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Japan's Future as an International, Multicultural Society: From Migrants to Immigrants

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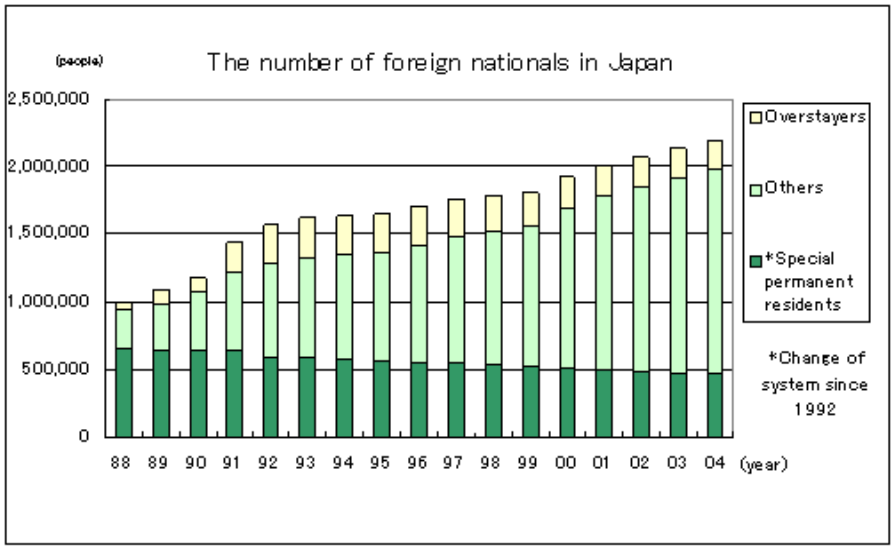
Summary

Despite an express policy against importing unskilled foreign labor, the Government of Japan (GOJ) since 1990 has been following an unacknowledged backdoor "guest worker" program to alleviate a labor shortage that threatens to become chronic. Through its "Student", "Entertainer", "Nikkei repatriation", "Researcher", "Trainee", and "Intern" Visa programs, the GOJ has imported hundreds of thousands of cost-effective Non-Japanese (NJ) laborers to stem the "hollowing out" (i.e. outsourcing, relocation, or bankruptcy) of Japan's domestic industry at all levels.

As in many countries including the United States, France and South Korea, immigration has become a hotly-debated subject. While Japan's immigrant population is much smaller than that of many European and North American countries, there is growing reliance on foreign labor resulting in a doubling of the number of registered NJ in Japan since 1990.



Despite their importance to Japan's economy, this has not resulted in general acceptance of these laborers as "residents", or as regular "full-time workers" entitled to the same social benefits under labor laws as Japanese workers (such as a minimum wage, health or unemployment insurance). Moreover, insufficient GOJ regulation has resulted in labor abuses (exploitative or coercive labor, child labor, sundry human rights violations), to the degree that the GOJ now proposes to "fix" the system by 2009. The current debate among ministries, however, is not focused on finding ways to help NJ workers to assimilate to Japan. Rather it has the effect of making it ever clearer that they are really only temporary and expendable. The most powerful actor in the debate is the Justice Ministry. Its minister under the former Abe administration proposed term-limited revolving-door employment for NJ workers. Meanwhile, one consequence of the present visa regime is a growing underclass of NJ children, with neither sufficient language abilities nor education to develop employable skills and adjust to Japanese society. Nevertheless, immigration continues apace. Not only does the number of foreign workers grow, but Regular Permanent Residents (RPRs) also increase by double-digit percentages every year. By the end of 2007, the number of RPRs will surpass the number of generational Zainichi Permanent Residents of Korean and Taiwan origins. In conclusion, Japan is no exception to the forces of globalization and international migrant labor. The GOJ needs to create appropriate policies that will enable migrant workers and their families to integrate into Japanese society and to find appropriate jobs that will maximize their contributions at a time when Japan faces acute labor shortages that will increase the importance of migrants.

