

THE DIALOGUE

Latin America Advisor

www.thedialogue.org

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Merike Blofield

Professor of Political Science,
University of Hamburg

Joyce Chang

Global Head of Research,
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Marlene Fernández

Corporate Vice President for
Government Relations,
Arcos Dorados

Peter Hakim

President Emeritus,
Inter-American Dialogue

Donna Hrinak

Director,
Covista

Jon E. Huenemann

Council Member,
GLG Inc.

James R. Jones

Chairman,
Monarch Global Strategies

Craig A. Kelly

Senior Director, Int'l Gov't Relations,
Exxon Mobil

John Maisto

Director,
U.S. Education Finance Group

Nicolás Mariscal

Chairman,
Grupo Marhnos

Thomas F. McLarty III

Chairman,
McLarty Associates

Ernesto Revilla

Head of Latin American
Economics, Citi

Gustavo Roosen

President,
IESA

Andrés Rozental

President,
Rozental & Asociados

FEATURED Q&A

What Does Kast's Cabinet Say About His Gov't in Chile?



José Antonio Kast took office March 11 as president of Chile. He is pictured in Santiago with some of his cabinet members. // Photo: Chilean Government.

Q The cabinet of Chilean President José Antonio Kast, who took office on March 11, includes appointees who worked with Kast during his presidential campaigns, as well as technocrats and figures associated with various right-wing parties. Among them are Foreign Minister Francisco Pérez Mackenna, Finance Minister Jorge Quiroz and Minister of Economy and Mining Daniel Mas, as well as two attorneys who defended late dictator Augusto Pinochet: Defense Minister Fernando Barros and Minister of Justice and Human Rights Fernando Rabat. What does the composition of Kast's cabinet say about his priorities and how he will govern? What do Kast's top cabinet members bring to his government? What are the implications of the two cabinet members' ties to Pinochet?

A Carolina Costa Hurtado, head of policy at Red Flag Global: "The composition of President José Antonio Kast's cabinet reflects a political shift, paired with an effort to anchor that shift in technical expertise and governability. The inclusion of experienced economists and policy professionals, such as Foreign Minister Francisco Pérez Mackenna, Finance Minister Jorge Quiroz and Economy Minister Daniel Mas, signals a focus on macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline and sustaining investor confidence in Chile as a regional investment hub. This points to a governing approach centered on predictability and economic management. In this context, the private sector will be closely watching early signals on regulatory stability, tax policy and the administration's broader commitment to a business-friendly environment. At the same time, the presence of close political allies suggests a prefer-

Continued on page 3

TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

At Least 70 Killed in Gang Attacks in Central Haiti

At least 70 people were killed Sunday and Monday in gang attacks in Haiti's central Artibonite region, according to a human rights group. The attacks happened near the town of Petite Rivière.

Page 2

ECONOMIC

Economists Raise Outlook for Brazil's Inflation Rate

Economists raised their expectation for Brazil's inflation rate this year to 4.31 percent, according to a central bank survey.

Page 3

POLITICAL

United States Reopens Embassy in Venezuela

The United States formally resumed limited operations at its embassy in Caracas, the State Department announced. Longtime diplomat Laura F. Dogu was appointed in January as the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Venezuela.

Page 2



Dogu // File Photo: U.S. State Department.

POLITICAL NEWS

At Least 70 Killed in Gang Attacks in Central Haiti

At least 70 people were killed on Sunday and Monday in attacks by gang members near the town of Petite Rivière in Haiti's central Artibonite region, Reuters reported Monday, citing a human rights group. The Défenseurs Plus rights group also said the violence had displaced some 6,000 people and that assailants had burned down about 50 houses, the wire service reported. "The lack of a security response and the abandonment of Artibonite to armed groups demonstrate a complete abdication of responsibility by the authorities,"

“When they arrived in these localities, they began shooting in all directions.”

