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### The myth of homogeneity and the 'Others': foreign labour migration and globalization in the case of Japan

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# The myth of homogeneity and the 'Others': foreign labour migration and globalization in the case of Japan

## Abstract

This essay will examine the multi-dimensional dynamics of global labor migrations participating in and facilitated by globalization, by analyzing Japan's contemporary experience of rapidly intensified foreign labor immigration. Japan has not considered itself as a country of immigration until recently. Since Japan's prewar self-modernization period, conservative political discourse has conceptualized the modern nation-state as a racially homogeneous entity. This discourse established the cultural and political foundation for Japanese identity, and Japan's relationship with the outside world. Consequently, the incorporation of culturally and ethnically different Others has been deemed a threat to the harmony of Japan's homogeneous society. Yet, beginning in the late 1980s when the term internationalization began to be widely used in Japan as a political slogan for the rapid expansion of the Japanese economy the number of foreign workers legally and illegally entering into Japan has increased remarkably, and these workers have become deeply incorporated in its society. The traditional migration theory utilizes neoclassical economic view in regarding labour migration as voluntary movement. This tradition considers that individuals choose to migrate through a calculation of the cost-and-benefits. However, the ahistorical and individualistic perspective of this model cannot precisely explain the historically changing modes of labour migrations. In this respect, through the critical lens of international political economy, this study will explore the contested relationship between foreign labor migration and the modern nation-state by applying three conceptual tools within Robert Cox's analytical framework, which are: the internationalization of production; the internationalization of state; and the reconstitution of power relations among diversified social forces. This essay will argue that increasing inflows and incorporation of the Others have posed a serious challenge to Japan's socially constructed hegemonic and mythical self-perception as a homogeneous nation-state and society. It will suggest democratization at the social and institutional levels as the consequent need for Japan within the context of globalization.

## Keywords

others, labour, migration, globalization, foreign, case, myth, homogeneity, japan

## Disciplines

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**The Myth of Homogeneity and the “Others:”  
Foreign Labor Migration and Globalization in the Case of Japan**

— Working Draft —

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**The problem of foreign labor is primarily the process of *choosing the future citizens*.  
With the increasing liberalization of contemporary economic activities, the coexistence with foreigners is a definitive path.  
Fundamentally, a social acceptance as it ought to be is needed to be transformed at the *grass-root* level.**

**Tadashi Hanami and Yasuo Kuwabara  
*Asu no Rinjin: Gaikokujin Rodosha*  
[Tomorrow's Neighbors: Foreign Workers]  
Emphasis in original  
Translation by author**

The Myth of Homogeneity and the “Others”:  
Foreign Labor Migration and Globalization in the Case of Japan

**I. Introduction**

Throughout the evolution of global capitalist economy, trans-border labor migrations and the modern nation-states have been paradoxically related across time and space. Global labor migration is not a historical novelty, but their forms and trends have shifted through changing global configurations of power and production. As the contemporary “great transformation”<sup>1</sup> of the world order has dramatically reconstituted the multidimensional aspects of human activity, significant changes have occurred in the pattern of the global labor flows. Revolutionary developments in transportation and communication technology, which have reduced the costs and enlarged the spatial range of movement, have dramatically increased the scope and speed of international labor transfers. Furthermore, the current conspicuousness of South-to-North and East-to-West migratory flows marks a distinct shift from the North-to-South pattern characteristic of the nineteenth century. Reflecting this intensification of labor inflows to the highly industrialized countries, politicians and policy makers in these host countries have paid keen attention to the issue of how to control foreign workers’ entries by assessing their economic value, and their social and political costs. By exploring the historically contested relationship between foreign workers and the notion of the modern nation-state in the world capitalist economy through the lens of critical International Political Economy (IPE), this essay attempts to scrutinize the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of global labor migrations participating in and facilitated by contemporary globalization.

The contested nature of migratory flows is clearly exemplified by Japan, which has never considered itself as a country of immigration until recently. Since Japan’s self-modernization project in the prewar period, conservative political discourse has conceptualized the modern nation-state as a racially homogeneous entity. This concept established the cultural and political

foundation for both Japanese identity and the country's relationship with the outside world. Consequently, the incorporation of culturally and ethnically different "Others" has been deemed a serious threat to the harmony of the homogeneous Japanese society, and Japanese insecurity has been translated into the state's restrictive immigration regulations.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Japan has not proven exempt from receiving an influx of foreign workers, as the world becomes increasingly globalized. Beginning in the late 1980s—when the term "internationalization" was widely, but vaguely, used as a dominant political slogan along with the rapid expansion of the Japanese economy<sup>3</sup>—the number of foreign workers legally and illegally flowing into Japan increased remarkably, accompanied by heated debates as to whether Japan should embrace this new segment of the population. More importantly, even after the Japanese economy fell into recession following the burst of the "bubble" economy, the number of immigrant workers in Japan has not decreased noticeably, but these workers have become more deeply incorporated in Japanese society as "long-term stayers" or "social beings." Approximately 1.8 million foreigners legally or illegally live in Japanese society.<sup>4</sup>

This essay will endeavor to holistically capture Japan's problem of foreign labor migration in the context of globalization within the framework of critical IPE, by analyzing the dialectical interactions between rapidly intensified flows of migrant workers into Japan and the restructuring in the mode of production, forms of state and configurations of power relations among various social forces. Through exploring the multidimensional impacts of these labor migrations on Japanese society, this essay will argue that increasing inflows and incorporation of the "Others" have challenged Japan to reconsider the persuasive notion of the modern Japanese nation-state as a culturally and ethnically homogeneous community founded upon the ongoing "social construction of reality"<sup>5</sup> through its modernization. It will further argue that the challenge posed by foreign labor migration has raised the question of the true meaning of Japan's "internationalization" within the context of contemporary globalization.

To systematize this analysis, the essay is divided into two parts. The first part will contextualize the dynamics of global labor migration by reviewing the arguments of critical IPE scholars. In this section, through examining the traditional neoclassical explanatory model of migration and its critiques from the IPE perspective, the theoretical framework of this essay will be formulated. Viewed through the lens of critical IPE, the second part of the essay will explore the complex and multifaceted issue of foreign labor migrations in Japan in the contemporary globalization period.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

### ***A. Neoclassical Explanatory Model and its Critics***

Various specialized disciplines of social science have developed different approaches to the study of international labor migration.<sup>6</sup> Among them, the traditionally predominant explanatory theory of migration, launched by the geographer E.G. Ravenstein in the 1880s,<sup>7</sup> regards labor migrations as voluntary individual movement resulting from migrants' calculation of the cost-benefits under the conditions of unevenly distributed economic opportunities, based on the neoclassical economic notion of human beings as rational actors in maximizing their economic utility. This approach is also known as "push-pull" theory owing to its search for the causes of migration in the variables combining "push factors" (e.g., low living standards, lack of economic opportunities, rapid demographic growth) and "pull factors" (e.g., demand for labor, availability of land, good economic opportunities).<sup>8</sup> In other words, the neoclassical view emphasizes the existence of socioeconomic disparities between the sending and receiving countries as a sufficient explanatory variable promoting labor migration. Furthermore, in this model, originated in the neoclassical concept of the self-regulating market mechanism, such labor flows—together with other economic exchanges—are viewed as a way of restoring economic equilibrium between spatial units.<sup>9</sup> The successful advancement of capitalist market-economy improving wages and economic

conditions in the developing countries is considered a constraint on the escalating labor immigrations into highly developed countries. Yet, by reconsidering this individualistic and ahistorical theoretical discourse from an international and interdisciplinary viewpoint, critical IPE theorists have revealed its oversimplification and inability to comprehend actual migration patterns or predict future ones.

First, critical IPE scholars point out the neoclassical migration model's lack of multidimensionality. Aristide R. Zolberg posits that neoclassical migration theory does not make the fundamental distinction between domestic and transnational movements by ignoring the political dimension constituent of all international migrations.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Silvano M. Tomasi notes that labor migrants have "incorporated into a stratification system that reflected discrimination based on the cultural distance of newcomers from the dominant group and on the industrial function they were expected to carry out in an expanding economy."<sup>11</sup> That is, the traditional migration theory precludes paying due attention to the diverse paths followed by migrant minorities by viewing them as a mere labor-force in economic terms. IPE critics stress that not only economic, but also political and cultural dimensions must be scrutinized to fully understand the dynamics of the international labor migration flows.

Furthermore, critical IPE theorists contend that the simplistic list of "push-pull" variables from the ahistorical and individualistic perspective in the traditional model render it incapable of sufficiently capturing not only the historically altering modes of labor migrations—ranging from coerced labor extraction (slavery) beginning in the sixteenth century to the present self-initiated international labor flow—but also the uneven development of labor migrations across time and space.<sup>12</sup> From the IPE perspective, referring to the Polanyian concept of "embeddedness" that articulates the insertion of economic transactions of the most diverse sorts in the overarching social structure, Alejandro Portes also argues that "decisions to migrate do not occur in a vacuum; the



‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ that enter into such individual calculations are themselves conditioned by an institutional structure reflecting external hegemony.”<sup>13</sup> Through emphasizing the importance of “the historicization of migration theory,”<sup>14</sup> and devoting due attention to the changing specificities of time and space, the critical IPE approach views international labor migration not as a voluntarily individual movement, but rather as movement based on social networks linking various countries, which both shapes and is a consequence of a restructuring of the global political economy.<sup>15</sup> This viewpoint is encapsulated by the Marxian perception that “men make history...but not in conditions of their own choosing.”<sup>16</sup> In this respect, critical IPE theory clarifies the structural implications of the constitution of the world order, driven by the consolidation of capitalism as the international economic system and the enhancement of the nation-state as the key political actor, over the historical evolution of international labor migration.

In historical terms, the rapid expansion of capitalism under imperialism and the subsequent consolidation of capitalist order as the basis of global economy resulted in the disintegration or subordination of non-capitalist forms of subsistence. The transformation of land into a commodity led to the emergence of a mass of landless peasants left little alternative but to be absorbed into the rural or urban labor reserve. In this respect, the process of peripheralization was marked by the constitution of a very large mass of surplus labor within the newly established labor market in these regions. Due to escalating urbanization and a lack of diversification within the productive sectors in the periphery, members of this labor surplus were destined to compete for scarce employment. This condition eventually facilitated the formation of a pool of potential emigrants. Accordingly, the consolidation of a global capitalist economy through the subordination of large areas of the world as a “periphery” generated international labor migrations originating in less-developing countries to satisfy the labor needs of the industrializing countries.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, the critical IPE perspective sheds light on the strengthening of the nation-states as a

basic political unit, coinciding with the consolidation of the world capitalist system, by emphasizing the considerations of the concept of modern nation-state and its contradictory relation to the displacement of labor as imperative in fully capturing the historically altered forms of trans-border labor flows.<sup>18</sup> The notion of the “modern nation-state” is a socially and historically constructed reality. Modern nation-state building was, as Nina Glick Schiller *et al.* elucidate, a political process creating “a myth that each nation-state contained within it a single people defined by their residence in a common territory, their undivided loyalty to a common government, and their shared cultural heritage.”<sup>19</sup> Inherent to modern nation-states is the combination of the “nation” as cultural—e.g. ethnic or racial—homogeneous “imagined community”<sup>20</sup> and the “state” as a sovereign regime within a particular bounded territory. Indeed, nation-states convey a sense of identity and belonging, marking their memberships by defining “citizenship,” which, as R. Baubock articulates, designates “the equality of rights of all citizens within political community, as well as a corresponding set of institutions guaranteeing these rights.”<sup>21</sup> For modern nation-states, therefore, the arrival of large waves of immigrants speaking different languages, practicing different religions, or simply having different habits, has challenged national consciousness among citizens rooted in collective cultural ties and sentiments. Grounded on continuing state regulations over the entry and exit of labor since the late nineteenth century, Zolberg argues that it is the actions of state more than individual migrants’ motivations and invidious comparisons between country of origin and destination that account for the feasibility and characteristics of migration flows.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, as indicated by Immanuel Wallerstein who argues that “capitalism as an economic mode is based on the fact that the economic factor operates within an arena larger than that which any political entity can fully control,”<sup>23</sup> the capitalist world economy has consisted of a multiplicity of the nation-states with no full control by a single political regime. Encountering the problem of labor scarcity, which has historically been crucial in enhancing the efficiency of capital

accumulation under the conditions of rapid industrialization, nation-states have imported foreign labor in various forms, depending on “a country’s place in the international division of labor and the particular mode of specialization prevalent at a given time in the world system.”<sup>24</sup> That is, throughout historical capitalist expansion, foreign labor migrants have played an important, but contradictory, role in providing nation-states’ own politically and economically suitable labor supply system as a precondition for realizing the surplus-generating possibilities of a given geographic location. In other word, modern nation-states have inherently contained “conflicting interests—to maximize the labor supply and to protect cultural integrity....”<sup>25</sup> By recognizing international migration as a key element in the production and reproduction of labor within capital accumulation on the global scale, this dilemma of the modern nation-state is elucidated as one of the essential issues in holistically exploring the complex and multifaceted nature of international labor flows with the dramatic expansion and restructuring of global capitalist economy.

Within the context of contemporary globalization, the accelerating interconnectedness of the global economy through the rising flows of capital and goods, which, in turn, have been facilitated by technological developments in communication and transportation and by the growing number and scale of trans-national institutions organizing production, distribution, and consumption, has led to the great transformations of the global division of labor and power relations.<sup>26</sup> As part of the global changes of social practice, rapidly growing transnational labor flows in terms of their extensity and intensity have connected economic, political and cultural activities that were previously more or less divided.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, as critical IPE scholars suggest, to holistically explore the complex dynamism of contemporary globalization of labor migration, it is vital to analyze these flows in the light of the dramatic restructuring of the global political economy. By scrutinizing the dialectical relations of contemporary global labor migration with the great transformations of global political economy, the following examination will attempt to contextualize

the dynamics of these labor displacements, especially escalating inflows of foreign workers into the highly industrialized countries, within the context of contemporary globalization.

