



T.C.

CANKIRI KARATEKIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

DEPARTMENT

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTTOM-UP APPROACH IN
POLICY-MAKING: THE CASE OF JAPAN'S
REFUGEE POLICY**

ALİ KARAUZUN

MASTER'S THESIS

**Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Sezai ÖZÇELİK**

Çankırı – 2024

**T.C.
CANKIRI KARATEKIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTTOM-UP APPROACH IN
POLICY-MAKING: THE CASE OF JAPAN'S
REFUGEE POLICY**

ALİ KARAUZUN

ORCID: 0009-0000-4099-2591

MASTER'S THESIS

**Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Sezai ÖZÇELİK**

Çankırı – 2024

CONTENTS

	Page
SCIENTIFIC ETHICS STATEMENT	iii
THESIS ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL.....	iv
PREFACE.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
TURKISH ABSTRACT	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	11
LIST OF TABLES	12
1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	13
1.1. Research Aim and Objective.....	15
1.2. Research Question.....	17
1.3. Hypothesis of the study	17
1.4. Methodology	17
1.4.1. Process-Tracing as a Qualitative Research Method.....	18
1.4.2. Case Selection	19
1.4.3. Data Collection.....	20
1.5. Synopsis of the Study.....	21
1.6. Contribution of The Study to The Academic Literature	21
2. CHAPTER II: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK.....	23
2.1. Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making	23
2.2. The Importance of Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making	23
2.3. Meso-level Bottom-up (Level of NGOs and Other Civil Society Organizations)	24
2.4. Bottom-up Approach As a Level of Local Governance.....	26
2.5. Terminology	27
2.5.1. Migration and Immigrant	28
2.5.2. Asylum Seeker and Refugee	29
2.5.3. Asylum Seeker:	29
2.5.4. Refugee:	30
2.5.5. Well-Founded Fear of Persecution	30
2.5.6. The Risks of Misusing The Terms Refugee and Irregular Immigrant	32
2.6. Rights of Refugees	34

2.6.1. International Refugee Law and UNHCR:	34
2.6.2. Responsibilities of Member States for Refugees	35
2.6.3. International Human Rights Law	37
2.7. Japan's Laws and Regulations Regarding Refugees	37
2.7.1. Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRL):	38
2.7.2. Refugee Recognition and Asylum Seeker Policy of Japan:.....	40
2.7.3. SSW Program Introduced by ICRRL Amendment	41
2.8. What Does a Refugee Mean to Japan?.....	42
2.8.1. From the Perspective of Laws (State)	43
2.8.2. From the Perspective of Public Opinion	46
2.8.3. From the Perspective of Refugees.....	48
2.8.4. From the Perspective of Worldwide Refugees.....	49
3. CHAPTER III: HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND ...	51
3.1. Asylum Seeking From World War II to The Present.....	51
3.2. Dynamics Underpinning International Migration In The 21st Century	53
3.3. Globalization and Asylum Seeking.....	54
3.4. Japan's Globalization Within The Concept of Asylum.....	56
4. CHAPTER IV: BOTTOM-UP APPROACH IN JAPAN AND ITS IMPACT ON REFUGEE POLICY	59
4.1. NGOs	59
4.2. NGOs in Japan	61
4.3. SDGs in Japan	64
4.4. Bottom-up Culture in Japan	65
4.4.1. Giri-Ninjou (義理人情)	66
4.5. Bottom-up Examples For Refugees in Japan	68
4.5.1. RAFIQ as A Good Example	69
4.5.2. Another Bottom-up Case Impacted Refugee Policy: Kurdish asylum seekers in Japan.....	72
4.5.3. Resettlement Program and Contributions of SPF as An NGO	73
5. CONCLUSION.....	76
6. REFERENCES	79
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmamış.

SCIENTIFIC ETHICS STATEMENT

In the process from the proposal stage to the conclusion of the study titled [The Importance of Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making: The Case of Japan's Refugee Policy], which I prepared as a master's thesis, I carefully followed the academic ethics and rules that I obtained all the information in the thesis within the framework of academic ethics and tradition that I prepared by the rules of writing the thesis. I declare that I cited every citation as a reference and that the works I have benefited from are those shown in the bibliography.

17 / 07/ 2024

Signature

Ali KARAUZUN

THESIS ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

ÇANKIRI KARATEKİN UNIVERSITY

TO THE DIRECTORATE OF THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

This study titled *The Importance of Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making: The Case of Japan's Refugee Policy*, prepared by Ali KARAUZUN, was found successful *unanimously* as a result of the thesis defense held on 17/07/2024. It was accepted as a Master's thesis in the *Political Science and International Relations (English)* (Master's) by our jury.

TERM PROJECT JURORS (Title, Name and Surname)

Supervisor : Prof. Dr. Sezai ÖZÇELİK Sign

Jury : Doç. Dr. Segah TEKİN Sign:

Jury : Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Şuayip TURAN Sign:

APPROVAL

This thesis-based Master's study has been accepted by the jury determined by the Çankırı Karatekin University Social Sciences Institute Board of Directors at the session dated 17.07.2024 and numbered

Prof.Dr. Ersoy YILMAZ

Institute Director

PREFACE

At the dawn of the 21st century, the world is experiencing the largest migration movements since World War II. Nations enjoying domestic tranquility and affluence are grappling with the influx of millions seeking refuge, balancing the protection of national interests with the rights of refugees. In democracies, it is imperative that citizens participate in policymaking and support initiatives. The refugee crisis, a delicate matter, requires the involvement of all parties, not solely the decisions of a select few, in countries where democratic principles are upheld.

Japan exemplifies democracy in action, both theoretically and practically. The nation has preserved its ethnic uniformity while contemplating the harmonious integration of global dynamics. Asylum seekers and refugees in Japan, however, encounter challenges due to the nation's perception of refugees as immigrants, making the attainment of refugee status exceedingly difficult.

Improvements in the plight of those seeking or granted refugee status in Japan have begun, partly thanks to the efforts of Japanese civil society organizations. These humanitarian groups, recognizing the state's hesitant reception, have secured housing and employment for refugees through the GiriNinjou philosophy and state collaboration, alleviating governmental burdens and aiding those in dire straits.

The study has focused on the "importance of bottom-up activities in policy making," highlighting key actions by NGOs that marked a pivotal moment in Japan's refugee policy. Japanese civil society organization representatives have also enriched the study through their participation in interviews. Special appreciation is extended to Takanobu Yamamoto and Keiko Tanaka for their significant contributions.

17/07/ 2024

Ali KARAUZUN

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title : The Importance of Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making: The Case of Japan's Refugee Policy
Author of the Thesis : Ali KARAUZUN
Supervisor : Prof. Dr. Sezai ÖZÇELİK
Department : Political Science and International Relations
Type of Thesis : Master
Acceptance Date : 17.07.2024

Japan's historical inclination towards isolationism and maintaining an ethnically homogeneous society, coupled with its policy of assessing foreigners based on its own criteria and interests, has placed thousands of asylum seekers in a precarious position. The nation faces both domestic and international criticism for its stringent refugee policies. Until 2010, Japan attempted to address this issue through ad hoc measures. However, even the "resettlement" program initiated in 2010, which aimed to accept more refugees, did not achieve complete success.

Subsequently, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stepped in. NGOs supporting refugees, along with business sector representatives, began to communicate the fundamental issues to government officials. In Japan, where the bottom-up approach is prevalent, the efforts of NGOs found resonance. These organizations played a pivotal role in selecting refugees for the "resettlement" program, determining their city of residence and employment, thus alleviating some of the state's burden. The Japanese government endorsed these NGO initiatives and supported the collaborative platform they established, the Forum For Refugee Japan.

The bottom-up approach, a staple in democratic societies and a subject of social science studies, advocates for the involvement of stakeholders in shaping policy. This case study highlights the positive impact of bottom-up activities on national policy, as evidenced by the evolution of Japan's refugee policy, which also employs process-tracing methodology. In democracies like Japan, policy decisions are not solely dictated by governing elites but are informed by the grievances, critiques, and suggestions of those affected by the issues. To strengthen democracy, the dissemination of the bottom-up approach is essential.

Keywords: Japan, Bottom-up, NGOs, Refugee, Advocacy

TURKISH ABSTRACT

Tez Başlığı : Politika Oluşturmada Bottom-up Yaklaşımının Önemi:
Japonya'nın Mülteci Politikası Örneği
Yazar : Ali KARAUZUN
Danışman : Prof. Dr. Sezai ÖZÇELİK
Bölüm : Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler
Tez Türü : Master's Thesis
Tarih : 17.07.2024

Japonya'nın izolasyona ve etnik açıdan tek tip topluma yönelik tarihsel eğiliminin yanında ülkesine almak istediği yabancıları ancak kendi kriterleri ve menfaatleri açısından değerlendirmek istemesi, ülkede mülteci başvurusunda bulunmuş binlerce sığınmacıya zor duruma sokmakta. Ülke, sıkı mülteci politikası sebebiyle içeride ve dışarıda eleştirilmekte. Japonya bu sorunun 2010 yılına kadar geçici tedbirlerle üstesinden gelmeye çalıştı. 2010 yılında devreye giren “yeniden yerleştirme” programı ile daha fazla mülteci almak istediğini duyuran Japonya, bu programda da tam anlamıyla başarılı olamadı.

Bu noktada devreye STK'lar girdi. Gerek mülteci dostu STK'lar gerekse iş dünyasından temsilciler, sorunun kök nedenlerini devlet yetkilileriyle paylaşmaya başladılar. Bottom-up yaklaşımının aktif bir şekilde kullanıldığı Japonya'da STK'ların gayreti karşılık buldu. STK'lar, “yeniden yerleştirme” programı çerçevesinde kabul edilecek mültecilerin hangi şehirde ve hangi pozisyonda alınacağına kadar destek oldu ve devletin üzerindeki büyük bir yükü omuzladı. Japonya hükümeti de STK'ların bu gayretlerini destekledi ve onların oluşturmuş olduğu ortak platform olan Forum For Refugee Japan'a destek verdi.

Bottom-up yaklaşımı, demokrasilerde yaygın ve aktif şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Bottom-up yaklaşımı, Sosyal Bilimleri'n ele aldığı önemli yaklaşımlardan biridir. Çalışma, bir vaka çalışması olup, Japonya mülteci politikası örneği üzerinden Bottom-up faaliyetlerinin ülke politikasına katkısını savunmaktadır. Japonya'nın mülteci politikasının evrim süreci de süreç-izleme metodu ile analiz edilmiştir. Demokratik ülkelerde kararlar, ülkeyi yöneten bir takım elitler tarafından değil, problemin paydaşlarından gelen şikayetlerin, eleştirilerin ve önerilerin dikkate alınması ile oluşturulur.

Japonya gibi demokratik  lkelerde, Bottom-up yaklaşımının yaygınlaştırılması ve demokrasinin daha sağlam temeller  zerine kurulması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Japonya, Bottom-up, STK, M lteci, Savunmacılık



ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Advisory Council
AJALT	Association for Japanese-Language Teaching
AJF	Africa Japan Forum
AKP	Justice and Development Party
ARC	Arupe Refugee Center
CCRMW	Christian Coalition for Refugee and Migrant Workers
CHP	Republican People's Party
CTIC	Catholic Tokyo International Center
DAN	Door to Asylum Nagoya
ECOSOC	The Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
ICRRL	Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISA	Immigration Services Agency
ISSJ	International Social Service Japan
JANIC	Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation
JAR	Japan Association for Refugees
JCaRM	Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move
JELA	Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association
JLNR	Japan Lawyers Network for Refugees
JPF	Japan Platform
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LIP	Living in Peace
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MIC	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication of Japan
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NGO	Non Governmental Organization

OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PJ	Pathways Japan
RCJ	Refugee Council Japan
REN	Refugees Empowerment Network
RRCJ	Rainbow Refugee Connection Japan
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPF	The Sasakawa Peace Foundation
SSW	Specified Skilled Worker
TITP	Technical Intern Training Program
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WELgee	WELCOME+refugee
WFP	World Food Program
WJP	World Justice Project
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Asylum Seekers and Recognized Refugees in Japan	43
Figure 2.2: WJP Rule of Law Index 2023: Overall Score	44
Figure 2.3: Japan’s contribution to UNHCR recently.....	50
Figure 2.4: Supporter based donation info.....	50
Figure 3.1: Facility-focused high-refugees-concentration provinces.....	55
Figure 3.2: Japan’s Refugee Application and Acceptance Graph.....	57
Figure 4.1: 2016 and 2021 Interest Rate to SDG from NGO.....	63



LIST OF TABLES

Tablo 3.2: PullandPush Factors in The 21st Century.....	54
---	----



1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study highlights the significance of involving the public and their representatives in policy formulation, advocating for a participatory bottom-up approach rather than reliance solely on an elite team. It examines the efficacy of this method through the lens of Japan's refugee policy. The study delineates the significance of the bottom-up approach by first detailing the problem's background within the country's political framework, then describing the issue itself, the measures implemented using the bottom-up approach to address the problem, and finally, how the problem was resolved.

According to IOM's latest data, there are 281 million immigrants worldwide. This corresponds to 3.6% of the world's population. Considering that there is an increase of approximately 3.5% in one year, it is certain that the number of immigrants in the world will increase every year in the coming year (IOM, 2023). Among this figure, there are 110 million refugees and asylum seekers, and approximately 50 million of them are outside the borders of their own country (UNHCR, 2023). Considering both immigration and asylum, it is not foreseen that the world will be able to reduce the above data in the near future (Nakamura, 2022). Global warming and uncontrolled use of resources are also among the factors that drive people from the lands they live in. According to the World Bank's estimates, another 143 million people will be displaced in Africa, Asia and South America in 2050 due to global warming and famine. Although some of these people will go to neighboring countries, a significant portion will travel to Europe, America, Canada and other developed countries (Reuters, 2023). Developing technology and the widespread use of transportation in an environment of globalization have brought distances closer and increased mobilization. Refugees who emerge due to wars and turmoil in different geographies of Asia and Africa can also seek refuge in a country on the other side of the world like Canada, Japan, Australia, etc.

The issue of refugee is especially sensitive. Because human rights and refugee rights should be considered (Freier and Gauci, 2020). Industrialized nations often propose that they can more effectively fulfill their role in the refugee protection regime by providing financial support to developing countries, rather than serving as host

countries for potential long-term migrants (Dean and Nagashima, 2007). But, member states must adhere to the refugee convention, conduct an objective application screening, and protect people who meet the necessary conditions as refugees. This situation requires the country to think about the issue multi-dimensionally. The challenge of managing refugee policy is not one that the state can tackle alone; it necessitates the input of all stakeholders, particularly public and its representatives; non-governmental organizations. State policymakers can more effectively handle this delicate matter with the support of non-governmental organizations that convey the concerns and voices from the ground (Thouez, 2014).

Japan's current situation is characterized by an administration endeavoring to maintain the country's ethnic homogeneity, while on the other hand, it hosts individuals seeking refuge from persecution in their homeland and searching for a new beginning. One of the senior officials of the ISA (Immigration Services Agency) remarked that *“the mission of the ISA is to promote the acceptance of foreign nationals who are beneficial to Japan’s national interest, and prevent/deport those whose presence is detrimental to the national interest of Japan”*. The question then arises: how can these two sides find common ground?

Japan has made some minor improvements in its refugee policy over the past 15 years. While these improvements might seem minor to countries grappling with substantial refugee influxes, they represent significant strides in humanitarian terms, particularly for those seeking asylum in Japan. The support, assistance, and resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees in Japan are primarily conducted by NGOs (MOFA, 2024). Initially established to aid Indo-Chinese refugees, the 1980s saw the emergence of new organizations dedicated to helping asylum seekers and refugees. Leading these is the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR), which collaborates with other NGOs and UNHCR Japan, and the Japan Lawyers’ Network for Refugees (JLNR), comprising lawyers who frequently offer pro bono services. In 2004, the Refugee Council Japan (RCJ) was established as an umbrella organization for eight NGOs involved in refugee assistance (Dean and Nagashima, 2007).

This study aims to highlight the significant role that civil initiatives play in rectifying a country's flawed policy; it underscores the value of a bottom-up approach. As for the

importance of the public and NGOs in policy making, JD Kertzer and T Zeitzoff came to the following findings in their research titled “A Bottom-up Theory of Public Opinion About Foreign Policy”:

“If public opinion about foreign policy is such an elite-driven process, why does the public often disagree with what elites have to say? We argue here that elite cue-taking models in International Relations are both overly pessimistic and unnecessarily restrictive. Members of the public may lack information about the world around them, but they do not lack principles, and information need not only cascade from the top down. We present the results from five survey experiments where we show that cues from social peers are at least as strong as those from political elites. Our theory and results build on a growing number of findings that individuals are embedded in a social context that combines with their general orientations toward foreign policy in shaping responses toward the world around them. Thus, we suggest the public is perhaps better equipped for espousing judgments in foreign affairs than many of our top-down models claim”(Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017, Introduction Section).

