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Refugee and Asylum Seeking in Modern Japan: Analysis of Japan's Humanitarian Commitments and Xenophobic Problems

Hidayet Sıddıkoğlu*

Abstract

The current position of the Japanese government towards Japan's foreign policy aligns with both the notion of a 'Proactive Contribution to Peace', and the United Nations' mission of humanitarian assistance. However, the domestic Japanese attitude towards refugees has resulted in its humanitarian commitments remaining highly controversial. This paper examines the Japanese government's paradox in relation to humanitarian assistance, and in particular whether Japan's controversial domestic refugee policies reflect its international humanitarian commitments. It argues that the current Japanese refugee policy fulfils two political ends: firstly to keep the refugee crisis out of Japan, and secondly, to convey a strong message of 'no entry' to those wishing to find refuge in Japan.

Keywords: *Human rights, Japan, Refugee Policy, Paradox*

* Research Fellow, Hiroshima University, Graduate School of Social Science, e-mail: noqra@ipakyol.com

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Modern Japonya'da Göç ve Sığınma Talebi: Japonya'nın İnsani Yükümlülükleri ve Yabancı Düşmanlığı Sorunlarının Analizi

Hidayet Sıddıkoğlu*

Öz

Japon Hükümetinin Japon dış politikasına yönelik mevcut tutumu hem "Barışa Proaktif (Önalan) Katkı" anlayışıyla hem de BM'nin insani yardım göreviyle uyumludur. Bununla birlikte, göçmenlere karşı iç politikadaki tutum, insani yükümlülüklerin oldukça tartışmalı kalmasıyla sonuçlandı. Bu makalede, insani yardım konusunda Japon hükümetinin ikilemi ve özellikle de Japonya'nın tartışmalı politikalarının uluslararası insani yükümlülüklerini yansıtıp yansıtmadığı incelenmiştir. Mevcut Japon göç politikasının iki politik sonucu gerçekleştirdiği öne sürülmektedir: birincisi göçmen krizini Japonya'nın dışında tutmak ve ikinci olarak Japonya'dan sığınma talep edecek kişilere güçlü bir "girilmez" mesajı vermek.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İnsan Hakları, Japonya, Göç Politikası, İkilem*

* Araştırma görevlisi, Hiroşima Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, e-posta: noqra@ipakyol.com

INTRODUCTION

International scholars have praised Japan for its: rapid economic growth; technological advancement; creation of quality products; and position as a peace-loving nation. Under Article 9 of its constitution, Japan renounces war and avoids maintaining a military force, apart from that necessary for self-defence (Dean, 2006: 2; Andressen, 2002: 1). Furthermore, Japan has, since the end of the Cold War, attracted global attention as one of the major donors to the promotion of peace and the reduction of poverty, as well as humanitarian assistance on a global basis (Edström, 2011: 15; Söberberg, 2011: 45-46). Moreover, Japan's foreign policy contains a considerable number of references to humanitarian assistance and the promotion of international peace. The current Japanese government, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has positioned Japan's foreign policy in line with the notion of a 'Pro-active Contribution to Peace' (PCP). This is primarily enacted through international cooperation and the United Nations' (UN) mission of humanitarian assistance, including: promoting international cooperation for peace; sharing universal values; responding to global development issues; realising human security; and cooperating with the development of human resources in developing countries. However, the Japanese attitude to humanitarian commitment to refugees within its own borders remains highly controversial.

This paper examines the Japanese government's paradox in relation to humanitarian assistance, and assesses whether Japan's controversial domestic policies towards foreigners (i.e. long term foreign residents in general, and refugees in particular) reflects its international humanitarian commitments. Firstly, this paper examines previous discussions (i.e. policies and the reports of international organisations) concerning Japanese state policy towards refugees; secondly, it discusses issues surrounding the growing humanitarian concerns related to asylum seekers and refugees; thirdly, it examines the Japanese perception of

the self and of foreigners residing in Japan; and finally, there is a discussion of Japan's global humanitarian commitments.

