

# What is the Trigger of Migration Trends in Asia Pacific Region?

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Abstract: This study explains the elements that trigger migration trends in Asia Pacific. migrants from all of the nations in the regions hold key role as development actors assist in boosting GDP of their host country, while also support the family and society in their home countries. Migration will become the engine of development and growth which are getting higher in this region since the interconnectivity between the countries is also increased, as well as the demography inequality. The challenge of environment will also increase pressure to jobs and economic growth will create new opportunities in all over the region. Along January-August 2017, National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI) has succeeded in placing 148.285 labor force or immigrants to several Countries in Asia Pacific, America, Middle East, and Europe. The problem is that in some point the mobilization of labor force or migrants tend to not according to procedures, so that leads to human trafficking problems which become national security issue. On the other hand, there are also problems regarding the policy, permission, and procedure in Indonesia government since there are a lot of findings regarding illegal labors. Thus it becomes one of the concerns of Head of Economist of World Bank towards East Asia region since if the permissions and procedures can be renewed then Indonesia as the migrants' sender will receive economic benefits by sending migration abroad. The issue faced by Indonesia was analyzed by using national security concept and theory of securitization

## 1 INTRODUCTION

International migration is a global phenomenon which can open opportunities for development as well as challenges for governments. More than 200 million people live out of their home Country or their nation. Migrations affect almost all of the aspects of the nation whether it is their home countries, transit countries, or host countries. Migrant workers are humans who also have their own rights which must be fulfilled. Since they do not possess legal protection in the country where they are migrating to, international migrant workers can be vulnerable towards harassment and exploitation. Legal protection and other kind of protections must be conducted as assurance for the fulfillment of labor rights and decent works for migrant workers. This is due to the view of the migrants as a group of people who can be exploited and sacrificed, as cheap labor force, fragile, and flexible, as well as willing to work in 3-D, dirty, dangerous, and degrading environment, whereas the host country is not willing and / or does not want to accept them. As a result, the rights of migrant

workers are easily abused or abandoned. On the other hand, migrant workers are contributing to the development and economic and social welfare of their home as well as host country. The rights of the migrants which are violated in a society will contribute to social disintegration and the decline of respect for the law. For example, violation and exploitation towards the migrant workers will prevent them to obtain decent job and income, which leads to the reduction for their contribution to the local society as well as the remittances they may give to their home countries. Conflict of interest between economic pressure to exploit the migrants and the necessity to protect them forces the government to manage this condition by formulating and implementing policy carefully and comprehensively.

Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistic (BPS) noted the number of poor population (population with monthly per capita expenditure under the line of poverty) in Indonesia in March 2015 reached 28.59 million people or 11.22%. The high number of this population coupled with the low education level makes a lot of Indonesian citizens especially people

who live in rural area lose in the work competition to urgently need a decent job with purpose of improving their family economy. In order to handle those problems, Indonesian citizens choose to be Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI). Becoming a TKI is one of the shortcuts to find job faster and achieve higher salary rather than having the same job in the country. A lot of Indonesians think that being a migrant worker abroad is better than becoming a farmer or laborer in Indonesia. Indonesian Migrant Workers is divided into two groups. The first group is formal TKI who work in legal status whether it is from the government or private. Meanwhile, the second group is the non-formal TKI who work in individual level such as housekeeper (PLRT), baby sitter, elderly nurse, driver or gardener.

## 2 HISTORY OF MIGRATION INDO PACIFIC

In the 1990s, international migration is occurring on an unprecedented scale, involving a wide cross section of populations and taking on a greater variety of forms than any time in history. This is nowhere truer than in the Asian region where rapid economic growth, inter-country contrasts in the extent of labor surplus or shortage the transport and communication revolution and the globalisation tendencies business activity have seen a burgeoning of international population flows. Important (and increasing) element in these movements has been that of undocumented or illegal migrants. However, our knowledge of international population movements within Asia remains limited. Not only is there uncertainty regarding the underlying causes and consequences of this movement, but in many cases the scale and composition of flows is not known. This of course especially applies to the burgeoning illegal movement.

