

Research Study

Titled:

"Migration Between Canada, Mexico, and the United States During Trump's New Term: A Comparative Study of Causes, Policies, and Impacts"

Issued by the Studies and Research Unit at the International Independents Organization (IOI)



Executive Summary:

The reasons for international migration for work to the countries of North and South America are multiple and include economic, social, and political factors. The United States is the country that absorbs the largest number of Latin American citizens, despite the economic problems it has come to suffer from. Since Donald Trump came to power in 2016, the issue of migration has occupied a large space in his speeches, which are characterized by extreme hostility and hatred towards migrants in the United States. He issued many executive orders that harmed migrants, such as the executive order known as “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States.”

In examining the policies adopted by Biden during his tenure, we find that they were initially sympathetic toward migrants. However, in January 2022, the Biden administration introduced the largest proposed immigration package, which would have led to radical changes in the policies he had adopted at the beginning of his presidency. After Donald Trump’s return to the White House, indicators of his strict policies toward migrants re-emerged, even before his victory in the November 2024 elections.

Based on the above, this study focuses on comparing the policies, impacts, and drivers related to migration between Canada, Mexico, and the United States during Trump’s new term. It also compares the policies adopted by Trump and Biden toward irregular migrants in the United States and examines the impact of these policies on the labor market and the economic situation in the United States.

The study is divided into four main axes:

The first axis addresses “the economic, social, and political drivers that encourage individuals to migrate between Canada, Mexico, and the United States,” the most important of which are the following:

The end of the application of “Title 42” in the United States in 2023, which had been enacted during the presidency of Donald Trump in 2020 and stipulated preventing the entry of migrants as part of preventive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of this measure was extended under President Biden.

The judicial ruling issued on 25 July 2023, which resulted in the termination of the asylum ban policy imposed by the Biden administration. This policy had prevented asylum seekers who passed through other countries on their way to the southern border of the United States from applying for asylum, unless they had previously applied for asylum elsewhere and been rejected. Judge Jon Tigar of the federal court in San Francisco considered that the policy forcing migrants to apply for asylum from their home countries or countries of transit in order to obtain approval to enter the United States was “unlawful.”

The second axis is titled “The Impact of Migration between Canada and Mexico on the U.S. Labor Market” and discusses the distinction between legal and illegal migration in terms of their impact on the U.S. labor market. Regular migration has a positive impact on the labor market and the U.S. economy, whereas irregular migration has a negative impact. This axis also addresses the NAFTA agreement between the three countries and its relationship to migration.

The third axis, titled “A Comparison between U.S. Immigration Policies under Donald Trump and Joe Biden,” discusses the migration issue during both Trump’s and Biden’s presidencies. It begins with Trump’s first term and clarifies his strict policy toward migrants, which continued even after his victory in the November 2024 elections. In contrast, it examines Biden’s policy, which was less strict than Trump’s from the moment he took office.

The fourth axis, titled “The Impact of Immigration Policies on Economic Relations between Mexico, Canada, and the United States,” links trade policy with migration and border issues. Trump pledged to reduce the number of migrants coming from Mexico and Canada and to implement his strict policies toward migrants, threatening to impose tariffs of 25% on both countries. This would have counterproductive results. The Mexican Minister of Economy had earlier warned that the application of such tariffs would lead to the loss of about 400,000 jobs, which would result in the deterioration of political and economic relations among the three countries.

The fifth and final axis, titled “A Forward-Looking Vision of the Fate and Course of Migration and Migrants under Trump,” addresses the future of the migration file and migrants during Trump’s term, the expected measures likely to be taken by the Trump administration, and the consequences of these measures. Since U.S. President Donald Trump assumed office during the current year, his administration has begun implementing a new approach toward migration consistent with the promises he made during his election campaign, which involve imposing major restrictions on immigration laws and migrants—especially those coming from Canada and Mexico. In addition, the president announced the repeal of the policies of his predecessor Joe Biden related to this issue, with the aim of preventing the influx of migrants, criminals, and terrorists. This comes from his personal conviction in the concept of “securitization,” which he sees as the fastest way to create a political climate that accepts the idea that migration threatens U.S. national security.

Accordingly, the study concludes with a set of recommendations for dealing with the issue of migration among the three countries. The study finds that migration between Canada, Mexico, and the United States requires comprehensive and balanced policies that take into account economic, social, and security dimensions. The recommendations focus on improving legal policies, enhancing regional and international cooperation, and supporting the economic integration of migrants in these countries. The recommendations include proposals for improving relations among the three states, such as strengthening cooperation in combating irregular migration, fighting human trafficking, smuggling, and illegal infiltration, and holding accountable those responsible for such unethical activities. The economic recommendations include enhancing job opportunities and investment in these countries to limit irregular migration flows, as well as strengthening economic partnerships among the three countries.

As for recommendations aimed at reducing the negative impacts of migration, they include enhancing cooperation and coordination among the three countries in order to develop joint strategies for effective migration management, with a focus on policies that promote economic and social stability in countries of origin. They also propose establishing mechanisms to address irregular entry routes and provide protection for refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations, in a way that guarantees their rights and prevents violations.

