WESTERN HEMISPHERE READINESS SERIES

HRS Resilience Foundation

COUNTRY READINESS ASSESSMENT 09

Chile: Institutional Readiness, Strategic Minerals and Hemispheric Realignment

A 50-year readiness architecture for the hemisphere's leading copper and lithium producer

PUBLICATION TYPE	SCOPE	EDITION
Independent country readiness assessment	Chile	September 2026

SERIES POSITION	AUTHOR	INSTITUTION
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Research integrity. Public research publication. Independent analysis. No U.S. Government endorsement or sponsorship. Not an intelligence estimate, a political rating, or a judgment on Chilean policy choices.

Evidence discipline. This publication distinguishes documented facts, analytical judgments and scenario propositions.

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About this series. The Western Hemisphere Readiness Series applies the HRS Readiness Cycle and Strategic Dependency Test to country, sector and regional systems. CRA 09 integrates SRA 01–10 into a Chile-level system-of-systems assessment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chile: Institutional Readiness, Strategic Minerals and Hemispheric Realignment

Chile enters the final quarter of 2026 as the series' sharpest applied case of great-power economic competition over critical minerals. José Antonio Kast, of the right-wing Republican Party, was inaugurated on 11 March 2026, ending a run of five consecutive elections in which Chileans voted out the incumbent coalition, and declaring a "government of emergency" focused on crime and the economy. [1][2] During the transition itself, Kast publicly clashed with outgoing President Gabriel Boric over a Chinese-led transpacific fiber-optic cable project, and the United States imposed visa restrictions on three outgoing Chilean officials, alleging a broader threat to regional security. [3] Months later, the U.S. sanctioned Chile's former Minister of Communications and Transport, Juan Carlos Muñoz, over non-transparent contracting that had awarded the same cable project to a China Mobile-led consortium. [4]

Chile holds the world's largest copper reserves and largest lithium reserves, and ranks first in mined copper and rhenium production — making it, in the words of the U.S. approach to critical minerals, indispensable to reducing American dependence on China for the inputs of the energy transition. [5][6] Yet China remains Chile's largest trading partner, purchasing 39% of Chilean exports — chiefly copper — and holds roughly US$20 billion in contemplated Chilean infrastructure and commercial projects; President Kast is scheduled to travel to Beijing in November 2026 for the APEC summit, with a possible state visit to President Xi Jinping. [7] Chile is also contending with a documented rise in transnational organized crime, including the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua network, whose Chile-based leadership was convicted in July 2026 for crimes including the 2024 kidnapping and killing of Venezuelan dissident Ronald Ojeda on Chilean soil. [8][9]

> CENTRAL HRS PROPOSITION
>
> *Chile's readiness challenge is not choosing between Washington and Beijing — its own government has explicitly rejected that framing — but building the institutional capacity to screen, diversify and secure strategic infrastructure and mineral supply chains consistently, regardless of which partner's capital or technology is involved, while its security institutions absorb a transnational criminal footprint new to Chile's traditionally low-crime profile.*

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Purpose and Scope

Country Readiness Assessment 09 extends the Western Hemisphere Readiness Series from Brazil (CRA 01), Venezuela (CRA 02), Cuba (CRA 03), Colombia (CRA 04), Bolivia (CRA 05), Peru (CRA 06), Ecuador (CRA 07) and Paraguay (CRA 08) to Chile. It applies the HRS Readiness Cycle to Chile and integrates the ten Sector Readiness Assessments into a single system-of-systems framework, consistent with the methodology used throughout the series.

The assessment uses public information available through 28 September 2026. Statements about U.S., Chilean and Chinese government positions are identified as government positions; the characterization of specific events as security threats, sanctions violations, or criminal conduct reflects the respective government's own determination, not an independent HRS finding. The assessment does not endorse a political party, candidate, or electoral outcome, and takes no position on Chile's internal political disputes.

The intended audience includes U.S. institutions, international organizations, private-sector actors evaluating Chile entry, and Chilean public and private institutions. The document is a strategic research reference for critical-minerals investment, infrastructure-screening capacity building, sovereign-to-sovereign engagement, and long-horizon institutional capacity building; project-level decisions require current technical, legal, environmental, financial and security diligence.

