

HRS Resilience Foundation

STRATEGIC REPORT 03

Strategic Dependency Patterns Across the Western Hemisphere

A Cross-Country Synthesis of Twelve Country Readiness Assessments

PUBLICATION TYPE

Independent strategic report

SCOPE

Western Hemisphere — 12 countries

EDITION

September 2026

SERIES POSITION

Strategic Report 03

AUTHOR

André Vieira

INSTITUTION

HRS Resilience Foundation

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 any country's policy choices.

Evidence discipline. This publication synthesizes documented facts and analytical judgments already published in the HRS Resilience Foundation's Country Readiness Assessment series. It does not introduce new country-level claims beyond what each underlying CRA documents.

CONTENTS

— Executive Summary	3
01 Purpose, Scope and Method	4
02 Finding One — The Strategic Dependency Test as a Developmental Stage	5
03 Finding Two — Financial Alignment Does Not Resolve Commercial Dependency	6
04 Finding Three — The Lithium Triangle as Emergent Geography	7
05 Finding Four — Maritime Chokepoints Across a Resolution Spectrum	8
06 Cross-Cutting Pattern — Institutional Pace Versus Dependency Scale	9
07 Policy Implications for U.S. Partners	10
08 Implications for Partner Governments	11
09 A 50-Year Reading of the Twelve-Country Portfolio	12
10 Conclusion	13
— Methodology, Research Integrity and Limitations	14
— Selected Bibliography and Sources	15

About this report. Strategic Report 03 is the third publication in the HRS Resilience Foundation's Strategic Report series and the first to synthesize findings across the full twelve-country Country Readiness Assessment portfolio (CRA 01–12). It does not replace any individual CRA; it identifies patterns visible only when the twelve are read together.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic Dependency Patterns Across the Western Hemisphere

Between January and September 2026, the HRS Resilience Foundation published twelve Country Readiness Assessments (CRA 01–12), each applying the HRS Readiness Cycle and Strategic Dependency Test to a single Western Hemisphere country. Read individually, each CRA answers a country-specific question: how ready is Ecuador's security apparatus, how exposed is Chile's port infrastructure, how fast must Guyana's fiscal institutions scale. Read together, the twelve assessments reveal four patterns that no single-country analysis can surface on its own.

This report does not summarize the twelve CRAs. It extracts and tests four cross-country findings: that the Strategic Dependency Test identifies the same institutional-continuity question at different developmental stages across countries, not twelve unrelated disputes; that financial and diplomatic alignment with the United States does not, by itself, resolve underlying commercial dependency on China; that Bolivia, Chile and Argentina's lithium endowments constitute a single strategic geography only visible in combination; and that Peru's and Panama's port disputes occupy different points on the same resolution spectrum, offering a comparative framework for cases not yet resolved elsewhere.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

The twelve-country portfolio demonstrates that hemispheric readiness is not a checklist of national conditions to be assessed one country at a time, but a small number of recurring institutional patterns – dependency concentration, financial-commercial divergence, shared mineral geography, and infrastructure-resolution sequencing – that appear, in varying stages, across nearly every country examined.

01 • PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHOD

Purpose, Scope and Method

This report synthesizes the twelve Country Readiness Assessments published in the HRS Resilience Foundation's Western Hemisphere Readiness Series between January and September 2026: Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Panama and Guyana. Each CRA independently applies the HRS Readiness Cycle and Strategic Dependency Test to its subject country; this report does not revisit or re-verify those country-level findings. It instead applies a second-order analytical pass across the full portfolio, asking which patterns recur across multiple countries rather than belonging to any single one.

Four findings met the threshold for inclusion in this report: each had to appear, in some form, in at least two of the twelve CRAs, and each had to produce an analytical insight not available from any single country's assessment read in isolation. Findings that were genuinely country-specific — however significant within that country's own CRA — are not reproduced here.

Selection Criterion	Application
Cross-country recurrence	Pattern documented in at least two of the twelve CRAs, in comparable form.
Portfolio-level insight	The pattern is more informative when the relevant countries are read together than individually.
Evidentiary traceability	Every claim in this report is traceable to a specific, already-published CRA finding.

Scope note: This report draws exclusively on findings already published in CRA 01–12. It introduces no new country-level facts. Where this report characterizes a pattern as "emerging" or "cross-cutting," that characterization is this report's own analytical synthesis, clearly distinguished from the underlying CRA findings it draws on.

