

Chile in Brief: Overview and U.S. Relations

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Chile traditionally has been a close U.S. partner in Latin America. Since Chile's 1990 return to democracy, the United States and Chile have maintained close economic and security ties, worked to promote democracy and human rights, and cooperated on scientific research and in other areas. Congress has helped shape the bilateral relationship at times, including through the imposition of restrictions on arms sales and military assistance to Chile during the country's 1973-1990 dictatorship (e.g., P.L. 94-329, §406), the approval and implementation of the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement in 2003 (P.L. 108-77), and Senate consent to the ratification of a bilateral tax treaty in 2023 (Treaty Doc. 112-8).

Chile's Domestic Situation

President José Antonio Kast of the right-wing Republican Party was inaugurated to a four-year term on March 11, 2026, succeeding President Gabriel Boric of the left-wing Broad Front (2022-2026). Kast's 2025 electoral victory was the fifth consecutive presidential election in which Chileans voted out the incumbent political coalition. The Kast administration has begun to implement business-friendly economic reforms, more restrictive immigration policies, and various initiatives intended to suppress crime and violence. Kast has needed to secure the support of unaffiliated and/or opposition legislators to enact his legislative agenda since the center-right and right-wing political coalitions incorporated into his government lack majorities in both houses of the Chilean congress. Since taking office, Kast's approval rating has declined from 57% to 38%, and his disapproval rating has climbed from 34% to 59%, driven primarily by a deterioration in economic conditions.

U.S.-Chile Relations

The second Trump and Kast administrations have sought to reset the U.S.-Chile relationship, which was somewhat strained during the final year of the Boric administration due to disagreements over U.S. tariffs and military operations in the Western Hemisphere, among other policy differences. The U.S. and Chilean governments have announced several new agreements and initiatives focused on combatting organized crime, strengthening regional security cooperation, and developing secure supply chains for critical minerals. U.S. tariffs on imports from Chile have continued to generate tensions, however, and have raised questions among some members of the Kast administration and other Chilean observers about the reliability of the United States as a partner. According to Pew Research Center polling, the percentage of Chileans expressing favorable views of the United States declined from 55% to 37% between spring 2024 and spring 2026.

Congressional Action

The 119th Congress has enacted some legislation and is considering other measures that may affect U.S.-Chilean relations. For example, Congress lifted a prohibition on U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) support for projects in countries that the World Bank classifies as high income. Since that change, enacted in the DFC Modernization and Reauthorization Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-60, Division H, Title LXXXVII), DFC has sought to mobilize private capital for investments in critical minerals and strategic infrastructure projects in Chile. The National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs (NSRP) Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-75, Division F), designated \$11 million for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) activities in the Southern Cone of South America, a portion of which could benefit Chile. The FY2027 NSRP appropriations bill passed by the House in July 2026 (H.R. 8595/H.Rept. 119-631) would designate \$20 million in INCLE aid for the Southern Cone. Some Members of Congress also have engaged in oversight of U.S.-Chile relations, examining bilateral security cooperation, the impact of U.S. tariffs, collaboration on critical minerals, and the influence of the People's Republic of China in Chile, among other issues.

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Chile, located along the Pacific coast of South America (**Figure 1**), historically has been a close U.S. partner in Latin America. Congress periodically has helped shape the bilateral relationship. During the 118th Congress, for example, the Senate consented to the ratification of a tax treaty with Chile (Treaty Doc. 112-8) intended to encourage investment in both countries by preventing double taxation. During the 119th Congress, some Members have assessed U.S.-Chile security cooperation, the impact of U.S. tariffs on both countries, bilateral collaboration on critical minerals trade, and the influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) in Chile, among other issues.

Figure 1. Map of Chile



Source: Created by CRS using data from the U.S. Department of State, Database of Global Administrative Areas (GADM), and Esri.

Notes: Chile's 16 administrative regions are labeled with brown text and their respective capital cities are noted with black bullets.

Political Context

Chile's democratic tradition dates to the 19th century, but the country experienced 17 years of authoritarian rule after General Augusto Pinochet led a 1973 military coup that deposed the democratically elected socialist government of President Salvador Allende (1970-1973). More than 3,200 people were killed or "disappeared," and some 37,000 people were imprisoned and/or tortured during the Pinochet dictatorship.¹ Chile restored democratic governance in 1990, following a 1988 plebiscite. The country's constitution, as amended, divides power among an executive branch led by the president, a bicameral congress consisting of the 155-member Chamber of Deputies and the 50-member Senate, and an independent judiciary.²

Chile at a Glance

Capital: Santiago

Population: 20.2 million (2026 est., INE)

Land Area: 287,000 sq. miles (INE)

Life Expectancy at Birth: 82 years (2025 est., INE)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): \$407.9 billion (2026 est., IMF)

GDP per Capita: \$20,240 (2026 est., IMF)

Top Exports: copper ores, copper, fruit and nuts, fish, inorganic chemicals and compounds (including lithium) (2025, TDM)

Top Trade Partners: China (32%), United States (17%), European Union (11%), Brazil (7%), Japan (5%) (total trade in goods, 2025, TDM)

Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Trade Data Monitor (TDM).

