



## Brian H. Neira Fajardo: The Lithium Triangle and the Reordering of Global Power in the Post-Combustion Age<sup>1</sup>

### Executive Summary

- The Lithium Triangle (Argentina, Chile, Bolivia) holds over half of the world's identified lithium reserves, making it a structural pivot of the global energy transition rather than a peripheral resource zone.
- Lithium geopolitics is driven by control over value chains, processing capacity, and technological standards, not merely by access to raw materials
- U.S.-China rivalry in the Triangle reflects competing models: U.S. diversification and risk management versus China's vertically integrated, state-backed industrial ecosystems.
- Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia represent three distinct sovereignty models, producing divergent strategic outcomes — openness, managed leverage, and technological dependence.
- China's influence stems from systemic integration rather than ownership, converting financial and technological asymmetries into long-term structural advantage.
- The Triangle's future will shape broader global outcomes, serving as a test case for whether producer states can translate critical resources into strategic autonomy in the post-carbon order.

The Lithium Triangle of Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia has emerged as a key arena in the reordering of global power in the post-combustion age, as control over lithium value chains becomes central to the energy transition and industrial competition. Far from a peripheral resource zone, the Triangle holds over half of the world's identified lithium reserves and lies at the intersection of U.S.-China rivalry, technological dependence, and competing models of sovereignty. This paper argues that lithium geopolitics is driven less by access to raw materials than by control over processing capacity, technological standards, and downstream integration. While the United States emphasizes diversification and supply-chain resilience and China advances vertically integrated, state-backed industrial ecosystems, producer states follow divergent paths: Argentina's openness enables access but limits coordination, Chile's managed hybrid model enhances leverage through regulation, and Bolivia's state-centric approach has produced technological dependence, particularly on China. The analysis concludes that the Triangle's future hinges on whether producer states can convert indispensability into strategic autonomy, making the region a test case for how power and sovereignty will be reshaped in the post-carbon global order.

### 1. The Great-Power Fault Line: Why the Lithium Triangle Matters

The Lithium Triangle — encompassing Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia — is the single most consequential concentration of lithium resources in the world, holding more than half

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of the planet's identified reserves<sup>2</sup>. These three countries occupy the high-altitude salt flats and brine-rich basins of the Andean plateau, creating a geographically contiguous region uniquely suited to large-scale lithium extraction. Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni alone contains the world's largest estimated lithium deposit, yet extraction is technically challenging and capital-intensive, requiring infrastructure and technological solutions that few actors outside China currently possess.

Chile's Atacama Desert, in contrast, features highly concentrated brines with lower extraction costs and a long history of industrial development, while Argentina's Hombre Muerto, Olaroz, and Cauchari basins combine high-quality resources with an increasingly liberalized investment environment<sup>3</sup>.

Together, these sites form a triangle of asymmetric yet complementary lithium endowments: high potential in Bolivia, industrial sophistication in Chile, and rapid access and flexibility in Argentina. Beyond geological richness, the Triangle is defined by political heterogeneity, regulatory diversity, and infrastructure asymmetries, which collectively create both strategic opportunity and vulnerability<sup>4</sup>.

It is this combination of immense reserves, technical variance, and institutional diversity that has attracted sustained attention from the United States, China, the European Union, and other emerging powers, transforming the Triangle from a peripheral resource frontier into a central node of 21st-century geo-economic competition<sup>5</sup>.

In the emerging post-carbon world, the Triangle is no longer merely a source of raw material; it is a structural pivot, where control over extraction, processing, and downstream industrial integration will determine which states can shape global clean-energy systems, technological standards, and the broader architecture of industrial power.

The global race for lithium is therefore not reducible to supply and demand — it is a defining element of 21st-century power competition. As the world transitions away from fossil fuels, lithium has emerged as a cornerstone of the new energy economy, shaping electric vehicles (EVs), grid storage, semiconductors, and defence systems. Demand is projected to grow dramatically over the next two decades, with lithium required for an expanding portfolio of clean-energy technologies<sup>6</sup>.

Unlike the fossil fuels that once drove geopolitical competition, lithium's strategic logic is tied to industrial ecosystems, technology standards, and supply-chain control. This new geo-economic environment privileges actors that not only control raw materials but also dominate processing, value addition, and industrial integration. As in oil before it, access to lithium now determines which states and firms can shape the global order of clean technologies.

