

CHAPTER 5

Trump's Immigration Policy and United States Foreign Relations

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Introduction

Immigration has served as both a domestic policy and a symbolic frontier in US politics and foreign policy, where questions of sovereignty and national interest collide. Under President Donald Trump, these tensions were sharpened and reconfigured into a core governing strategy. From the campaign trail to the White House, immigration policy moved from the periphery of political discourse to its centre, reflecting a broader project that intertwined nationalism and executive power. While many of Trump's immigration policies focused on domestic enforcement and legal rollbacks, relatively less attention has been paid to their foreign policy dimensions, particularly regarding Africa. This chapter explores how immigration became a key site through which US–Africa relations were reimagined, examining both the indirect and direct implications of Trump-era immigration measures for African states and African migrants.

This study examines US immigration policy under Trump, across both terms. During his first term (2017–2021), immigration policy

became a defining mechanism of statecraft, with about 400 administrative actions ranging from travel bans to visa restrictions (Pierce, Bolter and Selee, 2018). Though Africa was not a central focus of these policies, the continent was not untouched, as countries like Somalia, Eritrea and Nigeria were included in successive travel bans. Still, the impacts were largely peripheral and overshadowed by more visible policy changes toward Latin America and the Middle East. By contrast, Trump's second term (2025–present) has ushered in a new phase in which African countries feature more prominently regarding policy consequences and diplomatic signalling. In examining these developments, this work makes three key contributions. First, it links immigration enforcement to foreign policy dynamics, showing how domestic decisions reverberate globally. Second, it foregrounds African perspectives, emphasising how Trump's evolving immigration policy has affected African mobility, diplomacy, and perceptions of US credibility. Third, it highlights the shifting nature of global order, where immigration policy becomes a tool of both inclusion and exclusion, shaping not just who enters the US, but how the US itself is seen on the world stage.

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This reconfiguration of immigration as both a domestic and diplomatic tool reflects a broader trend in global politics, where mobility regimes increasingly function as instruments of geopolitical alignment. Under Trump, immigration policy was not merely reactive to internal pressures, but actively used to structure international relationships, elevate certain allies, and penalise perceived threats or non-cooperative states. While Africa was not the rhetorical centrepiece of Trump's first-term immigration agenda, the continent was not immune to its logics of restriction. The inclusion of African countries in travel bans, reductions in refugee resettlement, and changes to visa categories cumulatively shaped the contours of US–Africa engagement. As this chapter demonstrates, these seemingly administrative or legal changes carried outsized diplomatic weight, altering bilateral ties, impacting educational and labour flows and contributing to a broader recalibration of African perceptions of the US as a global partner. These dynamics only deepen in Trump's second term, where African countries feature more prominently in both policy consequences and political signalling. Moreover, even

beyond the temporal scope of this chapter, new travel measures and proposed immigration restrictions continue to emerge, further entrenching exclusionary trends. As this chapter demonstrates, these seemingly administrative or legal changes carried outsized diplomatic weight, altering bilateral ties and contributing to a broader recalibration of African perceptions of the US as a global partner.

The framework for the US immigration policy

US immigration policy does not emerge from neutral institutional machinery or technocratic judgment, rather, it reflects a deeper context over the meaning of sovereignty, the limits of democratic inclusion, and the moral commitments a liberal state is willing to compromise to secure its geopolitical and economic interests. Thus, immigration policy in the US is best viewed not as a product of a singular ideological position, but as the outcome of competing and often contradictory imperatives. Liberalism, with its normative emphasis on rights, individual autonomy and rule of law constraints, shapes both the promise and failure of US immigration policy (Akakpo and Lenard, 2014). On the one hand, it generates expansive judicial interpretations that shield certain noncitizens from arbitrary treatment; on the other hand, it relies heavily on procedural legality to justify exclusion, detention and deportation. The state appears bound by law, yet uses that very law to delimit who is worthy of protection.

