

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In this era of globalization, Japan as a developed country whose economic activities are based on industry, apparently faces a serious problem in the availability of labor and declining population. A serious problem faced by Japan is related to the increasing population of elderly people and the decreasing strength of Japanese workers in the long run because the younger labor force group is shrinking. As the implication of this problem, the Japanese government and private sector make adjustments in the composition of the workforce and robot technology (Hidayat, 2011). However, the large number of jobs in other sectors such as construction and public works are in great need of migrant workers. Meanwhile, the lack of local workers who are willing to do work in the manual and medium-sized work sector ultimately results in a demand of large number of foreign workers migrating to Japan.

In general, there are two factors that support the migration of foreign workers, namely the push factor and the pull factor. Push factors are factors that encourage foreign workers to work outside their country. This factor is typically found in poor or developing countries that need employment from another country to sustain better welfare (Hidayat, 2011). On the other hand, the sending of foreign labor workers or migrant workers is also able to maintain the country's economy.

The sending of workers has become an industry that is proven by the appearance of offices or agents tasked with recruiting foreign workers and channeling them to countries in need.

Developed or developing countries are in great need of labor and it has become an attractive factor for the economy (Hidayat, 2011). This factor is determined by countries that accept foreign workers, including countries undergoing industrial restructuring, which results in local workers shifting to higher technology employment. The transition created an intensive vacuum in the 3K employment sector in Japan (kitanai, kiken, kitsui) or in English; dirty, dangerous, demanding.

“Kitanai” is closely related with dirty jobs such as farming and cleaning service, while “kitsui” relates to jobs that require physical strength to do, such as jobs that have to be done standing still, such as shopkeepers, or receptionists. Lastly, "kiken" relates to high-risk occupations, such as workers associated with the construction industry. This "3K" type of work is not liked by Japanese people, including young people.

According to the Japanese Bureau of Statistics, as of June this year, the number of young Japanese population under the age of 15 was 15,484,000 people, aged 15 to 64 years were around 75,581,000 people and the population aged 65 and over was 35,445,000 people. From these data, we can see that the number of Japanese people of working age has decreased and the number of people aged 65 years and over has increased. Due to the decline in the number of "working" age

people, coupled with the drastic reduction in the interest of young Japanese people to work in the so-called "3K" sector as the author wrote in the previous paragraph, currently many foreigners are employed, or rather, there are many vacancies available for foreign workers in Japan (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020).

The 3K employment sector is a specific sector of job conditions where the strain on the labor market is located in construction, intensive labor, and other sector that dealt with higher risk of mortality and perceived discriminatory even in the Japanese society. This is why the young generations are not interested in working in 3K sector when it's needed because the lack of workers. In addition, the rising cost of living and the changing role of women in society have caused many women to leave homework and work abroad as foreign domestic workers (The Asian Women Resource Exchange, 1995).

In connection with the two factors above, there are also factors that cause the inflows of foreign workers to Japan to increase. First, there are demands for workers to fill the domestic sector which is supported by the condition of the Japanese economy, the availability of jobs and a lack of labor. Second, the demand for foreign workers is based on high wage levels. Third, is the economic development of neighboring countries of Japan (Hidayat, 2011).

Japan, which is experiencing problems with the availability of manpower in a number of employment sectors, especially the 3K work sector that is unable to be fulfilled by Japanese workers, is supported by the influx of foreign residents which has led to the emergence of demand for foreign workers to fill the

employment sector. Foreign populations in Japan increased dramatically in the 1980s and early 1990s. To begin with, the entry of migrant workers to Japan began in 1970. There have been a number of rumors about the entry of migrant workers into Japan. In the 1960s until the 1970s, trainees or students who took the training started to enter Japan. In the 1970s, women and migrant workers who worked in the sex and entertainment industry also came to Japan. The late 1980s marked male migrant workers as workers in manufacturing and construction. While in the early 1990s, Japanese diaspora (nikkeijin) entered as unskilled labor (Komai, 1993).