JAPAN'S REFUGEE POLICY: 1981-2016

The Arab uprising in the Middle East in 2011 reignited the religio-political and sectarian divide between Muslims in the Middle East, leading to unprecedented sectarian violence in Syria forcing millions to flee their homes. At the same time, further unresolved conflicts, along with natural disasters and environmental challenges, exacerbated global forced displacements, including in the following countries: Afghanistan; Iraq; Palestine; Yemen; Libya; Somalia; South Sudan; Ethiopia; Pakistan; Bangladesh; and Haiti. This led to an unprecedented movement of refugees, primarily fleeing towards the West from war-torn countries. The influx of migrants from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Northern Africa primarily to Western nations has questioned the political integrity of the West. For example, the number of registered asylum seekers in Europe reached approximately 1.2 million in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017: 1). Germany, known for its open-door refugee policy, took in the largest number (i.e. 722,300 registered first-time applicants), followed by Italy and France (Ibid). Turkey currently houses over three million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Pakistan (a country which is also exporting refugees) became home to 1.3 million registered refugees in 2016 (UNHCR, 2016: 10), along with tens of thousands of undocumented Afghans (SIGAR, 2015: 1). While Lebanon has become home to over one million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017). These countries currently house the largest global refugee population. However, Japan, which has the third largest global economy, and a well-established democratic modern nation state, granted refugee status to only 660 applicants between 1978 and 2015 (MoJ, 2016: 60).

Within this context, a large number of scholars, policy literature (including NGOs), UNHCR, and the popular media, have criticised Japan for failing to fulfil its fair share of responsibility in relation to

the international refugee crisis. The critics of Japanese refugee policy focus on a number of areas, including: Japan's closed-door refugee policy; the perception by both society and the state of foreigners, particularly refugees, as a security threat to political stability of the state; the tradition of homogeneity, i.e. Japaneseness, (*nihonjinron),* focussing on a uniqueness in culture, language and ethnicity and thus being against multiculturalism; criticisms of refugee detention centres as anti-humanitarian; an absence professional administrative courts; and the failure of Japan to comply with international humanitarian regimes in relation to the protection of the rights of refugees (Wilson et al., 2016; The Economist, 2015; Sugimoto, 2010: 189-90; Junichi, 2006: 221-222; Dean, 2006: 1-5). Japan has also been previously criticised by the international community in the 1970s, when it failed to take its share of the burden of Indo-Chinese refugees (Arakaki, 2008: 17-18).

A number of scholars consider one of the main reasons for Japan's homogeneity to be its self-imposed isolation, known as *sakoku,* (1630-1853), which has led to a 'closed door' policy towards foreigners wishing to find refuge in Japan (Dean, 2005, 1). Andressen (2002: 68) emphasised two fundamental reasons for Japanese leaders (i.e. the *Tokugawa Shogunate*, the ruling power) to choose seclusion between 1630 and 1853. Firstly, this was to control social class, then based on a caste system made up of the *daimyo/samurai* (ruling power), and the peasants, artisans, merchants and outcasts (known as *Burakumins*) (ibid). This was undertaken by restricting the empowerment of the population by means of international trade, with a considerable number of international business networks being established during this era (ibid). Secondly, it was to prevent Christian missionaries converting the Japanese to Christianity, as this was considered a threat to national security, leading to potential foreign invasions of Japan (ibid). Moreover, following the demise of *Tokugawa shogun,* in the *Meiji* (enlightened rule) era (1868-1912), the ruling elites also propagated a fear of foreigners, through the creation of the political cry of

"rich country, strong army, *fukoku-kyohei*", which strengthened central political and imperial military power in Japan (Andressen, 2002: 78-80). Contemporary scholarship recognises this seclusion theory, both historically and politically, as one of the main factors shaping the Japanese perception of the outside world in terms of a threat to its security.