A center-left coalition led by the Christian Democratic (*Partido Demócrata Cristiana*) and Socialist (*Partido Socialista*) parties and a center-right coalition led by the National Renewal (*Renovación Nacional*) and Independent Democratic Union (*Unión Demócrata Independiente*) parties dominated Chilean politics for three decades following the democratic transition. Both coalitions prioritized political stability and economic growth, eschewing ambitious structural reforms in favor of consensus-based politics, market-oriented economic policies, and incremental social change. Living standards improved significantly between 1990 and 2022; real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita grew by 154% and the poverty rate fell from 68.5% to 6.5%.³

Nevertheless, some polling data since the mid-1990s suggests the majority of Chileans have been dissatisfied with how democracy works in Chile.⁴ This dissatisfaction appears to stem, in part, from the political system's perceived inability or unwillingness to address Chile's steady decline in economic growth rates and continued economic and social inequality.⁵ Amid this discontent,

¹ Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, "Listado Todas las Víctimas," 2026, https://interactivos.museodelamemoria.cl/victims/?page_id=7836; and Gobierno de Chile, *Informe de la Comisión Asesora para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura*, August 2011.

² The Political Constitution of Chile, as amended through 2021, is available in English at https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Chile_2021.

³ International Monetary Fund (IMF), IMF Data Portal, accessed January 2026. Poverty rates based on Chile's 2013-2024 methodology for measuring poverty based on income, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, *Evolución de la Pobreza 1990-2017: ¿Cómo ha Cambiado Chile?*, 2020, p. 63; and Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, *Pobreza y Distribución de los Ingresos en Chile*, January 8, 2026. The Chilean government adopted a new methodology for calculating poverty in 2024, resulting in the poverty rate rising from 4.9% (2013-2024 methodology) to 17.3%.

⁴ CRS analysis of 1995-2024 polling data from Latinobarómetro, accessed August 26, 2026, <https://www.latinobarometro.org/odajds/>.

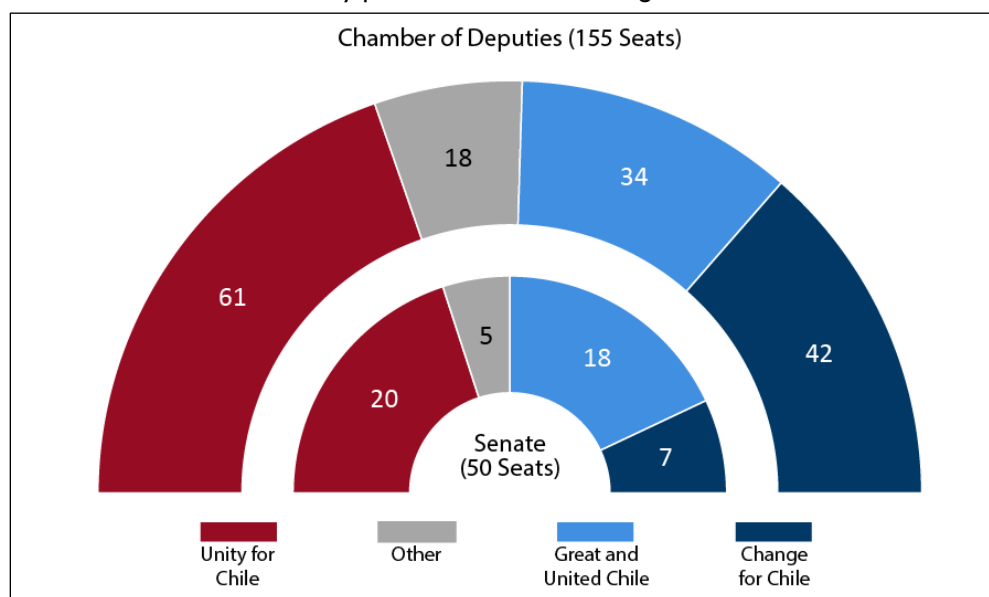
⁵ See, for example, Patricio Navia, "Chile's Riots: Frustration at the Gate of the Promised Land," *Americas Quarterly*, October 21, 2019; and Si Guo and Andrea Schaechter, "Chile Can Grow Faster—But It Won't Be Like the 1990s Again," IMF, June 24, 2025.

Chileans have voted out incumbent coalitions in every election since 2009, supported various new political parties, and engaged in periodic mass protests.

Kast Administration

President José Antonio Kast of the right-wing Republican Party (*Partido Republicano*) was inaugurated to a four-year term on March 11, 2026. He succeeded President Gabriel Boric (2022-2026) of the left-wing Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*), who was not eligible for reelection due to Chile's constitutional ban on consecutive presidential terms. Kast had lost to Boric in 2021 but defeated Boric's former labor minister, Jeannette Jara of the left-wing Communist Party (*Partido Comunista*), 58% to 42%, in a presidential runoff election held in December 2025.⁶ The right-wing and center-right political coalitions that backed Kast in the runoff (Change for Chile [*Cambio por Chile*] and Great and United Chile [*Chile Grande y Unido*], respectively) hold a combined 76 of 155 seats in Chile's Chamber of Deputies and 25 of 50 seats in the Senate (see **Figure 2**).⁷ According to one Chilean polling firm, since taking office, Kast's approval rating has declined from 57% to 38% and his disapproval rating has climbed from 34% to 59%, driven primarily by deteriorating economic conditions (see "Economic Policy").⁸

Figure 2. Balance of Power in the Chilean Congress
Seat allocations by political coalition following the 2025 elections



Source: CRS, using data from DecideChile, <https://live.decidechile.cl/>.

Notes: *Unity for Chile* (*Unidad por Chile*) includes leftist parties such as the Communist Party and Broad Front as well as the traditional center-left parties. *Great and United Chile* includes the traditional center-right parties. *Change for Chile* includes the Republican Party and other right-wing parties. *Other* includes legislators of varying ideologies that did not align with any of the three major coalitions in the 2025 elections.