Introduction: Japan's *de facto* Guest Worker Program from 1990

Following its long history of importing labor from overseas (Western technical advisors during and after the Meiji Era, millions of citizens of empire and forced laborers during Japan's prewar and wartime era), the postwar Japanese government (GOJ) has had the express policy of "no unskilled Non-Japanese labor", relying more on women, the elderly, and automation to keep domestic industries humming.[1] However, as Japan's Bubble Economy of the 1980's began to wane, and government and business leaders realized that Japan's wealth and high exchange rates had priced its goods out of the international market, many labor intensive industries including textiles, shoes, and toys) relocated overseas or went bankrupt. At the same time, with declining birth rates, since 1990 Japan has faced a growing labor shortage: according to the Labor Ministry 58% of all domestic manufacturers were "labor deficient". At one level, the problem was simple. Japan's economy had become larger than all other Asian economies *combined*, and wage levels were high, making it exceptionally attractive to outsiders.

However, the GOJ resisted the path of encouraging labor migration taken by such nations as the United States, Canada, France, Germany and Australia in order to assure a labor supply that could sustain steady growth[2]. Instead of switching to services, the GOJ sought to make Japanese goods internationally competitive by providing incentives for cutting-edge technology research and development (famously in industries such as semiconductors, robotics, and automobiles). It also maintained a long-embedded preference wherever possible for "self-sufficiency" (*jikyuu jisoku*) , avoiding reliance on foreign markets to supply essentials, including foreign labor.

However, demographic pressures made importing labor unavoidable. With its low and dropping birthrate, Japan has become among the oldest in the world with fewer workers to support more aging dependents. Japanese business, particularly small- and medium-sized industries (*chuushou kigyou*) feeling the labor squeeze most acutely, began demanding that Japan loosen its grip on

immigration, to allow entry of NJ workers. Failure to do guaranteed that Japanese enterprise would relocate to other countries with cheaper labor costs, or domestic rust belts and sector-wide bankruptcies.

However, GOJ, with the support of Japan's big business leaders, particularly the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren), the nation's largest business lobby and the representative of competitive global industries, continued to restrict entry of unskilled migrant labor out of fear of crime and instability. Instead, NJ workers would be restricted to those allowed entry as "students", "trainees", "researchers", "interns", and "entertainers".

The program was presented as a form of "Overseas Development Assistance" and technological transfer (a la the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)[3]), ostensibly offering these workers opportunities to work and be trained in developed Japan, then sent back home in a few years with skills that would benefit their home countries. They would thus be no threat to the domestic labor market, as their jobs would be confined to sectors with labor shortages. Nor would they be permitted to change jobs inside Japan without leaving the country, requiring that they then find another employer, and secure a new visa all over again. It was to be a closed-factory-fishbowl of a system which severely circumscribed migrant labor and placed it under severe constraints.

In 1990, the GOJ revised its Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law to give "trainees" (*gijutsu jisshuusei*) one-year visas. Under this status, they were not legally considered "workers", so were exempt from Japanese labor laws. This meant they would not be given wages but a mandated "stipend" of 60,000 yen per month, far below the minimum wage. Moreover, employers would not be required to pay for the basic entitlements guaranteed every other person working full-time hours in Japan: minimum wage, health and unemployment insurance, annual bonus or retirement stipend. Employers were supposed to supply trainees with a full year's training in skill sets, as well as Japanese language and culture. If the trainees were sufficiently diligent, they would be given one- or two-year extensions in their visa as "interns" (*kenkyuusei*), with more labor rights and higher salaries.

By 1993, it was clear to employers that employing trainees was cheaper than interns, so a new visa status of "practical trainees" (*ginou jisshuusei*) basically extended "trainee" work conditions for two more years. Similar provisions were made for "entertainers" (*kougyou*, i.e. NJ women put to work in Japan's water-trade and nightlife industries) and "students" (*ryuugakusei* or *shuugakusei*), which brought in people from China, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and other developing countries to do unskilled and often unsavory tasks while ostensibly studying in Japan. Meanwhile, brokers and ersatz "language schools" sprang up to headhunt and launder NJ visa statuses.

