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IMMIGRANT JAPAN AND A NEW ERA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Abstract:

Japan is an ethno-nationalist society— a society with a strong national cultural identity and a myth of racial homogeneity. Though discursively in denial, Japan has become a de facto immigrant country. It has been thirty years since the 1989 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act—the first drastic immigration policy reform that started to allow migrant workers to enter. Although at 2.7 million and 2 percent of the total population, immigrants' presence is small compared to other industrialized nations, the number has been rapidly increasing and immigrants have penetrated every aspect of economic and social life in this island country and are taking part in shaping its future. Using Japan's immigration experiences and dilemma as an empirical departure point, this presentation highlights some of the new trends in international migration today. In particular, from individual migrants' motivations to come to Japan and their decisions to stay or leave, the migration infrastructure that channels their mobility, and immigrants' belonging and identity, the presentation shows some of the common situations shared by countries around the world.