The Emphasis on Ethnic Homogeneity and Japanese and Danish Immigration Policy

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Abstract

This essay compares the Japanese emphasis on ethnic homogeneity in immigration policy with its counterpart in Denmark. Japan's lack of integration policy stands out against the backdrop of Denmark's elaborate civic integration policy. A key reason for this contrast is the criterion that Japan is for the Japanese, and one has to be ethnically and culturally Japanese to be Japanese. *Nihonjinron*, a discourse on Japanese cultural uniqueness, has provided ammunition for this. Denmark, on the other hand, is in principle open to those who adopt Danish values. Japan needs a strong integration policy as the number of immigrants increase. Until now, its emphasis on ethnic homogeneity has led Japan to see immigrants as outsiders and to exclude them. Denmark, on the other hand, is willing to include immigrants on equal terms, on the condition that they adopt Danish values.

Keywords: Japan, Denmark, immigration, homogeneity, integration

1. Introduction

Being a researcher of Japanese immigration who understands the significance of the emphasis on ethnic homogeneity in Japanese immigration policy (Morita, 2017; 2018), I have long been interested in comparing the Japanese case with a contrasting one in order to better understand homogeneity in immigration policy. Denmark attracted my attention because like Japan, it is economically successful and high-income. However, unlike Japan, it has a larger proportion of immigrants (7.1 percent in Denmark versus 1.6 percent in Japan) (OECD, 2019a), in spite of its emphasis on homogeneity. Danes are proud of their liberal, welfare state. In contrast, the Japanese are less liberal in the sense that personal freedom is infrequently stressed upon, relatively speaking, and efforts towards an equal sharing of wealth and power in society are also weaker. Far from being a welfare state, the Japanese pay for social services such as healthcare, although at a subsidised rate, and unemployment benefits are much more limited.

The next section is devoted to Japan, with subsections on its recent history of immigration and the idea of ethnic homogeneity. After that, Section 3 focuses on Denmark, again with subsections on its recent history of immigration and homogeneity. Section 4 begins with civic integration in Denmark, followed by integration efforts in Japan. Discussion in Section 5 opens with the role of *Nihonjinron*, a discourse on Japan's cultural uniqueness, followed by the inclusive and exclusive tendencies produced by the emphasis on ethnic homogeneity, and finally closing remarks.

2. Japan

Japan is remarkable in that it has internationalised without the large numbers of immigrants that usually accompanies internationalisation (Vogt, 2014). It has also achieved high economic growth without an open-door immigration policy that has helped countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

One of the most serious threats Japan faces is the negative effects of its rapidly aging and declining population. In fact, the Japanese population is aging at the fastest rate in the world. The OECD defines 'elderly population' as people aged 65 and above, and according to that, 26.0 percent of the Japanese population is elderly in 2014, ranked highest in the world (OECD, 2019a). In comparison, Denmark is ranked 10th, with 18.3 percent of its population

being elderly (OECD, 2019a).

Having an aging population means that there will be more elderly people and fewer working-age adults in the workforce, resulting in a smaller workforce, which has negative effects on economic growth. It also means fewer taxpayers to pay for and support state pensions and health insurance schemes. This results in a heavier tax burden on working-age adults, who will then have less disposable income and less to spend on consumption, again negatively impacting the economy.

In theory, immigrants help to alleviate the negative effects of an aging population. They make up for the shortfall in the workforce and contribute by paying taxes to state pensions and health insurance schemes. However, as we will see in this essay, the process of recruiting immigrants in order to counteract the negative effects of an aging population is not as simple as it seems.

2.1 Recent History of Immigration in Japan

After the end of World War II, the first significant numbers of immigrants arrived in the late 1970s (Oishi, 2012a; Vogt, 2015). These immigrants fall under four categories. Firstly, there were women mostly from the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan and Thailand who came on the 'entertainer' visa; secondly, Indochinese refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; thirdly, second- and third-generation descendants of the Japanese left behind in China at the end of World War II; and finally, business professionals from Europe and North America. In the 1980s, a period of rapid economic growth also known as the 'bubble economy', a large number of immigrants arrived (Oishi, 2012b). Most of them were Koreans and Taiwanese, and the number of those from the US and other Asian countries increased. In the 1990s and 2000s, the Brazilians and Peruvians (in smaller numbers than the Brazilians) who came to work increased dramatically before falling in the early 2010s (Green, 2017).

