

Zazuliak Zoriana Mykolaivna
Kalashnyk Sofiia Tymurivna

Features of the U.S. migration policy in 2017–2025 and its global impact

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Zazuliak Zoriana Mykolaivna

PhD in Political Science, Associate

Professor,

Associate Professor at the Department

of Political Science and International

Relations

Lviv Polytechnic National University

Mytropolyta Andriy str., 5, Lviv, Ukraine

ORCID: 0000-0002-0098-9424

Kalashnyk Sofiia Tymurivna

Student of the 291 "International

Relations, Social Communications,

and Regional Studies" Specialty

Lviv Polytechnic National University

Mytropolyta Andriy str., 5, Lviv, Ukraine

ORCID: 0009-0000-4838-008X

U.S. migration policy is one of the key factors shaping contemporary global migration processes, as the United States remains a primary destination for migrants and a state that significantly influences international standards and approaches to regulating population mobility. Between 2017 and 2025, U.S. migration policy underwent profound transformations closely linked to the alternating administrations of Donald Trump and Joe Biden, whose ideological frameworks and policy instruments varied considerably. The Trump administration (2017–2021) focused on a hardline approach that included strengthening border control, militarizing the U.S.–Mexico border, significantly reducing refugee admission quotas, restricting humanitarian protection programs, and withdrawing from the UN Global Compact for Migration. Conversely, the Biden administration (2021–2024) reinstated several humanitarian mechanisms, expanded refugee quotas, revived programs protecting migrant children, and initiated reforms in asylum procedures, emphasizing human rights and international cooperation. However, systemic overload, rising irregular border crossings, and deep political polarization limited the effectiveness of these reforms. Trump's return to power in 2025 triggered another shift toward a restrictive model and highlighted the cyclical nature of U.S. migration policy. The purpose of this article is to analyze the evolution of U.S. migration policy during 2017–2025 and assess its global political, economic, and humanitarian implications. The findings demonstrate a combination of securitization, humanitarian protection, and institutional crisis, which collectively influence global migration governance. The study concludes that the sustainable reform of U.S. migration policy requires a strategic, long-term approach grounded in digitalization of administrative procedures, strengthening international cooperation, and adherence to human rights standards, rather than relying solely on situational security-driven measures.

Key words: United States, migration policy, refugees, international organizations, globalization, national security.

Introduction. U.S. migration policy has been the subject of extensive research in both international and Ukrainian scholarly literature over recent decades. The United States remains the largest recipient country for migrants: according to UN data, by 2020, over 50 million people born outside the country reside in the U.S. Scholars note the ambivalent nature of American policy, balancing control measures with humanitarian obligations.

In the Ukrainian context, studying U.S. migration policy is practically significant, as Ukraine faces similar challenges in labor migration, refugee integration, and aligning legislation with EU standards (Malynovska, 2018; Semenets-Orlova, 2020). The shift from D.Trump's restrictive policies (2017–2021) to J. Biden's moderate approach (2021–2024), and subsequently D. Trump's return in 2025, reflects the cyclical and unstable nature of U.S. policy. This pendulum effect creates both domestic and international consequences requiring comprehensive analysis.

Objective of the study: To analyze the transformation of U.S. migration policy in 2017–2025 and determine its impact on global processes.

Tasks:

- Characterize the migration-related political decisions of the Trump and Biden administrations.
- Identify the economic, humanitarian, and security consequences of U.S. policy.

- Examine the influence of U.S. migration policy on international organizations and the global migration governance system.

- Outline key challenges as of 2025.

Research Methods. The article employs a systemic approach to analyze migration policy as an interconnected set of decisions; a historical method to trace changes during 2017–2025; a comparative method to examine differences between the Trump and Biden administrations; and content analysis of documents, reports of international organizations (IOM, UNHCR, Pew Research, MPI), and media materials.

Results. U.S. migration policy has historically developed under the influence of economic needs, political interests, and ideological priorities, combining the aspiration for humanism with the requirements of national security. Since the beginning of the 21st century, this sphere has been characterized by contradictory tendencies: on the one hand – strengthening control over migration flows, and on the other – maintaining the image of the country as a «nation of immigrants» [1].

The administration of Donald Trump (2017–2021) initiated a hardline approach by implementing the «Zero Tolerance» strategy aimed at tightening border control and reducing the number of asylum seekers. The construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico was initiated, refugee admission

quotas were reduced from 110,000 to 18,000 [2], and the «Remain in Mexico» policy was introduced, forcing migrants to wait for their case reviews on Mexican territory. This led to the creation of temporary camps where human rights were systematically violated [3].