## **2. The Structural Logic of U.S.–China Rivalry: Supply Chains, Technological Blocs, and State–Corporate Power**

At its core, the lithium competition reflects a structural confrontation between the United States and China over how future technologies, industries, and alliances will be ordered.

### **2.1. United States: Security Through Diversification and Supply-Chain Resilience**

Washington sees lithium not just as a commodity but as a security vulnerability, given heavy Western dependence on Asian processing capacity. Chinese firms today control a lion's share of global lithium-ion

<sup>2</sup> SANCHEZ LOPEZ, Maria Daniela: [From a White Desert to the Largest World Deposit of Lithium: Symbolic Meanings and Materiality of the Uyuni Salt Flat in Bolivia](#). *Antipode*, Vol. 51. No.3. (2019), 882–904. [Online, 2025.11.26.]

<sup>3</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, Gonzalo – RUIZ LEÓN, Domingo: [Lithium in Chile: Present Status and Future Outlook](#). *Materials Advances*. No. 20. 2024. [Online, 25.11.2025]

<sup>4</sup> JOHNSON, Craig A. et al.: [Bringing the State Back in the Lithium Triangle: An Institutional Analysis of Resource Nationalism in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia](#). *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 101534. 2024. [Online, 25.11.2025]

<sup>5</sup> BERG, Ryan. C. – SADY KENNEDY, T. Andrew: [South America's Lithium Triangle: Opportunities for the Biden Administration](#). *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. 2021. [Online, 25.11.2025]

<sup>6</sup> BILLE, Bryan: [Increasing Lithium Supply Security for Europe's Growing Battery Industry: Recommendations for a Resilient Supply Chain](#). *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*. 2024. [Online, 25.11.2025]



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supply chains, including nearly 80% of refining capacity and dominant positions in battery component manufacturing<sup>7</sup>.

The U.S. strategy oscillates between friend-shoring — encouraging allied sourcing and processing — and decoupling from Chinese-controlled supply networks<sup>8</sup>. This approach prioritizes reliability and geopolitical alignment over cost efficiency, pushing investment into trusted partners, including Latin America, Australia, and Europe.

#### **2.2. China: Industrial Control and Deep Integration**

Beijing's approach is fundamentally different. Rather than merely securing raw inputs, China has pursued control over entire supply chains, from extraction financing to downstream processing and battery manufacturing<sup>9</sup>. Even though China has relatively modest domestic lithium reserves, it processes around 80% of global lithium raw materials and produces over 60% of EV batteries, reflecting a long-term strategy of capturing value and influence in critical technologies.

In the Lithium Triangle, China's strength is in capital, technology, and long-term offtake agreements, which systematically convert access into structural dependence. This is especially visible in Bolivia, where Chinese actors engage in partnerships that promise technology transfer but also embed Beijing deeply in industrial pathways<sup>10</sup>.

It is important to note that Chinese engagement in the Lithium Triangle is not monolithic<sup>11</sup>. Multiple state-owned enterprises, policy banks, and quasi-private firms operate with overlapping objectives, creating internal competition<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, this competition is coordinated through financing structures, long-term offtake agreements, and alignment with national industrial policy, allowing China to maintain strategic coherence while leveraging the capacities of diverse actors.

#### **2.3. The EU and Others: Stability, Standards, and Strategic Autonomy**

The European Union, while less assertive than China or the United States, seeks predictability, sustainability, and regulatory coherence. Brussels is trying to secure green lithium sources and promote industrial resilience without locking into a single power bloc<sup>13</sup>. However, Europe's capacity to sway outcomes in the Triangle remains constrained compared to China's economic leverage and the U.S.'s diplomatic muscle.

While the EU seeks to promote predictability and sustainability in lithium sourcing, its leverage remains constrained, it primarily uses regulatory standards, conditional financing, and battery traceability requirements rather than direct industrial control, and often aligns with U.S. strategies in practice<sup>14</sup>.

Understanding the U.S.–China rivalry over lithium therefore requires shifting from raw quantities to value chains and technological blocs therefore the structural circuits through which power flows.