At present, the ethnic profile of foreign residents in Japan is diversifying (Green, 2017). Before the 1990s, the vast majority of foreign residents were Koreans (those who came during Japan's colonial expansion and their descendants). Many of them were born in Japan and spoke Japanese at native level. There were also Chinese who came during the colonial period but they were in much smaller numbers. In the 1990s and 2000s, the Brazilians and Peruvians came into the picture. At present, there is an influx of Asians of various nationalities including Filipinos, Vietnamese, Nepalese and Thais.

2.2 The Idea of Homogeneity in Japan

In spite of the fact that in as early as the end of the 1800s, immigrant enclaves existed in major port cities in Japan, the idea of ethnic homogeneity has been widely accepted and actively promoted by the government (Green, 2017). After World War II and particularly during the 'economic bubble' period of the 1970s and 1980s, the discourse on homogeneity grew rapidly and became a legitimate 'myth' endorsed by academics (Iwata and Nemoto, 2018; Oishi, 2012b). The media played a key role in accelerating the spread of the idea of 'monoethnic' Japan(note 1). Without the media the concept would not have been as widely accepted. 'Monoethnic Japan' encouraged the thinking that non-Japanese are 'others' and they are inherently different and do not belong (Iwata and Nemoto, 2018). We will see below that this 'othering' of non-Japanese is a key reason why the Japanese oppose immigration.

The connection between the 'othering' of non-Japanese and opposition to immigration is clearly explained by Vogt (2014), who uses the 2004 campaign against undocumented foreigners as illustration. In this campaign driven by the Ministry of Justice and National Police Agency, a discourse on why immigration needs to be controlled was produced. In this discourse, the potential immigrant is an 'other' who is a threat to national security and public safety. The portrayal of foreigners as internal security threats originated in the 1980s and has been well established since the 1990s (Chiavacci, 2014). According to the discourse, foreigners who are capable of violating immigration regulations have a criminal side to them, and might commit more serious crimes. This claim is of course unsubstantiated and open to debate. There is also very little discussion of the breaking of immigration laws as a victimless crime in Japan. Returning to the discourse of foreigners as internal security threats, Chiavacci (2014) pointed out that this reasoning has a very strong impact on the Japanese public because prominent government representatives repeatedly emphasised that undocumented foreigners, because they had already committed an illegal act by entering the country unlawfully or overstaying their visa, were more likely to commit crimes. Furthermore, in this discourse on why immigration needs to be controlled, crime is presented as something foreign, and public safety as something Japanese. In other words, Japan would be safe and secure if there were no immigrants. As a result of the propagation of the discourse, public opinion towards foreigners in Japan became more negative (Vogt, 2014).

Chiavacci (2014) elaborated that according to this discourse, foreign crime is the main reason for rising crime rates in Japan and has brought an end to Japanese exceptionalism in its high degree of social order and public security.

Increase in foreign crime is linked to increasing numbers of foreigners arriving in Japan. The resonance of this discourse with the Japanese public, as well as the fear and distrust of foreigners it generated, is documented in several representative national surveys conducted by newspaper organisations and the Cabinet Office (Chiavacci, 2014). The discourse is responsible for this, as well as the use of flawed data in reports on crimes committed by foreigners, and recurrent, biased and sensational coverage of the Japanese mass media on these crimes (Chiavacci, 2014).

The portrayal of foreigners as potential criminals and terrorists received further ammunition from the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Vogt, 2014). After the attacks, it became a global trend to step up national security measures. All over the world, foreigners are perceived as potential criminals and terrorists, as substantial threats to national security (Vogt, 2014). This exacerbated the perception of foreigners in Japan.

