



# #ObservatórioEDJ

MAR2025

## A strategic triangle: Europe, Latin-America and the United States

Post 2024 US Election

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## The Impact of Trump 2.0 on the Sino-Brazilian Relations

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According to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) website, "Tariffs give a price advantage to locally produced goods over similar goods which are imported, and they raise revenues for governments." Upon reading the definition, one could assume that tariffs are a smart move toward a more robust and effective economy, even though the WTO has been signaling that the path to ensure free trade and a fair market is without said tariffs. In the Uruguay Round, which were negotiations that lasted for over two years in the 1990s, many stipulations were established towards the envisioned fair and free market, probably the most important of them being the countries' commitment to cut tariffs or at least guarantee that the values would be lower and challenging to raise in future times. In the past thirty years, the world has rapidly become interconnected, and economic maneuvers, especially when done by economic giants, necessarily impact diplomatic and financial relations among other nations. In the first one hundred days of the Trump mandate, much has been said -or threatened- regarding tariffs. For Trump, implementing tariffs is a sure way to tackle high grocery prices and, more importantly, to guarantee that other countries "won't take advantage of the United States."

Unfortunately for Trump's agenda, the United States, albeit a colossal force in economic matters, is not the only one, and due to the threats regarding tariffs made in his first term, other countries, especially China, have been preparing to deal with this matter. During his campaign, Trump promised to impose a 100% tariff on BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, among others). In comparison, China announced a possible 0% tariff for countries that would be affected by Trump's measures. The point being made is not that Trump is a villain and that Xi Jinping is a hero, but merely to shine a light on the fact that another round of the trade war between the USA and China is upon us, but that this time around, the United States is in a more fragile place than before. Conversely, China has been strengthening economic ties with any nation interested in doing so. For example, it is interesting to see Brazil's role in the international arena and, more specifically, how the Trump 2.0 economic policies will impact Brazil's choices of allies.

Historically, the Latin American nation has sought a diplomatic path of independence, not necessarily paying much attention to the movement of non-aligned countries or rushing to join the club of countries that allied themselves to Western or Eastern forces at any cost. Lula has been vocal about his desire to establish prosperous relations with any country that wishes to do so. He firmly believes in the multilateralist option, as opposed to the unipolar

context forged under American hegemony for the past thirty years. Given this conjuncture, the rise of China in the past decade much pleases Brazil's diplomatic institutions due to its contribution towards a multilateralism context that would allow nations similar to Brazil to occupy a just position in the world order instead of being doomed to be perpetual peripheries. Still, this does not signify that Brazil sought to end its ties with the USA, but it does mean that the country will not back away from partnering up with China, even if it displeases the United States. Even so, in 2023, Lula stated that he is not choosing sides between the giants, "I am not going to get into a Cold War with anyone" (The Guardian, 2023).

Brazil stands as a friendly country in the international arena, maintaining stable and positive relations with all nations. It is a strategic partner of NATO and the EU. Brazil is also one of the nations aiming to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, which the United States has signaled—but not confirmed—it would approve of. Brazil-USA relations share a significant economic bond, with Brazil providing agricultural goods, crude oil, and aircraft. Of course, China is also an essential economic ally for Brazil, which imports a third of what Brazil exports yearly, focusing on the country's agricultural capacity. This means that both the USA and China are essential partners for Brazil and that Brazil is an important partner for each of them. With this conjuncture, Brazil wouldn't attach itself to one economic power, but the tariff war might change that. In a bidding war between the financial giants, Brazil stands on shaky ground to not displease its fundamental economic partners. Still, currently, with Trump's threats to impose heavy tariffs not only on China but also on Mexico, Canada, the EU, and Brazil, it wouldn't be unnatural if those actors shifted towards a more economically friendly China, especially Brazil, that has been eagerly working in cementing a deep and essential bond vis-a-vis China.

