International Migration Transforming Japan's Societal Landscape

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Abstract- International migration profoundly shapes Japan's societal landscape across economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions. Complex dynamics and implications characterise this transformation. One of the key aspects is the economic impact, where foreign workers contribute to addressing labour shortages but face challenges such as wage disparities and job insecurity. Socially, international migration leads to demographic changes and cultural diversity, raising questions about social integration and cohesion. Language barriers and cultural differences can hinder integration efforts, highlighting the need for inclusive policies and programs. A forward-looking perspective is crucial to anticipate future trends and challenges related to international migration in Japan. This includes preparing for demographic shifts and evolving attitudes towards multiculturalism. Effective policies and initiatives should aim to foster mutual understanding, respect cultural diversity, and promote inclusive societies. Overall, international migration is a dynamic force that necessitates thoughtful consideration and proactive measures to ensure a harmonious societal landscape in Japan.

Keywords Internationalisation, immigrants, multiculturalism, demographic challenges, greying of society, low birth rate, workforce.

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1.　Introduction

Contrary to its commonly perceived image as an isolated island nation, Japan has a historical background characterised by various phases of interaction and integration with people from the region and beyond. The recent increase in foreign nationals contributing to Japanese society makes the "hidden" diversity more apparent. This shift poses a challenge to Japan's meticulously constructed self-identity. The emergence of immigrants and multiculturalism presents a nuanced and multifaceted political and diplomatic challenge in Japan. International migration and multiculturalism, viewed as a potential solution, offer Japan the opportunity to infuse the nation with fresh perspectives, talents, and experiences. Internationalisation could enable Japan to cultivate a more dynamic workforce, drive innovation, and position itself as a global leader in the 21st century. However, the impact of multiculturalism on Japan will inevitably manifest in both positive and negative dimensions. It is imperative for Japan to maximise the positive outcomes while mitigating potential drawbacks to ensure the nation's sustained prosperity (Ghimire, 2023).

To navigate this complex terrain, Japan must engage in a deliberate effort to amplify positive effects and address challenges associated with international migration and multiculturalism. A comprehensive examination of Japan's evolving image as a multicultural society becomes crucial in this pursuit. In recent years, Japan has experienced a notable transformation in its societal landscape, bringing about multifaceted changes across economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, driven by increased international migration. This phenomenon is reshaping the fabric of Japanese society, bringing about a visible and impactful presence of foreigners and mixed-race individuals. This article delves into the current situation, prospects, effects, challenges, and the forward trajectory of international migration and multiculturalism in Japan, shedding light on the potential path ahead. It also scrutinises the various aspects of this transformative process, examining its implications for relationships, attitudes, and discussions surrounding diversity and cultural identity. This critical analysis delves into the complex dynamics of how international migration is transforming Japan's societal fabric and evaluates the implications of these transformations.

Methodologically, this article is also the partial outcome of my postdoctoral research conducted during my tenure as a Japan Foundation Fellow in Japan. The methodology employed encompasses a blend of qualitative and quantitative investigations, drawing from primary and secondary sources and self-collected data. The data collection process hinged primarily on tailored questionnaires structured by the study's parameters. Furthermore, the research incorporated online and physical surveys, first-hand observations of cultural engagements and group discussions. Complementing these methods were formal and informal interviews

with pertinent individuals to enrich the breadth of research.

Japan's Open Doors Policy and Current Situation

The changing landscape of migration and diversity in Japan has increased the visibility of foreigners and mixed-race individuals. This visibility extends beyond those directly involved in international migration to include individuals in international marriages and their families. As a result, encounters with foreign differences have become more frequent and conspicuous.

A compelling rationale for welcoming a significant number of immigrants to Japan is the nation's pressing demographic challenges, marked by the phenomena of "kōreika," or the "greying of society," and "shōshika," signifying the "declining birth rate." Japan grapples not only with a drastically low birth rate but also boasts one of the world's highest life expectancies.

Japan is presently grappling with a decline in its population primarily attributed to a persistently low birth rate. Projections indicate that by 2030, approximately one-third of the nation's populace will be aged 65 and above, leading to a significant shortage in the workforce. This has given rise to an urgent demand for integrating foreign individuals into Japan. The rapid contraction and ageing of the population due to subpar birth rates have compelled the government to relax certain border regulations to facilitate the entry of more foreign labour. According to a forecast by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan will be required to quadruple its foreign workforce to a staggering 6 million by 2040. As highlighted in the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's "Report on the Employment Situation of Foreigners" for 2019, Japan's number of foreign workers surged to 1,658,804, reflecting a notable 13.6% increase compared to the previous year.

