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FEATURED Q&A

Will Kast Bring a New Era for Chile-Argentina Ties?



Chilean President José Antonio Kast's first foreign trip after assuming office was to Argentina, where he met earlier this month with Argentine President Javier Milei. // Photo: Argentine Government via Wikimedia Commons [CC BY 4.0](#).

Q Chilean President José Antonio Kast met with Argentine President Javier Milei on April 7 in Buenos Aires, marking Kast's first foreign visit after assuming office in March. The two right-wing presidents vowed to increase collaboration on security and mining, the Associated Press reported. What is the potential for Kast and Milei striking significant bilateral agreements? What is the geopolitical significance of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile each being led by right-wing governments at the same time? To what extent could the arrangement result in coordinated mining policy across the southern Andes?

A Lucía Dammert, professor of international relations at Universidad de Santiago de Chile: "The relationship between Chile and Argentina is fundamental and stands as one of the most strategically important bilateral ties in South America.

The meeting between Presidents Kast and Milei should be understood not merely through an ideological lens, but as the continuation of a deep, multifaceted partnership that demands constant strengthening. Both countries have made significant advances in critical areas that now require renewed commitment: the infrastructure of border crossings across the Andes, the exchange of human capital and technical expertise and the development of fast-track trade mechanisms that can unlock the full economic potential of this corridor. Equally important, however, are shared responsibilities that transcend any single administration's political orientation—the protection of Patagonia, the preservation of glaciers that sustain water systems on both sides of the border and the strengthening

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TODAY'S NEWS

BUSINESS

Eni, Repsol Sign Deal to Export Gas From Venezuela

Eni and Repsol have reached an agreement with the government of interim Venezuelan President Delcy Rodríguez to begin exporting natural gas from an offshore field in Venezuelan waters.

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BUSINESS

Novonor Agrees to Sell Controlling Stake in Braskem

Brazilian conglomerate Novonor, which was formerly known as Odebrecht, on Monday announced a deal to sell its stake in petrochemical giant Braskem to a São Paulo-based asset manager.

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POLITICAL

Chad to Deploy 1,500 Troops to Haiti as Part of Security Force

Chad will send 1,500 troops to Haiti as part of a new U.N.-authorized security force, Chadian President Mahamat Déby Itno said Monday in a letter to lawmakers.

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

POLITICAL NEWS

Chad to Deploy 1,500 Troops to Haiti as Part of Security Force

Chad will send 1,500 troops to Haiti as part of the new security force that the United Nations authorized to fight gang violence, the African country's president said in a letter read to lawmakers on Monday, the Associated Press reported. Two battalions of 750 troops each will be deployed to Haiti for a year, beginning this month, President Mahamat Déby Itno said in the letter, the wire service reported. "A contingent of 400 men has already been sent to Haiti as part of this mission that honors Chad and its defense and security forces," he added. The first contingent of troops was deployed on April 1 and was accompanied by a new leader for the force, Déby added, Reuters reported. The U.N. Security Council last year approved a replacement of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support Mission with a new force known as the Gang Suppression Force, expanding it to 5,500 troops and extending its jurisdiction to include the arrests of suspected gang members, the AP reported.

Peru's Electoral Tribunal Sets May 15 Deadline for Count

Peru's electoral tribunal on Monday said election officials must finish counting votes from the country's delay-plagued presidential election and announce the winning candidates by May 15, the Associated Press reported. More than 30 candidates participated in the April 12 election, and the two top finishers will go to a runoff on June 7 because no candidate finished with more than 50 percent of the votes. With 93.5 percent of the votes counted, conservative former member of Congress Keiko Fujimori has the highest percentage of the total, with 17.05 percent and is virtually certain to be in the runoff, the AP reported. However, a thin

margin separates the second- and third-place candidates, with lawmaker Roberto Sánchez currently in second place with 12 percent of the votes and former Lima Mayor Rafael López Aliaga with 11.91 percent. López Aliaga has alleged "gigantic fraud" in the election without providing any evidence. Last week, an election observation mission from the European Union said that while the election was marred by logistical problems, there was no indication of fraud. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Feb. 27 issue of the Advisor.]

