# National Identity Analysis and Foreign Policy: Australia Turn Back the Boats Policy under Tony Abbott

Fauzi Firmansyah Prakoso and Baiq Wardhani

Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga

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Abstract: In the beginning of 2000s, Australia began to impose the rejection of asylum-seekers policy because their number is constantly increasing. From all the policies that have been applied, Tony Abbott's policy, which is "Turn Back the Boats" policy, became one of the policies that being discussed by many actors because before the policy is being applied, Australia has always been accepting many asylum-seekers, but it suddenly changed. One of the reason that the policy is being implemented is that Australian society feel threatened by the arrival of the asylum-seekers. Related with the policy, the author tries to analyze the implementation of the "Turn Back the Boats" policy using the national identity level of analysis. In this case, the author will some of the concepts of the national identity to explain it, which is the basic concept of national identity, the concept of national self-image, the concept of strategic culture, and the concept of national role. The author thinks that those concept could explain why the national identity can influence the "Turn Back the Boats" policy.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Australia was originally one of the countries open to receiving asylum seekers. According to Janet Phillips (2011: 2), Australia has hosted approximately 700,000 asylum seekers since the end of the Cold War II to date. However, entering the 2000s, Australia began to change policies related to this because of various reasons, among others, the increasing number of illegal asylum seekers. The culmination of illegal asylum seekers entering Australia was when the Tampa incident took place, where as many as 400 asylum seekers came from Indonesia to Christmas Island. The large number of asylum seekers was eventually endeavored by Australia to return to Indonesia as a form of Australian resistance to their arrival (Kasic, 2014: 19). Since that incident, Australia has begun to regard asylum seekers as a threat so that this has affected policy changes since the leadership of John Howard (2001-2007) to Tony Abbott (2013-2015). The policy that first reflected this rejection was the offshore processing policy of John Howard's reign, which was later developed by Tony Abbott into a stop the boats or turn back the boats policy (Phillips, 2014: 3). This policy is in the form of stopping boats carrying asylum seekers who come illegally through waterways. Given this policy, approximately 2015 illegal asylum seekers have been detained by immigration detention in 2015 (Australian Border Force, 2015: 8).

As mentioned earlier, the reason behind this policy is to begin the growing view that asylum seekers are a threat to Australia. In addition, through his speech, Tony Abbott stated that "if you want to stop the deaths, if you want to stop drowning, you've got to stop the boats" (Hunt, 2013). The meaning behind this Abbott statement is to prevent the death of the abandoned asylum seekers, it would be better if the asylum seekers are returned to the former sending country. In addition, the adoption of this policy is also based on the protection of Australia's national security. This is due to an indication of the crime of human smuggling within the group of asylum seekers entering Australia. This incident then leads to the formation of people smuggler's business model, where within the group of asylum seekers, there are some people who serve as victims of human trafficking. According to Refugee Action Coalition Sydney (2015), during the period 2006-2010 has been known as much as approximately 16 actors of human trafficking in groups of asylum seekers. This figure does not include the perpetrators who escaped Australia's security. If this continues, it will pose a threat to Australia's national security. Therefore, Tony Abbott implemented the turn back the boats policy.

Turny the boats policy implemented by Tony Abbott has been proven to be supported by the majority of Australians. It is noted that as many as 60% of the people in Australia support the policies set

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by Tony Abbott regarding the rejection of asylum seekers (Vieszadeh, 2013). The majority of Australians show their resentment towards asylumseekers, even to discriminatory attitudes. The large number represents the discriminatory nature of the community towards asylum seekers. They assume that asylum-seekers are sometimes not genuine asylum seekers, whereas genuine asylum seekers are truly asylum-seekers, so many disagree with the asylum seekers (Dorling, 2014). However, in fact 70-97% of asylum seekers are actually genuine asylum seekers, but this data seems incapable of altering the views of Australian society towards such asylum seekers. As many as 59% of people think the asylum seekers are not genuine, while only 30% consider the asylum seekers genuine and the rest do not think (Dorling, 2014). The data shows how the majority of people basically also start not wanting to accept the asylum seekers who come through the sea lane. Of course this response is a positive thing for the policy run by Tony Abbott.