Japan itself faces the problem of an aging population at a higher speed than any other country. Rapid aging in Japan is caused by a combination of rising life expectancy and falling birth rates (Burgess, 2014). At present, Japanese people live far longer and produce far less children than other countries. The government predicts that Japan's total population, which currently stands at 127 million, will decrease by a third in the next 50 years where it is estimated that there will only be about 43 million Japanese residents in 2110 (The Economist, 2014). The head of the special panel advising Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Akio Mimura, said that the government must act quickly to prevent the population from plunging to a number below 100 million, in order to prevent this, Japanese women who are old enough must have children and raise the birth rate to 2.07 from the current level of only 1.41 (Nikkei Asian Review, 2014).

The population crisis and also the shortage of labor in some sectors that require unskilled workers certainly makes Japan have to consider several solutions

to overcome these problems. One of the ways that can be taken by Japan is by opening immigration doors for foreign workers, including unskilled workers to help the sectors that need these workers. Former Head of Tokyo Immigration Bureau, Hidenori Sakanaka, believes that only immigration can save Japan, where in a proposal submitted in 2014, he recommended Japan to absorb around 10 million immigrants in 50 years or around 200,000 people per year to cover the shortfall of decrease in population (Sakanaka, 2018).

Japan has always been persecuted by the international community regarding the issue of immigrants. However, the Japanese government under the leadership of Shinzo Abe does not seem to budge about the problem of hiring immigrants and remains firm to maintain the principle of "no-immigration" as has been done so far. In a press conference in June 2014, Abe stated that for Japan facing an aging population, he believed that the absorption of quality human resources into Japan to revitalize the economy and improve Japan's competitiveness was important, and for that the government intends to curb the widening of the recruitment of non-Japanese skilled and highly skilled workers and to relax living requirements (Burgess, 2014).

However, the leniency and convenience in immigration process said by Abe in fact could not be said as a form of significant changes related to Japan's attitude on the issue of immigrants. Abe stated that the intended human resources were intended to work and earn income for a limited period of time, and would then be returned to their home countries (Yoshida, 2014). Abe's reluctance to relax Japanese immigration rules can also be seen from his statement stating that in

countries that accept immigration, there have been many riots, unhappiness for both migrants and existing communities (recipients). From Abe's statement, it can be seen that the fear of damage to the existing social order due to the arrival of immigrants to Japan was one of the reasons that caused Japanese regulations regarding immigrants to be very strict and seemed to be very disrespectful to the immigrants (Office of Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2014).

This was also supported by the fact that within the internal scope of the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), the current government party, most also refused to welcome the arrival of large numbers of unskilled workers to Japan for the same reason that fear that the immigrants would increase crime rates and depriving employment opportunities at the level of the economic sector are low, and most Japanese people themselves also have a harmonious perspective with the government (Yoshida, 2014).

Reluctance to open the door for immigration by the Japanese government was tricked into another program. Faced with the need for labor and reluctance to open the door to immigration, the Abe government is utilizing an "internship" program called the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). This program received a lot of criticism from outside, especially the United States because it was considered to violate human rights, with the exploitation of labor with low wages but with the protection of workers' rights that were still relatively lacking, stated that the training program was a system of slavery, human trafficking, and forced labor (Sekiguchi, 2015).

The government opposes the statement that TITP is a system of slavery, but acknowledges that there are indeed a number of problems related to some persons who exploit the system, but the government itself opposes these exploitative actions (Kamibayashi, 2014). The need for labor, especially in fields that require unskilled workers and provide low wages, is felt to be very much needed by Japan at this time, especially in the nursing sector and physical labor needed to prepare for the construction of the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. However, Japan under the government of Shinzo Abe, is still impressed half-heartedly in providing access for immigrant workers themselves. In addition, even if they succeed in entering Japan, the migrant workers must still face several problems due to their limited rights. Internships, for example, face tighter restrictions than other categories of foreign workers regarding their livelihoods.