This study argues how practical bottom-up activities, through the contribution of civil initiatives and NGOs within the country, have been in some of the improvements Japan has made in its refugee policy in the last 15 years. The most significant and affected stakeholders in the decisions of the country's elites are undoubtedly the public (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017). Politicians may want public to welcome a situation in a country, but that situation sometimes differs from what is conveyed. This can be seen in the US for Israel’s invasion of Gaza. For this reason, it is indispensable within the framework of the theory of equality to include people from among the public who can question the truth and are experts in their fields, like a Japanese lawyer who sees what kind of trouble an Afghan in Japan was going through and helped him through the application process. Information about the content of the thesis is provided on the following sections.

1.1. Research Aim and Objective

Japan's refugee policy was selected for examination because, despite being one of the wealthiest and most globally integrated countries with a significantly aging population, it maintained one of the strictest refugee policies. Previously adhering to a closed-door approach, Japan has shown recent interest in liberalizing its stance. Upon investigation,

it becomes evident that public opinion, media influence, and particularly non-governmental organizations play a crucial role. The author's research, which focuses on the experiences of Kurdish refugees in Japan, reveals that non-governmental organizations have been instrumental in shaping the changes in Japan's refugee policy. Japan took an important step in accepting refugees with the resettlement program launched in 2010. This step is a small undertaking compared to other countries that face the flow of tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of refugees. Still, it is an important step when considered from the perspective of refugees and humanity in the country. Japan's SSW and TITP programs also reveal a very important change in Japan: like other developed countries, Japan is also experiencing cultural and ethnic globalization. What will be the future policies of Japan, which is trying to overcome its aging population and shrinking workforce with ad hoc measures? Will she say yes to more foreigners or take other measures? Whatever happens, there are some facts. A state can no longer be an isolated state in a globalizing world.

As a kind of qualitative research method, case study method has been used in this study. Choosing Japan is a kind of case study. Personal interviews and literature reviews has also been done. Moreover, the process-tracing method followed the improvement process of the policy, and qualitative textual analysis and interviews have also been used. Interviews were held with NGO leaders operating for refugees and with refugees who received support from the local people in Japan during the process. The author's own experiences in Japan have also been used. In addition, articles from previous researchers who defended the author's thesis on the impact and importance of bottom-up activities were also used, and references were made.

This study also seeks to achieve several key objectives:

- To clarify the meaning of 'refugee' in Japan's context by providing accurate definitions of 'immigrant,' 'asylum seeker,' and 'refugee',
- To remind nation of their obligations under the framework of refugee rights,
- To acknowledge that the homogeneous ethnic structure is gradually diminishing in the era of globalization,
- To investigate how Japan, known for its stringent refugee policies, has softened these policies due to civil society's influence (bottom-up),

- To highlight the significance in a democracy of acknowledging that policymakers and the public may hold differing views and that policies are subject to critique by non-governmental organizations.

1.2. Research Question

The research question is: What is the significance of the bottom-up approach in policy-making? In this context, the bottom-up approach means that individuals from the public, non-governmental organizations including human rights advocates and business representatives, as well as local governments, collaborate with state mechanisms in formulating policies, resulting in the state crafting an optimal policy for all stakeholders.

In an increasingly interconnected world, in a nation like Japan that is keen on preserving its ethnic and cultural fabric and thus implements a stringent immigration and refugee policy, what are the public sentiments about this? How did the public's views influence the policy updates?' This question was thoroughly explored to understand the impact of grassroots (bottom-up) initiatives.

1.3. Hypothesis of the study

Japan's refugee policy has been notably strict, facing criticism from both international and domestic fronts. Following these critiques, the Japanese government relaxed certain aspects of its refugee policy. This study suggests that the efforts of individuals and non-governmental organizations played a significant role in this policy shift. Their involvement not only influenced the government's decision to soften its stringent measures but also aided in enhancing the policy for all involved parties. In summary, a nation's rigid and detrimental policies can evolve into beneficial ones when citizens actively engage and contribute to the policymaking process. The impact of collective and individual actions by the public and NGOs on overarching policies underscores the value of a bottom-up approach.

1.4. Methodology

This study employs case study method as a qualitative research method. It examines the contributions of Japanese NGOs to refugee policy through case study and analyzes the conditions of refugees and the NGO representatives assisting them using

phenomenology. The desk research incorporates secondary data sources alongside qualitative approaches. A mixed methods framework is adopted, applying distinct disciplines throughout various research phases. The objective is to uncover the influence of bottom-up activities on policy development, with Japan serving as a case study to explore the effects on stakeholders and their reciprocal influence on the policy-making process.

1.4.1. Process-Tracing as a Qualitative Research Method

Process tracing is a case study method commonly used in social sciences, particularly in fields like political science, sociology, and psychology. It's employed to understand causal mechanisms by examining how events unfold over time (Wikipedia, 2024).

Process tracing is a detailed case study methodology employed in the social sciences to identify and follow causal mechanisms within a specific case. It is utilized to construct and evaluate theories that connect causes and outcomes within a defined group of causally similar cases. This can be done alone, in conjunction with comparative methods, or pragmatically, to deepen understanding of the causal dynamics behind a particular historical outcome. The advantage of process tracing lies in the acquisition of in-depth knowledge via the gathering of mechanistic evidence within cases, shedding light on how causal processes operate in actual scenarios (Collier, 2011). However, process tracing is limited to inferences within individual cases, necessitating the use of comparative methods for broader applicability to similar cases. Such comparisons allow for generalizations, positing that if other cases are causally akin to the one studied, similar mechanisms should be at work. There are three main parts to process tracing: theorizing about how causes work, collecting and analyzing evidence of these mechanisms, and using comparative methods to apply what one learns from one case to others with similar causes (Beach and Pedersen, 2013). In 'theory-testing process tracing,' the goal is to test existing theories and the causal mechanisms assumed therein. Process-tracing emphasizes the temporal sequence of events, and requires fine-grained case knowledge (Beach, 2017). In brief, Process-tracing is a method used to identify causal mechanisms through detailed empirical analysis within a specific case. It is applicable to case studies aimed at understanding the causal dynamics behind the outcomes of historical events, as well

as illuminating generalizable causal mechanisms that link causes and outcomes across a group of similar cases.

This study presented the Japanese refugee policy case as an example, detailing with concrete data and instances the dynamics that influenced the policy's evolution. Subsequently, the group examining cause-effect relationships was introduced, contextualized by the present political climate. The analysis disclosed the impact of NGOs and other non-governmental organizations throughout the policy's development process.

1.4.2. Case Selection

The case study method allows in depth examination of certain cases, policies and practices. NGOs in Japan did not remain silent, especially in the last 15 years, against to the problems experienced by individuals who took refuge in the country. So, the importance of bottom-up activities from NGOs have been emphasized in this study.

Bottom-up activities are important in terms of the coming of the voice of the people. The decisions taken by the elites who rule the country can sometimes put the people and the guests in the country in a difficult situation. If the people assume only the role of the listeners in all decisions, the policies of the country cannot go beyond targets. Kertzer and Zeitzoff talk about the importance of the bottom-up approach as follows: *“If public opinion about foreign policy is such an elite-driven process, why does the public often disagree with what elites have to say? We have argued here that elite cue-taking models in International Relations are both overly pessimistic and unnecessarily restrictive. Members of the public may lack information about the world around them, but they do not lack principles, and information need not only cascade from the top down. We present the results from five survey experiments where we show that cues from social peers are at least as strong as those from political elites. Our theory and results build on a growing number of findings that individuals are embedded in a social context that combines with their general orientations toward foreign policy in shaping responses toward the world around them. Thus, we suggest the public is perhaps better equipped for espousing judgments in foreign affairs than many of our top-down models claim”* (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017).

Japan is a country where NGO activities are active. There are thousands of NGOs operating in the country and outside the country. The number of NGOs that cooperate

only with other organizations abroad is more than 400 (MOFA, 2021). As Kremels (2014) stated, Migrant advocacy groups raised awareness among the international community, successfully influencing the perspectives of various political entities and interest groups, ultimately swaying the balance in the policy-making process. The reason why NGOs in Japan are cited as an example in this research is that these NGOs have led very good aid activities not only in their own countries, but also all over the world, especially in developing countries. Detailed information about Japan's NGOs is given in the following sections.

1.4.3. Data Collection

This study scrutinized a broad array of data sources, interviews, encompassing official government reports, statistics, scientific articles, books, print materials, academic dissertations, conference proceedings, and the official websites of governmental bodies. It also incorporated data from various non-governmental and international organizations. The data collection process was meticulous in evaluating the reliability and quality of these sources. Factors such as the authors' credibility and expertise, the relevance of the sources to the research questions, the currency and pertinence of the information, and the integrity of the data collection methods were all carefully considered. The data collection process began with a comprehensive literature review on the evolution of Japan's refugee policy. Afterwards, information about Japan's NGOs was collected and the background of the study was created. Finally, the thesis was put forward that Bottom-up activities could contribute to changes even in Japan's refugee admission policy, which is the strictest.

The word bottom-up is a word that can be heard frequently in Japanese companies. It is known that the first origin of this word in the private sector was Honda. At Honda's facility in Japan, employees and management at all levels come together periodically and hold an event open to everyone. The biggest feature of this event is that the bottom line employees (for example, a machine operator) usually do the speech. In this event, employees voice the problems they think can be improved in the field. Not only problems but also good developments are mentioned. The purpose of this activity is to identify some issues that the management team, or in today's words white collar employees, may overlook, by those working in the field, and to enable the management

to hear the real voice of the field. In the context of state affairs, white-collar workers or management could be likened to state officials who administer the country. The blue-collar workers represent the public, who are the most impacted by the government's decisions and are the primary stakeholders. A country cannot claim to be a true democracy if the voices of its people are silenced in matters concerning the nation. Often, the public can drive progress by highlighting issues that state officials might overlook or choose to ignore. A similar situation occurred in the refugee acceptance case in Japan. Some members of the public could not remain silent and spoke out against the individuals suffering from irresponsibility within the country. Kurdish refugees and Afghan refugees are examples of these. In the following sections, the study was supported with cases suitable for each method and the theory and the aims of the thesis.

1.5. Synopsis of the Study

This study begins by providing precise definitions of terms related to the subject matter, as it focuses on refugee policy. It clarifies the terms 'immigrant,' 'asylum seeker,' and 'refugee' to prevent confusion between 'refugee' and 'irregular immigrant.' Subsequently, it outlines the history and legislation of refugees in Japan. The latter sections of the study examine the significant role of non-governmental organizations in effecting certain improvements within Japan's flawed refugee policy.

The study is structured into four principal chapters. The Introduction chapter provides information on the thesis's purpose, significance, and methodology. The Theoretical Framework chapter elaborates on the Bottom-up approach and associated concepts. The Historical and Conceptual Background chapter examines the evolution of Japan's refugee policy and its stance towards refugees, which are central to the study. The chapter on the Bottom-Up Approach in Japan and Its Impact on Refugee Policy addresses the study's main question: "How does the Bottom-up approach positively affect Japan's refugee policy?" The study concludes with the final chapter, Conclusion.

1.6. Contribution of The Study to The Academic Literature

The contribution of the study is twofold, encompassing both content and literature. The study's content is crucial for several reasons: 1) It addresses a timely issue: Refugee policy is a pressing concern for many nations. It's a delicate matter, involving

on one side individuals who have been forcibly displaced, seeking protection under universal laws, and on the other, a state grappling with the arrival of these unexpected guests. The study explores how these two parties can find common ground. 2) The interviewees are directly engaged with the refugee issue, lending authenticity to the research. 3) The study highlights the importance of a bottom-up approach in policy-making, a topic that should be understood by not only policymakers but also every citizen. This study's academic contribution can be summarized as follows: 1) It illustrates how Japan's state channels garner support from the public and NGOs in a nation struggling with policy improvement. Researchers can use this case to explore how a bottom-up approach contributes to "collective work/cooperation" in their own countries, applicable to refugee and other policy areas. 2) The question of resettlement, a common challenge for countries grappling with refugees, is addressed using Japan as a model. 3) The study demonstrates that the bottom-up approach, with public and representative engagement in policymaking, is transferable to various other domains.

Even as an island nation, Japan faces challenges in managing refugee applications. In formulating its refugee policy, Japan aims to safeguard national interests, yet the approach can sometimes be overly stringent. The country may soften its strict policies due to both internal and external pressures. These pressures are pivotal in the incremental easing of Japan's stringent refugee policies. While external pressure plays a role in policy modification, this study highlights the significance of domestic pressure. In Japan, non-governmental organizations and certain societal groups have played a crucial role in advocating for more lenient treatment of refugees. The research examines how societal advocacy and its outputs, explained as bottom-up approach in this study, influence national decisions. Such bottom-up initiatives are vital globally, but they are particularly impactful in Japan, where they have led to significant outcomes.

2. CHAPTER II: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter analyzes the bottom-up approach, focusing on its contribution and significance in policy-making, which is the central aim of the study. The bottom-up approach is a strategy employed in problem-solving where individuals or groups initiate the solution process independently, working towards a result that serves as a comprehensive solution (Team, 2021).

2.1. Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making

“....Yet if the mass public knows so little and can only regurgitate carefully pureed talking points, why does it often disagree with what elites have to say?” (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017)

Bottom-up activities in policy-making is the involvement of local residents and all stakeholders during the creation of policies. This approach ensures that the public's information and needs are considered, leading to more optimal decisions. Without this inclusion, there's a risk of encountering grievances from stakeholders who were excluded from the policy-making process (Moy and Rinke, 2012).

Analyzing the bottom-up approach logically, it can be divided into two parts: micro and meso. The micro-level refers to the initiation of activities by individuals, while meso-level represents the organizational or institutional level that unites these individuals. The bottom-up approach starts at the grassroots level and ascends to the outcome. Thus, after surpassing the micro and meso levels, the bottom-up approach culminates at the macro, or national, level (Sobel, 2022).

2.2. The Importance of Bottom-up Approach in Policy-making

Kertzer and Zeitzoff's 2017 study, "A Bottom-Up Theory of Public Opinion about Foreign Policy," is a significant work that highlights the importance of the bottom-up approach. In their research, Kertzer and Zeitzoff surveyed attitudes towards international relations, considering participants' political affiliations, whether Democrat or Republican, their party membership, and their views on the country's leadership. They also examined if individuals were influenced by knowing the majority opinion within their group. The study concluded that individuals and the

public are more influenced by the majority opinion within their own group than by leaders' statements. Moreover, when not prompted about others' opinions, people made decisions based on their own values. This indicates that people prioritize the majority view of their affiliated group and their own values over the pronouncements of elite politicians. Public inquiries have grown in prevalence recently, with numerous survey companies emerging. Public opinion polls become a critical agenda item before elections. Politicians, despite having their strategies, recognize that disregarding public sentiment would be an erroneous move. It has been highlighted that the opposition party CHP garnering more votes than the ruling party AKP in Turkey's recent elections signals the AKP's inability to gauge public sentiment (Çakır, 2024). Governments that ignore the populace's opinions are bound to face consequences over time.

When the ruling elites of a country prioritize the interests of a select group or party in policy-making, disregarding the majority's needs, it can lead to an authoritarian and oligarchic regime, deviating from democratic principles. In a democracy, the expectation is that the government will act in the interest of the populace that elected them. For instance, public sentiment in several nations involved in the Afghanistan conflict was against deploying troops. Similarly, following the Iraq War, a notable portion of the American public believed that the invasion of Iraq was a mistake. Hence, in democratic systems, incorporating the public's voice into policy-making, which includes heeding the advice of experts and elected representatives from the populace, is crucial (Holsti, 2004)

2.3. Meso-level Bottom-up (Level of NGOs and Other Civil Society Organizations)

The term "meso" originates from the Greek word "mesos," which translates to "middle" or "intermediate." This term is applied to a level of analysis that is situated between the micro level, which pertains to individuals, and the macro level, which encompasses systemic or aggregate aspects. The meso level is concerned with structures, processes, and entities that function at an intermediate scale, including organizations, communities, networks, and institutions (Faist, 2021).

As indicated, the examination of bottom-up activities at the meso-level is more significant than at the micro-level, which reduces to individual initiatives. This is

because, as Kertzer and Zeitzoff have determined in their research, it is the meso-level activities that warrant investigation. Meso-level entities, such as formations and organizations, serve as intermediaries between individuals and national politics. These entities can trigger a domino effect, influencing others at the same level. For instance, organizations within the same sector exemplify this dynamic. In the education sector, some non-governmental organizations may support traditional approaches, while others promote innovation. The input from this level enables the government to better understand and connect with society's grassroots. This is in line with Kertzer and Zeitzoff's research, which indicates that citizens are more attuned to trends among their peers and internal news, rather than top-down partisan narratives. Considering meso-level activities offers several benefits: Holistic Understanding: It bridges the gap between micro and macro perspectives, providing a more comprehensive view; Policy and Strategy: It aids in crafting policies and strategies that reflect the actual workings of organizations and communities; Advanced Analysis: It allows for an in-depth examination of the interactions and dynamics across various societal levels. Exploring the social dynamics within communities and their impact on individual behaviors and societal trends yields insights into the broader societal patterns. Additionally, it uncovers the interplay between information, news, and social networks (Boudreau and MacKenzie, 2018), (Klar, 2014).