### ***B. Globalization, Global Labor Migration and Critical IPE***

Critical IPE theory deems contemporary global labor migration as shaped by and facilitating the current restructuring of the global political economy based on a capitalist economic order and a nation-state system, which has been broadly termed as “globalization.” Because “globalization” is a much-contested notion, it is vital to briefly clarify the critical IPE conception of the dynamics of globalization. The “skeptics” thesis, represented by Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, defines globalization as the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural transactions across borders with their emphasis on quantitative terms, invariably concluding that there is nothing very new about globalization as a result of empiricist cross-time comparisons.<sup>28</sup> However, to highlight the interdependence between the dynamics of contemporary globalization and global labor migration, the quantified understanding of labor migratory flows not only undermines their historically altering forms and implications but also, more importantly, ignores the question of what causes these changes.

Going beyond quantitative terms, critical IPE scholars interpret globalization as “qualitative practices operating in the global space.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the concept of globalization is elucidated through addressing three key factors: (1) the increasing interdependence or interconnectedness of multidimensional and multilayered human activities; (2) the compression of time and space; and (3) most importantly, the historically ongoing structural transformation in the economic, political, and cultural realms, which may produce either accommodation or resistance.<sup>30</sup> Along the same lines, citing Anthony Giddens, Lily Kong points out the contingent nature of globalization by arguing that it is not an ‘out there’ phenomenon but rather an “in here” phenomenon transforming the very texture of everyday life and affecting even the intimacies of

personal identity.<sup>31</sup> That is, the critical IPE conceptualization of globalization designates the continuing qualitative reconfiguration of the world structure by recognizing its “subjective” and “objective” implications. This understanding allows critical IPE analysis to underline the economical, political and cultural dimensions of global labor migration within the context of contemporary globalization by precisely capturing the dialectic relationship of these two processes. To scrutinize the dynamic changes in the structure of contemporary global political economy and the concomitant reconstitution of power relations, Robert W. Cox suggests an analytical framework from the critical IPE standpoint.

By reconstructing Gramscian historical materialism on a global scale,<sup>32</sup> Cox’s critical perspective overcomes the conventional international studies’ theoretical perception of the world as an aggregation of state or regime relations by regarding the state/society complex as the basic entity in international relations.<sup>33</sup> For Cox, critical IPE constructs “a [large] picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component” and seeks “to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved.”<sup>34</sup> To achieve this purpose, Cox conceptualizes the transformations of historical structures and power relations of the global political economy through focusing on three spheres of human activity, whose conditions are most propitious for change within the world system: (1) “the patterns of production organization,” with special attention to the “social forces” produced through the production process; (2) “forms of state” as the articulation of state/society complexes; and (3) “world order,” as the ensemble of power among diversified social forces. More importantly, the three levels are dialectically interrelated to create a particular configuration of the world structure.<sup>35</sup> In this respect, the following analysis attempts to contextualize the dynamics of contemporary global labor migration by applying the three categories of the Coxian framework.

### *The Internationalization of Production and Global Labor Migration*

To comprehend the context of “the age of transition”<sup>36</sup> in the structure of the contemporary global political economy, the Coxian approach focuses on shifts in the capitalist mode of production to maximize capital accumulation. As Cox notes, whereas the postwar international economy connected national economies by focusing on exchange, the current world economy predominated by neoliberal economic globalization has denationalized economic activities by focusing on production. For Cox, the distinctive restructuring of the capitalist world economy in contemporary globalization is characterized by “the internationalization of production,” which denotes “the integration of production processes on a transnational scale, with different phases of a single process being carried out in different countries.”<sup>37</sup> Facilitated by technological innovation—which has always been “the servant of dominant capital”<sup>38</sup>—that not only intensifies global competition but also transforms its spatial and temporal scales, the loci of production have territorially reorganized on the transnational scale and expanded through foreign direct investment (FDI) to minimize overall production costs by taking advantage of differences between the factor endowments of countries, especially differences in labor costs. Indeed, David Harvey considers this reconstitution of production processes as the transition from the rigid Fordism to the geographically and temporally flexible capital accumulation by enhancing flexibility in production, labor market, and consumption.<sup>39</sup> That is, the contemporary internationalizing mode of production has spatially rearranged the traditional international division of labor at the global, more particularly regional, level, leading to the formation of global assembly lines boosting flexible capital accumulation.

In this context, transnational production organizations through FDI from the highly industrialized countries has been designated as new forms of the integration of the developing countries in the global capitalist economy through intensifying labor emigrations from developing countries, which, in turn, also contributes not only to the further restructuring of global economy but

also to the formulation of the complex global division of labor.<sup>40</sup> The “new industrialization” in the developing countries promoted by FDI has changed pre-existent socio-economic organizations by both introducing the capitalist modes of production and penetrating normative consumption expectations imported from the advanced countries to the peripheral societies. The construction of labor-intensive production plants has incorporated new segments of the population into wage-labor contracts associated with the destruction of the traditional means of livelihood. In this regard, the increasing feminization of the new proletariats due to the recruitment preference of foreign plants for young women (regarded as more pliant and less costly) has imposed an additional disruptive impact on traditional employment structure in the developing regions as well as their production and reproduction processes, contributing to male unemployment and, in some cases, to male emigration.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the phenomenon of “runaway factories”—indicating that employment created through FDI by multinational corporations (MNCs) remains only as long as labor costs remain comparatively low—has enlarged the pool of potential emigrants.<sup>42</sup> As another noteworthy impact of transnational production organizations on global labor migrations, FDI encourages the movement of people, very often in the direction where investment capital originates. Saskia Sassen explains this trend by arguing that the significant levels and concentration of FDI have consolidated objective and ideological links between workers in the developing world and the highly industrialized countries, providing this capital through specific working situations wherein workers find themselves producing goods and services demanded by highly developed countries.<sup>43</sup> In sum, the escalating internationalization of production in more or less geographically uneven and fragmented manners, due to the strategies of enterprises, has created structural conditions for emigration as an optional solution to these multiple disruptions in highly patterned directions.

Yet, these reasons only partially capture the essence of the dialectical relation between the reorganization of capitalist mode of production at the global scale and global labor migration. W.R.

Bohning argues that “there cannot be any emigration without immigration opportunities elsewhere....”<sup>44</sup> In this respect, Sassen has argued that the deindustrialization of highly industrialized economies associated with the internationalization of production, particularly the consolidation of “global cities,” has promoted the concentration of both high-level control and management operations and a vast expansion of low-wage jobs constituted mainly by a rapidly developing service industry and the downgraded manufacturing sectors.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the permeation of the conceptualized “socially undesirable jobs”<sup>46</sup> within the ingrained job hierarchies and the increasing rigidity of labor market facilitated by the demographic changes, such as the aging of the population, have generated the structural shortage of low-wage labor in the advanced industrialized countries.<sup>47</sup> In this context, the significant vacuum in the lower segment of the labor market has provided employment opportunities for immigrant workers. Consequently, their massive inflows as flexible and disposable cheap labor-sources in the developed countries have not only reconstituted the geographically conceptualized core-periphery but also reinforced the further restructuring of the global economy by destabilizing the exclusive territoriality of the modern nation-states.

That is, the contemporary intensification of labor inflows into the highly industrialized countries has been conditioned by two changing processes of global economy—the rapid internationalization of the production with a notable growth in FDI *and* the deindustrialization of core countries which has led to their structural scarcity of low-wage labor. Indeed, following Max Frisch’s aphorism, “we imported labor, we got people,” Zolberg notes that:

Considered over the longer term...a remarkable feature of the migrant labor pattern is its instability in the sense that the unidimensionality on which it is founded cannot be maintained for very long. Sooner or later, any foreign worker comes to be conceived of not only as an economic actor, but also as a cultural, social or political actor...and hence as a potential member of the society.”<sup>48</sup>



In this respect, within the context of increasing economic globalization, the political and cultural implications of global labor migration, as part of the restructuring of global political economy at large, need to be clarified to underline the challenge of these labor displacements toward the modern nation-state by analyzing the restructuring in the form of state and in the power configurations among various social forces within the context of contemporary globalization.

***The Internationalization of State and the Deterritorializing of the Nation-state***

Reflecting the increasingly interconnected world with the acceleration of neoliberal economic globalization, the question of whether the nation-state still matters has generated controversy among scholars, ranging from some positing the imminent end of the nation-state to others considering the state as one of the main “authors” of globalization.<sup>49</sup> With this debate in mind, Cox articulates the qualitatively changing role of the state by using the concept of “the internationalization of the state.” This refers to “the global process whereby national policies and practices have been adjusted to the exigencies of the world economy of international production.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, as the economic and social relations of production are progressively more dominated by transnational processes, so must the function of the state coping with those processes increasingly be performed transnationally to be effective. Indeed, along with the internationalizing of the state, the restructuring of the state in the contemporary globalization period, in contrast to welfare nationalist states of the preceding period concentrated on economic planning at the national level, has promoted the practice of economic policy harmonization regarding the needs or requirements of the global economy within a neoliberal ideological framework.

Within the context of the rapid economic globalization, the growing convergence of immigration policies in the highly industrialized nation-states can also be underlined despite the differences stemming from their specifics of culture and history.<sup>51</sup> More strikingly, the harmonization of immigration policies in developed countries contains crucial contradictions, which

the Coxian concept of the “internationalizing of state” does not address: the liberal market economy is unequivocally illiberal when it comes to the free movement of labor. That is, as compellingly caught by Stephen Gill’s concept of “disciplinary neoliberalism,”<sup>52</sup> the neoliberal restructuring of the global economy involves the briskly escalating free movement of goods, services, and capital as well as the disciplining of labor. In this respect, considering the restrictive tendency of host-country immigration policies and their implications for the actual inflows of labor is imperative in holistically understanding the processes of global labor migration in terms of its dialectical relations to the restructuring of state forms and, more particularly, their impact on the notion of the modern nation-state.

Host states have adopted convergent restrictive immigration policies in terms of the selective entries of foreign workers.<sup>53</sup> Here, the highly industrialized countries of immigration have consciously facilitated the entry of professionals and skilled workers as a response to the increasing demand for these labors to sustain and maximize their competitiveness in the global economy, while impeding massive inflows of semi- and unskilled labor. These highly selective criteria can be understood as the continuing dilemma inherent to the modern nation-states between employing foreign laborers and sustaining historically constructed ideas of cultural unity. Sassen perceives this contradiction between neoliberal economic globalization and illiberal labor migration as the interaction between “economic denationalizing and political renationalizing.”<sup>54</sup> However, with the rapidly aggravated shortages of low-wage labor in the highly developed countries through the restructuring of global economy, the regulatory barriers in the host states reinforce the development of irregular channels. As Bimal Ghosh argues, host countries must deal with a direct trade-off that can be envisaged between legal exclusion and illegal migration.<sup>55</sup> More precisely, the renationalizing of the state as a response to a severe low-wage labor shortage within the context of dramatic economic globalization has escalated the tendency of migrants to use irregular channels to

enter the countries of destination, developing the stratification between legal and illegal migrant laborers.

Indeed, as legal and illegal laborers are massively displaced on a transnational scale, Arjun Appadurai and other critical IPE scholars emphasize the contemporary world as “deterritorialized” through various forms of “reterritorialization.”<sup>56</sup> Since all modern ideologies of rights depend, ultimately, on the “closed” (enumerated, stable, and immobile) group of appropriate recipients of state protection and patronage, the transfers of foreign labor into new polities require reterritorialization within a new civic order, whose ideology of ethnic coherence and citizenship rights they are bound to disturb. From this perspective, as the current globalized flows of laborers have made the concept of national culture and identity highly questionable, the nation-state, or more precisely, the relationship between “nation” and “state” has entered into crisis, with the modern notion of territorial sovereignty as the crucial problem. Appadurai notes that escalating ethnic pluralities expose and intensify “the gap between the powers of the state to regulate borders, monitor dissent, distribute entitlements within a finite territory *and* the fiction of ethnic singularity on which most nations ultimately rely.”<sup>57</sup> In sum, the growing displacements of labor at the transnational scale have created disparities between the notion of modern nation-state and the deterritorialization of contemporary nation-states as well as economic activities.

Thus, the development of economic globalization and the rapid escalation of migrant flows even under restrictive host-country immigration policies have facilitated the restructuring of the state/society complex by elucidating not only the internationalization of state but also its deterritorialization through the reterritorializing processes. In other words, contemporary global labor migration has made the notion of modern nation-states highly questionable and, more precisely, exposed the disparities between the increasingly multicultural characteristics of society and the concept of culturally and ideologically coherent nation. Indeed, as the *de facto* conversion

of workforce migration into settlement migration has become increasingly apparent among foreign laborers (reflecting the structurally-generated labor shortage in the advanced industrialized countries), these contradictory conditions stemming from the trends of economic denationalizing and political renationalizing have created potential and/or realized conflicts in these societies. In this respect, it is crucial to articulate the dialectical relationship between the restructuring in power relations among social forces and global labor migrations, focusing on the emergence of new social forces in the politics of immigration.

### ***New Social Forces, Multiculturalism, and the Politics of Migration***

Regarding “power” as emerging from social processes rather than accumulated material capabilities, Cox claims that the restructuring of global economy and the concomitant reorganization of the global division of labor may be mobilizing social forces associated with the consequent reshaping of power relations.<sup>58</sup> From Cox’s perspective, social forces created through the changing processes of social and economic relations with the globalizing capitalist mode of production are the essential starting points for considering a possible future. More strikingly, Cox argues that tendencies towards organizing global production and internationalizing the state are never complete; the more these restructurings advance, the more they have the potential to incite social groups that have been disadvantaged or excluded in the new domestic realignments to sustain countermovements.<sup>59</sup> Examination of the racialization within the incorporating mechanism for foreign laborers and the consequent emergence of “new” social forces not only precisely articulates the Coxian perception of countertendencies inherent to globalization, but also explores how the dynamics of global labor migration dialectically relate to the power configuration among various social forces by addressing the increasing complexity in the politics of migration.