Layered over this is the realist impulse, an insistence that the state's primary function is to defend its borders, regulate its population, and prioritise its citizens (Silva, 2008). In practice, this leads to securitised immigration enforcement that legitimises surveillance, detention, and militarised borders under the logic of sovereignty. A third axis is the capitalist logic, where immigration is a mechanism of labour regulation (Silva, 2008). Here, policy is not simply about inclusion or exclusion, it is about conditional incorporation. Crucially, these frameworks do not operate in silos. Rather, they collide and converge in complex ways. For instance, the liberal language of human rights may be invoked to defend asylum seekers, even as the system narrows the legal definition of refugee to exclude most displaced persons. Similarly, the state may

restrict unauthorised immigration rhetorically, while quietly tolerating undocumented labour in agriculture or domestic work. Immigration policy, therefore, functions as a terrain of ideological compromise, one that protects the formal commitments of liberal democracy, while operationalising the demands of national security and capital accumulation (Silva, 2008).

In most countries, immigration policy is not a technocratic issue isolated from politics, it is deeply interwoven into how power is negotiated, legitimised, and contested. In recent years, this entanglement has sharpened significantly. The direction immigration policy takes, toward restriction or liberalisation, is often shaped by a range of demographic, economic and political factors. Declining birth rates and aging populations, for instance, have driven some governments to adopt more open immigration policies to counter labour shortages and ensure economic sustainability (National Academy of Sciences, 2016).

112 In other cases, immigration has become a mechanism for responding to geopolitical shifts, global inequality or humanitarian obligations. These pressures interact with the ideological frameworks described above, liberal, realist and capitalist, so that any given policy can reflect a blend of moral posturing, national security concerns and labour market pragmatism. Furthermore, immigration rhetoric has become an increasingly central feature of electoral politics. The rise of populist leaders and right-wing parties across the globe has been marked by a strategic amplification of anti-immigrant sentiment, suggesting that immigration discourse is often less about managing flows than about mobilising constituencies (Silva, 2008). In this sense, immigration policy does not merely reflect political outcomes, it helps shape them. In the US, this has long been the case. Far from a story of linear progress, US immigration policy has consistently oscillated between openness and restriction, not in response to the actual presence or behaviour of migrants, but to the anxieties they are made to symbolise.

In the early US history, a period from the late 1780s or 1789 to the 1830s, immigration policy was almost non-existent, not because of an ideological commitment to openness, but because the young state lacked regulatory infrastructure, and migration largely served settler-colonial

expansion (Higham, 1956). As the nineteenth century progressed, racialised exclusion became formalised, from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the national origins' quotas of the 1920s, which sought to engineer a particular demographic future aligned with white, Anglo-Saxon dominance (Higham, 1956). Even moments that appear inclusive on the surface, such as the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, were shaped less by a moral reckoning than by geopolitical calculation (Gilbertson, 2007). While the law formally dismantled race-based quotas, it reoriented immigration around skilled labour and family reunification, sidelining low-skilled migrants. The logic was strategic; amid Cold War tensions, the US could not plausibly position itself as a global leader in democracy and human rights while maintaining overtly racist immigration laws. Thus, even reformist policies often masked deeper efforts to reframe exclusion in more palatable terms.

The post-9/11 period marked a pivotal rupture in US immigration governance. Immigration became inseparable from counterterrorism, effectively blurring the boundary between foreign policy and domestic enforcement (Rathod, 2011). The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which absorbed immigration functions previously handled by civil agencies, signalled a shift from regulatory administration to national security infrastructure (Rathod, 2011). Immigration enforcement was no longer just a bureaucratic process, it became a militarised apparatus, with the southern border transformed into a performative stage for sovereign control, a spectacle designed to reassure the public that the state remained in command. Legally, this shift operated within the existing doctrine of plenary power, which grants Congress and the executive branch broad discretion over immigration, relatively unconstrained by the constitutional protections that apply in most other domains of law (Koulish, 2024).

