mongolia's Foreign Minister met with her French counterpart at the Nuclear Energy Summit, discussing bilateral partnerships in energy and civil protection. While no new major cybersecurity incidents were reported within this specific week, the nation continues to face a high volume of cyberattacks, highlighting persistent vulnerabilities. Internally, the country is navigating the aftermath of a constitutional crisis from late 2025/early 2026, which could impact governance and reform efforts. Overall, Mongolia continues its multi-vector foreign policy, balancing relations with its immediate neighbors and "third neighbors" to enhance its security and stability.

Key Security Developments

- Joint Military Training with China: "Steppe Partner-2024" Commences

On Sunday, March 9, 2026, Chinese and Mongolian troops initiated the "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training in Mongolia's Dornogovi Province. This marks the first-ever battalion-sized joint training between the two nations, focusing on combating illegal armed groups and enhancing command, coordination, and support capabilities. The exercise is scheduled to continue until late May 2026. This significant military activity underscores deepening strategic mutual trust and pragmatic cooperation between the two militaries, aiming to contribute positively to regional peace and stability.

- Diplomatic Engagement with France at Nuclear Energy Summit

Mongolia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Batmunkh Battsetseg, held a meeting with France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noël Barrot, on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, during the Nuclear Energy Summit. Discussions centered on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in the fields of energy, transport, and civil protection. The ministers also addressed the upcoming signing of an AFD establishment agreement and reiterated their commitment to sustainable development, especially in preparation for COP17 on desertification, which Ulaanbaatar will host in August 2026.

- Ongoing Cybersecurity Threats and Vulnerabilities

While no specific major cyberattacks on Mongolia were reported between March 7-14, 2026, the country continues to face a substantial and persistent threat. Mongolia is targeted by an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 cyberattacks weekly, with government institutions being the primary targets (70% of attacks). Attacks originate from various sources, including Russia, the United States, and China. Mongolia has a National Cybersecurity Strategy (2022-2027) and a dedicated national cybersecurity budget for 2026, but a severe shortage of skilled specialists remains a critical challenge.

- India-Mongolia Defense Cooperation Highlighted

The 17th edition of the India-Mongolia joint military exercise, Nomadic Elephant 2025, which took place in Ulaanbaatar from May 31 to June 13, 2025, was referenced in news updated on March 12, 2026. The exercise focused on enhancing interoperability and operational capabilities in counter-terrorism operations within semi-urban and mountainous terrain under a United Nations mandate. This ongoing reporting on past exercises indicates continued emphasis on defense cooperation with India, a key "third neighbor."

- Mongolia's Founding Membership in the U.S.-Initiated Board of Peace

In January 2026, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Mongolian Prime Minister Zandanshatar Gombojav signed on as a founding member of the U.S.-initiated Board of Peace. This move is viewed as a strategic decision aligning with Mongolia's "Third Neighbor" policy, aimed at ensuring its relevance and voice in a rapidly evolving global order. The Mongolian government emphasized that the Board of Peace is a voluntary cooperation platform based on respect for national sovereignty, not a military alliance.

- Defense Technology Transfer Agreement with Japan

An agreement for the transfer of defense technology and equipment from Japan to Mongolia was signed in December 2024, elevating their relationship to a "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace and Development." This agreement, which aims to enhance the capabilities of the Mongolian Armed Forces, continues to be a significant development in Mongolia's defense modernization efforts and its engagement with "third neighbors."

- Trilateral Border Defense Drills with China and Russia in 2025

In September 2025, China, Russia, and Mongolia conducted their first-ever joint border defense drills, named "Border Defence Cooperation - 2025." These two-day exercises, held in a shared frontier region, focused on countering terrorist and sabotage activities, enhancing strategic coordination, and building mutual trust among the three nations. This demonstrates a concerted effort to address shared border security threats with its immediate powerful neighbors.

- Reaffirmation of "One China" Policy

On February 11, 2026, Mongolia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, B. Battsetseg, met with China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sun Weidong, and reaffirmed Mongolia's firm support for the "One China" policy. This stance is intended to guide bilateral relations, emphasizing mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.