Upon Trump's promise to impose tariffs, Lula stated that Brazil would financially retaliate and possibly even file a complaint at the WTO, as China did. Still, Brazil's Finance and International Affairs ministers are opting for a more diplomatic approach to the 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports. This tariff impacts Brazil, given that the country is one of the biggest steel exporters into the USA, following Mexico and Canada. Due to the possibility of suffering a substantial economic loss, Brazil -and other nations- might be looking into being more allied with China. As stated, Brazil has deep and essential ties with both countries, walking on a tightrope to maintain relations that flourish amid a trade war between them. However, with Trump's erratic behavior and open threats, a more straightforward path might be open toward complete alignment between Brazil and China. This movement would disaccord with what Brazil's diplomatic institutions have been building in the past century. Still, it would not be unnatural to assume an alignment with China since these countries have been closer than ever following the 2009 BRICS founding. Also, it is essential to shine a light on the fact that tariffs are a stamp of protectionism and that protectionism goes against one of the main pillars of American policies, which is to ensure a free market. The United States contradicts itself, a clear sign of the turning tides.

Ultimately, there is no way of knowing what will happen in the next few years, but the first hundred days of Trump 2.0 have been chaotic and erratic. Due to this intensity, we should be watching what the POTUS does and how it spills over other diplomatic and economic ties. In the case of Sino-Brazilian relations, while Trump worries about “being taken advantage of” by Europe, Mexico, and Canada, he is paving the way for the country to lose its long-standing dominance in Latin America to China, with Brazil being a clear example.

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## Promise or Provocation? Trump and the Panama Canal

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The Panama Canal is one of the most impressive engineering feats of the 20th century. Opened in 1914, it connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, playing a crucial role in the flow of goods between different regions of the globe and becoming a strategic hub for global trade. Before its construction, navigating from the East Coast to the West Coast of the United States required traveling over 15,000 kilometers around the entirety of Latin America. The canal revolutionized global trade, especially for the U.S., drastically reducing maritime transport time and costs. Today, more than a thousand ships cross the canal annually.

The canal's history is marked by political and imperialist disputes. Before the United States took over the project, construction began under the French in 1880. However, the endeavor failed due to technical challenges and high worker mortality rates. Following the project's bankruptcy, the U.S. acquired the construction rights for \$40 million. The canal was completed in 10 years at a total cost of over \$350 million, becoming the most expensive infrastructure project in U.S. history at the time. In 1977, U.S. President Jimmy Carter signed an agreement to return control of the canal to Panama, which became fully sovereign over it by the end of 1999. Thousands of workers died under poor working conditions due to accidents or tropical diseases. According to Trump, 35,000 Americans died during the canal's construction<sup>1</sup>. However, this narrative excludes workers of other nationalities, aligning with Trump's political strategy of emphasizing an exclusively American sacrifice.

The canal is vital to U.S. trade, with a significant portion of the goods passing through it belonging to American companies. For Trump, reclaiming control of the canal would be a strategic move benefiting not only U.S. economic interests but also geopolitical and security concerns.

During World War II, the canal served as a strategic base for American ships heading toward Japan. In today's context of emerging threats, unrestricted control of the canal would enable the rapid movement of U.S. naval forces between oceans during conflicts or emergencies. The canal also facilitates the transportation of essential resources such as oil, natural gas, and other critical goods, especially to the East Coast. Moreover, controlling the canal would allow the U.S. to monitor potential threats like terrorism, drug trafficking, and smuggling.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Trump, in an interview with Tucker Carlson in August, stated: "We lost 35,000 people to the mosquito... We sold it for one dollar. China now controls it. They actually control the Panama Canal."

In the last month, Trump has begun claiming that returning the canal to Panama was a “great mistake.” In social media posts, he has accused Panama of charging excessive fees for canal crossings. Additionally, he has raised concerns about increasing Chinese influence in the canal, highlighting that Chinese <sup>2</sup>companies operate parts of its infrastructure, which he sees as a potential threat to American interests.

However, Panamanians view these statements as a direct affront to their sovereignty. The canal is a national symbol of pride and independence, and Trump’s rhetoric is perceived as neocolonialist. The canal’s transfer in 1977 was regulated by bilateral treaties recognized under international law. Any attempt to reclaim the canal without Panama’s consent would violate its sovereignty and have devastating diplomatic consequences for the U.S. Even repurchasing the canal would be extraordinarily expensive, and Panama shows no interest in negotiating such a vital asset. As current President José Raúl Mulino stated, “The Panama Canal belongs to Panama. The sovereignty and independence of our country are non-negotiable<sup>3</sup>.”