Within this context, the Trump administration did not introduce an entirely new immigration regime so much as it intensified and exposed the contradictions already embedded within it. Immigration was not a marginal issue, but a central focus of both Trump's campaign rhetoric and governing agenda, with direct implications for foreign policy as well. What distinguished Trump's first term was not the invention of

exclusion, but the unmasking of its foundational logic. By stripping away the rhetorical balance maintained by previous administrations between enforcement and humanitarianism, security and rights, Trump's approach laid bare the instrumental role of immigration in asserting state authority. Whether one characterises this as a mobilisation or manipulation of executive power, the administration leveraged existing legal structures to make explicit what had long been implicit, its immigration policy serves, above all, as a mechanism for exercising and displaying state control.

Immigration policy and foreign relations in Trump's first term

Immigration occupied a focal point in the political project of Trump's administration. It functioned as both a policy domain and symbolic repertoire, used to signal authority, galvanise support and distinguish the administration's approach from that of its predecessor. From the earliest days of the 2016 campaign, immigration was positioned as a defining issue, often invoked about concerns about security, economic protectionism and cultural cohesion. This centrality translated into an ambitious agenda once in office. The administration proposed more than 400 immigration related actions between 2017 and 2021, ranging from high-profile executive orders like the travel bans to regulatory changes affecting refugee admissions, international students, employment-based visas and border enforcement (Pierce et al., 2018).

Among the most significant changes were efforts to reshape both legal and illegal migration channels. On the illegal front, in January 2017, the Trump administration eliminated the Obama-era enforcement priorities that had focused primarily on individuals with serious criminal records (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025). Under the new policy, virtually any undocumented immigrant could be targeted for arrest or removal, regardless of criminal history. The DHS also expanded expedited removal (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025); a process that allows certain individuals to be deported without a court hearing, to apply not just at the border, but anywhere in the country for individuals who could not prove they had been in the US for at least two years.

Another major change during the Trump administration involved

expanding programmes like 287(g), which allows the DHS to authorise local and state law enforcement officers to perform certain immigration enforcement functions, including initiating deportation proceedings (Pierce et al., 2018). Legal immigration pathways were also significantly affected. Family-based migration faced growing legislative scrutiny, while greater preference was placed on skill-based selection criteria. Programmes such as DACA and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) were both targeted for termination, and refugee admissions were reduced to the lowest level since the modern resettlement framework was established in 1980 (Pierce et al., 2018). The administration also introduced additional layers of vetting for visa applicants, including enhanced background checks, requests for social media handles and more extensive biographical disclosures. In-person interviews were made mandatory for all green card applicants, even in routine cases where previous administrations had waived this requirement (Pierce et al., 2018). Efforts were also made to end humanitarian parole for specific categories of migrants, especially those from countries like Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025).

The impact of these changes extended to international students as well. Policies affecting Optional Practical Training (OPT), heightened visa scrutiny, particularly for applicants in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, and an attempted restriction on visa eligibility for students during the COVID 19 pandemic, when universities moved their classes online, created widespread uncertainty (Redden, 2020). This period shaped international perceptions of the US as a less predictable and less welcoming destination for higher education and skilled migration.

The Trump administration also resumed large-scale workplace immigration raids, especially in industries such as food processing and construction. One of the largest such operations took place in Mississippi in 2019, resulting in hundreds of detentions (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2019). That same year, the administration expanded the public charge rule, altering the criteria for determining whether immigrants might become dependent on public benefits (Pierce et al., 2018). Policies also targeted lawful permanent residency. The

administration signalled plans to tighten public charge rules by making green-card or visa extensions harder for applicants who used a wider range of public benefits and tax credits (Pierce et al., 2018).

The implementation of ‘zero-tolerance’ policies at the southern border also generated considerable attention. Under this directive, adults prosecuted for unauthorised entry were separated from their children or guardians, a policy that, while later modified, underscored the administration’s deterrence-based approach to border enforcement (Pierce et al., 2018). Other administrative changes included the rescinding of the deference policy, which had previously allowed visa officers to treat past approvals as presumptively valid. Under the new policy, each visa renewal, particularly for employment-based categories like H-1B, was treated as a first-time application, resulting in a surge in delays and denials (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025).