- U.S.-Mongolia Bilateral Defense Forum

The annual U.S.-Mongolia Bilateral Defense Forum (BDF) meeting was held on September 19, 2025, between U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of War Alvaro Smith and Major General Gankhuyag Davagdorj, State Secretary of the Mongolian Ministry of Defense. A similar meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dr. Michael Chase also occurred in January 2026. These discussions reaffirmed commitment to deepening bilateral defense relations, exploring opportunities for enhanced security cooperation, including exercises, training, and defense equipment sales, and recognizing Mongolia's role in UN peacekeeping operations.

- Lingering Effects of Constitutional Crisis and Political Instability

Mongolia entered 2026 grappling with the aftermath of a constitutional crisis in late 2025, triggered by teachers' strikes and a power struggle between Parliament and President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh. Although Prime Minister Gombojavyn Zandanshatar was reinstated, the executive-legislative deadlock poses a threat to vital reforms. Concerns also persist regarding a backslide into "electoral autocracy" in 2025, marked by issues related to free speech and arbitrary arrests of journalists. This internal political fragility could indirectly impact national security by diverting attention and resources from external threats and hindering effective governance.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's recent security and diplomatic activities underscore its continued commitment to a multi-vector foreign policy, carefully balancing relations with its powerful immediate neighbors, China and Russia, while actively engaging "third neighbors" like the United States, Japan, France, and India. The commencement of the "Steppe Partner-2024" joint military training with China in March 2026 highlights a deepening military-to-military relationship with Beijing, particularly in the realm of counter-terrorism. This cooperation is significant as it enhances China's influence in Mongolia's defense sector and contributes to a regional security framework that includes China. Simultaneously, Mongolia's reaffirmation of the "One China" policy further solidifies its diplomatic alignment with Beijing on sensitive issues.

The trilateral border defense drills with China and Russia in September 2025, though outside the immediate reporting period, set a precedent for enhanced security coordination among these three nations. This collaboration, focused on countering

border security threats and terrorism, demonstrates a shared interest in regional stability and could lead to further integrated security initiatives. For Russia, maintaining strong ties with Mongolia is part of its broader strategy to secure its eastern flank and project influence in Central Asia. The engagement with both China and Russia reflects Mongolia's pragmatic approach to managing its geopolitical reality as a landlocked state between two major powers.

Concurrently, Mongolia's active engagement with "third neighbors" remains a crucial component of its strategy to avoid over-reliance on any single power. Its founding membership in the U.S.-initiated Board of Peace in early 2026, despite some international skepticism, signals a strategic move to gain visibility and diplomatic leverage with the United States. This aligns with the existing U.S.-Mongolia Strategic Partnership and aims to strengthen Mongolia's security and independence through political and diplomatic means. The defense technology transfer agreement with Japan and ongoing defense cooperation with India (as highlighted by the Nomadic Elephant exercise) further diversify Mongolia's security partnerships, providing access to modern equipment and training that enhances its military capabilities and regional standing. The recent meeting with France also indicates a broadening of diplomatic and economic ties with European partners, particularly in critical sectors like energy.

Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense posture is characterized by a strategic focus on enhancing capabilities through international cooperation and modernization, particularly in areas relevant to its unique geopolitical position. The "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training with China, commencing in March 2026, is a significant development, marking the first battalion-sized exercise between the two. This training, centered on combating illegal armed groups, directly contributes to improving the Mongolian Armed Forces' (MAF) operational readiness and coordination in counter-terrorism scenarios, a key area of concern for border security. The participation of armored forces from China's PLA 79th Group Army suggests a focus on mechanized infantry and combined arms operations, which could offer valuable experience and training to Mongolian units.