CURRENT GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Current Governance and Political Context

Kast, a Catholic lawyer and the Republican Party's candidate, won a decisive runoff victory with 58.2% of the vote on 14 December 2025, defeating Communist Party candidate Jeannette Jara, who had led the first round; turnout reached a record 84.1% under Chile's reintroduced mandatory-voting law. [1][10] He took office on 11 March 2026 for a four-year term succeeding Gabriel Boric of the left-wing Broad Front, and lacks a majority in either house of the Chilean Congress, requiring him to build support among unaffiliated and opposition legislators to advance his legislative agenda. [2][10] Kast's disapproval rating rose from 34% to 59% within his first months in office, driven primarily by deteriorating economic conditions; his government undertook a cabinet reshuffle on 19 May 2026, replacing his original Security Minister, prosecutor Trinidad Steinert — who had led the prosecution that convicted the Chile-based leadership of the Tren de Aragua criminal network — alongside his government spokesperson. [11][2]

Chile has also faced a severe wildfire season, with the outgoing Boric government declaring a "state of catastrophe" in the Biobío region in January 2026, and periodic violent incidents attributed by Chilean authorities to extremist elements within the Mapuche indigenous movement in the Araucanía region and elsewhere in southern Chile. [12]

> **Material to readiness planning:** This assessment treats Kast's political affiliation, cabinet composition, approval ratings, and the characterization of Mapuche-linked violence as security incidents as documented facts and government positions, not as independent HRS political judgments. The report does not take a position on the legal or political merits of any domestic Chilean dispute, including land and autonomy claims advanced by Mapuche communities and organizations.

01 · CHILE 2026 BASELINE

The Hemisphere's Critical-Minerals Anchor

Chile's baseline combines an unmatched critical-minerals endowment with a newly inaugurated, economically stressed government navigating simultaneous pressure from its two largest partners. Chile ranks first in the world in mined copper production and copper reserves, first in lithium reserves, third in lithium production, and first in rhenium production and reserves — giving it a central role in the global energy transition and in any strategy to diversify critical-mineral supply chains away from China. [5][6] China remains Chile's largest trading partner, purchasing 39% of Chilean exports (chiefly copper) and holding an estimated US$20 billion in contemplated infrastructure and commercial projects, while the United States remains Chile's largest source of foreign investment. [7][13]

Chile signed a joint declaration establishing consultations on critical minerals and rare earth elements with the United States on 12 March 2026, at President Kast's inauguration, part of a wider pattern of similar Trump-administration critical-minerals engagement across the Western Hemisphere including Argentina, Peru and Ecuador, reflecting the Trump administration's effort to reduce U.S. dependence on China for critical-mineral inputs. [13] U.S. tariffs on Chilean imports have nonetheless generated continuing friction, raising questions within the Kast government about the reliability of the United States as a partner even as it pursues closer alignment with Washington. [2]

> **BASELINE CONCLUSION**
>
> *Chile's readiness priority is building transparent, nationality-neutral screening and diversification capacity for strategic infrastructure and mineral supply chains — capacity that functions regardless of which government is in office in Santiago or which foreign partner currently holds commercial advantage.*

02 · THE TRANSPACIFIC CABLE DISPUTE

The Transpacific Cable Dispute as a National Readiness Test

During the presidential transition, President-elect Kast publicly clashed with outgoing President Boric over a Chinese-led transpacific fiber-optic cable project, alleging that outgoing authorities had not disclosed key information about the sensitive plans; the Boric government denied withholding information, and the project remained pending approval. [3] The United States imposed visa restrictions on three outgoing Chilean government officials, citing a broader threat to regional security, while China's embassy in Santiago accused Washington of showing "obvious contempt for Chile's sovereignty, dignity and national interests." [3] The dispute escalated further when the United States sanctioned Chile's former Minister of Communications and Transport, Juan Carlos Muñoz, over allegedly non-transparent contracting that had awarded the cable project to a China Mobile-led consortium. [4]

System	Primary Dependency	Cascading Effect	Readiness Response
Digital infrastructure	Transpacific cable connectivity contracted to a China Mobile-led consortium under a prior administration	Contracting-transparency dispute becomes a bilateral flashpoint during a presidential transition	Transparent, nationality-neutral procurement standards for future cable and digital-infrastructure projects
Diplomatic relations	U.S. visa restrictions on named officials; Chinese embassy public criticism	A single infrastructure contract becomes a test of Chile's sovereign decision-making under competing pressure	Institutionalized screening applied consistently before contracts are signed, not after
Institutional continuity	Dispute originated under one administration and was inherited, unresolved, by the next	Political transitions create windows of ambiguity that outside pressure can exploit	Standing, administration-independent infrastructure-screening authority

