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MIGRANT ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

Migrant Issues in Contemporary Japan

Japan has an interesting and ambivalent policy toward the migration process; therefore, it is interesting to examine the migration position of a mono-ethnic state, which has also had a history of "closure" and exclusion from the outside world. The research objective is to examine the characteristics of immigration processes in contemporary Japanese society. The research methods used include narrative, comparative, analytical, and structural. As a result, it can be argued that the legislative framework is important in dealing with migrants, which in Japan is recognized as highly effective; in general, the mechanism formed by the Japanese government for dealing with the migrant population copes with all its tasks. In the course of the work, the main problems of adapting to life in Japan were identified, which are the focus of the governing authorities.

KEYWORDS: workers, Asian labor market, social security and health insurance, economy, emigration

IZVLEČEK

Migrantski izzivi v sodobni Japonski

Japonska ima zanimivo in ambivalentno politiko do procesa migracij, zato je zanimivo preučiti migracijski položaj te monoetnične države, ki ima tudi zgodovino »zaprtosti« in izključenosti iz zunanjega sveta. Cilj v prispevku predstavljene raziskave je preučiti značilnosti migracijskih procesov v sodobni japonski družbi. Avtorice so pri tem uporabile pripovedno, primerjalno, analitično in strukturno raziskovalno metodo. Kot kažejo rezultati, je pri obravnavi migrantov pomemben zakonodajni okvir, ki na Japonskem velja za zelo učinkovitega; mehanizem, ki ga je vzpostavila japonska vlada za obravnavo priseljencev, na splošno opravlja vse svoje naloge. Med njegovim delovanjem so bile opredeljene glavne težave pri prilagajanju na življenje na Japonskem, na katere se osredotočajo vladni organi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: delavci, azijski trg dela, socialna varnost in zdravstveno zavarovanje, gospodarstvo, emigracija

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INTRODUCTION

In the current context of open international dialogue and globalization worldwide, millions of people are moving across different state borders in search of better living conditions, so migration has become a global phenomenon. It has certain social, economic, and political implications for the entire world and, therefore, has an important place in international relations. The topic is particularly interesting in light of Japan's active involvement in the global migration cycle, as the rising sun is currently quite an attractive territory for immigrants. Migration to Japan should be seen as a complex social and economic phenomenon. Currently, there is no single theory of migration. For example, migration can be analyzed based on such classical theories as Ravenstein's (1885) theory, Lee's (1966) "push-pull factors" model, Duncan's (1940) "Theory and Consequences of Mobility of Farm Population," and Zelinsky's (1971) concept of migration transition. Ravenstein (1885), in his theory, formulated such fundamental laws of migration that correspond to the present situation in Japan:

- the population is distributed among the territories;
- the regions differ mainly in their economic characteristics;
- most migrants move short distances;
- migration takes place in stages;
- each migration "flow" corresponds to the opposite "flow";
- migrants travel long distances to large industrial and commercial centers;
- urban residents are less mobile than rural residents;
- women are more mobile than men in internal migration, and men are more mobile than women in long-distance migration;
- large cities develop mainly through migration;
- the volume of migration increases with the development of industry, trade, and transport;
- the main causes of migration are economic.

According to the "push-pull factors" model by Lee (1966), different migration factors operate in each territory: retention, pull factors, and push factors. Determining arrivals and departures, with some factors affecting most people and some affecting only certain individuals. Lee (1966) was among the first to describe the factors influencing migration processes. Push factors can be economic, social-political, and natural circumstances. Economic factors are unemployment, low wages, high taxes, unstable labor market; social and political factors are poverty, discrimination, infringement of rights, restrictions on freedom of speech and religion, and war (Tomashevski & Yaroshenko, 2020). The factors that attract migrants are usually high economic development, high wages, security, and the opportunity to get a job (Shebanina et al., 2022). Applying Lee's (1966) migration theory to the Japanese situation, pull

factors such as a stable economic situation on the domestic and foreign markets, security, and labor market demand work to a greater extent.

Duncan (1940), in his book “Theory and Consequences of Mobility of Farm Population,” presented a theory of mobility of the agricultural population. His theory combines microscopic and macroscopic active forces in the migration process. According to him, whatever effects change in structural factors cause in a country, the same effects are caused by migration. Thus, migration is a functional alternative to social change for many structural goals. Generally, migration is influenced by the following factors: economic and technical reasons, social reasons, personal reasons, natural reasons, and other reasons (Kerimkulov et al., 2015).

Zelinsky’s (1971) concept of migration transition formed five stages of the migration transition process. The first stage was called primitive traditional society. It was accompanied by migration at a minimal rate for a change of habitat or a change in everyday conditions (land use, trade, military affairs, or religious rituals). The second stage was the early mobile society. It was accompanied by mass migrations from rural to urban areas, settlement of undeveloped land, emigration to available countries, and small immigration of skilled workers from other countries. The third stage was the later mobile society. A weakened but continuing process of movement from villages to cities, a decline in emigration. The fourth stage is the developed society, in which the mobility of citizens declines, and migration from city to city has taken over. Large numbers of low-skilled workers immigrate from less economically developed countries, a significant jump in international migration. The final fifth stage is an overdeveloped society in which migration is decreasing. This migration is restricted by strict government control. Therefore, a historical evolution in the development of population movement can be traced. All five stages of this theory can be traced in Japan’s migration history (Davis & Ikeno, 2008).