Additionally, the administration moved to end work permits for spouses of H-1B visa holders (under the H-4 EAD programme), further complicating life for thousands of skilled workers and their families (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025). At the local level, the administration targeted sanctuary cities, threatening to withhold Department of Justice grants from jurisdictions that did not fully cooperate with federal immigration authorities (Pierce et al., 2018). These pressures were accompanied by increased interior arrests and deportations. In 2017 alone, over 61 000 removals took place from the interior of the country, many involving individuals with no criminal convictions, marking a shift from the enforcement priorities of previous administrations (Ballotpedia, 2019).

Finally, the administration issued multiple iterations of travel bans, beginning in January 2017, which restricted entry from several predominantly Muslim-majority countries (Ballotpedia, 2019). Although initially challenged in court, the third version of the ban was ultimately upheld by the US Supreme Court. These travel bans became emblematic of the administration’s broader effort to reduce both legal and unauthorised migration through executive action. While many of these policies were later contested, revised or overturned by judicial interventions or subsequent administrations, the period was marked by

a climate of uncertainty, unpredictability and a strategic recalibration of how migration was regulated, enforced and perceived, both within the US and globally.

Trump's immigration policies during his first term undeniably shaped US foreign policy. Bilateral and multilateral relationships increasingly became conditioned by immigration negotiations and compliance. For instance, aid to Central American countries was tied to their willingness to accept asylum agreements that redirected migrants away from the US. Countries like Guatemala and El Salvador were asked to receive third-country asylum seekers, effectively externalising parts of the US asylum process (Pierce et al., 2018). Mexico's role became especially pivotal, under threat of tariffs, its government assumed expanded border enforcement responsibilities, deploying the National Guard to its southern border (Foreign Policy, 2019).

The most direct foreign policy consequences of Trump's immigration strategy thus unfolded in Central America and parts of the Middle East, where enforcement deals, migration controls and restrictive entry policies were explicitly linked to diplomatic leverage (Rosenberg and Trevizo, 2025). By contrast, Africa was not a central focus of this immigration-driven foreign policy agenda. While several African countries, such as Somalia, Sudan and later Nigeria and Eritrea, were included at various stages of the travel bans, these actions were generally framed around terrorism concerns and the broader Muslim ban, rather than any targeted African strategy (Immigration Tracking Project, 2020). As a result, most African states experienced the Trump-era immigration shifts indirectly, through reduced refugee admissions, growing visa restrictions, uncertainty around student mobility and a shift in how the US was perceived as a destination for opportunity and exchange. However, these peripheral effects would not last. Trump's second term brought a notable shift, with African countries more squarely affected by the immigration policies, moving from minimal consequences to more direct and material impacts.

Immigration and foreign relations in Trump's second term

President Trump promptly acted following his inauguration, commencing with many executive orders. This was not unexpected, he was fulfilling his campaign commitments, which had a considerable worldwide effect. One of his distinguishing features was the initiation of large deportations of illegal immigrants, the militarisation of border enforcement, stringent asylum limitations and the elimination of legitimate migration avenues, among others. These policies not only altered US immigration procedures domestically, but also damaged relations with critical regions such as Latin America and Africa.

Mass deportations and enforcement crackdown

Within days of President Trump's second inauguration, the administration moved to implement what was described as the largest domestic deportation operation in US history, launching hundreds of deportation flights and even invoking a dormant 1798 statute (the Alien Enemies Act) to summarily expel certain groups (Montoya-Galvez, 2025). This approach targeted millions of undocumented residents, prioritising those deemed criminal or national security threats. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) intensified its activities, and by February 2025, monthly immigration arrests had surged to record levels, exceeding any seen in any other month for the past seven years (Craft Singh, 2025). Highly publicised ICE raids swept workplaces and communities, and prior restrictions on enforcement in sensitive locations like schools, hospitals and churches were largely removed (Ainsley and Martinez, 2024; Rahman, 2025).

The administration signalled it would use all means necessary, including border militarisation, to achieve its aims. Trump indicated he was prepared to deploy National Guard units and even active-duty military personnel to the southern border if needed to halt unauthorised crossings (Copp Baldor, 2025). Indeed, military resources were briefly brought to bear; for example, US Air Force aircraft were used to transport

deportees until defence officials halted that practice in March due to cost and legal concerns (Roy, 2025).

