ATLAS PROTOCOL / STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

GEO 06 / 02
Major & Middle Powers

How do different actors translate capabilities and perceived threats into strategic behaviour?

22 OCTOBER 2026 | EDITION 1.0 | ANALYTICAL DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Executive strategic assessment

Actor-centred geopolitical analysis compares declared objectives, demonstrated behaviour, domestic constraints and bargaining alternatives. Middle powers are not a residual category: their selective alignment often alters the choices available to larger actors.

Atlas position: this dossier is an independent analytic framework, not an operational mandate or a statement issued by the United Nations or any government.

Analytical architecture

United States

Assess security commitments, monetary reach, technology leadership, domestic political constraints and the credibility of reassurance or restraint; separate executive rhetoric from sustained policy.

China

Assess industrial depth, trade exposure, technological strategy, maritime access, regional security interests and the distinction between official doctrine and observed implementation.

European Union

Treat the EU as a complex institutional actor rather than a unitary state: market and regulatory power differ from national security capabilities and decision procedures.

India

Assess strategic autonomy, regional security concerns, economic expansion, technology partnerships and its capacity to maintain relationships across competing groups.

Russia

Assess military posture, energy and resource position, sanctions adaptation, geographic exposure and domestic constraints; avoid assuming every action follows a single stable objective.

Emerging and middle powers

Use comparable profiles for Brazil, Indonesia, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Japan and South Korea, allowing for distinct foreign-policy institutions and interests.

Geopolitical Actor Matrix

For each actor document objectives, capabilities, dependencies, partnerships, constraints, escalation behaviour, cooperation potential and strategic outlook.

Observed reality / strategic interpretation / forward outlook

Observed reality

Use documented primary sources and dated data; an official statement establishes that a claim was made, not that the claim is true.

Strategic interpretation

State assumptions, alternative explanations and actor incentives; distinguish competing narratives and corroborated observations.

Forward outlook

Use conditional pathways and clear signposts, not deterministic forecasts or unsupported numerical probabilities.

Geopolitical Actor Matrix — common standard

DIMENSION	ASSESSMENT RULE
Strategic objectives	Identify declared priorities and inferred red lines separately.
Capabilities	Compare economic, military, financial, technological and institutional leverage.
Dependencies	Map imports, security guarantees, trade routes, compute, energy and critical inputs.
Alliances	Distinguish treaty obligations, partnerships, issue coalitions and tactical alignment.
Constraints	Test domestic politics, fiscal exposure, legitimacy, law and time horizons.
Escalation behaviour	Record signals, deployments, thresholds and crisis communications.
Cooperation potential	Identify verifiable shared interests and reciprocal concessions.
Strategic outlook	Present assumptions, alternatives, indicators and confidence.

Escalation and opportunity pathways

- A partner declines a major-power demand yet expands issue-specific cooperation.
- Domestic political turnover changes a negotiation position.
- A resource or transit state obtains additional bargaining leverage.

Monitoring indicators

- National strategy and policy releases
- Sanctions and export controls
- Treaty votes and official joint statements
- Trade/investment concentration
- Diplomatic and military signalling

Scenario framework — conditional, not predictive

Polarized alignment

Key actors converge into rigid opposing constellations.

Selective balancing

Middle powers preserve issue-by-issue room to manoeuvre.

Negotiated coexistence

Major powers sustain competition and bounded practical arrangements.

Decision questions

- What has changed since the previous assessment, with what verified evidence?
- Which actor has gained or lost bargaining alternatives, and why?
- Which dependency, alliance or institutional constraint is most decisive?
- What evidence would contradict the leading interpretation?
- Which de-escalatory or cooperative pathway remains available?

Connections within Atlas Intelligence Core

STR 05 provides analysis of strategic systems (financial, maritime, defence, AI and space); GEO 06 evaluates actors, interests and relational power; OBS 07 tracks signals and evidence. PLN 01, SPE 02, CIV 03 and HUM 04 add physical, species, institutional and human-decision perspectives.

Selected references and source discipline

WEF Global Risks Report 2026 — https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2026

SIPRI Trends in World Military Expenditure 2025 (April 2026) — https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025

IMF World Economic Outlook October 2026 — https://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo/issues/2026/10/13/world-economic-outlook-october-2026

United Nations Charter — https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text

Method note: cited figures require matching vintage, definitions and verification before web publication. WEF 2026 risk survey (18% cite geoeconomic confrontation as highest potential crisis trigger; 68% anticipate a

multipolar/fragmented order) is perception data. SIPRI reports military spending of US$2,887 billion in 2025. IMF October 2026 WEO forecasts 3.1% global growth in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027; these are projections, not confirmed outcomes.

Editorial control: Draft v1.0 — scholarly and institutional fact-check, owner review and publication approval required; no claimed live monitoring, applied scores or state endorsements.

DEEPENED ANALYTICAL ANNEX · v1.1

22 OCTOBER 2026 | GEO 06 | ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS FOR OWNER REVIEW

Method: grounded background is distinguished from Atlas analysis and conditional outlook. Profile and monitoring items below are assessment frameworks, not claims that particular future events have occurred. All proposed triggers are editorial watchlist thresholds, not empirically calibrated forecasts.

Actor profiles — comparable strategic assessment

Profiles are intentionally symmetrical: leverage, constraints, observable behaviour and contingent outlook. They should be updated with source-dated actor evidence before each publication cycle.