The research aim is to examine the characteristics of immigration processes in contemporary Japanese society. The research objectives are to reveal the government’s policy in regulating migration processes and consider the process of adaptation and integration of immigrants in Japanese society, that is, the social aspect and the labor market.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methods used include narrative, comparative, analytical, and structural. The narrative method involves presenting a coherent story or chronological sequence of events. In the context of immigration policies in Japan, this method was used to outline the historical evolution of these policies. It helps understand how Japan’s immigration approach has transformed, highlighting key turning points, policy shifts, and the factors that prompted these changes. For immigration policies in Japan, the analytical method was used to dissect various aspects

of the policies, such as economic impacts, social integration, legal frameworks, and public attitudes. In the context of immigration policies, the structural method was used to analyze the institutional framework for formulating and implementing policies in Japan. It can delve into the roles of government agencies, legislative bodies, advisory boards, and international collaborations that shape immigration policies. Overall, the synergy of narrative, comparative, analytical, and structural methods provides a holistic perspective on immigration policies in Japan, enabling researchers to unravel the topic's complexities and offer valuable insights for policy considerations and future studies.

In the course of the work, such documents were used, such as migration legislation of Japan and Kazakhstan; statistics from the database of the Immigration Services Agency of Japan (2022; 2023); materials of the Census of Japan 2020; Japanese Ministry of Justice (2023) survey among foreigners on discrimination experienced; Pew Research Center survey (Stokes & Devlin, 2018), survey of the Japanese news agency Jiji Press (2019). The works of Russian scholars devoted to migration processes in Japan by Shevtsova (2009), Vasilieva (2010), Pavlyatenko (2008), Markaryan (2012), Matrusova (2016), Molodyakova (2002), Streltsova (2018), Avetisyan (2016), Karpova & Karpov (2019) were also used.

English language contributions include the "Labour Situation in Japan and Its Analysis: General Overview 2015/2016" (The Japan Institute, 2016), "Foreign Workers in Bubble and Post-bubble Economy in Japan" (Mori, 1999), "Bucking a Global Trend, Japan Seeks More Immigrants. Ambivalently" (Rich, 2018), "J. League and media must show red card to racism" (Arudouj, 2014), "Japan racism survey reveals one in three foreigners experience discrimination" (Hurst, 2017), "Kurdish case becomes rallying cry for Japan protest against police" (Saito, 2020), etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context of Japanese Emigration

Migration processes are not new to Japan; they occurred even in ancient times. For example, there is evidence that there was massive migration from the Korean peninsula to the Japanese archipelago during the Yayoi period (third century BC–third century AD), with the number of migrants reaching about 1.2 million people (with a total population of about 6 million people at the end of the 8th century) (Zhukov, 1998). Immigrants from the mainland became the agents of Chinese polity, writing, and other cultural manifestations in the Japanese world. In addition to the Chinese and Koreans, the first Europeans arrived in Japan in the second half of the sixteenth century, resulting in the "Christian Age," characterized by widespread Christianity in the country. In 1600, the first Dutch arrived in Japan, and the Japanese subsequently developed strong commercial and cultural ties with the Dutch. From 1639 to 1853,

Japan had a policy of isolation during which any contact with the outside world was restricted. However, the isolation was not absolute, as the Japanese had trade contacts with the Dutch through the port of Nagasaki and had relations with the Koreans and the Ryukyu Islands (Vorobyov, 1980; Vasiliyeva, 2010).

The forcible opening of the country to the outside world in 1853 opened the borders to the Japanese and led to mass emigration to foreign countries. A large number of foreigners, in particular Europeans, were immigrating to Japan, and internal migration was also increasing due to the onset of urbanization. Before the World War I, Japan was a major labor supplier abroad. Emigration was economically motivated: the country was undergoing rapid industrialization, and the poorest people in the countryside were moving in large numbers to the cities or, having failed to find work there, to other countries that were open for the first time (Bozorgmehr & Díaz, 2022). The number was as high as 10,000 a year. Coming from the countryside, they sought refuge where they could get land. As long as they were welcomed in the United States of America (USA) and Canada, the Japanese settled in those countries and later in Latin American countries, especially Brazil, where they formed a large diaspora. In the city of Sao Paulo, for example, it eventually reached 1 million people. After World War I, emigration from Japan to these countries declined considerably and, in the 1930s, was redirected to Sakhalin, Manchuria, and other territories closer to Japan and taken from other countries at this time (Markaryan, 2012; Matrusova, 2016).

During the occupation period, Japan ceased to have colonized regions from which the Japanese returned. During this period, migration was taken under strict control, and the first bodies and laws to regulate migration processes were formed. After the period of occupation, Japan was on the road to regaining the status of a world power. This period (from 1951 to 1971) saw the completion of the restoration of the national economy and finding its place in the international arena. As Japan entered a scientific and technological race and began to apply its innovations in production, companies began to experience labor shortages. In order to solve this problem, the government began to actively pursue urbanization, and, as a consequence, the level of internal migration increased (one-third of the peasantry moved to the cities). Also, during this period, Japan has been locating its production facilities in the Asia-Pacific region, establishing economic and political ties with them and exchanging human resources between countries, which has contributed to increased migration processes. After the structural adjustment of the Japanese economy following the energy crisis during 1973–1974. The country began to experience labor shortages, and there was a need for immigrants. In 1981, Japan acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. The conditions for entry into the country are made easier for professionals, but at the same time, the entry of unskilled workers is restricted.

Evolution of Immigration Policies

The policy of attracting highly qualified specialists has prevailed since the 1990s and up to the present day. The Japanese Migration Service grants foreigners 28 residence statuses in Japan, sixteen allowing them to perform permitted work activities (Shevtsova, 2009). The Japanese government's strategy for the immigration movement has three directions. The first is recruiting students and trainees; this type of immigration was conceived as an element of transferring new technologies to developing countries. The second is for the descendants of Japanese emigrants: the Japanese government grants them some facilitated entry into the country and employment. The third direction is used by irregular migrants, who enter on tourist visas and then stay to work—they are being actively dealt with, fined, and deported (Streltsova, 2018). Japan's population has remained ethnically homogeneous for quite a long time: the number of foreigners in the territory has not exceeded 1%. However, due to changing economic and social conditions (demographic crisis, labor shortages, and globalization processes), the government has had to modernize its migration legislation and allow more foreigners into the country. At the moment, the ethnic and racial composition of the country is as follows: Japanese—98.5%, Koreans—0.5%, Chinese—0.4%, and others—0.6%. There are currently 2,951,365 officially registered immigrants in Japan. Detailed statistics can be seen below in Table 1.