However, Japan once again made contact with the outside world as a result of the Meiji restoration of 1868, opening up its borders for foreigners to share occidental knowledge and technology (Arudou, 2013, 49). Japan rapidly acquired Western technology, and, during the early twentieth century, began to export goods on an international basis (Frieden, 2006: 60), with the export of Japanese technology gradually increasing following the 1950s. This led to Japanese culture being represented globally through the medium of advanced technology (Sugimoto, 2010: 77), while Japan continued to learn extensively from the West (Stronach, 1995: 56). Stronach (1995: 55) stated that increased interaction with the outside world "attacked Japanese homogeneity at its very roots". Hence, everyday-life in Japan is now connected to the rest of the world through Japanese cultural capitalism (Sugimoto, 2010: 78). Within this context, the seclusion theory does not appear to reflect the contemporary attitude of either the Japanese state or its population towards foreigners. Furthermore, the theory that its seclusion led to the Japanese remaining unaware of issues related to refugees contradicts the fact that the Japanese have not only been acquainted with foreign cultures since the 1860s, but have also been aware of the issue of refugees as early as 1917, i.e. when many Russians sought refuge in Japan (Honma, 2007: 23).

The question thus rises as to why Japan, as third largest economy and modern democratic nation, as well as party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter the Convention and Protocol), is inclined to practice such a rigid domestic refugee policy. Junichi (2006: 221-222), considered this due to the rigidity of Japa-

nese bureaucracy, noting that neither the political establishment, nor the judiciary, override policy decisions undertaken by the bureaucracy. Furthermore, Junichi (2006: 234) noted the presence of a gap between international refugee law and the interests of the Government of Japan. This is particularly so when it comes to refugee protection law, i.e. international law demonstrates a humanitarian approach towards the refugee issue, while the Japanese government implements a refugee policy based on narrow organisational interests (ibid). Arakaki (2008: 18) emphasised that Japan manipulated its accession to the international refugee regime for three main purposes: firstly, to maintain a good relationship with the United States (US); secondly, to stabilise the legal status of Indo-Chinese refugees at home; and thirdly, to politically mobilise Japanese commitments to humanitarian cooperation both at home and internationally. Furthermore, he emphasised that "factors other than refugee protection decisively affected Japan's decision to implement the international refugee regime." (ibid). However, Honma (2007: 23) stated that it was not only the Japanese state (including the Ministry of Justice) that was reluctant to accept refugees, but that also "ordinary Japanese have been unsympathetic towards … (the) rights of foreigner living in Japan". In accord with Arakaki's (2008) analysis of Japanese refugee policy and its implementations, Honma (2007: 24) emphasised that the Ministry of Justice (under the influence of state politics) is solely responsible for determining and recognising the status of refugees in the country.

In summary: there are a number of challenges that have led Japan to lag behind the protection of refugee rights in the contemporary world. These include: the lack of an impartial administrative court to assess applications; a narrow interpretation of the rights of refugees; and the establishment's reluctance to commit to the protection of refugees.

Alongside the lack of professional administrative courts and the reluctance of the political leadership to determine refugee status and the protection of refugee rights, it is also important to note that the

implementation of such refugee policies has remained a primary concern of international humanitarian organisations, i.e. UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, and other humanitarian based NGOs. Moreover, the social, cultural, political and psychological impact of procedures undertaken towards asylum seekers have attracted the attention of human right activists, scholars and journalists, including significant criticism of the process by which the status of refugees is determined by the Ministry of Justice. For example, a report by the BBC, broadcast in June 2016, described refugee detention centres as resembling prisons, in which detainees are psychologically tortured, including being kept in dark cells, subject to verbal torments that they will soon be deported (BBC, 2016). Furthermore, the death of an infirm Sri Lankan detainee in a Japanese refugee detention centre highlighted serious deficiencies in medical care and monitoring systems (Wilson et al., 2017). In addition, there have recently been a number of reports made by the *Deutsche Welle*, *The Japan Times, The Economist,* and Human Rights Watch (HRW) that repeatedly emphasised the violation of human rights, particularly in relation to the provision of fundamental rights to asylum seekers in Japanese refugee detention centres (Kikuchi, 2017; Ryall, 2017; HR, 2017; The Economist, 2015). Moreover, a recent HRW report raised a number of similar criticisms of Japan's deportation of refugees, and the detention of refugees for an unlimited time, as well as violations of human rights in relation to migrant workers, e.g. illegal overtime; unpaid wages; dangerous working conditions; confiscation of passports; and a prohibition on mobile phones (HRW, 2017: 358). Furthermore, as previously discussed, there have been a number of reports concerning the human rights violation of foreigners in detention, including the denial of interpreters along with legal and medical services (Dean, 2006: 27-28).

