MARITIME CHOKE POINTS

Protocol for Global Maritime Access, Risk Transmission & Strategic Resilience

MCP-5 • Revised strategic framework • 22 October 2026

EDITION V2.0 | PROPOSED ATLAS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK | EDITORIAL REVIEW

This document is an independent strategic analysis and a proposed decision-support framework. It is not a treaty, a navigation authority, an operational maritime security command or an adopted United Nations protocol. The five passages are a deliberate analytical selection—not a definitive ranking of all global chokepoints.

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT

Maritime chokepoints concentrate global dependencies within narrow, politically exposed geography. A disruption can propagate through shipping capacity, energy markets, food security, insurance, financing and civilian welfare. MCP-5 therefore treats access and continuity not simply as naval matters, but as interconnected strategic-resilience questions.

UNCTAD reports that more than 80% of international merchandise trade by volume moves by sea (2025). This is a volume statistic, not a claim about trade value. Route-specific market shares vary with the commodity, reference year, routing and chosen denominator. [S1]

01 MANDATE & ANALYTICAL BOUNDARY

- Observe maritime exposure, route dependency and disruption signals; distinguish evidence from interpretation.
- Assess direct effects (transit, delay, threat) and second-order consequences (prices, rerouting, insurance, humanitarian access).
- Support proportional choices by states, commercial actors and international institutions acting within their own mandates.
- Maintain explicit links to PLN 01 (physical systems), GEO 06 (state interests), HUM 04 / SPE 02 (human impact), OBS 07 (verification) and D.E.F.E.N.D. (strategic resilience).

02 THE FIVE MCP-5 CORRIDORS

Corridor	Strategic function	Primary exposure
Strait of Hormuz	Gulf oil, refined products and LNG export access	Energy supply shock; limited bypass capacity
Strait of Malacca	Indian–Pacific connection; oil and container traffic	Asian supply chains; congestion and diversion
Suez Canal	Mediterranean–Red Sea shortcut	Europe–Asia route elongation and cost
Bab el-Mandeb	Red Sea southern gateway	Security incidents; coupled Suez exposure
Turkish Straits / Bosporus	Black Sea access to Mediterranean	Grain, energy, naval and navigation constraints

Methodological note: MCP-5 is not an exhaustive list. Panama Canal, Danish Straits and other high-impact passages also merit comparative monitoring. The Bosporus is analysed as part of the interconnected Turkish Straits system; the Dardanelles should not be conflated with the Bosporus when quoting transit datasets.

03 CORRIDOR INTELLIGENCE PROFILES

3.1 Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and is a particularly consequential energy corridor. The IEA estimates approximately 20 million barrels per day of crude oil and oil products transited in 2025—around one quarter of

global seaborne oil trade—and roughly 19% of global LNG trade. These are distinct denominators; neither is “25% of all global trade.” [S2]

Strategic assessment: a major disruption is likely to transmit rapidly through energy prices and import security. Alternative pipeline capacity exists but cannot replace all traffic. Observe ship movements, official navigation notices, insurance conditions, export terminal activity and credible evidence of alternative flows.

3.2 Strait of Malacca

Malacca links the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and the wider Pacific. It is central to Northeast and Southeast Asian energy and manufacturing supply chains. EIA estimates 23.2 million barrels per day of petroleum liquids through Malacca in the first half of 2025. This is an oil-flow metric, not a general merchandise-trade percentage. [S3]

Strategic assessment: congestion, incidents or politically driven access restrictions can create cascading transport and energy costs. Monitor route diversion, shipping density, port queues, fuel logistics and Southeast Asian intergovernmental communications.

3.3 Suez Canal

Suez provides the shortest major maritime connection between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Risk is inseparable from conditions farther south at Bab el-Mandeb. UNCTAD has documented diversion around the Cape of Good Hope and the resulting increase in ton-miles, costs and supply-chain strain. [S1, S4]

Strategic assessment: distinguish a canal-specific outage from avoidance of the broader Red Sea corridor. Monitor canal transits, security advisories, shipping line routing, freight rates and effective vessel capacity.

3.4 Bab el-Mandeb

Bab el-Mandeb connects the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea. Security threats may affect transit decisions even when the passage remains technically navigable. EIA estimated petroleum flows of 4.2 million barrels per day in the first half of 2025, materially below 2023 levels. [S3]

Strategic assessment: assess direct threats to commercial shipping, humanitarian impacts, escort measures, insurer decisions and resulting rerouting. Do not add Bab el-Mandeb and Suez flow totals as though they represented independent global traffic.