One other visa status of particular note was for workers of Japanese descent (nikkei). Several countries have significant nikkei populations, including of course the US and Canada, but also Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic as a result of GOJ incentives for prewar and postwar emigration, sending the poor and underprivileged to farm overseas. Nikkei who could prove their Japanese ancestry within three generations were brought in under the "long-term resident" (*teijuusha*) and "spouse of Japanese" (*nihonjin no haguusha tou*) visas, ostensibly to "visit their ethnic homeland, travel the country, meet their Japanese relatives, learn the Japanese language, and thus explore their ethnic heritage"[4]. One incentive for choosing people with Japanese roots over, say, closer and cheaper Chinese, was the conviction that they would more readily adapt to Japanese society. Moreover, nikkei visas have no restrictions on work activity, and can be renewed indefinitely. In this way, the walls of the factory fishbowl thus became more porous.

Many NJ did stay on indefinitely. As of the end of 2006, these visa programs had helped double the number of registered NJ in Japan to more than two million, and changed their demographics significantly. From negligible numbers twenty years ago, more than 300,000 NJ workers from Brazil alone are now registered in Japan -- the third largest nationality, behind the Koreans and Chinese -- and growing steadily. Some towns now have NJ populations of over ten percent, and companies such as Toyota, depend heavily on them. Japanese industry has become *reliant* on NJ workers.

As weekly economics magazine *Shuukan Diamondo* (June 5, 2004[5]) reports,

Cover: *"Even with the Toyota Production style, it won't work without foreigners. By 2050, Japan will need more than 33,500,000 immigrants!! Toyota's castle town overflowing with Nikkei Brazilians. An explosion of Chinese women, working 22 hour days… the dark side of foreign labor".*

Page 32: *"If SARS [pneumonia] spreads, factories 'dependent on Chinese' in Shikoku will close down".*

Page 40-41: Keidanren leader Okuda Hiroshi offers "five policies":

1) Create a "Foreigners Agency" (gaikokujin-chou);

2) Create bilateral agreements to receive "simple laborers" (tanjun roudousha);

3) Strengthen Immigration and reform labor oversight; 4) Create a policy for public safety, and environments for foreigner lifestyles (gaikokujin no seikatsu kankyou seibi);

5) Create a "Green Card" system for Japan to encourage brain drains from overseas.

This means that the original plan of closed-fishbowl, or revolving-door, employment has in fact become one leading toward ethnic immigration. Migrant has turned into immigrant. But immigrant with Japanese characteristics.

Foreigners continue to suffer disincentives and labor abuses as a result of the prevailing visa system. Horrible work conditions have been researched exhaustively by other authors[6], and I will not retread their findings here. This paper will present the most recent data available indicating the current state of problematic conditions for NJ laborers, then turn to the current debate on immigration within the Japanese ministries.

In 2000, the United Nations reported and the Obuchi Cabinet acknowledged that Japan would need to import at least 600,000 workers per year to maintain the current standard of living and tax base[7]. The current net number coming per year (January to December 2006) is about 70,000[8]--a slight increase from 2000's average of around 50,000, but clearly not enough to fill the gap. In January 2007, it was announced that Japan's population had actually decreased for the first time in 2006. Demographic forecasts suggest that the population will fall from 127 million to around 100 million by 2050. The labor shortage would not only continue, but Japan would have fewer people of any nationality to work, pay taxes, or contribute to the social safety net.

Despite this, the GOJ has continued to sit on the fence, neither acknowledging a guest-worker program, nor devising a clear immigration policy[9]. In sum, workers were encouraged to come, but the government has done little to protect and care for them. The resulting legal grey area for foreign workers has fostered multiple labor abuses. Between autumn 2006 and winter 2007, these abuses generated significant domestic press attention. This report highlights how old problems continue unabated and how local governments and Japan's civil society have stepped in to fill the gaps of GOJ negligence.