Trump’s proposal to reclaim the Panama Canal is yet another example of his aggressive and nationalist policies. This promise is likely a bluff aimed at negotiating lower tariffs for American companies using the canal<sup>4</sup>. His statements have sparked international tensions, evident in his expansionist rhetoric including his expressed interest in Greenland and suggestion of making Canada the 51st state of the US. While none of these scenarios are likely to materialize, such provocative statements illustrate Trump’s willingness to leverage controversial rhetoric in international negotiations.

A few days after Trump took office for his second term, Marco Rubio visited Panama on February 1, delivering the new president’s ultimatum to reduce Chinese presence and ‘maintain the canal’s neutrality’. Mulino eventually agreed not to renew a financing agreement with Beijing. However, this decision may have a limited impact: after all, Brazil is not part of the New Silk Road initiative, yet it still receives Chinese investments. Negotiations are ongoing, but regardless of their outcome, Trump’s discourse remains a threat not only to Panama but also to the rest of Latin America.

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Trump, in an interview with Tucker Carlson in August, stated: “There’s five...Chinese state-owned enterprises along the Panama Canal”

<sup>3</sup> Mulino, J. R. (2024, December 22). Statement reaffirming Panama’s sovereignty over the Panama Canal in response to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s remarks [Television broadcast]. Panama National Television

<sup>4</sup> Politico. (2024, December 26). ‘Crazy worked just fine the first time’: Why some Republicans see Trump’s imperialist musings as an act of negotiation. Politico. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/12/26/republicans-trump-canada-greenland-negotiation-00196050>

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## The Impact of Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in Latin America

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In a historic moment in which we witness the ascension of various far-right movements across the globe, 2025 is proving to be what might be the grand apex of such tendencies with the return of President elect Donald Trump to the White House after the Biden Administration. However, an important factor to consider in this government – which showcases its political intensity – was the sheer amount of policies already approved in such a short span of time in comparison to other presidents in recent American history. In his first 100 days in office, Trump not only approved more executive orders – 72 as of February 20 – than any other president did in that amount of time in the last 4 decades, he has also almost doubled the amount approved by Biden in the same period, who had a mere 42 in comparison (Chiwaya *et al.*, 2025). If this trend continues, it will lead to a completely unprecedented number of decisions in a presidential position of the US.

In this sense, one of the most impactful executive orders so far that has shaken the very governmental structure present – especially in terms of its departmental leadership – was the adoption of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) (The White House, 2025) and the nomination of Elon Musk as its main advisor. The presence of the world's richest man, with almost US\$400 billion in networth (Forbes, 2025) in itself already constitutes a problematic endeavour when considering its various political implications and conflicts of interest between the public and private sectors, however, regionally speaking, this shift in power could mean Latin America becomes one of the major international targets for not only continued American meddling in the political arena, but also a renewed economical conflict with private enterprises unapologetically associated with the American government.

Much of this is thanks to the figurehead of the DOGE itself, as Musk has interfered and publicly opinionated on Latin American politics for years now, especially through Twitter (now called X after Musk's purchase of the platform). Elon Musk has a particular affinity towards right-wing politicians such as when commenting on Javier Milei's electoral victory in Argentina (Musk, 2023) and celebrating Nayib Bukele in El Salvador (Musk, 2024). Not only that, Musk has also openly advocated for a coup in Bolivia in 2020, demonstrating his political bias (Coelho, 2024). Alongside this, his goals of obtaining natural resources in Latin American countries is more than clear, and it should only intensify further with his political support of the right-wing and especially with his presence in the White House. These factors were recently exemplified by Musk's encounter with Milei at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington DC, in which he was gifted "the chainsaw of bureaucracy", waving it around on stage, a symbol once used by Milei to signify cuts in state spending – which Musk has already mentioned for the US – that now could also take a whole new meaning as a symbolic key to the countries resources – such as highly sought after lithium – through liberal trade (BBC, 2025).

As much as Musk has supported the right-wing in Latin America, he has also shown a significant aversion to those countries with left-wing governments. As an example, regarding Venezuela, Musk had once again taken to his own platform to state his opinions on the matter of the country's natural resources, economy and form of government,

blaming late president Chávez and “extreme socialism” (Musk, 2024). Perhaps even more impactful was the fairly tense situation that arose with X’s ban in Brazil due to the company’s – but more specifically, his CEO Musk – lack of compliance to court orders.