> READINESS PRINCIPLE
>
> *A transparent, documented screening process applied before a strategic-infrastructure contract is signed would have converted this dispute from a bilateral crisis into a routine regulatory decision — the same principle this series has applied to Chancay in Peru and to comparable cases elsewhere.*

03 · HRS METHOD

Chile as a System of Systems

The HRS Readiness Cycle — Detect, Assess, Decide, Coordinate, Deploy, Sustain, Learn — is applied to Chile across critical-minerals governance, infrastructure-screening capacity, and public-security institutions simultaneously, given that Chile's readiness gaps span economic, diplomatic and security domains at once.

HRS Function	Chile Application
Detect	Identify infrastructure contracts and mineral-sector transactions carrying strategic-dependency risk before they are signed.
Assess	Fuse economic, security and diplomatic information into a common operating picture across administrations.
Decide	Apply consistent, nationality-neutral screening criteria regardless of which foreign partner is involved.
Coordinate	Connect Chilean regulatory, security and foreign-affairs institutions with U.S. and other international partners.
Deploy	Move screening, security and diversification capacity to priority mineral and infrastructure sectors.
Sustain	Maintain institutional screening capacity through changes of government, given Chile's pattern of alternating coalitions.
Learn	Convert the transpacific cable dispute into a documented, repeatable screening precedent.

The HRS Strategic Dependency Test asks whether Chile's infrastructure and mineral-sector decisions depend on the political alignment of the government in office, or on a durable, transparent institutional process that would apply the same way regardless of administration.

04 · TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Transnational Organized Crime and the Dependency Test

Chile's traditionally low-crime profile has come under sustained pressure from transnational criminal networks, most prominently the Venezuelan-origin Tren de Aragua. Chilean prosecutors secured convictions in July 2026 against the network's Chile-based leadership, including its local leader, for crimes including two 2022 kidnappings — one resulting in death, another in mutilation — in the northern city of Alto Hospicio; the same network's members were separately implicated in the 2024 kidnapping and killing of Venezuelan dissident Ronald Ojeda on Chilean soil. [8][9] The prosecutor who led that case, Trinidad Steinert, was subsequently appointed Kast's first Security Minister before being replaced in a May 2026 cabinet reshuffle. [11] Other groups documented operating in Chile include Peruvian networks such as "Los Pulpos" and "Los Gallegos," and Colombian extortion networks operating "gota a gota" informal lending schemes. [14]

Test Dimension	Chile Application	Readiness Question
Concentration	Transnational criminal presence concentrated in specific migration corridors and northern border regions	What institutional capacity exists to prevent territorial consolidation before it becomes entrenched?
Substitutability	Convicting one network's leadership does not remove the underlying transnational structure	What regional coordination reduces dependence on any single prosecution?
Control	A record 108 tonnes of cocaine seized in Chilean ports in 2026, with Bolivian authorities investigating its origin	What port and logistics-screening capacity exists across Chile's full maritime network?
Recovery	Security-ministry leadership changed within Kast's first three months in office	What institutional continuity survives changes in ministerial leadership?
Cascading impact	Periodic violence attributed to extremist elements within the Mapuche movement in southern Chile, alongside organized-crime activity	How does Chile distinguish and separately address distinct sources of security pressure?

Material to readiness planning: This assessment treats the characterization of Mapuche-linked violence as attributed by Chilean authorities to specific extremist elements, not as a characterization of Mapuche communities or organizations broadly, the great majority of which are not linked to violence. This report takes no position on underlying land, autonomy or historical-grievance claims.

HRS PROPOSITION

Chile's organized-crime challenge is transnational by nature — Venezuelan, Peruvian and Colombian networks operating across shared migration and logistics corridors — meaning durable readiness depends on regional coordination, not on any single country's domestic enforcement success.