It is important to realise that contemporary large-scale movement from Indonesia Malaysia has strong historical precedents. Although reports of movement of Javanese workers to Malaysia go back five centuries and evidence of movements between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula even further, the movement particularly gained momentum during the colonial period, especially in the late nineteenth century. Temporary labor migration was an important element whereby the resources of the Netherlands East Indies were exploited by the Dutch (Hugo, 1982). There were three major types of such

movement: forced migrations to work on plantations, roads, etc. in which the potential migrant was given little or no choice; "contract coolie" migrations in which workers were recruited to work, usually on a plantation, for a given period (penal sanctions were applied if the conditions of the contract were broken); spontaneous migration whereby the migrant sought work temporarily away from his/her homeplace either on their own initiative or through that of friends only or family.

Each of these types of movement has both an internal and an international component. With respect to forced movement, besides virtual slavery in early colonial years, the Romusha forced labor saw the Japanese occupation forces in the 1940s transporting Indonesians to work on railway and other construction projects in Thailand, Burma and elsewhere. Contract labor gradually came to replace slavery, *corvée* and labor in lieu of taxes after 1870. Recruiters were common in many areas of Java in colonial times (Hugo, 1975) and significant numbers of contract workers were sent abroad especially to the Malay Peninsula (Jackson, 1961) and Surinam, but also to New Caledonia, Siam (Thailand), British North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak, Cochin China (Vietnam) and even Australia. In the early twentieth century, the colonial government attempted to stop the activities of companies recruiting labor for foreign countries except where specially licensed, although contract labor recruitment within the country continued. Accordingly, as a result of contract coolie movements, by 1930 there were 89,735 Java-born persons living in Malaya (Bahrin, 1967:280) and 170,000 ethnic Javanese residents (Volkstelling, 1936, VIII:45). There were also 5,237 Java-born persons in British North Borneo (now Sabah) in 1922 (Scheltema, 1926:874). In addition to the contract coolie movements of the Java-born, there were also significant, largely spontaneous labor movements of Minangkabau, Batak, Bugis, Banjarese and Bawean migrants to Malaya from other islands of the Netherlands East Indies.

Labor movements from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) to Malaya increased in the 1930s (Bahrin, 1967) and the major patterns are depicted in Figure 1. The diagram also shows the distribution of the birthplaces of Indonesian-born residents of Malaya recorded at the 1947 Malaya census. The number of Java-born recorded was 189,450 (an increase of 111 per cent over the 1930 figure). There were also 62,400 Banjarese from South Kalimantan and 26,300 Sumatrans, predominantly Minangkabau, from West Sumatra and Mandaling Batak from North Sumatra. The Minangkabau movement was a

longstanding one with many settling in the Negri Sembilan area (Hadi, 1981). There were also 20,400 Bawean-born and 7,000 Celebes-born people identified (Bahrin, 1965:53). These figures of course only apply to Peninsular Malaysia and it should be mentioned that there was significant movement from the NEI into British North Borneo and, to a lesser extent, Sarawak. The so called "Boyanese" group presents an interesting case. They come from the tiny island of Bawean which currently has a population of around 66,000 and is frequently known as the "Island of Women". In almost all households on the island, the male head or a son is away working in Malaysia or Singapore (Anon., 1982). This movement has become a rite de passage in the society for young men to the extent that a woman is reported to have sought to divorce her husband on the grounds that he isn't really an adult man because he has never gone merantau (migrated temporarily) (Subarkah, Marsidi and Fadjar, 1986:2). This migration is said to date back to links established with Palembang in the early seventeenth century when the Sultan of Bawean was converted to Islam by a missionary from the southern part of Sumatra. In any case they were recorded as a distinct group in the Singapore census of 1894 and had increased to 22,000 by the 1957 census (Vrednregt, 1964). They also appear to have established a Kampung Boyan in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh city), Vietnam at the end of the nineteenth century (Anon., 1982:62). To many (perhaps the majority) of Bawean men, the Malaya Peninsula or Singapore has become a tanah air kedua (Anon., 1982:62) or second native country.

