

## Policy Control over International Population Movements: Its Effectiveness and Limitations

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The sovereign state is a major player even in times of growing cross-border migration. With its exclusive and coercive power, the state seeks an effective immigration policy as a means to bring in migrants beneficial to the host society and to stem the inflows of those who are unwanted. Immigration policy directly shapes the directions and scales of international population movements. It also influences and motivates people who are willing to transcend national boundaries and live outside their countries of origin.

However, the state's attempt to control immigration often fails to yield the intended outcomes. Today, the citizens of major receiving societies are rarely content with the social consequences of the immigration policy formulated and implemented by their governments. Anti-immigration groups have increasingly gained popular support. The growing public resentment against immigrants is evident and commonly seen in developed countries, particularly in Europe. Thus, immigration policy is frequently under pressure to reform.

This essay examines the factors that influence the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of immigration policy. In other words, it investigates the conditions for immigration policy to function as intended by the policy makers. The essay deals conceptually with immigration policy performance and then discusses the issue in a more or less experimental manner, focusing on the case of Japan.

Japan has been long described as a "zero-immigration country" with the proof that the country's foreign residents accounts for below two per cent of the total population. Notably, Japan, whose population size is rapidly shrinking, has recently implemented several policy initiatives, including the EPA scheme for foreign nurses and care-givers, third-country refugees program, and points system for foreign talents. However, these initiatives have reportedly fallen far short of expectations in terms of their effectiveness. The low performance of Japan's immigration policy can be partially attributed to the deficiencies embedded in its own policy frameworks and to the insufficient scale of potential migrants interested in moving to Japan.

The determinants of immigration policy effectiveness tend to vary across nations. For this reason, scholars need to establish a systematic analytical methodology with a view to explore the mechanism of how immigration policy fails to achieve its objectives despite the monopolistic power exerted by the state over immigration. Therefore, the pursuit of effective immigration policy with a clearer understanding of its limitations is, and will continue to be, a key issue in the face of the expected expansion of cross-border migration.