Moreover, the transition of foreign students, encompassing those in undergraduate, postgraduate, junior college, and vocational institutions, into the workforce holds substantial significance. A significant portion, totalling 14,493, choose to remain in Japan for employment upon completing their studies, constituting around 31.1% of all graduates. This trend is reinforced by data from the Japan Student Services Organization, revealing a growth of 4.4% in the number of international students in Japan, totalling 312,214 as of May 1, 2019. Against this backdrop, Japan's population is in a state of decline at an annual rate of nearly 500,000 individuals, while the count of foreign residents is progressively increasing by approximately 200,000. This trend is poised to continue and intensify in the foreseeable future (Ghimire, 2023).

In April 2019, Japan embarked on a significant transformation of its immigration landscape by formally welcoming lower-skilled foreign workers, marking a pivotal revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. This watershed development saw the establishment of the Specified Skills visa program, an

initiative designed to accommodate blue-collar and other categories of workers. This program is a landmark shift in Japan's approach to immigration policy. However, uncertainties persist regarding Japanese society's readiness, often insular and homogeneous, to fully embrace foreign residents and ensure their equitable integration.

Nevertheless, the undeniable reality is that Japan's foreign population has been on the rise. While predominantly residing in the nation's urban centres, they are progressively becoming a familiar presence in smaller Japanese cities, towns, and villages. Comprising international students, technical interns, and specialised and high-skilled labourers, Japan's foreign resident population reached 3.8 million in 2022. According to data from the Japanese government, these foreign citizens can be categorised into the following principal groups.

Table 1: Foreign Citizens in Japan

Nationality	Number of foreigners	Percentage of	
		Foreign Citizens	Total population
China	778,112	32.30	0.73
Korea (South +North)	454,122	17.70	0.40
Vietnam	448,053	15.50	0.28
Philippines	279,660	13.00	0.2
Brazil	208,538	7.50	0.17
Nepal	139,393	4.80	0.11
Indonesia	66,832	2.10	0.04
Taiwan	55,872	2.20	0.05
USA	55,761	2.10	0.04
Thailand	53,379	1.90	0.04
Peru	48,256	1.80	0.04
India	40,752	1.40	0.03
Myanmar	35,049	1.00	0.02
Sri Lanka	34,966	1.20	0.02
Bangladesh	20,954	0.70	0.02
Pakistan	19,103	0.70	0.02
UK	16,891	0.70	0.02
Cambodia	16,659	0.50	0.01
Mongolia	13,504	0.50	0.01
France	12,264	0.50	0.01
Others	635,787	23.60	0.50
Total (as of 2022)	3,839,031	100	2.30

Source: Wikipedia, 2023

In an unprecedented turn of events, Japan's population has experienced a decline across all 47 of its prefectures, marking a historic plummet. Simultaneously, the number of foreign residents has reached a remarkable milestone, approaching three million individuals. In 2019, Japan attracted 31.88 million international tourists, as the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) reported. However, recent data from May 2023 reveals a staggering increase in international travellers to

Japan, totalling about 1,898,900 individuals. This represents a remarkable surge of +1,191.4% compared to the previous year, albeit still reflecting a decline of -31.5% when contrasted with the statistics from May 2019. While it is important to note that international tourists and immigrants are distinct categories, both groups significantly impact Japanese culture, lifestyle, and economy. This upward trend underscores the growing significance of non-Japanese residents in a nation grappling with population shrinkage and an ageing demographic. Concurrently, the populace of Japanese nationals has dwindled by approximately 800,000 individuals, constituting a decrease of 0.65%. Of particular note is the substantial year-on-year escalation in Japan's foreign resident count, signifying a noteworthy trend. This development has resulted in foreign residents comprising approximately 2.4% of Japan's total population, showcasing a substantial demographic shift (Yamaguchi, 2023). The 2023 parliamentary session in Japan commenced with an alarming declaration from Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. He warned that Japan stood on the "brink of social dysfunction" attributed to the nation's swiftly diminishing birth rate, population, and labour force (Harrison & Sakudo, 2023).