In 2017, the Trump administration announced the U.S. withdrawal from the UN Global Compact for Migration, arguing this by the need to protect sovereignty. The continuation of this policy during the second term (2025) was accompanied by statements about plans for a complete withdrawal from the UN and 48 of its agencies, including the WHO, which testified to isolationist tendencies in the field of international cooperation.

Despite the harsh rhetoric, the U.S. maintained cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, implementing resettlement programs for refugees and support for Latin American countries. At the same time, Washington demanded more active engagement from countries of origin in the repatriation of their citizens, emphasizing the supremacy of U.S. law [4].

After Joe Biden was elected in 2021, there was a partial return to the humanitarian paradigm. The administration canceled the «Remain in Mexico» policy, increased the refugee admission quota to 125,000, reinstated the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, and launched Operation Allies Welcome for the resettlement of Afghans after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. At the same time, humanitarian openness led to an overload of the judicial system – as of 2023, the number of pending cases in immigration courts exceeded 3.6 million. This provoked sharp political criticism even among Biden's allies [5].

Donald Trump's return to power in 2025 marked a new round of restrictive policy: large-scale deportations were announced, humanitarian programs were reduced, new migrant security screening requirements were introduced, and the National Guard was involved in border protection.

Trump also declared his intention to withdraw completely from the UN and stop funding a number of international organizations, including the World Health Organization. Such actions were justified by the «ineffectiveness» of international institutions and indicate strengthening isolationist tendencies in U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the field of international migration regulation [6].

In the economic dimension, the U.S. policy of attracting highly qualified specialists creates an ambivalent effect: on the one hand, it promotes innovation and increases the competitiveness of the American economy, while on the other hand, it exacerbates the «brain drain» problem from donor countries. The loss of human capital in the countries of origin of such migrants slows their technological and scientific development, while

the United States gains additional resources for economic growth [7].

Immigrants play a key role in the functioning of the American economy, filling the labor shortage in various sectors – from agriculture to high-tech industries. Their activity contributes to economic growth, innovation, and productivity. Moreover, remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin constitute an important source of external financing for those economies and contribute to poverty reduction and the improvement of socio-economic well-being [8].

The deportation policy, especially concerning Latin American countries, has pronounced humanitarian consequences. The return of a large number of individuals without adequate resources, employment, or social support creates a serious burden on the economies of origin countries and increases the risk of repeated migration. Such trends may contribute to the redistribution of refugee flows, complicate international coordination, and aggravate humanitarian crises [9]. At the same time, the lack of a systemic approach to granting asylum or resolving the status of deported persons deepens global problems in protecting migrants' rights.

From a security standpoint, the strengthening of border control, particularly through advanced technological monitoring tools, has allowed the U.S. to increase the effectiveness of combating illegal migration flows and countering the activities of transnational criminal groups engaged in human trafficking, drug trafficking, and smuggling. [12] However, excessively harsh border control approaches – such as the «Zero tolerance» policy or the reinstatement of the «Remain in Mexico» program – contribute to the growth of shadow migration channels and the risk of human exploitation [10].

The policy of tightened control reduces the scale of illegal migration, yet simultaneously stimulates the development of illegal routes and smuggling networks. Conversely, periods of liberalization aimed at humanizing approaches to migrants often lead to overloading the immigration system, which subsequently causes a return to restrictive measures. As a result, constant oscillation between these two poles casts doubt on the consistency and strategic nature of U.S. migration policy, as well as its leadership role in the global regulation of migration processes [11].

The migration policy of the United States of America traditionally occupies a key place in the system of public administration since the country remains one of the main centers of migrant attraction in the world. As of early 2025, the United States remains one of the leading destinations for both legal and illegal migration, which determines the need for an in-depth analysis of current problems and challenges in this field. U.S. policy is characterized by a combination of humanitarian principles, economic expediency,

and national security requirements, but the balance between these components is increasingly disrupted under the influence of domestic political changes and global crisis processes [12].

One of the most acute problems is the strengthening of deportation policy and the militarization of the border. The resumption by the Trump administration in 2025 of mass deportations using military aircraft became the subject of sharp criticism from international partners and human rights organizations. This practice, in addition to humanitarian consequences, created significant diplomatic difficulties, particularly in relations with Latin American countries. Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela repeatedly refused to accept deported citizens, citing the lack of reintegration and social support programs for returnees in the United States [14]. As a result, a vicious circle is formed: deported individuals try to re-enter the U.S. illegally, which increases the burden on the border system.