Asia		Europe		Africa		North America	
2,449,373		79,066		17,710		75,953	
Country	Total*	Country	Total *	Country	Total*	Country	Total*
Afghanistan	3,482	Albania	102	Algeria	252	Antigua and Barbuda	9
Armenia	59	Andorra	3	Angola	87	Bahamas	22
Azerbaijan	156	Austria	684	Benin	137	Barbados	38
Bahrain	45	Belarus	380	Botswana	78	Belize	9
Bangladesh	17,757	Belgium	996	Burkina Faso	163	Canada	10,949
Bhutan	514	Bosnia and Herzegovina	58	Burundi	35	Costa Rica	233
Brunei	64	Bulgaria	502	Cameroon	1,127	Cuba	341
Cambodia	16,898	Croatia	161	Cape Verde	14	Dominica	17
China	801,357	Cyprus	53	Central African Republic	26	Dominican Republic	972

East Timor	36	Czech Republic	459	Chad	4	El Salvador	156
Georgia	81	Denmark	630	Comoros	3	Grenada	5
India	40,798	Estonia	165	Côte d'Ivoire	205	Guatemala	178
Indonesia	67,051	Finland	716	Democratic Republic of the Congo	564	Haiti	43
Iran	4,289	France	14,046	Djibouti	30	Honduras	161
Iraq	255	Germany	7,263	Egypt	2,315	Jamaica	992
Israel	702	Greece	406	Equatorial Guinea	5	Mexico	298
Jordan	246	Hungary	774	Eritrea	52	Nicaragua	101
Kazakhstan	524	Iceland	50	Ethiopia	506	Panama	91
Kuwait	89	Ireland	1,285	Gabon	58	Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	188
Kyrgyzstan	631	Italy	4,695	Gambia	102	Saint Lucia	8
Laos	2,973	Latvia	137	Ghana	261	St Vincent	6
Lebanon	183	Liechtenstein	10	Guinea	502	St. Kitts and Nevis	12
Malaysia	10,996	Lithuania	342	Guinea-Bissau	12	USA	61,124
Maldives	60	Luxembourg	63	Kenya	835	South America	
Maldives	60	Malta	29	Lesotho	31	274463	
Mongolia	13,601	Moldova	181	Liberia	68	Country	Total*
Myanmar	3,506	Monaco	2	Libya	95	Argentina	3,105
Nepal	97,966	Montenegro	10	Madagascar	163	Bolivia	6,118
North Korea	436,791	Netherlands	1,458	Malawi	139	Brazil	211,495
Oman	50	Northern Macedonia	51	Mali	217	Chile	1
Pakistan	19,156	Norway	496	Mauritania	32	Colombia	2,545

Palestine	85	Poland	1,598	Mauritius	161	Ecuador	251
Philippines	292,649	Portugal	655	Morocco	710	Guyana	22
Qatar	71	Republic of Kosovo	21	Mozambique	143	Paraguay	2,176
Saudi Arabia	723	Romania	2,404	Namibia	40	Peru	48,613
Singapore	3,168	Russia	10,427	Niger	28	Suriname	7
South Korea	27,695	San Marino	1	Nigeria	3,439	Uruguay	130
Sri Lanka	29,517	Serbia	274	Republic of Congo	49	Venezuela	611
Syria	951	Serbia and Montenegro	4	Republic of South Sudan	39	Oceania	
Taiwan	60,449	Slovakia	321	Rwanda	103	15,415	
Tajikistan	230	Slovenia	115	Senegal	1,039	Country	Total*
Thailand	54,999	Spain	3,722	Sierra Leone	65	Australia	11,018
Turkey	7,058	Sweden	1,695	Somalia	27	Fiji	317
Turkmenistan	64	Switzerland	1,226	South Africa	1,133	Kiribati	8
United Arab Emirates	148	Ukraine	2,075	Sudan	364	Marshall	35
Uzbekistan	3,686	United Kingdom	18,317	Swaziland	7	Micronesia	66
Vietnam	427,367	Vatican City	4	Tunisia	806	Nauru	6
Yemen	137			Uganda	942	New Zealand	3,548
Stateless				Zambia	240	Palau	45
666				Zimbabwe	257	Papua New Guinea	64
						Samoa	79
						Solomon	39
						Tonga	186
						Tuvalu	4
						Vanuatu	14

Note: * Total number of registered immigrants

Table 1: Registered immigrants in Japan (source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2022).

Regarding gender composition, there are slightly more women: 1,425,043 men and 1,460,861 women. Regarding age composition, men outnumber women in the more working age range (from 20 to 35 years old). However, the quantitative difference favors women from 0 to 19 years old and from 36 to 80 years old. Foreigners' three main residence statuses are permanent residence—780,000, vocational training—370,000, and study abroad—340,000. Of the total number of foreigners, 1.46 million are foreign workers. The top three in terms of residence status are 500,000 based on their status (permanent residence, marriage, etc.), 340,000 unqualified (study abroad, etc.), and 310,000 in technical apprenticeship (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2022). To facilitate the compilation of statistics on external migration, foreigners fill in an 18-question questionnaire that includes name, sex, date and place of birth, nationality, status, occupation, passport number, date of issue, period of residence, place of residence, place of occupation, info on family members and relatives. Migrants have been drawn to countries with a high standard of living, including Japan. A high standard of living implies a developed economy and medicine, a high level of education, science, salaries, and other factors (Komilova, 2021). The policy of isolation from other countries, which was in force from 1641 to 1853, determined the attitude of the state structures toward immigration, and thanks to that policy, the culture and traditions of Japan were preserved. In this context, studying the experience of Japanese migration control authorities is useful for better understanding and improving national legislation (Kuzmin & Yurkovskiy, 2016; Karpova & Karpov, 2019).