Press interest

According to Kyodo News ("Foreign trainees facing chronic abuses", January 3, 2007), for example, NJ "have been underpaid or forced to take unproductive jobs unconnected to training", or even related to the initial job the worker was brought over to do. The article cites a Chinese woman who was brought over to learn farming techniques, but was instead sent to work in a factory. Trainee monthly pay, already below Japan's legal minimum wage, is hit with additional salary deductions to match any pay rise. Overtime work is rampant, with hourly pay of only 300 yen. Shuukan Kin'youbi/Japan Times April 29, 2007, reports a figure for foreign overtime pay of only 100 yen at a subcontractor for Toyota; the corresponding monthly salary was only 58,000 yen. An academic specialist quoted called the entire visa regime "fraudulent".

According the Yomiuri Shinbun ("Factory denies Muslim basic human rights", December 5, 2006), a sewing factory required an Indonesian trainee to sign a written oath saying she would, *inter alia*, not pray five times a day, fast during Ramadan, own a cell phone, write letters, repatriate her money, ride in motor vehicles, or be outside her dormitory after 9PM. The oath was presented after the worker arrived in Japan as a condition of employment, and, having paid a lot of money to come, she was forced to sign. A source in the factory explained that this was a means to "raise worker efficiency", and "prevent [workers] from escaping". The Justice Ministry called this activity illegal under Japanese immigration law and as I write is investigating the case.

According to the same Shuukan Kin'youbi article, six Vietnamese were harassed in the workplace with verbal abuse, such as, "You people aren't humans, you're animals", and threats of deportation for mistakes or complaints. They were also restricted in their access to toilets, with their pay docked by 15 yen per minute if they exceeded the "allotted time". They alleged sexual harassment, saying a boss came to their dormitory and even slipped into their futons, offering "financial incentives in exchange for sexual favors". The Vietnamese could not quit due to an outstanding loan for traveling to Japan. They are currently suing the company, TMC, and the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO, an affiliate of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and four other ministries) for back pay and damages in Nagoya District Court.

According to Kyodo News ("Gifu firms warned on Brazilian child labor", December 30, 2006), two job-placement agencies hired 12 nikkei Brazilian children between the ages of 13 and 15, to work in factories. This was with the knowledge of their parents, who needed their children's wages to supplement their low incomes in Japan. The children had dropped out of school, which is not compulsory for foreign children in Japan. The local Labor Ministry was reportedly investigating this issue as a violation of the Labor Standards Law, which forbids employment under the age of 16 in Japan.

The Tokyo Shinbun ("Despite progress, lack of discussion in the government", December 3, 2006) reported that some workers are receiving little to no wages at all. Not only are travel loans a substantial drain on their already meager wages, but also some employers are making extortionate deductions for living expenses. Cited is a case where a Chinese intern was charged 90,000 yen (from his 120,000 yen monthly salary) for air conditioning in his dorm. Ijuuren, a human rights group, was quoted as calling this "a slavery system". Kouno Taro, Diet member and a former Vice Minister of Justice, called it "a swindle" (*ikasama*), advocating several fundamental reforms.

According to the Yomiuri Shinbun ("Foreign students in need of specialized Japanese teachers", May 22, 2007), an Education Ministry survey of 885 municipalities found that more than 20,000 NJ children--about a third of all foreign students in Japan in 2005--were not proficient enough in Japanese to follow Japanese classroom instruction. The largest language group was Portuguese (37%), then Chinese (22%), followed by Spanish (15%), with Japanese schools woefully unequipped to educate non-native speakers. The article noted the difficulty these children have finding jobs after dropping out.

In Asahi Shinbun's premier column, *Watashi no Shiten* ("Fundamental flaw remains in education law", February 12, 2007), Tokai University's Onuki Daisuke pointed out the inability of the government to take care of the education of these imported laborers. The Fundamental Law of Education (even after its revision in December, 2006), only guarantees equal opportunity of education to citizens (*kokumin*). Taking advantage of this loophole, secondary schools are even *refusing entry* to foreign children, citing a lack of obligation and facilities. The statistics he cites are telling: Although a high percentage of ninth-grade Japanese students drop out (3.3%), "somewhere between 20 and 40 percent of Brazilian children are currently out of primary education", and this does not include "the 25 percent of children who go to expensive Brazilian private schools not officially recognized as 'schools' by the Japanese government". While ethnic schools do exist in Japan serving Brazilian and Zainichi Korean students, they receive no funding (*kokkou hojo*) from the government.

