



# BALANCING IMMIGRATION PRESSURES WITH NATIONAL INTERESTS

**Fall 2024 Practicum**

School of International Service  
American University

How can the U.S. better respond to the massive influx of refugees and migrants while balancing other national priorities?

## **Introduction**

Balancing national priorities in response to the massive influx of refugees and migrants – humanitarian concerns, legal obligations, and economic realities – has challenged the U.S. and other governments for years. This study will analyze the treatment of intending migrants and refugees from around the globe as they seek irregular or lawful entry into the United States. We will identify policy options for U.S. federal, state, and local authorities to better respond while protecting migrant and refugee rights, observing treaty obligations and laws, addressing budget constraints, and acknowledging the contributions refugees and migrants make to society.

By exploring solutions attempted by other countries, we will employ advanced analytical methods to develop policy options aimed at enriching the debate on how the United States can effectively respond to the refugee and migration challenge, fostering common ground among political stakeholders.

## **1. Narratives Surrounding Migration**

How can narratives regarding migration be transformed to foster more constructive dialogue on migration issues?

- What are the most impactful examples of rhetoric from both sides of the spectrum, and what political agendas might underpin this messaging?
- What are the effects of this rhetoric on public opinion? Does it sway views or merely reinforce existing beliefs among specific voter bases?

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## **2. Challenges Migrants Face**

What are the primary challenges within the U.S. immigration system that lead to migrants being rejected at the border and experiencing extreme difficulties inside the United States?

- How do we address issues such as prolonged court backlogs and difficulties in resettlement and integration?
- How do the successes and failures of resettlement and integration processes reflect broader issues within the U.S. immigration system?
- What strategies can be implemented to improve conditions in detention facilities while adhering to legal obligations and budget constraints?

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### **3. U.S. National Security Concerns**

How can we prioritize real national security concerns on the border rather than miscast immigrants and asylees as the threat?

- Is there a more truthful way to frame national security issues at the U.S.-Mexican border?
- Are there comparable national security concerns at the U.S.-Canadian border that are often overlooked due to bias?
- How can we address legitimate national security issues while minimizing anti-immigrant sentiment and rhetoric?

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### **4. The Bukele Model**

Can the Bukele model effectively address the root causes of Latin American migration, such as poor economic conditions, limited employment and education opportunities, and violence?

- How would a reduction in violence impact economic conditions and the availability of education and employment in Latin America?
- What sustainability and ethical concerns may influence the implementation of the Bukele model in other countries?
- How can and should the United States respond if the Bukele model expands to other countries?

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### **5. Europe and Asia Policies**

What immigration policies and practices have been adopted in selected European and Asian countries that could benefit the United States?

- What similarities and differences exist between immigration events in these regions and the U.S.?
- How has public support for immigration policy evolved over the past 15 years?
- What is the process for determining how many refugees, immigrants, and migrants are allocated to each state, and what does pushback look like?
- What rights do migrants have prior to a hearing, and what is the process for becoming an authorized migrant? How long does this process take?

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## **Information**

The report's conclusions and recommendations will be based on data garnered from government, international organization, and NGO reports, academic studies, media reports, and interviews with experts and migrants

## **Deliverables**

We propose delivering a briefing book (via email) and a team briefing (via Zoom) on December 9, summarizing our findings.

*Please feel free to reach out to us throughout the semester if you have questions about the areas we're covering.*