After the forcible opening of the country by the Western powers and the declaration of the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government faced the rather important task of forming bodies that would represent the executive, administrative, legislative, and judicial powers. Hence, in 1871, the Japanese Ministry of Justice was formed, and immigration authorities began to be established. D. MacArthur tried to change Japan's legal system to democratize its society; his efforts and endeavors were successful. As a result, the Constitution of Japan was adopted in 1947, and it is still relevant today. In 1950, an immigration agency was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; in 1951, an "Immigration Control Order" was enacted, and in 1952, the Foreigners' Registration Act was adopted and came into force. At that time, the foreign national policy focused on the permanent ethnic Koreans and Chinese "Zainichi" residing in Japan. In the mid-1960s, industry began to conscript and admit unskilled workers because of labor shortages. However, under the First Basic Employment Measures Plan (1967), foreign workers were not allowed into the country, making these unskilled workers' presence in the country illegal. This principle was maintained in the Second (1973) and Third Basic Employment Measures Plan (1976). In the late 1970s, the number of refugees from Indochina, foreign women from Southeast Asia, second- and third-generation Japanese displaced to China during World War II, and Europeans and North Americans coming to Japan for business increased. When the yen appreciated markedly after the "Plaza" Agreement

was signed in 1985, Japanese companies expanded overseas, mainly into Southeast Asia, and one of the consequences of this was the emergence of the problem of “industrial displacement” in Japan. Around the same time, there was an increase in the number of *nikkeijin* immigrants (emigrants from Japan and their descendants) from South America and foreign workers from Asian countries who came to Japan in search of work (Matrusova, 2016).

The Sixth Basic Employment Measures Plan (1988) divided foreign workers into “professional and technical workers” and “unskilled workers”. The policy adopted for these two categories was to facilitate the immigration of professional and technical workers and, as far as possible, to accept unskilled workers in a limited and careful manner. Under this policy, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was revised in 1989.

Shifting Immigration Policies in the 1990s to Present

The changes came into force in 1990, when a new residence status, “trainee,” was introduced for foreigners. In response to the Second Report of the Third Special Advisory Council for the Enforcement of Administrative Reform in 1993, the “Foreign Worker Vocational Training System” was established, and the residence status system under which foreigners were allowed to live in Japan was further developed. As Japan’s economy became mired in deflation following the bubble’s collapse in the late 1990s, Japanese manufacturers continued to shift their production operations to other countries. Overseas, the Chinese economy gained prominence, and international competition intensified. During this period, an increasing number of *nikkeijin* and other foreign nationals took non-permanent jobs. Partly because of the relaxation of requirements for permanent residence permits in 1998, foreign workers who had initially come to Japan as temporary “guest workers” increasingly began to stay for long periods (The Japan Institute, 2016). As more foreign nationals settled permanently, the number of young foreigners also increased. With this, the problems of foreign workers took on a new character, now including not only employment and work but also domestic and other social problems (Chernobay et al., 2022).

The Anti-Employment Act was amended in 2007 to oblige the government to take action. For example, the Government was required to promote the employment of foreign nationals in specialized technical fields, to take measures to promote the proper management of the employment of foreign workers and the re-employment of those who quit their jobs, to take measures to prevent the illegal employment of foreign workers and to improve employers’ management of the employment of foreigners (Decree of the Ministry of Justice, 1990). The simultaneous global recession of the autumn of 2008 also left a deep mark on the employment of foreign workers. Unemployed foreign nationals visited “Hello Work” centers (employment service centers) in search of work, but very few were able to find work. Some foreign

nationals not enrolled in social security or unemployment insurance found themselves unprotected by social protection programs and were stranded. In 2009, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was amended, and “technical apprenticeship” was established as a new residence status. The Act was amended again in July 2012, along with other legislation. This repealed the Aliens’ Registration Act and introduced a new residence management system.

Meanwhile, with the expansion of overseas businesses and international transactions, attracting and securing global human resources has become an urgent task for corporate interests. The number of companies hiring foreign students and recruiting foreign staff has gradually increased. Since May 2012, highly skilled foreign professionals have enjoyed preferential immigration treatment based on a point system as part of a government campaign to encourage the admission of such personnel. In 2014, the Japan Renaissance Strategy was announced. It included the recruitment of talented foreign skilled labor, the use of foreign labor in construction and shipbuilding, the adjustment of technical training and skill development programs for foreign trainees, the admission of foreign employees to manufacturing companies, support for the employment of foreign students in the medical field, and, in particular, home care for the sick and elderly. The strategy calls for caution to avoid confusion between the foreign recruitment policy and the immigration policy (Abe, 2013).

In 2012, Japan underwent a revival program to increase the annual number of tourists to twenty million. Certain measures were taken to achieve the goal, in particular, to make it easier to obtain a visa or to abolish the visa regime altogether. One example of implementing this process is that 19,690,000 tourists came to Japan. Compared to 2014, the number of tourists exceeded by almost six million. This beats a new challenge for the state as part of increasing the number of workers in the migration department. The Migration Service has added 162 employees to its ranks in order to carry out the work of controlling arrivals to the country. Most people arriving in Japan from different countries fly into the country’s biggest airports. The number of migration officers has increased at airports such as Narita, Haneda, Chubu, Kansai, and Naha.

Migration relations were established by the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, 1951). This Act aimed to control the exit and entry into the country. In order to realize this objective, it was necessary to maintain a balance between deporting migrants and accepting people of other nationalities coming into the country. Entry into Japan can be refused to aliens on fourteen grounds specified in the Act. An entry permit may be granted before or after entry. An entering foreigner intending to work must certify that he or she meets the conditions for working residence status included in the lists annexed to the Act. The Act established residence statuses for foreigners, defining permissible activities for each. Over time, a growing influx of foreigners has come to work in Japan. This was facilitated by changes in the economic situation in Japan’s domestic

and foreign markets. It became necessary to update the 1951 Law to regulate modified labor immigration.