As a result, numerous NJ children do not receive a basic education in Japan. Onuki concludes: "Neglecting the child's right to education is one of the most aggressive threats to the physical, mental and social integrity of the individual. Children with Brazilian nationality have been three to five times more likely to be put in detention centers than the general population over the past six years. This situation has the making of a new form of 'ethnic crisis' taking place right in front of our eyes."

Not surprisingly, some foreign workers have snapped. For example, the Asahi Shinbun ("Slain farm association official took fees from both Chinese trainees, farmers", May 28, 2007) reported that a farm cooperative had been using a "trainee and travel" fee system to double-dip from both 150 imported workers and their farm employers. The issue surfaced after a Chinese trainee, working illegally for the cooperative about 50 hours a month overtime for meager pay, murdered one executive and severely injured two others with a knife in August, 2006. JITCO is calling for transparency in the training and supervision process, but as the article notes, "there is no clear legal basis for such system".

What is being done?

Some local governments and NGOs have been clamoring for assistance from the national government to resolve these problems. The most prominent action took place as far back as 2001, when thirteen town and city governments in Shizuoka, Gunma, Nagano, Aichi, and Gifu prefectures signed a declaration asking the central government to provide smoother access to visas, education, and social security. Entitled the *Hamamatsu Sengen*[10], it was submitted in November 2001 by Hamamatsu Mayor Kitawaki Yasuyuki to the Ministries of Health and Welfare, Education, Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs. Their proposals included:

> That educational guidelines be laid out in writing for public primary schooling; that a budget be established for the study of Japanese language at all levels, and for counselors to assist in overseas tongues; that children unregistered in schools or unable to keep up receive special assistance; that an official education foundation be established in cooperation with foreign schools; that unregistered or truant children be provided with Japanese language classes and assistance; and that support for their learning social rules and customs help them lead a life in Japan.

The declaration also advised that NJ children should be provided additional places (outside of school) to spend time and assimilate better with local children. It suggested this should not be limited to children, and not to local levels. The nation, prefecture, and other organizations should consider a network to strengthen financial and personal assistance for adults as well.

The Hamamatsu proposals also included social security measures (*shakai hoshou*): That the medical insurance system be overhauled, delinking the set-package nature of the Health Insurance Plan (*Kenkou Hoken*) and the National Pension Plan (*Nenkin*), so that shorter-term residents do not fall through these safety nets; that after a suitable duration of investment, their insurance money be given back if and when they return to their home country; that the National Health Insurance (*Kokumin Hoken*) and the *Kenkou Hoken* systems be unified, or a special health plan for NJ be established; that employers be made to cover insurance costs for workers, and penalties be strengthened for those who do not; and that insurance registration be made a condition for contract employment.

In cooperation with medical organizations, NPOs, NGOs, and other volunteer groups were urged to create a system to help NJ residents avail themselves of multilingual medical care and information with peace of mind. This applies to all levels: national, prefectural, and related organizations.

In alien registration, it was proposed that documents be in more languages, with fewer categories to fill out, saving paperwork and increasing simplicity and convenience; that regional authorities create online registration, proxy registration and immigration procedures; NJ who exit the country often or change residency be allowed more flexible options, such as on-the-spot form submissions at departure, and that Immigration speed up its departure processing and notification procedures; with regard to human rights, that information on welfare, education, and taxation administration, as well as on regional coexistence, be made more available to the public.

Further legislative measures should be taken to make it easier for NJ to stay longer in Japan.

This initiative resulted in some positive policymaking, such as national government grants and loans to local municipalities. The Asahi Shinbun ("Grants eyed to help foreigners settle", March 9, 2007) reported that 70 local governments with high immigrant populations received national government grants for language programs for NJ children, rent subsidies, and "improved disaster-prevention measures".