### **3. Divergent National Models as Strategic Arenas**

The Lithium Triangle is not a monolith. Each country embodies a distinct sovereignty experiment that both reflects and conditions great-power strategies. To assess national strategies systematically, this analysis

<sup>7</sup> GREITEMEIER, Tim et al.: [China's hold on the lithium ion battery supply chain: Prospects for competitive growth and sovereign control](#). *Journal of Power Sources Advances*, Vol. 32, No. 100173. 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>8</sup> REINSCH, William Alan et al.: [Friendshoring the lithium-ion battery supply chain: Processing and refining stage](#). Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2024. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>9</sup> INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY: [Critical Minerals Market Review 2023](#). OECD / IEA. 2023. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>10</sup> SPARREO, Raechel: [China's Expanding Strategic Investment in the Lithium Triangle](#). *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 369–382. 2025 [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>11</sup> BABIĆ, Milan et al: [The geoeconomic turn in international trade, investment, and technology](#). *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 12., 2024, [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>12</sup> CHANG, Charles et al.: [China's global reach grows behind critical minerals: Diverse corporate engagement in lithium](#). *S&P Global*. 2024 [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>13</sup> IUCN NL: [The energy transition revisited: The case of lithium extraction in the Andes](#). *International Union for Conservation of Nature*. 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>14</sup> INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY: [EU Sustainable Batteries Regulation – Policies](#). 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]



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considers four dimensions: downstream capacity, industrial policy coherence, exposure to technological dependence, and long-term strategic trade-offs. Applying these criteria allows for a comparative evaluation of how Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia convert their lithium endowments into strategic autonomy vis-à-vis major powers.

#### **3.1. Argentina: Liberalized Access and Competitive Magnet**

Argentina's open investment regime and high-quality brine deposits have made it one of the most attractive destinations for foreign lithium capital<sup>15</sup>. International investors, including Western firms, have flocked to Argentine projects, seduced by a governance framework that privileges private initiative and competitive entry.

In geopolitical terms, Argentina functions as a competitive access arena. It offers Western actors — especially U.S. and EU firms — a chance to establish supply lines outside Chinese dominance. However, Argentina's model also risks fragmented regulation and coordination challenges, which could limit the coherence of Western industrial strategy<sup>16</sup>.

Argentina's liberalized investment environment aligns particularly well with U.S. and EU efforts to diversify supply chains and secure reliable sources outside Chinese dominance. At the same time, its openness and fragmented regulatory coordination limit leverage over China, leaving the country dependent on external actors for technological capacity and downstream integration. The trade-off is clear, Argentina facilitates rapid access and foreign participation but faces constraints in converting lithium indispensability into long-term strategic autonomy.

#### **3.2. Chile: Hedged Sovereignty and Institutional Balancing**

Chile's model is arguably the most sophisticated in the Triangle. With a large share of global lithium production and a history of state-private collaboration, Chile has moved toward partial nationalization and strategic oversight under initiatives like the National Lithium Strategy<sup>17</sup>.

Rather than tilting entirely toward one power, Chile actively hedges, inviting investments from Western multinationals such as Rio Tinto and partnering with Chinese actors under regulatory frameworks that protect national interests<sup>18</sup>. Recent conditional approvals of joint ventures exemplify this delicate balancing act.

Under this analysis, it is possible to say that Chile is the swing state of the Triangle: whoever influences Chile's regulatory architecture and industrial pathways gains leverage over broader norms and standards in critical mineral governance<sup>19</sup>.

This hybrid model allows Chile selective engagement with both Chinese industrial actors and Western firms, enabling the country to benefit from foreign investment while retaining regulatory control over strategic pathways<sup>20</sup>. Measured against the shared yardstick, Chile achieves relatively strong downstream capacity and industrial coherence, positioning it as the most effective converter of lithium indispensability into strategic leverage within the Triangle. Its hedging strategy demonstrates how national policies can balance competing great-power pressures to maximize autonomy.