However, it is important to note that the issue of the violation of human rights, (to varying degrees, including physical and psychological torture) is found in all countries hosting refugees, including Western states emphasising the importance of human rights, liberalism and

democracy. This includes the severe violation of human rights in Australian refugee centres, where asylum seekers are kept for prolonged periods in inhuman conditions with a lack of medical care, and where they experience ill-treatment and severe physical and psychological torture (HRW, 2016). However, this current paper does not focus on a comparison between the refugee policy of Japan and those of other developed democratic states, but it is important to highlight that in the majority of developed nations the issue of refugees has remained beyond humanitarian policy.

On the other hand, the Constitution of Japan promulgates the protection of human rights, as follows: (1) Chapter 3, Article 11 states that: "[t]he people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental rights" (The Constitution of Japan); (2) Article 14 states that "[n]o discrimination shall be authorised or tolerated in political, economic or social relations on account of race, creed, sex, social status, caste or national origin"; (3) Article 21 guarantees freedom of speech; (4) Article 25 states that "people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living"; and (5) Article 26 guarantees equal right to education for all (ibid). In criticising the legal interpretation of the constitution, that the "provisions therein are only to be enjoyed by Japanese", Field (2009) states that:

> *Simply, at what point does "...no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin..." become semantically reduced to read "no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of being Japanese"?* (Field, 2009: 49)

In addition to the constitution's protection of fundamental human rights, Japan has ratified the Convention and Protocol defining a refugee as "someone who is unable, or willing, to return to his or her country of origin, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 1950: 3). Furthermore, the convention stresses that "refugees should not be penalised [offensive

criminal charges, detention, forceful expulsion] for their illegal entry or stay... [recognising] that the seeking of asylum can require breaching immigration rules" (Ibid). Moreover, "[t]he principle of *non-refoulement* is so fundamental that no reservation or derogations may be made to it" (Ibid). As stated previously, Japan ratifies the convention in principle, but rarely treats the issue of refugees as a humanitarian issue (Junichi, 2006, 222). However, although the Japanese practice of refugee law has, to a large extent, served political ends rather than humanitarian requirements obligatory under the Convention and Protocol, the consequence of Japanese accession to the Convention has been to improve the rights and status of foreigners living in Japan (Moris-Suzuki, 2015: 78).

However, the Japanese establishment (including the Ministry of Justice) tends to view the refugee issue at home as a political, rather than a humanitarian, crisis, and one that needs to be tackled politically. In fact, the institutional rigidity of Japanese refugee policy has resulted in the state having two political interests: firstly, using a closed-door policy to keep the refugee crisis from entering Japan; and secondly, to convey a strong message of 'no entry' to those migrants attempting to gain refuge in Japan. However, although Japan has revised its refugee policy, which was amended in 2004 under the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, and came into effect in May 2005 (Dean, 2006: 5), the Japanese attitude towards refugees has remained generally unchanged. Thus, the practice of rigid refugee policies, based on a narrow interpretation of refugee rights (in particular Japan's act of 'refoulement', prohibited under international refugee law) have been criticised as contrary to Japan's obligations under international law (UNHCR, 2005).

LIVING AS A *GAIJIN* (FOREIGNER) IN JAPAN

The most important issue when it comes to the Japan's closed door refugee policy (i.e. ethnic, cultural, social, economic or political) concerns the securitisation of foreigners collectively, as a political matter

threatening the security of the nation. Buzan et al. (1998: 23-24) noted that a politicised issue (i.e. "meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision") becomes a security issue when a securitising actor frames the issue as an existential threat to the referent object. Japanese securitising actors consider refugees as a threat to the cultural identity of Japan, and portray illegal migration as a matter of state security, i.e. political establishments, in particular, have viewed non-Japanese individuals as a threat both to the national security of Japan and to the cultural purity and ethnic homogeneity of the nation (Dean, 2006: 1-2). Arakaki (2008: 7) noted that, following the terrorist attacks in New York in September 2001 (9/11), the association between irregular migration and crimes such as trafficking raised concerns for national identity and the societal security of Japan, and thus foreigners were securitised as threat to national identity of Japan.