ECONOMIC NEWS

Cuban, U.S. Officials Discuss Energy Blockade in Talks

U.S. and Cuban officials met recently and discussed the Trump administration's efforts to cut off nearly all of Cuba's oil imports, the Caribbean nation's government said Monday, the Associated Press reported. "The elimination of the energy embargo against the country was a top priority for our delegation," Alejandro García del Toro, a top diplomat at Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Monday, the AP reported. Senior officials of the State Department said Friday that top U.S. diplomats flew to Cuba earlier this month for the talks, the wire service reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

Eni and Repsol Sign Deal to Export Gas From Venezuela

Two European oil majors, Italy's Eni and Spain's Repsol, have reached an agreement with the government of interim Venezuelan President Delcy Rodríguez to begin exporting natural gas from an offshore field in Venezuelan waters, sources close to the matter told Bloomberg

NEWS BRIEFS

One Killed, 13 Injured in Shooting at Mexico Archaeological Site

One Canadian tourist was killed and 13 other people were injured on Monday in a shooting at an archaeological site north of Mexico City, the Associated Press reported. Around midday on Monday, a 27-year-old Mexican man standing on top of a pyramid at the Teotihuacán UNESCO site opened fire on a crowd of tourists. The shooter, who was identified as Julio Cesar Jasso, was the sole assailant, state police said Monday evening, the AP reported. He died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound before he could be apprehended.

Sheinbaum Demands Answers on Fatal Crash

Mexico's federal government did not authorize a mission between Chihuahua state police and U.S. law enforcement officials in which two Mexican officers and two U.S. officials were killed in a car crash on Sunday, President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday, the Associated Press reported. Sheinbaum said she would demand explanations regarding the nature of the U.S.-Chihuahua joint operations, noting that any collaboration between state entities and foreign governments that happens without federal permission is a violation of Mexican law.

Brazilian Rare Earth Firm Acquired by U.S. Company

Oklahoma-based USA Rare Earth, Inc. on Monday said it has acquired mining firm Serra Verde, which owns the Pela Ema rare earth mine and processing plant in Brazil's Goiás state, in a deal worth \$2.8 billion, CNBC reported. USA Rare Earth also said it has secured a 15-year offtake agreement for the Pela Ema facility with "various U.S. government agencies, as well as private capital sources," beginning after the first phase of operations is complete at the end of 2027.

News on Monday. Eni and Repsol now plan to complete a floating liquefied natural gas export terminal at the Perla field in the Gulf of Venezuela by 2028, which will allow the firms to double production at the site. Eni and Repsol first began gas production from the Perla field in 2015, but the project's development stalled after U.S. sanctions against Venezuela's oil sector prevented the firms from directly exporting gas from their joint venture. As of March, Eni was owed \$3.3 billion by Venezuela's government from payments that were missed for natural gas provided from the Perla project to the domestic market, Reuters reported. The agreement that Rodríguez struck with Eni and Repsol includes assurances that the firms will be compensated for those debts, sources told Bloomberg News on Monday. The expiration of the firms' lease to operate the Perla field is now set to be extended from 2036 to 2051. Eni and Repsol can begin exports as soon as gas production from the site increases by more than 10 percent relative to current levels, according to Bloomberg News.

Novonor Agrees to Sell Braskem to São Paulo-Based Fund

The controlling shareholder of Brazilian petrochemical firm Braskem has agreed to sell the company to a fund controlled by São Paulo-based asset manager IG4, Braskem said on Monday, Reuters reported. Novonor, which was formerly known as Odebrecht until its rebranding in 2020 following a wide-ranging international corruption scandal, controls 50.1 percent of voting shares in Braskem, which is Latin America's largest petrochemical producer. Novonor has sought to sell Braskem, which has been hampered by weak global demand for its products, since at least 2022, Bloomberg News reported. State-run oil firm Petrobras, Braskem's second-largest shareholder, said Monday that it is evaluating the sale agreement and will release a final statement on the matter in the coming days or weeks. The sale would include Petrobras and IG4 taking "equal" roles in Braskem's management, Petrobras said.

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of both nations' presence in Antarctica, where coordinated sovereignty claims and scientific cooperation carry enormous long-term geopolitical weight. Mining certainly plays a key role in this equation, particularly as global demand for lithium and copper intensifies, but it would be a mistake to reduce the bilateral agenda to extractive industries alone. Mining is one piece of a broader fabric in which the relationship is progressively consolidating across diplomatic, environmental, commercial and security dimensions. The fact that Argentina, Bolivia and Chile share right-leaning governments may facilitate political dialogue, but durable bilateral agreements depend on institutional frameworks, not ideological alignment. What matters most is whether these leaders invest in the structural architecture of cooperation that will outlast any single presidency."