<sup>15</sup> OXFORD BUSINESS GROUP: [The emerging supply chains for lithium in Latin America](#). 2023. [Online, 25.11.2025]

<sup>16</sup> DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL DE PROMOCIÓN Y ECONOMÍA MINERA DE LA RÉPUBLICA DE ARGENTINA: [Litio: Panorama global del mercado del litio y el potencial litífero de Argentina. Informe oficial de la República Argentina](#). 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>17</sup> OSBORN, Catherine: [Chile's Boric Announces National Lithium Strategy for Green Energy Transition](#). *Foreign Policy*. 2023. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>18</sup> ELLIS, Evan: [The Evolution of Chinese Engagement in Argentina under Javier Milei](#). *CSIS Analysis*. 2024. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>19</sup> CORTÉS LEISS, Benigna: [Chile's New Lithium Strategy: A Market Boost or Miss?](#) *Baker Institute*. 2024. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>20</sup> ZAPATA, Pedro: [Chile's lithium strategy: Contracts signed, future uncertain](#). *Resource Governance Institute*. 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]



### **3.3. Bolivia: State Control, Technological Dependence, and Chinese Leverage**

Bolivia holds the largest lithium resources in the Triangle, but it stands at the crossroads of nationalist policies and strategic dependency. Historically, Bolivia's authoritarian grasp on strategic minerals has aimed to keep national control over extraction and processing. Yet technical hurdles and limited capital have constrained this vision<sup>21</sup>.

China has stepped into this vacuum with capital and technology, tying Bolivian projects to Beijing's industrial ecosystem. While this provides an avenue for development, it also deepens Bolivia's technological dependence, making it a potential near-monopoly lithium partner for China outside Asia<sup>22</sup>. This dynamic reshapes sovereignty in resource politics, where state ownership does not automatically mean strategic autonomy.

Bolivia's state-centric approach rhetorically emphasizes sovereignty and control over lithium, but in practice, it aligns closely with China's vertically integrated industrial model. Reliance on Chinese capital and technology creates structural dependence despite formal ownership, limiting Bolivia's ability to convert resource abundance into strategic autonomy relative to U.S. and EU strategies<sup>23</sup>. This paradox illustrates how nationalist policies may coexist with external alignment when technological and financial constraints are decisive.

Taken together, the three national models reveal distinct strategies along the shared yardstick. Argentina prioritizes rapid access and liberalized investment but remains leverage-light due to limited downstream capacity and coordination challenges. Chile balances regulatory control with selective openness, achieving comparatively strong downstream integration and industrial coherence, making it the most effective converter of lithium indispensability into strategic autonomy. Bolivia asserts formal ownership through state control yet remains structurally dependent on Chinese technology and capital, highlighting the gap between sovereignty claims and strategic leverage. This comparative perspective clarifies how national strategies mediate the relationship between resource abundance and global power engagement.

## **4. Lithium, Power, and the Reordering of Global Competition**

### **4.1. From Resources to Systems: What Is Actually Happening**

The global competition over lithium is not a scramble for scarcity, but a struggle over systemic control. Unlike hydrocarbons, lithium's geopolitical value does not lie in its combustibility or transportability, but in its role as a keystone input for entire technological ecosystems<sup>24</sup>. Batteries, electric vehicles, renewable grids, aerospace systems, and next-generation defence platforms are all downstream expressions of lithium-based value chains.

What is unfolding in the Lithium Triangle is therefore not a classical resource contest, but a reconfiguration of industrial power. States and firms are no longer competing primarily for access to raw materials; they are competing to lock in technological pathways, control processing bottlenecks, and embed suppliers into long-term production architectures<sup>25</sup>. In this environment, lithium functions less like oil and more like semiconductors: strategically indispensable, politically sensitive, and structurally asymmetrical.

<sup>21</sup> OBAYA, Martín.: [The evolution of resource nationalism: The case of Bolivian lithium](#). *Extractive Industries and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 100932. 2021. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>22</sup> AGRAMONT LECHÍN, Daniel - SEOANE FLORES, Alfredo.: [Extractivismo en Bolivia – debates y alternativas](#). *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung en Bolivia*. 2025. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>23</sup> CHEKERTDIEVA, Christina: [Resource nationalism in the Lithium Triangle: Analyzing the investment environment for China's projects in the lithium industry](#). *International Relations Review*. 2025. [Online, 2025.11.26.]

<sup>24</sup> INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY: [Geopolitics of the energy transition: Critical materials](#). IRENA. 2024. [Online, 26.11.2025]

<sup>25</sup> BOWN, Chad. P.: [How export restrictions threaten economic security](#). *Journal of International Economic Law*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 278–292. 2025. [Online, 30.11.2025]



The Triangle has moved to the center of this transformation because it combines three critical conditions: massive reserves, political heterogeneity, and limited downstream capacity<sup>26</sup>. Together, these factors make the region a testing ground for how sovereignty operates under conditions of green industrial competition, while providing a lens into the systemic implications of technological dependence and supply-chain geopolitics<sup>27</sup>.