Mercer classifies the contributions of NGOs, a meso-level structure, to democracy into three main categories: 1. NGOs are believed to pluralize and thus fortify the institutional landscape. An increase in civic actors leads to more opportunities for a broader spectrum of interest groups to be heard, more independent organizations to serve as watchdogs against the state, and more chances for networking and forming alliances among civic actors to exert pressure on the state. 2. NGOs are recognized for their collaboration with grassroots organizations, often consisting of impoverished and marginalized communities. They expand (both socially and geographically) and deepen (in terms of individual and organizational capacity) the avenues for citizen engagement. Concurrently, NGOs advocate for the interests of marginalized groups in the broader public sphere, campaign on their behalf, and strive to shape public policy. 3. NGOs are acknowledged for checking state power by contesting its independence

at national and local levels, advocating for reform, and fostering an alternative array of perspectives and policies (Mercer, 2002).

The following chapter, within this theoretical framework, examines the role of non-governmental organizations and other civil initiatives in Japan in influencing the country's acceptance of immigrants and refugees. It explores how civil society's voice impacts the nation's policies, particularly in Japan, known for having the world's strictest policy on foreign admissions.

2.4. Bottom-up Approach As a Level of Local Governance

In this study, local governments are included within the scope of bottom-up approach as well. While this study primarily focuses on civil initiatives such as NGOs and NPOs, local governments have also been evaluated. Despite not being as autonomous as NGOs, local governments can still set precedents for state initiatives, leading to beneficial changes in state policies. This was evident in Türkiye's recent elections, where the opposition party's municipal victories inspired some of the government's promised improvements in the subsequent period through their exemplary practices. Local autonomy refers to the ability of local governments to provide policies and services that meet the needs of the region, and is a system in which local residents actively participate in the management of their own local community. Hence, local governance that heeds the concerns of its citizens is crucial for the equitable and just allocation of municipal resources, the appropriate utilization of these resources, and the creation of a cohesive community. Below is the explanation of its importance in detail from several perspectives based on MIC (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication of Japan):

1. Implementing policies that meet local needs: Local autonomy can implement policies that meet the characteristics and needs of the region. Each region has different challenges and requests. If local governments directly respond to these issues, more effective and rapid solutions can be achieved. Example: Policies that are appropriate for the different natural environments and economic situations in each region are necessary, such as measures to deal with cold weather in Hokkaido and measures to deal with typhoons in Okinawa.
2. Strengthening resident participation and democracy: Local autonomy promotes residents' political participation and strengthens the practice of democracy. Through

local elections and referendums, residents can reflect their will and are directly involved in the management of their local community. Example: Resident participation makes it easier to realize policies that residents actually need, such as the development of local parks and improvements to the educational environment.

3. Revitalization of the local economy: Local governments are responsible for formulating and implementing policies to support the development of the local economy. Economic revitalization is carried out by utilizing resources unique to the region, such as supporting local businesses and promoting tourism. Example: Initiatives such as the Regional Revitalization Project and the Regional Revitalization Cooperation Team contribute to the revitalization of the local economy.

4. Improvement of public services: Local governments improve the quality of public services by providing services that are close to residents. Services that directly improve the quality of life, such as local health and welfare, education, and infrastructure development, will be enhanced. Example: Services that are close to the lives of local residents, such as improving local medical care and developing childcare support facilities, will be provided.

5. Crisis management and rapid response: Local governments are required to respond quickly and appropriately to disasters and emergency situations. Because they are familiar with the local situation, they can make quick decisions and respond quickly. Example: In the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons, local governments will take the lead in issuing evacuation orders and carrying out rescue operations quickly.

As a conclusion, the importance of local autonomy is wide-ranging, including policy implementation in line with local needs, strengthening democracy through resident participation, revitalizing the local economy, improving public services, and responding quickly to crisis management. Strengthening local autonomy is an essential element for the development of local communities and improving the lives of residents.

2.5. Terminology

In order to ensure the correct flow of the research, it is necessary first to understand the terminology well. Since the subject of the study is the impact of civil initiatives on refugee policy, it is necessary to know the word refugee correctly. Because the word

refugee tends to be used randomly in daily life (Nakamura, 2022). The same situation exists in other countries. For example, in Turkey, if the public were randomly asked, "Who is a refugee?" the probability of getting a correct answer would be pretty low. The words immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker can be misused interchangeably; however, each has different definitions and statuses internationally. First of all, the author provides the correct meanings of these words.

2.5.1. Migration and Immigrant

Migration involves the alteration of a person's physical and social surroundings and the spatial relationship they establish with these environments (Bozkurt, 1996). An individual forms a bond with the land of their birth and upbringing, which strengthens with age. They develop social and cultural connections within this land and are reluctant to leave unless compelled by circumstances. Migration can be categorized by cause, duration, and distance, but at its core, it is forced or voluntary (Yilmaz, 2014). Voluntary migration occurs when an individual chooses to move without any external compulsion (Karşlı, 2023) possibly in pursuit of better living conditions if they feel their goals cannot be met in their homeland. On the other hand, forced migration occurs when a person is compelled to move due to uncontrollable factors. Such individuals prioritize finding shelter as events leading to forced migration are often sudden and acute. Depending on the cause, migration can be internal or cross-border. Those displaced by natural disasters like floods, fires, and earthquakes typically remain within their country initially, as their lives are not being actively threatened. Conversely, those fleeing from oppression, war, or other life-threatening situations in their home country often seek refuge abroad. These migrants are particularly vulnerable, forced to leave abruptly due to an urgent event (Stromberg, 2020). Migrants usually move not due to a direct threat of persecution or death but to enhance their lives by finding work, pursuing education, reuniting with family, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants do not face such impediments. Should they decide to return, they will continue enjoying their government's protection (UNHCR, 2023). This distinction is crucial for individual governments. Nations manage immigrants according to their immigration laws and procedures, while they handle refugees by national and international regulations on

refugee protection and asylum. Nations are obligated to protect anyone seeking asylum within their borders.

2.5.2. Asylum Seeker and Refugee

To explain the difference between asylum seekers and refugees, it is necessary to understand the definition of refugee first. According to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention), adopted by the United Nations in 1951, a refugee is a person who lives outside the country of his nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or because of his political opinion and who cannot benefit from the protection of his country of origin or does not want to benefit from the protection of his country of origin due to this fear. In 1967, the Protocol Relating to the Legal Status of Refugees (Refugee Protocol) came into force. The Refugee Convention was limited in duration and applied only to refugees arising from events before 1 January 1951. The Refugee Protocol made the Refugee Convention applicable to refugees who have emerged since that date (Nakamura, 2022). The main difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee lies in their legal status and stage of the asylum process. The differences between an asylum seeker and a refugee due to their legal status are as follows:

2.5.3. Asylum Seeker:

- An asylum seeker is an individual who has fled their native country and seeks sanctuary in a different nation.
- They have submitted an application for asylum in the country they have escaped, but their claim has not been thoroughly evaluated or accepted.
- Asylum seekers are awaiting the determination of their refugee status by the government or appropriate authorities of the host country.
- During the processing of their asylum applications, they may experience restricted rights and limited access to services compared to those afforded to recognized refugees.

2.5.4. Refugee:

- A refugee has been officially acknowledged as having escaped their home country due to persecution, conflict, or violence and has been granted asylum in a new country.
- Their asylum claims have been reviewed and sanctioned, and they are legally acknowledged as possessing a legitimate fear of persecution in their homeland.
- Recognized refugees are granted specific rights and protections under international law, such as the right to employment, education, and healthcare in the country of asylum.
- Depending on the laws and policies of the host country, refugees might also eventually be eligible to apply for permanent residency or citizenship.

To summarize, an asylum seeker is an individual seeking protection whose claim has not yet received approval. In contrast, a refugee has been formally recognized as facing a credible threat of persecution and has been granted asylum in another nation (Asylumseekerscentre, 2023). The "well-founded fear" aspect is crucial in defining a refugee. An individual must have fled their country for fear of being granted refugee status. Naturally, if the individual has engaged in illegal activities or committed severe crimes in their home country, they will not be eligible for refugee status and will likely be deported. However, one should not automatically be labeled as an "irregular migrant" or "illegal immigrant" based on their mode of entry. Asylum seekers deserve to have their cases heard to determine whether they qualify as immigrants or refugees. This is among the critical requirements that the UNHCR asks its member states.

2.5.5. Well-Founded Fear of Persecution

The concept of 'well-founded fear' is central to the definition of a refugee. Nakamura's (Nakamura, 2022) study highlights that the key criterion for an individual to be recognized as a refugee is fleeing their country due to a well-founded fear. Determining if an individual is eligible for refugee status depends on evaluating the risk they face of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or belonging to a certain social group (Adrienne Anderson, 2006). Demonstrating this fear is one of the most challenging aspects for an asylum seeker, as countries rigorously scrutinize whether this criterion is fulfilled to avoid confronting the reality of refugees and shirking various obligations. The "Handbook And Guidelines On

Procedures And Criteria For Determining Refugee Status" by UNHCR includes the definition of a refugee as per the Refugee Convention. However, it notes that a specific procedure for the recognition and acceptance of refugees has not been established, emphasizing that each country should develop a procedure that aligns with its unique institutional and administrative framework (UNHCR, Handbook And Guidelines On Procedures And Criteria For Determining Refugee Status, 2023). Upon reviewing the UNHCR's guide, determining whether an individual's fear is justified can be challenging due to its multifaceted nature. Hence, it is crucial for professionals to attentively listen to refugee applicants. Equally significant is ensuring that any aid given to an individual truly reaches the intended recipient. Individuals who emigrate exclusively for economic reasons should not be entitled to the protections afforded to refugees (Adrienne Anderson, 2006).

The term "well-founded fear" has both subjective and objective elements:

Subjective Element: 1. Personal Experience: The individual's personal and genuine fear of persecution must be established. This includes their personal circumstances, experiences, and the reasons for their fear. 2. Credibility: The asylum seeker's account must be credible and consistent. This involves assessing the believability of their statements and the coherence of their story.

Objective Element: 1. Evidence of Risk: There must be objective evidence to support the individual's fear of persecution. This can include country conditions, human rights reports, and other relevant information indicating a risk of persecution in their home country. 2. Reasonableness: The fear must be reasonable, meaning that there is a real possibility or serious risk of persecution if the person were to return to their home country. 3. Persecution Criteria: The fear must relate to persecution based on one or more of the following grounds: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, political opinion.

Legal interpretation: 1. Assessment: Decision-makers (e.g., immigration officials, judges) assess both the subjective and objective elements to determine if the fear is well-founded. 2. Documentation: The applicant may need to provide supporting documentation, such as personal testimonies, affidavits, and reports on the conditions in their home country. 3. Case-by-Case Basis: Each application is assessed

individually, considering the unique circumstances of the applicant and the current conditions in their country of origin.

In summary, "well-founded fear" means that the person has a genuine, credible fear of persecution, and there is sufficient evidence or reason to believe that their fear is justified based on the situation in their home country. This concept is crucial for determining refugee status and ensuring protection for those who truly need it (UNHCR, Handbook And Guidelines On Procedures And Criteria For Determining Refugee Status, 2023).

2.5.6. The Risks of Misusing The Terms Refugee and Irregular Immigrant

One of the most dangerous situations for refugees today is that they are confused with irregular immigrants. Refugees may have come to hosting countries of refuge illegally. However, that does not mean they do not need protection (UNHCR, Handbook And Guidelines On Procedures And Criteria For Determining Refugee Status, 2023). Unfortunately, unrest, economic deterioration, famine, and similar phenomena experienced in different world geographies have increased migration from poor to rich countries. When people enter these countries where they seek prosperity, they enter illegally or legally. However, entering through legal means can often be impossible or difficult. For this reason, people may even fall into the hands of human traffickers (Wolman, 2015). UNHCR carries out various activities to distinguish refugees from illegal immigrants. One is to provide information and remind people of refugee law in meetings. Genuine refugees must be managed in the hosting countries to distinguish them from illegal immigrants. This first requires proper border control (Junichi, 2021). Conflating refugees with migrants is not only perilous but also legally incorrect. The right to seek and enjoy asylum is solidly established in international human rights law, notably Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unlike migration, it does not have a similar international legal foundation. Refugees, lacking their government's protection, are accorded an internationally supported protection regime bolstered by constitutional, legislative, and "soft law" provisions to ensure they are treated appropriately. Furthermore, refugees have access to the services of the United Nations agency UNHCR, which was specifically established to provide protection and

assistance. Thus, refugees possess a unique legal status internationally acknowledged by at least the 145 States parties to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol.

The incorrect use of "immigrant" and "refugee" can lead to several adverse outcomes. Recognizing that immigrants and refugees have different legal statuses and rights is vital. Misusing these terms can result in a profound misunderstanding of the legal rights and protections afforded to individuals. For example, refugees are entitled to certain rights under international law, such as not being deported to their home countries, which may not extend to immigrants. This highlights the potential damage caused by misusing the terms 'immigrant' and 'refugee.'

Stigmatization and Discrimination: The misuse of these terms can reinforce stereotypes and stigmatize immigrants and refugees. It can foster negative perceptions and discrimination against these groups, leading to their social exclusion, marginalization, and even aggression.

It is essential to acknowledge that refugees are people who escape their home countries due to persecution, conflict, or violence and desperately need protection and aid. Misapplying the term 'refugee' to other migrants can weaken the sense of urgency to meet the specific humanitarian needs of refugees. This can result in insufficient support and protection for those in need, highlighting the severe consequences of misusing the term 'refugee' (UNHCR, 2023).

Policy Implications: Public understanding and perceptions of these terms often influence immigration policies and refugee protection measures. Misusing these terms can skew public debate and policy discussions, leading to policies that do not adequately meet the intricate needs of both immigrants and refugees.

Inaccuracy in Data and Reporting: Inaccurate use of these terms can cause errors in data gathering, reporting, and analysis concerning migration and refugee movements. This can obstruct efforts to comprehend and tackle the underlying causes of migration and displacement and to formulate effective policies and measures (UNIC, 2016).

In summary, it is imperative to use these terms correctly to avoid these negative consequences.

2.6. Rights of Refugees

2.6.1. International Refugee Law and UNHCR:

It was only in 1951, and subsequently with the expansion of the refugee definition in 1967 that the international community established a system for the global protection of refugees. The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is the cornerstone of refugee legal protections. It offers a precise definition of a refugee, ensures the right to seek asylum, and upholds the principle of non-refoulement, preventing forced return to a country where one may face persecution. Nonetheless, international refugee law does not function in a vacuum. It is most effectively interpreted alongside international human rights law, beginning with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war.

The UN General Assembly has tasked the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with providing international protection to refugees and finding lasting solutions to their situations (PHAP, 2022). New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016 by all 193 United Nations member states. The New York Declaration underscores the necessity for all societal sectors to engage in the protection of refugees. Parliamentarians play a pivotal role in this endeavor by ensuring the sustained efficacy of the international refugee protection regime and by establishing and upholding state asylum systems that adhere to protection principles and effectively address current challenges.

In 2017, UNHCR has published a handbook to ensure international common management of asylum seekers and refugees. The Handbook for Parliamentarians No. 27, titled "A Guide to International Refugee Protection and Building State Asylum Systems," is a joint publication by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It tackles modern challenges and delineates the international legal standards and responsibilities concerning refugees and others requiring international protection, aiming to be accessible and comprehensive. The Handbook emphasizes the development and upkeep of asylum systems, detailing the necessary components for protection-sensitive entry systems that manage mixed movements of people. It ensures equitable and effective asylum

procedures, upholds the rights and dignity of refugees, and caters to varied protection needs. Additionally, it proposes strategies to foster increased tolerance and respect for refugees and asylum-seekers, alongside supporting lasting solutions for those needing international protection. The Handbook also delineates the international legal framework foundational to refugee protection, which it consistently references. It elucidates the benefits for States in joining international treaties pertinent to refugee protection, especially the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It details the core components of a refugee protection system, ranging from entry and reception to status determination, the rights and responsibilities of refugees, and lasting solutions. Additionally, the Handbook aims to clarify complex issues like border management, racism, xenophobia, the repatriation of individuals not requiring international protection and modern security concerns (UNHCR, 2023).

The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol were established to ensure that refugees could exercise their rights as broadly as possible. To address regional particularities, various states around the globe have formulated regional laws and standards that enhance the international regime for refugee protection. For example Africa: 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa was established. With the complements, OAU (Organization of African Unity) expanded the scope of the Convention by including: "any person compelled to leave his or her country because of "external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his [or her] country of origin or nationality". The OAU Convention highlights significant points, asserting that the provision of asylum to refugees constitutes a peaceful and humanitarian act, which should not be viewed as an act of hostility by any member state of the OAU, presently known as the African Union (UNHCR, A guide to international refugee protection and building state asylum systems, 2017). Additionally, Europe has enacted laws addressing specific situations not covered by the Refugee Convention or that require further elaboration.