The second significant challenge is the growing militarization of the border area. The Pentagon deployed an additional 1,500 military personnel to support operations on the Mexican border, increasing the presence of armed forces by 60% [16]. Such measures, although aimed at strengthening control, simultaneously raise questions about compliance with human rights, particularly the right to asylum. The de facto substitution of civilian structures by the military indicates a shift in emphasis in migration policy from a humanitarian approach to a force-based one.

Another problem remains the suspension of accepting new asylum seekers, which became the result of a presidential decree allowing migrants to be returned without judicial review. This contradicts the U.S. international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The curtailment of humanitarian parole programs for citizens of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela also led to an increase in illegal flows and humanitarian tension on the southern border [17].

Equally controversial is the reinstatement of the «Remain in Mexico» policy, according to which asylum seekers must await court decisions on Mexican territory. This approach creates critical pressure on border cities that lack infrastructure to accommodate tens of thousands of people. According to human rights organizations, 4 out of 5 migrants in these camps faced violence, abductions, or extortion. This turns the border zone into a space with a high level of crime and social instability.

Another example of inconsistency is the cancellation of the CBP One mobile application, which allowed migrants to pre-register for border crossing. Its abolition caused chaos, as thousands of people were left without the opportunity to legally apply for asylum. Despite the temporary reduction in crossings, the problem merely took a latent form, since

a significant part of migrants shifted to the «shadow» sector.

Additionally, the U.S. migration system is experiencing a deep institutional crisis. At the beginning of 2025, more than 3.6 million cases were pending in immigration courts, and the average review period exceeded three years. The dismissal of judges and reduction of immigration agency personnel further complicated the situation, undermining public trust in the effectiveness of the system.

Another major problem is the exploitation of labor migrants and the lack of flexible mechanisms for legal employment. Temporary work visa programs (H-2A, H-2B) do not meet the needs of the American labor market, which stimulates shadow employment and labor rights violations [18]. On the one hand, the government seeks to reduce dependence on foreign labor, while on the other, labor migrants sustain a number of key economic sectors, especially agriculture, construction, and elderly care.

It is also important to emphasize the growing political polarization. Republicans advocate for strict control and deportation mechanisms, while Democrats support liberalization, legalization of certain migrants, and protection of asylum seekers' rights. The lack of consensus in Congress blocks the adoption of comprehensive immigration reform, which has been proposed repeatedly since the Obama administration.

Overall, as of 2025, U.S. migration policy is characterized by a combination of institutional overload, social tension, and international pressure. Despite the official decrease in illegal crossings, the humanitarian situation at the border remains critical, and federal actions often contradict international law principles. This indicates a systemic crisis that requires a strategic rethinking of approaches to migration management.

In the current conditions, reforming U.S. migration policy requires new tools of forecasting and strategic planning. Scholars increasingly turn to futurological analysis methods, in particular Jim Dator's scenario forecasting method, which envisions four possible models of future development [19]. This approach allows for assessing how the migration system may change under the influence of political, economic, and technological factors.

1. Scenario «Business as usual». Within this scenario, U.S. migration policy development continues without significant reforms. Main characteristics: maintaining the current level of deportations, partial functioning of visa programs, technological innovations in border control (use of biometrics, artificial intelligence) [20]. The advantages of this approach are stability and predictability, but it does not solve key problems – judicial system overload, illegal labor, and humanitarian crises.

2. Scenario «Collapse». This envisions a deep political and social crisis. Polarization between parties

reaches a critical level, reforms become impossible, and social conflicts between migrants and local communities intensify [21]. The consequence may be labor market degradation, growth of xenophobia, and international isolation of the U.S. This scenario is likely in the case of prolonged political instability and economic decline.

3. Scenario «Discipline». This option envisions the creation of a strict system of migration control. It includes the introduction of quotas, a point-based system, enhanced dual citizenship monitoring, and digital registration of all migrants [22]. Advantages include reduced illegal migration and improved security. However, such measures pose risks of human rights violations and may lead to the loss of the U.S. international image as a state that protects freedom and human dignity.