However, this securitisation of refugees under the pretext of a national threat is neither unprecedented, nor exclusive to Japan. One of the flagships of the successful US presidential campaign in 2016 of Donald J. Trump was his electoral speech against Muslim refugees, i.e. "[y]ou are not safe, radical Islam is coming to our shores" (Trump, Washington Post, 13 June, 2016). Following the success of President Trump, the flagship policy of the electoral campaign of Norbert Hofer, the leader of right-wing Freedom Party of Austria, focussed on building a fence on the southern borders of Austria to prevent Muslim refugees entering, calling this a 'Muslim invasion' (Faiola, 2016). In one of her campaign speeches during the 2017 French presidential election, Marine Le Pen (the leader of the right-wing Front National) pledged to keep all foreigners out of France, stating: "[m]ass immigration is not an opportunity for France, it's for France... [because] France is for the French" (Ramadani, 2017). Such anti-immigrant rhetoric by right-wing political leaders has successfully resonated with a considerable audience in Western societies.

However, there are a number of differences between the Western and Japanese securitisation of foreigners, in both the public and state

spheres. The West has a long history of hosting foreign refugees and economic migrants, in particular Muslims, and therefore any discourse concerning securitisation is, to a large extent, in line with anti-religious and ideological rhetoric. Historically, European colonists' perception during the colonial era of Muslim migrants as 'other' arose from the presumed cultural superiority of the 'self', rather than as a security threat to European Christendom (Stuchtey, 2011: 855-856). However, the contemporary Western securitisation of Muslim refugees and immigrants has arisen from a series of post-Cold War Muslim-associated terrorist attacks in the Western world, in particular the 9/11, followed by a new phase of similar attacks in Europe. On the other hand, the later xenophobic discourses have incited the cultural, racial and ethnic otherness of foreigners as a security threat to Japan's ethnic, cultural and linguistic homogeneity (Dean, 2005: 1). This difference in the perception of foreigners between the West and Japan is closely related to the changing social, cultural and political conditions experienced by both settlers and refugees within a short time-span, i.e. the perception of refugees in Japan has been developed and shaped by social, cultural, and political settings.

The perception of foreigners in Japan as 'others' was, shaped on a conviction of the cultural and biological superiority of the self. Andressen (2002: 12) examined Japanese self-perception, emphasising that the Japanese claim to have a unique biological and psychological identity that is separate from the rest of the global population. Nonetheless, scholars have identified the roots of Japanese excellence in industrialisation and technology in series of factors resulting from the import of Western technology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as economic opportunities under changing geopolitical conditions (i.e. the Korean war in 1950), including the US led post-World War-II policy reforms and emergency assistance and economic recovery loans (Frieden, 2007: 60 & 268; Takada, 1999: 5-12). However, the technological advancement and rapid economic growth in Japan between 1950 and 1980, according

to Japanese, originated primarily from the Japanese culture of hierarchical chain command, known as *amae,* and ethno-cultural loyalty between groups that constructed the collective homogenous society of Japanese, known as *nihonjinron* (Sugimoto, 2010: 3-4). Pride in Japaneseness was expressed in a number of different ways, with some Japanese viewing their biological set up as differing from that of foreigners (Andressen, 2002: 12), and that the Japanese brain is group-oriented, originating from the Japanese tendency to use left side of the brain rather than right (ibid). Such ethno-cultural and biological perceptions led the Japanese to believe in their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic superiority over other nationalities (Andressen, 2002: 12; Sugimoto, 2010: 190-91). At the same time, the difficulty of the Japanese language was viewed as reflecting the high level of Japanese intelligence (Andressen, 2002: 12), leading to a self-perception that the Japanese race is unique and belongs to a pure homogenous ethno-cultural society raised above all other nationalities. Such perceptions may be exaggerated politically by the ruling elite in order to unite the nation against both internal minorities (i.e. the Korean, *Zainichi,* Chinese, Ainu and Okinawa ethnic groups, as well as the *Burakumin* class) and external political challenges (i.e. the influx of refugees).