2.6.2. Responsibilities of Member States for Refugees

The responsibilities of member countries for refugees are primarily guided by international law, particularly the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

These responsibilities encompass a range of obligations aimed at ensuring the protection and rights of refugees. The responsibilities of UNHCR member countries can be categorized into ten principal areas:

1. Non-Refoulement: Definition: The principle of non-refoulement prohibits member countries from returning refugees to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom due to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Responsibility: Member countries must ensure that refugees are not expelled or returned against their will to a territory where they might face danger.
2. Provision of Asylum: Definition: Asylum refers to the protection granted to foreign nationals fleeing persecution in their home countries. Responsibility: Member countries should allow refugees to seek asylum and must process asylum applications fairly and efficiently.
3. Legal Status and Documentation: Definition: Providing legal recognition and appropriate documentation to refugees. Responsibility: Member countries should issue identity documents and travel papers to refugees, enabling them to access rights and services.
4. Basic Rights and Services: Definition: Ensuring access to fundamental human rights and essential services. Responsibility: Member countries must provide refugees with access to housing, education, healthcare, and employment. Refugees should be treated at least as favorably as nationals in these respects.
5. Family Reunification: Definition: The right of refugees to be reunited with their family members. Responsibility: Member countries should facilitate the reunification of refugees with their families, considering the importance of family unity.
6. Non-Discrimination: Definition: Ensuring that refugees are not discriminated against. Responsibility: Member countries must treat refugees without discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, or other factors.
7. Respect for Refugee Rights: Definition: Upholding the rights outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Responsibility: Member countries must respect and protect the rights of refugees, including freedom of movement, access to courts, and the right to work.
8. Cooperation with International Organizations: Definition: Working with organizations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Responsibility: Member countries should cooperate with the UNHCR and other relevant bodies to ensure the protection and assistance of refugees.

9. Integration and Durable Solutions: Definition: Promoting long-term solutions for refugees. Responsibility: Member countries should support the integration of refugees into local communities, consider resettlement opportunities, and assist in voluntary repatriation when safe.

10. Reporting and Accountability: Definition: Monitoring and reporting on the situation of refugees. Responsibility: Member countries should maintain transparency and report to international bodies on the status and conditions of refugees within their territory.

By adhering to these responsibilities, member countries play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights and well-being of refugees, ensuring they receive the protection and assistance they need (UNHCR, A guide to international refugee protection and building state asylum systems, 2017).

2.6.3. International Human Rights Law

As previously mentioned, international refugee law comprises the 1951 Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and associated regional instruments. However, it does not function in isolation. It is supplemented by other legal frameworks, specifically international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. While there is no hierarchical relationship among these legal bodies, they are interrelated (IPU, 2023).

2.7. Japan's Laws and Regulations Regarding Refugees

Before delving into Japan's legal framework concerning refugees, it is crucial to acknowledge a significant aspect: Japan does not have a law exclusively for refugees. In 1981, upon joining the UNHCR, Japan incorporated the term 'refugee' into its Immigration Law, which then became known as the "Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act." The management of refugees under immigration law conveys a telling implication: Japan perceives or prefers to perceive refugees as immigrants. As highlighted in different parts of the analysis, the terms 'immigrant' and 'refugee' are distinctly different.

2.7.1. Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRL):

The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA) of Japan is a legal framework that regulates the entry, stay, and departure of foreign nationals in Japan. It also outlines the procedures for refugee recognition. The Act has evolved significantly over time to address Japan's changing socio-economic needs and international obligations (Ide, 2024). Here's a brief history of the Act: **1. Initial Legislation (1951):** The foundation of Japan's immigration policy was established in 1951 with the enactment of the Immigration Control Order. This was primarily to control the influx of people entering and leaving Japan in the post-World War II era (Feldhoff, 2018). It was influenced by the Allied occupation and aligned with the international norms of that time. **2. The Immigration Control Act (1952):** The Immigration Control Order was revised into the Immigration Control Act in 1952, coinciding with the end of the Allied occupation and the restoration of Japan's sovereignty. The Act laid out specific visa categories, entry and stay regulations, and deportation procedures. It was a domestic effort to formalize immigration policy, with strict controls reflecting the need to rebuild the nation. **3. Inclusion of Refugee Recognition (1981):** In 1981, Japan signed the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. This was a significant step, as it committed Japan to international standards regarding refugee protection. Subsequently, the Immigration Control Act was amended to become the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA). This amendment incorporated provisions for recognizing and protecting refugees. **4. Amendments and Revisions (1990):** The 1990 amendments were among the most significant changes to the ICRRA. These changes were made to cope with the globalization of the economy and the resulting increase in foreign workers and residents. Key revisions included: The introduction of a status of residence system, which categorized visas into specific types based on the purpose of stay, such as work, study, or family. Enhanced penalties for illegal employment of foreign nationals. Measures to facilitate the residence of foreign workers in specialized and technical fields. **5. Additional Reforms and Stricter Controls (2009):** The 2009 amendments further tightened immigration control, emphasizing the need to tackle illegal immigration and overstayers. Key changes included: Introduction of a new residency management system, which included issuing

a Residence Card for long-term foreign residents. Creation of a points-based immigration system for highly skilled foreign professionals to encourage more skilled labor migration. Abolishment of the Alien Registration System, replaced by the new residence card system managed by the Immigration Bureau. **6. Recent Amendments (2018 and Beyond):** In response to Japan's demographic challenges, including an aging population and declining birth rates, Japan has started to open its doors wider to foreign workers. The 2018 amendment introduced new visa categories to attract non-Japanese workers in sectors facing labor shortages. These new statuses of residence, known as "Specified Skills," allowed for a more significant number of foreign workers, particularly in sectors like construction, agriculture, and caregiving. The primary goal of the policy revision is to address Japan's dwindling population and acute labor shortage. The strategy involves reassessing and broadening the scope of policies related to the acceptance of foreign nationals. Following the revision, individuals eligible for a visa under the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) for up to five years can now transition to the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program and secure a work visa across various fields. While the program is titled "Specified Skilled Worker," it appears to have been created primarily to address the demand for lower-skilled labor in Japan. Certainly, the program represented a positive advancement for foreigners wishing to reside and work in Japan. In 2021, a proposed legal amendment was postponed for humanitarian reasons. The proposed changes included severe measures, such as deporting asylum seekers after three rejections of refugee application and initiating legal proceedings against them. Criticism from NGOs and other groups led to the shelving of the law reform. The next major change was made in 2023. These changes basically include the following:

1. The policy of detaining children in institutions until their release will be revised to allow them to reside under the supervision of relatives and supporters, termed "supervisors," who are sanctioned by the Immigration Bureau.
2. The necessity for continued detention in immigration facilities will be assessed every three months.
3. New criminal penalties will be introduced for individuals who either refuse to apply for a passport necessary for repatriation or exhibit violence on repatriation flights.

4. A "Supplementary Protected Persons" system will be implemented to acknowledge refugees who do not meet the Convention's refugee criteria but nonetheless require protection, such as Ukrainian refugees, as quasi-refugees.
5. Specialized staff will be developed to ensure the accurate execution of refugee recognition processes.

Examining the evolution and transformation of the law reveals that the government initially sought to enforce stricter measures on refugees; however, these measures were ultimately discarded in response to domestic and international criticism. As Tanaka, the head of RAFIQ, stated in her interviews, the criticism directed at refugee-supporting NGOs in Japan, along with the support from opposition parties for these NGOs, has hindered the enactment of stricter refugee policies in the law.

Nevertheless, individuals with applications rejected three times still face the risk of deportation. The request by NGOs and the CDP (Constitutional Democratic Party) for distinct legislation or regulations for refugees was not fulfilled. However, the government has guaranteed that the review of refugee applications is conducted by specialists and individuals trained in their respective fields.

2.7.2. Refugee Recognition and Asylum Seeker Policy of Japan:

Despite these changes, Japan's policies on refugee recognition have remained conservative. The country has faced international criticism for its low acceptance rate of refugees. In recent years, efforts have been made to streamline the refugee recognition process, but the number of accepted refugees remains relatively low compared to other developed nations. Japan's immigration policy continues to evolve in response to internal and external pressures. There is ongoing debate on how to balance the need for foreign labor with concerns about national security, social integration, and cultural preservation. The government is also under pressure to improve its refugee recognition system to align more closely with international standards.

The history of Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act reflects the country's cautious approach to immigration, shaped by its unique socio-economic, cultural, and geopolitical considerations. As Japan faces demographic challenges, the

role and regulation of immigration are likely to remain critical issues for the foreseeable future.

2.7.3. SSW Program Introduced by ICRRL Amendment

SSW program was introduced in April 2019 as mentioned above, with a major revision of the Immigration Control Act. This was done to solve the problems of Japan's declining population and serious labor shortage. The idea is to solve the labor shortage by reviewing and expanding the policy of accepting foreigners. Consequently, Japan has introduced a new residency status called "Specified Skilled Worker." This program enables the acceptance of foreign nationals who possess certain levels of expertise and skills, to serve as an immediate workforce in specific industries facing severe labor shortages. It is essential to highlight that this program allows for a broad spectrum of tasks, including those considered simple labor. Previously, engagement in simple labor was not permitted under any residency status other than that based on status. However, the Specified Skilled Worker Program has opened up various job opportunities for foreign workers. This added flexibility contributes to a workforce that is more varied and dynamic. Moreover, the program facilitates a transition from technical intern training to specified skills, offering foreign workers a sense of security and stability as they can now remain in Japan beyond the previous five-year limit without having to return to their home countries. This initiative represents a step towards addressing labor shortages by broadening the scope of foreign human resource acceptance.

There are 11 different areas available for work within the scope of the program: Building Cleaning Management, Machine Parts and Tooling/Industrial machinery/Electric, Electronics and Information Industries, Automobile Repair and Maintenance Industry, Aviation Industry, Accommodation Industry, Agriculture Industry, Fishery and Aquaculture Industries, Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industries, and Food Service Industry and Shipbuilding and Ship Machinery (SSW, 2022).

While TITP (Technical Intern Training Program) is a status of residence for acquiring skills, SSW (Specified Skilled Worker) is a status of residence for working. Under the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program, an individual may reside and work in Japan

for over five years, have the opportunity to bring their family, and receive a salary equivalent to that of a Japanese citizen.

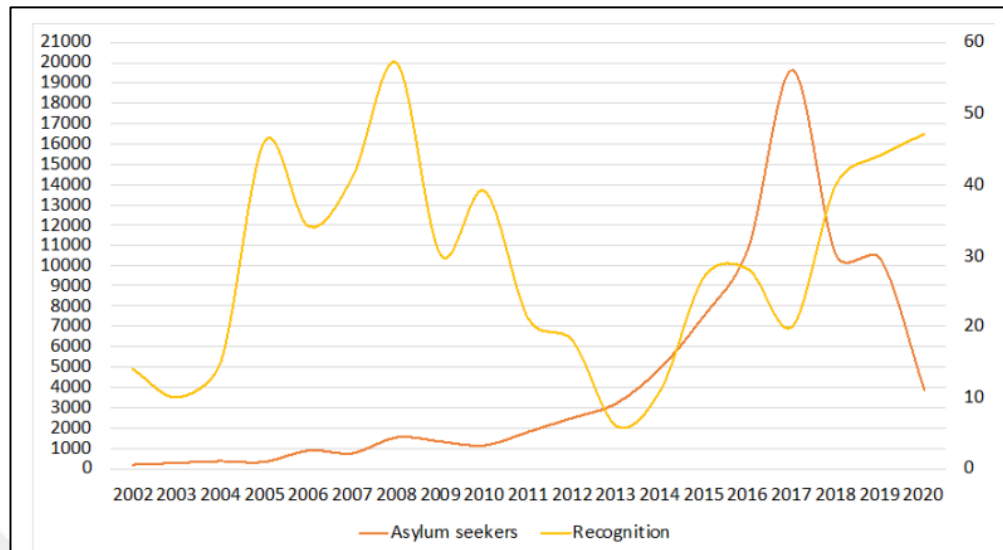
2.8. What Does a Refugee Mean to Japan?

To encapsulate Japan's stance on refugees succinctly: Japan is inclined to treat refugees as immigrants, welcoming them when it aligns with its interests and turning them away when it does not.

Japan became a signatory to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statute on January 19, 1951 (UNHCR, 2023). This marked Japan's formal recognition of UNHCR's mandate and its commitment to supporting international efforts to protect and assist refugees (Kondo, 2022). As a signatory to the statute, Japan has been actively involved in UNHCR's work, including through financial contributions, humanitarian assistance, resettlement programs, and policy dialogue on refugee issues (Takizawa, 2021).

However, as explained above, the words refugee and irregular migrant or illegal immigrant tend to be used randomly. However, sometimes, countries deliberately use these words in a way that exceeds their true meaning. This is to avoid the responsibility of distinguishing between refugees and immigrants accurately and clearly (Nakamura, 2022). Japan's approach to refugees has been relatively restrictive compared to other developed countries (UNHCR, 2023). Historically, Japan has maintained strict immigration policies and has not traditionally been a destination for asylum seekers. The Japanese government has often prioritized maintaining social and cultural homogeneity, influencing its approach to immigration and refugee resettlement (JAR, 2023). Strangely, although it is one of the countries that provides the most support to refugees globally, the attitude towards refugees within the country is incompatible with the aid provided abroad (Wolman, 2015). Refugees in Japan face numerous challenges, including difficulties obtaining legal status, finding employment, accessing education, and integrating into society. The country's refugee recognition process poses a significant obstacle for asylum seekers due to low acceptance rates and long processing times (JAR, 2023).

Figure 2.1: Asylum Seekers and Recognized Refugees in Japan



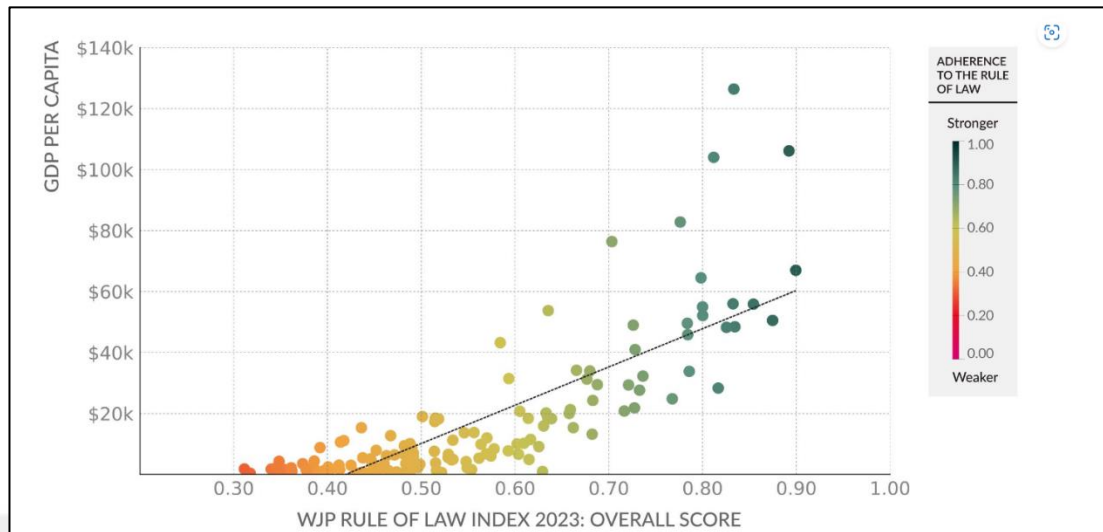
Source: (ISA, 2021)

Subsequent chapters will discuss details on Japan's refugee situation. However, a brief overview of Japan's stance on refugees reveals that while Japan is among the nations that offer significant aid to refugees globally, it is less inclined to accept individuals as refugees within its borders. Evaluating Japan's refugee situation from three perspectives: laws, public opinion, and the experiences of refugees themselves, will be beneficial.

2.8.1. From the Perspective of Laws (State)

Laws serve as the foundation of governance in a state, providing the framework for social order, justice, rights protection, and collective welfare. They reflect society's values, priorities, and aspirations and play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of a state's development and progress (UN, 2006). Laws within a state ensure order and stability, safeguard rights and freedoms, uphold justice and fairness, and promote social cohesion, public welfare, and safety. They also contribute to economic stability and prosperity, as well as manage international relations and diplomacy. They mirror the values, priorities, and aspirations of a community and are instrumental in guiding its development and advancement. As shown in the below graph, the more rule-abiding a country is, the higher its level of prosperity.

Figure 2.2: WJP Rule of Law Index 2023: Overall Score



Source: (World Development Indicators 2022, The World Bank Group)

Considering that the average of 193 countries for 2022 is -0.04, Japan has the highest score, with 1.56. Drawing from the author's personal experiences living in Japan and working within a Japanese company for an extended period, it is evident that the critical factor contributing to Japan's status as one of the most developed and prosperous nations globally is its adherence to the laws it establishes.

At times, laws may not align with the general public's desires. For instance, America's decision to support Israel. The American public's stance on Israel's actions in Palestine is clear from nationwide protests. Nonetheless, the country's elites may make decisions that favor a minority rather than the majority due to specific interests (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017).