— Bertide Horace

the rights group said in a joint statement with another group, the Collective to Save the Artibonite, the wire service reported. The attacks began early Sunday morning in rural communities and continued into the early morning hours on Monday, residents told local media outlets, Reuters reported. The attacks targeted the Jean-Denis and Pont-Sondé areas of Artibonite department, CNN reported. During the attacks, gang members barricaded roads and dug trenches across roads leading into the areas of the attacks, Bertide Horace, a representative of the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission to Save the Artibonite Valley, told CNN. "When they arrived in these localities, they began shooting in all directions. They killed several people and caused extensive damage," Horace said, adding that her team had recovered 30 bodies. No police officers were on the scene initially, and gang members were "filming and operating with complete confidence," Horace told CNN. She added that police arrived at

around noon on Monday, and the gangs began to depart. Police had initially reported that 16 people had been killed, but a spokesperson for the United Nations' secretary general said estimates of the death toll ranged from 10 to 80, Reuters reported. An audio message that circulated on social media was attributed to Luckson Elan, the leader of the Gran Grif gang, who appeared to say that the attacks were retaliation for attacks on their base in the town of Savien, Reuters reported. Gangs have terrorized Haiti for years; a new multinational force known as the Gang Suppression Force is expected to deploy soon in the Caribbean nation. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Sept. 18 issue of the Advisor.]

United States Reopens Embassy in Venezuelan Capital

The United States formally resumed limited operations at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas on Monday, the State Department said in a statement. The embassy had been closed for more than seven years amid poor bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States. The reopening of the embassy in Caracas comes nearly three months after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was deposed by U.S. forces and his vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, took over as interim president. The State Department said the embassy's reopening "will strengthen our ability to engage directly with Venezuela's interim government, civil society and the private sector." The U.S. government in late January appointed Laura F. Dogu, a longtime diplomat and former ambassador to Honduras and Nicaragua, as chargé d'affaires to Venezuela, but the U.S. embassy building in Caracas is still in need of substantial repair, the Associated Press reported. Full consular services are not yet available, meaning people looking for passport or visa assistance would still need to coordinate with the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, the AP reported. "The resumption of operations at U.S. Embassy Caracas is a key milestone in implementing the President's three phase plan for Venezuela," the State

NEWS BRIEFS

Mexico Has 'Every Right' to Provide Oil to Cuba: Sheinbaum

Mexico has "every right" to provide Cuba with large shipments of oil, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum told reporters on Monday, Reuters reported. Some private firms based in Cuba, including hotels, have approached Mexico's government in recent weeks asking to purchase oil from state-run Pemex amid growing fuel shortages caused by a U.S. energy blockade of Cuba, Sheinbaum said. Mexico was Cuba's second-largest source of oil imports last year; until a Russian tanker docked in northern Cuba on Monday, the island had not received large shipments of oil products from any country, including Mexico, since Jan. 9.

Former Suriname President Chan Santokhi Dies at 67

Former Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, known widely as "Chan," died Monday at age 67, the Associated Press reported. Santokhi left office last July at the end of his five-year term. His cause of death was not publicly announced.

Brazilian Solar Imports Shrink Amid New Tariffs

Brazil's imports of solar energy modules declined by 24 percent last year compared to 2024, news site PV Magazine reported on Monday, citing a research statement from consultancy Greener. Solar imports slowed substantially in the second half of last year after Brazil's government began enforcing a new tariff rate of 25 percent for modules, PV Magazine reported. Module imports to Brazil had been subject to a 9 percent levy until late 2024. Nearly 80 percent of Brazil's module imports last year were destined for the small-scale distributed generation segment, the news site reported.