3. Denmark

3.1 Recent History of Immigration in Denmark

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first waves of immigrants arrived with guest workers from Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Morocco (Jensen et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2017b). After the 1973 oil crisis, most immigrants came through the family reunification, asylum and refugee (refugees from Chile and Vietnam) channels (Beck and Lindekilde, 2014). From the 1980s, the main form of immigration was asylum (Meer et al., 2015). In the 1980s and 1990s, refugees arrived from the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Balkans, Hungary and Russia (Bech and Lindekilde, 2014; Jensen et al., 2017b).

All in all, the ethnic profile of immigrants in Denmark has changed over the years (Jensen et al., 2010), and like in Japan, it is diversifying. It was only after 1990 that significant numbers of those from non-Caucasian ethnic backgrounds arrived (Kaegard, 2010). By the 2000s, immigrants from other Nordic countries were still numerous but there were also immigrants who came from much more distant countries and regions of the world (Jensen et. al, 2010; Jensen et. al, 2017b). The majority of immigrants used to come from western countries but today, they are mostly from non-western countries and they are increasing rapidly (Kaegard, 2010). At present, the largest EU source countries are Poland and Germany (Bech and Lindekilde, 2014). The largest non-EU source countries are Turkey and Iraq.

3.2 The Idea of Homogeneity in Denmark

In the Danish context, the immigration policy is known to have been very restrictive since the late 1990s and especially after the 2001 election (Kaegard, 2010). Immigration was the most important issue in the election and political parties competed in being restrictive (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013). In a series of changes, all forms of immigration were restricted to the maximum. Especially prominent was the requirement for immigrants to adopt Danish values if they wanted to obtain permanent residency or citizenship.

With the exception of the very thinly populated North Atlantic territories of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Denmark has been a nation with only one language and no ethnic minorities since 1864 (Kaegard, 2010). Unlike ethnic homogeneity in Japan, ethnic homogeneity in Denmark is supported by facts detailed by Kaergard (2010). This homogeneity has not always been at the fore in immigration policymaking. In the 1970s for example, the attention was on the human rights of immigrants (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013), particularly on equal rights and opportunities, with some acknowledgement of their cultural differences and identity. However, in the 1980s, with a larger number of refugees, and growing concerns about residential segregation and social problems, there was more emphasis on the duty of immigrants to make an effort to integrate into Danish society and become economically independent (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013). The contrast between the immigrants from various backgrounds and the homogeneous Danes had become conspicuous. Concern for immigrants' cultural backgrounds declined significantly (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013).

In the 1990s, politicians and the media increasingly emphasised immigrants' differences and economic dependency on the state (Bech and Lindekilde, 2014). These messages were accentuated by real socioeconomic differences between immigrants and Danes. Immigrants were told to take more responsibility and adjust to society, and not to 'burden' the welfare system (Meer et al., 2015). 'Adjusting to society' in this context refers to acquiring fundamental Danish values, in other words, to be more like Danes. In all legislation concerning immigrants, 'respect for cultural identity' was omitted and self-support became the overall goal (Meer et al., 2015). Immigration and integration became very salient politically in the 1990s, and are still so today (Jensen et al., 2017a; Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013).

Denmark is known for upholding the ideal of equality among its people (Bech et al., 2014), and Danes are prepared to include immigrants on equal terms, on the condition that they adapt to a canon of Danish cultural values and traditions (Borevi, 2014). The reasoning is that Danish culture is a prerequisite of the welfare state, and immigrants must adapt in order to protect social cohesion (Jensen et al., 2017a). To Danes, social cohesion is a key to keeping society functioning well and closely integrated, and the core values bring about solidarity and cohesion. In this reasoning, social inclusion is less about mutual intercultural understanding and more about socialising immigrants (Jensen et al., 2017a).

In national studies of attitudes towards cultural difference, the findings show that Danes have the ideals of tolerance and openness but they are uneasy about difference and they prefer the immigrants to be like themselves (Jensen et al., 2010). In order words, they prefer a homogeneous Denmark. Jensen et al. (Jensen et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2011) point out that there is a general public discourse that praises cultural diversity, but in practice, there is very little room to be different. In government policies, there is an emphasis on being open to other cultures, but they do not say that all cultures are equal (Jensen et al., 2010).