Looking at Japan's refugee policy history, it is clear that it has a closed-door policy. As stated in the previous sections, Japan's acceptance of refugees was and still is widely criticized internationally. So, looking at Japan's laws, it can be understood that the state does not want refugees. This is clearly understood when looking at the ICRRL above. When look at the law articles regarding refugees, it is understood that Japan does not want to accept a refugee status in the first place. For this reason, Japan has never enacted a Refugee Law on its own and has always made a law with the name of immigration(Wolman, 2015). Enclosed are the fundamental amendments Japan has recently made to the ICRRL. These amendments typically encompass articles

pertaining to immigrants. The measures adopted concerning refugees have been previously detailed (Refer to Annex: 1, Recent Amendments to the Immigration Control Act).

Takizawa clarifies that Japan's stringent refugee admission criteria stem from the nation's adherence to the "well-grounded fear" standard, which is defined with great precision:

- 1) The reasons for harm are those prescribed by the Refugee Convention: race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, or membership in a particular social group.*
- 2) The agent causing harm is a government organ or equivalent organ with governing power (in addition to directly causing harm, cases of tolerating or assisting harm by a third party are included).*
- 3) A particular individual or group is singled out and targeted as the object of harm.*
- 4) Government authorities do not take effective measures to prevent harm within the country or lack the governing ability to do so.*
- 5) The extent of harm is extreme to the extent that it cannot be endured by normal people, entailing grave and severe violation of life or physical freedom of person.*
- 6) A logical cause-effect relationship is recognized between harm and fear of being harmed.*

To constitute "persecution," all six conditions must be satisfied. The assessment of "fear of persecution" is rigorous, with the burden of proof resting mostly on the asylum seekers. This is partly due to the ISA's inadequate country-of-origin information system. ISA refugee inquirers find it extremely challenging to grasp the actual conditions in war-ravaged nations such as Syria or in "fragile/failed" states where daily occurrences, inconceivable in Japan, compel individuals to escape their homelands in search of safety (Takizawa, 2021).

On the other hand, for many years, Japan was the second-largest donor to the UNHCR and remains a significant contributor to this and other international organizations, such as the International Office of Migration. Moreover, since the 1980s, Japan has implemented extensive overseas aid and assistance programs (ODA) and has

contributed significantly to various UNHCR initiatives. Consequently, in the fiscal year 2006, the total ODA budget amounted to ¥759.7 billion (MOFA, 2006).

The information provided demonstrates that Japan has been active in assisting refugees globally, yet it has been conservative in allowing refugees to enter its own territory.

2.8.2. From the Perspective of Public Opinion

In Japan's history, following the Sakoku ("locked country") period, the Meiji era aimed to unify all Japanese under one nation and pursue swift modernization, industrialization, and militarization. The Meiji era introduced the concept of Kokutai, Japan's unique 'national polity,' which posits that the unity of the Japanese people stems from inherent familial bonds. This perspective, viewing the Japanese nation as a family-oriented community, was reinforced by a family registration system that established membership through lineage, thereby excluding foreigners. These principles shaped the narrative of a homogeneous national community, bolstering central state control and authority. This movement, driven by political and ideological motivations, paved the way for the emergence of ultranationalist leaders in the 1930s. These leaders championed the establishment of the Japan-led Great East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere, founded on a misguided sense of national pride and cultural superiority (Feldhoff, 2018).

A 2017 UNHCR internal survey showed that among 17 Asian countries, Japan was ranked lowest in terms of awareness about refugees and the UNHCR. A Cabinet Office opinion survey conducted in November 2019 with 1,572 participants indicated that 55% believed Japan's acceptance of refugees was insufficient, while 11% felt it was excessive, even though only around 40 asylum seekers were granted refugee status annually. Additionally, 24% opined that Japan should accept more refugees in the future, 16% found the current level appropriate, and 57% suggested that acceptance should be approached with caution, suggesting a preference for fewer refugees. Concerning the acceptance of refugees, 67% expressed concerns about public safety deterioration, 39% cited cultural differences as a challenge to coexistence, and 36% viewed it as a potential social burden for Japan (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2019).

NGOs and other non-governmental organizations argue that, in the globalizing world, the country's closedness to external dynamics is no longer valid. In his article of “When public opinion drives national asylum policymaking: The case of Kurdish asylum seekers in Japan”, (Fujibayashi, 2020) explains how the public reacted to the repatriation of Kurds who came to Japan as asylum seekers, and how, as a result, the state allowed these refugees to stay in Japan, although it did not accept them as refugees. The following sections discuss in detail the Japanese people's attitude toward the acceptance of foreigners, especially refugees. In examining Japan's approach to asylum seekers and refugee management, it appears that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Japan are the primary advocates for these vulnerable groups. Japan is recognized as a leading country in sustainability efforts globally, and this commitment extends to addressing refugee issues. Despite being among the nations that provide significant support to refugees, Japan admits a relatively small number. Those who are granted asylum are often those whose rights have been actively championed by NGOs. For instance, organizations like RAFIQ play a crucial role in advocating for asylum seekers and refugees, thereby shouldering some of Japan's responsibilities towards these individuals. As of June 2022, "Forum For Refugees Japan", a collaborative platform created to assist refugees in Japan, had 24 member NGOs. These organizations include: Africa Japan Forum (AJF), Association for Japanese-Language Teaching(AJALT), Amnesty International Japan, Arupe Refugee Center(ARC), Caritas Japan, Christian Coalition for Refugee and Migrant Workers (CCRMW), Catholic Tokyo International Center (CTIC), Door to Asylum Nagoya (DAN), International Social Service Japan (ISSJ), Japan Association for Refugees (JAR), Japan Association for UNHCR, Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (JCaRM), Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association (JELA), Japan Lawyers Network for Refugees (JLNR), Jesuit Social Center, Living in Peace(LIP), Pathways Japan(PJ), Society for Understanding Kurds Japan, Stateless Network, Support 21, RAFIQ Japan -the Network aiming at the Coexistence with the Refugees in Japan, Rainbow Refugee Connection Japan(RRCJ), Refugees Empowerment Network (REN), WELgee (WELCOME+refugee). Among them, Rainbow Refugee Connection Japan (RRCJ) encompasses eight NGOs that are supporting refugees.

2.8.3. From the Perspective of Refugees

The issue of how difficult it is to be an asylum seeker or refugee in Japan is an issue that has been thoroughly researched in the literature. Although some amendments to the ICRRL have been made recently (in 2021 and 2023), some already wrong practices were terminated rather than being changed to satisfy the asylum seekers and refugees coming to the country (OSAKA, 2023). The challenges involved in being an asylum seeker and applying for refugee status in Japan and subsequent procedures are organized under the following categories:

- **Strict Immigration Policies:** Japan has historically maintained strict immigration policies, including for asylum seekers. The country has one of the lowest acceptance rates for asylum applications among developed nations.
- **Complex Application Process:** Asylum seekers in Japan face a complex and often lengthy application process. The burden of proof is high, and applicants must provide extensive documentation and evidence to support their claims of persecution or fear of persecution in their home countries.
- **Low Acceptance Rates:** Japan's Ministry of Justice handles asylum applications, and the acceptance rate for asylum seekers is relatively low. Many applicants are denied refugee status, leading to concerns about the fairness and effectiveness of the asylum system.
- **Limited Rights and Support:** Asylum seekers in Japan may face challenges accessing fundamental rights and support services. They may experience difficulty obtaining legal representation, language barriers, and limited access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.
- **Detention of Asylum Seekers:** Japan has been criticized for its detention of asylum seekers, including children and families, in immigration detention centers. Detention conditions have raised concerns about overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and violations of detainees' rights.
- **Refugee Resettlement Programs:** While Japan has not traditionally been a destination for refugees, it has participated in international refugee resettlement programs. However, the number of refugees resettled in Japan remains relatively small compared to other countries.

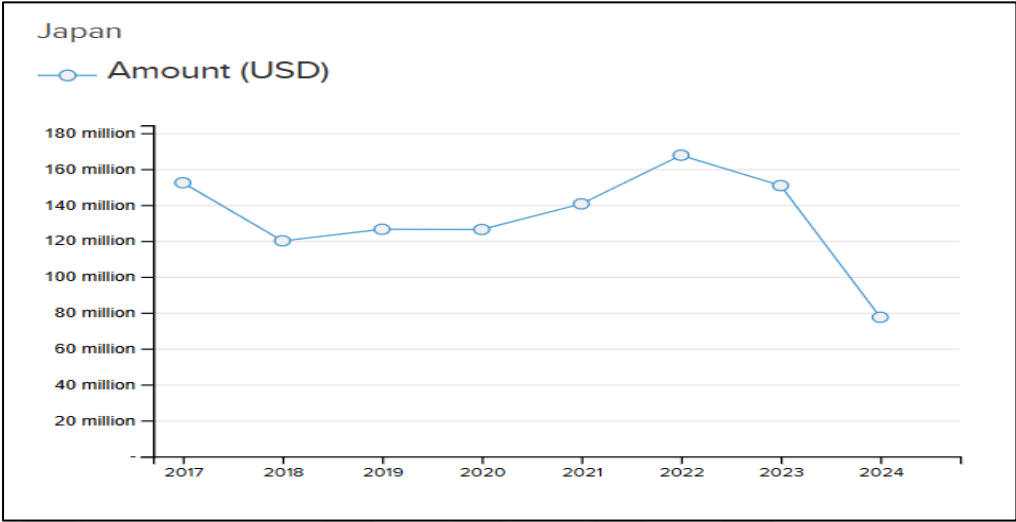
- **Efforts to Reform:** In recent years, there have been calls for reform of Japan's asylum system to improve the protection of asylum seekers' rights and ensure a fair and transparent process. Some advocacy groups have urged the government to increase support for asylum seekers and streamline the application process.

Overall, Japan's treatment of asylum seekers remains a topic of debate and concern, with ongoing efforts to address challenges and improve the protection of refugees' rights within the country.

2.8.4. From the Perspective of Worldwide Refugees

While some researchers contend that Japan may not completely meet its obligations through the aid it offers to impoverished nations and refugees globally, Japan is undeniably among the top contributors to major international aid organizations, including UNHCR, WFP, IOM, UNRWA, and UNICEF. Moreover, Japan has initiated numerous aid campaigns, both for these entities and on a regional level. Following the 2023 Maraş earthquake, the author participated in the efforts of a Japanese NGO that provided assistance in the affected area. This section focuses on Japan's assistance to global refugees, while other international aid efforts by Japan are elaborated in the section on NGOs in Japan. Japan's contributions, amounting to hundreds of millions of USD annually, assist millions of refugees and internally displaced individuals. Notably, Japan for UNHCR, an NGO that gathers donations from individuals in Japan, collected over 50 million USD in 2020. Other NGOs, including World Vision, MSF, and the UNICEF Association, have raised tens of millions of dollars for refugee operations worldwide (JAR, 2023). When considering these donations, Japan's total contributions to burden sharing are significant, effectively balancing its less favorable image due to the low number of Convention refugees it accepts.

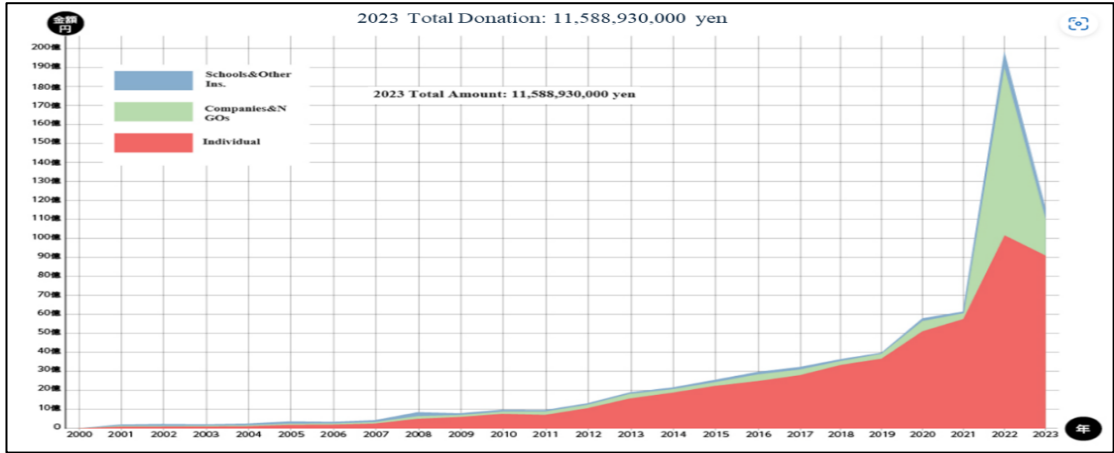
Figure 2.3: Japan’s contribution to UNHCR recently



Source: (UNHCR, 2024)

Japan's collaborative efforts with UNHCR are facilitated by Japan For UNHCR, which serves as the support desk for UNHCR in Japan and was established in the year 2000. The Japan For UNHCR website provides details on the collaborative activities between Japan and UNHCR, as well as information on assistance within Japan. It also discusses tax incentives for donating companies. Sadako Ogata, who served as the institution's head from 1991 to 2001, played a pivotal role in strengthening the bond between Japan and UNHCR. As seen in the chart belowe, most aid to refugees from Japan is on an individual or company/organization basis.

Figure 2.4: Supporter based donation info



Source: (Japan For UNHCR: 2024)

3. CHAPTER III: HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Asylum Seeking From World War II to The Present

Internationally valid definitions of the words migration, asylum and refuge have been made at the Terminology section of the study. Therefore, the words "asylum" and "refuge" used in the study has been interpreted literally.

Humanitarianism refers to a belief system that aims to improve people's living conditions and reduce suffering (Ticktin, 2014). This includes efforts to provide assistance to victims of conflict, natural disasters or other crises. Humanitarianism emphasizes the principles of impartiality and independence in aid efforts. Doctors, students and various organizations participate in humanitarian missions based on this principle. Fundamentally, it is about offering compassion and support to those in need (Gabiam, 2016).

As previously discussed, individuals from various nations are compelled to seek asylum due to wars, disasters, and persecution in their homelands. The post-World War II world witnessed the emergence of many of today's non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. These organizations sought to relieve the suffering caused by World War I and World War II. (Devetak, 2010). Post-World War II, Europe saw the displacement of millions, prompting the UN to establish the UNHCR. Initially focused on European refugees' rights, the UNHCR has since become a global entity aiding refugees worldwide, reflecting the numerous internal and external conflicts of the 21st century (UNHCR, 2023).

While the UNHCR's official website reports that there are currently about 110 million displaced individuals globally, experts believe this figure to be significantly higher due to the lack of accurate record-keeping in many countries (Leopold M. a.-B., 1994). Following the end of the Cold War, the world witnessed the proliferation of Humanitarian Aid. One feature of this expansion is the increasing importance of states, regional organizations and the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance. One of the characteristics of 21st century migration is that the 21st century has seen an increase in migration from rural areas to cities (Demirkol, 2018). This migration

has further increased the population of already crowded urban areas due to factors like education for children and job opportunities. Consequently, this surge in urban populations has led to issues with infrastructure and housing, a scenario more prevalent in developing Central Asian countries. Millions displaced by war and oppression in Asia have sought asylum in neighboring nations. For instance, over half of the Syrian refugees have found refuge in Türkiye, with around 80% residing in urban areas. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) of 2016, hosted in Türkiye under the UN's auspices, convened representatives from governments, NGOs, and other parties impacted by the refugee crisis. The summit's resolutions included plans to incentivize the urban integration of refugees, indicating that cities already facing overcrowding may experience even greater population density.

Another forecast from the summit indicates that peace remains elusive in countries recently afflicted by war and oppression, which continue to generate refugees. Consequently, refugees may remain in host countries for extended periods. Neighboring nations, often still developing and sometimes deemed less advanced in welfare, cannot shoulder this substantial burden alone. Temporary measures will not resolve the issue. To ensure refugees live with dignity until their homelands can support them, all signatories to the Refugee Convention must collectively assume responsibility (Summit, 2016).

For example in Europe, a definitive policy on managing asylum seekers and refugees is still being formulated. While certain countries shoulder a significant amount of responsibility, others are encouraged to increase their involvement. Europe is determining its future policy direction through regular meetings (Reuters, 2023).

Political theorists commonly concur that citizens, whose states ensure their security, liberty, and a reasonable standard of social welfare, have moral obligations towards less fortunate individuals who lack these advantages and are compelled to flee their homeland seeking refuge from persecution, violence, and threats to their fundamental human needs (Rainer, 2017).

3.2. Dynamics Underpinning International Migration In The 21st Century

International migration in the 21st century is shaped by a multifaceted mix of economic, political, social, and environmental factors (Korinek, 2020). Parkins explains the dynamics of migration with the pull and push factors. Push Factors: Economic Hardship: High unemployment, low wages, and limited economic opportunities can compel individuals to seek improved prospects in other countries. Political Instability: Conflicts, persecution, and authoritarian governments may drive citizens to escape their native lands. Environmental Challenges: Disasters, climate change effects, and environmental decay can render regions unlivable. Pull Factors: Economic Prospects: Attractive salaries, promising career opportunities, and the prospect of an enhanced standard of living draw immigrants. Political Stability: Nations with steady governance and a commitment to human rights appeal to those escaping turmoil or oppression. Social Considerations: The desire for family reunification, access to education, and superior healthcare facilities can lure individuals to specific nations (Parkins, 2020).