02 · FINDING ONE

The Strategic Dependency Test as a Developmental Stage, Not a Static Category

Four CRAs — Ecuador, Chile, Panama and Guyana — apply the Strategic Dependency Test to what, read individually, appear to be four unrelated situations: an internal armed conflict, a transpacific cable dispute, a nullified port concession, and an offshore consortium with mixed-nationality ownership.^{[7][9][11][12]} Read together, these four cases occupy four different points along the same institutional-continuity timeline.

Country	CRA	Dependency-Test Stage	Current Status
Ecuador	CRA 07	Active, unresolved dispute	Internal armed conflict against criminal organizations remains formally declared and ongoing; no institutional resolution yet in place.
Chile	CRA 09	Active, contested dispute	Transpacific cable proposal from a China Mobile-led consortium under disputed circumstances; the U.S. imposed visa restrictions on three Chilean officials involved in the review, and the dispute remained unresolved as of the reporting period.
Panama	CRA 11	Concession nullified, permanent governance pending	Prior port concession voided by court order; interim operators in place; permanent concession and institutional review process still being designed.
Guyana	CRA 12	No dispute; institutional pace is the test	Mixed American-Chinese consortium ownership is not itself contested; the test is whether regulatory capacity scales as fast as production.

CROSS-COUNTRY INSIGHT

The Strategic Dependency Test does not identify four different problems in four different countries. It identifies the same institutional-continuity question — does durable, transparent governance exist independent of any single dispute's outcome — appearing at four different stages of resolution. A country at the Ecuador or Chile stage can reasonably expect to look more like Panama once its dispute reaches a formal resolution, and a country at the Panama stage can reasonably expect to look more like Guyana once a permanent institutional framework is in place.

This sequencing has a practical implication for external partners, including the United States: the appropriate form of engagement differs by stage. Countries at the Ecuador or Chile stage benefit most from active diplomatic engagement and transparent dispute-resolution support; countries at the Panama stage benefit most from concession-review and regulatory-capacity support; countries at the Guyana stage benefit most from fiscal and screening-institution investment that scales ahead of, not behind, resource growth.

03 • FINDING TWO

Financial Alignment Does Not Resolve Commercial Dependency

Argentina's CRA 10 documents the portfolio's clearest case: a U.S. financial-stabilization package accompanied by measures aimed at deepening U.S.-Argentina economic ties and reducing strategic exposure to China, delivered in the same period China became Argentina's largest trading partner.^[10] Reading the Argentina case alongside Chile (CRA 09) and Guyana (CRA 12) shows this is not an isolated paradox — it is a recurring structural feature of U.S. engagement with resource-exporting and financially stressed economies in the hemisphere.^{[9][12]}

Country	Financial/Diplomatic Alignment	Parallel Commercial Dependency
Argentina	US\$20 billion Treasury swap; ARTI critical-minerals chapter; EXIM US\$7 billion framework	China became Argentina's largest trading partner by December 2025, overtaking Brazil
Chile	Joined the Shield of the Americas in September 2026; February–March 2026 critical-minerals consultative framework with the U.S.	China remained Chile's largest trading partner, accounting for 33.9% of exports in the first half of 2026, led by copper
Guyana	Shield of the Americas participation; U.S. and U.K. security backing over the Essequibo dispute	China's state-owned CNOOC holds a 25% stake in the same Stabroek Block consortium as ExxonMobil and Chevron

CROSS-COUNTRY INSIGHT

Financial and security alignment with the United States and continued commercial dependency on China are not mutually exclusive conditions in any of the three cases — they coexist within the same government at the same time. None of the three CRAs frame this as a contradiction requiring resolution; each instead frames it as a readiness question about whether the country's own institutions apply transparent, nationality-neutral standards to both relationships consistently.

This pattern suggests that U.S. policy frameworks calibrated to expect alignment to produce commercial disengagement from China may be measuring the wrong variable. The more durable readiness indicator, consistent across all three CRAs, is whether the partner country has built institutional screening capacity applicable to any foreign investor — not which partner currently holds the larger trade share.

04 • FINDING THREE

The Lithium Triangle as Emergent Geography

Bolivia (CRA 05), Chile (CRA 09) and Argentina (CRA 10) were each assessed independently, roughly nine months apart, with no CRA explicitly framed around the other two.^{[5][9][10]} Yet together they document the same geological formation — the South American "Lithium Triangle" — approached through three structurally different national postures.