As indicated by the shift of immigrants from some temporary laborers to permanent settlers through the restructuring and deindustrialization of the advanced economies and the state’s failure to

keep illegal foreign workers out, the social inclusion of these “Others” has engendered an “unavoidable challenge”<sup>60</sup> for host countries. In this context, as Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller argue, the integration of culturally diverse immigrants presents the modern nation-states with a dilemma rooted in the intimate relationship between cultural belonging and political identity: “incorporation of the newcomers as citizens may undermine myths of cultural homogeneity; but failure to incorporate them may lead to divided societies, marked by severe inequality and conflict.”<sup>61</sup> While encountering this dilemma, the contemporary re-emphasis on ethnoterritorial thinking in the cultural ideologies of the “developed” nations has led to social segmentation based on ethno-cultural differences, making second-classness and third-classness conditions for the integration of migrants, however plural the ethnic ideology of the host nation-state.<sup>62</sup> This discriminatory behavior can be deemed as the “racialization (or ethnicization) of immigrant minorities” to promote a public discourse implying that a range of social or political problems are a “natural” consequence of certain ascribed cultural characteristics of minorities regarded as primordial, static and regressive by the dominant groups.<sup>63</sup> In fact, as Castles and others have indicated, migrant workers can be manipulated not only by their precarious legal status in the host country, but also by a process of racialization stemming from racial violence, residential segregation, economic disadvantage and social exclusion.<sup>64</sup> In short, the pervasive practices of racial discrimination within the sphere of civil society and in state immigration policymaking have marginalized or excluded labor migrants, leading to potential or actual conflict.

As a response to the racialization of immigrant workers, “new” social forces have been mobilized in the domestic as well as transnational realms. Sassen has considered the proliferation of political actors as “new” social forces supported by the lobbying of international human rights and other migration interest groups, suggesting that “the overall effect of these developments is to constrain the sovereignty of the state and to undermine old notions about immigration control.”<sup>65</sup>

Among the various social forces influencing the politics of migration, the resistance movements of immigrant communities play a crucial role in modifying how foreign workers are incorporated into the societies of the highly industrialized nation-states. With regard to the politics of immigrant resistance, Castles and Miller highlight how minority cultures emerge as a source of identity and as a focus for resistance to exclusion and discrimination.<sup>66</sup> They also hypothesize that:

[i]f political participation is denied through refusal of citizenship and failure to provide channels of representation, immigrant politics is likely to take on militant forms. This applies particularly to the children of immigrants born in the countries of immigration. If they are excluded from political life through non-citizenship, social marginalisation or racism, they are likely to present a major challenge to existing political structures in the future.<sup>67</sup>

For instance, the movement of youth of North African origin in France has led to a new form of citizenship, which, they have claimed, is “citizenship by participation” without necessarily being nationals.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, at the regional level, the transnationalization of resistance movements led by various immigrant associations has also taken place across Europe.<sup>69</sup> In this respect, the development of ethnic cultures, the stabilization of personal and group identities, and the formation of ethnic communities are considered components of a single process, which is not self-contained but rather develops dependent on the needs and experience of these minorities through their constant interaction with the dominant group in the country of immigration. That is, as foreign workers are progressively integrated as the “ethnic minorities” within their host societies, immigrants’ resistance movements against racial discrimination have posed serious challenges to the modern notion of state citizenship by celebrating the development of multiculturalism. This development renders the incorporation of the “Others” an “unavoidable task” of the advanced industrialized countries in contemporary globalization.

Thus, “new” social forces, especially resistance mobilized by immigrant workers, has not only shaped power relations over immigration policymaking, but also necessitated the reconsideration of the nation-state and its “citizenship.” Unlike the European industrialized

countries of immigration, rapidly increasing number of foreign workers in Japan have produced no remarkable self-organized resistance movements against their racialized acceptance in the society. With this in mind, the absence of the countermovements mobilized by foreign laborers and the potential for conflicting conditions in Japan should be examined. Based on this theoretical understanding of the dynamics of global labor migration, the following section will attempt not only to holistically grasp the multifaceted and complex nature of rapidly escalating inflows of foreign workers in Japan, but also to explore the impacts of labor inflows on Japan's modern nation-state, a conception anchored in the myth of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. Throughout this case study, it will be argued that the implementation of democratization driven by the development of multiculturalism both in the state immigration policymaking and within the sphere of civil society has been necessary to cope with conflicting situations stemming from the "unavoidable" incorporation of foreign workers in Japanese society.

### **III. The Case Study: Japan and Foreign Labor Migration in Globalization**

#### ***A. Historical Context: Japan's Modernization and Foreign Workers***

Massive inflows of foreign labor to Japan began in the mid-1980s. The estimated number of foreign workers in Japan increased from 119,100 in 1986 to 600,700 in 1992 (including legal and illegal workers).<sup>70</sup> Although the proportion of foreign residents in Japan was the lowest among the major industrialized countries, rapidly increasing foreign labor inflows generated a great deal of debate on whether Japan should accept these foreign workers. In particular, since Japan's immigration law strictly prohibited the entry of unskilled migrant workers, more attention was paid toward the issue of the dramatically escalating inflows of illegal unskilled laborers to Japan (the estimated number of illegal workers increased from 63,100 in 1986 to 292,800 in 1992<sup>71</sup>). These debates largely divided into two lines, reflecting an "open" and a "closed" door policy.<sup>72</sup> The proponents of the *kaikoku* (open door policy) insisted that Japan should accept foreign labor by

considering it an essential factor breaking down the exclusivity of Japanese society, which, they claimed, delayed “internationalization.” On the other hand, the supporters of the *sakoku* (closed door policy) opposed the increase in foreign workers by attributing Japan’s successful economic development to the “peculiarity” of Japan’s ethnic homogeneity. Toshio Iyotani has argued that the positions of either accepting or refusing an inflow of foreign labor are indeed opposing views in one sense, but that both sides divorced from Japan’s immigration issues from general global immigration trends by focusing on homogeneity as the basis of Japanese society.<sup>73</sup> That is, Japan’s homogeneity is regarded as “backward” from the open door arguments, while the closed door arguments consider it the strength of Japan’s economy and society. With this in mind, for the holistic analysis of the contemporary issue of foreign labor migration in Japan, it is vital not only to briefly explain the historical process of construction of the myth of homogeneous ideology as the basis of Japan’s modern nation-state and society, but also to explore the relation of this process to the history of migration in Japan.

The perception of Japan as a nation of homogeneous people might have originated from its long history of isolation (*sakoku*) from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but, more likely, had been ingeniously utilized as a political instrument since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. By opening the country (*kaikoku*) to the world, the Japanese leadership realized the necessity of overcoming a sense of crisis in the face of Western power. This was expressed in two contradictory ways: while these leaders recognized the inevitability of importing Western learning to sustain its political independence, they also acknowledged the necessity of rejecting Western influences to maintain its indigenous identity.<sup>74</sup> To become modernized yet remain “Japanese,” they led to self-Orientalize Japan by consciously positioning itself as the West’s “Other.”<sup>75</sup> In this mechanism, by strategically incorporating both the naturalization of selected cultural characteristics and the grafting of pseudo-scientific notions of biological determinism borrowed from the West, the



Japanese nation-state was formed by idealizing cultural and “racial” homogeneity as its basis.<sup>76</sup>

Michael Weiner considers Japan’s high degree of overlap between race and nation as “the racialization of an imagined community,” in which the criteria for membership was culturally and biologically determined.<sup>77</sup> That is, by underlining the idea that “nobody can *become* a Japanese,”<sup>78</sup> Japan’s homogeneous ideology emphasized the exclusion of “Others” who did not share racial lineage. Indeed, the use of the nineteenth-century terminologies *sakoku* and *kaikoku* in the recent dispute on the acceptance of foreign workers signals that the Japanese interpret this issue not in temporal isolation, but as an integral part of the historically continuing argument over how open Japan’s relationship with the world should be.<sup>79</sup>

In historical terms, although the issue of international labor migrations had not been thrown into the limelight in Japan until the late 1980s, foreign labor inflows to the country were not a new phenomenon. During WWII, Japan’s imperialist expansion conscripted Koreans and Chinese to the country as replacement workers to satisfy emergent labor needs caused by the massive military mobilization of the indigenous labor force: the number of the Koreans forcefully mitigated to Japan totaled 2.3 million in 1945.<sup>80</sup> Currently, the Koreans who remained in Japan and their descendents, numbering approximately 700,000, constitute the largest ethnic minority community in the country.<sup>81</sup> However, despite the presence of Korean and Chinese residents since the prewar period, much of the contemporary debate on foreign workers utterly ignores or denies this prewar history by regarding these foreign residents as “invisible” immigrants or as a little more than a residual of the history of military imperialism.<sup>82</sup> More importantly, together with the historical integrations of culturally different indigenous groups, the Ainu and Okinawans, the forceful incorporation of foreign workers and their continuing residence in Japan have revealed that the ideology of the Japanese as the homogeneous population is oblivious to the history of prewar Japanese modernization; that is, it is myth, that is, historically and socially constructed reality.

In the postwar period, the continued ramifications of the myth of ethnic homogeneity as the essence of Japanese ideology have been articulated in the official unwillingness to accept the ethnically and culturally different origins of people. The Japanese Nationality Act, issued and enshrined in 1950, has defined its citizenship by the principle of *jus sanguinis*, the ‘law of blood’ or parental nationality, in contrast to the basis of *jus soli*, the ‘law of soil,’ whereby citizenship is the right of everyone born within a state’s borders.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, labor shortages had been a recurrent problem in Japan’s capitalist development since the 1960s, which promoted the debate about the acceptance of foreign workers among Japanese officials and employers. Yet, Japan maintained its exclusive immigration policies until late-1989, and only opened the door to limited personnel qualified in professional and technical fields while strictly prohibiting the entry of unskilled foreign labor, largely on the grounds that such an influx might endanger the seamless racial homogeneity of Japanese society.<sup>84</sup>

During the period from the latter half of 1965 to the mid-1970s, the Japanese economy experienced a conspicuously high rate of growth accompanied by severe scarcity of workers—particularly flexible unskilled labor. Responding to the additional labor necessary for high growth, dramatic urbanization occurred. In fact, approximately 10 million internal labor migrants, mainly as seasonal workers, had moved from rural to urban areas during the 1960s, but their availability as industrial labor fell sharply by the end of the 1960s, owing to long-term sustained high economic growth.<sup>85</sup> Against the sequential emergence of discussions about the possible introduction of unskilled foreign migrant workers under the tight labor market conditions, the Japanese government decided not to accept such workers on three occasions (in 1967, 1973, and 1976).<sup>86</sup> Reflecting the “miracle” growth of Japan’s economy of this period without experiencing the massive inflows of new immigrant labor, Japanese businessmen and government officials claimed that Japan’s industrial prowess derived largely from the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of

its population. This belief was highlighted in the former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's notorious remark made in a 1986 speech, which criticized the U.S. for its competitive backwardness stemming from its racial diversity.<sup>87</sup> The spread of the *Nihonjinron* literature (literature of "Japaneseness") has also filled the ideological needs of conservative politics *not* by precisely depicting the Japanese society with its reality of actual "ethnic" diversity as well as differences in material conditions among individuals and localities, *but* rather by addressing it with the idealized images of the homogeneous society as a whole.<sup>88</sup> That is, dialectically reinforced as the driving force of Japan's successful economic development, the myth of Japanese racial and cultural homogeneity has continued to play an essential role at the core of Japan's contemporary conservative political discourse in constructing the predominant ideology of Japan.

In contrast to foreign labor schemes launched by most Western highly developed nations to solve a shortage of workers during the same period, some Western analysts interpreted that postwar Japan made the 'deliberate' choice not to introduce workers from abroad by emphasizing cultural considerations rather than economic forces in making migration policy.<sup>89</sup> From this perspective shedding light on the Japanese rapid industrialization without relying on foreign-born workers to fill significant numbers of low-level jobs as a "exceptional case," Japan's success is considered the proof that economic growth can be achieved by relying on labor-saving innovation without relying on mass immigration.<sup>90</sup> Yet, in the late-1980s, Japan noticeably lost its status as the exceptional case among advanced industrialized nation-states when rapidly developed inflows of massive foreign labor came to Japan. By examining both domestic and global contexts to explain the twenty-year time-lag between the 1960s, when the labor shortage in Japan become a problem, and the 1980s, when the massive inflow of unskilled and low-wage foreign workers began, Iyotani has highlighted the following five factors.<sup>91</sup>

First, Japanese companies successfully managed to raise labor productivity by pursuing

improvements in manufacturing technologies. In the 1970s in particular, the development of microelectronics, mechanization and automation promoted further technological advancement in manufacturing, and, as a result, there was less demand for unskilled workers in the labor market. Second, longer working hours were maintained during the rapid economic growth period. Also, elderly people and married women, who were encouraged to participate in the labor market, contributed to preserving a supply of low-wage labor. Third, the existence of appropriate conditions—such as the flexible hiring policies of companies and the use of housewives and students as temporary and part-time workers—made the maintenance of the flexibility of the labor market possible. Fourth, the Japanese economic development slowed down with the oil shocks in the mid-1970s, which was an important external factor in postponing the influx of foreign workers to Japan.<sup>92</sup> Finally, since the latter half of the 1970s, production and assembly operations have increasingly relocated from Japan into East and Southeast Asian countries where cheap and ready sources of labor exist. The trend of foreign direct investment by Japanese companies accelerated in the 1980s, a development closely related to the rapid increase of foreign labor immigrants in Japan (this point will be further examined below). In sum, under these conditions, most Japanese in the 1960s and 1970s never considered employing foreign workers to make up for the labor shortage.<sup>93</sup> In other words, Japan's economic success without immigration was not simply the result of a deliberate governmental and/or societal decision not to import foreign labor, but rather that of a sophisticated combination of structural factors in its domestic and international realms.

Unlike the period of the 1960-70s, the re-emergence of an acute labor shortage through Japan's abnormally brisk economic activities beginning from the mid-1980s, the so-called "bubble" economy, caused dramatic streams of foreign labor migrants to flow into Japan. These migrant workers consisted not only of skilled (and therefore legally permissible) laborers but also of unskilled laborers prohibited from work in Japan. In this respect, since the mid-1980s, Japan's

emergence as one of the major labor immigration countries in the world has posed a essential challenge to Japan's conservative immigration policy and, more strikingly, the myth of Japan as a racially and culturally homogeneous nation-state. But first the changes causing the dramatically increasing immigration of foreign workers into Japan should be examined from the critical IPE perspective. This analysis will not only clarify the intimate correlation between the dramatic inflows of skilled and unskilled foreign workers in Japan and the restructuring of its economy in the context of contemporary globalization, but also will posit that foreign workers, especially unskilled ones, have begun to play a key role as an indispensable labor-force in the structurally evolving Japanese economy and, consequently, as a new actor in Japanese society.