The political establishment therefore considers itself a zealous guardian of Japanese racial purity and uniqueness (Sugimoto, 2010: 189; Dean, 2006: 1), which has led the ruling elites to exploit the theory of homogeneity for political ends. Thus, the approach of the Japanese state towards foreigners (including refugees) is, to a considerable extent, built on the assumption that Japanese society is homogenous and has no tradition of accepting foreigners (Dean, 2006: 2; Sugimoto, 2010: 189). Such individuals are thus collectively securitised, in particular by the political establishment, as threat to Japan's ethnic, cultural and linguistic homogeneity. In summary: there is a tendency for foreigners to be securitised as threat to the national identity of Japan.

On the other hand, from the perspective of foreigners who have lived in Japan for a long period of time (including permanent residents and naturalised citizens), the Japanese racial discrimination of *gaijins* (foreigners) is based on a number of preconceptions, including: (1) that they are criminals; (2) exclusionary discrimination (i.e. Japanese Only); (3) housing discrimination; and (4) that foreigners married to a Japanese national only did so to obtain a visa, and are oblivious to Japanese culture and language (Hurst, 2017; Riri, 2012; The Asahi Shimbun, 2008: 2). In 2007, there were 21,600 cases of such violation of rights (The Asahi Shinbun, 2008: 3), which has continued to increase on an annual basis. A recent government survey has revealed that one in every three foreigners has experienced racial discrimination in Japan (Ross, 2017). However, such racial discrimination towards foreigners have never been subject to homogeneity. Western (i.e. European and Northern American) expatriates are far less subject to racial discrimination than the Chinese, *Zainichi*, and other migrants from developing countries in Asia. In fact, the Japanese value foreigners on the basis of their social position in relation to economic, political and scientific superiority. Moreover, in the context of presenting Japan's identity internationally (i.e. in relation to culture and advanced technology) the Japanese have preferred a comparison with Western, rather than Asian, developed states (Stronach, 1995: 57), due to the presumed economic, scientific and cultural superiority of Japan over other Asian countries. The Japanese perception of Western and non-Western foreigners is therefore shaped by the social stratum to which they belong, and thus the Japanese treatment of foreigners varies from polite to ill-mannered, depending upon their socio-economic and political status, i.e. Stronach (1995) noted that the Japanese habit of keeping foreigners at arm's length is dependent upon race and nationality (Ibid).

Despite the frequent expression of racial discrimination against foreigners, there has also been long-held racial discrimination on the basis of ethnic and religious identity within Japanese societies. Thus,

racial discrimination has been practiced between those whose Japaneseness is determined by the right of blood (i.e. *jus sanguinis*), and other minorities (i.e. Ainu and Okinawan) whose Japaneseness is determined by descent, and who were born in Japanese soil. Furthermore, naturalised citizens (including *Burakumins*, who share ethnic and cultural origins with the majority of Japanese nationals), have been subject to racial discrimination. In analysing the issues of racial discrimination in Japan, Debito Arudou (an US born naturalised Japanese citizen, known for being outspoken when it comes to issues of human rights and racism in Japan) argued that racism is rooted in Japan's Nationality Law, *kokuseki ho,* where "bloodlines and state membership is explicitly linked" (Arudou, 2013: 157). Japanese Nationality Law is therefore firmly bound with *jus sanguinis* (i.e. *Wajin*) (Morris-Suzuki, 2015: 70), and that therefore Ainu, Okinawan, and naturalised citizens are viewed as being unequal to *Wajin* citizens.