Introduction:

In recent years, the borders between the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada have

witnessed a large and noticeable increase in the numbers of irregular migrants and refugees. Displaced persons at the borders—whether from Mexico, Canada, or other Latin American countries—have been racing against time to enter the United States before the return of the new U.S. president, Donald Trump, which would mean a return to closure policies and restrictions on migrants. This is especially true given that migration was one of the most important issues in his election campaign, where he stated that he would carry out the largest mass deportation of migrants in U.S. history. He frequently asserted in his speeches that migrants who cross the border illegally have escaped prisons and shelters in their countries of origin and increase violent crime in the United States.

He also criticized the Biden administration's handling of the southern border due to the recent influx of between 800 and 1000 migrants into Whitewater. For this reason, the Biden administration faced criticism from both Republicans and Democrats. Crossings along the U.S.–Mexico border reached record levels during Biden's term, which had a clear impact on the efficiency of education and health services.

In this context, the annual report issued by the International Organization for Migration indicated that since 2022, Mexico has begun to rival India as the top country of origin for migrants worldwide. Mexico has become both a country of origin and transit for more than 16 million migrants annually who seek to cross its border with the United States. Data from the Mexican Federal Migration Office indicates that the total number of Mexican migrants reached 11.9 million, 97% of whom are in the United States. These numbers alone are sufficient to place U.S.–Mexican political and economic relations under the umbrella of migration, which has shaped the trajectory of these relations for many years. The relations have always been governed by a compulsory and necessary coexistence imposed by geography and shared borders, as well as by mutual trade and economic interests.

It is worth noting that the number of migrants began to increase in 2018, due to a series of crises suffered by the citizens of Central American countries—crises that include poverty, political repression, and natural disasters.

This study must also shed light on the future and fate of the migration file and migrants during Trump's new term. In light of the political orientations and measures adopted by U.S. President Donald Trump regarding migration, several scenarios can be anticipated regarding the future of migrants in the United States. Trump's policies toward migration are expected to have a long-term impact not only on irregular migrants, but also on the social and economic system of the country as a whole—an issue that will be addressed in detail in the fifth axis of the study.

Based on the above, the study is divided into five main axes:

The first axis examines the economic, social, and political drivers that encourage individuals to migrate between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

The second axis addresses the impact of migration between Canada and Mexico on the U.S. labor market.

The third axis focuses on comparing immigration policies during the terms of Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

The fourth axis examines the impact of immigration policies on economic relations among Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

The fifth axis presents a forward-looking vision regarding the fate and trajectory of migration and migrants under Trump.

Research Problem:

The research problem lies in studying and analyzing the reasons for migration among Canada, Mexico, and the United States and its effects on the social, economic, and political dimensions in these countries. Despite differing economic and social conditions among these states, migration among them remains a complex and multidimensional issue. This study aims to shed light on the immigration policies adopted by Trump during both his first and current terms, as well as those adopted by Biden, and the impact of these policies on migration flows. It also examines the effects of migration on labor markets, cultural diversity, and the social system in receiving countries, in addition to its impact on relations among these states.

Research Questions:

The study addresses a central research question:

“What are the reasons and drivers of migration among Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and what is the impact on the economic, social, and political dimensions among the three countries?”

From this main question stem several sub-questions:

1. What are the economic, social, and political drivers that encourage individuals to migrate among Canada, Mexico, and the United States?
2. What are the immigration policies and laws adopted by Trump and Biden?
3. How do immigration policies affect political relations among Mexico, Canada, and the United States?
4. What policies do the United States, Canada, and Mexico adopt in dealing with migration?

Objectives:

This study aims to:

1. Examine the factors that drive individuals to migrate between Mexico, Canada, and the United States of America.
2. Compare the immigration policies adopted by Donald Trump and Joe Biden.
3. Analyze the impact of migration between Canada and Mexico on the U.S. labor market.
4. Address the impact of immigration policies on economic relations among Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

Methodology:

The study relied on desk research to collect the necessary data. It also relied on the comparative method to analyze and describe the gathered data. This method makes it possible to analyze and describe the reasons for migration to the United States, as well as the impacts of migration and the policies adopted to confront it. It also allows for comparison between immigration policies under

Trump and Biden and for drawing recommendations regarding the migration file under Trump's new term.

First: Economic, Social, and Political Drivers Encouraging Individuals to Migrate between Canada, Mexico, and the United States

Irregular migration is a widespread global phenomenon that represents a real threat to both sending and receiving countries, due to its negative impacts on various dimensions and levels. Mexico, Canada, and the United States are among the countries affected by this phenomenon, due to slow development in those countries, which has naturally reflected on social, economic, and political aspects through the spread of poverty, high unemployment rates, low levels of education and health, and lack of security. These factors drive many citizens of Mexico and Canada to migrate to the United States in pursuit of social welfare and a better life at various levels.

Given that the United States is an economic partner of Mexico and Canada in the NAFTA agreement, and the country most affected by irregular migration, Mexico and Canada promised that NAFTA would achieve unprecedented economic growth, provide jobs, and raise wages—thus helping to combat irregular migration. Migration is considered one of the most sensitive issues in U.S. politics and has always influenced bilateral relations among the three countries.

Human mobility in search of better living opportunities or to escape armed threats has become a global and increasing phenomenon. By examining the reasons behind this phenomenon at the southern and northern borders of Mexico and Canada, we can identify several factors that have contributed to it, including the following:

- 1. The end of Title 42 in the United States in 2023:**

This provision was enacted during the presidency of Donald Trump in 2020 and stipulated preventing the entry of migrants as part of preventive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its implementation was extended under President Biden. Over three years, it resulted in the expulsion of 2.8 million migrants to cities along the U.S.–Mexico border.