In addition, a signature move by Trump on his very first day back in office was the termination of the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) One mobile app system, which under the previous administration had allowed migrants to schedule asylum appointments at ports of entry. The CBP announced it would no longer honour any of the tens of thousands of appointments that had been pre-booked, abruptly stranding migrants who had been pursuing lawful entry (Heilweil, 2025). The shutdown of CBP One effectively eliminated a key pathway for asylum seekers, leading many desperate individuals to consider riskier irregular crossings or leaving them in limbo in Northern Mexico. Together, these measures reflected a hardline enforcement stance not seen in modern times, drawing domestic legal challenges and international scrutiny.

Travel bans and refugee selection

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Trump's second-term agenda also revised and expanded travel bans and made refugee policy starkly selective, steps that had significant repercussions for US relations abroad. In early 2025, the administration began weighing an expansion of the travel restrictions first introduced in 2017. An internal memo outlined plans to bar entry for nationals of up to dozens of countries, heavily concentrated in Africa and the broader Global South, drawing parallels to the earlier 'Muslim ban' (Helmore, 2025). This proposed new travel ban list encompassed nations such as Eritrea, South Sudan and others in Africa, as well as countries in Asia and the Middle East, under the purported rationale of security concerns. Such measures provoked anger among the affected countries, which viewed the blanket restrictions as discriminatory.

At the same time, the administration suspended the general US refugee resettlement programme (USRAP), imposing an indefinite pause on admissions of refugees from traditional channels (Betancourt, 2025). This halt to refugee intakes marked a historic low in US humanitarian admissions and drew condemnation from international refugee agencies.

However, one controversial exception stood out, President Trump signed an executive order offering expedited refugee resettlement exclusively to white South Africans (Afrikaners), framing it as a response to what President Trump considers to be a human rights violation in South Africa. The order authorised up to 250 000 Afrikaners to resettle in the US and even cut US foreign aid to South Africa in protest the South Africa's land reform policies (Kumwenda-Mtambo and Schenck, 2025). The South African government rejected Trump's characterization of its domestic affairs, accusing Washington of stoking misinformation and racism. Even many intended beneficiaries in the Afrikaner community expressed reluctance or scorn, with some leaders publicly declining the offer, arguing that they are not interested in becoming refugees (Kumwenda-Mtambo and Schenck, 2025). Nonetheless, the message both domestically and internationally was clear, President Trump would continue to put 'America First', a slogan that aligns with his broader agenda for his second term.

More strikingly, some Americans received emails from the DHS directing them to leave the US, an occurrence that has caused significant distress among legal US citizens (Mejia, 2025). For many, the requirement to validate their citizenship status or seek counsel from an immigration attorney was formerly unimaginable. This portrays the extensive ramifications of heightened immigration enforcement and the increasing sense of uncertainty it has instigated, even among individuals with legal status.

Domestic consequences of Trump's immigration policy

President Trump's 2.0 immigration policies have brought about a range of structural and social transformations within and outside the US. These policies have been signed mostly through executive orders aimed at controlling the way immigrants enter the US and pushing those who are already in, out. The reason for this is to promote national security. These have been achieved through several measures; nonetheless, these actions also engendered extensive institutional, diplomatic, humanitarian and economic consequences that continue to unfold. The ramifications to foster an in-depth understanding of the policy landscape are

evaluated, recognising both the underlying motivations and the changing repercussions of these decisions.

Domestic governance and economic effects

The repercussions of intensified policing also infiltrated the economic sphere. The extensive elimination of labourers, particularly in sectors that conventionally rely on foreign labour, imposed pressure on industries such as agriculture and construction. Certain localities had workforce shortages and escalating operating expenses, which subsequently impacted consumer pricing and productivity (Butler, 2025). The indefinite suspension of refugee admissions has led numerous resettlement agencies to halt or reduce their activities, resulting in economic hardships for nonprofits and the communities they serve.