Department said on Monday. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has said it is executing a three-pronged strategy in Venezuela: the stabilization of the country's political institutions, the recovery of major economic sectors and a transition to sovereign democracy.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Economists Raise Outlook for Brazil's Inflation Rate

Economists raised their expectations for Brazil's inflation rate this year, pushing it further above the central bank's target as the war in Iran pushes up global prices for fuel, Bloomberg News reported Monday. In a weekly survey released Monday by the central bank, economists forecast inflation at 4.31 percent this December, up from 4.17 percent. In the survey, economists also forecast inflation at 3.84 percent at the end of 2027 and 3.57 percent at the end of 2028. Earlier this month, the central bank began a long-anticipated easing cycle, cutting its benchmark Selic interest rate by a quarter percentage point, to 14.75 percent. The war in Iran complicates Brazil's economic outlook, Giulia Branco Spiess, senior associate in the Brazil Program at the Inter-American Dialogue, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published March 17. "For Brazil, the conflict in Iran makes it extremely difficult to assess the macroeconomic outlook with any precision," Branco Spiess said. "In the short term, the most immediate effects appear in inflation and interest rate expectations, particularly given the weight that fuel prices carry in Brazil's inflation index," she added. Itaú Unibanco expects the benchmark rate to fall to 13 percent at the end of this year, according to a report released Monday, Bloomberg News reported. The bank's economists also raised their forecast for inflation at the end of this year to 4.5 percent from 3.8, citing effects of the war in the Middle East.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

ence for cohesion and disciplined execution of the government's agenda. While this may enable more decisive policymaking, it could also narrow the range of internal debate. The appointments of Defense Minister Fernando Barros and Justice Minister Fernando Rabat, given their past legal defense of Augusto Pinochet, introduce a sensitive dimension. While their roles can be framed in terms of legal expertise, these ties carry symbolic weight in Chile's democratic context and are likely to draw scrutiny, particularly on issues of historical memory and institutional trust. Overall, the cabinet suggests a government prioritizing economic stabilization and policy clarity, while navigating political sensitivities. For Chile, a key economy and democracy in the region, the test will be whether this approach can sustain growth, reinforce institutional credibility and maintain social cohesion in an evolving global environment."

A **Julio E. Ligorria, senior director of public relations and government affairs at Roar**

Media: "President José Antonio Kast's cabinet reflects a governing approach shaped by Chile's post-authoritarian evolution and the rupture introduced by the 2019 social unrest, though its coherence will depend on political conditions that remain unsettled. After the return to democracy in 1990, Chile operated within a relatively stable framework that combined market-oriented economics with expanding social protections and a sustained, if contested, commitment to human rights. The post-2019 cycle, driven by both institutional demands and deeper social pressures around inequality and public services, shifted attention toward reform and constitutional change. Kast's cabinet points to a shift back toward order and fiscal control, with more focus on getting policy implemented, even within a constrained institutional setting. The composition points to a presidency focused on early, visible results. The prominence of technocrats and business-linked figures

recalls the 1990s, when democratic governments built on a market framework shaped in part during the Pinochet era, maintaining macroeconomic discipline and investor confidence as they gradually expanded social policy. Today's context is less permissive. Finance Minister Jorge Quiroz brings orthodox economic credentials aligned with fiscal restraint. Economy and Mining Minister Daniel Mas offers sector-level experience tied to project execution, particularly in mining. Foreign Minister Francisco Pérez Mackenna contributes corporate networks that support a commercially oriented foreign policy. Kast has combined close allies with figures from across the right, which may reduce friction within the executive while leaving broader coalition tensions unresolved. This is an executive-driven government structured for implementation, operating within a fragmented political environment. The appointments of Defense Minister Fernando Barros and Justice Minister Fernando Rabat, both linked to Pinochet's legal defense, carry institutional implications. They place added pressure on ministries tied to civilian oversight and human rights continuity. While Chile's institutions remain intact, these choices complicate perceptions of neutrality and may affect how the state's commitments are interpreted in practice."