- 2. The judicial ruling issued on 25 July 2023:**

This ruling ended the asylum ban policy imposed by the Biden administration. The policy had prevented asylum seekers who passed through other countries on their way to the southern U.S. border from applying for asylum unless they had already applied in another place and been rejected. Judge Jon Tigar of the federal court in San Francisco ruled that the policy forcing migrants to apply for asylum from their home countries or transit countries in order to obtain approval to enter the United States was “unlawful.”

- 3. Fear of Trump's new term:**

This fear implies a return to restrictive policies and refusal to admit migrants, which was clearly evident in his statements during the election campaign. He stated that he would carry out the largest mass deportation of migrants in U.S. history and would establish detention camps and use police forces to pursue them. In his recent statements, Trump described migrants residing illegally in the United States as “animals, not people.” He

repeatedly claimed that migrants crossing the border illegally had escaped from prisons and shelters in their home countries and that they increase violent crime in the United States.

4. Increased activity of human smuggling gangs operating in Mexico:

These gangs contribute to the growing influx of irregular migrants by spreading misleading information to promote their activities, convincing a larger number of people to deal with them, and charging fees in exchange for smuggling them into the United States. They exploit the current period after the change in U.S. laws and before the Republicans' return to the presidency. In this regard, the United States is considered a major market for economic opportunities, with a wide diversity of industries and professional opportunities. Some people migrate to seek higher-paying jobs or opportunities in specific fields that may be limited in Canada and Mexico.

5. Education and academic opportunities:

Many students and researchers prefer to migrate to the United States to complete their studies and work in prestigious academic institutions. U.S. universities are among the best in the world, making them a preferred destination for academics and students.

6. The United States' need for migrants:

The U.S. economy has faced multiple crises since the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, along with rising inflation rates and fears of a recession. As a result, the United States will need new arrivals. Despite ongoing calls to restrict migration, two factors contribute to this need: declining fertility rates and demographic shifts that will slow population growth in the coming years. These changes create a need to continue receiving migrants to offset the economic consequences.

7. Insecurity and high unemployment rates:

Since 2018, many migrants from Mexico and, to some extent, Canada have decided to move to the United States due to limited job opportunities in their countries and high unemployment rates. It is notable that 2023 witnessed record numbers at the U.S.–Mexico border, where border crossings continued to accelerate in the last quarter of the year, averaging 10,000 crossings per day. The United Nations has described the land route from Mexico to the United States as the most dangerous in the world. The UN has also reported that 686 migrants died or went missing last year while attempting to cross the border. When deaths along other parts of the migration route to the United States are included—such as the Darién Gap between Panama and Colombia and sea routes through the Caribbean—the number rises to 1,457 deaths.

It is worth noting that despite the strict and ongoing monitoring imposed by the United States on its borders—especially after the events of 11 September 2001, which fueled anti-migrant sentiment toward both regular and irregular migrants, particularly Mexicans—irregular migration and smuggling operations have continued. Thousands risk their lives each year to reach a better life. In 2006, the U.S. Congress approved the construction of a 1,200-kilometer wall along the border with Mexico to curb this migration, which is not limited to Mexicans alone. Many migrants use Mexico as a transit point and staging area for entering the United States. Most of them come from North and Latin America, as well as Africa and Asia. They are then moved clandestinely through local and

international networks and organizations into the United States, at a high cost that can reach \$10,000 per person.

Second: The Impact of Migration from Canada and Mexico on the U.S. Labor Market

Migration is one of the most contentious issues in the United States. The country has witnessed historic inflows of migrants from around the world seeking better living opportunities, which has affected its demographic structure and labor market.

Opinions among analysts and researchers differ regarding the presence of large numbers of migrants in the United States. Some view it as an opportunity to expand the base of young workers who contribute to strengthening the economy, while others see migrants as a threat to jobs, a cause of wage stagnation, and a negative factor for economic performance in both the short and long term.

Trump's statements during his election campaign reflected this controversy when he described irregular migrants as a "threat" and affirmed his intent to return them to their home countries if he assumed power. While migrants constitute an increasing share of the labor force, the question arises: Does the influx of migrants to the United States represent a threat to the labor market, or an opportunity to strengthen and diversify it?

To answer this question, it is essential to distinguish between legal and illegal migration when discussing the effects of migration on the U.S. economy and labor market. Illegal migration has negative effects on the U.S. economy, especially in vital sectors such as engineering, technology, and medicine, where many skilled doctors and engineers have come through legal migration. Regular migration is highly beneficial to the U.S. economy, while irregular migration is a burden on it. Most irregular migrants and refugees lack the education, training, and skills required by the labor market, and their increasing numbers add pressure on social and financial programs.

Regarding the labor market, migrants contribute in some sectors by filling jobs that Americans tend to avoid, and they add cultural and economic diversity. They also play a role in driving economic growth and development. It is noted that irregular migrants constitute about 6% of the U.S. workforce, including some workers. While migration improves average living standards, economic literature is divided on whether migration reduces the wages of certain groups of workers. Some estimates indicate that migration led to a 4.7% decline in the wages of low-skilled workers and a 1.7% decline in the wages of college graduates between 1990 and 2006.