The Danish approach to immigrants is assimilationist (Borevi, 2014). The strategy is active promotion of Danish culture, and linguistic and political homogeneity. The state asserts that Denmark is monocultural, and assimilation is a condition of equal inclusion and opportunity.

4. A Startling Contrast: The Lack of Civic Integration Policy in Japan

Up to this point in this essay, the word *integrate* has been used to refer to its general meaning of 'to mix with or to join society'. *Integrate* will continue to be used in the same way for the rest of the essay, while *civic integration* will be used to refer to 'policy instruments that conditions access to various legal statuses' (Borevi et al., 2017). Since the 1990s, most countries in Europe have introduced civic integration requirements regarding language, knowledge, and employment. These requirements take the form of citizenship tests, naturalisation ceremonies, language and civic-orientation courses, and modules for role-playing social interaction (Breidahl, 2017). Access to entry, permanent residence, citizenship and family reunification depend upon whether these requirements are met.

4.1 Civic Integration in Denmark

Denmark is one of the European countries that have gone furthest in civic integration policy, in its demands and making immigrants' access to their rights conditional upon them meeting the requirements (Borevi, 2014).

Since the 1980s, integration has been an explicit objective in Denmark (Jensen et. al, 2017b). From the 1990s, the national government made considerable efforts to influence local integration policies (Emilsson, 2015). Integration became very salient politically and is said to be the responsibility of immigrants (Jensen et. al, 2017a). The world's first integration law went into effect in 1999 (Emilsson, 2015) and has been tightened several times since (Jensen et. al, 2017b). This law, also known as the 1998 Integration Act, made municipal governments responsible for its objectives, including offering a three-year introduction programme to all non-EEA immigrants. This Integration Act is the beginning of one of the most restrictive civic integration policies in Europe (Emilsson, 2015).

The Integration Act could be said to be effective since during most of the 2000s, immigrants and their descendants became increasingly integrated into the education and labour sectors (Bech and Lindekilde, 2014). The general public agrees with the core ideas of the act (Jensen et. al, 2014). Emilsson (2015) noted that integration in Denmark consists of a one-way compliance with the standards set by the state, and immigrants have to jump through legal hoops and prove that they are economically independent and culturally integrated. They also have to conform to an increasingly comprehensive set of public values, practices and norms (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013).

Denmark has introduced some of the most stringent requirements for permanent residency and citizenship in Europe since the turn of the century. Requirements for permanent residency have been made more stringent several times (Mouritsen, 2012). Applicants must participate in the introduction programme, pass the knowledge and language tests, and have resided in Denmark for five years (Borevi, 2014). There are also work and welfare independence requirements. Immigrants who have been in paid employment for at least three years can receive permanent residency earlier (Breidahl, 2017). The rationale behind the demanding requirements is that permanent residency is for foreigners who integrate (Emilsson, 2015).

Denmark's naturalisation requirements include nine years' residence, financial self-sufficiency, passing the language and knowledge tests (the citizenship test includes questions on culture, society and history), and a loyalty oath to declare one's allegiance and loyalty (Borevi, 2014; Jensen et al., 2017a). Applicants must not have received certain

unemployment benefits in the last year, and not for more than six months in the last five years. The rationale behind the stringent citizenship requirements is that citizenship is a privilege, a reward for successful integration (Jensen et al., 2017a). The requirements are decided by the political parties in the majority in the parliament (Midtboen, 2015). The issues they take into consideration include deservingness, cultural assimilation and national security (Borevi et al., 2017).