### 1.1 National Identity and Foreign Policy

Level of Analysis that can be used in analyzing a foreign policy varies. One form of the ranking of this analysis is the national identity. Hansen (2006: 15) explains that national identity is an identity owned by a state actor in which this identity is constructed by other actors. Waever (2002: 21) adds that this construct-like nature seems to make national identity as ambiguous, since the views of an actor on an actor's national identity will be different from those of other actors. Apart from other actors, a national identity can also be formed by individuals within a country itself (Clunan, 2009: 23). This in itself is a natural trait for all individuals, ie each individual will tend to give a separate identity for a thing, not exception for a country. The existence of this national identity aims to distinguish between identity one with another identity. This distinction between identities will make it easier for any actor to interact, where identity can also represent an ownership, whether in terms of culture or territory (Clunan, 2009: 23). Even so, the ambiguity that has been mentioned previously sometimes causes a dispute because some national identity can occur friction between identities. Therefore, national identity has influence in the formation of foreign policy.

Based on Dharmaputra (2016), the analytical rank of national identity can be several things, depending on the underlying concept. The basic concept of this national identity itself is a question that leads to "who are we?", "What do we do?", And "who are they?" (Hudson, 2007: 104). In addition, the national identity analysis can also use the concept of National Self-Image, where the concept is an idea related to the international status of a country as well as the political objectives of the country. This is the basis of how the policy should be taken by a country (Clunan, 2009: 29). In addition, there is also the concept of Strategic Culture in the ranking of this national identity analysis. According to Booth (1990 in Dharmaputra, 2016), the existence of aspects of a nation can be a separate strategy for the country to adapt to the international environment and to overcome the problems experienced by the country. These aspects include traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, customs, and achievements. Based on these aspects, a country can determine what role the country will choose and the military force to be used in determining a foreign policy.

In addition to basic concepts, the concept of National Self-Image, and the concept of Strategic Culture, then there is also another concept contained in the ranking of national identity analysis, namely the concept of religion. In this global era, there are some countries that actually make a religion a national identity of their country. According to Carolyn M. Warner and Stephen G. Walker (2011: 117), religion can be a source of views and assessment of the world against the country. This view or judgment directly makes the country has its own national identity. The existence of this concept is caused by a religious group that dominates in one country. Another concept that exists in this analytical rank is the National Role concept. In this concept, Holsti (1970: 239) explains the existence of three important elements, including explanations related to the main mission of a country, specific ideas relating to other countries, and the stability of the country itself. The existence of the National Role or the national role of a country will certainly form a separate identity for a country. Then, the final concept in the ranking of national identity analysis is ideology. What a country believes will lead to what the country will do based on ideology or beliefs believed by the country, not least the foreign policy of a country (Schonberg, 2007: 13).

Although it has some concepts, researchers can be free to use any concept, because one concept alone represents the rank of national identity analysis. According Dharmaputra (2016), at least the main principle that must be emphasized is how the perception that emerged from the relationship of "self-others". The emergence of this perception and then forming a thought for one of the parties related to what policy will be done if the national identity in such a way. In addition, this identity is also not written, but only limited to the perception of various parties. This then makes the identity does not have a fixed form, but continues to change in accordance with the perception formed by the general public. This continuous change causes the identity to be sometimes not easy to be understood rationally (Dharmaputra, 2016). However, the establishment of this identity can still affect the foreign policy of a country. The existence of a change of identity does not make the identity has no effect on foreign policy, but the change will be the basis of foreign policy changes for a country. Therefore, sometimes a country seeks to keep its national identity, because if there is a drastic change in terms of national identity, then the country must be courageous in making changes in foreign policy in totality as well.