### ***B. The Globalization of the Japanese Economy and Foreign Workers***

The onset of Japan's high economic growth in the mid-1980s generated a marked expansion of total labor demand, consequently leading to a boost in demand for foreign workers. Compared with the situation under the 1960-70s' economic boom, Japan's labor market was deemed considerably rigid, partially the result of significant demographic transformations stemming from the country's extremely low fertility rate and the rapid ageing of its population.<sup>94</sup> However, Hiromi Mori posits that "...the existing labor force was more fully employed in the 1960s and early 1970s. One should note here that the use of foreign workers emerged in response to the comparatively less tight [labor] market of the recent Heisei economic expansion."<sup>95</sup> In further exploring the implications of Mori's interpretation, David Bartram sheds light on the fact that the ratio of job openings to applicants was much higher in the early 1970s than in the late 1980s.<sup>96</sup> With in this mind, the analysis of the restructuring of Japanese economy within the larger framework of the progressively interconnected global economy, primarily manifested by the internationalization of production and the concomitant specialization of the global division of labor, is imperative to explore the question of what has caused labor immigration to Japan.

Since the late 1970s, the significant development of Japanese economy, particularly in terms of increased income levels, has made Japan an attractive destination for labor migrants from neighboring Asian developing countries, nearly all of which have insufficient domestic demands for labor, considerable unemployment or underemployment, and large labor surpluses. The sudden appreciation of the Japanese yen in the wake of the Plaza Accords of 1985 expanded the income differentials between Japan and these countries, which continued to widen rapidly in the remainder of the decade. In 1988, for example, Japan's per capita income was 123 times higher than that of Bangladesh, 64 times that of China, 60 times that of Pakistan, and 33 times that of the Philippines.<sup>97</sup> Such disparities have enormously raised the level of wage expectations in Japan and created an economic magnet for would-be migrants. Wage differentials, however, cannot be regarded as a single incentive of the rapidly intensified influx of labor immigration into Japan from the late-1980s, because Japan's income level has been constantly higher than those of the adjacent countries of Asia since the late 1960s, when other Asians did not seek extensively to migrate into Japan.<sup>98</sup>

The rising value of the yen following the Plaza Accords encouraged a seemingly endless process of investment-led economic growth in Japan. Along with the escalation of labor scarcity, the upsurge of domestic labor cost and its adverse implications for accelerating competitiveness in the global economy have facilitated the relocation of labor-intensive manufacturing production through extensive foreign direct investment (FDI) and overseas development assistance (ODA) initiatives, a strategy designed to take advantage of the strong yen (which made investment abroad cheaper) and seek cheap labor. From 1975 to 1987, the number of overseas subsidiary firms established by Japanese corporations rose from 339 to 1,307.<sup>99</sup> The significant crunch of both Japan's FDI and ODA has concentrated in Asia. FDI in the rest of Asia conducted by Japanese MNCs grew at a rate of about 20 percent a year from 1980 to 1985 and at a much greater rate in the latter half of the 1980s.<sup>100</sup> As a result, Japan is the largest foreign investor in Indonesia, Malaysia

and Thailand, and the second largest in Singapore and the Philippines. In the 1980s, the dramatic increase of Japanese ODA made Japan the single largest donor of ODA in Asia.<sup>101</sup> By the early 1990s, some in governmental and intellectual circles began to emphasize the internationalization of production through FDI and ODA initiatives as a purposely enlightened policy to curb much labor migration by hypothesizing its effect of the reduction of manual jobs in Japan and large-scale job creation in prospective sending countries.<sup>102</sup> However, in addressing flows of predominantly Asian foreign workers in Japan, the fact that a high percentage of foreign workers have originated from areas dominated by Japanese FDI should be clarified.

John Clammer argues that “Japanese capital which has spurred growth elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia has also spurred the influx of labor from those very regions into Japan itself.”<sup>103</sup> In fact, foreigners of Asian origin accounted for 78.1 percent of total registrants.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, in terms of illegal labor inflows to Japan, appreciation data indicates that during the late 1980s, when Japan began establishing off-shore factories and other types of investment in Malaysia, illegal labor migration from Malaysian to Japan increased.<sup>105</sup> This pattern underscores the critical IPE perspective by suggesting that Asian countries’ “new industrialization” assisted by FDI and ODA originated from Japan as well as the presence of and employment at the Japanese plants have developed a familiarity with the Japanese economy and way of life, which makes the perceptual distance smaller and, consequently, elevates the incentive to go and work there among the “would-be” immigrant workers. That is, the “flexible restructuring” of Japan’s economy through the internationalization of production as its effort to cope with the problem of its labor shortage not only has encouraged the formation of permanent transnational pathway between Japan and the countries receiving Japanese FDI and ODA, but also enhanced Japan’s image as an affluent land of earning opportunity and potential destination for migration. In other words, since the mid-1980s, when Japan suffered from its acute shortage of labor, the combination of Japan’s considerably high

average of income per capita and its visible presence in the global and, more precisely, regional political economy as Asia's economic "locomotive" convincingly induced immigration to Japan. It was also in this period that a new upsurge of emigration pressure within Asia was created by the remarkable outflow of Asian workers from the Middle East, due to declining petroleum prices and heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf region. Under this situation, migrant workers as well as state officials in the country of emigration in this region turned to Japan. The governments of sending countries, such as China (1988), the Philippines (1987) and Korea (1988), persuaded the Japanese government to facilitate the employment of migrant labor.<sup>106</sup> In this context, despite the Japanese government's continuous prohibition on the entrance of unskilled labor since the second half of the 1980s, Japan has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of foreign workers—predominantly illegal unskilled workers—from the rest of Asia.

To further explore the cause of these labor flows, Japan's attraction for foreign workers should be considered in terms of three aspects, which have been structurally created by the transforming nature of labor demand through the restructuring process of Japan's economy. First, the rapidly deepening manpower deficit along with the dramatic growth of Japan's economy imposed difficulty predominantly on small- and medium-sized companies, which had played an essential role in Japan's economic development during the period of 1960s and 1970s. To curtail labor demand and also to minimize labor costs, large-sized companies favored the externalization of their labor-intensive processes by subcontracting their activities or redeploying production bases abroad, whereas, in small- and medium-sized companies, these options were less feasible. This tendency was associated with not only the insufficient financial resources of small companies but also their immobility, particularly in the construction industry and the rapidly expanding service sector.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, significantly acute shortage of labor in small firms is deeply rooted in the "dual" Japanese economic structure consisting of a few large firms and numerous small subcontractors.<sup>108</sup>



Within the context of a highly competitive global economy, parent companies have exercised tighter controls over their subcontractors by claiming reductions in both costs and delivery times.

Consequently, the subcontracting firms have faced the increasing necessity of low-cost and flexible labor, but have been constrained in their use of indigenous workers largely because of their comparatively low-wage and inferior working conditions, a commonly characteristic of the construction and low value-added service industries. For the employers of small companies, unskilled foreign workers, who are willing to accept low wages and insecure working conditions, have offered a new source of cheap, flexible labor. Hence, the severe scarcity of workers in small-and medium sized companies, stemming from the rapidly expanding demand for labor and from the structural transformation of Japanese economy, has intensified their reliance on foreign laborers.

Second, under the conditions of an eroding supply of young labor due to Japan's low fertility rate, the growing trend of high-job aspirations among younger local workers driven by an intimate correlation between occupational prestige and educational attainment in Japanese society has made labor scarcity serious in "socially undesirable jobs," characterized as "3K"—*kiken*, *kitsui*, and *kitanai* in Japanese (dangerous, difficult, and dirty).<sup>109</sup> The advancement of higher education has not only multiplied the supply of well-educated young applicants with sufficient qualifications to adapt themselves to the latest technologies, but also generated a bias among graduates to determine an occupational preference dependent on levels of educational attainment. This qualitative change in the labor market has been accompanied by Japan's advanced economy that has provided the well-educated Japanese as new labor-market entrants with rich working opportunities represented by great rewards and prestige. In these trends, closely interrelated with Japan's dual industrial structure, severe and persistent labor shortages have occurred in such industries as construction, certain segments of low-technology manufacturing, and low value-added service,

which have been progressively shunned by younger Japanese workers because of their “3K” as well as “bottom-wage” and “dead-end” nature of jobs.<sup>110</sup> Not only Japan’s relatively high wage level but also the huge number of job vacancies at the lower segment of industrial sector as a result of Japanese job preference has attracted foreign labor to Japan. In fact, by 1992, the construction sector alone, in which conditions were estimated as nearly 40 percent shy of its full labor complement, employed approximately 120,000 foreign workers.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, through performing unskilled labor, which the Japanese themselves are no longer willing to do, foreign workers turned out to be an indispensable, yet supposedly disposable, labor-force for supporting the basic structure of the Japanese economy.

Finally, along with the deindustrialization of Japanese economy facilitated by the internationalization of production, “global cities” have emerged and accelerated the demand for unskilled labor in Japan. The urban life-style, exemplified by the externalization of many household services owing to the intensified participation of housewives in labor market, has developed the new types of service sectors, such as retail trade and restaurants. The expansion of the service industries, which are generally labor-intensive and small- or medium-sized, has escalated the requirements for cheap and flexible labor. For instance, from 1975 to 1990, services and wholesale/retail trade and restaurants absorbed 5.4 million and 2.9 million employees respectively, while the manufacturing industry added only 1.6 million.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, Japan’s indigenous dynamics of urbanization and, more strikingly, its progressing involvement in global political economy have transnationalized its major cities, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe and Yokohama.<sup>113</sup> These cities have attracted professionals and skilled transients from all over the world, and, at the same time, the widening void of unskilled labor in these areas, especially promoted by the predominant concentrations of such industries as construction, low-technology manufacturing and labor-intensive services, has been filled by foreign workers. While 817 of

1,050 foreign enterprises are located in Tokyo, illegal unskilled migrant workers accounted for over 30 percent of total foreign workers in this area in 1994.<sup>114</sup> In sum, these major Japanese cities have embraced the characteristics of “global cities,” not only by serving as global command centers for corporations, but equally by diversifying the composition of their populations. Indeed, these “global cities” have functioned as a significant magnet for skilled as well as unskilled labor migrants to the country.

Together with the increasing rigidity of the labor market due to demographic transformations led by the low fertility rate and the accelerated ageing of the society in Japan, the rapid development and the coincided restructuring of Japan’s economy since the mid-1980s have created a severe shortage of labor. In this sense, the demand for foreign workers in the Japanese economy is derived not from a cyclical but rather a structural labor scarcity. Furthermore, the exigent demand for cheap and flexible labor at the lower industrial segment has provided attractive opportunities for foreign workers, who have been induced by the combination of Japan’s image of affluence and its very visible presence overseas, to bring their migrations to Japan to fruition. On the other hand, Japanese small- and medium-sized firms have evolved their structural dependences on foreign workers as a flexible labor-force, partially facilitated by the progressively institutionalized foreign labor market with the development of labor-broker networks.<sup>115</sup> In this context, the Japanese government had responded to the escalating labor shortage by encouraging the further rationalization of labor market and the further mechanization and internationalization of production until the 1990s. Yet, since these strategies are limited for most small- and medium-sized companies, the massive influx of illegal foreign workers to Japan continued. In this respect, Japan’s immigration policy reform in 1990 and its consequences need to be elaborated to fully capture the dynamics of contemporary foreign labor immigrations to Japan. The implications of the Japanese immigration policies over labor flow characteristics and the impact of the entries of

legal and illegal migrant workers on the modern Japanese nation-state and its society will be explored.

***C. Japan's Revised Immigration Policies: The "Side-Door" Policies and Class and Ethnicity***

The Immigration Control Act of 1951 provided the fundamental legislative framework for Japanese regulation for the foreigners' employment in the country. Under the Act rules, the entry into and residence in Japan of foreigners, including those who are to be employed, are controlled on the basis of the status-of-residence system, which categorizes the activities that a foreigner is permitted to perform.<sup>116</sup> Together with both the legal criteria for a citizenship based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, Japan's restrictive legal admission and its perception of foreign workers only on a temporary-basis had historically characterized its state immigration policy. Yet, since the mid-1980s, within the context of an increasingly interconnected and interdependent global economy, Japan has found itself in a rapid increase of the number of foreign labor immigration, facilitated by the restructuring of their capitalist economy. Responding to a dramatically escalated influx of foreign workers, the Japanese government initiated the reconsideration of its official approaches toward the entries of both skilled and unskilled foreign laborers and revised the immigration law in 1990. This amendment exemplifies the convergent tendency of the internationalization and renationalization of state among the highly industrialized nation-states as the response to the restructuring of global economy. More crucially, the consequences of the revision of law have created the contradictory conditions between the maintenance of the notion of the modern nation-state and the dialectical influence of the increasing inflows of foreign labor over the transformations of state/society complex within the context of contemporary globalization.

In the 1990 revision, state officials announced that the law was amended to effectively deal with both the changing requirements stemming from the accelerating processes of economic globalization and the increasing number of illegal workers and, consequently, the infringements of

their human rights in the country.<sup>117</sup> This revision addressed three major provisions: 1) rearrangement and enlargement of resident statuses under the categories of skilled activities; 2) classification of the standards for immigration screening and simplification of landing procedures; and 3) strengthening of measures against the recruitment and employment of illegal foreign workers (primarily unskilled labor).<sup>118</sup> That is, the revised Act has responded to the significant inflows of skilled workers and professionals in the progressively diversified field of work by liberalizing opportunities for the admission of skilled foreign workers, but has tightened the regulations with regard to the recruitment and employment of unskilled immigrant laborers. In fact, the number of permissible job categories for foreigners to work and reside legally in Japan has expanded from 18 to 27, including legal/accounting services and intra-company transferees.<sup>119</sup> In this regard, it can be deemed that the 1990 policy reform has aimed to establish an institutional framework for promoting the admission of a qualified workforce in relation to economic globalization.