4. Scenario «Transformation». The most promising scenario, which envisions a deep renewal of the migration system. Its main features: creation of digital platforms for migrant registration, development of global cooperation with the UN and the International Organization for Migration, simplification of procedures for obtaining work and study visas, stimulation of integration through education and civic participation. Such a policy will ensure adaptability and competitiveness of the U.S. in globalization conditions, although it will require significant financial and political resources.

Conclusions. U.S. migration policy in 2017–2025 demonstrates cyclicity and instability caused by changes in political elites. It stands at a crossroads between security and humanism, between economic expediency and compliance with international norms. In the short term, the Trump administration is implementing a course close to the «discipline» scenario, which combines strict control measures with elements of crisis management. However, long-term stability requires a transition to the «transformation» scenario – building a flexible, digitally managed, human rights-based model of migration management.

Harsh measures reduce legal migration flows but stimulate shadow routes, whereas humanization overloads the system and provokes new waves of illegal migration. The isolationist stance of the U.S. has weakened its role in global migration governance, though international cooperation remains vital for maintaining global security and stability.

Reforming U.S. migration policy must be based on a complex of interrelated principles. Above all, it is important to ensure a balance between national security and respect for human rights, since excessive securitization may lead to discriminatory practices and undermine trust in state institutions. Equally significant is the institutional modernization of immigration services and the judicial system, which would allow reducing bureaucratic procedures

and ensuring prompt and fair case reviews. Among the key directions of reform, it is also worth highlighting the digitalization of migration control systems with mandatory guarantees of personal data protection, the development of international partnerships – primarily with Latin American countries, which remain the main source of migration flows – as well as the formation of an effective integration policy aimed at education, employment, and migrant participation in public life.

Thus, the prospects for reforming U.S. migration policy will be determined by the state's ability to combine technological innovation, humanitarian standards, and effective governance. Only a comprehensive, strategically oriented policy can ensure balanced development of the migration system in the 21st century.

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Особливості міграційної політики США у 2017–2025 роках та її глобальний вплив

Зазуляк Зоряна Миколаївна

кандидат політичних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри політології
та міжнародних відносин
Національного університету
«Львівська політехніка»
вул. Митрополита Андрея, 5,
Львів, Україна
ORCID: 0000-0002-0098-9424

Калашник Софія Тимурівна

студентка спеціальності
291 «Міжнародні відносини, суспільні
комунікації та регіональні студії»
Національного університету
«Львівська політехніка»
вул. Митрополита Андрея, 5,
Львів, Україна
ORCID: 0009-0000-4838-008X

Міграційна політика США є одним із ключових чинників формування сучасних глобальних міграційних процесів, оскільки Сполучені Штати виступають одним із головних центрів тяжіння мігрантів та країною, що найбільше впливає на міжнародні норми та підходи до регулювання мобільності населення. У 2017–2025 роках вона зазнала глибоких трансформацій, безпосередньо пов'язаних зі зміною адміністрацій Дональда Трампа та Джо Байдена, чії концепції та інструменти реалізації міграційної політики істотно різнилися. Адміністрація Д. Трампа (2017–2021) орієнтувалася на політику жорсткого контролю, що включала посилення прикордонного режиму, мілітаризацію кордону з Мексикою, значне скорочення квот на прийом біженців, обмеження програм тимчасового захисту та вихід США з Глобального договору про міграцію ООН. Натомість Дж. Байден (2021–2024) відновив низку гуманітарних програм, зокрема захист дітей-мігрантів, збільшив квоти на біженців та ініціював реформу процедур надання притулку, наголошуючи на необхідності дотримання прав людини. Однак надмірне навантаження на судову та адміністративну системи, зростання кількості нелегальних перетинів кордону та внутрішньополітична поляризація обмежили ефективність реформ. Повернення Д. Трампа до влади у 2025 р. спричинило черговий розворот до рестриктивної моделі та підкреслило циклічність американської міграційної політики. Мета статті – проаналізувати еволюцію міграційної політики США у 2017–2025 рр. та оцінити її глобальні політичні, економічні й гуманітарні наслідки. Результати дослідження демонструють поєднання тенденцій сек'юритизації, гуманізації та інституційної кризи, що впливає на міжнародні механізми управління міграцією. Висновки свідчать, що реформування американської міграційної політики потребує стратегічного підходу, заснованого на цифровізації процедур, зміцненні міжнародної співпраці та дотриманні стандартів прав людини.

Ключові слова: США, міграційна політика, біженці, міжнародні організації, глобалізація, національна безпека.

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