

# Strategic Culture: Historical and Geographical Rationalization in Explaining Australia's Current Immigration Policies

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**Abstract:** During the twenty first century, the problem of immigration has become an indirect security concern that is highly crucial for Australia. There is a plenty of phenomenon that show how the acceptance of immigrants can pose a very serious threat to a nation's domestic stability. On one hand, this is due to the difference of culture between the immigrants and local population which is exhibited through the phenomenon of Cronulla Riots in 2005. On the other hand, the incapability of the immigrants to fulfill the competencies of skilled labors also contribute to the rise of criminality in accepting countries. In turn, these two problems create a paradox with moral values since refusing the arrival of immigrants will be viewed negatively by the international society. Hence, there is a paradox between moral values and the problem of security in a certain region that is hard to escape. An interesting case to prove that this paradox exists is when Australia made a decision to refuse the arrival of immigrants that used boats in 2013 and built two detention centers in Nauru and Manus under the administration of Tony Abbott. In order to explain this paradox, this article will utilize the usage of Strategic Culture that can explain Australia's decision that has been mentioned before. This article argues that Australia's decision to build immigration detention centers is the most rational decision if viewed through the perspective of Strategic Culture although it creates controversies and tensions among the other Asia Pacific countries such as Indonesia, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Unlike other classic security problems states around the world faces such as land disputes, war on resources, domestic violence etc, immigration problem cannot be defined bluntly only as security issue. This is caused by the background complexity that lies behind the whole process of immigration. In most cases, immigration as a phenomenon do not directly impose a threatening condition to state actors. For example, in brief we can learn that foreigners comes to host country to seek live improvements or to seek refuge. The intention of those individual were not aimed to cause chaos or impose direct threat to the host country to begin with but to seek for self-survival that they may not receive from their countries of origins. Moreover the causes of some immigration phenomenon such as emerging waves of refugees and asylum seekers comes from a more precise and justified security threats where refugees fled to host country to escape an already imposed self-threatening conditions such as domestic violence that happens in their country of

origins. In this typical case, we can see that immigration is a phenomenon that happens as the effect of insecurities rather than as a cause of insecurity and that the insecurity is felt by individual rather than state actors. But in other cases, such as the case we use in this article, immigration is seen as a cause of insecurity which is then felt by state actors who are trying to maintain stability within their territories.

## 2 IMMIGRATION AS STATE'S SECURITY OBSTACLES

There are three ways of seeing immigration within security context (Dotty, 1998 in Lohrman 2000). The first one (1) is to see immigration issue as a national security, (2) as a societal security, (3) as an individual security. This article aims to use the national security point of view where immigration is seen in a classical security logic rooted by the self-othering practices guided by the believe that people

who are not a part of a same cultural understanding or thinking structure will cause more harm than good due to the difference in how they perceive and conduct ways of life. This point of view is aligned by the fact that a more developed countries tends to see immigration problems differently with a developing third world countries. Third world's tends to see their material inabilities of handling refugees as the main source of immigration conflict. This is seen by their tendency of being more cautious about how a big wave of migration coming to their country will constraint their resources which will eventually produce certain resentment. Other than that, developing countries inability of creating proper camps and rehabilitation centers for refugees often leads to protest done by the refugees with a chance of growing into an act of domestic violence. In most cases too, such as the ones in southeast asia, refugee camps that are less regulated and less supervised due to the lack of financial support often time become main bases of emerging terrorist groups and other extended problem such as environmental disruptions (Freilich 2006). Whereas first world countries that are financially capable sees cultural differences as the main source of immigration conflict. There are prejudicial stereotyping of the proneness of immigrants towards crime and deviant behaviour. Other than that society of first world country are threatened by the open possibilities of their lifestyle getting swamped by a big wave of immigrants who have different ways of thinking and different cultural behaviour (Freilich 2006). Taking account that immigration problem in first world countries are associated with cultural issue, this article will show that Australia's experiences and history in handling migrants and refugees that are part of their 'otherings' and other factors such as racial problems in the past shapes how Australia sees foreigner as a threat and explain that current Non – Caucasian sentiment that are being brought up as a implicit migration policy is the product of those experiences and history governing or ordering their ways of thinking while doing a decision making processes.