#### **1.2** National Identity Analysis and Turning Back Boat Policy

The sustainability of Australia's turn back the boats policy on Tony Abbott's government can be analyzed using national identity analysis ratings. Of the six concepts previously mentioned, the author will attempt to use the basic concepts of national identity, the concept of national self-image, the concept of strategic culture, and the national role of national identity analysis in analyzing Australian turn back the boats policy. However, it is necessary to focus first on what kind of identity will be discussed because Australia can be said to have a diverse identity. Based on the writings of Sara Causins (2005: 2), Australia is a British Commonwealth country that makes Australia's identity closely related to Britain. However, it should be recalled that in Australia there are already indigenous people who can still be found in the vicinity of Australia, where they call themselves as Aboriginal people. Of course this can also be separated from Australia's national identity. Not to mention, in the current era many Australians who have descendants from Asian societies such as Malaysia, China, and Lebanon (Holton, 1997). Related to this, the author will use the modern Australian national identity, the identity associated with "European whiteness". This identity considers Australians to be white people who have been living in Australia for a long time.

For the first, the authors will link the policies set by Australia regarding the refusal of asylum seekers. According to Hudson's writings (2007: 104), the identity of a country can be represented by "who are we?", "What do we do?" And "who are they?"

Statements. When it is associated with turn back the boats policy, the authors analyze that there is an element of desire to preserve the original identity of Australia. Australia wants to maintain the dominance of the white population in Australia (Kasic, 2014: 33). Actually it has been implemented by the White Australian Policy from 1901 to 1973, in which Australia restricted the arrival of non-white asylum seekers into Australia. However, even if it is not implemented, the majority of Australians still adhere to the values of the White Australian Policy. This is seen in how Australians reject the coming of asylum seekers who are mostly from different countries. In addition, these values also serve as the basis for why Australia's policy of initially accepting asylum seekers has been to repatriate asylum-seekers. If Australia continues to accept asylum-seekers, whose numbers continue to increase, then Australia's national identity will be threatened to change, as well as identical identities with white communities will be threatened as well. Therefore, this consideration is the reason why the implementation of turn back the boats policy.

The form of distinction between white Australians and asylum seekers who are mostly non-white can be answered with the direction of the basic concept of national identity. Related questions "who are we?", "We" is a white Australian society that has long been settled in Australia and has long been part of Australia itself. Then, the question "what do we do?" Can lead to cultures and values prevailing in Australia for a long time. These cultures and values have its origins in the Australian society and indirectly make it its own national identity for Australia. The last question, "who are they?", Is a question addressed to asylum seekers. Therefore, this question is answered with non-white people. Not only have different skin colors, the asylum seekers also have different values because the majority of asylum seekers are Muslims. Not only skin color and value, the culture of the asylum seekers is of course also much different than that of the already developed culture in Australia (Hartley and Pederson, 2015: 189). The author analyzes that the existence of differences in values and culture will actually cause clash of civilization so that it can threaten the national identity owned by Australia. Therefore, it is only natural that Australia implements a turn back the boats policy to safeguard Australia's national identity.

After connecting with the basic concept of national identity, the author will also try to analyze the policy of turn back the boats with the concept of national self-image owned by Australia. The concept of national self-image according to Anne L. Clunan (2009: 29) is a stereotype of others against a country. This stereotype can be an international status of a country which then relates to what action should be done by that country. Before further, it is necessary to understand first how the actual self-image is owned by Australia. According to Anne Pedersen et al. (2005: 170), many view Australia as an example of a country that has successfully implemented the concept of a multicultural society. This can be seen in the many foreign cultures that enter and expand in Australia, such as Asian culture, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Arab. However, despite the many cultures that enter, they are treated less well by the Australian community. Australians tend to discriminate against people who are considered non-indigenous Australians. This is because the majority of Australians tend to show negative action to immigrant people in Australia. This action was also carried out by Australians to asylum seekers who came to Australia (Pedersen et al., 2005: 170). According to the authors, this has indirectly shaped the self-image of Australia, the anti-immigrant country.