⁶ Servicio Electoral de Chile, "Resultado Elección de Presidente," December 15, 2025.

⁷ Seat allocations by coalition from DecideChile, accessed March 17, 2026, <https://live.decidechile.cl/>.

⁸ Cadem, "Transversal Mala Evaluación del Sistema de Justicia en Chile," August 30, 2026; and Cadem, "Economía: La Principal Razón para Desaprobar a Kast," July 9, 2026.

Security Policy

Kast's electoral campaign focused heavily on combatting crime and unauthorized immigration, which Chileans expressed increasing concerns about between 2021 and 2025.⁹ Although Chile reportedly remains among the safest countries in Latin America, violence has increased as criminal organizations such as *Tren de Aragua*, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization of Venezuelan origin, have expanded into Chile and sought to control illicit markets such as migrant smuggling and human and drug trafficking.¹⁰ Chile's homicide rate reached a 21st century peak of 6.8 per 100,000 residents in 2022; the 2025 rate of 5.4 per 100,000 remained above the 2010-2019 average of 3.4 per 100,000.¹¹

Polls suggest that many Chileans blame immigration for rising crime rates.¹² Between 2018 and 2023, the number of unauthorized foreign nationals in Chile is estimated to have increased from about 10,000 to nearly 337,000 while the total number of foreign nationals residing in Chile is estimated to have increased from 1.3 million to 1.9 million. Venezuelans fleeing political and economic crises in their home country are estimated to comprise 75% of unauthorized foreign nationals and 38% of the total foreign national population residing in Chile.¹³

Upon taking office, Kast issued decrees that designated an area along Chile's northern border with Peru and Bolivia (where most unauthorized border crossings occur) as a military zone; deployed additional military resources to the area; and designated a commissioner to coordinate Chile's efforts to combat unauthorized migration, drug trafficking, and organized crime in the area.¹⁴ Kast also began implementing his "Border Shield Plan," which includes establishing trenches, fences, and various forms of surveillance along the northern border.¹⁵

In June 2026, the Kast administration presented a four-year security plan focused on controlling streets and neighborhoods, ending gang recruitment, protecting critical routes and borders, combating organized crime, controlling prisons, strengthening the security ministry, and restoring police legitimacy.¹⁶ Constitutional reforms proposed by President Kast in August 2026 would empower the president, with the approval of two-thirds of the Chilean Senate, to designate groups as organized crime or terrorist organizations. The reforms would also empower the president to unilaterally declare a public security state of exception for up to 240 days, during which time the president could restrict or suspend freedoms of movement and assembly, intercept and search communications, and seize property.¹⁷ Some legislators, including members of Kast's

⁹ CRS analysis of 2021 and 2025 polling data from CEP, accessed January 2026, <https://www.cepchile.cl/opinion-publica/encuesta-cep/>.

¹⁰ InSight Crime, "Safe Chile Meets Extreme Gang Violence," August 17, 2025.

¹¹ Gobierno de Chile, Centro Para la Prevención de Homicidios y Delitos Violentos, *Informe Nacional de Víctimas de Homicidios Consumados en Chile*, 2025, p. 10; and UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Intentional Homicide Statistics, <https://data.unodc.org/datareport/hom-victim>, accessed March 19, 2026.

¹² According to one poll, 67% of Chileans assert that immigrants increase crime rates and 41% assert that irregular immigration is among the top causes of crime in Chile. CEP, "Encuesta CEP N° 96, Abril-Mayo 2026," June 10, 2026.

¹³ Gobierno de Chile, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, *Informe de Resultados de la Estimación de Personas Extranjeras*, December 2024, pp. 12, 18, 19, and 22.

¹⁴ Manuel Izquierdo, "Los 6 Decretos de Emergencia que Kast Firmó con Sus Primeras Medidas," *Ex-Ante*, March 11, 2026.

¹⁵ Gobierno de Chile, "Presidente José Antonio Kast Llegó hasta Arica para Supervisar Implementación del Plan Escudo Fronterizo Contra la Migración Irregular," March 16, 2026.

¹⁶ *Latin American Security & Strategic Review*, "Chile: New Minister Unveils Security Plan," July 2026.

¹⁷ Senado de la República de Chile, Boletín N° 18.597-07.

congressional support base, have pushed back on the constitutional changes as an excessive concentration of power in the executive.¹⁸

Economic Policy

During the presidential campaign, Kast's economic policy platform focused on facilitating private sector activity and boosting economic growth by reducing taxes, regulations, and government spending. Chile's annual real GDP growth averaged 1.9% between 2022 and 2025.¹⁹ Upon taking office, Kast signed decrees to audit all government ministries and institutions for irregularities and to fast-track the environmental permitting process to resolve a backlog of pending projects tied to \$16 billion in investment.²⁰ The Kast administration also ordered an across-the-board 3% cut in spending on every budget item, though it later made certain exceptions, including for the security ministry.²¹ In August 2026, the Chilean congress approved an economic reform package proposed by the Kast administration that is to gradually lower the corporate tax rate from 27% to 23%, provide 10- to 20-year tax stability agreements for investments above \$50 million, and fund recovery efforts stemming from January 2026 wildfires in central Chile, among other measures.²²