On the other hand, by maintaining a restraining regulation for the entrance of unskilled foreign workers, the 1990 amendment has established for the first time severe penalties against employers who illegally employ foreign workers as well as brokers who find jobs for these workers.<sup>120</sup> This tightened restrictive approach to unskilled labor migration has reflected the Japanese officials' consideration that any short-term benefits brought about by cheap and flexible unskilled labor of foreign immigrants may be outnumbered by the long-term social and political costs through their integration in the society. Deeply lying behind these changes were, as Yoko Sellek and Michael Weiner note, "the often expressed fears that a continued influx of unskilled migrant labor would generate social tensions," which, more strikingly, they have termed as the anxiety for "cultural or ethnic contamination" through the high possibility for temporary workers to transform into permanent settlers and marginalized into ethnic minorities over time.<sup>121</sup> That is, while experiencing rapidly increasing inflows of unskilled labor, Japan's revised Act attempted to

tightly regulate these flows by reinventing political rhetoric that racialized the social contracts binding its society together.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the 1990 revision of Japan's immigration policies demonstrates how the internationalization and renationalization of the Japanese state has influenced the state's immigration policy in a time of economic globalization.

In addition, the 1990 revision created *ad hoc*, the so-called "side-door" policies to ameliorate the shortages of a low-cost labor source in response to the lodged complaints from small- and medium-sized employers.<sup>123</sup> The revised Act has allowed the *Nikkeijin* (Japanese descendants up to the third generation and their spouses, mainly of Brazilian and Peruvian origins) to enter, work and live in Japan with no job restrictions, by obtaining the status of the new category, a "long-term" resident.<sup>124</sup> Reflecting this change, the entries of the *Nikkeijin* had increased dramatically—from 8,450 in 1988 to 148,700 in 1991 and 220,844 in 1998,<sup>125</sup>—and, they have expanded the labor pool as "legal" foreign unskilled labor. Furthermore, the acceptance of foreign trainees via the "company trainee" program to offer job training in Japan has expanded threefold between 1986 (14,400) and 1991 (43,600).<sup>126</sup> In principle, the purpose of the trainee system is "to contribute to the industrial, social, and economic development in various developing countries through an attempt to transfer technological, technical skills, expertise and/or knowledge which have been accumulated in Japan."<sup>127</sup> Yet, derived from the understanding that company trainees are not by definition employees, employers do not possess the legal obligation to pay full wages but only nominal remuneration for the employees' on-the-job training. For this reason, employers are attracted to the training programs and, more crucially, as Hiroshi Komai remarks, many of them have instituted them to obtain disguised cheap foreign labor.<sup>128</sup> The revised Act has also permitted the "pre-college students," mostly in language and vocational schools, to work a maximum of four hours a day. In reality, however, these students (mainly from China, Korea, and Taiwan) work longer hours as unskilled labor mainly in the service industry, such as restaurants and hotels by violating the law.<sup>129</sup>

By opening the “side-door” to inflows of foreign unskilled workers, the 1990 revision reflects the Japanese state’s compromise between its previous closed-door policy and industry’s strong demand for cheap foreign workers. Furthermore, the humanitarian problems stemming from the severe exploitation of migrant labor were addressed as one of the main concerns in the revision of the Act, but the new law has left out any discussion about these problems.<sup>130</sup> More strikingly, while the state’s ineffective control over the continuing inflows of illegal labor (even after the enforcement of severe penalties<sup>131</sup>) indicates an erosion of state sovereignty, it also can be considered the tacit acceptance among the state authority of foreign labor’s entry through the “back-door” by recognizing the deepening dependence of the Japanese economy on these laborers.<sup>132</sup> That is, since the 1990 revision of the Act, the issue of foreign labor migration has become increasingly complex by embracing massive amounts of unskilled migrant workers employed under different legal and employment conditions.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, the inflows of a large number of both legal and illegal foreign workers to Japan have not only led to the increased deterritorializing of the state but also to the problematizing of the image of homogeneous society as the essential basis of the modern Japanese nation-state.

The *de facto* legalization of the resident status of the *Nikkeijin* reveals the intentions of the Japanese political and business establishment to alleviate a crippling unskilled labor shortage and, simultaneously, to preserve the myth of “racial” homogeneity of the society. The *Nikkeijin* have been expected as “less foreign” and therefore acceptable because, sharing the same lineage, they would be culturally compatible regardless of nationality.<sup>134</sup> Yet, such local assumptions that they *must* understand Japanese customs have intensified the incongruity with the current reality of the *Nikkeijin* in Japan consisting of mostly third-generation descendents who are largely unfamiliar with the Japanese language and culture.<sup>135</sup> In this regard, their return-migrations embody psychological experiences quite distinct from other labor migrants in Japan. As Sassen notes through her

interview with the *Nikkeijin* returned from Japan, their experiences are quite dismal: “the jobs were hard and dirty, they received no respect, they were not seen as Japanese. Many have returned defeated and humiliated.”<sup>136</sup> The discriminatory attitudes among the Japanese toward the *Nikkeijin* who are physically Japanese but culturally and linguistically South American have raised a serious question concerning the ethnic boundary between Japanese and foreigners supposedly divided by the idea of a Japanese “race” as the cultural and pseudo-biological homogeneity. Indeed, the influx of these “ethnically” Japanese has joined with the presence of the third generation of Korean and Chinese permanent residents (who are “sociologically” Japanese since they do not share Japanese lineage or nationality but share its culture and language) and indigenous ethnic groups, such as the Ainu and Okinawans, to further challenge Japan’s long-standing assumption of “one nation and one ethnicity.”<sup>137</sup> Thus, the prevailing presence of the *Nikkeijin*, as the consequence of immigration policy-approach from the conservative political discourse, has compellingly generated a contradiction within the meaning of Japanese identity constructed through its modern nation-state formation.

The Japanese state regulatory constraints on immigration also cause the notion of Japan’s modern society to become precarious by creating the multilayered structure for foreign migrant labor in the country. In these layers, the professionals and skilled laborers qualified under the legally permitted job categories can be deemed as positioning at the highest. Although the total number of officially employed has represented a sharp increase since the 1980s, even after the enlargement of the status-of-residence, it has accounted for a rather minor proportion of foreign newcomers as a whole, and, consequently, its overall significance in Japanese society is being overwhelmed by the massive influx of unskilled workers.<sup>138</sup> Analysis should therefore place more emphasis on the emerging “class stratification” within the foreign manual-labor market and its impact on the Japanese society. The acceptance of the *Nikkeijin* as the “legal” unskilled workers



has caused their wage levels to soar, creating what Sellek calls the emergence of migrant labor “aristocracy.”<sup>139</sup> In addition, despite the gradual relaxation in the implementations of the trainee program, it continues to impose financial constraints on companies. Thus the costs associated with using these side-door channels have inevitably induced many small firms to rely on illegals, eventually facilitating the continuing massive inflows of these workers. The study by the Overseas Japanese Association underscores the stratification of unskilled foreign labor market by revealing that the *Nikkeijin* have concentrated in automobile and electrical manufacturing factories, whereas illegal Asians have tended toward much tougher and dirtier conditions, such as construction and low-tier service industries.<sup>140</sup> In sum, unskilled foreign workers in Japan have developed the class structure based on their legal status, while the gap widens between the official legal position and the actual state of affairs. Takashi Miyajima has also called attention to the ethnic segmentations among Asian unskilled labor migrants.<sup>141</sup> Miyajima argues that promotion opportunities available to these migrants in the Japanese employment hierarchy largely depend on their language similarities with the Japanese—the use of the same Chinese characters. That is, structural stratification among foreign unskilled workers is based not on individuals’ talent or experience but rather on their legal status as well as their ethnic and linguistic origins.

Intricate segmentation among foreign unskilled labor contains vital implications for Japanese notions of social stratification. Citing a survey reporting that nearly 90 percent of Japanese population identify themselves as members of the “middle-class,” Mika Mervio posits that Japan perceives itself as a classless society with having high levels of social equality and low income differentials.<sup>142</sup> Japanese self-perception as overwhelmingly middle-class is largely driven by the postwar socioeconomic policies which has emphasized a greater degree of equality than at any previous time in Japanese history, although social discrimination against ethnic minorities—Korean, Okinawans and Ainu, for instance—has been common. Within the

supposedly classless society of the modern Japan, the rapidly prevailing presence of foreign workers has created a new proletariat. This new class is clarified not only as a “lumpenproletariat”—rootless, unstable, (mostly) legally unprotected and earning lower wages than the Japanese proletariat—but also an “ethno-class” distinguished by its racial and cultural difference from the Japanese mainstream and split ethnically and linguistically within itself.<sup>143</sup> In this respect, the *de facto* existence of foreign labor migrants problematizes the relationship of class and ethnicity in Japan, a question with which other highly industrialized countries in the West have had comparatively long experience.<sup>144</sup> In Japan, the relationship between class and ethnicity has been historically undermined by the prevalence and common acceptance of the myth of Japan as a monoethnic nation-state.<sup>145</sup> In other words, contemporary labor immigration in Japan has not only created a new class in Japanese society but also provides the significant incentive to reconsider social structure whose ideological foundations continue to be reinforced by the marginalization of, and ignorance about, many forms of cultural diversity in its midst.

Thus, contemporary foreign labor immigration in Japan has largely been shaped by state immigration policies and, in turn, have also deterritorialized the state and destabilized the idea of the modern Japanese nation-state historically derived from the myth of homogeneity. The impacts of foreign labor migration on Japanese society have been more sophisticated, since these laborers have not dramatically decreased in number despite Japan’s recession since late 1991. Rather, the growing tendency has been to remain in Japan for a longer period and to “settle” in the country.<sup>146</sup> These trends have failed to meet the prevailing expectation among the Japanese that foreign workers are temporary, disposable “guest workers,” utilized only during growth periods, and, sequentially and crucially, underlined the consideration of the social consequences of migrant laborers’ transition to long-term residents as vital in holistically comprehending the current problems of foreign workers in Japan. In this respect, both the multidimensional problems of racialization against

foreign workers and the restructuring of power relationships in the politics of migration with the emergence of “new” social forces needs to be examined. In this examination, the reasons for the abovementioned question of the absence of self-organized resistance movements by foreign workers in Japan and the key elements for Japan’s “unavoidable task” to integrate the “Others” in the rapidly globalizing world will be explored.

***D. The Politics of Migration in Japan: “New” Social Forces and “Double Democratization”***

Most foreign workers, regardless of legal status, have faced great difficulties to be incorporated in Japan, while the deepening social involvement of these “Others” has fomented social unrest in Japan’s modern nation-state and society. The Japanese law is based on the idea that “citizenship” is closely connected with nationality, principally conferred by origin. In this context, it is considered as a highly exceptional procedure for individuals of different origins to acquire full citizenship through naturalization as new members of a nation.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, foreign residents, including permanent Korean residents, are all precluded from participating in the political sphere on the grounds that “sovereignty rests with the Japanese nation.”<sup>148</sup> These restrictive regulations with regard to the incorporation of foreigners in Japan have underscored the myth of homogeneity of Japan’s modern nation-state, but, in the context of economic globalization, they are obstacles to attract the inflows of skilled workers, which are encouraged by the Japanese political and business leaders. Go No, a head of the firm recruiting Chinese computer experts upon requests from Japanese companies, notes that “many Chinese workers prefer to go to the West (rather than come to Japan) which offers them more security to build a future by giving them permanent status.”<sup>149</sup> However, unskilled laborers tend to face far more severe obstacles to their integration into the Japanese society.

Together with the racialization of Japan’s recruitment highlighted by the acceptance of the *Nikkeijin*, institutionalized and societal-based racial discrimination has disadvantaged both legal and,

more severely, illegal unskilled workers in terms of their employment conditions and social practices (housing, medical care, and education, etc.). Although Japanese labor law guarantees labor standards and rights irrespective of nationality and status of residence, migrant unskilled workers have suffered from inferior wages and working conditions. Wage levels of migrant workers are largely determined by factors such as legitimacy, forms of employment contract, and personal skills, especially proficiency in Japanese. The *Nikkeijin* constitute the highest stratum in terms of wage rates among foreign unskilled workers owing to their legitimacy, earning wages comparable to their Japanese counterparts. Yet, notwithstanding their legal resident status, the *Nikkeijin* have been exploited and mistreated by employers and foreign-labor brokers. For example, large portions of their wages are deducted to cover commission fees and travel expenses to Japan.<sup>150</sup> In the case of illegal workers, the situations have been more brutal. Many of these illegals are excluded from the benefits that native and legal foreign workers regularly acquire, including paid holiday and overtime payments.<sup>151</sup> Some employers have refused to pay any wages to unauthorized workers at all.<sup>152</sup> Widespread violations of standard labor protection for illegal workers by unscrupulous employers often go unreported because of workers' fear to disclose their clandestine status, possibly leading to deportation.

Difficult conditions are also experienced by foreign workers living in Japan in terms of social rights. One of the first challenges to be faced is racial discrimination while searching for adequate housing. Many Japanese landlords refuse to accept foreigners as tenants, especially illegal entrants who are mostly without guarantors or character references.<sup>153</sup> Given the concentration of foreign workers in urban areas, high rents and discriminatory attitudes leave them with no choice but to find shelter in overcrowded apartments or even in the nation's public parks.<sup>154</sup> In addition, despite the recent removal of Japanese nationality as a prerequisite of eligibility for national health insurance, various factors, such as employers' reluctance to pay additional expenses

and foreign-workers' anxieties about exposure of illegal employment, have prevented foreign workers from enrolling in health insurance and having access to medical services. Medical protection is still scarce for both legal and illegal foreign workers, while job-related accidents involving immigrant working in particularly dangerous "3K" industries has risen.<sup>155</sup> The rapid increase of unpaid medical expenses by foreign workers, mostly because of their financial inabilities, has also brought about the new social problem in Japan.<sup>156</sup> As the process of migratory inflows in Japan is gradually transformed into a settlement phase characterized by migrants' prolonged stay with family formation and reunification, the education of foreign children has engendered another salient social issue. Over the past five years, the number of foreign children attending local Japanese schools has significantly increased and most of these children have encountered serious language problems under Japan's educational system which regards proficiency in Japanese as its fundamental prerequisite.<sup>157</sup> The inaction of the state officials has resulted in the underdevelopment of educational infrastructure to deal with the rapid progress of internationalization in schools. A considerable portion of these children are discriminated against and find themselves barred access to equal education.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, the mass media's persuasion of the criminal image of foreign workers who deteriorate the racial harmony of Japanese society has facilitated xenophobia among the Japanese.<sup>159</sup> Thus, for foreign workers who have been intensely involved in Japanese society, there are various obstacles stemming from the racial discrimination against them, which has been firmly institutionalized within the framework of state regulations and also deeply inserted in the way of thinking of them as the "Others" among the Japanese.