The development of self-image is then considered the authors have an effect on the implementation of turn back the boats policy run by Tony Abbott. Australian self-image, which shows the antiimmigrant nature of the immigrants, certainly makes the policy run by the government also rejects nonindigenous migrants. If Australia makes it easy for asylum seekers to get into Australia, this will certainly get strong opposition from the Australian public, as self-image related to the rejection of foreign residents is strong enough to stick to each other. As Clunan explains (2009: 30), the self-image that has become a national identity is certainly dominated by a large number of people, thus making it a threat if there are parties who want to contradict self- the image. In addition, self-image is also inherent in a long time. Therefore, it can be said that the policy of turn back the boats is a continuation of Australian self-image that feels anti against asylum seekers, where the majority of the asylum seekers are residents who are not from Australia but from countries in the Middle East . Although some sides think this is bad, but still Australia does not feel there is anything wrong with the self-image or the policies that apply because Australia considers it is also for the benefit of Australia itself.

In addition to the basic concepts related to national identity and the concept of national selfimage, the author will also discuss how the concept of strategic culture affects the sustainability of Australia's turn back the boats policy. As mentioned earlier, aspects such as traditions, values, attitudes,

patterns of behavior, habits, customs, and achievements possessed by a country can be a separate strategy for a country in adapting or solving problems owned by a country (Booth, 1990 in Dharmaputra, 2016). While not all of these aspects have influenced the establishment of Australia's turn back the boats policy, some aspects have been able to represent the reasons for the implementation of the policy. The author will try to take only a few aspects of Australian policy that have refused the arrival of asylum seekers before the turn back the boats policy of Tony Abbott's time. Australia began refusing asylum seekers since the reign of John Howard (2001-2007). While leading, Howard tries to indoctrinate Australian society with the assertion that asylum seekers are a threat to Australia. In fact, the term "queue jumper" has grown among the people, where it considers the asylum seekers, especially those coming by sea, to asylum seekers who tend to break the rules. This Howard doctrine has been judged to have established a value in society that also became a supporter of the refusal policy of asylum seekers (Klocker and Dunn, 2003: 71).

The value established by John Howard must also be followed by action, where John Howard did not accept the Tampa ship and sent him back to his home country of departure from the vessel. Along with these measures, Howard also tightened the Border Protection Act and the Migration Amendment Act to make it harder for asylum seekers to enter Australia (McAdam and Purcell, 2007: 88). After the reign of Howard, the post of Prime Minister of Australia was attributed to Kevin Rudd in 2007 to 2010, Julia Gillard in 2010 to 2012, and Kevin Rudd again in 2013 before being held by Tony Abbott. Although the implementation of the refusal policy of asylum seekers has changed, the value of rejection of the asylum seekers is still embedded in each Australian society. This is evident in how Australian policy keeps trying not to accept asylum seekers, despite the different ways (Karlsen, 2010). This continues to be maintained by the Australian government because this policy is able to make Australia safer because the number of illegal asylum seekers continues to decline. When analyzed, the authors can see that both the actions, values, and achievements of the refusal policy of asylum seekers prior to Tony Abbott's administration can underlie the enforcement of turn back the boats policy. The actions and values of the refusal of asylum seekers remain followed by this policy, and the achievement of reducing the number of illegal asylum seekers is also attempted to be achieved (Karlsen, 2010).

The final concept that will be linked by the author on Australian turn back the boats policy is the concept of a national role. National role, or national role itself can be interpreted as how a country plays a role which then gives a meaning to the international system. In addition, this concept also has three important elements, including explanations related to the main mission of a country, specific ideas relating to other countries, as well as the stability of the country itself (Holsti, 1970: 239). When looking at what was written by K. J. Holsti (1970: 296), one of the roles assigned to Australia is as a regional protector, or security guard of the region. The area referred to in this context is the Oceania region. The concepts of this role include perceptions of threats, geographical location, traditional policies, as well as the needs of the countries that are threatened. When it comes to Australia's role in the Oceania region, it is clear that there are significant differences between Australia and other Oceania countries in various aspects, be it economic to security. This makes the Oceania countries dependent on Australia (National Geographic, t.t.). Dependence also includes facing the threat posed by the arrival of asylum seekers. To secure the security of the Oceania region, Australia has provided funding to immigration detention centers in areas such as Nauru and Papua New Guinea (Harvey, 2015).