Rising fuel prices and inflationary pressures stemming from the U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran have presented serious challenges for Kast and his economic agenda. Chile is a net energy importer and its open, export-oriented economy is sensitive to external shocks. The Kast administration opted not to subsidize fuel costs, but it worked with the Chilean congress to provide some targeted assistance to mitigate the impact of rising prices on the most affected households and sectors.²³ In June 2026, the Central Bank of Chile revised down its 2026 GDP growth forecast to 1.0%-1.75% (from 2%-3% in December 2025), noting that a rapid rise in inflation driven by the conflict in the Middle East had reduced real wages, negatively affected consumer expectations, and coincided with a rise in unemployment.²⁴

U.S.-Chile Relations

Chile traditionally has been among the United States' closest partners in Latin America. Although the Nixon Administration helped create the conditions for the 1973 military coup in Chile and initially supported the Pinochet dictatorship in the context of the Cold War, Congress restricted arms sales and military assistance to the Pinochet regime in the late 1970s (e.g., P.L. 94-329, §406) and the Administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush advocated for the restoration of democracy during the late 1980s.²⁵ Since Chile's 1990 democratic transition, the

¹⁸ Cristóbal Fuentes and Pedro Rosas, "Rebelión Parlamentaria: Reforms de Seguridad de Kast No Convence al Oficialismo," *La Tercera*, August 18, 2026.

¹⁹ IMF, IMF Data Portal, accessed August 18, 2026.

²⁰ Manuel Izquierdo, "Los 6 Decretos de Emergencia que Kast Firmó con Sus Primeras Medidas."

²¹ Daina Beth Solomon, "Chile Government Orders Spending Cuts amid Fiscal Squeeze," Reuters, March 17, 2026; and "Ministerios se Resisten a Recorte del 3% Impulsado por Hacienda," *La Tercera*, April 1, 2026.

²² Cámara de Diputados y Diputadas de la República de Chile, Boletín N° 18216-05.

²³ Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), "Fuel Price Increases Pose Governability Risks," April 1, 2026.

²⁴ Central Bank of Chile, *Monetary Policy Report*, June 2026, pp. 4-5; and Central Bank of Chile, *Monetary Policy Report*, December 2025, p. 5.

²⁵ For information on the evolution of U.S. policy, see U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Covert Action in Chile 1963-1973*, committee print, 94th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1975); *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXI, Chile, 1969-1973*, eds. James McElveen and James Sikmeier (Washington: GPO, 2014); and Pablo Rubio Apiolaza, "The United States and Chile, 1973-1990," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

United States and Chile have maintained close economic and security ties and have worked to promote democracy and human rights throughout Latin America. The United States and Chile also have engaged in extensive scientific collaboration, with a particular focus on astronomy, astrophysics, and Antarctic research.²⁶

The second Trump Administration has expressed interest in resetting the bilateral relationship after a year of somewhat strained relations with the Boric administration over disagreements on U.S. tariffs and U.S. military operations in the Caribbean and Venezuela, among other policies. The Trump Administration aims to work with the Kast administration on shared priorities, including upgrading the U.S.-Chile security partnership, expanding commercial ties, and securing supply chains.²⁷ The U.S. and Chilean governments have announced new initiatives in several of those areas, as discussed in the following sections.

At the same time, U.S. tariffs on imports from Chile have continued to generate tensions, and some members of the Kast administration and other Chilean observers have questioned the reliability of the United States as a partner (see “Trade and Investment Ties”). The Chilean public’s views of the United States also may influence the Kast administration’s engagement with the U.S. government. According to Pew Research Center polling conducted between March and May 2026, 37% of Chileans had favorable views of the United States (down from 55% in the same period of 2024) and 28% had confidence in President Trump to “do the right thing regarding world affairs.”²⁸

Security Cooperation

Law Enforcement Cooperation

U.S.-Chilean law enforcement cooperation has focused primarily on countering transnational criminal organizations. Over the past year, for example, the United States has extradited several alleged *Tren de Aragua* members to Chile, some of whom allegedly participated in the 2024 assassination of a Venezuelan dissident in Chile.²⁹ Other bilateral law enforcement efforts have focused on “South American Theft Groups” that have carried out burglaries across the United States. These groups reportedly include some Chilean nationals who entered the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, which allows individuals who meet certain requirements to travel to the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without a visa.³⁰

²⁶ Due in part to Chile’s geography and atmospheric conditions, about 40% of the world’s astronomical observation capacity is concentrated in Chile; that figure is expected to exceed 60% by 2030 following the completion of three new mega-telescopes. Giant Magellan Telescope, “Dark Skies Council: International Astronomical Observatories Join Forces to Protect Chile’s Skies,” June 3, 2025. As of 2024, the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy had invested more than \$1 billion in astronomy and astrophysics observatories in Chile. U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Chile,” September 17, 2024.

²⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Deputy Secretary Landau’s Travel to Chile,” March 9, 2026.

²⁸ Richard Wike et al., *Trump Gets Negative Reviews Internationally as Fewer Say U.S. Is a Reliable Partner*, Pew Research Center, June 23, 2026, pp. 9 and 13; and Richard Wike et al., *Globally, Biden Receives Higher Ratings Than Trump*, Pew Research Center, June 11, 2024, p. 8.

²⁹ U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), “United States Extradites Three Alleged Members of Tren de Aragua to Chile to Face Prosecution for Murder, Kidnapping, and Other Violent Offenses,” November 14, 2025; DOJ, “United States Extradites to Chile One of Its Most Wanted Fugitives – An Alleged Tren de Aragua Leader Charged in Chile with Criminal Association, Extortion, and Kidnapping Resulting in Homicide,” August 28, 2026.