4.2 Integration in Japan

Compared to Denmark, Japan has no civic integration policy to speak of. There have been no systematic efforts made by the national government to integrate immigrants into society either (Oishi, 2012a; 2012b). The only policy to date that bears some semblance to an integration policy is the 2006 Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Plan. The neglect of integration is short-sighted particularly in view of the fact that since 1990, many immigrants have been staying long-term in Japan (Roberts, 2018). About 30 per cent of foreign residents have permanent residency (Roberts, 2018). This contradicts the key principle of the state on immigration, that immigration is on a temporary basis only, but it is nonetheless a fact that many immigrants are putting down roots in Japan.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications announced the Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Plan in 2006. Multicultural coexistence is defined as people of different nationalities and races living together as members of local societies while recognising their cultural differences and trying to establish equal relationships (Oishi, 2012a; Oishi, 2012b). This was ground-breaking in the sense that it was the first time the national government had set clear guidelines for integrating immigrants and to have integration as a policy goal. The overall policy goal was said to be the integration of foreign residents. The plan was communicated to municipal governments and municipal governments were instructed to establish or improve four areas: communication support for foreign residents, daily life support for foreign residents, development of multicultural communities, and policy coordination for promoting multicultural coexistence policies.

The Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Plan was criticised by conservatives such as Hasegawa (2009; cited in Oishi, 2012a; 2012b) for its semblance to multiculturalism, for attempting to achieve equality among different cultures. This is inappropriate since Japan is 'homogeneous' and there should be only one culture, Japanese culture. Japanese culture should also be superior to all others. The plan contaminates the purity of Japanese culture, according to its critics.

In the early years, municipal governments' responses to the Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Plan was mostly to offer their services to foreign residents in various languages and to set up Japanese language classes. Writing later in 2017, Green noted that municipal-level services included multilingual consultations, Japanese language classes, translation services, medical referral services, employment assistance, and explanatory sessions for accessing public education (Green, 2017). Green added that the government appears to be removing discriminatory barriers, while widening the range of services for immigrants with lower levels of Japanese language proficiency. There is ongoing improvement in large cities' efforts to accommodate immigrants.

Japanese permanent residency requires a minimum of 10 years' continuous presence (Ministry of Justice, 2019a). The application requires materials showing good behaviour and conduct, as well as sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living. The above requirement for materials is waived if the applicant is a spouse or child of a Japanese national, permanent resident or Special Permanent Resident (mostly Koreans who came to Japan during the Japanese colonial expansion, and their descendants). Highly Skilled Foreign Professional visa holders can apply with three or even one year's continuous residence, depending on how many points they earn in the points-based system.

The process of naturalisation is thought of as arbitrary and quite strict (Green, 2017). It requires five years' continuous presence. The Nationality Law specifies 'upright conduct' and the ability to 'secure a livelihood by one's own property or ability' (Ministry of Justice, 2019b). There are about 1,000 new citizens and 30,000 new permanent residents every year (Green, 2017). Most foreign residents become permanent residents rather than citizens.

When viewed with European requirements for permanent residency and citizenship, Japanese requirements stand out due to their lack of language and knowledge demands. Japan has no formal citizenship test or naturalisation ceremony to speak of, nor are there civic-orientation courses to prepare immigrants for residency or citizenship.

5. Discussion

5.1 Nihonjinron, a Discourse on Japan's Cultural Uniqueness

We have seen above that among other requirements, Danish permanent residency requires participation in the

introduction programme, as well as passing the language and knowledge tests. Japan on the other hand has no equivalent demands for permanent residency, i.e. no obligatory introduction programmes or a pass in language or knowledge tests. Danish naturalisation also requires passing the language and knowledge tests while Japanese naturalisation does not. What is the reason for this difference? If Denmark and Japan both emphasise homogeneity, doesn't it make sense for Japan to have a civic integration policy resembling Denmark's in order to coax immigrants into adopting Japanese values?

A key reason for Japan's lack of civic integration policy is that Denmark is a 'civic nation' while Japan would be an 'ethnic nation', according to Kaergard's (2010) classification. Kaergard provides a detailed discussion of why he considers Denmark to be a civic nation. A civic nation is in principle open to anyone willing to adopt the national culture. In the context of the present essay, it means that immigrants who adopt Danish values will be accepted. In Japan, on the other hand, merely adopting Japanese values is insufficient; one has to be ethnically and culturally Japanese to be accepted as Japanese.