This is admittedly a somewhat extreme case but it does indicate the extent of migratory links between parts of Indonesia and Malaysia-Singapore which have existed for a long period of time. This can be further underlined by the fact that in 1982 when the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister (Datuk Musa Hitam) made an official visit to Jakarta for negotiations regarding a "Supply of Workers Agreement" with Indonesia, he mentioned that his grandmother was a Bugis born in Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi (Anon., 1982:64). The important point here is that there are long-standing and strong social networks linking Malaysia and Indonesia. The political boundaries separating the two nations are a function of colonisation and separate peoples who share the same culture, language and religion. These historical linkages and cultural homogeneity have played an important role in facilitating population movement from Indonesia to Malaysia. During World War II and early post-Independence years,

the flow of labor migrants from Indonesia to Malaysia subsided, especially in the years of Confrontation. However, beginning in the early 1970s, shortages of labor in the plantation, agricultural and construction sectors saw the beginnings of illegal flows of Indonesians into both Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Dorall and Paramasivam, 1992:13).

### 3 ASIA PACIFIC MIGRATION IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

This section puts migration in the Asia-Pacific region in a global context and explores the major reasons why migration in the region is likely to increase before it decreases. The major points include; 1. Asia is different in both perception and reality. One perception is that, just as some Asian countries managed to achieve very rapid economic growth, some may succeed in managing labor migration more successfully than governments in other parts of the world; 2. Policies of migrant-receiving countries vary significantly, with the triangle of policies framed by Singapore's welcome the skilled and rotate the low-skilled, Japan's largely closed doors to low-skilled foreign workers, and the dependence of Gulf oil exporters on migrants to fill 90 percent of private-sector jobs; 3. Policies of migrant-sending countries are more similar, with many governments aiming to send more skilled workers to destinations inside and outside Asia and to measure the development impacts of migration using the single indicator of remittances.

The Asia-Pacific region, home to almost 60 percent of the world's people, is unusual in dealing with migration in three major respects. First, there is a widespread sense inside and outside the region that Asia is different. There are many reasons, including the Asian economic miracle that catapulted several countries from poorer to richer in a relatively short time (World Bank, 1993). This economic success may encourage some Asian leaders to believe that they can achieve another success in managing internal and international labor migration to achieve goals that include protecting migrants and local workers, enhancing cooperation between governments in labor-sending and -receiving areas to better manage migration, and ensuring that migration promotes development in labor-sending areas.

Second, there is more diversity in national labor migration policies than in national economic

policies. The policy extremes can be approximated by a triangle. Singapore lies at one corner welcoming professionals to settle with their families while rotating less-skilled foreign workers in and out of the country. Japan lies at another corner, allowing but not recruiting foreign professionals and preferring ethnic Japanese from Latin America as well as foreign trainees, students, and unauthorized workers to guest workers with full labor market rights. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries represent a third corner, relying on migrants for over 90 percent of private-sector workers, requiring migrants to have citizen-sponsors, and recently announcing policies to cooperate with migrant-sending countries to assure returns. The contrast between the similar investment-intensive and export-led economic policies of East and Southeast Asian nations, and the dis-similar labor migration policies, is striking.

Third, there appears to be convergence in the migration policies of labor-sending governments in the region. Most want to send more workers abroad, to increase the share of skilled workers among migrants, and to diversify the destinations of migrants to include more European and North American destinations. To achieve these marketing, up skilling, and diversification goals, many Asian governments have established ministries or agencies to promote and protect migrants, with promotion accomplished by ministerial visits and protection via regulation of private-sector recruiters and pre-departure reviews of the contracts they offer to migrants. The evolving migrant promotion and protection infrastructure often assumes that

development is a natural or inevitable outgrowth of sending more workers abroad, so that remittances can serve as the major indicator of migration's development impacts. This may not be true.

#### 4 WHY PEOPLE MIGRATE

International migration is usually a carefully considered individual or family decision. The major reasons to migrate to another country can be grouped into two categories: economic and noneconomic, while the factors that encourage a migrant to actually cross borders fall into three categories: demand-pull, supply-push, and networks. An economic migrant may be encouraged to move by employer recruitment of guest workers, demand-pull, while migrants crossing borders for economic reasons may be moving to escape unemployment or low wages, supply push factors.