Therefore, this study intends to analyze further related to the unwillingness or dilemma of Japanese government under Shinzo Abe administration from 2012 – 2020 to open a new and lax immigration policy for foreign workers in Japan. In addition to the aspects of policy formulation, this research also tries to highlight aspects of the implementation of the Japanese government's policy towards the immigrant workforce.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

In accordance with the explanation of background that the author had elucidated, the research question proposed for this thesis is: Why is Japan reluctant on opening a lenient immigration policy during the administration of Shinzo Abe even after the new immigration law reform is applied?

C. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1) Constructivism

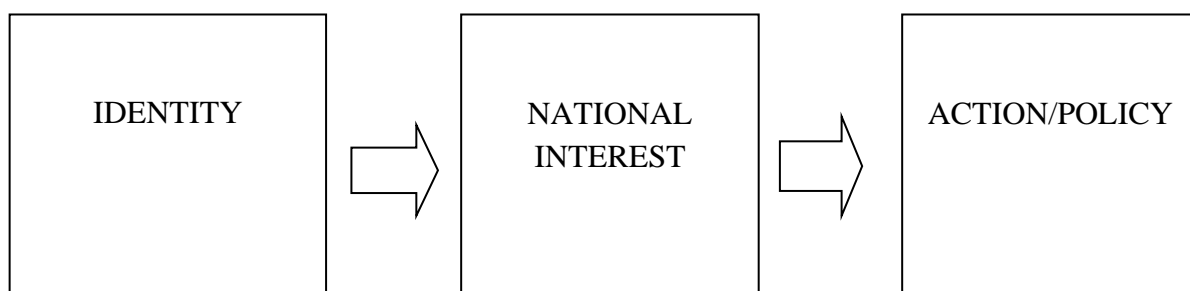
Constructivists emphasize three principles in international relations that affect a human activity, namely personality, norms and language. For this research the idea to be stressed is the idea of identity. Alexander Wendt describes identity as "a characteristic inherent in the actor who is guiding action" (Wendt, 1999). That is, identity can shape a person's and the state's actors' desires, which then shape and create an identity in an indirect manner. Constructivism explicitly states that actions, interactions, and perceptions shape reality. Hence, those thoughts and actions actually build international relations. However, this seemingly simple idea, when applied theoretically, has significant implications for how we can make sense of the world (Mukti, 2020). Identity that shapes the actor actions are closely related to the roots of culture in the making of the process of policies inherently.

In constructivism, Alexander Wendt also distinguishes four forms of identity (Wendt, 1992). The first is personal identification, in which an actor's identification is inherently shaped such as physical form, state symbol, nationalism, and others. The second identity is an identity of form which is shaped by categories such as political or religious ideology. The third identity is the role identity which focuses the actor's position or place in international relations. Only if the actors involved carry out an operation of international relations with other actors and get a response can this identification be established.

Foreign policy for an actor is affected by internal factors (state structures, public opinion) and external factors (international principles and norms, views of other actors). If combined, they would then see what an actor's role is and how the actor behaves on foreign affairs (Holsti, 1970). The last identity is the identity of a group that called as collective identity. A type of identity is created when there is a collective that includes a collective of interconnected State actors and eventually forms an identity that is held by joining the group simultaneously. Relationships between state actors can be due to interdependence or a high sense of solidarity.

An actor's identity can also alter when it has long maintained an identity. Changes in identity may arise because of different definitions from other actors, or because there are internal factors (government elite character and leadership style) and external factors (changes in events or the international environment) that alter them. Finally, the state must respond to the emergence of new identities in order to be socially appropriate, which is called an identity crisis.

CHART 1.1: The process of policy formulation according to Wendt's constructivism



The chart shows how identity shapes the national interests of a country first. The chart also highlights the major differences between neo-realists and

constructivists and neo-liberals. The neo-realist and neo-liberal view is that national interests are the guiding force behind agents (actors) in practice in foreign relations (Jackson, 2016). Whereas neo-realists and neo-liberals often emphasize the presence of force both from economic and military capacities.