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has prioritised addressing the decline in birth rates as a key policy objective, committing to secure approximately 3.5 trillion yen ($25.2 billion) in annual funding over the next three years for a comprehensive childcare package. This package encompasses childbirth, child-rearing allowances, and heightened higher education subsidies (Yamaguchi, 2023). It is projected that by 2070, foreign nationals will make up nearly 11 percent of Japan's dwindling population of 87 million, according to estimates from the labour ministry. Projections indicate that by 2040, there will be an anticipated shortage of 11 million workers. Addressing this substantial gap would necessitate the influx of a remarkably high number of working-age immigrants, estimated at 647,000 per year. The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research forecasts that Japan's overall population will decline to approximately 70 percent of its current size, primarily due to the ongoing decline in birth rates. Concurrently, the proportion of foreign residents living in Japan is anticipated to undergo a fivefold increase by 2070. This projection from the institute is rooted in the 2020 national census data and factors in births, deaths, and cross-border migration. The most recent estimate posits that Japan's average fertility rate will decrease to 1.36 by 2070 [Nakamura 2023]. In order to realise the growth trajectory outlined in its economic forecast, Japan will require approximately four times the current number of foreign workers by 2040.

Amidst escalating global competition for exceptional human resources, Japan grapples with shifting socio-economic dynamics characterised by declining birth rates and an ageing population. To effectively counter these changes, it is imperative to infuse Japan with the invigorating force of diversity from beyond its borders. This infusion can amplify the "value-adding creativity" inherent in every

individual among the Japanese populace, thereby maximising the contributions of non-Japanese workers within this context. Certain experts propose mass immigration as a last-minute remedy to address Japan's diminishing labour force, ageing population, and declining domestic consumption. Drawing inspiration from successful immigration-dependent nations such as Canada, a suggestion is to target an annual intake of one million immigrants to counteract population decline. The increasing focus on migration-related policies in Japan signifies an explicit acknowledgement of the nation's escalating demand for long-term foreign labour. However, lingering questions persist about the structural and cultural feasibility of successfully integrating and retaining the substantial number of migrants required to sustain stability in Japan's labour market (Harrison & Sakudo, 2023).

Internationalisation: A Political and Diplomatic Issue in Japan

The Japanese culture owes a significant debt to the influences of two Asian civilisations--the Chinese and Indian civilisations, both directly and indirectly. However, the Japanese incorporated these influences into their culture with certain modifications. The ancient Japanese civilisation can be segmented into three stages: the first stage served as the cradle of civilisation during the prehistoric age, the second stage emerged as the preparatory period of civilisation with the advent of the Yamato dynasty, and the third stage took shape as the formative period of civilisation starting from Fujiwara-kyo, the first planned capital onwards (Ito, 1990 cited in Kaburagi, 2012). The Japanese sense of beauty, characterised by concepts like "miyabi" (refined elegance), "mono no aware" (the pathos of nature), "wabi" (subtle taste), and "sabi" (elegant simplicity), conjures a realm of aesthetic and emotional harmony. The distinctiveness of contemporary Japanese culture results from the fusion of traditional Japanese values and foreign cultures, which were imported, assimilated, and thoughtfully integrated with the former. Instead of rejecting these foreign influences, the Japanese have assimilated them into their aesthetic framework, often ingeniously adapting them to meet Japanese sensibilities (Tazawa et al., 1973).

As per the *Nihon Shoki* (the Chronicles of Japan), Buddhism found its way to Japan in 552 AD through the efforts of Korean monks. The Japanese were undoubtedly familiar with Buddhism and other prominent facets of continental civilisation. Nonetheless, accepting or rejecting Buddhism ignited a more expansive discourse concerning national reform at the Japanese court during the latter half of the sixth century (Varley, 2000; Ghimire, 2017, 2019, 2020a).

Japan's response to the call for heightened international political and economic engagement was encapsulated in adopting *"kokusaika"* (internationalisation) as a national public policy. This approach aimed at securing a place within the global community by opening Japan to the world economy and demonstrating

tolerance and openness towards foreign elements (Soroos, 1988; cited in Ertl, 2008). The foundation for integrating internationalisation into cultural policy was further grounded in the belief that a defining facet of Japanese society lies in its continual assimilation, adaptation, and synthesis of foreign cultures and traditions (Watanabe, 1999, cited in Ertl, 2008).