These factors are listed in the table below. A worker in rural Indonesia may decide to migrate to Malaysia because a friend or relative tells him of a job, highlighting the availability of higher wage jobs as a demand-pull factor. The worker may not have a regular job at home or face debts from a family member's medical emergency, examples of supply-push factors that encourage emigration. Networks encompass everything from moneylenders who provide the funds needed to pay a smuggler to employers or friends and relatives at the destination who help migrants to find jobs and places to live

Table 1: Factors Influencing Migrations, Factors Encouraging an Individual to Migrate

| Type of Migrant | Demand-Pull  | Supply-Push   | Network/Other  |
|-----------------|--|---|--|
| Economic        | Labor recruitment, e.g. guest workers                | Un- or under-employment; low wages; e.g., farmers whose crops fail            | Job and wage information flows; e.g., sons following fathers                                   |
| Non-Economic    | Family unification; e.g., family members join spouse | Flee war and persecution; e.g., displaced persons and refugees/asylum seekers | Communications; transportation; Assistance organizations; Desire for new experience/adventure; |

Demand-pull, supply-push, and network factors rarely have equal weights in an individual migration decision, and their weights can change over time. Generally, demand-pull and supply push factors are strongest at the beginnings of a migration flow, and network factors become more important as

migration streams mature. The first migrant workers are often recruited by employers, and their presence is approved or tolerated by governments. The demonstration effect of some migrants returning to their areas of origin with savings can prompt more people to seek foreign jobs. Network factors ranging

from friends and relatives settled abroad to the expectation that especially young men and women are expected to seek opportunity abroad can sustain labor migration between poorer and richer areas within and between countries.

## 5 MIGRANT SECURITY, PERMISSIONS, AND PROCEDURE THEORY SCHEME

Indonesian migrant workers or basically all the migrants help delivering dividend to the country. TKI and immigrants indirectly possess important role towards Indonesian economic development. However, sometimes they are receiving problems when they are working abroad so that the nation is obliged to protect all of its citizens both inside and outside the country. Actually there are already many efforts which have been done by the Indonesian government in reducing the number violence and other violations which afflict the TKI and immigrants. Those policies came up in several governmental policies which were written in the Constitution, government regulations, and other ministerial regulations. However, even though there are a lot of policies issued by Indonesian governments in protecting Indonesian Migrant Workers, the implementations of the protection which were created are not able to protect the Indonesian Migrant Workers whether in the pre placement, placement, and the after placement stage.

Regarding the human security terminology, Alberth and Carlsson (2009:23-24) collaborated it with the human security through narrow human security approach (human security in narrow meaning) and broad human security (human security in broad meaning). Narrow human security is related to the actions which include the absence of individual/personal threat (personal violence), and consequently affect the absence of structural violence threats. These two threats' criteria actually fulfill the primary category and inclusion criteria regarding the ownership of emancipatory power. Both of the absences of personal and structural violence threat are the main power of emancipatory concept. Broad human security should be consistent to the critical security study. Therefore, critical security study should be related to human security in policy-making.

Security threats towards humans are becoming significant to be the object of Security Studies which

are free from nation-state security dichotomy through the field of traditional security (military) and non-traditional security (non-military). Thus, the factors of human freedom from various threats and pressures, either militaristic or non-militaristic, are the shifting form of Security Studies object which is reflecting the shift of armed conflict nowadays. Threats towards the damage of human security existence is becoming wide open when referring to United Nation's Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In order to assure human security in the MDGs framework, then the goals to be built are (www.unocha.org, 2014: 2-3):

1. Protecting humans from crime conflicts
2. Protecting and empowering humans/citizens related to migrations caused by conflict/war or crime against human rights
3. Protecting and empowering humans related to post-conflict conditions.
4. Economy security – related to the abolishment of poverty, improvement of economic level and social welfare.
5. Ensuring health for human security – spread of disease and poverty threats as the impacts from conflict; and
6. Improving knowledge, skill and value for human security: providing basic education facility and public information related to those three things which relevant to the forms of crime resulted from conflicts.