Failing to name a legal representative in the country and to establish hate speech moderation lead to the ban of the platform in the country for over a month until these issues were begrudgingly resolved (Reuters, 2025). Alongside this, Brazil’s Supreme Court also froze all assets inside the country from one of Musk’s companies, Starlink, in what could be mostly seen as a sign of sovereignty as the company was not a major service provider in Brazilian soil to begin with. With this, Musk attacked Alexandre de Moraes, one of Brazil’s Supreme Court Ministers, through the platform itself shortly after its ban, even publishing court documents with personal data, leading to doxxing (Mier, 2024). This reaction from a major player in the world economy is extremely worrying, with his now direct presence in politics only intensifying said worries. Now that Elon Musk has secured a position in the US government, his economic power and goals can – and most likely will – be enabled even further and even somewhat safeguarded by politics, which could lead to a much more intense degree of his own presence through the economy and politics themselves in Latin America.

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## Trump's Mass Deportation Policy and Its Impact on Latin America

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January 20, 2025, was a landmark date in American political history, marking the day Donald Trump returned to the presidency of the United States. Throughout his campaign, one of the most recurrent topics was the issue of illegal immigration, with his proposals aligning with a significant tightening of immigration policies. Notably, Trump declared his intention to implement the largest mass deportation operation in U.S. history.

According to Trump, the operation is primarily focused on reinforcing national security. He has described illegal immigrants as “animals”, asserting that they are “poisoning the blood of our country”. He further claims that the initiative will protect American jobs, stating, “There’s been no job creation by them; the jobs were filled by illegal immigrants”. A significant justification for this policy is its aim to combat criminal activities allegedly associated with illegal immigration.

One of the promised and already enacted measures was the removal of restrictions that previously limited immigration authorities' actions in sensitive locations. According to Trump, “There will be raids on schools, churches, or workplaces, something not currently permitted by law”. His administration has already revoked these previous guidelines, enforcing a strict zero-tolerance policy.

Furthermore, Trump has expressed the need to declare a national emergency to mobilize resources and authorize the use of military forces in detaining and removing undocumented immigrants. According to Tom Fitton, a conservative activist and president of Judicial Watch, “There is information indicating that the Trump administration is prepared to declare a national emergency and utilize military assets to reverse Biden’s invasion”. Indeed, one of Trump's first actions was to declare a national emergency at the southern border, deploying military troops to intensify deportation operations.

Simultaneously, detention centers are being constructed and expanded to house individuals awaiting deportation. As soon as he took office, President Trump issued a presidential memorandum instructing the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to expand the Migrant Operations Center at Guantánamo Bay, with a capacity for up to 30,000 migrants. By implementing these measures, Trump aims to accelerate and intensify immigration enforcement, making policies broader and more stringent. From a human rights perspective, organizations have issued strong warnings regarding potential violations, including arbitrary detentions and family separations. Ethical and moral concerns have also been raised about the impact of these policies on millions of lives.

One of the regions most affected by this deportation policy will be Latin America, as it is the primary source of undocumented immigrants in the US. This shift will have both political and economic consequences for the region. The reduction in remittances, often a crucial financial lifeline for numerous families, could increase the vulnerability of local communities. On the political front, mass deportations could escalate diplomatic tensions. For instance, Colombia faced diplomatic strains after refusing deportation flights from the US, leading Trump to impose economic sanctions, including a 25% tariff on Colombian imports. Ultimately, Colombian President Gustavo Petro was compelled to negotiate with the US to ease tensions.

The lingering question remains: Trump's objective upon assuming the presidency in 2025 is clear — achieving a country free of illegal immigrants as swiftly as possible. However, the critical issue is whether this goal is achievable or merely a political maneuver during the election campaign.

Trump asserts that only after "eliminating" the "25 million illegal immigrants" will the US experience enhanced national security and improved economic interests. This statement reflects the nationalist rhetoric that characterizes his approach to immigration, emphasizing a direct link between undocumented immigrants and socio-economic and security challenges. However, Trump disregards the complexity of the immigration issue and the positive impact these immigrants have on the economy, particularly in the agricultural, construction, and service sectors.

Moreover, a study by the American Immigration Council has demonstrated that "the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals". According to Professor Rubén Rumbaut, "One of the misconceptions in the United States is that immigrants commit more crimes; however, statistics prove otherwise".