In this case, it should be emphasized that in defining social reality and concepts (ideational structures), neo-realists and neo-liberalists pay more attention to the material structures. Meanwhile, ideational constructs play an important role in the constructivist worldview, which directs actors in their actions. The framework of the ideation may be in the form of concepts, traditions, principles, religion/belief, history, and so on. The ideational framework must form an identity that actors use to assess their goals, and then give birth to actors' actions in international relations. Therefore, identity is an explanatory factor in deciding the role of actors in global affairs.

The constructivism theory of collective identity from Wendt in this study will be explained as a factor influencing the formulation of Japanese government policy towards immigrant workers. As has already been explained before, the Japanese government basically applies a very strict immigration workforce policy and also limits the period of stay of the immigrant workers. The Japanese quota in the recruitment of immigrant laborers themselves is also still very limited, despite the fact that Japan requires many workers.

Constructivists assume that a person's ideas or characteristics determine their roles and actions in international relations activities. Constructivists also

interpret the word anarchy as something that is closely related among the actors involved, which results from social interaction. Actors can see anarchy depending on how the actor performs subjectivity to other actors, and vice versa, so that anarchy can experience many meanings, whether in good or bad terms. In other words, anarchy is not a natural thing but a subjective and social process (Wendt, 1992).

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Constructivists prioritize three concepts that influence a human action in international relations, namely identity, norms and language (Wendt, 1999). The concept to be emphasized in this research is the concept of identity. Alexander Wendt provides a definition of identity as "attributes inherent in actors that drive action" (Wendt, 1999). This means that identity can shape the interests of actors, both individuals and the state, which then shape actions that will indirectly also form identities, either the same identity or turning into a new identity.

Alexander Wendt also divides four types of identity in international relations (Wendt, 1992). The first is personal identity where the identity of an actor is formed naturally, such as physical form, state symbols, nationalism and others. The second identity is a type identity that is influenced by certain categories such as political ideology or religion. The third identity is a role identity that focuses on the position or position of actors in international relations. This identity can only be formed if the actor concerned carries out an international relations activity with other actors and gets a response.

This type of identity has a relationship with the formation of identity into foreign policy as expressed by Holsti in his journal *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy*. The formation of an actor's foreign policy is influenced by internal factors (state elements, public opinion, and others) and external factors (international values and norms, opinions of other actors, and others). When combined, it will then be seen what the position of an actor is and how the actor continues to act in international relations (Holsti, 1970).

The last identity is group identity or collective identity which will be the main topic of this study. This type of identity is formed when there is a group that contains a collection of interrelated state actors and in the end forms an identity that is shared by joining the group. Relations between state actors can occur because of interdependence or because of a high sense of solidarity. Wendt describes three factors that form the collective identity of an actor (Wendt, 1994). The first is a systemic factor or interaction factor between countries. The second factor is the structural factor or inter-subjectivity factor between countries.

Collective identity is only formed when two or more countries identify each other as friends. The last factor is the strategic factor or communication factor between countries.

2) Concept of Policy

Government policy is closely connected to a country's public issues or conflicts within the public sphere. The strategy has helped many government administration implementers and politicians to solve public problems. It can be said that policy is a form of government interference in the interests of vulnerable groups within society. In general, policy is a written rule that is a formal organizational decision that is binding on members associated with the organization, which can regulate behavior with the aim of creating new values in society.

In contrast to laws and regulations, policy is only a guideline for action and not as compelling as law. Although policies regulate what can and cannot be done, the policy is only adaptive and interpretative. Policies are generally problem solving and are expected to be general but without eliminating the local characteristics of an organization or institution, in other words policies must provide opportunities to be interpreted in accordance with existing conditions.

Some scholars try to define policy; one of them is Carl Friedrich with his definition of policy:

“The policy is a direction of action proposed by a person, group or government in a particular environment that provides obstacles and opportunities

for the proposed policy to use and overcome in order to achieve a goal, or realize a particular goal or purpose.” (Friedrich, 1940)

Based on the definition, it can be understood that the general purpose of policy making from the government is basically to achieve common interests in the society of a country. Therefore, joint consensus is one important factor in making a policy because it concerns all parties. Both internal and external factors in the policy-making environment will influence the formulated policy.