By holding the role of regional protector, the funding of the detention center already represents the role that Australia has. This in turn has also had an effect on the sustainability of turn back the boats policy, where the detention center is formed into a policy support facility. This is done by Australia because, as mentioned earlier, asylum seekers are a threat. This threat is not just for Australia, but Australia also considers this a threat to the Oceania region. Therefore, every asylum seeker who comes by sea to Australia is directly "repatriated" to the sending country of the asylum seekers (Babones, 2016). Australia's national role is seen to be an Australian national identity which later became the basis of the policy of turn back the boats. Australia, which plays an important role in safeguarding the territory of Oceania, is responsible for eliminating any threats that threaten the security of the Oceania region, in which Australia considers the asylum seekers a threat both to the security and to the national identity of each country. Other countries can follow Australian policy because, according to the author, that role makes other countries dependent on Australia, so they only consider what Australia does for the common good.

Through the analysis, the authors argue that the level of analysis of national identity is influential in

Australia's turn back the boats policy under Tony Abbott's leadership. Of the four concepts, the main reason why Australia implements the policy is that asylum seekers are a threat to Australia. As McHugh-Dillon (2015: 21) says, asylum-seekers differ in different ways from the Australian population, so they worry that their identities are affected by asylum-seekers. This led to the formation of an Australian national identity in the form of antiimmigrants, such as asylum-seekers. To prevent the entry of such asylum seekers, Australia implemented the turn back the boats policy. Although it has received criticism from various parties, the policy is still implemented by Australia because it is based on the national identity of Australia, where the national identity has a dominant character in a country, so the policy of course also gets the full support of the community. In addition, the national identity is also a thing that has been attached to the people themselves, so this provides stronger support to the policy.

## 2 CONCLUSION

As is commonly known to the majority of people in the world. Australia is a multicultural country that has many cultural elements in it. However, the increasing number of immigrants, especially the asylum seekers coming from the sea lane, Australia must change the initial policy that always receives asylum receivers. This is because the asylum seekers are perceived by Australia not to be given protection, or not called genuine asylum seekers. Hence the policy of rejecting asylum seekers has been established since the reign of John Howard and subsequently expanded to the reign of Tony Abbott. In Tony Abbott's government, this policy is known as turn back the boats policy, where ships of asylum seekers entering Australia will be returned to the ship's sending country. Implementation of this policy can be said to be caused by the development of anti-immigrant values in the majority of the population in Australia. This value is actually the result of the doctrine of John Howard as a form of rejection of asylum seekers who want to go to Australia. If viewed from the outside, this policy is based on public concerns about asylum seekers who can cause problems in Australia. However, beyond that the authors can say there is another element underlying the sustainability of turn back the boats policy, namely the existence of the element of Australia's own national identity.

The national identity that the authors say is influential in the formation of turn back the boats is an anti-immigrant identity, in which Australia does not want any migrants, such as asylum seekers, to come to Australia illegally. Even the Australians themselves are not uncommon to discriminate against migrants. This can be analyzed by the basic concept of national identity, where "they" are referred to as asylum seekers who have different elements that reside in Australia. In addition, this analysis is further strengthened after the authors linked it to the concept of national self-image and the concept of strategic culture, where the value of rejection of asylum seekers has been able to become self-image for Australia as well as supporting the establishment of a strategic culture based on the value of anti-asylum seekers. Not only that, Australia's national identity is also shaped by a national role, in which Australia plays a role in safeguarding the region around Australia, namely the Oceania region. Given the analysis linking the four concepts to the background of the enactment of the policy of turn back the boats, the authors conclude that the policy implemented by Tony Abbott is influenced by an Australian element of national identity in the form of anti-immigration. If Australia continues to receive it, then there will be many threats provided by the asylum seekers, whose Australian national identity will also be threatened.

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