The US faces a growing challenge in the increase in the ageing population and decrease in birth rate (Adejugbe Ahmed, 2025), although Trump 2.0 has proposed a US\$5 000 baby bonus for new mothers. It is uncertain if this policy will work or not (Pequen~o IV, 2025). However, the idea of restraining immigration could have long-term over-reaching economic effects. Immigrants are hardworking and play a crucial role by filling workforce shortages, promoting innovation and boosting entrepreneurship. Many immigrants start and manage small and large-scale businesses, create jobs and pay taxes. These activities have a significant impact on the US economy. Therefore, strict immigration laws may lead to a labour shortage, which would impede economic growth and reduce the country's ability to maintain its position as a global economic powerhouse.

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Educational dimensions

The Trump administration's immigration and research funding policies are starting to impact American higher education institutions. The administration announced in early 2025 that it was suspending approximately US\$11 billion in research grants, with indications that further cuts might be forthcoming (Nadworny, 2025). This development

has significantly impacted the capacity of universities to extend research opportunities to international students. Numerous students who had obtained financing offers have had those offers revoked because of the changing regulatory environment, while many who had not received offers and were anticipating them ultimately did not obtain any.

Moreover, recent modifications to visa procedures have engendered confusion for both present and potential overseas students. Several existing student visas have been revoked and subsequently reinstated after legal action was taken and a policy change, which has continued to cause fear among present students in the US (Raymond, 2025). This uncertainty has been most pronounced for students from nations listed on the administration's revised travel restriction list. These students face an uncertain future while juggling the demands of maintaining their legal status and navigating an unpredictable visa environment. The consequences could be extensive in the future. Talented students who previously might have wanted to study in the US may now start turning to other nations that provide more stable and visible options for studying abroad.

National security framing and humanitarian effects

Security rationales were a prominent feature of the administration's immigration justification. The rapid deployment of National Guard units to the border, the expanded use of surveillance and the revival of broad travel restrictions illustrated the administration's intent to view immigration through a security lens (Copp and Baldor, 2025). From a governance standpoint, this approach brought clarity and coherence to enforcement operations, and it was well-received by segments of the public who valued order and decisiveness.

At the same time, several humanitarian concerns emerged. The termination of programmes such as the CBP One asylum scheduling app left many individuals in procedural limbo, particularly those who had followed established legal protocols in seeking protection (Heilweil, 2025). The abrupt change increased strain on shelter systems in Northern Mexico and raised concerns about exposure to exploitation or danger

for vulnerable individuals. These outcomes suggest the importance of considering humanitarian logistics alongside enforcement goals, particularly in managing border flows.

Trump's immigration and the consequences for foreign relations

The second-term immigration policies of the Trump administration have no doubt begun to show wider-reaching implications for African nations, extending beyond visa decisions to broader concerns about equity, mobility and diplomatic reciprocity. Heightened restrictions and the reclassification of several African countries under stringent travel categories created uncertainty for students, researchers and professionals seeking entry to the US. Some individuals experienced revocations or indefinite delays of student and work visas, while others faced the withdrawal of research funding offers following the suspension of approximately US\$11 billion in federal grants. Many smart and talented Africans have had their educational and professional goals severely impacted by these policy changes, especially those who had plans to return home and support the development of their country. Such limitations may eventually slow down human capital development and technological transfer or diffusion throughout Africa, necessitating African countries to make more proactive investments in self-driven development pathways.

These policy adjustments have diplomatically affected how African states interact with the US and its global rivals. The perceived selectivity of US refugee policy, specifically the preference for white South Africans, while other African refugee populations endured continuous restrictions, prompts questions about fairness and humanitarian consistency. A growing desire by African states to show agency in the discourse surrounding global mobility was reflected in Namibia's decision to impose visa requirements for US nationals, which was described as a reciprocal step. African countries may be forced to diversify their partnerships, possibly fortifying ties with nations like China, which might offer more advantageous conditions, due to worries about the decline in US development funding to Africa and a more transactional foreign policy. These changes have the potential to change the symbolic image of

the US in Africa, turning it from an iconic representation of opportunity, to a more uncertain locale. If left unchecked, the cumulative impact may alter the nature of long-term interaction between the US and the African continent, altering both strategic alignment and public sentiment.