With the rise of the serious questions of human rights violations in Japan, the pressures from other states and the supranational human rights regime has not only criticized the institutional and societal practices of racial discrimination in Japan but also constrained state power over immigration issues. For instance, as for Japan's controversial recruitment of the *Nikkeijin* from the

viewpoint of equality among foreign nationals in the country, even the Brazilian government and media have criticized the Japanese position by claiming that Japanese discriminatory hiring has caused a furor in Brazil.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, in 1999, for the first time, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (which was adopted by the United Nations in 1965 and ratified by Japan in 1995) was applied in a case brought by a female Brazilian journalist, who was ejected from a jewellery store solely for being a foreigner, to claim damages based on racism. In this case, the judge declared that since there are no domestic laws in Japan barring racial discrimination, the international aforementioned convention could be deemed to be operative as domestic law.<sup>161</sup> Although the enforcement mechanisms of the international regime for migration over the sovereign nation-states is still questionable in practice,<sup>162</sup> the accelerating application of codes of international human rights to domestic cases will constrain Japan's state sovereignty based on its racially exclusive immigration policies.

Unlike European countries, Japan has not encountered notable unified resistance movements led by newcomer foreign migrant workers themselves as “new” counterhegemonic social forces against the state. This, to a large extent, is derived from the fragmented nature of the ethnic migrant communities in Japan. The fragmentation of migrant communities is partially caused by the class stratification among foreign workers that was examined above. Owing to their different legal statuses, each group claims its own goals and demands—e.g., the *Nikkeijin* demand better employment conditions, while illegal Asians want their stay in Japan to be legalized—and, consequently, the mobilization of a resistance movement based on the sense of solidarity or desire for joint achievement among them has been difficult. In this sense, the Japanese state's policy of “different rules for different people” has effectively repressed possible countermovements by foreign labor immigrants.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, the study of changes in the number of registrants by prefecture and nationality reveals that despite noticeable concentration of newcomers in the Tokyo

metropolitan area and the Tokai area (Aichi and Shizuoka prefectures), the wider nationwide dispersions, by reflecting not only their distinct occupational profile but also some variations even among the same ethnic groups, have characterized the geographical distribution of newcomers' residency.<sup>164</sup> In terms of illegal unskilled workers who are missing from these registration statistics, although it is difficult to gauge their geographical allocation because of no reliable nationwide data, Clammer points out their urban-oriented residential tendency largely being attracted by plentiful work-opportunities in the "global cities" but, at the same time, relatively distributed throughout the working class residential areas of Japanese industrial cities.<sup>165</sup> Along with these spatial dispersions of both legal and illegal foreign migrant workers, due to little social interaction taking place between different segments of ethnically and linguistically diversified migrant worker populations, there are no "divided cities" of ghetto or slums in Japan, which are familiar phenomena in the Western host countries of immigration. Consequently, while foreign labor migrants constitute an underclass with various socioeconomic disadvantages, the fragmented nature of their communities stemming from class stratification among them and their geographical dispersion has resulted in the lack of class-consciousness within immigrant workers, a prime force to mobilize resistance movements. In this sense, they are not for the most part a "class-for-itself."<sup>166</sup> In addition, particularly for illegal migrant laborers, there is the natural unwillingness to draw public attention to their *illegality* by organizing and claiming their rights collectively, which has intensified their marginality, alienation, and vulnerability to be exploited.<sup>167</sup>

Attempts to improve the disadvantaged situations of foreign workers and to empower them have been carried out somewhat by local governments and, more actively, by humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Japan through involving in the politics of migration as "new" social forces. As Wayne Cornelius observes, "the glaring contradiction between what is going on at the municipal level and the rigid, hard-line policy of bureaucrats at the national levels is

one of the most interesting facets of the contemporary immigration phenomenon in Japan.”<sup>168</sup> Especially in the ‘company towns’ where there are heavy concentrations of small- and medium-manufacturing plants, local authorities appear more willing to accommodate immigrants than their national counterparts. For example, the municipal officials in Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, a part of the main industrial zone along the Pacific coastal line, have provided a range of services for the *Nikkeijin* and their families, including the dissemination of newsletters containing useful information, the assignment of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking staff in the town hall, and the provision of language classes.<sup>169</sup> Spurred on by calls from the local institutions, particularly medical and educational ones, some local governments have also adopted various support measures to tackle the issues generated through the social integration of foreign workers. By applying the 1899 Sick-Travelers Treatment Law, local authorities, such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Saitama and Kanagawa Prefectures, have made efforts to cover rapidly accumulated unpaid fees owned by foreigners.<sup>170</sup> In terms of the education problem, the Kanagawa Prefectural Office launched a system to subsidize municipalities in employing and dispatching teachers for Japanese language training for foreign children.<sup>171</sup> Creating a striking contrast with Japan’s official anti-immigration positions,<sup>172</sup> such remedies by local governments have been considered significant achievements to deal with the social costs created by the foreign worker residents. Yet, the contributions of local governments are restrained in two senses: their approaches are still largely derived from the predominantly economic consideration of foreign workers merely as a complementary labor to the local industries, and they are reactionary and *ad hoc* responses to the urgently growing demands rather than comprehensive long-term plans for the further deepening incorporation of foreign migrant workers in Japanese society.

The growing awareness of foreign worker exploitation has led to the foundations of myriad support groups voluntarily initiated by Japanese citizens, which have endeavored to protect rights of



foreign workers and to enthusiastically involve in Japan's politics of migration as "new" social forces by developing critiques toward the racialized attitudes of the Japanese state and society. While some progressive unions, such as Zentoitsu, have been actively organizing foreign workers, "Bright," the first foreign immigrant workers' labor union was formed in Tokyo by Japanese volunteers in March 1993 to help foreign laborers to escape inhuman treatments with impunity.<sup>173</sup> Some representative NGOs, such as Kalabaw no Kai in Yokohama, ALS no Kai in Nagoya, and CALL Network in Tokyo, have been actively assisting foreigners in various ways, ranging from legal counsel to language training.<sup>174</sup> As for the development of these organized attempts in civil society to provide support for foreign workers, Tadashi Yamamoto explains:

The government's failure to respond effectively to the vast social changes and the pluralization of social values brought about by the forces of globalization and the intensification of interdependence, on the one hand, and a growing interest on the part of citizens in responding to the widening space of social needs, on the other, resulted in the emergence of civil society in Japan.<sup>175</sup>

In the same line, Komai argues that these NGOs "should be given rights and institutional status as organizations able to represent the interests of foreign workers."<sup>176</sup> From these perspectives, the active participations of the integrated citizens in the political realm are highlighted as the driving force for the transformation of the institutional and conceptual framework of exclusionist national sovereignty based on rapidly growing transnational relations in civil society, which Yoshikazu Sakamoto calls the realization of the "civic state."<sup>177</sup>

However, this optimistic perspective on the role of NGOs in the politics of migration undermines the important problem inherent to these organizations' operations. Koichi Ogawa *et al.*'s study of Kanagawa City Union (KCU), a trade union run by the Japanese and organizing 630 foreign workers by spring 2000, concludes that "we can hardly say that the union is cultivating the ability of its foreign membership to realize its rights as workers by forming solidarity relations at work and expanding their autonomy by organizing other workers themselves."<sup>178</sup> As they elucidate,

foreign members are not active subjects but rather passively mobilized participants in their own movement; in other words, they are basically recipients of union services to resolve their troubles. In this sense, the hardest task that these support groups need to overcome is not only how to make their organizational structure more democratic for the foreign members but also how to contribute for consciousness raising, education, and self-directed action among foreign workers themselves. That is, the accommodations made by local governments and NGOs as “new” social forces in the politics of migration have helped to improve the incorporation mechanisms of foreign workers in Japanese society, but as a foreign participant in the National Migrant Worker Forum asserts, “organizing does not equal just getting foreign workers into union, nor is it providing information in their native languages, which is only one step toward solving their problems working and living in Japan.”<sup>179</sup>

Thus, the involvement of these “new” social forces in the politics of migration has challenged the racially exclusive immigration policies of the Japanese state and the prevailing practices of racial discrimination in its society, but their attempts have not sufficiently empowered foreign workers themselves to overcome their disadvantaged conditions. Yet, reflecting the prolonged stay of foreign workers in Japan, the current absence of self-organized resistance movements of foreign migrant workers does not indicate that Japan’s discriminatory attitudes can be maintained without generating social chaos in the future between the Japanese who assert the social and cultural antagonisms against foreigners and immigrants and their succeeding generations who are militantly mobilized toward their racialized acceptance in the country. This point is underscored by the recent mobilization of the politically and socio-economically marginalized Korean residents in Osaka, especially led by those of second and third generation, to demand equal political representation through obtaining the voting right in local elections. That is, as the Japanese economy has structurally deepened its dependence on foreign labor within the context of

the contemporary restructuring of the global political economy, further substantial changes in Japanese political and social realm are necessary to effectively carry out its “unavoidable task,” that is, the integration of the “Others.” For Japan, as Miyajima suggests by referring to C. Wihtol de Wenden, “the question which needs to be addressed is that immigrants have for some time formed a structural part of this society, necessitating a redefinition of the political and social participation of immigrants in the country in which they live.”<sup>180</sup> In this respect, Japan needs to implement “double democratization” in political and social spheres by developing the sense of multiculturalism.

On the one hand, it is significant for the Japanese central government from the long-term perspective to carry out institutional democratization, that is, the establishment of legal and formal equality between domestic and foreign populations in the country by altering its racially exclusive immigration policies, which have not only facilitated the institutionalized and societal racialization against foreign workers but also forcefully and automatically imposed the disadvantaged conditions on them. For this purpose, it is most difficult to rethink the form and content of citizenship in Japan and to decouple it from the historically constructed notions of culturally and ethnically homogenous Japanese nation. Furthermore, to avoid the chaotic social segregation by constructing a permanent underclass of migrants and their following generations, the long-term plans of the educational provision for foreign children needs to be carefully considered.

The norm of racialization is deeply embedded into Japanese society. In this respect, Japanese civil society also needs to be democratized. The democratization of civil society involves the creation of culturally tolerant public space for the participation of foreigners. The rapidly intensified inflows of foreign labor migrants in Japan and their deepening involvement in Japanese society dialectically related to the dramatic restructuring of global political economy has forced Japan to reconsider its self-perception of nation-state and national society as culturally and racially homogeneous entities. A hard challenge that Japan has encountered within the context of

contemporary globalization, exemplified by the impact of dynamics of foreign labor migration on the Japanese society, is the necessary transformation of each individual's discernment of the self and "Others"—the reinvention of individual identity by going beyond the myth of homogeneity—to integrate foreign workers as new citizens of the country. In the face of the dramatically globalizing contemporary world, it is the tolerance for multicultural coexistence based on the sense of equality that a truly "internationalized" Japan needs to genuinely create within the space of its civil society.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In the contemporary globalization period, dramatically intensified foreign labor migration into Japan calls into question the Japanese modern nation-state and national society founded upon the myth of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. The idea of the nation-state as a racial unity, which has historically constructed and rehabilitated throughout Japan's modernization, continues to function as the key basis of the Japan's predominant ideology and its relation to the world by considering the incorporation of the "Other" as a threat to the cohesion of the society. Based on this belief, the Japanese state has strictly regulated the entry of foreign workers into the country. Yet, since the mid-1980s, along with Japan's accelerating involvement in economic globalization and its internal socio-demographic changes, foreign workers have flowed rapidly into Japan to fill the shortage of labor, particularly the acute scarcity of low-paid manual workers. Consequently, foreign unskilled workers have begun to play indispensable roles in supporting Japanese economy from the bottom.

In this context, as a response to the restructuring of global economy, the Japanese state's 1990 revision of immigration policies manifested the internationalization and renationalization of the state. Restrictive regulations for foreign unskilled immigration, largely driven by racialized consideration, maintained throughout the revision. Nevertheless, the *ad hoc* reactions to the Japan's acute demands for cheap foreign labor have promoted massive inflows of legal and illegal

foreign manual workers, which have deterritorialized and fundamentally challenged the form of Japan's modern nation-state. The presences of the *Nikkeijin* through the legalization of their status and their discriminatory acceptance in the society have made the meaning of Japanese identity ambiguous. The odd situation with the presence of highly stratified foreign labor market depending on legitimacy and ethnicity within a supposedly classless society has also raised the very question of social structure in Japan. The presence of foreign labor migrants has brought to light issues of class and ethnicity for the first time in Japan by problematizing the Japanese self-understanding of itself as a monoethnic society.

As "temporary laborers" increasingly become transformed into "social beings" in Japanese society, foreign immigrant workers must cope with severe discrimination. Despite the prevailing practices of institutionalized and societal-based racialization against foreigners, there is no noticeable self-mobilized resistance movement by immigrants largely because of the fragmentation of their immigrant communities. "New" social forces, such as local governments and NGOs, have been actively involved in the politics of migration not only to improve the material conditions of foreign residents but also to challenge the racially exclusive state policies. Yet, these social forces' achievement in raising class consciousness among the immigrants to counter the discriminatory perceptions and practices received from Japanese society has still been limited. Reflecting the proclivity of increasing "settlement" of foreign workers, to prevent the friction arising between locals and immigrant workers as well as their successor generations from creating chaotic situations, Japan needs to achieve a "double democratization" at institutional and societal levels. Through this process, the creations of formal equality for foreign residents and of cultural tolerance in social space are significant. With the intensification of foreign labor immigration in contemporary globalization, the greatest challenge that Japan has faced is how to wipe out the long-believed myth of homogeneity through the transformation at the grass-roots level for the "unavoidable task," that is,

to incorporate culturally or ethnically different “Others” as new members of the Japanese society.