The 21st century has also its unique dynamics. In an era where globalization is accelerating, it also shapes migration patterns. People are increasingly unafraid to relocate to different geographies. Globalization has transformed the world into a global village. An individual who adapts well to social life can comfortably live anywhere in the world. It has become commonplace to see people from other countries on the streets. For instance, the presence of foreign nationals conducting business in Turkey prompts reflections on the future. Beyond encountering foreigners in cities, one might wonder if encountering them in villages is on the horizon. The ongoing migration from Turkey to Europe suggests that, in turn, people from other countries may increasingly come to Turkey.

To evaluate the dynamics of 21st-century migration in terms of pull and push factors, they can be illustrated in the table below.

Tablo 3.2: PullandPush Factors in The 21st Century

Pull Factors		Common	Push Factors	
Economic factors	Globalization and Labor Markets		Political Factors	Conflict and Persecution
	Remittance			Immigration Policies and Border Controls
		Economic Disparities/Opportunities & Economic Blocs and Unions		Regional Conflicts and Stability
Social and Demographic Factors	Family Reunification		Environmental Factors	Climate Change
	Aging Populations			Resource Scarcity
	Educational Opportunities			
Technological Factors	Communication and Information Technology			
	Transportation			
Cultural Factors	Diaspora Networks			
	Cultural Exchange			
Policy and Legal Factors	Human Rights Considerations			
	International Agreements and Cooperation			
	Asylum Policies			
	Integration Policies			

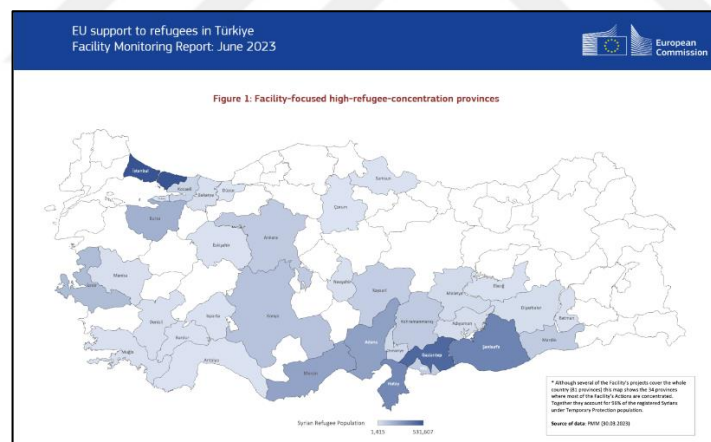
3.3. Globalization and Asylum Seeking

Devictor (Devictor, 2017) have noted that refugee flows are evolving in the 21st century. As time progresses, refugees are reaching out to more distant destinations and traveling greater distances. This shift is partly due to the limited resources of countries near conflict zones (Bubb, 2011). Moreover, international agreements highlight the need for all UN member states to equitably share the responsibility for asylum seekers and refugees. Consequently, in an era where mobilization and transportation technologies are highly advanced, far-off countries are called upon to participate in this shared responsibility. UNHCR reports reveal that 75% of refugees are sheltered in low- and middle-income countries, and 69% reside in nations bordering those that produce refugees (UNHCR, 2023). The current refugee crisis is exacerbated by unrest in many Asian and African countries, which are already grappling with the influx of refugees and asylum seekers. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has extended this crisis to Western Europe. Consequently, there is a call for more affluent countries, not directly neighboring the crisis regions, to assume greater responsibility. Annually, the refugee

movement change index reveals increases of up to 70% in Central Asian countries, contrasting with much lower rates on other continents (Zurich, 2023). Over half of the 13.2 million Syrians displaced by the civil war find refuge in Türkiye. Given that Türkiye is not yet among developed nations and is grappling with an economic crisis, the extent and quality of aid it can provide to Syrian refugees remains a significant concern.

Gabiam notes that a trend in refugee movements is the preference for migrating to larger cities, which offer enhanced opportunities for social life (Gabiam, 2016). Immigrants compelled to flee their homelands often struggle to find the desired quality of life in their initial countries of asylum. Consequently, they turn their attention to major cities in search of employment and sustenance. Yet, these urban areas, already grappling with deficits in infrastructure and services, are reluctant to assume additional burdens. This phenomenon is evident in Turkey, where many Syrian refugees have relocated to Istanbul.

Figure 3.1: Facility-focused high-refugees-concentration provinces



Source: (European Commission, 2023)

Faced with its own unemployment challenges, Turkey finds it difficult to address the needs of its citizens amidst the strain posed by refugees. Moreover, when possible, refugees move from Turkey to Europe, but Europe's hesitancy to welcome more refugees leads them to seek other destinations, such as America, Canada, Australia, and now Japan.

In summary, the migration movements of the 21st century are distinguished by several key characteristics, influenced by a complex mix of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. The common features include: 1. Globalization and Economic Disparities; Many individuals migrate seeking better economic prospects, motivated by income and employment disparities across countries, with a growing demand for both skilled and unskilled labor worldwide, prompting migration to meet these needs. 2. Conflict and Persecution; Wars, conflicts, and persecution, as seen in Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and parts of Africa, have resulted in mass displacement, with many seeking refuge in more secure nations. Individuals escape areas where they are persecuted for their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, or group membership. 3. Environmental Factors; Environmental deterioration and climate change are increasingly significant migration catalysts. Phenomena like rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and desertification compel people to relocate. Additionally, natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods lead to temporary or permanent migration. 4. Technological Advances; Technological progress aids migration by improving access to information about routes, destinations, and living conditions, while advancements in transport facilitate cross-border movement. 6. Urbanization; A considerable amount of migration is directed towards urban centers, both domestically and internationally, driven by the search for improved economic opportunities, education, and services. 8. Demographic Changes; In many developed nations, aging populations necessitate young migrant workers to sustain labor markets and social security systems, whereas in many developing nations, the youth seek opportunities overseas due to limited local prospects.

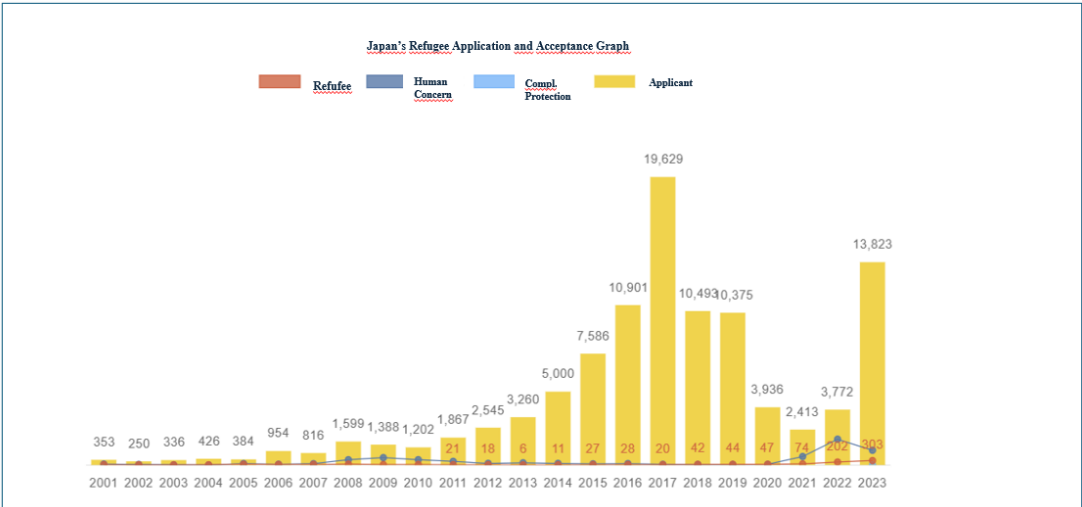
3.4. Japan's Globalization Within The Concept of Asylum

This section discusses Japan's influence on the mobility of asylum seekers and refugees in the 21st century within the context of globalization. Japan's remarkable economic success in the post-war era has established it as a significant global economic force, deeply involved in the various facets of globalization and international integration. When assessing globalization through the lens of technological support, Japan stands out as one of the foremost contributors to global integration in the 20th and 21st centuries (Hirata, 2004). The country's advancements in electronic devices and various technological products have significantly facilitated early global access to

transportation and communication technologies. Notably, in the economic realm, Japan stands out as one of the most globalized nations. Presently, Japanese technological innovations hold influence in markets worldwide. The human aspect of globalization still has significant progress to make. Japan, traditionally favoring a closed-door policy, continues to exhibit a reluctance towards foreigners. The country's demographic data suggests a hesitance to welcome a large number of foreigners, with a preference for professional workers. Indeed, domestic tourism in Japan is robust enough to offset the financial influx from international tourism (Hemmi, 2023) .

Japan's initial refugee guests were people from Indochina fleeing the wars on their peninsula in the 1970s (Koizumi, 1992) . Initially reluctant, Japan gradually accepted these individuals, particularly under the pressure of the UNHCR, to which it belongs. Following this period, there was no significant influx of refugees. However, as previously discussed, in the 21st century, Japan has become a destination for those escaping wars and disasters from various and distant parts of the world.

Figure 3.2: Japan’s Refugee Application and Acceptance Graph



Source: (MOFA, 2024)

Japan, similar to numerous European nations, is grappling with an aging population and a diminishing workforce. The LDP party's 2006 proposal marked the beginning of tangible actions addressing the workforce issue (Naoto, 2023). Japan has demonstrated its ingenuity by initiating a refugee resettlement program in 2010, showcasing its openness to the world. Nevertheless, the program sought specific criteria in its candidates, prioritizing the self-sufficiency of the individuals it welcomed. In the

resettlement program initiated in 2010, Japan aimed to settle 90 refugees but by 2014, only 86 were resettled (Wolman, 2015). This was due to Japan's stringent refugee selection criteria. Such conduct by Japan has been subject to significant criticism when evaluated against international ethical standards and norms (Kondo, 2015).

Although Japan is a global producer and seller of technology, it preserves its ethnically homogeneous structure and is reluctant to alter it. However, it must confront certain realities. Despite resistance, Japan will inevitably have to accommodate a number of foreigners due to an aging population and a shrinking workforce. Japan may attempt to bridge this gap with selective criteria, but it must contend with two undeniable facts: globalization and its responsibility in accepting refugees. Presently, Japan is addressing these challenges with short to medium-term strategies. Yet, in a world of ever-changing dynamics, the question arises: should long-term plans be considered?

4. CHAPTER IV: BOTTOM-UP APPROACH IN JAPAN AND ITS IMPACT ON REFUGEE POLICY

4.1. NGOs

The term NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) was first used in 1946 by the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) referred to private non-profit organizations working in cooperation with the UN as NGOs. Initially, NGOs recognized by the UN included a diverse array of "non-governmental groups" such as religious, political, labor, economic, ethnic, regional, and professional organizations, with their only commonality being their "non-governmental" status. Over time, NGOs have grown and diversified globally without a universally accepted definition (UN, 2024). For instance, a World Bank publication describes NGOs as entities that are wholly or largely independent of government influence, with a focus on humanitarian rather than commercial objectives, aiming to alleviate human suffering, advance the welfare of the impoverished, protect the environment, provide essential social services, and undertake community development (Matsuda, 2021).

NGOs significantly bolster civil society through their participatory and democratic approaches (Mercer, 2002). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in modern society, impacting various aspects of social, economic, and political life. Their importance can be understood in several key areas. Six of them are the leading ones: **1. In terms of humanitarian aid and development:** NGOs are often at the forefront of providing humanitarian aid during crises, such as natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics. They deliver essential services like food, shelter, medical care, and education in regions where government assistance may be limited or non-existent. For example, organizations like the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) are renowned for their rapid response and long-term commitment to affected areas. **2. In terms of advocacy and policy influence:** NGOs advocate for policy changes and social justice, influencing legislation and public opinion. They raise awareness on critical issues such as human rights, environmental protection, and social inequality. Amnesty International and Greenpeace are prominent examples of NGOs that have successfully lobbied for significant policy shifts on a global scale. **3. In terms of social and economic development:** NGOs contribute to economic and social development by implementing projects that improve living

conditions and economic opportunities. They focus on sustainable development, capacity building, and community empowerment. Organizations like Oxfam and CARE work on poverty alleviation, education, and economic empowerment programs, especially in developing countries. **4. In terms of environmental conservation:** environmental NGOs play a pivotal role in protecting natural resources and biodiversity. They engage in activities such as conservation projects, environmental education, and advocacy for sustainable policies. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Greenpeace are examples of NGOs that actively work to address issues like climate change, deforestation, and wildlife protection. **5. In terms of health and well-being:** NGOs are instrumental in improving health outcomes by providing medical services, providing health education, and advocating for health policy reforms. They address public health challenges such as epidemics, malnutrition, and lack of access to healthcare. NGOs like Doctors Without Borders and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have made significant contributions to global health improvements. **6. In terms of promoting human rights:** human rights NGOs work tirelessly to protect and promote fundamental human rights. They monitor abuses, provide legal assistance, and advocate for victims of injustice. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are key players in the global human rights movement, bringing attention to issues like torture, discrimination, and political repression.

NGOs are essential to addressing global challenges and fostering sustainable development. Their ability to operate independently of governments allows them to advocate for change, provide critical services, and support vulnerable populations in ways that might not be possible through state mechanisms alone. Their impact spans across humanitarian aid, advocacy, environmental conservation, and social development, making them indispensable actors in the quest for a more equitable and sustainable world (Matsuda, 2021).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide significant contributions to democratic societies. The interplay between NGOs, civil society, and democratization is commonly perceived thus: NGOs, as elements of civil society, bolster it through their activities, thereby aiding the democratic process. This perspective is shaped by specific notions of 'democracy' and 'civil society,' and the function NGOs serve in enhancing them. NGOs collaborate with grassroots organizations, often consisting of

impoverished and marginalized communities (Clarke, 1998). They expand and intensify the scope for citizen engagement, both socially and geographically, as well as in terms of personal and organizational capacity. Concurrently, NGOs advocate for the interests of these marginalized groups in the broader public domain, campaign for their causes, and strive to sway public policy. They are believed to counterbalance state authority by contesting its independence at various levels, advocating for reform, and fostering alternative viewpoints and policies (Gideon, 1998). NGOs contribute to democratization by diversifying the institutional landscape, enlarging and fortifying civil society, and introducing more democratic participants into the political arena.

4.2. NGOs in Japan

The focus of the study being the impact of citizens and their representatives on shaping Japan's refugee policy, it becomes essential to discuss the role of civil society initiatives in Japan. In Japan, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are regulated by the NPO Law (Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities). Since its enactment in 1998, the law has seen significant revisions. By 2015, the count of "NPOs" in Japan had surpassed 50,000, encompassing 20 distinct types of activities. While Specified Nonprofit Corporations are commonly associated with "NPOs," a variety of legal entities make up Japan's nonprofit sector (Nonprofits in Japan, 2016).

Japanese NPOs are active in 20 primary fields, including welfare, education, community development, tourism, agriculture, academic and cultural activities, environmental conservation, disaster relief, community safety, human rights and peace, international cooperation, gender equality, child welfare, information dissemination, science and technology, economic initiatives, employment, and consumer protection, among others (Npo-homepage, 2024). The culture of NGOs in Japan has evolved alongside the nation's postwar progress, becoming a significant force domestically and internationally (Japan, 2024). Engaged in various endeavors, including international cooperation, disaster response, and environmental conservation, these organizations also tackle challenges related to fundraising and enhancing public awareness (Platform, 2024). To ensure sustainable development, NGOs must preserve their autonomy and transparency while strengthening partnerships with the government and the populace. Anyone familiar with Japan and its corporations is aware that Japan is among the nations most committed to

sustainability globally (Vision, 2024). This commitment extends beyond its borders, impacting global practices. Japan's dedication to sustainability is evident in its involvement with the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Moreover, Japan's efforts to promote sustainability are reflected in its initiatives across underdeveloped and developing nations worldwide.

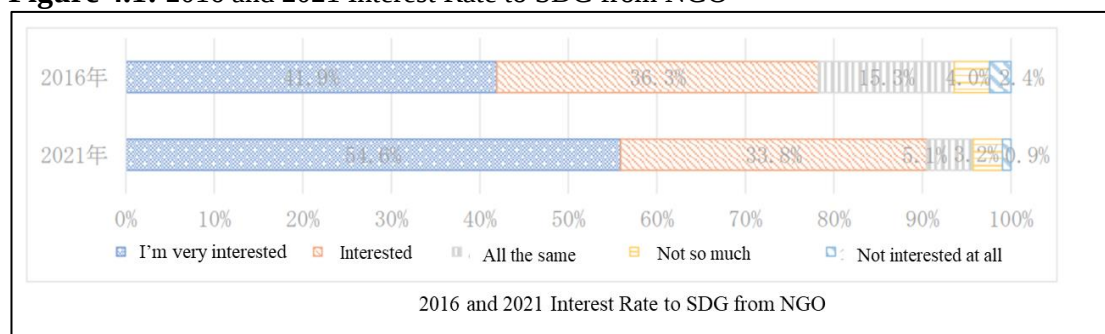
A distinctive feature of Japanese NPOs is their consistent collaborative approach. Unlike in many other countries, it is remarkable that these NPOs often initiate projects with local governments and sustain their efforts in partnership with them (Lee and Arrington, 2008). In Japan, NPOs often function as extensions of the state, emerging prominently when the state struggles or requires assistance. While this phenomenon may be observed in various countries, NPOs elsewhere typically have restricted scopes of operation, usually surfacing around disasters. In contrast, Japanese NPOs are noted for their active involvement in diverse fields, ranging from ensuring the smooth operation of agricultural activities to initiating measures for child development.