Nihonjinron explains why one has to be ethnically and culturally Japanese to be Japanese. *Nihonjinron* is a discourse which claims to demonstrate Japan's cultural differences from other cultures and Japan's cultural uniqueness in the world (Manabe, 1993). It usually includes a deliberate emphasis on how foreigners differ from the Japanese. It can be found in newspapers, magazines and books (both popular and academic), and on radio and television. This discourse claims to identify the characteristics of being Japanese (Sugimoto, 1999). These unique characteristics in turn define Japanese identity (Liddicoat, 2013). Burgess (2010) observed that *Nihonjinron* has been so widely disseminated, embodied, internalised, and regurgitated that it has contributed to the creation of a particular Japanese worldview.

There are three basic tenets in *Nihonjinron* (Manabe, 1993). The first is that Japan is ethnically homogeneous. The second is that Japanese 'blood' or ancestry is essential for understanding Japanese culture, and for successful communication and understanding among the Japanese. Japanese ancestry is necessary for social, cultural and linguistic competences. Non-Japanese are incapable of fully understanding Japanese culture or mastering the language. The third tenet is that the sociocultural territoriality of Japan should be defended and non-Japanese should be excluded.

We can see the influence of *Nihonjinron* on immigration policy, in the 1990 amendment to Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act which introduced renewable three-year visas for descendants of Japanese emigrants to Brazil and Peru in the 1950s. The reasoning was that these descendants, or *Nikkeijin*, have Japanese 'blood' and Japan would benefit from having them as workers without hurting its homogeneity. They should also fit in socially and culturally because of their Japanese ancestry. The reality turned out to be quite different, with the *Nikkeijin* speaking little or no Japanese and being culturally Brazilian (or Peruvian).

Nihonjinron strictly demarcates who is Japanese and who is not. It is very unlikely that Japan would impose Japanese values on immigrants, the way Denmark has, in its attempts to integrate them. Japanese values are for the Japanese only. At this point, the Danish principle of 'equal inclusion and opportunity for immigrants' seems more admirable than ever, even though it is in principle only and reality may differ, and it is conditional upon successful integration. Equality for non-Japanese is unlikely as long as the third tenet of *Nihonjinron* holds sway, that Japan is for the Japanese only.

The Japanese approach to immigrants is usually about control, about having immigrants obey Japanese rules. Grievances about immigrants not putting out the right type of rubbish on the right day of the week or immigrants making too much noise are frequently heard. In fact, the Japanese phrase *ruru mamoranai* ('to disobey rules') is often heard in relation to immigrants when they are discussed in the media. Mentions of having immigrants acquire Japanese values are extremely rare, if not unheard of.

This discussion of controlling immigrants leads us back to Section 2.2, to the discourse driven by the Ministry of Justice and National Police Agency, on why immigrants need to be controlled. In this discourse, the immigrant is an 'other' who is a threat to national security and public safety. This shows us the reach of *Nihonjinron* and how pervasive it is. In relation to this discourse, Vogt (2015) remarked that foreign residents are not well integrated into Japanese society, and it is because of this discourse that their full integration is unlikely.

5.2 Increase in Immigration to Japan

In Japan one of the most salient issues has been attracting highly-skilled immigrants in order to make up for the shortfall in the workforce. It is clear, for example, from Fukao et. al, 2016 and Ma, 2017 that Japan needs highly-skilled immigrants in the ICT and IT sectors. This is a priority so that Japan does not lose its global

competitiveness. For the purpose of recruiting highly-skilled immigrants in general (including scientists, researchers, engineers and business professionals), the Highly Skilled Foreign Professional visa was introduced in 2012. It is a points-based system with attractive terms for highly-skilled immigrants. One of its perks is an accelerated route to permanent residency (eligibility in three years or even one year).