Hundreds of immigrants have already been deported, and images of these individuals handcuffed on military planes have shocked the world. Streets across the United States have become battlegrounds for mass protests, with activists, politicians, and ordinary citizens demanding an end to what they call a humanitarian crisis. The global stage has also taken notice, as world leaders decry the policy as an affront to human dignity. From the UN headquarters to the streets of Washington, the debate rages on, with each passing day adding fuel to the fire of a deeply divided nation challenging the very identity of a nation built by immigrants.

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## Cuba in the Shadow of Trump: Economic Hardships, Migration, and the Fight to Survive

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The Cuban immigrants generate an impact on the lives of those who remain in Cuba, families constantly receive financial support which helps them, in most cases, to survive. The first Trump administration was marked by the end of the Western Union, the leading U.S. remittance agency operating in Cuba in 2020. The second administration will likely be worse than the first one when it comes to migration policy. In this paper, I will explore some data about Cuban immigration flows, its impacts on Cuba's economy and society, and past actions taken by the first Trump rule, thinking about impacts that can likely happen in the second one.

The history of Cuba has always been intertwined with the history of the U.S. Its small size; the fact Cuba is an island in the Caribe; and is one of the last countries that remains in a socialist political model makes Cuba a country with low chances of growing strong relations with other countries which makes Cuba vulnerable to the actions of its immense and powerful neighbor. Nevertheless, another key factor on the island is the immigration flow. There are Cuban immigrants all around the world, who most of the time, try to escape from the country in illegal and dangerous ways, due to the difficulty of moving off the country in legal ways.

The last research made by the Migration Policy Institute in 2021 gave crucial information about the Cuban Diaspora in the United States (U.S.). Approximately 2.7 million people living in the USA are either Cubans or descendants of Cubans. A number that only increases, according to EL PAÍS (2024), in 2022 Cuba suffered its biggest migration wave in history, making the population drop by 18%. The population is also small, authorities say 11 million people live on the island, while specialists claim a much smaller number, 8.62 million. Following this data, the Cuban community in the U.S. represents approximately 31% of the population in the Caribbean country.

The Pew Research Center evidenced the median income of Cubans is 35.000 dollars per year. According to the Columbia Law School (2021), some 700,000 Cuban immigrants send money to the island. The amount of money Western Union transferred to Cuba was between 900 million to 1.5 billion dollars per year. Also according to the Columbia Law School, the money sent by the immigrants to their relatives is used to cover basic needs, such as food, clothing, medicine, gas, electricity, water, and phone services. Not only that but nowadays Cubans try to survive from the income of small businesses, which are financially supported by the money of immigrants who send from the U.S., cutting the services of Western Union in Cuba provoked impacts not only in the capability for the population to pay for basic needs but also impacted in the third sector.

Trump in his past administration took several actions which demoralized the Cuban government, economy, and society. Trum hit Cuba with the harshest in more than a half century. Probably the most radical one was the designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SSOT), which according to the New York Times (2021) “Mr. Trump’s hard-line approach to the Cuban leadership has led to an array of restrictions on tourism, visas, remittances, investments, and commerce, which have worsened an already poor economy.” According to the Diplomatic Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs European Union and Cooperation (2024), the services sector represents 80% of the Cuban economy.

This decision was rescinded by Biden on January 14th, 2025, nevertheless, on January 31st, Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, added Cuba again to the SSOT and re-created a Restricted List. “On January 31, I approved the re-creation of the Cuba Restricted List, which prohibits certain transactions with companies under the control of, or acting for or on behalf of, the repressive Cuban military, intelligence, or security services or personnel” This not only generates effects on Cuban diplomacy but also generates a massive loss of money to the island. Last year, Cuban authorities made an estimate of its financial loss because of the embargo. It has been stated that the lose approximately 5 billion dollars per year (AP News, 2024).

The second Trump administration appears to follow the same position towards Cuba compared to the first one. If this trend continues, conditions on the island are likely to deteriorate further. Ironically, Trump's attempt to freeze illegal immigration seems almost contradictory, worsening the situation in the island can only potentially provoke a higher flow of illegal immigrants in the country. Taking into account the situation of those who depends on the financial help to survive, probably will be more and more common the utilization of the so called “mules”. Who transfers the money, medicines and resources to Cuba by countless trips between countries.