### **3 AUSTRALIA'S RACIAL PROFILING IMMIGRATION POLICY**

Immigration has become one of the most widely contested issue in Australia. The country never had a uniform official immigration policy until 1901

which became the Australia White Policy. According to Mence et al (2017), Australia's immigration history can be traced back to before 1788. The first people who landed their feet on Australian continent were Australian Aboriginals. Mence et al (2017) believed that Aboriginals came to Australia at around 40,000 and 60,000 years ago. Before the European settlement, their numbers were believed to reach around 1,5 million (Mence et al 2017). In 1770, James Cook arrived in Australia and eventually claimed the whole east coast area for Britain, naming it New South Wales. Despite this claim, around 250 tribes of Aboriginal Australians were still there with their own customs and languages (NSW.gov.au n.d). The arrival of British was seen with suspicion from Aboriginals Australia and often caused clashes between the British and Aboriginals Australia. Six years after the first arrival of Britain, the first conflict between Aboriginals Australians and European settlers occurred. No clear motives were evident, however, some researchers noted that the motives ranged from revenge to opportunity (Wahlquist 2017). In years that followed, more massacres happened that mostly killed Aboriginals Australia and non-white immigrants.

According to The Center For 21st Century Humanities under the University of Newcastle (2017), there were more than 150 identified massacres that were committed by European settlers from 1784-1930. These massacres were rough estimates, and researchers stated that there must be more but was kept in secret under the code of silence. Until 1901, the Aboriginals Australia decreased and only reached 94,000 (Mence et al 2017). The relationship between Aboriginals Australia and European settlers was rather hostile, and it was almost the same with other people from different races. The year 1820 was regarded as a year in which Britain started to encourage immigration although was still limited to British people. The immigration of free settlers brought economic changes to Australia, with farming and pasturing of cattle and sheep (Geyl 1963). This also marked an expansion and exploration of areas that were deemed inhabited. In 1851, the discovery of gold marked an upsurge in number of immigrants. Geyl (1963) noted that the gold rush in New South Wales and Victoria brought 600,000 immigrants from outside Australia. The highest percentage of immigrants was Britain, followed by Europeans particularly Germans and Chinese. These immigrants settled in the predominantly gold rush area and worked as labors with contracts. The

following year also marked immigration from Pacific Islands, Japan, and Malaysia to work in sugar plantations and pearl industry (Mence et al 2017).

Nonetheless, even with a quite high number of immigrants, Britain claimed that it still wanted to make Australia a cultural and political frontier for Britain. Therefore, Britain did restrict immigrants who were not British to settle in Australia. This was particularly evident in a speech from James Stephen who worked as a Head of Colonial Office in London (1841 in Soutphommasane 2015) that stated English race shall not be mixed with any lower caste. This was transferred to public place, and eventually caused a series of race riots, particularly targeting Chinese people who came during the gold rush. Soutphommasane (2015) wrote that race riots erupted in goldfields, such as Hanging Rock (1852), Bendigo (1854), and Buckland River (1857). The anti-Chinese immigration argued that it would bring unfair competition to the European workers. Nevertheless, the reason was not only economic but also in terms of race, the Chinese were regarded as beneath the English. The Chinese were pictured as uncivilized, so they were unable to mix with English and the white people who were pictured as racially superior (Soutphommasane 2015). The belief that white men were far more superior than other races were evident in media, particularly in *The Bulletin* which was Australia's first newspaper. The newspaper published that other races could not be Australians, and political liberty only belonged to the white people (Soutphommasane 2015).

When Australia became a federation in 1901, the issue of immigration remained important for the parliament. The belief that white race was superior than the other races still resonated which was evident in three important laws on immigration. These three were Immigration Restriction Act, Pacific Island Labourers Act, and Naturalization Act. These three laws represented what is now called as White Australia Policy. Immigration Restriction Act was a law that prohibited the entry of people who failed their Dictation Test. According to Jones (2017), a Dictation Test is a test in which a person would be asked to write 50 words in various European languages. Further, in 1905, the law was amended and gave the officers who conducted the test more power to exclude undesired people (Jones 2017). Pacific Island Labourers Act was an act that intended to prohibit people from Pacific Islands entering Australia from 1904 onwards. The people from Pacific Islands who had already entered Australia were forcibly repatriated (Federal Register

of Legislation 2018). Naturalization Act was a law that stated naturalization could not be done on people from Asia, Africa, and Islands of the Pacific. Further, non-Europeans could not bring their children or spouses to Australia (Mence et al 2017). These laws were seen quite effective, seeing that people were reluctant to migrate to Australia. According to Jones (2017), only 2,000 people took the Dictation Test from 1901 until 1958.

Australia started to change its attitudes towards immigration in 1958, but this was because Australia needed more labors to reconstruct Australia's economy after being attacked by Japan in World War II. Further, Australia had also sacrificed its people at a high number that reached 4 million people (Jupp 2007). The term 'populate or perish' was created by Arthur Calwell to address this problem. Australia started to open its doors, but the numbers of people who entered were still dominated by British and followed by people from Europe who were displaced. The White Australia Policy was officially dismantled in 1973, and Australia was seen ready to accept more immigrants that were categorized as highly skilled. However, White Australia as a mindset remained intact. Jupp (2007) noted that this was evident in public support for Pauline Hansen when she gave her first speech in Parliament in 1996. Hanson believed that Australia is being swamped by Asians and refused the policy of multiculturalism which was evident in her speech (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2016). Her party, One Nation, won nearly 23 per cent of the vote. Jupp (2007) also noted that her party was doing great in New South Wales and in federal election in which her party received one million votes for the Senate. When the Tampa Affairs happened in 2001, Prime Minister Howard refused to receive the refugees and received public support which enabled him to become prime minister again.