Role and Structure of the Japanese Immigration Authority

Thus, in 1990, a new Immigration Control Law (Cabinet Order No. 319, 1990) was drafted, which changed the conditions of the employment system for foreign workers. It was mainly aimed at facilitating entry, tightening measures against illegal labor activities of foreigners, and setting certain requirements for foreign workers. The law also defined a clear structure, duties, and rights of the migration authority—the Immigration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice. The task of the Immigration Bureau is to prevent terrorist acts and attempts to enter the territory of the state illegally. The Immigration Bureau of Japan is a department of the Ministry of Justice. Its task is to regulate the movement of migrants within the limits of the law. It consists of several divisions headed by a director general. One of the aims of the immigration office is to regulate the movement of foreigners. The office consists of seven divisions with their own aims and tasks. The first division has the task of regulating the bureau's work, including the remaining divisions. The second division aims to assist refugees and to assign them their status. The third keeps statistics on foreigners and deals with their registration. The fourth exists to combat illegal immigrants. The fifth monitors migrants' orders. The sixth division deals with litigation and legal proceedings against foreign nationals who break the law. The last division helps find accommodation and employment and deals with education. In addition to the main section, the immigration authority has regional bureaus and immigrant advice centers. All of the offices are located in the individual regions. The staff at the Bureau for Immigration have a great deal of work to do with foreign nationals (The Japan Institute, 2016).

According to information from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Migration Database (OECD.Stat, 2017), Japan ranked fourth in terms of growth in the number of foreign residents in 2015 and 2016. The government is seeking to increase this type of migration even further by creating a new visa status for workers, for which a cabinet commission has been set up. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo spoke of the need to create a system to accommodate different workers from other countries who can start work immediately (Abe, 2013). Many local governments are working to integrate foreign residents into Japanese society. For example, the city of Akitakata in Hiroshima Prefecture has been actively working to attract foreigners since 2010. Mayor H. Kazuyoshi commented: "The way for municipalities such as ours that are suffering from depopulation to survive is to attract the attention of people around the world. Now is not the time to say, 'I can't live with foreigners.' We need to learn how to create a successful multicultural community" (Serisawa, 2018). According to the influential *New York Times*, the measure is a remarkable turnaround for Japan, which has surprised the world. The country, which

once embraced big restrictions on immigration, is now reluctantly moving in the other direction and beckoning foreigners into the country (Rich, 2018).

The Japanese government is looking for other ways to attract foreigners, such as studying. For example, over the past ten years, the government has adopted a plan to attract about three hundred thousand foreign students, but the plan has been exceeded (Nebashi, 2017; Stokes & Devlin, 2018). What are the reasons? Initially, the question was only about the image of Japan, i.e., “to make Japan a more open country, to promote cultural exchange by creating an environment that would attract foreign tourists.” The first setback to the plan came when the government allowed students to work part-time. By law, people with a student visa can work up to twenty-eight hours a week, and during holidays, they can work up to forty hours a week, which is very different from the world’s norms for part-time work. For example, in the United States or Canada, people with a student visa cannot have a job at all (Palmer & Drbohlav, 2022). Therefore, the Japanese government expects students to become part of the workforce while studying here, as the country is experiencing an acute labor shortage due to a shrinking population. More than 90% of foreign students are employed in some kind of job while studying in Japan. Still, Japan is gradually making it easier for migrant workers to enter (BBC News Japan, 2018). In December 2018, the upper house of parliament passed amendments to the law concerning migration policy. Thanks to the new visa system, hundreds of thousands of migrants were able to come to Japan, where there are very few foreigners, in 2019. The easing applies primarily to areas with a particular shortage of workers: construction, agriculture, and care for the sick and the elderly (BBC News Japan, 2018). Hence, the Japanese government is trying to attract as many immigrants to the country as possible, as their employment is directly linked to the Japanese economy.

Recent Trends and Challenges in Immigration

Forming a strategic direction for social security is important in building a modern welfare state because infrastructure development often determines the standard of living and quality of life (Molodyakova, 2002; Abdulkabatova, 2010). Therefore, social welfare becomes a key topic when considering any aspect of society. Immigration is a key issue on Japan’s political and economic agenda, so it is important to define the place of immigrants in the country’s social infrastructure. Social welfare systems in Japan consist of insurance and social assistance programs that maximize the prevention of risks and threats to a citizen’s life. Social assistance programs are particularly important for the realization of people’s right to a “full and dignified life,” at least as a basis and to be a “last resort” for social security (UNDP Kazakhstan, 2004). The current social infrastructure system was not designed to respond to problems such as low birth rates and an aging population. In addition, an unexpected situation has emerged—the rapid growth of foreign workers and settlers—requiring an urgent response. Toshiaki (2020), in his work “Social Integration of Japanese

Immigrants,” held a dialogue with experts on immigrant and refugee issues, in which experts explained the economic disadvantage of attracting foreigners to the country. An important reason for this was the social security of immigrants. According to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations Conference, 1951), ratified by Japan in 1951, social security is, in principle, indiscriminate both inside and outside the country. In other words, “both Japanese and foreigners are treated equally,” and there are no restrictions on the use of social support depending on nationality (Davis & Ikeno, 2008).

The essence of the problem is that social security is based on long-term participation. That is, the state allocates various resources to support a population that will contribute to the country’s development in the long run. For example, to medical care, services on which the average Japanese spends between 20 and 30 million yen per lifetime. The whole social security mechanism only works by investing a large sum of money. Therefore, if foreign workers and settlers come to Japan for a short period, the burden of staying may exceed the benefit of their work, negatively affecting the maintenance of the social system. What is needed now is a fair and rational system that facilitates its maintenance, which will work for both Japanese and foreigners (Kohei, 2019).