The focus shift in the study of traditional security in becoming non-traditional security is actually transforming a new form of war in each actor which poses threats towards human security existence. Attention towards human security has become one kind of attention regarding the importance of global security which has been generalized into six human security outputs according to United Nations Development Programs (UNDP). New kind of war or future war will be more triggered by the six purposes of human security.

In 2003 to 2005, Saudi Arabia was the most favorite destination followed by Malaysia. In this period there was a change in the third most favorite destination which used to be Kuwait in 2003-2004 but then became the fifth most favorite after Taiwan became the third most favorite and Singapore became the fourth most favorite. In 2006, Saudi Arabia still became the most favorite destination by the majority of Indonesian job seekers but at Asia-Pacific region in 2007, Malaysia became the most favorite destination followed by Taiwan and Hong Kong. Meanwhile, there are a lot of authors who

argued about the reason why the migrants chose Malaysia as their most favorite destination. The main reason for that is related to distance followed by the cultural aspects which have many similarities. Several studies showed that there were a significant number of undocumented migrants especially the ones going to Malaysia. These migrant workers were going through two main routes; they are East Java-North and South Sumatera to Malaysia Peninsular and Flores-South Sulawesi to Sabah ([www.unesco.org/most/amprnwp8.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/amprnwp8.htm)). In the process of the TKI/immigrants undocumented delivery, there were several actors which were allowing this to happen such as the brokers syndicate, labor force recruiters, and *taikong* (helmsman). Their involvement brought several consequences such as the more expensive fees which were paid by the workers and minimal protection for them. There are a lot of cases which indicate that the most problems faced by the migrant workers are because of the departure done by this method.

There are around 6 million Indonesian citizens who are currently abroad, where 80% of them are Indonesian Migrant Workers. The majority of those TKI are the people who work in non-formal sectors or domestic workers. Those TKI are spreading into 160 countries and it is estimated that there are 1.2 million TKI who are illegal or the TKI who depart to other countries via illegal method. The majority of TKI who work in non-formal sectors is reflecting the low-skill level which those TKI possess. The majority of those TKI are also women who only have junior high school or even elementary school background. According to the Research Center for the Development and Information of National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI), there are 351,639 TKI who have only junior high or even elementary school background from the total of 521,168 TKI in 2013. The levels of education which the TKI possess were also in line with the majority of their own professions as housemaid more than any other professions. There were 168,318 TKI whose profession were housemaid in 2013, showing an increase of the number in 2012 which was 164,981. The limitation of education these TKI possessed caused this group of workers to be more vulnerable against issues that may happen to them, especially the ones who work in domestic worker sectors.

The countries which have become the most favorite destinations for Indonesian Migrant Workers in 2012 were Malaysia with 1.9 million people, followed by Saudi Arabia with 1.1 million people, and Hong Kong with 189 thousand people.

Saudi Arabia became the second most favorite destination because of religious reason since Saudi Arabia was viewed as home for Muslims, thus encouraging the TKI to choose Saudi Arabia while at the same time the Muslims could also visit the Kaaba to make Kaaba pilgrimage. While Malaysia became the biggest TKI receiver because of the geographical factor where Indonesia is directly bordered with Malaysia and some of the citizens are from Melayu Race with similar language. The income that the TKI generated poses significant impact to Indonesian government through remittance. In 2013, the total of Indonesian remittances from its TKI reached 88 Trillion rupiah.

Malaysia and Saudi Arabia are two dominant countries who contribute in remittance more than any other countries which become the destinations for the TKI. TKI holds important role which aimed to improve their families in Indonesia while being vulnerable against the risks that may happen to them anytime and anywhere. Working abroad by becoming TKI is not without risks and obstacles. Instead, the risks are far greater than working in their own country. A lot of Indonesian Migrant Workers especially the ones who work in informal sectors to become victims in various criminal and violent activities such as overwork, unpaid salary, even violence that poses threat to their own lives. As Indonesian President, Joko Widodo has set three diplomacy priorities i.e. by maintaining Indonesia sovereignty, improving the protection of the citizens and Indonesian legal entities, and increasing economic diplomacy. The President has placed the citizen's protection issue as Indonesia's priority agenda which means Indonesian foreign politic must be able to give protection and safety for citizens and legal entities of Indonesia in other countries.