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) serve a crucial function in Japanese society by amplifying existing awareness on various issues. For instance, while many individuals may express support for environmental protection, actual initiative often requires leadership. Volunteers within the community are sometimes better positioned to address issues than the state, as government officials are individuals with varying degrees of sensitivity towards different problems. NGOs are pivotal in galvanizing citizen engagement through dialogue. They amplify public discourse and foster communication among stakeholders, establishing principles for robust and democratic governance. Furthermore, NGOs serve as vital links in disaster governance, bolstering social trust and the public good (Park, 2022).

In summary, Japanese NGOs are characterized by their diverse areas of activity, including international cooperation, disaster response, environmental conservation, human rights advocacy, and contributions to education and healthcare. They often support developing nations, particularly through JICA, and address global human rights issues. These organizations typically rely on volunteer support rather than substantial government assistance. Their work is community-oriented, serving the broader society rather than specific groups. They maintain close cooperation with both the government and local authorities, ensuring their activities are integrated and not

isolated. In international endeavors, they align closely with the governments of the countries involved. Experts meticulously plan and execute activities; for instance, environmental initiatives are led by specialists in that field. The process begins with raising awareness, emphasizing that uninformed actions can be detrimental rather than beneficial. The public is educated on these topics through workshops and seminars, with volunteering playing a crucial role (MOFA, Data Book on NGOs in Japan, 2021). In recent years, the efforts of NGOs in Japan have been consolidated within the framework of SDG programs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of global objectives designed to achieve a sustainable and improved society under the principle of "leaving no one behind." These goals were established in the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which was adopted by all United Nations member states at the 2015 UN Summit. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets, aiming for completion by the year 2030. The below chart indicates that the interest in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Japanese NGOs has increased by 10% in 2021 compared to 2016. The SDGs have become more prevalent, with many NPOs and companies in Japan participating as members. Citizens' social networks are actively overseeing the government's actions, particularly following the announcement of the "SDGs Action Plan 2022" at the end of 2021, which emphasizes the principle of "leaving no one behind." Globally, Japan's implementation of the SDGs may not appear as strong. The sustainable development report, published annually in June in collaboration with the German Bertelsmann Foundation, assesses SDGs across 165 countries. The 2021 report, released on June 14, scored and ranked each country's progress. Japan was ranked 17th with a score of 79.2 points in 2020 and improved slightly to 79.8 points in 2021.

Figure 4.1: 2016 and 2021 Interest Rate to SDG from NGO



Source: (JANIC, 2021)

4.3. SDGs in Japan

As mentioned above, The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of global objectives designed to achieve a sustainable and improved society under the principle of "leaving no one behind." These goals were established in the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which was adopted by all United Nations member states at the 2015 UN Summit. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets, aiming for completion by the year 2030.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are: 1. No Poverty: Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere. 2. Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. 3. Good Health and Well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. 4. Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. 5. Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. 6. Clean Water and Sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. 7. Affordable and Clean Energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. 9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. 10. Reduced Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries. 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. 12. Responsible Consumption and Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. 13. Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. 14. Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. 15. Life on Land: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. 16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. 17. Partnerships for the Goals:

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The structure of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompasses three fundamental dimensions across its 17 goals: 1) Social aspects, including poverty, hunger, and education. 2) Economic objectives, such as the efficient use of energy and resources, improved work practices, and the eradication of inequality, are all aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth. 3) Environmental concerns, particularly global environmental protection and climate change, which require worldwide action. The SDGs strive to create a sustainable future by addressing these 17 objectives, which reflect the societal, economic, and environmental challenges we face (Center, 2023). As SDGs Features: The predecessor MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) primarily targeted developing countries, but the SDGs include developed countries and represent a universal goal for all nations to strive towards. However, these goals are challenging to attain through government efforts alone. A significant aspect of the SDGs is the involvement of everyone, from corporations, local governments, academia, and civil society. Indeed, the success of achieving the SDGs hinges on the actions of each individual. Japan has long been at the forefront of promoting "human security" within the international community, concentrating on each position of vulnerability. The philosophy of the SDGs, which is to ensure "no one will be left behind," aligns with this concept (MOFA, Sustainable Development Goals and Japan's Efforts, 2023).

4.4. Bottom-up Culture in Japan

The structure of Japan's NPOs reflects certain fundamental characteristics of the Japanese people, which include:

1. The Japanese are known for their collective action: When called upon by the state or local authorities, they can mobilize as a unified group.
2. The Japanese have learned the value of mutual assistance following disasters: Similar to Turkey, where state resources may be limited during calamities like earthquakes, the contributions of the public and NGOs become crucial.
3. The Japanese are rule-abiding citizens: They make concerted efforts to follow regulations that benefit the society.
4. The Japanese strive for continuous improvement: They possess a collective mindset that seeks to enhance existing processes rather than settling for the status quo.

5. As will be elaborated in the following section, the Japanese are generous in sharing their resources: The nation operates under a governance that prioritizes the welfare of the broader society over a select few elites. In a society like this, it's common for improvements to arise when an individual or group initiates action. This is evident in the projects that Japan supports both within its borders and globally. The extent of Japan's assistance in impoverished nations surpasses the combined efforts of many other countries. In section 2.8.4, it was examined Japan's backing of numerous aid organizations across various sectors, not merely specific ones worldwide.

The bottom-up approach is prevalent across various sectors in Japan, including the economy, politics, education, and healthcare. In politics, for instance, proposals are initiated at the grassroots level and ascend to the government's agenda, reflecting democratic principles. Takizawa, a member of the AC, notes that Japan's Parliament adopts a bottom-up approach in setting its agenda (Takizawa, 2021). An example is the SSW program, where field representatives' (Japan Business Federation, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the General Federation of Trade Unions of Japan) concerns are escalated through the appropriate ministry channels to the government. Similarly, in the business realm, companies like Honda prioritize this approach by regularly facilitating dialogue between workers and management to ensure that on-the-ground perspectives are heard. In essence, the bottom-up method is a fundamental practice in Japan.

4.4.1. Giri-Ninjou (義理人情)

The following sections will illustrate with examples how the local population's response to bureaucratic errors affecting foreigners, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, contributed to the rectification of these mistakes. To comprehend the rationale behind bottom-up activities in Japan, it is crucial to grasp the meaning of '**Giri-Ninjou**'. "Giri" and "Ninjo" are significant concepts in Japanese culture, deeply embedded in social interactions and behavioral codes. These principles are acknowledged as fundamental values that facilitate smooth interpersonal relationships and uphold social harmony. Giri refers to social and personal duties and responsibilities. It encompasses expected behaviors and obligations across various relationships, including family, friends, workplaces, and communities. Specifically, it

involves: **Reciprocity**: Expressing gratitude for past benefits and assistance received. **Social Role**: Acting in accordance with one's position and role, such as being a boss, senior, or parent. **Mutual Aid**: A spirit of helping one another, with the understanding that if you receive assistance with a problem, you should reciprocate that aid.

Ninjo pertains to human emotions and compassion. It relates to showing empathy, kindness, and warmth towards others. Specifically, it includes: **Empathy**: Understanding and being considerate of others' feelings and situations. **Kindness**: A disposition of benevolence and offering assistance to others. **Compassion**: Sharing in the emotions and tribulations of others.

The Interplay between Giri and Ninjo: Giri and Ninjo have a complementary relationship. Giri alone can seem cold and impersonal, but when combined with Ninjo, it fosters warm connections. Conversely, Ninjo by itself may become overly emotional, but balanced with Giri, stability is maintained. Real-life Examples: Workplace: Fulfilling one's duties (Giri) while also understanding and supporting colleagues and subordinates. Home: Meeting parental responsibilities (Giri) while being attuned to and supportive of each family member's feelings (Ninjo). Friendship: Honoring commitments to friends (Giri) and providing mutual support in times of need (Ninjo). Challenges in Contemporary Society: In contemporary society, the values associated with giri ninjo are evolving. Some argue that the traditional concept of giri ninjo is diminishing with the increase of individualism and cultural diversity brought about by globalization. Conversely, numerous individuals highlight the essence of giri ninjo as fundamental to human interactions, advocating for balanced relationships. Giri ninjo remains a significant notion entrenched in the social conduct and interpersonal connections of Japanese culture, and grasping its significance can facilitate the development of more cohesive and harmonious relationships [Kanaya, 1991].

When asked about the reasons Japanese people participate in NGOs activities, Yamamoto, a chairman of a Japanese NGO (Shinminato RC), stated:

“There are two main reasons. First is the availability of economic opportunities. The second is social responsibility awareness. Japan suffered a severe defeat in World War II. The key to post-war recovery was collective action. The entire nation mobilized to heal the wounds of war, and it was during this time that NGOs began to form. It's incorrect to expect the state to do everything since state resources are finite.

Beyond a certain point, it's necessary for citizens, NGOs, and businesses to contribute. The state's recognition of collective aid efforts has played a significant role in promoting such activities. Japanese NGOs are distinctive; they are local and address local issues. For instance, if a city faces a water problem, leading business figures, academics, or specialists will establish an NGO to raise awareness about it. This NGO primarily organizes conferences and events to educate the city's residents on the importance of water. Local governments support these NGO initiatives, creating a social responsibility project with widespread involvement. Additionally, there is the concept of 'Girinjou'. Girinjou signifies a person's awareness of their own virtues and social responsibilities. I possess it, whereas you may not. In essence, it is a social duty that I extend to you. For instance, consider the provision of earthquake assistance. Türkiye lent support to Japan during its earthquake by sending aid. Subsequently, when an earthquake occurred in Türkiye, we gathered donations among our members and delivered the aid to Türkiye”.

As Yamamoto said, the primary reason for Japan's NGO and SDG initiatives is the Japanese people's recognition of their collective responsibilities. Japan's awareness of collective social responsibility extends beyond national issues to global challenges. As indicated in earlier sections of the study, Japan is among the largest donors to international aid organizations, including WHO, UNHCR, WFP, IOM, UNRWA, and UNICEF.

4.5. Bottom-up Examples For Refugees in Japan

As outlined in earlier sections, Japan's policy towards asylum seekers and refugees is problematic. The primary issue is the significant challenges faced by these individuals. Following international and domestic criticism, Japan has implemented minor reforms concerning asylum seekers and refugees. While these reforms may seem minor compared to nations facing larger influxes of refugees, they play a crucial role in shaping Japan's future foreign policy. This study aims to explore the humanitarian measures adopted by the Japanese government for asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the softening of its stringent policies, partly due to civil initiatives. It examines how civil initiatives can influence and reform a state's flawed policies, using Japan as a case study. The subsequent section provides instances of how civil initiatives have supported refugees in Japan, assisting them in navigating bureaucratic hurdles.

4.5.1. RAFIQ as A Good Example

RAFIQ is a NGO established in 2002 to support refugees in Kansai region of Japan. The organization introduce itself as follows:

“RAFIQ, established in 2002, has supported asylum seekers who fall under the category of ‘refugee’ in accordance with the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. We focus on refugees in the Kansai region not having any other supporters in Japan. We offer a broad range of services including legal support, social support, and even livelihood support to needy refugees. We believe that Japan should do its part better in the international community by taking a humanitarian approach towards refugee issues. Everyone including refugees should be granted basic human rights, and we have made policy recommendations to the Japanese government. As understanding and cooperation of citizens are also important in order to promote refugees’ human rights, we actively engage in educational activities to let more people know about refugee issues in Japan. All RAFIQ members are unpaid volunteers. We, as one of grassroots civic movements here in Osaka, work constantly and passionately on refugee issues”(<http://rafiq.jp/>).

RAFIQ provides assistance to individuals applying for and qualifying for refugee status, playing a crucial role in the defense of refugees' rights. The organization prioritizes the most pressing needs of refugee applicants, such as completing necessary paperwork and substantiating their asylum claims based on legitimate fears. The significance of support during this process cannot be overstated, especially given that Japan's legal system acknowledges the existence of many refugees who lack such support. The organization supports refugees in a deliberate and consistent manner, not randomly or sporadically. Representatives visit the Osaka Immigration Office monthly, engage with individuals awaiting refugee status, and strive to offer the required assistance. Another significant element of the organization is the support from local residents towards refugees. Take housing assistance as an example: it's a well-known fact among foreigners living in Japan that securing housing can be challenging, particularly for those not employed by reputable companies or embassies. Thus, when locals extend their support to refugees, it represents an act of kindness that is deeply moving. Another significant role of the organization is to educate the public and institutions about refugees. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, the organization disseminates information on this topic in schools and universities. Such information is crucial for enhancing the public's perception of refugees. All members

of the organization participate in the organization on a completely voluntary basis and no one earns any income from the organization. The paramount importance of the organization, as articulated by its leader Tanaka, lies in alerting official institutions to their errors. In Japan, particularly, it is crucial to voice objections to official decisions in the manner of a local citizen when mistakes occur against refugees. Because, a Japanese always listens a Japanese. Significant highlights from the interview with Tanaka regarding the organization are as follows:

“I first encountered refugees in 2001. At the time, I was caring for three children and also working as a babysitter. The September 11 attacks shocked me, as they did the rest of the world. It was then that I became aware of the refugee crisis in Afghanistan and the term ‘refugee’ itself. In December 2001, I attended a film in Takatsuki city that depicted the better days in Afghanistan. It was there I met an Afghan refugee. Shortly after, a friend informed me that the Afghan man had been detained. I visited him at the immigration detention facility, which resembled the prisons depicted on television. We were allowed a 30-minute visit. The experience deeply moved me, but I was most astonished to learn that these individuals were only permitted to leave their rooms for thirty minutes every twenty-four hours. To guarantee that the individual could occasionally venture out, we began weekly visits by enlisting support from those close to us, particularly my husband. Subsequently, in 2002, together with a few friends who shared an interest in refugees and that Afghan individual, we established the RAFIQ organization. Initially uncertain of our direction, we have reached this point by committing to at least fulfill basic needs. The term RAFIQ carries significance, denoting ‘friend’ in both Persian and Arabic. RAFIQ stands as the foremost refugee-supportive organization within the Kansai region. Our collective comprises doctors, lawyers, university professors, students, and a variety of volunteers. We host monthly events focused on refugee issues, thereby heightening local awareness and engagement.

In response to inquiries about the tangible aid we offer to refugees: Primarily, we extend services to individuals provisionally discharged by immigration authorities. We assist with lodging arrangements upon their release and guide them through the documentation required for the refugee application process. Additionally, our team includes lawyers who assist individuals in preparing their documents to comply with legal procedures. The most challenging aspect of the refugee status application process is for the individual to prove that they fled their country for a well-grounded fear. This situation is highly complex because laws require the presentation of

unequivocal evidence. Merely the existence of a civil war in one's country is not deemed a sufficient cause for well-grounded fear. The individual must demonstrate that they were a direct target in their homeland, which is exceedingly difficult to prove. Nevertheless, authorities responsible for assessing refugee status may grant "temporary protection status" to individuals who are likely to have a valid fear, even if it is not conclusively verified. Following our legal team's investigation, we contest the denial of refugee status by state officials when the individual has a legitimate fear. We support the individual's right to reapply for refugee status. Typically, such circumstances lead to the individual being granted refugee status. We assisted eight out of the eleven individuals who applied for refugee status in the Osaka area and were successful. Essentially, we served as their guides on the journey to obtaining refugee status.

Concerning the issue you raised, there is a platform known as the "Refugee Forum" which encompasses our legal advice, particularly addressing the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees. It is fair to say that all non-governmental organizations aiding refugees in Japan are part of this forum. The Refugee Forum collaborates with the government and, similar to RAFIQ, assists individuals who may be eligible for refugee status. It is a known fact that in Japan, individuals applying for refugee status may be detained for a certain duration. Our aim is to provide the necessary services for those who may qualify for refugee status in Japan, both before and after they obtain it.

In the forum, each organization presents objections to certain articles of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. For instance, a recent suggestion was to define the scope of the complementary protection status more clearly. Although the amendment to the law legalized this status, its parameters remain vague. The challenges faced by refugee applicants have not been adequately addressed in this amendment”.

As highlighted by Tanaka in the interview, NGOs supporting refugees in Japan perform invaluable work for both refugees and asylum seekers. The creation of a unified forum to articulate these issues and the backing from governmental institutions is indeed commendable.