Around 150 years ago, during the Meiji Era, Japan embraced the "WAKON YOSAI" concept, signifying "Western Technology/knowledge with True Japanese Spirit." This approach was instrumental in assimilating Western technology and knowledge while infusing them with a distinctly Japanese essence. Similarly, Japanese society has also assimilated elements of Chinese culture yet adapted them in a unique Japanese manner (Ghimire, 2022a). Since the 1980s, as the Japanese government initiated the promotion of "internationalisation," catchphrases such as "international exchange," "cultural exchange," and "understanding of other cultures" have become commonplace and widely used expressions among policymakers and educators. The aftermath of the 1995 Hanshin earthquake triggered a surge in scholarship, public interest, and activism concerning foreign immigrants to Japan. This event brought together local Japanese and foreign residents in a communal struggle, giving rise to a more pronounced focus on this issue (Ertl, 2008).

Consequently, this discourse has significantly influenced external perceptions, giving rise to various foreign stereotypes. These notions suggest that Japanese people and society are entirely uniform, and the cultural traits that characterise the nation are exclusive to Japan. The concept of Japan's distinctiveness and uniformity, along with the body of literature surrounding this concept, is often referred to as "nihonjinron," which translates to "theories of Japanese-ness." Furthermore, many Japanese individuals take great pride in their place of origin and the regional nuances across Japan. Nevertheless, specific recurrent themes are woven into the fabric of Japanese culture. These include an identity closely linked to social groups and birthplace, a style of communication that is both polite and humble, a pragmatic approach to addressing challenges and situations, and a genuine appreciation for and enjoyment of artistic pursuits and forms of entertainment.

Present research, observations, and the evolving societal landscape all point to Japan being more diverse and heterogeneous than what the theories of nihonjinron suggest in contemporary times. Notably, numerous historical distinctions persist between the various regions of Japan, shaping its present state. Additionally, the nation hosts a range of indigenous and ethnic communities, including the Ainu, Ryūkyūan, and Korean populations. The count of foreign residents, comprising tourists, students, researchers, and workers, continues to surge with each passing day. The last century has witnessed historical events that exerted profound cultural, societal, political, and economic impacts across Japan. With transformative reforms to its economic structure in the post-war era, Japan experienced swift economic growth, evolving

into the world's third-largest industrialised market economy.

The Japanese term for multiculturalism that emerged in the 1980s, known as "tabunka kyosei," finds its origins in an expression utilised during the social movements of Zainichi (residing in Japan) Koreans in the 1970s. These movements protested the inequalities stemming from their lack of Japanese citizenship. Notably, the term was employed in Kawasaki City to address disparities between the majority population and the sizable Korean community (Grissler, 2022). The Japanese interpretation of multiculturalism corresponds to the country's internationalisation process as Japan became increasingly conscious of globalisation (Demelius, 2020).

While Japan's traditional portrayal as a distinctive and homogeneous society might evoke nationalistic sentiments, it also obstructs the nation's ability to confront labour shortages and facilitate diversity within its workforce. The challenges a rapidly ageing society poses are significant, as they threaten the continuity of cultural and technological legacies for the coming generations. To surmount these obstacles, Japan must embrace international talent by opening its doors and diversifying various sectors, including academia, job markets, research, science, technology, and production companies.

In the late 19th century, the Japanese government adopted its initial systematic cultural policy, Oka-Seisaku (Westernization Policy). This policy formed part of Japan's endeavour to modernise and concurrently unify its population, which had previously been fragmented across feudal princedoms (Han) without a clear sense of nationhood. Western arts and lifestyles were introduced extensively and imposed on the Japanese populace. While this Westernization policy was later adjusted to some extent, remnants of its influence persist, particularly in arts education within public schools, where the focus remains primarily on Western-oriented music and arts (Watanabe, 1999, p. 69). As Japan is redefined as a multi-ethnic and multi-class society, its culture emerges as a mosaic composed of diverse beliefs, practices, artefacts, and symbols produced and consumed by distinct ethnic and class groups with varying degrees of access to privilege, power, and prestige. With the convergence of ethnic and typological shifts, Japanese public discourse has transformed culturally. This paradigm shift has stimulated numerous recent studies focused on Japanese culture. The current volume encapsulates the novel framework of the 'multicultural model' of Japanese society, spotlighting the diversification and stratification of Japanese culture along class, region, generation, gender, and more (Sugimoto, 2009:2, Ghimire, 2022a). The influx of Western European culture, and more recently, American culture, continues to gain momentum in Japan (Watanabe, 1999, p. 106). Japan commenced its absorption of Western manners and customs shortly after the Meiji Reformation (1868), and Westernization's pace escalated markedly following World War II's conclusion [JNCFU 1958:866]. Despite this process of Westernization, Japan remains a society with aristocratic features