05 · STRATEGIC DEPENDENCY MAP

Chile's Critical Capability Network

Capability	Critical Inputs	Failure Consequence	Readiness Response
Critical minerals	World's largest copper and lithium reserves; China purchases 39% of exports	Economic concentration in a single trading partner despite diversified reserve base	Transparent, nationality-neutral offtake diversification
Digital infrastructure	Transpacific cable connectivity contracted under disputed circumstances to a China-linked consortium	Infrastructure decisions become bilateral flashpoints absent transparent process	Standing, administration-independent screening authority
Public security	Transnational criminal networks (Tren de Aragua and others) operating in migration and port corridors	Erosion of Chile's historically low-crime profile and institutional confidence	Regional security coordination; port and logistics screening
Government stability	Minority government requiring cross-coalition legislative support; rapid decline in approval ratings	Policy continuity risk on screening and security initiatives	Institutionalize reforms so they outlast any single government's political fortunes
Foreign policy balance	Simultaneous alignment efforts with Washington and continued deep economic engagement with Beijing	Risk of being drawn into bilateral disputes not of Chile's making	Consistent, documented, nationality-neutral engagement principles

06 · SRA 01

Telecommunications & Digital Infrastructure

Chile implementation objective: convert the transpacific cable dispute into a standing, transparent screening precedent applicable to all future digital-infrastructure contracts, regardless of the outcome of the current project.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Establish a standing, transparent, nationality-neutral screening authority for strategic digital-infrastructure contracts.
- Complete an independent review of the transpacific cable contracting process, documenting findings for future precedent.
- Build resilient, diversified network connectivity rather than single-project dependency.
- Protect telecommunications infrastructure with redundant, diversified power supply.
- Strengthen cybersecurity capacity across public and private telecommunications operators.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Independent contract review → standing screening authority → connectivity diversification → protected infrastructure → resilient digital backbone.*

07 · SRA 02

Data Centers, Cloud & AI Infrastructure

Chile implementation objective: build data-center and cloud capacity that leverages Chile's stable grid and mineral-processing expertise while applying the same screening discipline recommended for the cable dispute.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Apply transparent, nationality-neutral trusted-supplier standards to new data-center investment.
- Build backup and disaster-recovery capacity independent of single facilities or single foreign partners.
- Develop domestic technical capacity for data governance and cybersecurity.
- Use data-fusion capacity to connect economic, security and diplomatic readiness information.
- Coordinate data-infrastructure investment with the broader critical-minerals processing strategy.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Trusted-supplier standards → distributed backup → domestic technical capacity → cross-domain data fusion → resilient digital infrastructure.*

08 · SRA 03

Critical Minerals & Strategic Materials

Chile implementation objective: this is the central readiness domain of the assessment. Chile holds the world's largest copper and lithium reserves, and a March 2026 joint declaration establishing critical-minerals consultations with the United States creates a framework for diversified investment without displacing Chile's existing commercial relationships. [13]

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Implement the March 2026 U.S.-Chile critical-minerals consultative framework alongside continued, transparent engagement with existing partners.
- Apply consistent, nationality-neutral investment screening to mining-sector transactions and offtake agreements.
- Build domestic processing capacity to capture more value from copper and lithium extraction.
- Advance the National Lithium Strategy's institutional and regulatory framework.
- Diversify export markets to reduce concentration in any single destination.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Consultative framework implementation → transparent screening → domestic processing investment → diversified offtake → sovereign long-term mineral policy.*

09 · SRA 04

Rare Earths & Western Hemisphere Mineral Security

Chile implementation objective: Chile's rhenium production — the world's largest — and broader strategic-minerals base extend beyond copper and lithium alone, warranting the same validation and diversification discipline used throughout this series.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Validate rhenium and other strategic-mineral resource data through independent survey where needed.
- Avoid single-buyer or single-financier dependency for strategic minerals beyond copper and lithium.
- Maintain Chilean decision rights over long-term mineral policy.
- Apply national-security review to any strategic-mineral asset sales.
- Coordinate rare-earth and strategic-materials policy with the broader critical-minerals consultative framework.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Data validation → diversified offtake → transparent screening → sovereign long-term policy.*

10 · SRA 05

Energy Security & Strategic Power Infrastructure

Chile implementation objective: protect the electricity grid underpinning Chile's mining and industrial base, given documented Chinese ownership stakes across segments of Chilean electricity distribution.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Map foreign ownership concentration across Chile's electricity generation, transmission and distribution assets.
- Apply transparent, nationality-neutral regulatory oversight to future energy-sector investment.
- Advance grid diversification and renewable-generation capacity to reduce single-source dependency.
- Build grid-security and cybersecurity capacity commensurate with Chile's industrial energy demand.
- Coordinate energy-sector screening with the broader critical-minerals processing strategy.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Ownership mapping → transparent regulatory oversight → grid diversification → cybersecurity capacity → long-horizon energy resilience.*