1. NAFTA and Its Relationship with Migration and Its Impact on the U.S. Economy

On 1 July 2020, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was replaced by the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). According to the International Trade Administration, the new agreement promises to create a more balanced trade environment, support high-wage jobs for Americans, grow the North American economy, and address criticisms that had been directed at the old agreement.

When former U.S. President Bill Clinton signed NAFTA in 1993, he expected the agreement to remove trade barriers among the three countries, create the world's largest free trade area, and generate 200,000 jobs in the United States. Environmental and labor side agreements negotiated by

his administration were also expected to make NAFTA a force for social progress as well as economic growth.

After more than 30 years, opinions diverge regarding the agreement's impact on the U.S. economy and job creation. It should be noted that it is not always easy to isolate this impact from other economic, social, and political factors that have influenced U.S. growth.

2. NAFTA's Position on Migration:

The inclusion of Mexico and Canada in NAFTA was driven partly by a desire to regulate migration, although migration itself was not formally included in the agreement and was explicitly excluded from it. The official policy in the agreement was clear. President George H. W. Bush said during the signing that "this is a trade agreement, not a social contract." Mexican President Carlos Salinas and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney confirmed that migration would be outside the agreement, as the aim was to export goods, not people.

However, despite these statements, migration was a key driver behind the agreement. Recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform and International Cooperation and Development supported NAFTA's adoption by the U.S. Congress, arguing that NAFTA was an effective means of reducing migration from Canada and Mexico to the United States.

3. The Agreement's Impact on the U.S. Economy:

On the positive side, total trade among the three NAFTA partners (the United States, Canada, and Mexico) increased from about \$290 billion in 1993 to \$1.1 trillion in 2016. Cross-border investments also increased during those years. The stock of U.S. foreign direct investment in Mexico rose from \$15 billion to more than \$107.8 billion in 2014.

As for jobs, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that 6 million jobs depend on trade and investment among Canada, the United States, and Mexico—a flow greatly facilitated by NAFTA, which eliminated many costly tariff and non-tariff barriers. NAFTA also facilitated multi-layered integration of U.S., Mexican, and Canadian supply chains. According to the Wilson Center, 25 cents of every dollar of goods imported to the United States from Canada, and 40 cents of every dollar of goods imported from Mexico, is actually "made in the United States."

Gerónimo Gutiérrez, managing director of the North American Development Bank, noted that trade between the United States and Mexico exceeded \$500 billion in 2015, five times more than in 1992 when NAFTA negotiations concluded. He added that NAFTA created partners rather than competitors among the member countries. Mexico's interest in this bilateral relationship can be summarized in two facts: around 80% of Mexico's exports go to the United States, and 50% of the accumulated foreign direct investment it received between 2000 and 2011 came from the United States. Furthermore, NAFTA served as a key anchor for reforms that made Mexico a more modern economy and an open society.

Third: Comparing Immigration Policies under Donald Trump and Joe Biden

Immigration has been a central issue in U.S. politics over the past two decades, and U.S. presidents have differed in their approach to it based on their political agendas and economic and social

perspectives. By studying the presidencies of Trump and then Biden, it becomes clear that migration has been prominently present in American political discourse.

First: Immigration Policies during Trump's First Term and the Beginning of His Second Term

1. Trump since the 2016 Elections:

From the moment Trump came to power in his first term, immigration occupied a major place in his speeches, which were characterized by extreme hostility and hatred toward migrants in the United States. His most controversial decisions concerned building a wall along the southern border with Mexico and compelling Mexico to pay for it, on the grounds that it was responsible for the massive influx of migrants.

However, until 2019, few practical measures were taken regarding migration, apart from ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which had provided protection to undocumented minors who had been brought to the United States as children. He also terminated the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) proposal, which President Obama had introduced and which would have granted legal status to the undocumented parents of children who are U.S. citizens or legal residents. The program was fully aborted under Trump.

In addition, Trump announced a “zero tolerance” policy that involved detaining irregular migrants and separating them from their children, who were then held before being forcibly returned with their parents to their countries of origin.

It is worth mentioning that Trump focused during the 2016 elections on mobilizing voters in key states by building his campaign around the slogan “Make America great again” and appealing to a nostalgic image of a prosperous, predominantly white America. Migration was central to this message and helped him achieve the desired electoral gains.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Trump's immigration agenda rests on two key factors:

- The first factor is his worldview. Trump believes that U.S. national security is threatened by the country's “porous” southern border, which also undermines state sovereignty. He therefore insists on tight control over the border and the entry of both people and goods. With respect to goods, he believes that the United States must control prices and protect domestic products from competition through protectionist policies and tariffs. With respect to people, he sees migrants as a cultural and economic threat to the United States.
- The second factor relates to Trump's personality as a businessman. He believes that the economic aid the United States provides to Latin American and North American countries does not yield a sufficient material return. In reality, this aid is intended to improve economic, social, political, and educational conditions in those countries, thereby encouraging would-be migrants to remain in their homelands and ultimately reducing migration flows and eliminating irregular migration in the long term. Trump opposed this vision, which had prevailed before he came to office, and reduced economic aid to many countries upon assuming power, accusing them of exploiting the United States economically.