Defense modernization programs are also being bolstered through partnerships with "third neighbors." The agreement signed in December 2024 with Japan for the transfer of defense technology and equipment is poised to significantly enhance the MAF's capabilities. This "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace and Development" with Japan aims to provide Mongolia with modern defense technology, strengthening military trust and improving the MAF's capacity to fulfill its duties. Similarly, ongoing defense cooperation with India, as evidenced by the recurring "Nomadic Elephant" exercises, focuses on interoperability and best practices in counter-terrorism and

precision sniping, directly contributing to the MAF's specialized operational skills. The U.S.-Mongolia Bilateral Defense Forum also consistently explores opportunities for security assistance and defense equipment sales, indicating a multi-pronged approach to acquiring and integrating new capabilities.

Defense spending trends, while not explicitly detailed for the reporting period, are implicitly influenced by these acquisition and training initiatives. The commitment to a dedicated national cybersecurity budget starting January 1, 2026, indicates a recognition of modern warfare domains and a shift in resource allocation towards critical digital defenses. However, the persistent shortage of skilled cybersecurity specialists remains a significant capability gap that needs to be addressed for effective implementation of these new investments. Overall, Mongolia's defense strategy appears to be one of selective modernization and capability enhancement through diverse international partnerships, allowing it to maintain a degree of strategic autonomy while addressing specific security threats.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term Trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia will likely continue its active diplomatic and military engagement. The "Steppe Partner-2024" joint military training with China will be ongoing until late May, suggesting continued close military-to-military interaction and a focus on internal security threats like illegal armed groups. We can anticipate further diplomatic exchanges following the Nuclear Energy Summit meeting with France, potentially leading to concrete steps in energy and civil protection cooperation. The internal political landscape may remain somewhat fluid, with the lingering effects of the constitutional crisis and potential for further political maneuvering ahead of the 2027 presidential and 2028 parliamentary elections. Cybersecurity will remain a critical, ongoing challenge, with the new dedicated budget for 2026 aiming to bolster defenses, though immediate significant improvements may be hampered by the specialist shortage.

Critical Flashpoints and Risk Areas: A primary risk area remains cybersecurity, given the high volume of weekly attacks and the acknowledged shortage of skilled professionals. Critical infrastructure, including mineral resources and telecommunications, remains vulnerable. Internally, the political instability stemming from the constitutional crisis and concerns about democratic backsliding could hinder effective governance and resource allocation for security. Geopolitically, while Mongolia's multi-vector policy aims for balance, increasing military cooperation with China and the diplomatic alignment with the U.S. through the Board of Peace could subtly shift regional perceptions and potentially draw Mongolia into broader geopolitical tensions, despite its stated non-militarized stance. The delicate balance with its two large neighbors, China and Russia, will require continuous careful

management.

Indicators to Monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress and outcomes of the "Steppe Partner-2024" exercise, particularly any statements regarding future joint military activities with China. The implementation of the new national cybersecurity budget and efforts to address the specialist shortage will be crucial for assessing improvements in digital defenses. Domestically, observe any further developments in the executive-legislative relationship and the political stability ahead of upcoming elections. In foreign policy, watch for further engagements or statements related to the Board of Peace, and any new defense or economic agreements with "third neighbors" that could signal shifts in strategic alignment. The pace of implementation of the defense technology transfer agreement with Japan will also be an important indicator of defense modernization.

Strategic Recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize accelerating its cybersecurity capacity building, focusing on training and recruiting specialists to effectively utilize the new dedicated budget and implement the National Cybersecurity Strategy. Strengthening internal political stability through transparent governance and addressing public concerns over corruption and democratic processes will be vital to present a unified and resilient front. Diplomatically, Mongolia should continue to articulate clearly the non-military nature of its "third neighbor" engagements, such as the Board of Peace, to maintain its neutral foreign policy stance and manage perceptions from China and Russia. Diversifying defense partnerships and acquisitions, as seen with Japan and India, should continue to enhance military capabilities without creating over-reliance on any single external power. Finally, continued active participation in regional counter-terrorism and border security initiatives with all neighbors, including the trilateral exercises, will be essential for addressing immediate security threats.