³⁰ Jason Kravarik and Josh Campbell, “‘They Hit the Jackpot’: How So-Called ‘Burglary Tourists’ Use Visa Waivers to Target Luxury U.S. Homes,” *CNN*, April 6, 2024; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Valuable Items Stolen During (continued...) ”

In April 2026, the U.S. and Chilean governments amended a 2001 agreement on counterdrug cooperation that guides bilateral efforts. The modified agreement is said to allow for increased collaboration between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Chile's investigative police and to expand bilateral cooperation on money laundering investigations, asset forfeiture, border security, correctional facilities, and the prosecution of complex organized crime cases. The U.S. State Department has committed to provide \$1 million for capacity-building assistance and technological support for these efforts.³¹

Regional Security and Military Cooperation

In January 2026, then-President Boric condemned the U.S. military operation resulting in the capture and transfer of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro into U.S. custody to face narco-terrorism and drug trafficking charges. Boric asserted that the U.S. actions violated core principles of international law, including sovereignty and territorial integrity, which protect countries such as Chile from the arbitrary use of force.³² Boric's spokesperson also expressed concern that the U.S. actions in Venezuela could be repeated elsewhere in the region, including to take control of Chile's natural resources.³³ Then-President-elect Kast celebrated Maduro's capture and called on Latin American governments to work together to facilitate a democratic transition, support the return of Venezuelan migrants, and combat organized crime.³⁴ In July 2026, the Chilean and Venezuelan governments agreed to restore consular relations and begin to normalize diplomatic ties, which had been severed in 2024.³⁵

On March 7, 2026, four days prior to taking office, Kast attended the Shield of the Americas Summit hosted by President Trump. In the lead-up to the summit, defense and security ministers from the United States and 16 Latin American and Caribbean countries launched the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition and signed a joint security declaration stating their intent to "expand multilateral and bilateral cooperation" on "border security; countering narco-terrorism and trafficking; securing critical infrastructure; and other areas as mutually determined."³⁶ According to the U.S. Embassy in Chile, Chile signed the joint security declaration on March 12. In August, the Chilean Ministry of Defense asserted that Chile had attended Americas Counter Cartel Coalition meetings as an observer but has not made a decision about membership.³⁷ The Chilean government also reportedly has sought to distance itself from several of the security policies the Trump Administration has advocated to coalition members, including carrying out joint military

Los Angeles Burglaries by South American Theft Group Found in Chile and Returned to Victims, Including Actor Keanu Reeves," November 18, 2025. For more on the Visa Waiver Program, see CRS Report RL32221, *Visa Waiver Program*, by Abigail F. Kolker.

³¹ U.S. Embassy in Chile, "Chile y EE.UU. Suscriben Acuerdo de Seguridad y Memorando de Entendimiento para Avanzar en las Negociaciones sobre Minerales Críticos," April 21, 2026; and Gobierno de Chile, "Chile Signs Agreement with US State Department to Combat Organized Crime Alongside the FBI," April 20, 2026.

³² President Gabriel Boric, "Declaración desde el Palacio de la Moneda," January 3, 2026.

³³ Javiera Ortiz, "President Boric Se Suma a Tesis de Vallejo sobre EE.UU. y Advierte: 'En el Futuro Podría Eventualmente Amenazar a Chile'," *La Tercera*, January 9, 2026.

³⁴ José Antonio Kast Rist (@joseantoniokast), statement on X, January 3, 2026, <https://x.com/joseantoniokast/status/2007456165547102659>.

³⁵ Gobierno de Chile, "Chile y Venezuela Reactivan Relaciones Consulares e Inician Hoja de Ruta para Normalizar sus Vinculos Bilaterales," July 31, 2026.

³⁶ U.S. Embassy in Chile, "Americas Counter Cartel Conference Joint Security Declaration," August 21, 2026.

³⁷ Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, "Ministro Barros Participa en Foro de la Coalición de la Américas Contra los Carteles y Refuerza Cooperación Regional," August 14, 2026.

operations against drug traffickers, increasing defense expenditures, and withdrawing from the International Criminal Court.³⁸

The United States provides some military assistance to Chile. For example, U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) aid has supported attendance by Chilean military officers at U.S. professional military education institutions. IMET aid for Chile amounted to \$650,000 in FY2025 (most recent year available).³⁹ The U.S. Department of Defense has provided additional support to Chile through various programs and joint exercises, focusing on topics such as cybersecurity, disaster response, and space domain awareness.⁴⁰

Legislative Action and Issues for Congress

Congress oversees bilateral security ties and appropriates security assistance funding. The National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs (NSRP) Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-75, Division F), designated \$11 million for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) activities in the Southern Cone of South America, which includes Chile.⁴¹ During the FY2027 appropriations process, Congress could consider whether to appropriate law enforcement and/or military assistance specifically for Chile or to leave such allocation decisions to the executive branch. Congress also could assess whether to impose conditions on, or seek additional information about, U.S.-Chilean security cooperation, Chile's participation in the Visa Waiver Program, or the Trump Administration's regional security initiatives such as the Americas Counter Cartels Coalition. The Trump Administration requested \$650,000 in IMET aid for Chile in FY2027.⁴² The FY2027 NSRP appropriations bill passed by the House in July 2026 (H.R. 8595/H.Rept. 119-631) would designate \$20 million in INCLE aid for the Southern Cone. The Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to mark up an FY2027 NSRP bill.