Country	CRA	Lithium Posture	Central Readiness Tension
Bolivia	CRA 05	State-controlled development, limited foreign equity participation	Sovereign control preserved, but technical and capital constraints slow development pace
Chile	CRA 09	Established private-sector development; world's largest reserves	Transparent, nationality-neutral screening needed as Chinese and U.S. interests both seek access
Argentina	CRA 10	Open, foreign-investment-driven development; one of the world's largest resource bases	Rapid foreign investment inflow outpacing institutional screening and processing capacity

CROSS-COUNTRY INSIGHT

No single country's CRA could identify the Lithium Triangle as a coherent strategic geography, because each country's posture toward lithium development is a national policy choice, not a shared regional strategy. Read together, the three cases show the same critical mineral producing three different institutional-readiness profiles — state-controlled, screened-private, and open-investment — offering external partners and investors a natural basis for comparing regulatory models rather than evaluating each country as an isolated opportunity.

05 • FINDING FOUR

Maritime Chokepoints Across a Resolution Spectrum

Peru's Chancay port case (documented in CRA 06) and Panama's Balboa/Cristóbal case (CRA 11) are the portfolio's two clearest strategic-port dependency cases.^{[6][11]} Read side by side, they occupy different points on a single resolution spectrum, offering a comparative framework for understanding how similar disputes may evolve elsewhere in the hemisphere.

Stage	Peru (Chancay)	Panama (Balboa/Cristóbal)
Dispute status	Jurisdictional and regulatory questions remain active; no equivalent court nullification has occurred	Prior concession judicially nullified; dispute over the original award is settled
Operating arrangement	Original operator continues under contested but currently unchallenged terms	Interim operators (APM Terminals, TiL) installed under 18-month contracts pending permanent award
Institutional response	Readiness priority is establishing transparent regulatory review before a dispute escalates	Readiness priority is governing the permanent concession award transparently, having already experienced escalation

CROSS-COUNTRY INSIGHT

Panama's experience illustrates one possible trajectory for an unresolved case like Peru's Chancay dispute several years into an escalation cycle: court involvement, government seizure, interim operators, and a prolonged permanent-award process. The practical value of reading the two together is comparative, not predictive — it gives external partners and regional institutions a reference point for what early, transparent concession-review investment in Peru today could help avoid, based on the multi-year cost Panama has already incurred.

06 · CROSS-CUTTING PATTERN

Institutional Pace Versus Dependency Scale

Beneath the four findings above sits a single structural observation: across the CRAs contributing directly to the four findings, the central readiness gap is not the absence of relevant institutions, but a mismatch between the pace at which those institutions develop and the pace at which the underlying dependency — a security threat, a resource boom, a trade relationship, an infrastructure concession — scales. Guyana's fiscal institutions, Ecuador's security apparatus, Panama's concession-review capacity, and Argentina's screening institutions are each, in their respective CRAs, described as structurally sound in design but outpaced in practice by the speed of the condition they are meant to govern.^{[7][10][11]}
[12]

Country	Institutional Element	Pace Mismatch
Guyana	Natural Resource Fund and fiscal-governance institutions	Offshore production scaled from first oil in 2019 to roughly 900,000 barrels per day by 2026; institutional capacity has required repeated legislative amendment to keep pace
Ecuador	Security and judicial institutions	Internal armed conflict against criminal organizations remains active years after formal declaration, with no institutionalized end-state
Panama	Concession-review authority	Nearly 30 years elapsed between the original port concession and its first substantive institutional review
Argentina	Investment-screening institutions	ARTI and EXIM frameworks arrived in 2026, years after Chinese commercial presence in critical sectors had already scaled substantially

HRS PROPOSITION

Across the cases examined in this portfolio, readiness failures are rarely failures of institutional design. They are failures of institutional pace — durable, well-designed institutions built or reformed only after the condition they govern had already scaled past the point where routine oversight was sufficient. This reframes the central hemispheric readiness question from "does the right institution exist" to "can institutional capacity be built fast enough, and sustained long enough, to keep pace with the dependency it is meant to govern."

07 · POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. PARTNERS

Policy Implications for U.S. Partners

The four findings and the cross-cutting pace pattern suggest specific, actionable implications for U.S. Government stakeholders and institutions engaging with the Western Hemisphere Readiness Series' subject countries.