Until now, Australia remains committed to its refusal on irregular immigration including refugees and endorsed a refugee settlement programs as close as possible to the refugee's home country (*Foreign Policy White Paper* 2017). This strong position has been defended by Australia, who claimed that they are not obligated to accept refugees for resettlement. Today, Australia's immigration policy is focused on people who are experienced and highly qualified to work in Australia (*Department of Home Affairs* 2018).

#### 4 AUSTRALIA'S GOVERNMENT ACTOR'S POINT OF VIEW IN SEEING IMMIGRATION PROBLEM

Just as stated in section one, we can see that Australia, as a country that can be categorized as developed or First World's country had been familiar in experiencing riots as a cause of accepting immigrants from the very beginning of their existence as a state. It can be seen from section two that there had been attempt made by Australian government to accept refugees and immigrant repetitiously by two main factors and motives that are (1) to cover the demand of hard – skilled labor and (2) as a respond to minimize international spotlight given to them as a country who has not been very friendly in increasing immigrant quota. But just as they are open to such attempts, sets of tragedies like riots between the Chinese people and the Australian people that are mostly Caucasian that happened in 1851 occurs and had impose a significant security alert to the government and the people of Australia itself since the riot has contributed in a large amount of casualties records along history too. Similar cases happens after 1851 even until now repeating the same cycle all over again, the Cronulla riots for instance in 2005 is also a riot that comes out of unsynchronized cultural harmony between the local Australia people and those from outside who's not under the European or western identity. Researches by social scholars had stated that in most cases these kinds of riots appear out of identity base fear reasoning that comes out from economic anxieties where the local people are threatened by the existence of either soft-skilled or hard-skilled labor foreigners who might seize native's work field or work opportunity. Or in other words, there are competitive attempts from both migrants and natives in the host countries market too.

Until this point, it can be argued that the reduction of migrant and refugee quota that happened currently in 2013 right after Australia had made a slight period of a bigger quota just before 2013 is a rationalization made by decision makers taking account their historical experiences of handling refugees in the past which often times ends up with another riot and other domestic security alerts. To then point out and prove whether Australian people does have uneasy tendencies towards 'others' that are not part of the western or European culture we can reflect back onto how

Australia has made Immigration Restriction Act (1901) that requires immigrants to take tests to determine whether an immigrant or refugee had any similar cultural understanding of certain issue so to be easily accepted within the society or how in the process of visa granting the first thing that the Australia's immigration officers do is to see the applicant's race and origins. Other than seeing the tangible tendencies, statements made and discourse happening around Australian's officials could also show how Australian government take race and origins seriously in determining which immigrants or refugee should stay on their lands.

In national level, we can see clearly that immigration problem is very consequential to Australian government just as how consequential the issue of counterterrorism is for United States. This is shown in how Australia's Annual White Papers, their main guidelines for alignment and strategic decisions had always put immigration as their main agenda or national interest. Align with this interest, are the politicians, officials and authoritarians point of view in seeing immigrations as a security issue that needs handling. Almost all politicians even from different parties both agreed to the reduction of immigrants especially those coming from Southeast Asia and Middle East countries. In 2015 Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull had release the 'Australia First' policy to cut down around 457 Visas of people that mostly comes from China and other Southeast Asia countries. Along with that the Prime Minister had set a tougher english requirement test and other cultural test requirements up to a more advanced level. He stated that:

“We will no longer allow 457 visas to be passports to jobs that could and should go to Australians. We're putting jobs first, and we're putting Australians first.” (Turnbull in Clark, 2017)

Along with his statement, Dan Engels the Managing Director of Visa Solution then point out what this policy means to Australia and the workers originating from China and other Southeast Asia countries. In one of press interview Engels stated:

“For the impact on China and Asia more generally, past the English language requirements it does send a message that we are increasing the barriers to the movement of people and especially if you don't look and speak as we do here in Australia.” (Engels in Clark, 2017)



From behavior performed by the Prime minister and interpretative statement made by Engels above we can see that there are efforts made by Australia to do ‘self – othering’ practices where the ‘self’ here is perceived as Australian people or ‘those who speak as we (Australian) do’, this article takes language as a part of cultural tools, thus, this statement also ‘others’ those who do not have the ability to perceive the cultural understanding of Australian people. This two statements also validate the fact that developed countries sees cultural factor as the main source of immigration conflict as stated in the second section of this article. Other than the Prime Minister and his officials, ministers that are assigned in the ministries directly related with immigration issues such as Peter Dutton, the minister of Immigration and Borderline Protection which has now been change into the ministry of Home Affairs. In one of his speeches for his campaign he stated:

“We have to try and encourage people out into regions, we have to reduce the numbers where we believe it’s in our national interest. It’s come back considerably and if we have to bring it back further, if that’s what required and that’s what’s in our country’s best interests ... that is what we will do.” (Dutton 2016).