According to VOA Indonesia (2014), Indonesia President Joko Widodo has recently issued presidential instruction regarding repatriation for the problematic and undocumented TKI in several countries. Since there were a lot of problematic and undocumented TKI who were working in Malaysia, the government chose this neighbor country as the first country where the repatriation conducted. Up until now the government has succeeded in repatriating 703 problematic TKI from the estimated total of 1428 people. They were carried gradually by using five Hercules aircraft owned by Indonesian National Air force. The chief of BNP2TKI Nusron Wahid stated that the government is extremely serious in solving the TKI issues.

Protection towards Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) is basically the government's responsibility.

However, this task is specifically handled by Ministry of Labor and Transmigration together with Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Due to the complicated process and the number of requirements, the government then attempted to manage this issue by creating BNP2TKI in order to help the protection issue faced by the TKI based on Law No. 39 of 2004 which was regulated by Presidential Decree No. 81 of 2006. This led to the formation of three National bodies which relate and intersect to each other regarding the Indonesian Migrant Workers' protection namely Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labor and Transmigration, and National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI). Even though according to one of BNP2TKI staffs who work in protection deputy field there are actually 13 stakeholders related to the TKI protection such as National Police, Ministry of Law and Human Rights and other ministries, the most related bodies in handling this issue are the BNP2TKI, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labor and Transmigration.

## 6 DISCUSSION

As discussed above, the number of Indonesian migrants abroad has been increasing recently and the Indonesian Government has paid increased attention to the labour migration process and how Indonesian labour migrants are recruited, deployed and treated in the destination countries. As a result, a number of public policies have been enacted to better manage the migration of Indonesian labour migrants. Broad public interest in cases of mass deportation of Indonesian labour migrants from Malaysia has also caused civil society to put pressure on the Government of Indonesia to strengthen legislation that protects Indonesian labour migrants.

Economic reasons drive the majority of Indonesian labour migrants to migrate abroad, to improve the economic status of themselves and their families. High levels of unemployment and underemployment in Indonesia push many individuals to look for jobs outside their area of origin and many may decide to go abroad after hearing about the availability of jobs from recruitment agents and social networks and the higher salaries on over abroad in countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong SAR, Kuwait, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. Many individuals, especially women, see migration abroad as the only way out of poverty for them and their

families. Most workers therefore migrate with the intention of working abroad for only a limited period of time in order to save enough money to purchase a house, open a business or send their children or relatives to school. Although labour migration from Indonesia is characterized as temporary because few migrants leave with the intention of settling in the destination country, they generally do not have the opportunity to stay even if they change their mind. Nevertheless, due to the high costs often associated with securing overseas employment, temporary labour migration often turns into a stay that is longer than expected and may last several years.

## 7 CONCLUSION

In the end, all of those questions will never give ontological positioning answer in line with the dynamics shifting of security issues variant. This indicates that when it is reviewed as a security concept, then human security produces various interpretations that can be viewed from several points of view of power interest and order whether the interest is conducted by state actor, non-state actor institution, or even in individual level. In that sense, then human security today which was resulted from the shift of Post-Cold War security issue is dominated by non-state actors.

The lack of protection towards migrant workers is because of three main factors. Those main factors are the fragility of infrastructure of TKI protection in other countries, the overlapping policies among the involved stakeholders, and the legal protection policy which is still reactive. The involved stakeholders' overlapping policies in this context are the policies created by BNP2TKI, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labor and Transmigration. This factor is reinforced by the argument which stated that there are overlapping laws. The second argument which reinforced the second factor is the law related to tasks and responsibility which are not professional yet. The third factor which stated the reason why the migrant workers' protection is still reactive is due to the reactive nature of the law. The government until today is just solving the already-happening problems while not totally trying to solve the source of the problem itself.

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