However, it should be noted that the issue of double standards towards naturalised citizens is not exclusive to the Japanese, but is widely practiced in democratic countries with naturalised citizens on a global basis. However, Japanese Nationality Law is unique in the importance it places on the purity of the blood-line, which ensures that children with a non-Japanese (non-*Wajin*) father or mother are considered as *hafu* (i.e. 'half'), meaning half-pure. Thus, Japanese society does not consider those with one Japanese parent as having equal rights to those who are *Wajin* citizens, and even less so naturalised citizens or foreign residents. In criticising Japanese citizenship law, Arudou stated that "[i]f the laws themselves are racialised, then… people will be similarly codified and singled out for differential treatment due to their racialised characteristics" (Arudou, 2013: 157).

It is also significant to highlight the challenges of integration faced by foreigners in Japanese societies. A number of scholars, including Dean (2006) have emphasised that Japanese societies are conservative in both their operation and outlook, and foreigners thus experience a number of difficulties when it comes to successful integration (Dean,

2006: 1). Many scholars working on Japanese cultural and ethnic composition have highlighted the fact that Japan is a conservative homogeneous society, lacking any tradition of accepting foreigners (Sugimoto, 2010: 189; Dean, 2006: 2). As stated previously, this is largely due to Japanese presumed ethno-cultural uniqueness and rigidity, leading to a lack of openness towards others, including in relation to the integration of outsiders.

However, an examination of real-life Japanese societies reveals that the Japanese are more in tune with Western culture, including the celebration of Christmas and Halloween, and with weddings commonly performed in chapels by Christian priests (Brooke, 2005). Furthermore, the majority of popular anime movies and series are inspired by Western culture, with the main anime characters of movies or series tending to have blond hair and bluish eyes, e.g. 名探偵コナン, the Detetctive Conan, 天空の城ラピュタ Laputa: the Castle in the Sky, and 進撃の巨人 , Attack on Titan. This highlights that the Japanese enjoy practicing multicultural values, while at the same time being unwilling to support multiculturalism, which they view as a threat to national security. Consequently, modern Japanese lifestyle is juxtaposed with the general perception that Japanese have conservative outlook in both practice and theory. Japanese culture differs from Western culture in that the Japanese are less likely to practice an inclusive multicultural approach towards foreigners, and thus (despite being known for their cultural borrowing from all parts of the world), the Japanese are less like to share their socio-cultural values with foreigners. Therefore, despite the global success of Japan's cultural merchandise and technology, the Japanese population has remained deeply entrenched in the cultural belief of *Nihonjinron*, which has continued to delineate them from foreigners.

JAPAN'S GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Despite its refusal to accept refugees, Japan is the top fourth on the list of donor countries to UNHCR. The Government of Japan has al-

so recently announced that it is donating US$ 7 million to UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP) to support Afghan refugees in Pakistan (WFP, 2017), including assisting 22,500 Afghans to obtain legal documentation, and approximately 50,000 refugees with healthcare, and 210 young refugees to gain vocational training throughout Pakistan (ibid). Moreover, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has, in addition to promising to provide educational scholarships for 150 Syrians (JICA, 2016), pledged US$ 2.8 billion to assist in addressing the global refugee crisis (Brunnstorm, 2016). Further, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has establish a special Syrian refugee aid programme, known as the 'Japanese Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees (JISR)', which (in cooperation with UNHCR) will provide a Master's degree scholarship programme between 2017 and 2021 for approximately a hundred Syrian refugees in the Middle East (JICA, 2016).

The current Japanese multibillion US dollar commitment to assist both refugees and host countries on a global basis has been Japanese flagship for the preservation of global peace and stability. In 2015, Japan committed approximately one billion pounds sterling to counter the Middle East refugee crisis, including the increased challenges relating to refugees in both the Middle East and Europe (The Telegraph, 2015). This included: (1) £534 million to assist Iraqi and Syrian refugees; (2) £500 million towards peacebuilding in the Middle East (ibid); (3) £1.3 million to assist Lebanon as the country hosting the second largest number of Syrian refugees globally; and (4) £1.6 million to assist Serbia and Macedonia, as the countries through which refugees tend to pass to reach northern Europe (ibid). At the same time, Japan has pledged to assist African refugees and host countries in Africa. Japan has also committed US$ 4.5 million aid to UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme to enhance the livelihood and coordination of humanitarian emergency in Uganda, which is home to 500,000 refugees (UNDP) (UNDP, 2016). Similarly, 1,800 metric tonnes of food was purchased with a US$ 1.8 million

Japanese fund, in order to meet the emergency food needs of refugees in Tanzania (WFP, 2016).