11 · SRA 06

Ports, Logistics & Maritime Infrastructure

Chile implementation objective: secure the port network that both anchors Chile's mineral-export economy and has been identified as a transit point for record cocaine seizures, requiring dual attention to trade efficiency and security screening.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Deploy advanced cargo-screening technology across major mineral-export and container terminals.
- Apply transparent, nationality-neutral standards to port-concession and ownership decisions.
- Build regional coordination with Bolivian, Peruvian and other authorities investigating cross-border trafficking.
- Digitize customs and cargo visibility to reduce concealment opportunities.
- Protect port power, communications and administrative systems.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Cargo-screening deployment → transparent concession standards → regional coordination → customs digitization → resilient, secure maritime logistics.*

12 · SRA 07

Food Security & Strategic Agricultural Resilience

Chile implementation objective: protect the agricultural export sector, including growing foreign-owned agricultural landholding, while maintaining Chile's position as a major global fruit and wine exporter.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Apply transparent screening to foreign agricultural land and water-rights acquisitions.
- Diversify agricultural export markets beyond current concentration.
- Invest in cold-chain and logistics capacity linking producers to export ports.
- Protect water-resource allocation transparency given Chile's arid growing regions.
- Coordinate food-security investment with the broader port and logistics-security tracks.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Land and water-rights screening → market diversification → cold-chain investment → transparent resource allocation → resilient agricultural economy.*

13 · SRA 08

Pharmaceutical & Medical Supply Chains

Chile implementation objective: build health-logistics resilience that accounts for both Chile's relatively mature health system and the strain introduced by rising transnational crime and migration pressure in specific regions.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Maintain diversified medical-device and medicine supplier relationships.
- Build regional medical-logistics capacity in northern border and migration-corridor regions.
- Strengthen local repair and maintenance capacity for medical equipment.
- Protect health-logistics personnel and infrastructure from security-related disruption in affected regions.
- Coordinate health-system resilience planning with broader public-security institutions.

> **HRS TEST**
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Supplier diversification → regional logistics capacity → local repair capacity → security-coordinated planning → resilient health system.*

14 · SRA 09

Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Capacity

Chile implementation objective: build domestic industrial capacity for copper and lithium processing and downstream manufacturing, capturing more value from Chile's mineral endowment rather than exporting raw materials alone.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Invest in domestic copper- and lithium-processing capacity to capture greater value-added share.
- Develop technical training linked to mineral-processing and battery-supply-chain technology.
- Prioritize repair and maintenance capacity for mining and processing equipment.
- Evaluate domestic manufacturing opportunities in battery components and related technologies.
- Measure industrial resilience by domestic value capture, not raw-export volume alone.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *Processing-capacity investment → technical training → maintenance capacity → downstream manufacturing evaluation → diversified industrial base.*

15 · SRA 10

Western Hemisphere Strategic Infrastructure & Resilience

SRA 10 is the integration layer, converting the ten sector assessments into a Chile-level dependency architecture, with the transpacific cable dispute and Chile's critical-minerals position as the defining test cases for the series' Strategic Dependency Test methodology applied to a resource-central economy under great-power competition.

Chile implementation — priority actions

- Maintain a national Strategic Infrastructure and Minerals Dependency Register spanning all ten SRA domains.
- Run Scenario Stress Tests for compound infrastructure-dispute and mineral-market disruption.
- Use Readiness-to-Investment Assessments applied consistently regardless of investor nationality.
- Specify decision rights, recovery time and alternate capacity for every critical system.
- Coordinate with Shield of the Americas and regional partners on shared readiness and screening standards.

> HRS TEST
>
> *For every major project, identify concentration, substitutability, control, recovery time and cascading impact. A second supplier or facility is effective redundancy only when both are not dependent on the same upstream failure point.*

Implementation sequence: *National dependency register → scenario stress testing → nationality-neutral readiness assessments → regional coordination → integrated long-horizon resilience.*

16 · SECURITY-TO-INSTITUTIONAL-CAPACITY

A National Conversion Architecture

The conversion model treats Chile's critical-minerals endowment and new security-focused government as a necessary but insufficient foundation, requiring institutional screening and coordination capacity that outlasts any single administration or contract dispute.