2. Trump after His Victory in the November 2024 Elections

Based on an assessment of Trump's personality and his handling of various regional and international issues, it appears that he has not changed much during the four years he spent out of office. Indeed, he is expected to be even more extreme after returning to the White House, especially given his vengeful attitude toward his rivals and enemies and the assassination attempt he survived during the election campaign. All these factors add a special dimension to his political character in U.S. history.

He is unlikely to handle regional and international issues exactly as he did during his first term, but some of his previous stances may be repeated. Domestically, he has followed a strict policy toward irregular migrants and minorities of various backgrounds, making migration a key element of his electoral agenda and using it as a pressure card against Kamala Harris. Trump emphasized that he would carry out the largest mass deportation of migrants in U.S. history, establish detention camps, and deploy police forces to pursue them.

In his most recent statements, Trump described irregular migrants in the United States as "animals, not people," and claimed that they had escaped prisons and shelters in their home countries and were increasing violent crime in the United States. He criticized the Biden administration's handling of the southern border due to the influx of between 800 and 1000 migrants into Whitewater. As a result, the Biden administration faced criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike, and crossings along the U.S.–Mexico border reached record levels during his term, clearly affecting the efficiency of education and health services.

These bold and controversial statements will likely fuel hatred, division, and violence within the country. However, a number of U.S. affairs researchers have pointed out that available data show that people residing in the United States illegally do not commit violent crimes at higher rates than native-born U.S. citizens.

3. Deportation and Detention Plans under the New Trump Administration

Several indicators suggest the return of executive orders implemented during Trump's first term. The incoming administration is preparing plans to implement strict border measures, cancel all of President Joe Biden's immigration policies, and begin detaining and deporting migrants on a large scale. Trump made immigration a central issue in his 2024 election campaign. Unlike his first campaign, which focused heavily on building a border wall, he has now shifted attention to internal enforcement and the removal of irregular migrants already residing in the United States.

People close to the president and his aides are considering executive measures similar to those adopted during his first term that could be implemented as soon as he takes office. Overall, this would mean a return to strict immigration policies that had previously faced strong criticism from Democrats and migrant advocates.

These executive measures and ongoing reviews include the revival of the program informally known as "Remain in Mexico," which requires migrants to stay in Mexico while their immigration cases are processed in the United States, as well as a review of asylum restrictions and the removal of protections for migrants benefiting from humanitarian parole programs. Another executive order under consideration would make detention mandatory and end the practice of releasing migrants—

something that happens frequently under various administrations due to limited federal resources. Such orders would pave the way for large-scale detention and eventual mass deportation.

4. The Most Important Decisions by Donald Trump Concerning Migrants after His Return to the White House

On the first day of his second term, Trump expressed concern about the Canadian and Mexican borders. He reiterated his threat to impose comprehensive tariffs of 25% on both countries.

Indeed, President Donald Trump presented a plan to enhance security at the southern border through a series of executive orders that went into effect shortly after his inauguration on Monday, 20 January 2025, fulfilling his political promise to eliminate irregular migration. These orders revive priorities from his first administration that his successor had rolled back, including forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico and resuming construction of the border wall.

In addition, Trump canceled the entry appointments of migrants who had scheduled interviews to enter the United States using the CBP One application within minutes of taking the oath of office. Mexico, for its part, agreed to allow asylum seekers to remain south of the U.S. border while waiting for their court dates. In this context, Trump announced in his inaugural address that he was declaring a national emergency at the southern border. He pledged to halt illegal entry and begin the process of returning “millions and millions” of foreign nationals.

In parallel, the U.S. House of Representatives approved on Wednesday, 22 January 2025—just two days after Trump’s inauguration—a bill providing for the detention of irregular migrants accused of theft and violent crimes, in a first piece of legislation that Trump could sign in line with his plans to eliminate irregular migration. The bill, named “Let It Be Riley,” was named after a 22-year-old student killed in Georgia last year by a Venezuelan migrant. This underscores the sharp shift in political debate over migration following Trump’s election victory. Immigration policy remains one of the most entrenched issues in Congress.

Trump also issued a series of executive orders aimed at closing the Mexican border to migration and deporting millions of migrants who lack permanent legal status in the United States. Two days after his inauguration, on 22 January, Trump also canceled the refugee resettlement program, and his administration signaled its intent to prosecute local law enforcement officials who do not implement his new immigration policies.

Second: Joe Biden’s Policies Regarding Immigration to the United States

Joe Biden adopted a different approach from Donald Trump in handling the immigration issue. From the time he assumed office in January 2021, his administration began taking steps on several fronts to reverse the restrictions imposed by the Trump administration on immigration to the United States.

In January 2022, the Biden administration introduced the largest proposed immigration package, which would have brought about radical changes in the course set by his predecessor, a course that

had nearly halted migration and asylum to the United States. The new bill outlined an eight-year pathway to U.S. citizenship for an estimated 10.5 million irregular migrants residing in the country.

Biden also worked to modernize the family-based immigration system, aiming to expand access to family-based green cards in various ways. In addition, his administration raised the cap on refugees admitted to the United States to 62,500 for fiscal year 2021 and 125,000 for fiscal year 2022, alongside other measures relating to work visas and policies concerning unaccompanied migrant children.