#### **4.2. Strategic Pressure Points and Emerging Fault Lines**

The future geopolitical role of the Lithium Triangle will not be determined solely by how much lithium it produces, but by how the region navigates a series of structural pressure points that are already beginning to reshape global competition<sup>28</sup>. These pressures operate less at the level of national politics than at the level of industrial architecture, where seemingly technical decisions can lock in long-term dependencies.

The most decisive of these pressure points is the location and ownership of processing and refining capacity. Lithium that leaves South America as a raw or semi-processed input confers limited strategic advantage to producer states. Value, leverage, and resilience are generated further down the chain, where chemical conversion, cathode production, and battery assembly take place<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, downstream integration is not without risk. Industrial failure, capital constraints, or limited scale can make managed dependency a rational strategy for producer states, suggesting that integration must be pursued selectively rather than assumed as universally beneficial<sup>30</sup>. Currently, much of this downstream capacity remains concentrated in East Asia, particularly in China. Unless this imbalance is addressed, the Lithium Triangle risks becoming strategically indispensable yet structurally subordinate — a paradox that echoes earlier eras of commodity dependency.

Closely linked to this is the question of technological diffusion, especially around direct lithium extraction (DLE). If DLE technologies mature and spread unevenly, they could fundamentally alter cost structures, environmental constraints, and entry barriers. States or firms that control these technologies will enjoy not only economic advantages but also political leverage, as environmental standards and water usage become increasingly securitized issues<sup>31</sup>. Control over green extraction methods may prove as consequential as control over the resource itself.

A third fault line lies in regulatory divergence within the Triangle. Argentina's permissive, decentralized framework, Chile's managed hybrid system, and Bolivia's state-centric model are not merely domestic choices; they shape how external powers engage with the region<sup>32</sup>. If regulatory fragmentation deepens, great powers will continue to exploit asymmetries, embedding influence where resistance is lowest. Conversely, even limited coordination among Triangle states could enhance collective bargaining power and reduce vulnerability to external pressure.

Finally, the Triangle is exposed to external geopolitical shocks that originate far beyond South America. Export controls, sanctions regimes, trade disputes, or an escalation in U.S.–China strategic rivalry could rapidly politicize lithium flows. In such a scenario, producer states may find themselves pressured to choose sides, even if their long-term interests lie in strategic ambiguity. The more lithium is framed as

<sup>26</sup> POQUE GONZÁLEZ, Axel B.: [New Commodity Frontiers: Chile and Indonesia in the Geopolitics of Critical Minerals](#). *E International Relations*. 2025. [Online, 30.11.2025]

<sup>27</sup> SANCHEZ LOPEZ, Maria Daniela: [Geopolitics of the Li-ion battery value chain and the lithium triangle in South America](#). *Latin American Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 22–45. 2023. [Online, 30.11.2025]

<sup>28</sup> UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: [Commodities and development report 2023](#). *United Nations*. 2023. [Online, 03.12.2025]

<sup>29</sup> VIKSTRÖM, Hanna et al.: [Lithium availability and future production outlooks](#). *Applied Energy*, Vol. 110, 252–266. 2013. [Online, 03.12.2025]

<sup>30</sup> WANG, Jiaying et al.: [Critical risks in an industry chain-based global lithium supply networks: Static structure and dynamic propagation](#). *Process Safety and Environmental Protection*, Vol. 198, 107137. 2025. [Online, 03.12.2025]

<sup>31</sup> PETAVRATZI, Evi. et al.: [The impacts of environmental, social and governance \(ESG\) issues in achieving sustainable lithium supply in the Lithium Triangle](#). *Mineral Economics*, Vol. 35, 673–699. 2022. [Online, 03.12.2025]

<sup>32</sup> ORIHUELA, José Carlos - SERRANO, Sergio: [Rules, institutions and policy capacity: A comparative analysis of lithium-based development in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile](#). *Energy Research & Social Science*, Vol. 118, No. 103761. 2024. [Online, 03.12.2025]



a national security asset by consuming powers, the narrower the room for neutral economic diplomacy becomes<sup>33</sup>.