3.5 Turkish Straits / Bosporus

The Bosporus and Dardanelles together connect the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Their significance includes commercial access, grain exports, energy flows, safety of passage and treaty-governed questions of warship transit. EIA reports 3.7 million barrels per day through the Turkish Straits (Dardanelles measure) in the first half of 2025; this figure is not a Bosporus-specific count. [S3]

Strategic assessment: assess navigation disruptions, export logistics and the legal status of relevant vessel movements. Avoid implying that Atlas can determine or enforce passage rights.

04 DISRUPTION TRANSMISSION MODEL

Phase	Observed change	Strategic consequence
T0 · Trigger	Incident, restriction, attack or environmental closure	Access uncertainty
T1 · Logistics	Vessel delay, suspension or diversion	Capacity and delivery stress
T2 · Markets	Freight, insurance, energy and commodity repricing	Inflation and cash-flow pressure
T3 · Societal	Food, fuel and essential imports become less affordable	Disproportionate civilian exposure
T4 · Policy	Diplomatic, maritime and economic response	Containment or further escalation

Feedback loops matter: repricing can change routing; rerouting can create new bottlenecks; disinformation can amplify or distort perceived risk. GFSM provides a complementary financial contagion perspective while OBS 07 supplies evidence grading and trend recognition.

05 MCP-5 MONITORING & DECISION LOGIC

Signal family	Examples	Evidence standard
Physical passage	AIS gaps, congestion, closure notices	Confirm through independent shipping and official sources
Security	Threat reports, attacks, military advisories	Differentiate allegation, observation and verification
Market	Freight, insurance, oil/LNG prices	Identify currency, base period and data date
System response	Diversion, inventory and pipeline bypass	Avoid double-counting flows
Human impact	Essential imports, food prices, humanitarian access	Use civilian-first impact framing

Operational sequence: (1) verify incident; (2) characterize affected corridor and users; (3) model alternative routing and exposure; (4) assess escalation pathways; (5) compare response options and civilian consequences; (6) update confidence and assumptions. No unverified numerical risk index is implied by this document.

06 GOVERNANCE, INTERNATIONAL LAW & LIMITS

Navigation rights, coastal-state jurisdiction, transit regimes, shipping safety obligations and sanctions are governed by applicable international law and national mandates, not by MCP-5. Any new collective-protection initiative would require negotiated legal authority, credible burden-sharing and explicit safeguards for sovereignty and civilian access.

Under the proposed UNv7 Global Chokepoint Protection Principle, Atlas can formulate a *normative recommendation* for uninterrupted essential access, neutral verification and cooperative contingency planning. The principle is not an adopted UN instrument. Maritime monitoring must respect evidentiary integrity and avoid treating a proposed protocol as an enforceable rule.

07 STRATEGIC SCENARIOS & LEVERS

Scenario	Warning conditions	Decision-support response
Managed disruption	Partial rerouting; predictable notices; some spare capacity	Frequent verification, targeted logistical contingencies
Prolonged fragmentation	Persistent insecurity; costly diversion; insurer withdrawal	Stress-test fuel, food and shipping dependencies
Escalatory closure	Sustained access denial with military confrontation risk	Prioritize civilian continuity and diplomatic de-escalation

Indicative policy levers to evaluate—not direct Atlas operational actions—include diversified sourcing, reserve management, port readiness, commercial routing alternatives, trusted information channels, and proportionate crisis communication.

08 ATLAS INTEGRATION & FINAL ASSESSMENT

MCP-5 sits primarily in STR 05. It draws physical constraints from PLN 01, human exposure from SPE 02/HUM 04, institutions from CIV 03, cross-border rivalry from GEO 06, and real-time verification from OBS 07. It complements D.E.F.E.N.D., GFSM and the proposed UNv7 chokepoint principle.

Strategic principle: preserving maritime access is not merely about keeping ships moving. It is about preventing localized pressure from becoming systemic civilian insecurity and irreversible geopolitical escalation.

SOURCE NOTES & PUBLICATION CONTROL

[S1] UNCTAD, Review of Maritime Transport 2025, 24 Sep 2025. https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/review-of-maritime-transport

[S2] IEA, Strait of Hormuz Factsheet, updated Feb 2026 (2025 oil/LNG flows). https://www.iea.org/about/oil-security-and-emergency-ission/strait-of-hormuz

[S3] U.S. EIA, World Oil Transit Chokepoints, updated 3 Mar 2026 (first-half 2025 flow table). https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/special_topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/

[S4] UNCTAD, Maritime trade under pressure, 24 Sep 2025. https://unctad.org/news/maritime-trade-under-pressure-growth-set-stall-2025

Source edition: TOP SECRET CPM 5 — 17 March 2026, supplied as editorial review copy. This rewritten MCP-5 v2.0 supersedes that analytical draft for review purposes only. Public-release approval, live facts refresh and source verification remain required. “TOP SECRET” from the source is not used as an externally recognised classification.