A **Patricio Navia, clinical professor of liberal studies at New York University and professor of political science at Universidad**

Diego Portales in Chile: "The composition of President Kast's cabinet suggests that his government will be more like a traditional right-wing, business-friendly and morally conservative administration than an administration that closely aligns with the confrontational and disruptive MAGA type of recent right-wing governments in Latin America. Kast appointed career politicians to key positions, as well as career lawyers and economists who have spent decades working with elite companies. Although he also

Continued on page 4

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 3

appointed a couple of people who became household names because of their participation in social media outlets, the cabinet is far more a group of conservative traditionalists and technocrats than an ensemble of online media-savvy radical right-wingers. Some people have noted the connections of some cabinet ministers with Augusto Pinochet, but Pinochet is a far more relevant name in the international media than in Chilean politics today. Chileans in general

“Kast is not a vociferous populist.”
— Patricio Navia

do not have a good opinion of the Pinochet dictatorship. There surely are people who remain nostalgic of those years—and most of them probably like Kast for his right-wing views—but most Chileans don't see Pinochet as a relevant factor in today's politics. Kast himself makes it a point to criticize human rights violations when talking about the Pinochet regime. In fact, when talking about the military dictatorship, Kast often prefers to focus on the polarization and chaos that preceded the 1973 military coup. In that sense, he seeks to portray Pinochet as the inevitable consequence of the radicalization of the Allende years and Allende's attempt to make Chile a socialist country. It is easy to generalize and put Milei, Bolsonaro, Bukele, Noboa and other right-wing leaders in the same ideological basket. But Kast is not a vociferous populist. He is far more constrained than Milei or Bukele. He is a free market advocate, unlike President Trump, who declares love for tariffs. Kast talks about strengthening institutions and calls on his supporters to be cordial to political opponents. He does embrace strong anti-immigrant views and advocates for iron-fist policies to fight crime, but he clearly under-

stands that Chileans today care about the economy and crime, not about relitigating the painful legacies of the Pinochet years.”

A **Maria Velez de Berliner, chief strategy officer at RTG-Red Team Group. Inc.:** “Former President Boric opened the space for Kast to bring Chileans from a mostly failed left to the ultra-right, as demonstrated by his selection of his cabinet. Kast's cabinet shows he intends to govern from the ultra-right, which in Latin America means militarization of security institutions and repression of the opposition. The priorities of Kast and his cabinet are stopping illegal immigration, assuring personal security and improving the economy. His anti-immigration policies may backfire. Chileans will not accept crimes allegedly committed by illegal immigrants, but nor will they do without immigrants, who keep the economy running. That two cabinet ministers had close ties to Pinochet hopefully does not mean a return to Pinochet politics of repression and murder. Kast, for all his right-wing talk, is no Pinochet. He is governing in an age of instant ‘journalism.’ Today, everybody has a camera at the ready. And Boric followers will certainly film perceived wrongdoing by the government. In time, we can expect street demonstrations against the regime, particularly against the two Pinochet cabinet ministers. Kast and his cabinet need to prop up the Chilean economy and establish personal security policies that respect human rights and are deployed against criminals, not the valid anti-government opposition. It is one thing to be elected on an ultra-right platform. It is another is to govern the Chile of today that remembers Pinochet as a historical figure and where the opposition will not go quietly.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue ISSN 2163-7962

Gene Kuleta
Editor

Jack Quinn
Reporter

Luiza Franco
Reporter



Rebecca Bill Chavez, Ph.D., President & CEO

Lila Abed, Director, Mexico Program

Alfonso Blanco, Director, Energy Transition & Climate Program

Margaret Myers, Senior Advisor, Asia & Latin America Program

Manuel Orozco, Director, Migration, Remittances and Development Program

Bruna Santos, Director, Brazil Program

Peter Hakim, President Emeritus

Latin America Advisor is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005 www.thedialogue.org

The opinions expressed by the members of the Board of Advisors and by guest commentators do not necessarily represent those of the Inter-American Dialogue. The analysis is the sole view of each commentator and does not necessarily represent the views of their respective employers or firms. The information in this report has been obtained from reliable sources, but neither its accuracy and completeness, nor the opinions based thereon, are guaranteed. If you have any questions relating to the contents of this publication, contact the editorial offices of the Inter-American Dialogue. Contents of this report may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted without prior written permission from the Inter-American Dialogue.