This demonstrates that Japanese financial commitments towards the refugee crisis contradicts its own closed-door refugee policy. Critics of Japanese 'open-cheque and closed-door' refugee policies highlight the importance to refugees of the provision a place of safety, as well as financial aid. However, in a speech to the UN general assembly in New York, the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, prioritised issues including improving the rights of women and that of an aging population, over the acceptance of refugees into the country (McCurry, 2015). Thus, the Japanese political establishment delivers a clear message to the world that Japan is prepared to accept its responsibilities through financial and humanitarian assistance to help tackle international refugee crisis across the globe, while being at the same time unwilling to accept any into the country. This highlights the fact that, while Japan exhibits a multicultural approach in its foreign policy by being prepared to address global issues concerning refugees, its domestic policies remains monocultural.

It should be noted that the current establishment positions Japan's foreign policy in line with PCP. However, the term PCP has remained subject to a number of interpretations between Japanese and foreign policy analysts. Szczudlik-Tatar (2014: 1) stated that Japan's adaptation of new National Security Strategy (NSS) of PCP is a measure taken by Abe's administration in response to rising geopolitical tension in East Asia, in particular as a result of the assertive stance of both China and North Korea, further noting that this proactive policy may lead to the militarisation of Japan, thus strengthening suspicion of Japan's intentions (Szczudlik, 2014: 2). On the other hand, Japanese policy analysts recognise that Japan's new national security strategy has been undertaken in response to rising geopolitical and security concerns, in particular Chinese military modernisation, and the aggressive military stance of North Korea in East Asia, thus emphasising that Japan's PCP is based on international cooperation through a collective approach to

security (in particular US-Japan security arrangements) and is in line with UN humanitarian agendas, including tackling the contemporary international refugee crisis (Akiko, 2014: 52- 55; Fujishige, 2016). Taking into account Japan's multicultural foreign policy (in particular since the end of the Cold War) towards sustaining international peace and stability, it is unlikely that PCP policy will drastically shift Japan's self-defence oriented foreign policy into provocative militarism. However, the potential impact of Japanese PCP on its domestic refugee policies remains significant, i.e. whether Japanese multicultural foreign policy remains in line with UN humanitarian agendas will impact on Japan's domestic refugee policy.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary critical discourse concerning the Japanese attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers (in particular by journalists and the literature relating to policy, including UNHCR) has eclipsed Japan's reputation for humanitarian assistance, peace activities, and a symbol of healing, *orizuru*. The recent refugee crisis, unprecedented in modern history, has forced politicians, strategists and policy makers in developed nations throughout the world to redraw their national security strategies in response to the most effective methods of dealing with the contemporary refugee crisis. Within this context, Japan, as the third largest economy, has (despite being one of the largest donors to UNHCR) remained one of the least affected, but the country most criticised as undertaking an insufficient share of the burden.

This paper has established that the contemporary discourse has concluded the existence of a variety of reasons for Japan's reluctance to accept refugees, including concerns relating to homogeneity, security and culture. However, Japan remains clear in its message to the world that, while it is prepared to be a part of globalisation, this does not include multi-culturalisation. This does not infer (as suggested by a number or scholars) that Japan is culturally "conservative in both operation and outlook" (Dean, 2006: 1), but it is rather a modern

state, fully in tune with Westernisation, in which Western culture can be observed in the private, social and political spheres of society. The rigidity practiced in regard to its domestic refugee policy by the political establishment (including the Ministry of Justice) promulgates an explicit message that Japan is prepared to assist in any way it can to tackle the current refugee crisis internationally, but is not yet prepared to accept refugees on a domestic basis. This may largely be due to Japan's desire to remain home to those who are ethnically and culturally Japanese.

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