Stage	Core Action	Readiness Result
1. Measure	Strategic-infrastructure and minerals-dependency register; transparent contract review	Public baseline and auditability
2. Stabilize	Standing screening authority; regional security coordination against transnational crime	Reduced ad hoc, crisis-driven decision-making
3. Rebuild	Port and cargo-screening technology; diversified digital-infrastructure connectivity	Reduced single-point dependency
4. Industrialize	Domestic copper and lithium processing capacity	Greater value capture from mineral endowment
5. Diversify	Diversified export markets and investment partnerships, applied nationality-neutrally	Reduced concentration risk
6. Institutionalize	Administration-independent screening and security institutions	Continuity across changes of government
7. Adapt	Technology renewal, mineral-market evolution, criminal-network adaptation	2076 resilience

> HRS ALLOCATION PRINCIPLE
>
> *Screening and security investment should be structured to build institutional capacity that persists independent of any single administration's political fortunes, given Chile's documented pattern of alternating governing coalitions.*

17 · MIGRATION AND REGIONAL SECURITY

Migration, Human Capital & Regional Security

Chile's northern border regions, including Tarapacá, have become focal points for both irregular migration and the transnational criminal networks — including Tren de Aragua — that Chilean authorities have identified as exploiting migration corridors for extortion, kidnapping and trafficking. [9][14]

Priority	Readiness Action	Expected Capability
Border-region security	Coordinated enforcement in northern migration corridors, building on the Tarapacá prosecutorial model	Reduced territorial consolidation by transnational networks
Regional coordination	Information-sharing with Peru, Bolivia and Colombia on shared criminal networks	Reduced dependence on any single country's enforcement success
Institutional continuity	Security-ministry capacity that survives leadership and cabinet changes	Sustained prosecutorial and enforcement expertise
Workforce & technical capacity	Technical training linked to mineral-processing and port-security technology	Domestic workforce depth supporting economic diversification

HRS READINESS METRIC

Whether prosecutorial and security expertise built against specific criminal networks is institutionalized within Chile's security ministry rather than dependent on individual leadership, given the demonstrated volatility of ministerial tenure in Chile's first months under the new government.

18 · TRADE DIVERSIFICATION

Trade Diversification and External Economic Partners

Chile's foreign-policy posture explicitly rejects a binary choice between the United States and China: President Kast has stated publicly that maintaining strong relations with both is "not incompatible," and his Foreign Minister has taken visible steps — including parallel, near-identical photographs with the U.S. and Chinese ambassadors — to signal a balanced approach. [7][15] This assessment did not identify evidence of a Russian or Iranian strategic footprint in Chile comparable to cases documented elsewhere in this series; rising global oil prices linked to Middle East tensions have affected Chilean consumers, but this is a market effect, not a bilateral relationship with Iran.

Partner	Relationship	Readiness Consideration
China	Largest trading partner (39% of exports); ~US$20 billion in contemplated infrastructure and commercial projects; Kast to visit Beijing for APEC in November 2026	Continued engagement alongside transparent screening of strategic transactions
United States	Largest source of foreign investment; March 2026 critical-minerals consultative framework; ongoing tariff friction	Deepening security and minerals cooperation without displacing other partnerships
Regional partners (Peru, Bolivia, Colombia)	Shared exposure to transnational criminal networks; joint investigative interest in trafficking routes	Sustained regional security coordination

> HRS PROPOSITION
>
> *Chile's own government has already rejected the binary framing this series cautions against throughout: economic engagement with China and security alignment with the United States are not inherently contradictory when strategic transactions are screened transparently and consistently, regardless of partner.*

19 · U.S.–CHILE COOPERATION

A Readiness-Based Cooperation Framework

The Kast and Trump administrations have sought to reset a U.S.-Chile relationship that was strained during the final year of the Boric government over tariffs and regional military-operations disagreements. New agreements and initiatives announced in 2026 focus on combatting organized crime, strengthening regional security cooperation, and developing secure critical-minerals supply chains — though persistent U.S. tariffs on Chilean imports continue to generate friction and raise questions within the Kast government about the reliability of the relationship. [2][13] On 22 September 2026, Chile joined the United States and other participating governments in the Joint Statement on Defending Hemispheric Sovereignty, creating an additional regional framework for investment screening, critical-minerals supply-chain diversification, trusted digital infrastructure and security coordination — directly relevant to the transpacific cable dispute and critical-minerals questions this assessment documents. [30]

Domain	Illustrative Readiness Objective	Authority / Accountability
Critical minerals	Implementation of the March 2026 consultative framework alongside transparent, diversified engagement	Chilean and U.S. minerals and trade authorities
Digital infrastructure	Standing, transparent screening authority for future cable and infrastructure contracts	Chilean regulatory authorities
Security	Sustained counter-organized-crime cooperation building on the Tren de Aragua prosecutions	Chilean and regional security and judicial authorities
Trade	Resolution of tariff friction to reinforce reliability of the bilateral relationship	Chilean and U.S. trade authorities

COOPERATION PRINCIPLE

Build systems that remain useful if an administration changes on either side, a criminal network is replaced by another, or a bilateral relationship evolves — the same principle applied throughout this series.