Foreigners working in Japan can be divided into two types: those employed in Japan (locally hired foreigners) and those arriving from foreign companies (expats). In the case of locally employed foreigners, they are covered by social and health insurance, social pensions, and employment insurance, except for some workers (working for a certain period). When such a foreign worker is hired or, conversely, dismissed, the place of business must inform the “Hello Work” centers of the foreign worker’s name and residence status. In the case of expats, they provide labor to a Japanese business establishment and receive compensation from it. Alternatively, the insurer will make an exhaustive judgment based on the application status of the rules of the respective business establishment. The Social Insurance Office considers that if the Japanese commercial establishment pays the main wage, there is a significant consumer dependency, and it determines that social insurance is compulsory. If the Japanese office only provides accommodation and the basic salary is not paid, it can be decided that the person does not need social insurance. The judgment criteria differ according to the conditions of employment. Foreigners who work for a short period (usually five years or less) may be exempt from receiving social insurance in Japan according to the social security agreements with each country.

Another social security problem has been the present situation regarding foreigners’ use of health insurance. At the moment, about 10% of health insurance card holders are foreigners (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2023). Attention must be drawn to the full-scale growth of foreign workers due to the revision of the Immigration Control and Asylum Act. The problems can be divided into several types depending on whether the insurance user is a person, family, or third party and whether the place of use is local (foreign) or home. The first case is a medical

examination at home by dependent relatives. This is because the union health insurance has insured dependent relatives up to the third degree. In this case, difficulties arise because the kinship cannot always be confirmed, which could be abused. The second case is when dependent relatives come to Japan for a medical examination in Japan. This is the case when a person becomes a dependent relative after an illness or enters the country for medical treatment; you register with the public health insurance system and undergo a medical examination. A concrete example can be given for a better understanding of the situation. A Chinese woman in her sixties, supporting herself and her retired husband, was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in China. She found out that there was a cheap way to get advanced treatment in Japan, so she came to Japan. Her daughter, who was married to a Japanese man, lived in Japan. The Chinese woman came to Japan, where her Japanese son-in-law became her guardian, and she joined the National Health Insurance Scheme. Her total medical expenses, including surgery, would have been more than 2 million yen, yet she paid about 200,000 yen (Toshiaki, 2020).

The third case occurs when a person enters Japan to undergo a medical examination to join the National Health Insurance Scheme, pretending that the purpose of visiting Japan is to study abroad. According to media reports, the National Centre for Global Health and Medicine, which receives about twenty thousand foreigners a year, conducted a fact-finding study two years ago. As a result, 140 foreign patients were suspected of illegally obtaining a health insurance card. It was pointed out that there were cases of people entering Japan to study who were hospitalized immediately after joining the National Health Insurance Scheme, as well as cases of many foreigners having the same address on their health insurance cards. According to a 2018 fact-finding survey conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, there were 1,597 cases of expensive medical examinations worth 800,000 yen within six months of joining the National Health Insurance Scheme. Several cases of disguised visits to Japan were confirmed. Fourthly, unauthorized use of the health insurance card by a third party (using another person's health insurance). Sometimes, advertisements from people asking to borrow a health insurance card can be found on social media. There is even a Chinese website advertising the use of Japanese medicine, 30% of which is paid for out of pocket.

There are also concerns about the illegal receipt of a lump-sum birth grant, which is a subsidy for the birth of a child. The national health insurance scheme provides 420,000 yen for a child, which also applies to foreigners. Some foreign pregnant women receive a visa to stay in Japan for more than three months. This way, they can join the public health insurance system and receive a lump sum payment for childbirth and childcare. In 2016, the lump sum payment for childbirth and childcare in the Tokyo-Arakawa special district was 304 cases (127 million yen), of which 168 were Japanese women and 136 foreign women. Of the foreign women, forty-nine gave birth abroad (one in the United States, one in Thailand, two in Australia, seven in Vietnam, and thirty-one in China). The main purpose of the lump-sum birth

and maternity allowance is to counteract the decline in fertility. This measure only pays off if a child born in Japan stays and grows up in Japan. In 2017, the number of people covered by the National Health Insurance was 2,945 million. Of these, 990,000 were foreigners, or 3.4% of the total, over 10% in urban areas. The proportion of foreigners by age is 4.3% from 0 to 19 years, 11.8% from 20 to 39 years (this is the main age group of foreign workers), 2.8% from 40 to 64 years, and 0.4% from 65 years. The number of foreign residents will increase in the future, with the total number exceeding 10% (Kohei, 2019).

Social Security and Health Insurance Issues

The increase in the proportion of foreigners in the public health insurance system will be influenced by the increase in permanent foreign residents and the government's recommendation on medical tourism. Japan encourages the correct use of medical care, but there is a possibility that the number of illegal cases described above will increase. Measures are being taken to eliminate the violation of the law. For example, since 2016, attaching a "certificate of overseas travel" and a "consent form to request the contents of treatment" to applications for medical expenses abroad has become mandatory. When a health insurance association examines an insured person, he or she must now present a certificate of transfer. Additional identification measures must also be taken. For example, at the moment, insurance cards do not have a photo of the holder's face, which makes them easy to forge and misuse. Further, social workers and medical interpreters should be sent to hospitals. A full examination of the medical condition and circumstances is directly linked to preventing fraud. With regard to consultation with the above-mentioned third-degree dependent relatives, the requirements for their residence in Japan will be changed. In other words, relatives living abroad are excluded from being possible wards. It is difficult to confirm the blood relationship and the actual situation of dependents in the foreigner's country of residence, and the requirements are stricter due to the possibility of unauthorized use (Toshiaki, 2020).