However, the larger issues of employment and labor abuses are not being effectively addressed. The article noted that money was earmarked for smaller things, such as "employing assistant Japanese language teachers at elementary and junior high schools, and producing Portuguese calendars that explain how to sort garbage and show the collection days" (*ibid*). Moreover, it is unclear whether the measure will continue after fiscal 2007 particularly since their chief proponent, Hamamatsu Mayor Kitawaki, lost in the April 8, 2007 local elections.

Although the signatories to the *Hamamatsu Sengen* are still meeting annually and gaining new local-government members, the national government has not been proactive. There have, however, been efforts to improve the system. After the abovementioned murder by a Chinese trainee in Chiba, former vice-minister of justice Kouno Taro headed a Ministry of Justice project team that issued a book entitled "Basic Ideas for Accepting NJ" *(kongou no gaikokujin no ukeire ni kansuru kihonteki na kangaekata)*.

The abovementioned Tokyo Shinbun article quoted the book's refreshing rhetoric: "In order to continue letting [NJ] invigorate the economy, the government should look into expanding the acceptance of foreign labor in specialized and technical fields, and debate more policies... They should be thinking of this from a new angle: How new Japanese residents from overseas are going to revitalize and reenergize Japan. They should consider how to welcome people from overseas as new members of Japan's society."

The "Basic Ideas" book clearly built upon the *Hamamatsu Sengen*:

-Make it obligatory for companies to pay foreign employees the same wages and enroll them in the same social security programs as Japanese workers.

-Make Japanese language ability a requirement for even those job fields that are not classified as "specialized" or "technical".

-Make getting permanent residency (*eijuuken*) easier for foreigners who are contributing so much to Japan.

However, "experts" quickly poured cold water on the proposal, even within the same article: "The government and industrial leaders can't reconcile how they are going to fill in the void created by the labor shortage." In other words, how will Japan's industries stay globally competitive if they cannot keep importing foreign labor at subsistence or slave wages?

The debate was very active in 2007. According to the Yomiuri Shinbun (May 19, 2007), three ministries and Keidanren discussed what revisions to the visa regulations, if any, should be carried out by 2009. The Health, Welfare, and Labor Ministry wanted to tweak the system: Narrow these various visas down to the trainee visa only, remove the "one-year training period" exemption to the Labor Law, and treat NJ workers as employees. NJ could stay up for three years then come back for two more after repatriating and reapplying. Also included were language and acculturation tests to gauge how serious these people were about staying and fitting in, with visa renewal contingent on improvement.

The Economics, Trade, and Industry Ministry essentially wanted to preserve the system as it is, with some closer inspection of employer certification, because the benefits of the current program both domestically (to small industries) and internationally (in

terms of skill-set transfer) outweighed the externalities and labor abuses. It agreed with the labor ministry's three-plus-two-year proposal.

The Justice Ministry, notably in a memo written by Minister Nagase and leaked to Debito.org, was the most frank[11]: It recommended abolishing the trainee system entirely, putting a three-year nonrenewable system in its place, and making the NJ workers, skilled or unskilled, part of an explicit revolving-door "Guest Worker" system.

Keidanren took the opposite tack: NJ workers should be brought in specifically because they do have skills:

Nippon Keidanren's basic position is that non-Japanese people should be admitted to introduce different cultural ideas and sense of values into Japanese society and corporations and to promote the creation of new added value, as this would accelerate innovation, one of the three factors implicit in a potential growth rate (the other two being labor and capital).[12]

Keidanren also echoed the labor ministry and Kouno Taro in its call for assimilation, language improvement certification, more labor rights, and more stable work environments for NJ.

However, all four of these parties to the current debate agreed on one thing: That NJ workers are only temporary. Said Keidanren:

Japan's population has started to decline, but Nippon Keidanren's aim in calling for Japan to admit more non-Japanese workers is not to fill the gap caused by this drop in population. According to forecasts, if nothing is done to reverse the depopulation trend, the retirement of the so-called baby boom generation will, 10 years from now, leave Japan's labor force with four million fewer workers. It would not be practical to cover this shortfall entirely through the admission of Non-Japanese people. (ibid).