Unfortunately, the trend is not positive for the Cuban people, who suffer from hunger, poor housing politics, and lack of resources, challenges driven by both internal mismanagement and external pressures. Cuba recently also faced a crisis in the energy system, further worsening daily hardships. People who have long mastered the art of survival, whether through resilience or migration, now confront an old yet renewed struggle. With fewer places to turn for support, their greatest strength remains the deep sense of community and mutual aid that has sustained them through generations.



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# The Return of Trump and the Mexico Security Dilemma: Drug Trafficking as a Justification for Mass Deportations

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## Introduction

The return of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States in 2025 has reignited discussions on border security and migration policies, particularly concerning Mexico. Trump's rhetoric on drug trafficking has become a central matter of his strategy to justify extreme immigration measures, including the controversial proposal to deport individuals to Guantánamo Bay. This shift in policy direction has alarmed human rights organizations and legal experts, who argue that such measures not only violate international norms but also risk exacerbating tensions with Mexico and Latin American allies.

## U.S.-Mexico Relations Under Trump's Second Presidency

Throughout his political career, Trump has framed U.S.-Mexico relations primarily through the lens of border security, often portraying Mexico as both a source of illegal migration and a gateway for drug cartels. His first presidency saw the implementation of the "Remain in Mexico" policy and an increase in deportations. With his return to power, the same hardline approach is clear, but with an even more aggressive stance. His administration's renewed emphasis on cartel violence and fentanyl trafficking serves as a justification for mass deportations and extraordinary detention measures.

## Mexican Drug Trafficking and Its Political Use

The fight against drug trafficking is not new, but Trump has intensified its use as a political weapon. His administration argues that cartels such as Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation pose a direct threat to U.S. national security, linking drug-related violence to migration flows. This rhetoric strategically conflates asylum seekers and undocumented migrants with cartel operatives, despite evidence that the vast majority of those crossing the border are fleeing violence rather than perpetrating it (Correa-Cabrera, 2021). By framing the issue in stark security terms, Trump aims to rally political support for extreme measures, including military-style crackdowns and extrajudicial deportations.

## Deportation to Guantánamo Bay: A Legal and Ethical Crisis

One of the most alarming developments in Trump's immigration agenda is the reported consideration of deporting migrants to the Guantánamo Bay detention center. This proposal draws from post-9/11 counterterrorism policies, where Guantánamo was used to house individuals deemed threats to national security without due process. Trump's justification hinges on equating drug-related migration with acts of terrorism, a narrative that finds traction among his base but raises profound legal and ethical concerns. Legal experts warn that such a move would contravene both U.S. constitutional protections and international human rights law. The principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, prohibits returning individuals to places

where they may face persecution or inhumane treatment (García, 2023). By attempting to sidestep conventional legal frameworks, Trump's administration risks setting a dangerous precedent where immigration enforcement is decoupled from humanitarian obligations.

## Potential Consequences for U.S.-Mexico Cooperation

Trump's policies could severely strain U.S.-Mexico relations. The Mexican government has historically resisted U.S. unilateralism on border policies, and a move as extreme as mass deportations to Guantánamo could provoke diplomatic retaliation. Additionally, security cooperation on drug enforcement may suffer, as Mexico may be less inclined to collaborate with an administration that criminalizes its citizens en masse (Seelke & Finklea, 2022). Furthermore, by prioritizing deportations over intelligence-driven counter-narcotics efforts, Trump's approach may inadvertently strengthen cartels. Increased militarization of the border often pushes trafficking routes deeper underground, making interdiction efforts more difficult. Mexico's capacity to address cartel violence internally could also be compromised if diplomatic tensions escalate, further destabilizing the region.

## Conclusion

The return of Trump to the White House marks a renewed era of hardline immigration and security policies, with a sharp focus on drug trafficking as a justification for extreme measures. The proposal to deport individuals to Guantánamo Bay represents a troubling expansion of executive power, one that risks violating international law and eroding human rights protections. While Trump's rhetoric appeals to segments of the American electorate, it carries significant risks for U.S.-Mexico relations and broader regional stability. Policymakers and human rights advocates must remain vigilant in challenging policies that weaponize security concerns at the expense of fundamental freedoms.