When it comes to education, foreigners have the exact same rights and conditions as Japanese. Public education in primary and secondary schools is free for all, while high school and higher education are subject to a fee. The only costs for school are the purchase of school uniforms and stationery, but you will be required to pay some costs for lunches, school supplies, uniforms, and contributions to the Parents' Board of Trustees. International students in Japan have the same rights as local students. To enroll a child in school, the parent must register his or her address with the local municipality. Once he or she does so, the child will be assigned to a specific school. The child must meet the following requirements: the appropriate age for the school year in which they are enrolled; an enrolment form; references from the previous school; and a residence permit. Some private international and international schools also accept both Japanese and foreigners. It can be concluded that

in the field of social security, the Japanese government tries to maintain a balance between the population and provide foreign residents with the same social security conditions as Japanese citizens. However, because social security for Japanese citizens only benefits the government in the long term, it is not profitable to provide it for foreign residents, who mostly come for relatively short periods. Therefore, measures are now being taken to solve this problem. The parliament is developing special social security and insurance schemes for foreigners to give full assurance and security during their stay in Japan.

Migrants in Japan's Labor Market: Addressing Workforce Challenges and Immigration Reforms

Migrants in the labor market. Today, almost 3 million migrants live in Japan out of a population of 126 million. That is three times more than in 1990. As Japan grapples with a rapidly aging population and a shrinking domestic workforce, it aims to increase that number further. In April 2019, Tokyo introduced historic immigration reform, expanding visa programs to allow more than 345,000 new workers to immigrate to Japan over the next five years. Low-skilled workers will be able to reside in Japan for five years, while foreign workers with special skills will be allowed to stay indefinitely with their families, suggesting that many of these workers may stay permanently. Japan's foreign labor problem became an important labor market issue in the 1980s. This was because the Japanese economy was very active at the time, economic indicators were growing, and Japan invested heavily in foreign capital. As a result, the Japanese market was open to foreign companies, and the immigration of foreign workers increased. Finding work abroad was a serious problem. Thus, illegal immigration attracted the government's attention (Matrusova, 2016). The immigration policy at the time allowed only a temporary presence of foreigners. At the same time, the use of illegal labor was spreading actively, also for long periods. Most illegal immigrants were from South and Southeast Asia and worked in small businesses and industries. This rapid spread of illegal immigrant labor was facilitated by rather lenient legislation and also an acute shortage of labor previously not filled by the local population (construction, industry) (Makhazhanova et al., 2022).

To remedy the situation, the Japanese government hired experts to analyze the impact of the internationalization of the Japanese economy on the labor market and to predict its possible consequences. As a result of the studies, several projects were proposed to the government, including new entry conditions for immigrants, changing the provisions on immigrant status, and modifying the registration procedure for foreigners entering the country. As a result, a new immigration law was passed in 1990, which changed the immigration rules for foreign workers. According to the new law, the conditions of stay for foreigners were eased, and their rights were extended to facilitate the arrival of highly skilled professionals. A new residence status, *teijusha*, was introduced, which implied long-term residence. Secondly, the

prohibition of immigration aimed at labor activity without a special status to work (illegal immigration) was reiterated. The law increased penalties and sanctions for violating the law and broadened the concepts of criminal offenses. Not only illegal labor immigrants but also employers, recruitment agencies, and intermediaries have now been criminalized. The third addition to the Act established certain conditions that all labor immigrants must meet. The file management system was greatly simplified. All this simplified the migration process for foreign workers. The last addition restructured the education (or further training) system for foreign workers. In September 1990, the law was changed to allow Japanese employers to train foreigners in industrial enterprises. If a foreigner took up employment under such conditions, he or she was awarded a special “apprentice” status and the right to reside in Japan for two years (Siu & Koo, 2021).

As a result, in the late 1990s, Japan’s migration policy began to adjust in response to the new conditions of a globalized Japanese economy. Furthermore, contrary to a history of political “bending” and limiting the entry of unskilled workers, the Japanese region opened its labor market, partly due to recent legislation. Access to the labor market was opened primarily by the descendants of Japanese (excluding refugees and those exported from Korea and China) who emigrated (*nikkeijin*) to the Latin American region in the early twentieth century, which attracted many immigrants from the same countries. According to renowned Japanese scholars, the special status of the *nikkeijin* has put them in a more favorable position in the labor market than other categories of foreign workers. In the 1990s, the *nikkeijin* practically disappeared from the smallest enterprises and displaced, at least partially, illegals from other countries from medium-sized enterprises. Overall, the labor market, particularly its foreign part, has increasingly attracted Japanese entrepreneurs with its prospects. Although major changes were made in the entry and exit conditions for foreign workers residing in Japan, many serious problems arose in this area in the second half of the twentieth century. This primarily concerned unskilled foreign workers (Mori, 1999).

Studies conducted before the Immigration Control Act was passed have shown that for Japan to attract and utilize the talents of a highly skilled foreign workforce, this very foreign workforce needs to be trained in Japan itself. The practice of training foreigners for work already existed before mass immigration began back in the 1960s. At that time, however, the prerogative of Japanese multinational corporations prepared a foreign contingent of their personnel in Japan for subsequent work in foreign branches (Dzhulai, 2023). Studies conducted before the Act came into force show that Japan needs to train these foreign workers in Japan in order to attract more foreign workers with high qualifications. The practice of vocational training for foreigners existed long before mass migration began in the 1960s. However, back then, Japanese multinational corporations were the only ones to perform this technique of training foreign workers to prepare employees to work in the company’s overseas subsidiaries (Pavlyatenko, 2008; Avetisyan, 2016).

Multinational corporations have set themselves a set of goals, and two of them are now a priority. The first is relocating large offshore production facilities, mainly to Southeast Asia, exacerbating the problem of foreign companies and Japan coordinating their scientific research production units. Another is the promotion of qualification of company employees in Japan to take advantage of the latest technologies that have not yet been used in foreign production processes. The practice of training and qualification in Japan was on the rise because obtaining the necessary knowledge locally was impossible. However, how multinational companies solve this problem does not compare with the Japanese government's plan to attract highly skilled workers through immigration. Moreover, there is now a tendency for highly skilled foreigners to arrive (Komilova et al., 2020). Small companies are in great need of them and take them on as workers. The situation in this area and the lack of means of production, labor force, and resources to improve the situation for them encourage such immigration in the first place (Kerimkhulle et al., 2022).