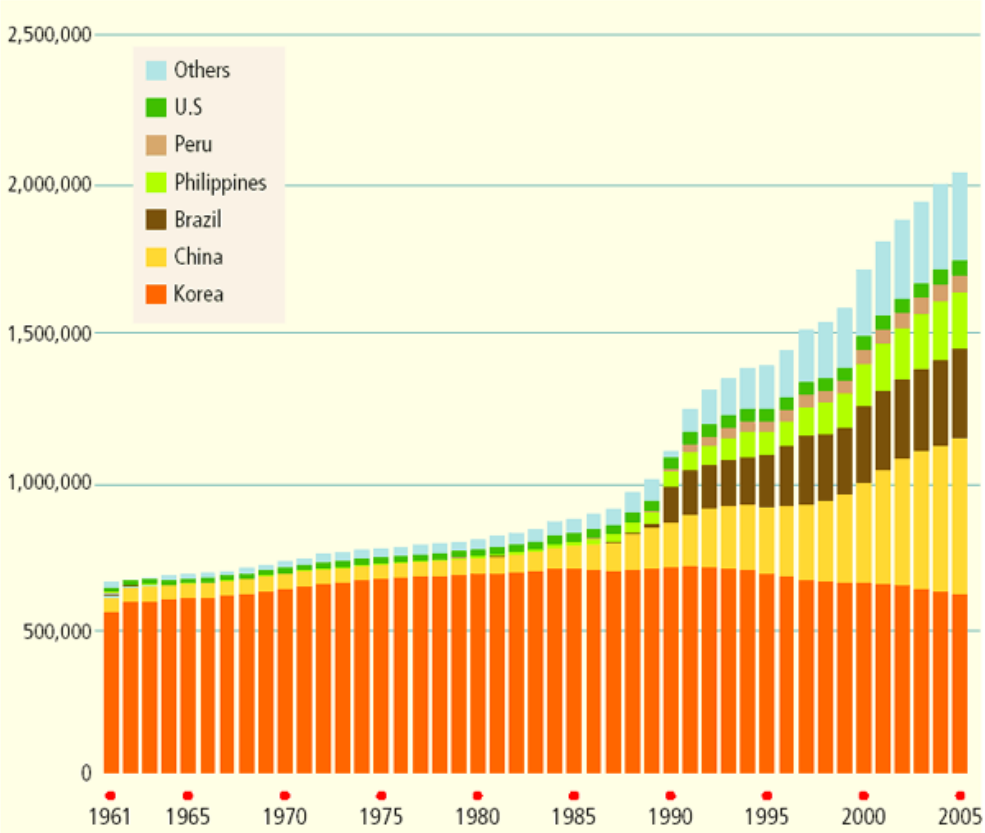
Curiously, while recognizing problems associated with Japan's depopulation, Keidanren rejects admitting NJ workers except those with special skills. In any case, it seems that the needs of Japanese industry, as the GOJ and most business representatives see them, are reinforcing the same old mantra: Japan should let NJ labor in, but not improve conditions that would encourage them to stay.

Zainichi vs. The New Immigrants

According to the latest numbers (released May 22, 2007[13]), as of the end of 2006, there are now 2.08 million registered NJ residents (people on three-month visas and up) in Japan. This is the 45th straight year of record levels. Moreover, it is only a rough indication of how "international" or diverse Japan is. This figure does not include the 7.3 million tourists[14] in 2006, the officially-recognized figure of around 200,000 visa overstayers (unofficial estimates say more than twice that[15]), more than 300,000 naturalized Japanese[16], and the estimated 21,000 children of international marriages[17] born annually to the 40,000 (and climbing steadily) international marriages each year in Japan.