A Federico Rojas de Galarreta, assistant professor at the International Studies Institute at Universidad de Chile: "The potential for Presidents José Antonio Kast and Javier Milei to reach significant bilateral agreements is real, but it is likely to be selective rather than far-reaching. The region has experienced previous moments of ideological alignment among governments, and those episodes did not consistently translate into effective cooperation. While ideological affinity can facilitate dialogue and reduce political frictions—especially at the presidential level—it is not sufficient on its own. In practice, national interests tend to prevail, so meaningful progress will depend on whether both sides can build an agenda around concrete, shared priorities, such as infrastructure, energy integration and specific cross-border initiatives. The fact that Chile, Argentina and Bolivia are currently led by right-leaning governments may create a more favorable environment for pragmatic coordination, particularly around investment and regulatory issues. That said, this convergence should not be overstated.

Differences in development strategies, fiscal constraints and state capacity remain significant. In mining, there is a clear interest in greater cooperation; however, a competitive logic continues to dominate. Each country is primarily focused on attracting invest-

“While ideological affinity can facilitate dialogue and reduce political frictions ... it is not sufficient on its own.”

— Federico Rojas de Galarreta

ment, capturing rents and strengthening its position in global value chains. In a context of rising geopolitical tensions, it would be prudent to be cautious about assuming that improved political relations will translate into coordinated mining policies. If cooperation does advance, it will likely take the form of limited, issue-specific arrangements rather than a fully articulated regional strategy."

A Patricio Navia, clinical professor of liberal studies at New York University and professor of political science at Universidad Diego Portales in Chile: "The talk of stronger trade relations and financial integration between Latin American countries has been a constant over the decades regardless of who is in power. But Latin American countries have been much better at creating new bureaucracies and multiplying multilateral initiatives than at advancing to eliminate trade barriers and promote integration of financial and technological services. As the political right is increasing its power in the region, the talk of moving forward with more integration initiatives has regained strength. Unfortunately, there are reasons not to be optimistic. Several regional trading blocs, like Mercosur, have protectionist policies.

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Entrenched agricultural and industrial sectors in several countries use regulations to obstruct the trade of goods. Moreover, there are discrepancies among right-wing leaders as to the benefits of free trade. U.S. President Donald Trump is a committed protectionist, and so are important Latin American leaders from the far right to the far left. Precisely because there has been much talk but less action about promoting bilateral and multilateral integration in recent decades, there are a lot of low-hanging-fruit reforms that could boost bilateral and multilateral trade and integration. But because there has been more talk than progress in recent decades, nobody should hold their breath for bilateral trade initiatives to pick up steam right away. In a world that is becoming more protectionist and in a continent whose leader is the champion of protectionism, bilateral trade deals are not going to be easy to come about—or be long-lasting—in the coming years.”

A Peter M. Siavelis, professor of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University: “Chile’s new president chose a meeting with Argentina’s President Javier Milei for his first international trip after taking office on March 11, signaling a clear effort to reset bilateral relations and capitalize on Latin America’s shifting ideological landscape. Bilateral ties had been strained under former President Gabriel Boric. Kast’s visit reflects the broader consolidation of right-leaning leadership in the region and a desire to counterbalance Brazil’s leftist

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Not insignificantly, Argentina recently solidified its position as Chile’s second-largest trading partner in Latin America, underscoring the growing importance of the trans-Andean relationship. The meeting combined symbolism and substance. Symbolically, Milei agreed to cooperate on the extradition of former Chilean guerrilla leader Galvarino Apablaza, the accused mastermind of the 1991 assassination of Jaime Guzmán, a right-wing senator and Augusto Pinochet ally. In terms of substance, both governments highlighted the need for increased cooperation in mining, energy, border enforcement and fighting organized crime. Most significant, however, was the push to formalize large-scale cross-border mining projects. With vast shared mineral resources in the Andes, Argentina and Chile are well positioned to anchor a broader regional alliance, potentially incorporating Bolivia’s lithium industry and Peru’s copper sector. Such coordination could boost South America’s global competitiveness in strategic minerals and counterbalance the asymmetrical relations the countries would have with China should they go it alone. Kast’s trip suggests more than a diplomatic reset for newly ideologically akin governments: It also signals an emerging axis of economic pragmatism, ideological alignment and a more intimate relationship between countries that have, at times, historically been at odds.”

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

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Upcoming Event

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