However, on 5 October 2023, the Biden administration announced its intention to add a new section to the border wall with Mexico—a project that had been a centerpiece of Trump's efforts to stop irregular migration. Although Biden had previously opposed funding the wall, he was compelled to proceed, according to his statements, because he could not reverse the funding that his predecessor had allocated for it. He stated that the money had already been earmarked for the border wall and that he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Republicans in Congress to redirect it.

Trump responded to this decision by asserting that the announcement proved he had been right to build 900 kilometers of wall. The Mexican president, in contrast, described the move as “a step backward.”

Biden had also pledged to reverse Trump's harsh immigration policies and adopt a more humanitarian approach. Although he achieved some success in changing those policies, his efforts to reform the immigration system were overwhelmed by the large numbers of migrants crossing the U.S.–Mexico border.

As a result, the immigration issue posed serious political challenges for Biden, especially given that two-thirds of Americans did not approve of his handling of the border. Trump, who ran against him in the November 2024 elections, capitalized on public dissatisfaction with Biden to bolster his own campaign. This pressure forced Biden to modify his stance and adopt positions similar to those advocated by Trump.

During his 2020 presidential campaign, Biden criticized Trump's restrictions on asylum, particularly the rule that barred migrants from filing asylum applications unless they did so before reaching the U.S. border. With mounting criticism, however, the Biden administration and Democrats in Congress eventually proposed laws similar to those enacted by the Trump administration just months before the presidential elections.

Biden issued a comprehensive executive order aimed at limiting the entry of migrants and refugees at the southern border between the United States and Mexico. This move angered Republicans, who believed it did not go far enough, and upset Democrats, who saw it as a betrayal of his commitment to refugees and a direct assault on the fundamental human right to seek asylum.

Under this order, which has come into effect, border patrol agents and immigration officials can expel migrants seeking to enter the United States irregularly without processing their asylum claims. The administration set thresholds for enforcing this policy once the seven-day average of arrivals at ports of entry reaches 2,500 migrants. The order also stipulates that the border may reopen once the seven-day average falls to 1,500 migrants. In contrast, the average daily number of irregular

crossings along the southern border with Mexico during the current year was estimated at about 6,000 people.

Fourth: The Impact of Immigration Policies under Donald Trump on Economic Relations among Mexico, Canada, and the United States

By linking trade policy to migration and border issues, Trump aims to use tariffs as a tool to pressure Canada and Mexico to take stricter measures at their borders with the United States, particularly to stop the flow of irregular migrants. Trump has emphasized that these tariffs will remain in place until his objectives are achieved.

These threats have provoked discontent in Canada and Mexico, where officials have described the move as a threat to economic stability and harmful to economic relations among the three countries.

Given Trump's pledge to reduce the number of migrants coming from Mexico and Canada and to implement strict policies toward migrants, he threatened to impose tariffs of 25% on both countries. This would have counterproductive results. The Mexican Minister of Economy had previously warned that such tariffs would result in the loss of about 400,000 jobs, leading to a deterioration in political and economic relations among the three countries.

In this context, U.S. immigration policies under Trump—and those that he is expected to adopt in his new term—have been criticized by Mexico and Canada for curtailing migrants' rights, such as through family separation and border wall construction.

Mexico, which receives many migrants from Central America, finds itself in a sensitive diplomatic position, balancing U.S. demands with its own humanitarian considerations. Canada, in contrast, adopts a more flexible and inclusive policy toward refugees and migrants, which may lead to tensions with the United States, whose approach is more restrictive.

At the level of economic and trade relations, tensions over migration may also affect trade agreements among these countries, including the USMCA, which contains provisions related to labor and migration and may influence future trade negotiations.

Migration flows also affect labor markets in these states. Migrants from Mexico to the United States constitute an essential part of the workforce in sectors such as agriculture and services. Canada, for its part, has benefited from attractive immigration policies for skilled workers, thereby boosting its domestic economy.

To confront the challenges arising from U.S. immigration policies toward Mexico and Canada, the three countries seek long-term solutions that balance security considerations with human rights. At the same time, domestic political issues in each of the three countries may influence the dynamics of cooperation among them. Overall, immigration policy remains a decisive factor in shaping political relations among Canada, Mexico, and the United States. These states must adapt to internal and external changes to find fair and sustainable solutions.

Fifth: A Forward-Looking Vision of the Fate and Course of Migration and Migrants under Trump and Their Future

The migration file is one of the most important issues during Trump's second term. Following his return to the White House, he announced that he would reshape the migration issue for future generations—not only in the United States, but also across much of the world.

Indeed, shortly after President Donald Trump's return to office, U.S. authorities launched an unprecedented deportation campaign targeting irregular migrants and declared a state of emergency at the southern border in what has been described as the largest mass deportation in history.

Recently, Trump signed orders declaring a national emergency at the southern border between the United States and Mexico as part of efforts to combat irregular migration. These orders classify criminal gangs as terrorist organizations and target birthright citizenship for children born in the United States to irregular migrants.

Although these measures were carefully planned—U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has arrested and deported many migrants—55% of Americans have expressed support for mass deportation campaigns targeting irregular migrants. Nevertheless, many human rights organizations, led by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), have filed lawsuits to obstruct deportation efforts.