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- <sup>12</sup> See, e.g. Alejandro Portes and Josef Borocz, "Contemporary Immigration: Theoretical Perspectives on Its Determinants and Modes of Incorporations," *International Migration Review* 23, 3 (1989): 606-30; Portes, "Migration and Underdevelopment," *Politics and Society* 8, 1 (1978): 1-48; and Myron Weiner, "International Emigration and the Third World," in *Population in an Interacting World*, ed. William Alonso (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1987): 176-7.
- <sup>13</sup> Portes, "Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview," in *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Portes (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995): 22.
- <sup>14</sup> Zolberg, "The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World," *International Migration Review* 23, 3 (1989): 403-30.
- <sup>15</sup> See, e.g. James H. Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Portes, "One Field, Many Views: Competing Theories of International Migration," in *Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands*, eds. James T. Fawcett and Benjamin V. Carino (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1987): 53-70; and Charles Tilly, "Transplanted Networks," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 79-95.
- <sup>16</sup> Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 241.
- <sup>17</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 33.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-43.
- <sup>19</sup> Nina Glick Schiller *et al.*, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1995): 51.
- <sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991).
- <sup>21</sup> R. Baubock, "Migration and Citizenship," *New Community* 18, 1 (1991): 28; quoted in Castles and Miller, 42.
- <sup>22</sup> Zolberg, "International Migration Policies in a Changing World System," in *Human Migration: Patterns and Policies*, eds. William H. McNeill and Ruth S. Adams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978): 241-86.
- <sup>23</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 348; quoted in Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, 36.

- <sup>24</sup> Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, 53.
- <sup>25</sup> Zolberg, "International Migrations in Political Perspective," 15.
- <sup>26</sup> Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome*.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; and David Held *et al.*, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).
- <sup>28</sup> Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). See also, Linda Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).
- <sup>29</sup> Henk Overbeek, "Globalization, Sovereignty, and Transnational Regulation: Reshaping the Governance of International Migration," in *Managing Migration: Time for a New International Regime?*, ed. Bimal Ghosh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 49.
- <sup>30</sup> Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome*, 5-7.
- <sup>31</sup> Anthony Giddens, "Affluence, Poverty and the Idea of a Post-scarcity Society," *Development and Change* 27 (1996): 367-8; quoted in Lily King, "Globalization, Transmigration and the Renegotiation of Ethnic Identity," in *Globalisation and the Asia-Pacific: Contested Territories*, eds. Kris Olds *et al.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999): 219.
- <sup>32</sup> With the limitation of space, the detailed discussion of Gramscian thought is not primary focus in this essay. For the recent works on the reconstruction of Gramscian historical materialism: Stephen Gill, ed. *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- <sup>33</sup> Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders;" and Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
- <sup>34</sup> Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," 209.
- <sup>35</sup> Also, for the recent critical review of Cox's approach: See, Mittelman, "Coxian Historicism as an Alternative Perspective in International Studies," *Alternatives* 23 (1998): 63-92; and Edward A. Comor, "Introduction: The Global Political Economy of Communication and IPE," in *The Global Political Economy of Communication: Hegemony, Telecommunication and the Information Economy*, ed. Comor (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994): 1-18.
- <sup>36</sup> Wallerstein, "Globalization or the Age of Transition?: A Long-term View of the Trajectory of the World-System," *International Sociology* 15, 2 (June 2000): 249-265.
- <sup>37</sup> Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," 233.
- <sup>38</sup> Cox, "A Perspective on Globalization," in *Globalization: Critical Reflections*, ed. James H. Mittelman (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997): 22.
- <sup>39</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- <sup>40</sup> Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*; Overbeek; Helen Pellerin, "New Global Migration Dynamics," in *Globalization, Democratization and Multilateralism*, ed. Stephen Gill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): 105-125.
- <sup>41</sup> Also, the feminization of the new industrial workforce under unstable employment situations has led to the growing prominence of female immigrants; for the case of the U.S. immigration, See, Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents: Essay on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: The New Press, 1998), Ch. 3.
- <sup>42</sup> Lin Lean Lim, "International Labor Movements: A Perspective on Economic Exchanges and Flows," in *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, eds. Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim, and Hania Zlotnik (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992): 144.
- <sup>43</sup> Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, 19-21.
- <sup>44</sup> W.R. Bohning, "Elements of a Theory of International Economic Migration to Industrial Nation States," in *Global Trends in Migration*, 32.
- <sup>45</sup> Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- <sup>46</sup> M.J. Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); quoted in Bohning, 31-2.
- <sup>47</sup> Iyotani calls this loss of flexibility in the labor market of highly industrialized countries "the atrophy of relative surplus-labor supply mechanism." Iyotani, "Sakerarenai Kadai," 116.
- <sup>48</sup> Zolberg, "International Migrations in Political Perspectives," 13.
- <sup>49</sup> Leo Panitch, "Rethinking the Role of the State in an Era of Globalization," in *Globalization: Critical Reflections*, 83-113.
- <sup>50</sup> Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order*, 253; also, See, Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," 230-2.
- <sup>51</sup> Sassen, *Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
- <sup>52</sup> Stephen Gill, "Globalization, Market Civilization, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, 3 (1995): 399-423.
- <sup>53</sup> Pellerin, 117-8.



<sup>54</sup> Sassen, *Losing Control?*, 63-4.

<sup>55</sup> Bimal Bhosh, *Huddled Masses and Uncertain Shores: Insights into Irregular Migration* (The Hague: Kluwer International, 1998): 35, 146; quoted in Bhosh, "Towards a New International Regime for Orderly Movements of People," in *Managing Migration*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2, 2 (1990): 1-24; quoted in Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography," in *The Geography of Identity*, ed. Patricia Yeager (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996): 56; and Schiller *et al.*

<sup>57</sup> Appadurai, 57: emphasis in original.

<sup>58</sup> Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders."

<sup>59</sup> Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order*.

<sup>60</sup> Iyotani, "Sakerarenai Kadai" [Unavoidable Challenge].

<sup>61</sup> Castles and Miller, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Appadurai, 56.

<sup>63</sup> Castles and Miller, 32-7.

<sup>64</sup> Castles, "Citizenship and the Other in the Age of Migration," in *Globalization and Citizenship in the Asia-Pacific*, eds. Alastair Davidson and Kathaleen Weekley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999): 41; Hans-Joachim Hoffman-Nowotny, "A Sociological Approach toward a General Theory of Migration," in *Global Trends in Migration*, 327; and Tomasi.

<sup>65</sup> Sassen, *Losing Control?*, 74.

<sup>66</sup> Castles and Miller, 37-9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-2.

<sup>68</sup> S. Buoamama, *Dix ans de Marche des Beurs* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1994); quoted in Castles, 43. For the more recent movements in France, also, *See*, Teresa Hayter, *Open Borders: The Case against Immigration Controls* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000): 142-148.

<sup>69</sup> Mittelman, 72-3.

<sup>70</sup> Hiromi Mori, *Immigration Policy and Foreign Workers in Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): table 1.4, 20.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-252; and Tadashi Hanami and Yasuo Kuwabara, *Asu no Rinjin: Gaikokujin Rodosha* [Tomorrow's Neighbors: Foreign Workers] (Tokyo: Tokyo Keizai Shimposha, 1989): 16-20.

<sup>73</sup> Iyotani, "Globalization and Immigrant Workers in Japan," *NIRA Review* (Winter 1998): Internet; available from <http://www.nira.go.jp/publ/review/98winter/iyotani.html>; accessed on June 29, 2001; and also, *See* Iyotani, *Gurobarizashon to Imin* [Migration in an Age of Globalization] (Tokyo: Yushindokoubunsha, 2001).

<sup>74</sup> George A. De Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "Cultural Identity and Minority Status in Japan," in *Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation*, 3rd ed., eds. Lola Romanucci-Ross and George A. De Vos (Walnut Creek, London and New Delhi: Altamira Press, 1995): 268.

<sup>75</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

<sup>76</sup> Michael Weiner, "The Invention of Identity: 'Self' and 'Other' in pre-war Japan," in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): 1-16.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> De Vos and Wagatsuma, 268.

<sup>79</sup> Takashi Oka, *Prying Open the Door: Foreign Workers in Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994): 8.

<sup>80</sup> John Lie, "The 'Problem' of Foreign Workers in Contemporary Japan," in *The Other Japan: Conflict, Compromise, and Resistance since 1945*, New ed., ed. Joe Moore (New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1997): 294-5.

<sup>81</sup> These Koreans obtained the status of special permanent residents through the 1965 bilateral agreement between Japan and South Korea and the 1991 Special Law enforcement. The majority of these Koreans concentrates on the Osaka and Kobe districts; Mori, 3-4; Yoko Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 19.

<sup>82</sup> Takashi Miyajima, "Immigration and the Redefinition of 'Citizenship': 'One People-One Nation' in Question," in *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalization*, ed. T.K. Oommen (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, and London: Sage Publications, 1997): 128; and Papademetriou and Hamilton, 9.

<sup>83</sup> Sellek, "*Nikkeijin*: The Phenomenon of Return Migration," in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): 202.

<sup>84</sup> Sellek and Michael A. Weiner, "Migrant Workers: The Japanese Case in International Perspective," in *The Internationalization of Japan*, 206.

- <sup>85</sup> Kiri Morita and Iyotani, "Japan and the Problem of Foreign Workers," in *Regional Development Impacts of Labour Migration in Asia*, UNCRD Research Report Series, No. 2, eds. W. Gooneratne, P.L. Martin, and H. Sazanami (Nagoya: United Nation Center for Regional Development, 1994): 189-92; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 22.
- <sup>86</sup> Sellek and Weiner, 220.
- <sup>87</sup> S.N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); quoted in John Clammer, *Japan and its Others: Globalization, Difference and the Critique of Modernity* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001): 22; more recently, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma referred Japan as a land inhabited by a single race. See "Ainu Activists' Resistance against Minister's Comment of Japan as a Single Race Country ["tanitsu minzoku" hatsugen ni Ainu yuushi ga kougi syuukai]," *Asahi Shimbun* (July 13, 2001): Internet: *Asahi.com*; available from <http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0713/032.html>; accessed on July 13, 2001.
- <sup>88</sup> Mika Mervio, "Diversity in Japanese Society," in *The Japan Handbook*, ed. Patrick Heenan (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998): 143; and also, for the discussion about *Nihonjinron* at details, See, Harumi Befu, "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*," in *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, ed. Harumi Befu (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993): 107-135.
- <sup>89</sup> Mary M. Kritz and Hania Zlotnik, "Global Interactions: Migration Systems, Processes, and Policies," *International Migration Systems*, 11. Also, See Toshio Kajita, "Characteristics of the Foreign Worker Problem in Japan: To an Analytical Viewpoint," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 27, 1 (1995): 3; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 21-2.
- <sup>90</sup> P. Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random, 1995): 287-8; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 22.
- <sup>91</sup> Iyotani, "Sakerarenai Kadai," 118-9.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.
- <sup>93</sup> Kajita, "Characteristics of the Foreign Worker Problem in Japan," 3; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 22; and Wayne A. Cornelius, "Japan: The Illusion of Immigration Control," in *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, eds. Wayne A. Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994): 377.
- <sup>94</sup> Cornelius, "Japan: The Illusion of Immigration Control," 377-8.
- <sup>95</sup> Mori, 40.
- <sup>96</sup> David Bartram, "Japan and Labor Migration: Theoretical and Methodological Implications of Negative Cases," *International Migration Review* 34, 1 (Spring 2000): 8, 15.
- <sup>97</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Development Report* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1990): 54.
- <sup>98</sup> Edwin P. Reubens, "Low-Level Work in Japan without Foreign Workers," *International Migration Review* 15, 4 (1981): 749-757.
- <sup>99</sup> Cornelius, 389.
- <sup>100</sup> Although Japanese FDI in Asia rose steadily from 1993 to 1997, it dropped dramatically in 1998 due to the outset of the Asian economic crisis. See Papademetriou and Hamilton, 53.
- <sup>101</sup> Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 46.
- <sup>102</sup> Papademetriou and Hamilton, 53-5.
- <sup>103</sup> Clammer, 127.
- <sup>104</sup> Mori, 137.
- <sup>105</sup> Morita and Sassen, 162.
- <sup>106</sup> Ryuhei Hatsuse, "Reciprocity and Migrant Workers," in *The Internationalization of Japan*, 235.
- <sup>107</sup> Mori 58-9.
- <sup>108</sup> Keiko Yamanaka, "Theory versus Reality in Japanese Immigration Policy," in *Controlling Immigration*, 412-3.
- <sup>109</sup> Mori, 47.
- <sup>110</sup> Sellek, "*Nikkeijin*," 183; and *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 42.
- <sup>111</sup> Papademetriou and Hamilton, 12; and Oka, 25.
- <sup>112</sup> Mori, 45.
- <sup>113</sup> Clammer, 125-6.
- <sup>114</sup> Miyomoto Kenichi, "Japan's World Cities: Osaka and Tokyo Compared," in *Japanese Cities in the World Economy*, eds. Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): 69; and, Papademetriou and Hamilton, 34.
- <sup>115</sup> Papademetriou and Hamilton, 43.
- <sup>116</sup> Japan Immigration Association, *A Guide to Entry, Residence and Registration Procedures in Japan for Foreign Nationals* (Tokyo: Nihon Kajoshuppan, 1990): 39; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 26.

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Justice, Immigration Bureau, *Syutsunyukoku Kanri: Kokusaika Jidai heno Aratana Taio* [Immigration Control: New Policy towards the Era of Internationalization Era] (1993): 1.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-9.

<sup>119</sup> Mori, 96, 103-6.

<sup>120</sup> These employers and brokers are fined up to a maximum of two million yen (approximately \$15,400) or are imprisoned for up to three years (Article 73, 2); Ministry of Justice, *Syutsunyukoku Kanri*, 6; and the OECD Report indicates that in the first four years that the sanctions came into effect, from 1990 to 1993, the number of arrested employers reached nearly 1,500, but this number is relatively small within the estimated size of illegal workers in Japan: See, OECD, *Migration and the Labour Market in Asia: Prospects to the Year 2000* (Paris: OECD, 1996): 205.