Trade and Investment Ties

Under the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which entered into force in 2004 after Congress adopted implementing legislation (P.L. 108-77), nearly all U.S.-Chile goods trade is to be duty free.⁴³ The second Trump Administration has imposed additional tariffs on imports from all U.S. trading partners, including on Chilean goods that qualify for duty-free treatment under the U.S.-Chile FTA. In April 2025, the President imposed a 10% tariff on most imports from Chile and many other countries using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977

³⁸ "Subir el Gasto Militar e Evitar la Influencia de Potencias 'Extrahemisféricas': Lo que EE.UU. les Pidió a los Países de América, Incluido Chile," *El Mercurio*, July 12, 2026; "'No Somos el Patio Trasero de Nadie': La Réplica de Barros a Presión de EE.UU. y Sus Implicancias," *Ex-Ante*, August 13, 2026; and "Chile Firmó 'Declaración de Intenciones' para 'Combatir el Narcoterrorismo' junto a EE.UU.," *El Mercurio*, August 14, 2026.

³⁹ Obligation data from ForeignAssistance.gov, accessed August 17, 2026.

⁴⁰ The Department of Defense is "using a secondary Department of War designation," under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025. Guillermo Saavedra, "Continental Shield: Multilateral Cooperation and Strategic Synergy in the Chile Fires," *Dialogo Americas* (U.S. Southern Command publication), April 9, 2026.

⁴¹ P.L. 119-75, §7019(a); and "Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Cole, Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, Regarding H.R. 7006, Financial Services and General Government and National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026," *Congressional Record*, vol. 172, part 10 (January 14, 2026), p. H861.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2027*, April 2026, p. 115

⁴³ U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, "U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement," <https://www.trade.gov/us-chile-free-trade-agreement>.

(IEEPA; 50 U.S.C. §§1701 et seq.), citing a purported lack of reciprocity in trade relations.⁴⁴ Following a February 2026 Supreme Court ruling that IEEPA does not give the President authority to impose tariffs, the President imposed a new 10%, 150-day “temporary import surcharge” on most U.S. imports under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. §2132). That 10% surcharge expired on July 24, 2026.⁴⁵

The same day the Section 122 surcharge expired, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) imposed a 12.5% tariff on imports from Chile.⁴⁶ The USTR decision followed an investigation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. §§2411-2420), into 60 economies, representing 99% of all U.S. imports. The investigation determined that “the acts, policies and practices of Chile related to the failure to impose and effectively enforce a forced labor import prohibition are unreasonable and burden or restrict U.S. commerce.”⁴⁷ Chilean Minister of Agriculture Jaime Campos reportedly accused USTR of making up an excuse to impose the tariff and of violating the U.S.-Chile FTA; Chilean Minister of Defense Fernando Barros reportedly asserted that the tariff raised doubts about the broader U.S.-Chilean relationship.⁴⁸

According to the Chilean government, the United States has imposed the Section 301 tariff on 943 products representing 40.3% of U.S. imports from Chile (e.g., salmon, bottled wine) and exempted 336 products representing 53.6% of U.S. imports from Chile (e.g., refined copper cathodes, lithium).⁴⁹ Another 118 products representing 3.9% of U.S. imports from Chile (e.g., sawn timber, copper wire) face tariffs imposed under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 (19 U.S.C. §1862, as amended).⁵⁰ Chile’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is negotiating with the Trump Administration with the aim of gaining additional exemptions from the Section 301 tariff while also seeking to strengthen Chile’s trade relations with other partners.⁵¹

Between 2024 and 2025, the value of total U.S.-Chile goods trade increased by nearly 10% to reach \$38.1 billion. U.S. goods exports to Chile increased by about 5% to \$19.1 billion, led by mineral fuels, machinery, civilian aircraft and parts, and motor vehicles. U.S. goods imports from

⁴⁴ Executive Order 14257 of April 2, 2025, “Regulating Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices That Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Trade Deficits,” 90 *Federal Register* 15041, April 7, 2025.

⁴⁵ Presidential Proclamation 11012 of February 20, 2026, “Imposing a Temporary Import Surcharge to Address Fundamental International Payments Problems,” 91 *Federal Register* 9339, February 25, 2026; CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11398, *Supreme Court Rules Against Tariffs Imposed Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)*, by Christopher T. Zirpoli; and CRS In Focus IF13199, *Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974*, by Christopher A. Casey, Danielle M. Trachtenberg, and Christopher T. Zirpoli.

⁴⁶ Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), “Notice of Actions in Section 301 Investigations of Acts, Policies, and Practices of Various Economies Related to the Failure of Each Economy to Impose and Effectively Enforce a Prohibition on the Importation of Goods Produced With Forced Labor,” 91 *Federal Register* 47318, July 28, 2026.

⁴⁷ USTR, *Acts, Policies, and Practices of Various Economies Related to the Failure To Impose and Effectively Enforce a Prohibition on the Importation of Goods Produced With Forced Labor*, June 2, 2026, p. 62. For more information, see CRS Insight IN12672, *Section 301 Investigation—Forced Labor and Import Policies of U.S. Trading Partners*, by Christopher A. Casey, Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs, and Danielle M. Trachtenberg.

⁴⁸ “La Moneda No Logra Contener la Cruzadas Declaraciones de Ministros por Sobretasa de EE.UU.,” *El Mercurio*, July 29, 2026.

⁴⁹ Paula Estévez Weinstein, Subsecretaria de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales, “Política Comercial de Estados Unidos,” Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, August 2026, <https://microservicio-documentos.senado.cl/v1/archivos/60ebc0cd-bda8-4f25-a8ea-847da1c1fd2?includeContent=true>.