20 · 2027–2030

Realignment and Screening

Objective: convert the transpacific cable dispute into durable screening institutions while stabilizing security-ministry continuity.

Priority portfolio

- Standing, transparent infrastructure-screening authority
- Institutionalized security-ministry expertise independent of individual leadership
- Initial implementation of the U.S.-Chile critical-minerals consultative framework
- Regional security-coordination agreements with Peru, Bolivia and Colombia
- Domestic mineral-processing investment pilot programs

> HRS LONG-HORIZON TEST
>
> *Screening and security investment should be traceable to measurable institutional outcomes — not only to the political priorities of the current government.*

21 · 2031–2035

Institutional Consolidation

Objective: move from crisis-driven screening decisions to durable, administration-independent institutions.

Priority portfolio

- Administration-independent infrastructure and minerals-screening institutions
- Expanded domestic mineral-processing and value-capture capacity
- Sustained regional security-coordination outcomes
- Diversified export markets reducing single-partner concentration
- Reduced volatility in security-ministry leadership

> HRS LONG-HORIZON TEST
>
> *The central transition is from politically contingent screening decisions to institutional capacity that outlasts any single government's tenure.*

22 · 2036–2050

Diversification

Objective: reduce structural dependence on any single trading partner, mineral-export destination, or bilateral security relationship.

Priority portfolio

- Diversified trade and investment partnerships, applied on nationality-neutral terms
- Mature domestic battery-supply-chain manufacturing capacity
- Institutionalized regional counter-organized-crime mechanisms
- Sustained, screened engagement with both the United States and China
- Reduced criminal-network recruitment and territorial presence

> HRS LONG-HORIZON TEST
>
> *A resilient Chilean system should continue functioning if one trading partner's priorities shift, one criminal network is replaced by another, or one bilateral relationship evolves.*

23 · 2051–2065

Renewal

Objective: replace first-generation post-2027 screening and processing infrastructure before systemic failure, applying updated technology and institutional standards.

Priority portfolio

- Renewed mineral-processing and digital infrastructure
- Updated screening technology and institutional protocols
- Continued security-institution professionalization
- Renewed regional security-coordination frameworks
- Sustained diversified trade relationships

> HRS LONG-HORIZON TEST
>
> *Long-horizon readiness means avoiding a second generation of infrastructure that reproduces the transparency gaps of the first.*

24 · 2066–2076

Intergenerational Resilience

Objective: establish a continuously renewing portfolio of Chilean strategic-minerals and institutional capabilities.

Priority portfolio

- Effective redundancy across minerals, infrastructure and security systems
- Diversified international partnerships, applied consistently and transparently
- Recurring national infrastructure and minerals-dependency stress tests
- Sustained regional security-coordination investment
- Durable, administration-independent governance institutions

> HRS LONG-HORIZON TEST
>
> *Build systems that remain useful when governments change, criminal networks evolve, or great-power competition over critical minerals shifts.*

25 · READINESS METRICS

Readiness Metrics and Governance

Country readiness should not be reduced to a single score. Metrics should be tracked by sector, geography and critical function.

Domain	Illustrative Metric
Infrastructure screening	Share of strategic-infrastructure contracts reviewed under a documented, nationality-neutral standard
Minerals	Domestic processing share of copper and lithium value chain
Security	Organized-crime prosecution continuity; port-interdiction-to-throughput ratio
Trade	Export-market diversification beyond current partner concentration
Institutional continuity	Screening and security-institution continuity across administrations and cabinet changes

26 · GOVERNANCE & IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

HRS Chile Readiness Improvement Framework

Cycle	Chile Implementation
Detect	Maintain strategic-infrastructure and minerals-dependency registers.
Assess	Stress-test compound infrastructure-dispute and mineral-market disruption scenarios.
Decide	Apply consistent, documented screening criteria regardless of investor nationality.
Coordinate	Align national, regional (Peru, Bolivia, Colombia) and international (U.S., Shield of the Americas) counterparts.
Deploy	Execute screening, security and minerals-diversification packages with measurable outcomes.
Sustain	Fund screening and security institutions through political cycles and cabinet changes.
Learn	Conduct annual continuity exercises and update assumptions through 2076.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE

The HRS improvement framework should be used as a management system rather than a one-time report — particularly important given the demonstrated pace of both political and criminal-network change in Chile's current environment.