Implication	Basis
Calibrate engagement to dependency-test stage, not country size	Finding One shows countries at an active-dispute stage (Ecuador) need different support than countries at a pace-institutionalization stage (Guyana); a uniform engagement model underserves both.
Measure institutional screening capacity, not trade-share shifts, as the readiness indicator	Finding Two shows financial alignment does not predict reduced Chinese commercial presence; nationality-neutral screening capacity is the more durable metric.
Treat the Lithium Triangle as a comparative regulatory-model opportunity	Finding Three shows three structurally different lithium-governance postures exist within one geography, offering a natural basis for technical-assistance comparison.
Invest earliest in concession-review capacity, before disputes escalate	Finding Four shows Panama's resolution process, now underway, could have been less costly with earlier, transparent concession-review institutions — a lesson directly applicable to Peru's still-unresolved Chancay case.
Fund institutional pace, not only institutional design	Section 06 shows well-designed institutions have repeatedly lagged the scale of what they govern; funding models should account for the ongoing cost of keeping pace, not only initial institution-building.

08 • IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTNER GOVERNMENTS

Implications for Partner Governments

The same four findings carry distinct implications for the governments of the twelve countries examined, independent of their relationship with any external partner.

Implication	Basis
Institutionalize screening before, not after, a dispute	Chile's and Panama's cases show the same institutional gap — the absence of standing, transparent concession or investment review — produced years-long disputes neither country's government anticipated.
Apply consistent standards to all foreign commercial partners	The Argentina, Chile and Guyana cases show that selectively screening one partner while exempting another does not resolve the underlying dependency question; consistency, not exclusion, is the durable standard.
Treat rapid resource or security scaling as an institutional-design trigger	Guyana's and Ecuador's cases show that waiting for institutions to develop at an ordinary pace, once a resource boom or security threat has already scaled rapidly, leaves governance structurally behind for a sustained period.
Use regional geological or infrastructure geography as a coordination basis	The Lithium Triangle and the maritime-chokepoint comparison both show that countries sharing a resource base or transit corridor can learn directly from each other's institutional experience, independent of formal regional-integration structures.

09 · A 50-YEAR READING OF THE PORTFOLIO

A 50-Year Reading of the Twelve-Country Portfolio

Each individual CRA applies a 50-year planning horizon to its subject country. Read as a portfolio, a consistent long-horizon theme emerges: in every case, the end-state the CRA describes is not the resolution of any single dispute or the completion of any single institution, but administration-independent, continuously renewing institutional capacity — capable of functioning when governments change, criminal networks evolve, resource markets shift, or bilateral relationships realign.

This portfolio-level consistency is itself a finding. Twelve CRAs, researched independently and covering countries with little in common politically, economically or geographically, converge on the same long-horizon design principle: readiness is measured by institutional durability across change, not by the resolution of any single present-day condition. A reader evaluating any thirteenth country against this series' methodology should expect the same convergence — not because the methodology forces a particular conclusion, but because durable institutional continuity is, across this portfolio's evidence, the consistent precondition for resilience regardless of a country's specific dependency profile.

10 • CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Twelve independently researched Country Readiness Assessments, read together, resolve into four recurring patterns and one structural observation: the Strategic Dependency Test identifies the same institutional-continuity question at different developmental stages; financial alignment with one partner does not resolve commercial dependency on another; shared mineral and infrastructure geography produces comparable institutional-readiness questions across national borders; and, beneath all four, institutional pace — not institutional design — is the portfolio's most consistent readiness gap.

None of these findings required new country-level research to surface. They required reading twelve already-published, independently researched assessments against each other. That is the value this report adds to the Western Hemisphere Readiness Series: not a thirteenth country, but the pattern that twelve countries, read together, were always going to reveal.

FINAL PROPOSITION

Hemispheric readiness should be measured as a portfolio property, not only as twelve independent national scores. A region's resilience depends on whether the institutional patterns this report identifies — dependency-stage progression, screening consistency, shared-geography coordination, and pace-matched institution-building — are recognized and addressed as recurring structural features, not re-discovered separately in each country as if for the first time.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND LIMITATIONS

Methodology, Research Integrity and Limitations

This report is an original HRS Resilience Foundation synthesis. It draws exclusively on findings already published in Country Readiness Assessments 01 through 12, each independently researched using public-source evidence and the HRS Readiness Cycle and Strategic Dependency Test methodology. This report does not independently re-verify the underlying country-level facts documented in each CRA; where a specific figure, date, or event is referenced, the citation points to the originating CRA. The bibliography lists the full twelve-CRA corpus this report reviewed in forming its four cross-country findings; inline citations point specifically to the CRAs whose findings are used as direct evidence for a given claim, which in this report are Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Panama and Guyana — the seven countries whose documented findings met this report's cross-country recurrence threshold.