#### 4.3. The Deeper Meaning of the Lithium Triangle

The strategic significance of the Lithium Triangle lies not in the inevitability of conflict, but in the quiet restructuring of power it represents. Lithium does not command headlines like oil embargoes or pipeline wars. Its influence is subtler, embedded in contracts, standards, technologies, and production timelines<sup>34</sup>. Yet these mechanisms increasingly determine who controls the pace and direction of the global energy transition.

In this sense, the Lithium Triangle is not becoming the new Middle East because it will generate wars or dramatic confrontations. It is becoming the new Middle East because it sits at the intersection of dependency and indispensability, where producer states matter enormously but remain structurally constrained<sup>35</sup>. It reveals a world in which power flows less from possession than from position — from the ability to shape systems rather than simply supply inputs.

For great powers, the Triangle is a means of securing industrial futures. For its states, it is a test of whether sovereignty can be exercised meaningfully under conditions of technological asymmetry. For the global order, it is an early indicator of how the transition away from fossil fuels will redistribute influence, vulnerability, and control.

The contest over lithium, therefore, is not about minerals alone. It is about who defines the architecture of the post-carbon world — and who must live within it.

#### 5. Strategic Conclusion: Five Insights on Power, Lithium, and the Post-Carbon Order

First, lithium is not a resource race but a systems contest. The decisive struggle is not over who extracts lithium, but over who controls the industrial ecosystems in which lithium is embedded. Processing capacity, technological standards, and long-term offtake agreements — not reserves alone — determine strategic leverage. In this sense, lithium resembles semiconductors more than oil: its power lies in chokepoints, not volume.

Second, the Lithium Triangle matters because it combines indispensability with asymmetry. Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia collectively anchor the world's lithium future, yet none individually commands the full value chain. This structural imbalance invites external powers to convert economic engagement into political influence. The Triangle is powerful not because it dominates outcomes, but because global decarbonization cannot proceed without it.

Third, national sovereignty models shape — but do not guarantee — strategic autonomy. Chile's managed hybrid system maximizes leverage by preserving institutional credibility and regulatory control. Argentina's openness accelerates access but limits coordination. Bolivia's state control asserts ownership yet produces technological dependence. The lesson is clear: sovereignty without industrial capacity yields symbolism, not power.

Fourth, China's advantage lies in integration, not coercion. Beijing's influence in the Triangle is durable because it operates through embedded industrial ecosystems rather than overt political pressure. By aligning finance, technology, infrastructure, and demand, China transforms access into structural dependence — especially where alternatives are scarce. This form of power is difficult to counter once entrenched.

Fifth, the Triangle is an early indicator of how the green transition will redistribute power globally. As critical minerals become securitized, producer states will face narrowing room for strategic ambiguity.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> ATTÍLIO, Lucas. Assis et al.: [Critical minerals, clean tech, geopolitical risk and the global energy transition: An exploration of the Chinese influence on rare earth and lithium markets through the GVAR model](#). *Cambridge Prisms: Energy Transitions*, Vol. 1 No. 7., 2025. [Online, 03.12.2025]

<sup>35</sup> BILMES, Julián et al.: [El litio suramericano en la geopolítica de los minerales críticos](#). *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales; Batalla de Ideas*, pp. 395–424. 2025. [Online, 03.12.2025]



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Those that fail to move downstream risk repeating extractive dependency under a green banner. Those that succeed may redefine the terms of sovereignty in a post-carbon world.

Taken together, the Lithium Triangle reveals a central paradox of 21st-century geopolitics: the energy transition reduces dependence on fossil fuels yet deepens dependence on technologically mediated supply chains. Power flows less from possession than from position — and lithium is one of the first arenas where this new logic is fully visible.



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The John Lukacs Analyses on Global Affairs discusses the most important issues related to the transformation of the global political and economic order. The series aims to contribute to the discourse on the changing world order through scientifically rigorous analyses and to shed light on the dynamics of international relations. The analyses examine great power competition, the transformation of global political structures, and the foreign policies of key actors shaping the 21st-century geopolitical landscape.

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#### Publisher:

John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics  
Eötvös József Research Centre  
Ludovika University of Public Service

#### Editors:

Gábor Csizmazia, Viktor Eszterhai, Balázs Tárnok

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