Through this research, the elaboration of the policy concept can be used in analyzing Japanese government policies towards immigrant workers during the Shinzo Abe administration from 2012-2020. The main aspects that will be examined from the Japanese government's policy towards the immigrant workforce are the stage of formulation or policy making regarding domestic events that shaped the policy. Analysis of policy making is used as an explanation that aims to explain or describe how a decision or series of decisions are made. Meanwhile, analysis of policy implementation is used in explaining how changes occur or how changes can be raised and the implementation of making in other ways.

D. HYPOTHESIS

Japan reluctant on opening a lenient immigration policy during the administration of Shinzo Abe even after the new immigration law reform is applied because:

1. The construction of Japan's identity is hindering the process of a lax immigration policy.

2. Japan's domestic politics regarding the fear of assimilation with foreign migrants considering the nativism and xenophobic view in the homogeneous society.

E. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to carry out this research, the researcher would apply qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is interpretive research, namely research that does not let go of the researchers' understanding in interpreting data that has been obtained (Lawrence, 2006) Qualitative method is able to identify intangible factors, such as, social norms, socio-economic, and perspectives from the local population it involves. The researcher expected to produce an in-depth analysis and understanding for relevant actors within this research.

Qualitative research is different from quantitative research that seeks to control and predict, but rather focus on generating descriptions, analysis, and interpretation of a phenomenon. The data collection method used by the researcher will depend on literature study, including the collection of some secondary data obtained from books, journals, web pages, reports, articles and so on. In the literature study, the data obtained is used to explain the meaning of this study. Furthermore, interviews to expert related to Japanese migrant is also considered to enrich the data that would later become the argument of the research.

The category of research conducted by the researcher is a research that is both descriptive and analytical in nature. This is because analytical manner is not limited to answer basic descriptive manner from 5W+1H, but also analyzing data

and guide it to become a full-fledged research argument. Moreover, this research seeks to understand something through describe the things that the researcher want to understand, so that the researcher will get the rough picture pertaining a complex social processes and lead to understanding through detailed analytical description.

F. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

With the problem identified as explained, the researcher would like to create a border or limitation around this research in fear of it getting too out of hand, out of topic, and far fetch. The research titled “Between Survivability and Nativism: Japan Migrant Workers Policy Under Shinzo Abe administration 2012– 2020” is limited to the level of analysis where Shinzo Abe is representing Japan’s interest, as opposed to representing individual’s interest. Therefore, the research will emphasize on the Japanese common society as a whole that are being represented by Shinzo Abe as the Prime Minister of Japan. Moreover, another consideration for the limitation of timeline from 2012-2020 is to prevent outdated topics to be discussed beyond the required years that the researchers would like to investigate. Therefore, the research would focused in the timeline that span 6 years from 2012-2020.

G. RESEARCH OUTLINE

The outline of the research will be divided as follows:

Chapter I: The researcher gives details on introduction, includes background problems, identification of problems, goals and uses of research, theoretical

framework, hypothesis, research methods, significance of research, scope of research, and research outline.

Chapter II: This chapter explains the elaboration of the background, mainly about Japan's migrant policy and the demographics of Japanese people as well as the migrant workers statistics that made migrant workers essential in Japan's workforce.

Chapter III: The researcher clarifies the evidence of the dilemmatic problem faced by Japan from nativism policies that hinders the survivability of Japanese people in the future. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss on the confirmation of hypothesis that the researchers argued, namely; the construction of Japan's identity is hindering the process of a lax immigration policy, and the resistance from Japan's domestic politics regarding the fear of assimilation with foreign migrants considering the xenophobic view in the homogeneous society.

Chapter IV: This chapter contains the conclusions drawn from the research related to the results of the discussion that has been obtained on the previous chapters.