The four findings presented here reflect this report's own analytical synthesis across the twelve-country portfolio. They are offered as patterns worth attention, not as proven causal relationships, and this report does not claim access to classified intelligence, confidential commercial information, or privileged government information beyond what each underlying CRA already discloses.

This report is not a political judgment, electoral recommendation, intelligence product, procurement recommendation, legal opinion, or investment solicitation. It does not rank the twelve countries against each other, and the selection of four findings for inclusion does not imply that other, country-specific findings documented in individual CRAs are less significant — only that they did not meet this report's cross-country recurrence threshold.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Sources

PRIMARY SOURCES — COUNTRY READINESS ASSESSMENTS 01–12

- [1] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 01 — Brazil. September 2026.
- [2] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 02 — Venezuela. September 2026.
- [3] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 03 — Cuba. September 2026.
- [4] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 04 — Colombia. September 2026.
- [5] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 05 — Bolivia: Institutional Readiness, Critical Minerals Security and Economic Realignment. September 2026.
- [6] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 06 — Peru: Institutional Readiness, Strategic Infrastructure and Hemispheric Supply-Chain Security. September 2026.
- [7] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 07 — Ecuador: Institutional Readiness, Internal Armed Conflict and Hemispheric Security Cooperation. September 2026.
- [8] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 08 — Paraguay: Institutional Readiness, Infrastructure Development and Hemispheric Alignment. September 2026.
- [9] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 09 — Chile: Institutional Readiness, Strategic Minerals and Hemispheric Realignment. September 2026.
- [10] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 10 — Argentina: Institutional Readiness, Financial Alignment and Strategic Minerals Competition. September 2026.
- [11] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 11 — Panama: Institutional Readiness, Canal Security and Hemispheric Logistics. September 2026.
- [12] HRS Resilience Foundation. Country Readiness Assessment 12 — Guyana: Institutional Readiness, Offshore Oil Security and Territorial Sovereignty. September 2026.

RELATED HRS RESEARCH OUTPUTS

- [13] HRS Resilience Foundation. Policy Brief 02 — Operationalizing the Economic Pillar of the Shield of the Americas: Lessons from Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. September 2026.
- [14] HRS Resilience Foundation. Policy Brief 03 — Operationalizing the Security Pillar of the Shield of the Americas: Lessons from Ecuador, Chile and Panama. September 2026.
- [15] HRS Resilience Foundation. Technical Paper 02 — Fiscal Transparency Frameworks for Resource-Boom States. September 2026.

Suggested citation: HRS Resilience Foundation. Strategic Report 03 — Strategic Dependency Patterns Across the Western Hemisphere: A Cross-Country Synthesis of Twelve Country Readiness Assessments. 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.

RESEARCH OUTPUTS TO DATE

STRATEGIC REPORTS

Strategic Report 01 — Health Security and Institutional Resilience in the Americas
Strategic Report 02 — Resilient Infrastructure Investment in the Western Hemisphere
Strategic Report 03 — Strategic Dependency Patterns Across 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
Policy Brief 03 — Operationalizing the Security Pillar of the Shield of the Americas

TECHNICAL PAPERS

Technical Paper 01 — Building Resilient Health Supply Chains
Technical Paper 02 — Fiscal Transparency Frameworks for Resource-Boom States

COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS

Country Readiness Assessment 01 — Brazil
Country Readiness Assessment 02 — Venezuela
Country Readiness Assessment 03 — Cuba
Country Readiness Assessment 04 — Colombia
Country Readiness Assessment 05 — Bolivia
Country Readiness Assessment 06 — Peru
Country Readiness Assessment 07 — Ecuador
Country Readiness Assessment 08 — Paraguay
Country Readiness Assessment 09 — Chile
Country Readiness Assessment 10 — Argentina
Country Readiness Assessment 11 — Panama
Country Readiness Assessment 12 — Guyana

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
SRA 05 — Energy Security & Strategic Power Infrastructure
SRA 06 — Ports, Logistics & Maritime Infrastructure
SRA 07 — Food Security & Strategic Agricultural Resilience
SRA 08 — Pharmaceutical & Medical Supply Chains
SRA 09 — Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Capacity
SRA 10 — Western Hemisphere Strategic Infrastructure & Resilience

André Vieira, MD

FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, HRS RESILIENCE FOUNDATION

© 2026 HRS Resilience Foundation. Western Hemisphere Readiness Series. All rights reserved. No U.S. Government or foreign-government endorsement is implied or claimed.