27 · CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Chile's September 2026 position is defined by a documented tension its own government has explicitly refused to resolve through binary choice: the world's largest copper and lithium reserves, a critical-minerals consultative framework with the United States, and continued deep economic engagement with China as its largest trading partner. The transpacific cable dispute — which began as a contracting-transparency question, drew U.S. visa restrictions and sanctions, and became a defining moment of a presidential transition — demonstrates concretely what happens when strategic-infrastructure decisions lack a standing, transparent screening process.

The HRS opportunity is not to resolve Chile's balancing act between Washington and Beijing, which Chile's own government has stated is not a binary choice, but to help build the institutional screening, processing and security capacity that lets Chile capture more value from its mineral endowment and manage strategic-infrastructure decisions consistently — regardless of which government is in office or which foreign partner currently holds commercial advantage.

> FINAL HRS PROPOSITION
>
> *Chile's resilience should be measured not by which foreign capital or technology it accepts, but by whether its screening, processing and security institutions can function consistently and transparently — capable of enduring when governments change, criminal networks evolve, or great-power competition over critical minerals intensifies.*

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND LIMITATIONS

Methodology, Research Integrity and Limitations

This assessment is an original HRS Resilience Foundation synthesis based on public-source evidence and the Foundation's Western Hemisphere Readiness Series. It integrates the HRS Readiness Cycle, Strategic Dependency Test, effective-versus-nominal redundancy distinction, sector readiness logic and 50-year planning principles.

The assessment does not claim access to classified intelligence, confidential commercial information or privileged government information. Conditions in Chile, U.S. policy, and Chile-China relations can change rapidly.

Statements attributed to the U.S., Chilean, or Chinese governments are presented as their respective positions. Sanctions, visa restrictions and contracting-transparency findings referenced in this report reflect the determinations of the issuing government, not an independent HRS finding of wrongdoing. Scenario propositions are analytical pathways, not forecasts.

The report is not a political judgment, electoral recommendation, intelligence product, procurement recommendation, legal opinion, engineering certification or investment solicitation. Country conditions are analytical categories, not rankings.

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Suggested citation: HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 09 — Chile: Institutional Readiness, Strategic Minerals and Hemispheric Realignment. Western Hemisphere Readiness Series. September 2026.

About the HRS Resilience Foundation: The HRS Resilience Foundation is an independent research organization advancing institutional readiness and health security across the Western Hemisphere.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE READINESS SERIES

HRS Resilience Foundation

Independent research for institutional readiness, continuity, and 50-year resilience planning across the Western Hemisphere. Research Outputs span Strategic Reports, Policy Briefs, Technical Papers, Sector Readiness Assessments and Country Assessments, translating public-source evidence into practical frameworks built to remain valid for governments, infrastructure operators, investors, and institutional decision-makers across changes in technology, suppliers, and political leadership.

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Strategic Report 01 — Health Security and Institutional Resilience in the Americas

Strategic Report 02 — Resilient Infrastructure Investment in the Western Hemisphere

POLICY BRIEFS

Policy Brief 01 — Strengthening Regional Health Emergency Readiness in the Americas

Policy Brief 02 — Operationalizing the Economic Pillar of the Shield of the Americas

TECHNICAL PAPERS

Technical Paper 01 — Building Resilient Health Supply Chains

COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS

Country Readiness Assessment 01 — Brazil

Country Readiness Assessment 02 — Venezuela

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Country Readiness Assessment 06 — Peru

Country Readiness Assessment 07 — Ecuador

Country Readiness Assessment 08 — Paraguay

Country Readiness Assessment 09 — Chile

SECTOR ASSESSMENTS

SRA 01 — Telecommunications & Digital Infrastructure

SRA 02 — Data Centers, Cloud & AI Infrastructure

SRA 03 — Critical Minerals & Strategic Materials

SRA 04 — Rare Earths & Western Hemisphere Mineral Security

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