United States

Strategic leverage: Alliance networks, dollar-centred finance, technological platforms and global force projection.

Constraints and dependencies: Domestic political contestation, fiscal constraints, industrial-supply exposure and assurance credibility.

Observable tests: Alliance burden-sharing, sanctions posture, technology restrictions and crisis-hotline use.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Commitment adjustments may change partners' hedging without a formal treaty change.

China

Strategic leverage: Industrial manufacturing scale, trade connectivity, state capacity and growing research ecosystems.

Constraints and dependencies: Export-market exposure, technology chokepoints, energy import routes and demographic constraints.

Observable tests: Export control responses, maritime signalling, bilateral summits and regional infrastructure finance.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Economic interdependence can coexist with security competition; avoid interpreting all trade as alignment.

European Union

Strategic leverage: Single-market regulation, commercial bargaining, development finance and collective diplomacy.

Constraints and dependencies: Fragmented defence authority, energy/technology supply exposure and member-state differences.

Observable tests: Common sanctions, procurement decisions, industrial policy and EU–partner agreements.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Regulatory power may grow while security decisions remain nationally differentiated.

India

Strategic leverage: Large domestic market, technology services, maritime geography and multiple external relationships.

Constraints and dependencies: Energy and defence import dependence, infrastructure needs and border-security tensions.

Observable tests: Issue-specific agreements, Indian Ocean cooperation, technology investment and multilateral voting.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Strategic autonomy can expand bargaining options rather than signal neutral indifference.

Brazil

Strategic leverage: Agrifood and commodity leverage, regional diplomacy and climate-related bargaining.

Constraints and dependencies: External demand cycles, fiscal constraints and infrastructure bottlenecks.

Observable tests: Commodity agreements, climate negotiations and diplomatic coordination across blocs.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Brazil can influence rules and trade negotiations without military parity with leading powers.

Indonesia

Strategic leverage: Maritime position, domestic market, ASEAN diplomacy and critical minerals.

Constraints and dependencies: Export concentration, infrastructure and investment requirements, regional maritime competition.

Observable tests: ASEAN communiqués, resource-processing measures and naval/port coordination.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Hedging and convening power can matter more than formal bloc alignment.

Türkiye

Strategic leverage: Geographical access between theatres, NATO membership, defence industry and diplomatic channels.

Constraints and dependencies: Currency and financing pressure, regional security exposure and alliance friction.

Observable tests: Straits administration, mediation attempts, procurement and cross-border security decisions.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Transactional cooperation with different actors may create leverage and contradictions.

Saudi Arabia

Strategic leverage: Energy-market position, investment capacity and diplomatic convening channels.

Constraints and dependencies: Hydrocarbon-cycle exposure, transition investment demands and regional security risks.

Observable tests: Oil policy, regional diplomatic agreements and diversification investment execution.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Economic and security partnerships may be diversified independently.

South Africa

Strategic leverage: Regional economic weight, African institutional diplomacy and minerals value chains.

Constraints and dependencies: Energy/infrastructure capacity constraints and domestic economic pressures.

Observable tests: AU engagement, trade diplomacy, logistics reform and multilateral voting.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Multilateral voice should not be conflated with uniform African representation.

Japan

Strategic leverage: Industrial and technological capability, finance, maritime trading networks and alliance depth.

Constraints and dependencies: Imported energy, aging population and concentrated technology supply chains.

Observable tests: Defence policy, regional infrastructure finance and maritime security cooperation.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Capability increase may coexist with efforts to stabilize commercial ties.

South Korea

Strategic leverage: Advanced semiconductor industry, export manufacturing, alliance security architecture.

Constraints and dependencies: External market dependence, Korean Peninsula risks and energy import reliance.

Observable tests: Export controls, regional security exercises, semiconductor investment diversification.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Technology networks make Seoul relevant beyond its immediate security theatre.

Russia

Strategic leverage: Nuclear deterrence, geographic depth, commodity production and established security infrastructure.

Constraints and dependencies: War and sanctions exposure, technological import restrictions and export-route concentrations.

Observable tests: Military signalling, diplomatic contacts, energy routing and arms-control posture.

Atlas forward interpretation (conditional): Military capacity, regime priorities and economic sustainability need separate assessments.

Actor-to-actor relationship tests

- US–China: compare competitive technology measures with continuing commercial and diplomatic contacts.
- EU–India: distinguish trade/investment negotiation from shared defence commitments.
- China–ASEAN members: compare economic integration with maritime security exposure; avoid treating ASEAN as one foreign-policy actor.
- Saudi Arabia–regional partners: distinguish investment diplomacy from security alignment.
- Brazil–EU–China: trace resource, agriculture and climate leverage across issue areas.

Profile comparability protocol

For each actor record: assessment date, declared objective with official citation, observed action with independent corroboration, domestic constraints, partner response, cooperation opportunity, competing explanations, and an explicit invalidation trigger. Do not create an aggregate power score without published weighting and uncertainty.

Source check: consult dated SIPRI April 2026, IMF October 2026, UN Charter and relevant regional authorities; bibliography and URL anchors retained in the main dossier.

Editorial note: v1.1 expands only dossiers 02, 04 and 08. Existing v1.0 chapters remain unchanged. Actor descriptions are analytical lenses, not official statements by those actors. Review immediately before publication for time-sensitive incidents and policy changes.