Even with the onerous visa conditions described above, the number of people on temporary or limited-work visas has increased dramatically. NJ who graduated from one-year "trainees" to two-year "interns" positions leapt from 11,000 in 1999 to 41,000 in 2006[18]. The number of trainees themselves doubled between 2001 and 2006 to 68,305, and NJ workers in general now number around 770,000: 1.3% of Japan's workforce and rising while Japan's domestic population and workforce began falling from 2006[19].

However, the biggest change is in the proportion of people who are here to stay. Since the end of WWII, Japan's largest group of "foreigners" was the "Zainichi" ethnic Koreans, followed by Chinese. These former citizens of empire (they lost their Japanese citizenship in 1947 with the establishment of the Foreign Registry Laws) and their descendents have been living for generations as non-citizens. No longer: Due to naturalization and natural attrition, their numbers have dwindled as NJ emigrating from overseas have grown, and their historical majority as Japan's registered foreigners has steadily dropped from more than half of the total to about a quarter.



Registered migrants by nationality, 1961-2005

However, the watershed news is this: The Zainichi "Oldcomers" (those with "Special Permanent Resident Visa" (*tokubetsu eijuuken*) status) are projected to drop below the numbers of the "Newcomers": those with "Regular Permanent Resident Visa" (*ippan eijuuken*) status.

Let's look at the numbers[20]:

Zainichi	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
# registered	489,900	475,952	465,619	451,909	443,044
% change		-2.85%	-2.17%	-2.94%	-1.96%

Average decrease in the Zainichi "Oldcomer" Permanent Resident population 2002-2006: -2.48%

Immigrants	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
# registered	223,875	261,001	312,964	349,804	394,477
% change		+16.58%	+19.91%	+11.77%	+12.77%

Average increase in the "Newcomer" Permanent-Resident Immigrant population 2002-2006: +15.26%

Projecting the numbers based upon the average for the past four years:

	2007 *(projected)*	**2008 *(projected)***
Zainichi	432,057	421,342
Immigrants	454,674	524,057

This means the people who are not here on any term-limited visa status, regular permanent residents, will surpass for the first time in history those permanent residents who were born here. And that will probably happen by the end of 2007.

Moreover, at this rate, under the laws of compounding interest and statistics, the number of regular permanent residents will double once again within about five to seven years. These people are allowed to stay here forever, and are undeniably immigrants. You cannot winkle them out by simply changing the visa regime. Can anyone in the GOJ reasonably continue to argue that Japan's internationalization will not happen?

Thus, Japan is no exception from the forces of globalization and international migrant labor. It remains for the GOJ, particularly the Ministry of Justice, to accept that fact now and create the appropriate assimilative policy for its sunset society.

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NOTES

[1] The introduction to this paper is substantiated by Takeyuki Tsuda's, "Reluctant Hosts: The Future of Japan as a Country of Immigration".

[2] This background was part of the focus of my Masters' of Pacific International Affairs degree in International Relations Japan, awarded 1991 by the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California San Diego. Further reading on the dynamics involved may be found in contemporary sources such as Robert Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations (Princeton University Press 1987) and his updates.

[3] See the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s writeup on their Technical Trainee Program.

[4] Tsuda paragraph 20.

[5] Article available in its entirety in Japanese here.

[6] See a list of papers on international migration, some dealing with Japan, from the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California San Diego here, and also works by authors such as Keiko Yamanaka of University of California, Berkeley.

[7] Please see here.

[8] Please see here.

[9] Even Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro, a public decrier of unfettered immigration, has called for a clear policy towards immigration. See Arudou, "Taking the 'Gai' out of 'Gaijin'", Japan Times January 24, 2006, or Ishihara's news conference of December 22, 2005.

[10] For more information on the Hamamatsu Sengen, please see here.

[11] Please see here and page down

[12] Please see here.

[13] Please see here.

[14] Please see here.

[15] Tsuda paragraph 22

[16] Please see here.

[17] Please see here.

[18] "Nagase enters foreign-worker feud" The Asahi Shinbun May 17, 2007. Please see here.

[19] "Crack in the Door: An aging Japan warms to foreign workers", The Wall Street Journal May 25, 2007. Please see here.

[20] Please see here.