⁵⁰ Paula Estévez Weinstein, “Política Comercial de Estados Unidos.” For more information on Section 232, see CRS In Focus IF13006, *Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962*, by Kyla H. Kitamura.

⁵¹ Paula Estévez Weinstein, “Política Comercial de Estados Unidos.”

Chile increased by 15% to nearly \$19 billion, led by copper, fish, fruit, and wood. Consequently, the U.S. goods trade surplus with Chile decreased by 91% to \$164 million.⁵²

Critical Mineral Cooperation

Successive U.S. Administrations have identified Chile as a partner for developing secure supply chains and reducing U.S. reliance on China for critical minerals. In 2025, Chile was among the world's top producers of five of the 60 mineral commodities determined by the U.S. Geological Survey to be essential to U.S. national security and the U.S. economy (see **Table 1**). Chile also reportedly has the potential to produce other critical minerals, including cobalt and rare earths.⁵³

Table 1. Chilean Production and U.S. Imports of Selected Critical Minerals

Critical Mineral	Applications	Chile World Production Rank (2025)	Chile World Reserves Rank (2025)	U.S. Imports as % of Consumption (2025)	% of U.S. Imports from Chile (2021-2024)
Boron	Nuclear energy, hardening of steel and glass	2 nd	4 th	0%	Not available
Copper (refined)	Cables, wiring	1 st	1 st	57%	68%
Lithium	Batteries	3 rd	1 st	>50%	54%
Rhenium	High-performance jet engines, gas turbines	1 st	1 st	75%	31%
Silver	Batteries, electrical circuits, antibacterial medical instruments, solar cells	5 th	7 th	77%	5%

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2026*, May 2026, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2026/mcs2026.pdf>.

In April 2026, the U.S. and Chilean governments signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation on critical minerals. According to the Chilean government, the agreement established a framework for cooperation focused on promoting investment, information exchange, and capacity building at all stages of the mining process but does not create binding obligations or provide preferential rights.⁵⁴ Chile could be among the countries included in a potential “plurilateral agreement on trade in critical minerals and downstream products” that

⁵² U.S. Census Bureau data, as reported by *Trade Data Monitor*, accessed May 19, 2026.

⁵³ Business News Americas, “Chile and the U.S. Advance Bilateral Cooperation on Critical Minerals and Rare Earths,” March 12, 2026.

⁵⁴ Gobierno de Chile, Subsecretaría de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales, “Gobierno de Chile Firma Acuerdos con Estados Unidos para Fortalecer Cooperación en Minerales Críticos y Seguridad,” April 21, 2026.

USTR seeks to negotiate with “like-minded partners.”⁵⁵ As of 2025, the total stock of U.S. investment in Chile’s mining industry amounted to nearly \$9.9 billion.⁵⁶

U.S. Competition with China in Chile

Over the past decade, U.S. officials have repeatedly warned Chile that investments from the PRC in strategic sectors and the use of equipment from China-based companies in Chile’s critical infrastructure could compromise Chile’s national security, intellectual property, and data privacy.⁵⁷ Polling suggests that most Chileans view the PRC as a partner, however, and consecutive Chilean governments have sought to bolster commercial ties with China.⁵⁸ Chile signed a cooperation agreement on the PRC’s Belt and Road Initiative in 2018, upgraded its free trade agreement with China in 2019, and joined the PRC-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2021.⁵⁹ In 2025, China was Chile’s top trade partner for goods, accounting for 27% of Chile’s imports and 36% of Chile’s exports.⁶⁰

China-based companies have invested more than \$21 billion in Chile since 2006, concentrated primarily in the energy, infrastructure, and mining sectors.⁶¹ Among these investments, State Grid Corporation of China spent more than \$5.2 billion to acquire two Chilean electricity distributors in 2020 and now reportedly controls power distribution to 57% of Chilean consumers, including the entire north of the country, where much of Chile’s mining sector is located.⁶² The acquisitions prompted a multiparty group of Chilean legislators to propose legislation in 2020 that would have enabled the Chilean congress to block acquisitions of strategic assets by foreign state-owned companies; the center-right administration of then-President Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014; 2018-2022) opposed the measure, which did not advance.⁶³

In February 2026, the U.S. State Department revoked the visas of Chile’s then-Minister of Transport and Telecommunications and two other Boric administration officials. The State Department alleged that the officials had “knowingly directed, authorized, funded, provided significant support to, and/or carried out activities that compromised critical telecommunications infrastructure and undermined regional security.”⁶⁴ The visa revocations were reportedly tied to the Chilean officials’ decision to grant preliminary approval for a consortium including China-based companies to build a subsea cable (“Chile China Express”) between Valparaíso, Chile, and Hong Kong, as well as U.S. dissatisfaction with the Boric administration’s response to U.S.

⁵⁵ USTR, “Request for Comments on the Design of a Plurilateral Agreement on Trade in Critical Minerals and Policy Actions to Strengthen the Resilience of Critical Mineral Supply Chains,” 91 *Federal Register* 9686, February 26, 2026.

⁵⁶ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, “U.S. Direct Investment Abroad—Chile,” July 21, 2026.

⁵⁷ See, for example, U.S. Embassy in Chile, “Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo on U.S. Latin American Policy,” April 12, 2019; and Testimony of Bernadette M. Meehan, Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Chile, in U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Nominations*, 117th Cong., 2nd sess., March 15, 2022.