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## Climate governance under Trump's administration and its interaction with Brazilian environmental security

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"Drill baby, drill": These were some of the most frequently used words by Donald Trump to indicate his intentions for U.S. climate and environmental policy in his second term. Although this slogan has been commonly adopted by the Republican Party since 2008, it signals a stance that has already become evident in the early days of his presidency. That is, even though climate change is a rapidly and drastically growing threat, Trump will prioritize increasing fossil fuel production, alongside the repeal of numerous environmental protection measures, all while embracing strong climate denialism.

Since taking office in January of this year, Trump has initiated a "second phase" of what was his environmental governance during his first term in 2017. Once again, he announced the controversial withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, making the United States one of the few non-signatory countries, alongside Iran, Libya, and Yemen. Moreover, he has pushed forward a series of policies that undermine efforts to combat climate change, in contrast to the Biden administration, which set a goal in December 2024 to reduce climate pollution by 66% below 2005 levels by 2035, though without time to implement it.

Donald Trump has already signed, among others: 1) The end of the "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" policy, which placed the climate crisis at the center of both domestic and foreign priorities; 2) The declaration of a "national energy emergency", aimed at facilitating oil exploration and neglecting renewable energy projects, despite experts stating that the country has abundant energy resources, making this move a likely strategy to lower gas prices, according to Gary Dirks, senior director of the Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University; 3) The reversal of protective measures that restricted resource extraction in Alaska; 4) The halt of offshore wind energy projects.

As it is clear in his "Make America Great Again" rhetoric, Trump evokes the idea of American greatness in the collective imagination, which is reflected in his foreign policy choices. Under this logic, the United States should pursue its own significant economic development, even at the expense of multilateralism. Having said so, from Trump's perspective, there should be no spending on initiatives such as foreign aid for environmental protection, as they are seen as distractions from his primary goals. However, as it will be analyzed, this stance profoundly shifts the international perception of the United States and could have serious consequences for environmental security in other countries.

Many of these countries are in Latin America, and given that Brazil is growing as a regional power with a strong environmental agenda, it is important to analyze how Trump's policies might impact this agenda. Additionally, it is crucial to keep in mind that in November 2025, Brazil will host the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) and has already revealed ambitious plans to ensure that this year's outcomes mark a significant step forward in the fight against climate change, unlike previous COPs, the last two of which were hosted by petro-states. However, as André Correa do Lago, president of COP30, has stated, Trump's position will undoubtedly affect the conference's preparations.

By no longer recognizing climate change as a national security issue, Donald Trump also extends this stance to the international level, particularly benefiting politicians with similar views who have a strong interest in the "aggressive" development of the Amazon. At stake, for example, is U.S. financial aid allocated to policies combating illegal mining and deforestation -such as the \$50 million pledged by Biden to the Amazon Fund-, which harm peoples who inhabit there and create opportunities for intensive natural resource extraction without environmental concerns. This extractive policy was heavily implemented during Jair Bolsonaro's administration, and for the upcoming presidential election in 2026, which may include Eduardo Bolsonaro as a candidate, Trump's support for continuing Bolsonaro's legacy in the Amazon poses significant risks to the region.

Diplomatically speaking, Trump's administration leaves a void when it comes to climate negotiations and important discussions on this agenda, such as financing, especially considering that the United States is the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind China. With Brazil's rapprochement with the Chinese government, it would not be surprising if the country was present at COP30, which could lead to significant multilateral progress in the field, but this potential is diminished without the collaborative participation of the United States. In addition to not contributing to future progress, Trump also rolls back key milestones in the fight against climate change, such as the ratification of the Paris Agreement. Once again, based on the rhetoric of making the country "great again," Trump has signaled his intention to withdraw from the Agreement once more, arguing that it is merely a mechanism through which other countries gain financial advantages over the United States, despite the country having a historical responsibility that should indeed be addressed, as stated by Marina Silva, Brazil's Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

The withdrawal from the Paris Agreement could also influence Javier Milei to follow the same path with Argentina, as he is a strong supporter of Trump's policies. If this were to happen, it could potentially create more obstacles for the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Mercosur, whose negotiations were concluded in 2024.

Summing up, Donald Trump has demonstrated, since the first days of his term, that his denialist mindset and opposition to climate policies will guide his foreign policy portfolio. This position will result in significant challenges in relationships with countries that prioritize the environmental agenda, such as Brazil, and the consequences will be felt heavily not only in the environment, but also in Human Rights, trade, diplomacy, and climate multilateralism.

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