The government has been most forthright in the recruitment of highly-skilled immigrants, because these immigrants have the highest levels of public approval (Green, 2017). The official position is that immigration is for highly-skilled immigrants only (Vogt, 2014; 2015). That is not to say that there is no shortfall in the workforce for low- and mid-skilled immigrants (Chiavacci, 2014). There is a strong demand and they enter Japan via a side door (Oishi, 2012a; Iwata and Nemoto, 2018), the Trainee and Technical Intern Program, which was established in 1993. This programme is part of Japan's overseas development assistance programmes. In theory the workers from less developed countries, mostly countries in Asia, come to Japan to work and learn, and take home with them technical know-how. In practice, however, this has been a cheap source of labour for Japanese companies (Green, 2017; Roberts, 2018), and these workers have become an indispensable source of labour (Chiavacci, 2014). In the past, workers could only stay in Japan for up to three years. That has been extended to five years in the 2016 revision to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Green, 2017; Roberts, 2018). The revision points in the direction of opening the labour market to immigrants, not only highly-skilled immigrants but also low- and mid-skilled immigrants. The revision comes into effect in April, 2019, and just how many immigrants will take advantage of the opportunity to work in Japan remains to be seen.

Another side door for low- and mid-skilled workers is for the *Nikkeijin*, who are descendants of Japanese emigrants to Brazil and Peru in the 1950s. A change to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990 created a new type of visa for the *Nikkeijin* to come to Japan on renewable three-year visas. Officially, this visa enables them to return home to the country of their Japanese roots (Green, 2017). In practice, the *Nikkeijin* use this visa to take up mostly unskilled employment (Oishi, 2012a) and they have also become an indispensable source of labour (Borevi et. al, 2017). The reasoning behind this new visa category was that the *Nikkeijin* have Japanese ancestry, and should therefore fit in better than other foreigners. Lawmakers who thought they had come up with a solution on how to let in unskilled workers as well as protect Japan's homogeneity were surprised when they found that the *Nikkeijin* were culturally Brazilian (or Peruvian) and spoke little Japanese. The two side doors discussed above enable the demand for low- and mid-skilled workers to be met, while allowing the government to uphold the principle of 'highly-skilled immigrants only'.

It may be the case that Japan has a relatively small proportion of immigrants (1.6 percent compared to 7.1 percent in Denmark) (OECD, 2019a) and the lack of effort in integrating immigrants have not yet become conspicuous. However, the number of immigrants is going to increase, and we have learned from Denmark that issues regarding immigrants' lack of integration quickly become highly visible. The Japanese context is certainly very different from that of Denmark, and civic integration policy may not be appropriate. However, the country's leaders can start by educating the public about the limitations of *Nihonjinron*. The first tenet of *Nihonjinron*, which states that Japan is ethnically homogeneous, is untrue. Japan has ethnic minorities such as the Ainus, Okinawans, Koreans and Chinese (Section 2.2). The second tenet, which claims that Japanese ancestry is necessary for understanding Japanese culture, as well as communicating with the Japanese, is also inaccurate. Immigrants in many countries have successfully achieved understanding of the host culture and communicated using the host language. The third tenet, that Japan's sociocultural territoriality should be defended and non-Japanese should be excluded, is impractical in the age of globalisation, especially in the context of Japan's rapidly aging and declining population. The public also needs to know that the portrayal of foreigners as internal security threats (Section 2.2) is unjustified. While it is true that foreigners commit crimes, there is no evidence to suggest that they do so at a higher rate than the Japanese.

5.3 Inclusive and Exclusive Tendencies

We have seen in this essay that emphasis on ethnic homogeneity can have inclusive or exclusive influences. In Denmark, the emphasis on homogeneity has produced inclusive tendencies. Denmark upholds the ideal of equality among its people, and Danes are prepared to include immigrants on equal terms if they adopt Danish values and become more like themselves (Section 3.2). In the case of Japan, its emphasis on homogeneity has encouraged the thinking that Japan is exclusively for the ethnic Japanese; that the Japanese are uniquely different from the rest of the world and immigrants are not welcomed to live among them (Section 5.1). What Japan can learn from Denmark is the principle of equal inclusion and opportunity for immigrants. Research (such as Morita, 2015) has shown that discrimination against immigrants in Japan is commonplace, and the idea of equality applies to the Japanese only, not to immigrants. However, this is not to say that the Danish situation is all inclusive and rosy; exclusive tendencies

exist too.