<sup>121</sup> Sellek and Weiner, 208; Also, against the fact that foreign workers are already deeply embedded in the Japanese economy, the Ministry of Justice has argued that “the admission of unskilled immigrant workers could lead to an avalanche of foreigners who, in turn, would undermine Japan’s labor market and social cohesion”: Papademetriou and Hamilton, 47.

<sup>122</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, “Citizens in Transnational Nation-states: The Asian Experience,” in *Globalization and the Asia-Pacific*, 214.

<sup>123</sup> Sellek, “*Nikkeijin*,” 183-6; and *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 63.

<sup>124</sup> The law defined “long-term” residents as “those who are authorized to reside in Japan with designation of period of stay by the Ministry of Justice in the consideration of special circumstances.” Japan Immigration Association, *A Guide to Entry, Residence and Registration Procedures in Japan for Foreign Nationals* (1990): 37; quoted in Yamanaka, “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan,” *Pacific Affairs* 66, 1 (1993): 77.

<sup>125</sup> Kazutoshi Koshiro, “Does Japan Need Immigrants?,” in *Temporary Workers or Future Citizens?: Japanese and U.S. Migration Policies*, eds. Myron Weiner and Tadashi Hanami (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 154; and SOPEMI, OECD, *Annual Internal Report: Japan* (Paris, December, 1999): 35; quoted in Papademetriou and Hamilton, 38.

<sup>126</sup> Yamanaka, “New Immigration Policy in Japan,” 80.

<sup>127</sup> Ministry of Justice, Immigration Bureau, “Kenshu, Ginojusshyu Seido Q & A” [Questions and Answers Regarding the System of Foreign Trainees and the Technical-intern Training Program], *Kokusai Jinryu* 9, 10 (1996): 8; quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 65.

<sup>128</sup> Hiroshi Komai, *Migrant Workers in Japan*, trans. by Jens Wilkinson (London and New York: Kegan Paul International Limited, 1995).

<sup>129</sup> The former Prime Minister Nakasone proposed in 1983 to accept 100,000 foreign students by the beginning of the twenty-first century as part of a campaign towards the internationalization of Japan. Coinciding with the government’s simplification of the procedure for the issuance of pre-college visas, the influx of students has become substantial since 1983: Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 85.

<sup>130</sup> Takashi Miyajima, *Gikokujin Rodosha Mukaeire no Ronri: Senshin Shakai no Jirenma no Naka de* [The Logic of Receiving Foreign Workers: One of the Dilemma of Advanced Societies] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1989); quoted in Morita and Sassen, “Research Note: The New Illegal Immigration in Japan, 1980-1992,” *International Migration Review* 23, 1 (1994): 161.

<sup>131</sup> At a seminar jointly sponsored by the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Tokyo-based Association of the Promotion of International Cooperation, October 1992, steady increase of estimated size of illegal population in Japan (160,000 in 1991 to 278,000 in mid-1992) was reported; Doris M. Meissner *et al.*, *International Migration Challenges in a New Era: Policy Perspectives and Priorities for Europe, Japan, North America and the International Community*, A Report to the Trilateral Commission (New York, Paris and Tokyo: The Trilateral Commission, 1993): 69.

<sup>132</sup> Yasuaki Sugawara, Third Secretary, Embassy of Japan. Interview by author. Washington, D.C. 23 June, 2001.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>134</sup> Takeyuki Tsuda, “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 48, 1 (October, 1999): 1-31; and “Migration and Alienation: Japanese-Brazilian Return Migrants and the Search for Homeland Abroad,” Working Paper 24, *The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies* (October, 2000).

<sup>135</sup> For more detailed examination of the generational differences among the *Nikkeijin*: See, Kajita, “Gaikokuji Rodosha no Jittai” [The Realities of Foreign Workers], in *Gurobaru Jidai no Gaikokujin Rodousha: Dokokara Kite Dokohe* [Foreign Workers in the Globalization Period: From Where to Where], ed. Yasuo Kuwahara (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Sinpousya, 2001): 119-121.

<sup>136</sup> Morita and Sassen, 162.

<sup>137</sup> Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 81-2.

<sup>138</sup> Registration statistics reports that the number of foreign labor migrants are estimated to have increased 43.6 percent as a whole from 1990 to 1992, while the rate for skilled manpower stayed far behind at only 25.4 percent: Mori, 106.

<sup>139</sup> Sellek, "Nikkeijin," 193: the *Nikkeijin* earned more than ¥1,200 per hour under direct employment contract, whereas the wage rate for clandestine workers stayed at the level of ¥700-800; Mori, 112.

<sup>140</sup> Komai.

<sup>141</sup> Miyajima, *Gaikokujin Rodosha to Nippon Shakai* [Foreign Workers and the Japanese Society] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1993): 41.

<sup>142</sup> Mervio, 143-4.

<sup>143</sup> Clammer.

<sup>144</sup> In this respect, more theoretically, Wallerstein explains that the capitalist system is based on a complex hierarchy within the labor segment associated with the "ethnicization" of the work force within a given state's boundaries: Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Etienne Baliar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. by Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1988): 83.

<sup>145</sup> Shigeto Sonoda, "'Tojita Kaiso Kenkyu' kara 'Kirakareta Kaiso Kenkyu' he: Gurobal Jidai no Kaiso Mondai to 'Nippon Shakai'" [From 'Closed Class Study' to 'Opened Class Study': The Problem of Class and 'the Japanese Society' in Globalization Period], in *Nippon no Kaiso Sisutemu 6: Kaiso Shakai kara Atarashii Shiminshakai he* [Class System in Japan 6: From Class Society to New Civil Society], ed. Kenji Kosaka (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shupankai, 2000): 223-240.

<sup>146</sup> For example, until 1992, the majority of apprehended illegal foreign workers had stayed in Japan for less than one year (70.6 percent in 1991, 58.8 in 1992). However, since 1993, the figure of those who had been stayed in Japan for less than one year has begun decreasing (29.5 percent in 1993, 22.3 in 1996), while that for those who had been staying in Japan for more than five years increased 2.4 times in 1993 and doubled in 1996 compared to each previous years; Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 104-6.

<sup>147</sup> Under the Japanese Nationality Act, foreign nationals seeking Japanese citizenship must satisfy a set of conditions, such as a continuous residence for a minimum period of five years, a minimum age requirement of 20 years, and the capacity and skills to earn a living.

<sup>148</sup> Article 1 of the Constitutional Law.

<sup>149</sup> Suvendrini Kakuchi, "Japan Dusts Off Welcome Mat for Foreign Workers," *Asian Times* (December 3, 1999): Internet; available from <http://www.atimes.com/japan-econ/AL03Dh01.html>; accessed on June 29, 2001.

<sup>150</sup> Yamanaka, "New Immigration Policy," 79.

<sup>151</sup> The latter is particularly significant for the employment of illegal workers, characterized by the relatively long-working-hours; Meissner *et al.*, 70.

<sup>152</sup> Papademetriou and Hamilton, 36.

<sup>153</sup> Since Japan has no law to specifically prohibit housing discrimination, landlords can be cajoled or shamed but not be coerced: Oka, 56-7.

<sup>154</sup> For example, in the early 1990s, Tokyo's Ueno Park was infamous for the many Iranians who made their home there; Gareth Jones, "Japan Faces Multi-Racial Challenge," *Reuter Library Report* (March 17, 1992); quoted in Papademetriou and Hamilton, note 38: 35.

<sup>155</sup> The Association of Immigrants in Brazil (Asibras) reported approximately 3,000 *Nikkeijin* needed to be provided sufficient medical treatment in 1998; *The Daily Mainichi* (August 8, 1998); quoted in Yoko Akimoto, "Brazilian Migrants Find No Pot of Gold in Japan," *APWSL Japan: Newsletter from Japan Committee of Asian Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links* 10, 30 (November 1998); Internet; available from <http://www.jca.apc.org/apwsljp/japan/No30/AJ-No30.html>; accessed on July 9, 2001.

<sup>156</sup> Only during the fiscal year 1994, defaulted fee payments involving foreign patients totaled 162,414,000 yen at the national level; Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 149.

<sup>157</sup> According to the series of survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, the number of foreign children who were considered to be in need of instruction in Japanese roughly doubled in 1993 from 1991, which increased to 17,296 (representing 65.5 percent increase over 1993) by 1997; Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 198.

<sup>158</sup> Mori, 202-206; in practice, with insufficient systematic mechanism of coping with language training in local schools, language training for foreign children mainly relies on the remarkable efforts of teachers who happen to have admitted such children in their classes. For the stories in Tochigi Prefecture, the northern suburban area of Tokyo: See, Daisuke Kanda, "Gaikokujinsijyo: Taiou Tesaguri" [Foreign Children: Grope for Correspondence], *Asahi Shinbun* (September 30, 2001): Internet; available from <http://www.asahi.com/edu/junior/K2001092900630.html>; accessed on September 30, 2001.

<sup>159</sup> Sellek, *Migrant Labor in Japan*, 209; and Kogaku Yoshino, "The Discourse on Blood and Racial Identity in Contemporary Japan," in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. F. Dikotter (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997): 199-211.

<sup>160</sup> Morita and Sassen, 162; and Yasuo Fujisaki, *Dekasegi Nikkei Gaikokujin Rodosha* [Nikkeijin Migrant Workers] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1991): 235-6.

<sup>161</sup> "Foreigners Wins Racism Case," *Mainichi Daily News* (October 13, 1999); quoted in Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 217-8.

<sup>162</sup> In fact, Japan has not ratified the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families containing a wide range of explicit human rights protection for illegal labor migrations and their families; *Ibid.*, 218-9.

<sup>163</sup> Miyajima, "Immigration and the Redefinition of 'Citizenship' in Japan," 137.

<sup>164</sup> For example, Chinese and Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, who account for the largest portion of newcomers, demonstrate this point. The majority of Chinese who have entered with student visa concentrate in Tokyo, but some of them settle in other cities with educational institutions. Chinese trainees are somewhat more dispersed residentially, settling mostly in suburban industrial areas. On the other hand, the residential distribution of the *Nikkeijin* is distinct since it is strongly tied to the industrial concentration of automobile assembly plants and electrical appliances. As a result, their massive habitation has taken place in Tokai area and industrial zones of the outer circumference of the Tokyo metropolitan area, such as Kanagawa, Tochigi, Gunma and Ibaragi; Mori, 114-50.

<sup>165</sup> Clammer.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-1.

<sup>167</sup> Oka, 55.

<sup>168</sup> Cornelius, "The 'New' Immigration and the Politics of Cultural Diversity in the United States and Japan," Discussion Note, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 2, 4 (1993): 446-7.

<sup>169</sup> Hamamatsu Local Government, *Hamamatsu-shi ni okeru Gaikokujin no Seikatsu Jittai, Ishikichosa* [An Investigation of the Actual Living Conditions of Foreign Residents in Hamamatsu City] (Hamamatsu: International Exchange Group of the Planning Section of Hamamatsu Local Government, 1993) and "Buraziru kara Nikkei-shin-shimin" [New Citizens from Brazil], *Shizuoka Shinbun* (January 1, 1992): 30; quoted in Sellek, *Nikkeijin*, 198.

<sup>170</sup> In the case of Tokyo, from October 1994 through March 1995 the Metropolitan Government compensated 292 medical institutions under this scheme at a total cost of 21 million yen; Sellek, *Migrant Labour in Japan*, 149-150.

<sup>171</sup> Mori, 205-6.

<sup>172</sup> The further support for the contrasting positions between the central and local authorities finds in the case of the on-again, off-again debate over civil service employment for foreigners; Papademetriou and Hamilton, 33.

<sup>173</sup> Lie, 292; Koshiro, 153; and Oka, 54-5.

<sup>174</sup> Komai, 257; and also, there are many field researches on the role of NGOs in the issue of foreign workers in Japan, e.g. Yuko Ohara-Hirono, "Foreign Residents Working and Living Condition and the Role of NGO: A Case Study of Kyushu, Japan," *Asia Solidarity Quarterly* 5 (Summer 2001): 11-22; and Kaoruko Yamamoto, "Yokohama, Kotobuki-cho no Gaikokujin Rodosha wo meguru Sabetsu no Kozo" [The Discrimination Mechanism of Foreign Workers in Kotobuki-cho, Yokohama] (Master Thesis, Keio University, Tokyo, 1998): Internet; available from [http://homepage1.nifty.com/kahoruko/ronbun/master\\_thesis/master\\_thesis.htm](http://homepage1.nifty.com/kahoruko/ronbun/master_thesis/master_thesis.htm); accessed on July 1, 2001.

<sup>175</sup> Tadashi Yamamoto, "Emergence of Japan's Civil Society and its Future Challenges," in *Deciding the Public Good: Governance and Civil Society in Japan*, ed. Tadashi Yamamoto (Tokyo and New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999): 103.

<sup>176</sup> Komai, 257.

<sup>177</sup> Yoshikazu Sakamoto, "An Alternative to Global Marketization: East Asian Regional Cooperation and the Civic State," *Alternatives* 24 (1999): 143-165; and also See, Makoto Imada, "From the Iron Triangle to Civil Society: Changing Japan's Society," *The Japan Foundation Newsletter* 28, 2 (January 2001): 1-7, 9.

<sup>178</sup> Koichi Ogawa, "The Organization of Foreign Workers in Japan: A Case Study of the Kanagawa City Union," trans. by John McLaughlin, *Center for Transnational Labor Studies* 6 (February 2001): Internet; available from <http://www2u.biglobe.ne.jp/~ctls/bul6/article6-2e.html>; accessed on June 29, 2001.

<sup>179</sup> John McLaughlin, "Some Impressions of the Third National Migrant Worker Forum Held in Tokyo," *APWSL Japan: Newsletter from Japan Committee of Asian Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links* 9, 32 (June 1999): Internet; available from <http://www.jca.apc.org/apwsljp/No32/AJ-No32.html>; accessed on July 9, 2001.

<sup>180</sup> C. Withold de Wenden, "Conference Speech," in Association de Juristes pour la Reconnaissance des Droits Fondamentaux des Immigrés, *Le droit et les immigrés* (Aix-en-Provence: EDISUD, 1983); Miyajima, "Immigration and the Redefinition of 'Citizenship,'" 140.



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