From this statement we can also see the minister Dutton’s effort in bringing up how the limitation of immigrants had always been brought up in the past and was effective therefore essential to do today in order to meet their national strategies. Although there has been sets of serious ambitions coming from Prime Minister Turnbull in his previous electoral campaign, the practice that goes on until now are still alligned with Australia’s needs of securing they’re lands from indirect threats such as the rising of immigrants in their big lands with very little ammount of natives. Preassumably this could happen as an effect of other consequential authoritarians such as Petter Dutton to who counters Turnbull’s anomaly Ideas and behavior in trying to make Australia a more migrant friendly country. Thus, we can see that there has been an attempt to change the way Australia sees immigrants but had not been a success at the end of the day. This shows that the historical pattern had been consequential in today’s decision making process.

## 5 AUSTRALIA’S STRATEGIC CULTURE: GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

From the historical background above we can see Australia’s domestic tendency when it comes to handling immigrants. In international strategic studies we could also see that the racial and cultural tendency does not only occur within Australia’s domestic dynamics but is also shown on how Australia acts and reacts towards the states that contain people’s who’s race and culture are less favorable to the Australian people. For instance, how Australia had always show its tendencies to counter Southeast Asian countries policies and behavior. This, however is also due to geographical conditions and features Australia is bounded with. As can be seen from the historical facts above, we can assume that Australia is in a way more of a West European or British culture – colored rather than eastern. This automatically became a paradox with its geographical condition where Australia’s geography is not any near with countries that shares similar or close cultural relation with Australia but the continent is placed among Asian countries and other eastern – colored countries such as Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Myanmar, China etc (Evans 2006). Taking geographical considerations into account we can see that the racial profiling policies are more and more rational to Australia seeing the fact that Australia had such big land and see territorial with big resources to govern and to take advantage of but less native population to do the governing. Thus, the immigration phenomenon could be seen as diaspora threat to the natives of Australia. The example of how this cultural constrains in immigration security context can be seen in how at 2011- 2015 Australia under Tony Abbott’s government Australia had been throwing ‘boat people’ originating from Myanmar but are mostly muslims to Indonesia and Malaysia which are the states perceived by Australia as more culturaly suitable for the Rohingyaans. As a strategic choice of keeping up with their national stability and completing moral tasks at the same time, Australia thinks that it is rational for them to spend extra money to help Indonesia and Papua Nugini to build camps, detention and rehabilitation center in Nauru and Manus, an island not far away from their land territories but not under their legitimate jurisdiction rather than having to accept those refugees intheir own place. Due to their need to secure their

geographical territory, Australia also take big concern in how Southeast Asia governments respond and react to immigrant issue. Australia had been playing active role in influencing the ASEAN community to reconsider their immigration policy since the more immigration allowance made by ASEAN country the bigger the risk of insecurity for Australia's territory too since they are geographically bounded. Last example can also be seen in how Australia had also recently stop immigrant originating from Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Afghanistan but has not done anything to limit immigrant coming from England, New Zealand, Ireland, United States and other European countries combined.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Australia's Strategic culture among scholars was known to be quite 'protective' in securing their national territories rather than taking extra concerns in the high political interventionist behavior that are mostly performed by other European and western countries. This behavior is caused by two main factors (1) historical dynamics and (2) geographical constraint. Seeing from the historical approach we can see that Australia had always been a country who made attempts in trying to accept immigrants just to be let down by the migrants who caused riots that ended up as domestic insecurity. The effort to then keep the immigrant quota low was a rationalization that comes out of the realization of social protest done by the natives or their own society of the economic anxieties that often occurs as the cause of Asian and Middle-eastern diaspora taking the native's jobs field in Australia. Thus, racial profiling for immigrants is perceived mandatory for Australia's security. In geographical approach, Australia's dilemma in being the only 'western/European' cultured country that sits among 'Asian or eastern' cultured country had forced them to take deep concern in ASEAN's countries decision and behavior in handling immigration problem since their choices would implicate Australia's security too. Although here has been trials of changing how the Australia should perceive the immigrant made by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, the practice done under his administration had not shown any significant change in Australia's immigration policy. This is because, there are structured understanding among internal security decision makers in seeing immigrants and Australia's history with the immigrants. Turnbull's attempt in increasing the

quota cannot be successful because of the other decision makers who are not in favor with accepting more 'Eastern/Asia' immigrants.

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