The far right in Denmark is gaining in influence and becoming mainstream, and it often targets Muslim immigrants and their descendants (Feischmidt and Hervik, 2015). One type of far-right rhetoric which opposes immigration is known as 'new racism', in which immigrants are portrayed as inferior to and incompatible with Denmark; as outsiders, while Danes have a 'natural' right to the country. This bears a strong resemblance to *Nihonjinron*. In this rhetoric, Danes have certain racial features in common as well as solidarity among themselves. Furthermore, living among one's own kind is natural, and the right to defend one's culture and territory is instinctive. This rhetoric encourages xenophobia, and Feischmidt and Hervik (2015) observed an increasing level of xenophobia among young people. In addition, a significant portion of the public are open to anti-immigrant mobilisation.

Feischmidt and Hervik (2015) point out that the reason why the new racism rhetoric has managed to spread and become influential is its resonance with the public. The rhetoric is based on pre-existing prejudices and has basic ideas and arguments in common with mainstream thinking. Another reason is that politicians and the media have not denounced it.

In relation to the idea that 'immigrants are outsiders' in the new racism rhetoric, Hervik observed a tendency for the subjects of a study (Hervik, 2012) to see themselves as 'hosts' and immigrants and their descendants as 'guests' no matter how long they have lived in Denmark. The guests are expected to obey the rules of the house and water down their differences such as wearing the hijab and not speaking fluent Danish. Interestingly, the current centre-right governing coalition recently passed a law to ban the burqa and niqab (*The Guardian*, 2018a). A law passed later in the year defines 25 residential areas across Denmark as 'ghettos' and doubles the sentence for crimes committed in these ghettos (*The Guardian*, 2018b). These ghettos are mostly areas where immigrants cluster in social housing. In addition, children from these ghettos with an immigrant background, from age one, must receive 25 hours of mandatory day care a week to ensure their integration into Danish society. This includes an education programme, and preschool children will be given language tests.

I have painted a rather rosy picture of Danish civic integration policy in this essay. The question I now need to address is whether it is efficient. The answer is no. The tests for permanent residency and naturalisation have become so difficult that a growing majority of otherwise well-integrated and hardworking immigrants will never be able to pass them (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013). In the education system, immigrants and their descendants perform very poorly and dropout rates are high. The employment rate for native-born Danes is 75.8% while it is 65.0% for the foreign-born population, for the 2014-2017 period (OECD, 2019b; c).

6. Conclusion

In closing, I would like to say that studying the emphasis on Danish ethnic homogeneity and immigration policy has been fruitful. It has highlighted Japan's lack of integration policy and the inappropriateness of *Nihonjinron*. Danish civic integration policy may not be immediately applicable to the Japanese context but it shows Japan the possibilities and lessons learned should Japan choose to move in that direction. Regarding the emphasis on ethnic homogeneity, we have seen that it can lead to inclusive or exclusive tendencies. It would be interesting to see if Japan can pivot from its current exclusive tendencies to being more inclusive, learning from Denmark's example(note 2).

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Notes

Note 1. Is 'monoethnic Japan' supported by facts? The answer is no. Japan has long been multi-ethnic (Oishi, 2012a). The Ainus lived in Hokkaido before Yamato Japanese from the mainland ventured north and eventually gained control of Hokkaido. The same happened in the southwest, where Okinawans lived and thrived before Yamato Japanese took over control. More recently during the Japanese colonial expansion, Koreans and Chinese came in substantial numbers as Japanese subjects.

Note 2. I would like to express my gratitude to a reviewer for reminding me that immigration is not the only solution to a rapidly aging and declining population. Alternatives such as a higher participation rate of women in the workforce and the use of robots exist. Japan has done groundbreaking work in the use of robots in caring for the elderly. Having women go back to work after having children is a little more complicated because of the expectation that women should care for their own children and long waiting lists for day care.