4.5.2. Another Bottom-up Case Impacted Refugee Policy: Kurdish asylum seekers in Japan

The Kurdish case, also examined in Fujibayashi's study, became known in Japan for the first time during the mid-2000s. Fujibayashi says (Fujibayashi, 2020):

“At that time, in Japan, despite the often-expressed desire for maintaining social and cultural cohesion that generally gives rise to anti-immigration attitudes, the liberal media, civil society groups and professional elites engaged in agenda setting and advocacy”.... Although it is difficult to detect when and how the government exactly made this policy change, because this information is not publicly available, it is safe to say that public opinion had directly or indirectly driven the change in the government's decision....The process tracing findings in this study could be the evidence to support a claim that Japan's policy shift was driven by mounting attention from the public around the mid-2000s....and the study concludes that the change in Japan's policy towards Kurdish asylum seekers in the mid-2000s was driven by public opinion”(p. 213).

The case illustrates how a nation's stance on asylum seekers and refugees can evolve in response to civil society's voice. Since the early 1990s, Kurds from Turkey have sought refuge in Japan, with their numbers growing incrementally each year (Dean, 2006). In the early 2000s, the Japanese Ministry of Justice, based on refugee applications, dispatched an investigation team to the Turkish cities inhabited by these Kurds. The team concluded that the Kurds did not meet the criteria for refugee status and reported their findings to the ministry. The Ministry resolved to repatriate families to Turkey, returning two families. However, the emergence of this incident prompted a coalition of lawyers and the UNHCR office to declare the investigation unethical and in violation of international standards. They contended that revealing individuals' personal information and the investigation team's proximity to Turkish authorities compromised the security of those repatriated. This incident also received coverage in the press. Non-governmental organizations have criticized the government, although initially, these criticisms were not very pronounced. Over time, unfolding events became the final straw. A father and son staged a 72-day sit-in protest in front of the UNHCR Office in Tokyo, garnering significant attention. Lawyers and human rights advocates gathered 6,000 signatures, demanding that the family's requests be met: seeking either refugee status or relocation to a third country (Japantimes, 2004). Although the father and son were recognized by the UNHCR as having a "refugee-

like" status and obtained "mandate refugee" status, they were deported back to Turkey. Non-governmental organizations supported the opposition's outcry. They escalated the opposition's criticism to the Assembly's agenda. As this incident remained topical, another case involving a Kurdish individual arose. A deportation order was issued for a Kurdish citizen whose wife is from the Philippines. Had the deportation proceeded, he would have had to return to Turkey and his wife to the Philippines, separating them. The government, previously responsive to criticism, ceased providing clear statements affirming their stance. Justice Minister Hatoyama refrained from making statements in defense of the government. In response to criticism, the Tokyo Supreme Court granted a special session for the family. "The government issued a special residence permit following the court's decision," the Minister stated. Since that 2007 ruling, no Kurdish family seeking asylum in Japan has been deported. While some families regularly renew their permits, others are known to stay in Japan without authorization, which is illegal. Nevertheless, the government has not resolved to expel Kurds who seek asylum.

This case illustrates that government decisions can sometimes conflict with the rights and laws that protect individuals. In such instances, it is crucial for civil society and experts to provide informed criticism, and for the government to be receptive to such feedback. Considering the situation where Kurds in Japan have sought asylum, whom recognized by the UNHCR as "refugee-like" and got "mandate refugee" status, experts argue that these kind of people should not be forcibly repatriated, as this may violate human and refugee rights. In response to this contentious decision, Japanese NGOs, particularly lawyers who gathered 6,000 signatures, advocated for the Kurds' demands. Their persistence paid off when the Japanese government heeded these internal calls for change and refrained from deporting the Kurds.

4.5.3. Resettlement Program and Contributions of SPF as An NGO

Japan initiated refugee resettlement program in 2010, which continues today. A key aspect of this program is the significant involvement of local governments and NGOs in the resettlement of refugees. NGOs have served as intermediaries between the state and local governments, enabling the partial settlement of a certain number of refugees through the program (MOFA, The Launch of Resettlement Program, 2020).

Resettlement represents a significant step that the UNHCR has urged member countries to take. It involves relocating refugees to a nation willing to receive them, as outlined in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook. Despite Japan not achieving the expected results with its resettlement program, it has yielded numerous positive effects. Each year, about 30-40 individuals were welcomed through the program. The issue of "who will be accepted" that emerged in the early years of the program persisted for some time. In 2018, the government declared the potential to raise the number of accepted refugees to 100. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) was the program's most significant supporter. In Japan, the application process for refugee status by asylum seekers is overseen by the Immigration Services Agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), as it is regulated under the Immigration Act. Meanwhile, the resettlement program is administered by the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), ensuring that the program operates within the bounds of human rights norms. Thus, Japan's resettlement efforts are fully aligned with international human rights standards (MOFA, 2023). Saburo Takazawa, who served as the UNHCR representative in Japan from 2007 to 2008, played a pivotal role in initiating the program. His involvement significantly strengthened UNHCR's advocacy for Japan's participation in the resettlement program. The Resettlement program has been a long-standing initiative in many developed countries. However, Japan's approach differs from these nations. In places like America and Europe, governments can issue directives to local authorities regarding the resettlement of individuals. In contrast, the Japanese government does not exert such pressure or provide directives to its local governments. This is where Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) step in. They engage with local governments, tailoring their meetings and information to the refugees' circumstances, and establish the necessary infrastructure with local approval. The program in Japan is a three-stage process: selection and relocation to Japan, followed by language training and integration support, and finally, local governments are approached for placement based on individual evaluations. This person-based evaluation aims to match placements with the individuals' qualifications, such as agricultural work if it aligns with the refugee's skills. It is important to note that Japan selects refugees who are self-reliant, excluding those who are not, which has drawn criticism for leaving out the "sensitive" class of refugees.

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) has made significant contributions by serving as a mediator between local governments and official institutions to facilitate the acceptance of more refugees. For instance, SPF has advocated for increasing the annual refugee intake from 30 to 500 by proposing the acceptance of some refugees under student status. Collaborating local governments include Hakodate City, Hiroshima City, and Saga City, while Suzuka, Misato, Nagoya, and Kure have previously welcomed refugees. In a 2014 parliamentary session, SPF contended that accepting only 30 refugees annually was insufficient and could diminish Japan's international standing, advocating for an increase to enhance the resettlement program's global ranking. A pivotal moment in the Resettlement program occurred during a 2018 panel, which saw attendance from ministry officials and representatives of all pertinent institutions and organizations, including trade organizations as part of the non-governmental entities. After eight meetings, local governments expressed willingness to accept more refugees, provided there was agreement among all stakeholders. For instance, Hiroshima Prefecture's representative indicated their capacity to take in additional refugees.

The paramount takeaway from this initiative is the necessity for policymakers to engage all relevant parties in the dialogue and solicit their input. State officials extended invitations to private sector representatives within the state to participate in these discussions. Their contributions influenced the placement of individuals into appropriate sectors and roles. Non-governmental organizations, like SPF, facilitated this process by ensuring effective communication and collaboration among all parties involved.

5. CONCLUSION

In democratic nations, active participation of the populace in policymaking is essential. According to Kertzer and Zeitzoff, societal decisions should not be the sole purview of an elite few. Some nations may prioritize the interests of specific groups over the general populace and their elected representatives in the policymaking process. Despite self-identifying as democracies, these countries do not fully meet the criteria of democracy. Japan approaches the ideal of democracy both in principle and practice. The government serves the people, and the people contribute to the state. Collective action is a common practice among the Japanese. Non-profit organizations in Japan often play a significant role in alleviating the state's responsibilities, more so than in other countries.

In the 21st century, over a hundred million individuals have been forcibly uprooted by wars, oppression, and disasters worldwide. More than half of them fled their countries because of war and persecution. International norms ensure that those who must leave their country for legitimate reasons receive humane treatment in their host countries. Migration patterns in the 21st century are distinguished by several unique features.

The advancements in technology and transportation, coupled with globalization and the labor demands of developed nations, have led individuals fleeing war, persecution, and disasters to seek new lives in distant developed countries. While European and North American nations attract millions of migrants, Japan also experiences an influx, with tens of thousands of immigrants yearly, thousand of whom seek refugee status. Japan has consistently faced criticism for its refugee policy. The country's welfare seems inversely related to the number of refugees it admits. Despite being one of the leading countries in providing humanitarian aid globally, Japan accepts a remarkably low number of refugees, drawing international scrutiny. Japan's refugee admission policy is often summarized as being highly restrictive. The stringent nature of this policy has led to asylum seekers experiencing severe hardships, likened to cruelty, especially in detention facilities, which are compared to prisons. Moved by these conditions, a Japanese citizen took action, ultimately establishing RAFIQ, the most prominent NGO supporting asylum seekers and refugees in the Kansai region. Japan is known for its active NGO movements. These organizations, in collaboration with

local governments, fill gaps in areas where state services may be insufficient. Typically founded for humanitarian aid, Japanese NGOs are vigorously involved in disaster relief, environmental protection, regional development, and etc. Notably, 40% of these NGOs extend their activities internationally. The first NGO dedicated to refugee support in Japan was established in the 1990s, focusing on individuals from the Indochina region. Since the early 2000s, new NGOs have emerged to assist refugees from broader areas, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

NGOs dedicated to aiding refugees in Japan play a crucial role: they act as staunch allies to those seeking refugee status. Should the UNHCR's Japan office and pro-refugee NGOs cease to voice concerns about Japan's treatment of refugees, significant issues could ensue. These NGOs articulate the harsh realities faced by asylum seekers and refugees via Refugee Forum Japan, a collective platform they established, which is also monitored by Japanese authorities. While these NGOs may not be able to eradicate negative treatment towards asylum seekers and refugees, they strive to mitigate it. Currently, there are 24 NGOs in the country dedicated to supporting refugees. These organizations aid individuals in the refugee status application process, help those with temporary protection to find housing and jobs, and assist recognized refugees in securing settlements and employment matching their skills. Since the initiation of the resettlement program in 2010, NGOs have been tracking where accepted refugees would reside and their employment, facilitating a mutual understanding between refugees and local authorities. The state has struggled to enforce a clear policy on the settlement and employment of refugees due to Japan's stringent bureaucracy. Overcoming bureaucratic barriers is notably challenging in Japan compared to other nations. In this context, trusted NGOs have been empowered by the state to take on responsibilities. The assistance provided by NGOs in the Resettlement program has served as a commendable model for all nations that welcome refugees.

Japan is characterized by its GiriNinjou culture, which embodies the philosophy of reciprocating good deeds and understanding one's social duties. At the national level, GiriNinjou manifests as state-sponsored aid to impoverished nations, while domestically, it is exercised through NGOs aiding foreigners. NGO leader Yamamoto encapsulates this ethos by stating, "If I have it, I can share it with you." Similarly, NGO

leader Tanaka, confronted with the harsh realities of detention, was moved by the conviction that she must assist, a resolve that has helped not just one refugee, but potentially dozens or even hundreds.

The examples illustrate that when citizens do not stay silent about a country's flawed or incomplete policies, but instead take action initially at an individual (micro-level) and subsequently through NGOs (meso-level), it can lead to positive policy changes. The government may not always succeed in implementing policies that are 100% correct and precise. In such cases, micro and meso level responses, which are among the finest manifestations of democracy, ought to be encouraged. These responses are not only necessary in the face of errors but also for policies or practices that require enhancement. NGOs and local governments, in partnership with state agencies, should have the autonomy to take the lead where national policies fall short. The issue of refugees is highly sensitive. These individuals, having fled their homeland due to well-grounded fear, are deserving of compassionate reception. Consequently, the UN has established guidelines for refugee protection and has urged each member nation to adhere to these guidelines. Refugee policy impacts the citizens of a country; therefore, the government should engage the public, the primary stakeholder, in the policy-making process and collectively determine the approach towards refugees. Collaboration is essential among state authorities, local governments, and the public, who are the pillars of society. The nation's policy should be shaped not only by a select governing elite but in concert with the broader community.

6. REFERENCES

- Adrienne Anderson, M. F. (2006). A Well-Founded Fear of Being Persecuted ... But When? Sydney: University Of Sydney Nsw.
- Asylum Seekers Centre (2023) Retrieved May 1, 2024 from <https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au>.
- Bozkurt, G. (1996). Göç Olgusu ve Türk Toplumu. G. Bozkurt içinde, Göç Olgusu ve Türk Toplumu (p. 21). Mersin: Sosyoloji Derneği Yayınları.
- Clarke, G. (1998). Non - governmental organizations (NGOs) and politics in the developing world. Political studies, 46(1), p.36-52.
- Çakır, R. (2024) Retrieved March 15, 2024 <https://medyascope.tv/2024/04/12/rusen-cakir-yazdi-ak-parti-yok-hukmunde-cunku>
- Data Book on NGOs in Japan 2021: NGOs in Figures (summarized version) (2021), Retrieved on April 5 2024 from <https://www.janic.org/en/2022/05/12/data-book-on-ngos-in-japan-2021-ngos-in-figures-summarized-version/>
- Dean, M. (2006). Japan: Refugees and asylum seekers. . Writenet Independent Analysis, .
- Devictor, X. D. (2017). The globalization of refugee flows. Journal of Development Economics, 5-12.
- Feldhoff, T. (2018). Nation, immigration, and the future of Japanese Society Education About ASIA, 23(2).
- Faist, T. (2021). The crucial meso-level. In International migration, immobility and development. p. 187-217.
- Hemmi, J. (2023). NIKKEIASIA. Japan domestic travel spending to hit new record this holiday season: Retrieved June 7 from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Travel-Leisure/Japan-domestic-travel-spending-to-hit-new-record-this-holiday-season>
- Hirata, K. (2002). The growing role of NGOs in Tokyo's aid and development policy. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hirata, K. (2004). Civil society and Japan's dysfunctional democracy. Journal of Developing Societies, 20(1-2), p.107-124.
- Holsti, O. (2004). Theories of international relations. Explaining the history of American foreign relations. p. 2, 384.

- Ide, K. (2024). Specified skilled workers, Retrieved June 23, 2024 from <https://global-saponet.mgl.mynavi.jp>.
- Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, MOFA. (2024). Retrieved May 5 from https://laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/326CO0000000319#Mp-At_2-Pr_1-It_5
- IOM. (2023). International Organization for Migration Retrieved June 28 2024 from <https://www.iom.int/data-and-research>
- IPU. (2023). Retrieved June 29 2024 from <https://www.ipu.org>. <https://www.ipu.org>:
- Japantimes. (2004) Retrieved July 2 2024 from https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/12/11/national/petition-supports-kurdish-refugees/#.WshKQy_ja8U.
- JAR. (2024). Retrieved June 5 from <https://www.refugee.or.jp>.
- Junichi, A. (2021, 06 17). Akashi, Junichi. "How a policy network matters for rA case study of Japan's refugee resettlement programme. Refugee Survery Quarterly, p. 249-270.
- Kanaya, H. (1991). What is Giri-Ninjou. Osaka City University Repository, p. 427-450.
- Karslı, E. (2023) Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Türkiye'ye Göçü: Antakya Örneği (p. 21). İstanbul: Post Yayınevi.
- Klar, S. (2014). Partisanship in a social setting. American journal of political science, 58(3), p.687-704.
- Koizumi, K. (1992). Refugee policy formation in Japan: Developments and implications. Journal of refugee studies, 5(2), p.123-135.
- Kondo, A. (2022). Development of immigration policy in Japan. Discussion paper series, p. 21-27.
- Korinek, K. and. (2020). Migration in the 21st Century: Rights, Outcomes, and Policy. Immigration in the early 21st century.
- Leopold, M., and Harrell-Bond, B. (1994). An overview of the world refugee crisis. American Psychological Association, p.17-31. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/10147-019>
- Mapping Global Refugee Movements (2023). Retrieved from April 20, 2024 from <https://refugeemovements.com>

- MOFA. (2020). The Launch of Resettlement Program. Retrieved May 5, 2024 from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/refugee/japan>
- Naoto, H. (2023, 08 25) Japan's incremental immigration reform: a recipe for failure, Retrieved April 6, 2024 from <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d00920>
- Npo-homepage. (2024, 6). Retrieved from <https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/about/npo-kisochishiki>
- Park, E. S. (2022, 02 01). The value of NGOs in disaster management and governance in South Korea and Japan. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, p. 1-10.
- Rainer, B. (2017). Refugee protection and burden-sharing in the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, p. 2-7.
- Reuters. (2024, 10 6). Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/eu-is-stuck-with-its-one-trick->
- SAPONET. (2024, 04). Retrieved from <https://global-saponet.mgl.mynavi.jp/visa/624>.
- SDG's Report 2022, Retrieved June 18 2024 from <https://www.unic.or.jp>
- SSW. (2024, 5). Retrieved from <https://www.ssw.go.jp/en>
- Summit, W. H. (2016). COMMITMENTS TO ACTION. World Humanitarian Summit, (p. 20-32). İstanbul.
- Team, L. C. (2021). *Grassroots Innovation: An Inclusive Path to Development*.
- UN. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf>
- UN. (2024). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/non-governmental-organizations/index.html>
- UNHCR. (2023). UNHCR Resettlement Handbook. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-handbook/>
- UNHCR. (2019). A guide to international refugee protection and building state asylum systems. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org>
- UNHCR. (2022). Handbook And Guidelines On Procedures And Criteria For Determining Refugee Status. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org>