Diplomatic realignments and bilateral relationships

The international dimension of immigration policy was particularly salient in the second term. In Latin America, for example, deportation agreements and the use of economic levers such as threatened tariffs led to renewed discussions about equity and cooperation in regional migration management (Roy, 2025). While these arrangements secured short-term compliance, they also introduced a layer of complexity to traditional diplomatic partnerships, especially where the perception of unilateralism emerged.

Trump's second-term immigration policies significantly influenced US foreign relations, particularly with Latin America, Europe and Africa. With the rise in deportations, Latin American nations saw direct pressure to accept both their nationals and third-country migrants deported from the US (Roy, 2025). US authorities engaged in negotiations for deportation agreements with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, utilising diplomatic and economic instruments. Colombia initially declined flights transporting Venezuelan migrants, however, altered its stance with a threat of trade sanctions from the US (Roy, 2025). The conversations, however effective, raised issues regarding coercion and unilateralism, undermining trust and complicating existing cooperative arrangements.

In parallel, Mexico was tasked with renewed responsibilities under revived programmes like 'Remain in Mexico', placing significant logistical and political pressure on its asylum infrastructure. Meanwhile, the presence of US troops near the border signalled a securitised posture that raised further regional concern. Though some governments cooperated to preserve bilateral ties, these policies introduced new complexities into US–Latin America relations and may diminish long-standing goodwill.

The immigration issue in Africa posed comparable diplomatic obstacles. Increased travel restrictions impacting several African nations

elicited criticism from Africans, which challenged the rationale and fairness of the prohibitions. The US choice to provide refugee resettlement only to white South Africans received significant attention and was perceived as a threat to the Indigenous Black South Africans, thereby supporting racial selectivity in immigration policy. Although most African governments refrained from providing explicit public replies, the change in tone was apparent in their shifting diplomatic stances.

Namibia, for instance, responded by introducing visa requirements for American travellers, an apparent reciprocity measure. The government has signalled that it might implement visa restrictions on more Western countries that fail to provide reciprocal access to Namibians (Shipale, 2025). These events indicate an increasing readiness among African nations to contest inequitable visa policies. Furthermore, many countries of the world, except Namibia, have been reserved about the US visa waiver, where no African country is on the list. For many Africans, acquiring a US visa was already challenging, and with more limitations, prospects for study, research, and professional advancement overseas may become increasingly constrained. Visa limitations enacted by the US and African nations might impede interpersonal exchanges and affect decisions related to foreign investment and tourism, thereby obstructing economic progress and regional collaboration in Africa.

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Conclusion

The trajectory of US immigration policy under President Trump's 2.0 represents a critical juncture in the emerging relationship between migration governance and foreign affairs. The implications of these policies have extended far beyond US borders, reshaping diplomatic ties, altering global perceptions, and triggering structural responses in countries affected by the policy shifts, despite their domestic positioning as a matter of border control and national security towards making America great again, which is the core motive of the Trump 2.0 administration. Whether through expansive deportation operations, the rollback of asylum pathways, or the reconfiguration of visa regimes and immigration has been deployed as a central tool of executive authority, one that asserts

sovereign control while sending unmistakable signals to both domestic audiences and foreign governments.

The repercussions of this approach have been diverse. Domestically, it has incited discussions regarding humanitarian obligations, educational accessibility and labour sustainability. The policies have increased tensions regarding global responsibility, reciprocity and fairness, and have put the resilience of bilateral relationships to the test on a global scale. The repercussions have also progressed from a peripheral issue to a pronounced one in Africa, particularly. From travel restrictions and visa denials to selective refugee resettlement and reduced educational access, the continent has encountered a set of challenges that reflect not only on immigration enforcement, but ask deeper questions about equity and geopolitical positioning. Policy responses by African states, such as Namibia's imposition of visa requirements, signal a more assertive posture in negotiating mobility norms and underscore the broader recalibration of diplomatic relations.

126 Ultimately, the second-term agenda has not simply redefined the contours of immigration, it has also illuminated the extent to which migration serves as a barometer of national intent and global perception.

The lasting impact will depend not only on the permanence of these policies, but also on how other nations choose to interpret and respond to the signals they send.

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