⁵⁸ A 2025 poll found 64% of Chileans and 80% of a subsample of Chilean foreign policy experts viewed China as a partner. Athena Lab, *Percepciones Sobre Política Exterior y Seguridad Nacional*, 6^o Encuesta, May 2025, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹ The Belt and Road Initiative is a multifaceted initiative that aims to expand China’s global economic reach and influence by developing China-centered and -controlled infrastructure, transportation, trade, and production networks.

⁶⁰ Chile National Customs Office data, reported by Trade Data Monitor, accessed March 17, 2026.

⁶¹ Inter-American Dialogue, “Regional Repository of Chinese Investments in Latin America,” accessed July 8, 2026.

⁶² Inter-American Dialogue, “Regional Repository of Chinese Investments in Latin America”; and Lorena Guzmán, “State Grid Grows Presence in Chile with CGE Purchase,” *Diálogo Chino*, February 1, 2021.

⁶³ Chile’s antitrust agency reviews mergers and acquisitions to ensure they do not threaten market competition, but Chile has not established a mechanism to review investments for national security concerns.

⁶⁴ Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, “Visa Revocations on Chilean Nationals Undermining Regional Security,” U.S. Department of State, February 20, 2026.

reports that foreign malicious actors had hacked into Chilean telecommunications systems.⁶⁵ The Boric administration rejected the U.S. claims, condemned the visa revocations, and asserted that Chile would not make decisions under threats or pressure.⁶⁶

The Kast administration has stated that it intends to review the proposed subsea cable to Hong Kong and that it plans to maintain close ties with both the United States and China.⁶⁷ In July 2026, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chilean Foreign Minister Francisco Pérez Mackenna discussed “ways to counter adversarial influence in critical infrastructure” during their first bilateral meeting, held in Washington, DC.⁶⁸ Although the Chilean foreign minister has characterized the United States as Chile’s main strategic partner, he also has described China as a key partner and asserted that deepening relations with the PRC is in Chile’s long-term strategic interest.⁶⁹ According to an August 2026 poll conducted in the aftermath of the U.S. imposition of Section 301 tariffs on Chile, 29% of Chileans think Chile should prioritize commercial relations with China, 14% think Chile should prioritize commercial relations with the United States, and 54% think Chile should pursue commercial relations with both countries equally.⁷⁰

Legislative Action and Issues for Congress

Congress may evaluate the Trump Administration’s approach to U.S.-Chile economic relations. Among other issues, Congress could assess how the U.S.-Chile FTA and the Trump Administration’s tariffs have affected the U.S. and Chilean economies, bilateral trade and investment flows, U.S. competition with China, and the broader U.S.-Chile partnership. Such assessments could inform congressional decisions regarding potential measures to codify, terminate, or modify the tariffs and their underlying authorities. Congress also could establish negotiating objectives for U.S. trade discussions with the Chilean government and consider implementing legislation for any agreements to modify the FTA.

The 119th Congress enacted a six-year reauthorization of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), an agency that seeks to mobilize private capital for investments to advance economic development and other U.S. foreign policy interests in partner countries.⁷¹ Among other changes, the DFC Modernization and Reauthorization Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-60, Division H, Title LXXXVII) authorized the agency to support projects in countries classified as

⁶⁵ Business News Americas, “Visa Revocations Strain Chile-Hong Kong Cable Project,” February 23, 2026. “Ministro Muñoz Aprobó Concesión de Cable Submarino entre China y Chile, pero Seanuló Dos Días Después,” *El Mercurio*, February 24, 2026; U.S. Embassy in Chile, “Palabras de Introducción del Embajador de los EE.UU. en Chile, Brandon Judd, durante Su Conferencia de Prensa el Lunes 23 de Febrero de 2026,” February 23, 2026. U.S.-based Google is currently building another subsea cable (“Humboldt”) between Valparaíso and Sydney, Australia, which, upon its completion, is to be the first subsea cable connection between South America and the Asia-Pacific region.

⁶⁶ Gobierno de Chile, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, “Gobierno de Chile Rechaza la Imposición de Medidas Unilaterales por Parte de Estados Unidos,” February 20, 2026; and Paz Rubio, “Por Sanción EE.UU.: Vallejo Califica Decisión de ‘Arbitraria’ y Recalca que Chile ‘No Toma Decisiones Bajo Amenaza de Ningún País,’” *La Tercera*, February 23, 2026.

⁶⁷ “Queremos Reponer la Buenas Relaciones que Nunca Debimos Haber Perdido con EE.UU.,” *El Mercurio*, March 15, 2026.

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Rubio’s Meeting with Chile’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Pérez Mackenna,” readout, July 6, 2026.

⁶⁹ “Las Declaraciones del Canciller Pérez Mackenna sobre EE.UU. y China,” *El Mercurio*, August 13, 2026.

⁷⁰ Cadem, “La Política es Lo que Más División Genera en la Sociedad Chilena,” August 2, 2026.

⁷¹ For more information on DFC, see CRS In Focus IF11436, *U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)*, by Shayerah I. Akhtar and Nick M. Brown.

high income by the World Bank—such as Chile—under certain conditions; such support was previously prohibited. DFC asserts that it intends to facilitate high-impact investments in Chile’s

critical minerals and other strategic sectors.⁷² Congress may examine DFC's actions in Chile and how, if at all, to further strengthen bilateral investment ties.

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⁷² U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (@DFCgov), X post, June 9, 2026, <https://x.com/DFCgov/status/2064362219744211234>.