Japan's current labor market situation is inextricably linked to the status of foreign residents. Employment-related residency statuses include diplomat, official, professor, artist, religious worker, journalist, business manager, lawyer/accountant, medical worker, researcher, instructor, engineer, humanities specialist, artist, skilled worker, technical trainee, cultural worker, short-term visitor to the country, student, trainee, etc. Of these statuses, those ranging from "diplomat" to "technical trainee" allow for gainful activities. In addition, foreign nationals granted residence status for "certain activities" may engage in commercial activities outside their status, but only if allowed to engage in these specific activities. Foreigners with one of the statuses ranging from cultural activity to dependent may not engage in profit-making activities. However, they may engage in certain profit-making activities if allowed to do so in certain areas outside their residence status. Residence statuses arising from a person's personal situation include permanent resident, spouse or child of a Japanese citizen, spouse or child of a permanent resident, and long-term resident. Holders of these status categories may engage in any type of employment activity, regardless of whether it is unskilled or highly skilled.

CONCLUSIONS

The migration policy of any state should ensure a high level of protection of the national economy, address employment problems within the country by regulating the number of foreign labor force, and rationally use the migrant workers arriving in the country in the economic and political interests of the importing country. It is worth noting that Japan, in its state policy, has been able to take quite effective measures to regulate migration. The migration concept has a number of strengths and merits and has proven to be effective. The stability of the labor market, high employment rates, and low unemployment rates are indicators of its effectiveness.

To summarize all the main conclusions of the paper, it can be argued that the legislative framework is important in dealing with migrants, which in Japan is recognized as highly effective; in general, the mechanism formed by the Japanese government for dealing with the migrant population copes with all its tasks. In the course of the work, the main problems of adapting to life in Japan were identified, which are the focus of the governing authorities. Despite Japan's measures, it is clear that the biggest dilemma for Japan remains the question of the need for immigrants, as opinions on the matter are sharply divided: the political elite sees no need to change their position on the issue, and representatives of the business community want to attract more and more migrants. Labor shortages are particularly acute in the healthcare, agriculture, construction, and information technology sectors. To address this, Japan has been looking to attract foreign workers to fill these gaps. Many experts argue that Japan will have to open the door to new immigrants due to the aging demographic situation, labor shortages, and other factors. For now, Japan is not ready to completely rethink its immigration policy and offer a way out of a state in which there is a progressive and accelerating process of population aging and, as a consequence, a decreasing proportion of working-age people and slower economic growth.

In conclusion, Japan's immigration policies have evolved significantly over the years, driven by economic needs, demographic shifts, and changing global dynamics. While the country has moved toward a more open stance on immigration, it continues to balance preserving its cultural identity with the practical realities of labor shortages and demographic challenges. The ongoing discussions and adjustments to immigration policies will play a crucial role in shaping Japan's future as a diverse and dynamic society. The scientific value of studying migrant issues in contemporary Japan extends across numerous disciplines, offering insights into demographic shifts, labor markets, social dynamics, cultural interactions, policy effectiveness, and more. This research informs policy decisions and contributes to broader academic understanding and global discussions on migration and diversity.

The future of immigration and social security in Japan presents a complex set of challenges and opportunities. As the country grapples with an aging population, low birth rates, and labor shortages, immigration will likely play a crucial role in shaping its social and economic landscape. Public Perception and Attitudes could be the perspective area for further research on this topic. Attitudes toward immigrants can shape policy decisions and societal dynamics. Research on public perception, stereotypes, and xenophobia can inform efforts to promote inclusivity and combat negative biases.

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POVZETEK

MIGRANTSKI IZZIVI V SODOBNI JAPONSKI

Aigerim Adilgazinova, Lyailya Balakayeva, Mara Gubaidullina

Avtorice v prispevku obravnavajo migrantske izzive v sodobni japonski družbi. Predstavijo zgodovinski kontekst emigracijskih trendov na Japonskem in razvoj politik priseljevanja skozi čas. Japonska, ki je nekoč veljala za državo izseljevanja, se danes osredotoča na strateško priseljevanje za reševanje težave pomanjkanja delovne sile. Med najpomembnejše spremembe v imigracijski politiki sodita uvedba statusa stalnega prebivališča za pripravnike leta 1990 ter razširitev programov za pridobitev vizumov leta 2019, ki omogočata prihod več tujim delavcem.

Avtorice analizirajo vlogo in strukturo japonskega urada za priseljevanje pri regulaciji migracijskih procesov. Izpostavljajo učinkovitost japonskega zakonodajnega okvira pri upravljanju migrantov. Urad za priseljevanje je odgovoren za nadzor vstopanja v državo in izstopanja iz nje ter določa merila za upravičenost do različnih rezidenčnih statusov, vezanih na zaposlitev. Na Japonskem je trenutno po uradnih podatkih več kot 2,9 milijona priseljencev, kar kaže na trend naraščanja števila migrantov.

V nadaljevanju avtorice predstavijo izzive, povezane z vključevanjem migrantov v družbo in na trg dela. Slednji vključujejo plačevanje socialnih prispevkov, goljufije na področju zdravstvenega zavarovanja ter neustrezno upravljanje tujih delavcev s strani delodajalcev. Japonska želi zaradi pomanjkanja delovne sile v sektorjih, kot sta zdravstvo in gradbeništvo, privabiti več priseljencev, vendar pa ta cilj še vedno usklajuje s ciljem ohranjanja kulturne identitete. Eden od predlogov je vzpostavitev posebnih sistemov socialne varnosti za tujce.

Japonski mehanizem za upravljanje priseljevanja je v splošnem učinkovit, kljub temu pa se še vedno pojavljajo določene težave pri prilagajanju in vključevanju priseljencev. Avtorice v prispevku ugotavljajo, da se bo morala Japonska glede na demografske in gospodarske razmere v državi verjetno še naprej odpirati priseljenjem, čeprav je mnenje javnosti do nadaljnjega priseljevanja še vedno neenotno.

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