1. Challenges and Obstacles to Implementing Immigration Policies during Trump's Second Term

The planned mass deportation campaign will likely face many barriers and challenges, particularly in so-called “sanctuary cities” that have pledged not to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. These cities include New York, Chicago, Miami, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

According to the latest estimates, nearly 15 million irregular migrants reside in the United States, including migrants from Mexico and Canada. Many of these migrants are an integral part of the U.S. economy. Migrant representation is particularly high in sectors such as construction, agriculture, tourism, elder care, and low-status jobs such as cleaning and maintenance.

Once mass deportation begins, many U.S. companies will have difficulty filling the vacancies currently occupied by irregular migrants. This may create labor shortages and increase the cost of finding replacement workers. Prices and inflation are also likely to rise, imposing financial pressure on all Americans and disrupting supply chains and service levels.

The immediate effects of deportation are difficult to predict with certainty. However, based on existing information about the migration file and previous mass deportation efforts, it seems that goods and services heavily reliant on irregular migrant labor—such as construction and agriculture—are more likely to see rising prices, contrary to Trump's promises of lower costs. This will create economic challenges for the American people over the next four years under Trump.

Legal challenges cannot be overlooked. Despite signs of public support for mass deportation, human rights advocates strongly oppose Trump's plans and arrangements. Concerns over family separation and due process are particularly acute, as many irregular migrants live with spouses or children who

have legal status or are U.S. citizens. Deporting these migrants would keep the government occupied for years, but the serious enforcement of immigration laws may also deter many migrants from remaining in the country.

Thus, since President Donald Trump assumed office this year, his administration has adopted a new approach to migration consistent with his campaign pledges to impose major restrictions on migration and migrants—especially those coming from Canada and Mexico—and to repeal Joe Biden’s immigration policies. This approach reflects his belief in “securitization” as the fastest way to create a political climate that accepts the idea that migration is a threat to U.S. national security.

2. Features of Trump’s Strategy to Securitize the Immigration Issue in the Coming Period

Trump is expected to continue framing irregular migration as a state of war that threatens Americans’ lives and to present national identity as existentially threatened. The exceptional measures taken against migrants are largely based on executive orders that bypass the legislative process in Congress, which can be lengthy.

Based on the above, border crossings are likely to decline even more than during Trump’s first term. As for the deportation of irregular migrants, 5,000 people were detained in the first week of the campaign, most of them migrants. The powers of U.S. security agencies are expected to be expanded, enabling them to deport irregular migrants more quickly in the coming period of Trump’s presidency.

In light of Trump’s political preferences and measures, several scenarios can be drawn regarding the future of migrants in the United States:

1. Escalation of Deportation Policy and Pressure on Irregular Migrants:

The Trump administration is expected to continue mass deportation campaigns targeting irregular migrants, exacerbating the suffering of these individuals and their families. Large-scale deportation operations will make migrants’ lives much more difficult and may result in a substantial increase in the number of families separated, especially those with legally resident or U.S.-citizen members.

2. Tightening Restrictions on Legal Migration:

The administration is likely to further limit opportunities for migrants seeking work visas, asylum, or family reunification. Bureaucratic procedures for legal migration will become more complex and time-consuming. New restrictions may be imposed on migrants from countries that Trump deems sources of security or economic threats.

3. Impact on the U.S. Economy:

If mass deportation policies continue, the U.S. economy may suffer losses in critical sectors such as construction, agriculture, tourism, and healthcare—sectors heavily dependent on migrant labor. The economy will face serious challenges in filling the void left by deported migrants, potentially leading to rising prices, higher inflation, and greater reliance on local labor that may not be available or prepared to meet demand.

4. Legal and Social Pressures:

Despite Trump’s support among certain segments of society, his policies may heighten legal and social tensions. Laws that violate the rights of migrants may provoke strong responses

from human rights organizations and affected communities, increasing internal tensions. The administration is likely to face more lawsuits challenging immigration policies, and national-level protests may become more frequent.

5. Political and Demographic Shifts:

Trump's policies could cause significant changes in the U.S. political and demographic landscape. As migrant communities grow—even under irregular status—new political alliances may form between Americans of migrant origin and human rights organizations, fueling renewed debate over the future of migration in the country. At the same time, nationalist and isolationist sentiments may rise among groups that see migrants as a threat to the country's security and cultural identity.

6. Future of Migrants in the Context of Human Rights:

As migration restrictions intensify, the human rights situation for irregular migrants in the United States may deteriorate. Human rights organizations will face growing challenges in defending migrants' rights amid restrictive legislation. Key issues such as family separation, forced detention, and denial of access to essential rights such as healthcare and education are likely to intensify.

In summary, immigration policy under Trump will continue to profoundly affect American society and migrants both inside and outside the United States. Legal and political tensions may increase as a result of the administration's stance on migration, potentially undermining the country's stability on multiple levels. Migrants will face numerous challenges that require concerted efforts at both the local and international levels to protect their rights and combat discrimination and persecution.

Conclusion

This study has provided an analysis of the drivers and reasons for migration among Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The United States is one of the main destinations driving these migration flows and has played a significant role in increasing international migration rates, levels of educational attainment, and wealth accumulation worldwide in recent decades.

The study has also compared immigration policies under Trump and Biden. It focused on irregular migrants and refugees, given the importance of this issue at a time marked by large waves of global displacement driven by security, economic, and environmental factors.

Security measures cannot be considered a decisive mechanism capable of stopping irregular cross-border migration. Human beings will continue to move and be displaced. It is certain that the escalation of security-based responses by destination countries like the United States, or by transit and source countries such as Mexico and Canada, will have severe humanitarian consequences for many people.

The overlap between these migration flows and the 2024 presidential elections has intensified the complexity of the issue, as migration became a point of contention between Trump and Harris. Amid all this, regional coordination to address irregular migration remains lacking, as do legal channels for

organizing migration and asylum procedures, and efforts to tackle economic and security problems in countries of origin.

The study has also highlighted a comparison between the Trump and Biden administrations regarding the migration file. The Trump administration sought to reduce migration to the United States by adopting strict policies and measures toward migrants, as reflected both in his 2024 election campaign and during his first and the beginning of his second term. These measures sparked concern among migrants in the United States and around the world and led to the loss of many skilled and highly qualified migrants, which will negatively affect the U.S. economy.

The Biden administration, by contrast, moved from January 2021 to dismantle many of Trump's restrictive measures on migration to the United States. In January 2022, it introduced the largest immigration proposal, which would have radically altered Trump's course and removed the near-total obstruction of migration and asylum to the United States. The bill established an eight-year path to citizenship for an estimated 10.5 million irregular migrants and updated family-based immigration rules to broaden access to family green cards in multiple ways. Biden's administration also raised the refugee admission cap to 62,500 in fiscal year 2021.

Recommendations

Mechanisms to address the influx of migrants and refugees to the United States are grounded in U.S.–Mexican–Canadian policies and coordination intended to prevent as many migrants as possible from reaching the U.S. southern border. As a result, security measures and strict policies against migrants increase, placing pressure on them to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. Undoubtedly, these measures and policies create severely deteriorating and dangerous humanitarian conditions for thousands of migrants.

Based on the above, the following recommendations can be made to help improve migration management and strengthen shared benefits for the countries concerned:

- **Recommendations to Improve Relations among the Three Countries:**

1. **Cooperation among the countries in combating irregular migration:**

It is important to strengthen cooperation among Canada, Mexico, and the United States in combating irregular migration and developing joint border-control policies. These policies must ensure humanitarian solutions that respect human rights, such as improving migrant reception centers and providing legal protection to migrants at risk.

2. **Information and resource sharing:**

The three countries can enhance cooperation in sharing information on migration flows and potential security threats arising from irregular migration. Such cooperation will support evidence-based policymaking and informed analysis.

3. **Strengthen cooperation in the field of human rights protection and work to improve conditions for irregular migrants, ensuring that they receive necessary assistance and legal protection.**

4. Enhance cooperation in combating human trafficking, smuggling, and illegal infiltration, and hold accountable those engaged in these unethical activities.
5. Strengthen cultural and educational cooperation among the three countries to foster understanding, acceptance of the other, and stronger human relations among the peoples of the region.
6. Encourage social and cultural exchanges among the three countries to promote mutual understanding, integration, and appreciation of different cultures and traditions.

• **Economic Recommendations:**

1. Canada and the United States should harness migration as a driver of economic growth, especially by attracting highly skilled migrants and talent in fields such as technology and healthcare. In turn, Mexico should improve economic conditions to reduce economic migration by investing in sectors that promote sustainable development.
2. Provide training programs for migrants. Both Canada and Mexico should implement training programs that help migrants develop skills to increase their chances of obtaining suitable jobs. The United States should provide training programs to prepare new migrants to participate effectively in the local labor market.
3. Enhance economic and development support for Mexico and other Latin American countries, and expand job opportunities and investment in those countries to reduce irregular migration flows.
4. Strengthen economic partnerships among the three countries by promoting trade, joint investment, and the free movement of capital, thereby boosting economic development and creating new jobs.
5. Develop joint economic sectors among the three countries, such as agriculture, tourism, technology, and creative industries, through the exchange of knowledge, technology, and expertise.
6. Provide joint programs to support entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, and support the integration of migrant workers into the private sector.
7. Strengthen education and vocational training for youth in the three countries to enhance employment opportunities, support inclusive development, and improve the economic conditions of young people and families.

• **Recommendations to Reduce the Negative Impacts of Migration:**

1. **Monitor the impact of migration on labor markets:**
The three countries should continue monitoring the impact of migration on their domestic labor markets through ongoing economic analysis. This will help identify affected sectors and provide solutions to challenges arising from imbalances in migration.

2. **Strengthen social protection for migrants:**

Social policies should include rights-based guarantees for migrants, such as access to healthcare, education, and social services, to ensure that they are not subjected to exploitation or marginalization.

3. Strengthen tripartite cooperation among the three countries to develop joint strategies for effective migration management, focusing on policies that promote economic and social stability in countries of origin.
4. Establish mechanisms to address irregular entry routes and provide protection for refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations in a way that guarantees their rights and prevents violations.
5. Enhance tripartite cooperation in combating human trafficking and promote good governance of migration, including stronger judicial cooperation and information and expertise sharing.
6. Provide awareness and education programs for host communities in the three countries on the positive impact of migration and the importance of peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights.
7. Strengthen tripartite cooperation in developing infrastructure, expanding job opportunities, and advancing sustainable development to improve living conditions in countries of origin and reduce economic pressure on host communities.