(Benedict, 1967).

In 2005, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications initiated a study group dedicated to advancing multiculturalism. This study group, in 2007, issued a report proposing the establishment of a *tabunka kyōsei shakai* (Society of Multicultural Coexistence). The report emphasised the necessity of local governments taking the lead in building such a society, primarily focusing on surmounting cultural and linguistic barriers among ethnic groups, all while operating independently of central government aid (Kibe, 2011).

Japan strategically implemented dual projects: kokusaika (internationalisation) and chiho-bunken (decentralisation). At first glance, these two endeavours may seem to diverge, with the former embracing openness and heightened global interactions. At the same time, the latter leans inward, aiming to safeguard and fortify the nation's constituent parts. However, together, these initiatives compose a coherent response to the longstanding myth of Japan's homogeneity. They collectively reveal Japan's increasing international outlook, signifying an openness to foreign individuals and ideas while amplifying and reinforcing the international diversity that thrives within its regions (Ertl, 2008). The contemporary shape of these movements and their relationship to multiculturalism crystallised during the tenure of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982-1987). Under Nakasone's leadership, four pivotal initiatives were developed to alter Japan's global image and international relationships (Pyle, 1987, cited in Ertl, 2008). Japan's earliest local internationalisation initiatives manifested through sister-city programs, with the oldest such partnership dating back to 1955 between Nagasaki and St. Paul, Minnesota (Muto, 1996, cited in Ertl, 2008).

Japan attracts a considerable influx of international tourists. The surge in foreign tourism holds the potential to invigorate a struggling Japanese economy and also emphasises the enhancement of cross-cultural management and related services. The nation is witnessing a rise in visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds, consequently presenting heightened challenges to the established service culture. The array of customers has intensified competition within the hospitality sector, pitting Japanese and non-Japanese foreign-owned companies and indigenous firms against each other as they vie to offer distinctive products and service offerings. In recent years, the ageing population has compounded the pressure from a labour shortage. As the employment of foreign workers continues to escalate, the management of cultural diversity has emerged as a pressing concern for both Japanese-owned and foreign-owned companies. Under globalisation and foreign impact, particularly from the Western world, Japan's traditional norms are gradually transforming (Zhu & Mito, 2022; Ghimire, 2022a).

The Japanese Government's approach to foreigners has primarily focused on

Japanese language education and preparedness for natural disasters and emergencies. While these endeavours are crucial for facilitating the integration of foreigners into the Japanese way of life, scant attention has been directed toward fostering cross-cultural adaptation among Japanese citizens within the domestic sphere. Consequently, the Japanese populace often lacks the necessary tools to comprehend and potentially incorporate the cultural values and practices of minority groups within Japan. Additionally, there has been a recent initiative to equip students and professionals in Japan with the skills required to enable Japanese companies to compete effectively in global markets. These policies generally encourage foreigners and minority populations to assimilate the Japanese language, culture, and potentially even identity, particularly within the domestic context. Initiatives aimed at inducing cultural change or adaptation among the Japanese majority typically remain limited to scenarios where individuals must work overseas or operate across national borders (Lee & Olsen, 2015).

Ethnic diversity has experienced rapid expansion, forming a seemingly irreversible trend due to the growing influx of foreign migrants into Japanese society. Additionally, the escalating activities and movements of minority groups, including Korean residents and the indigenous Ainu, have played a significant role in crafting the portrayal of a multi-ethnic Japan. As Japan is redefined as a multi-ethnic and multi-class society, its culture appears to be a mosaic composed of diverse beliefs, practices, artefacts, and symbols. These are generated and consumed by ethnic and class groups endowed with varying degrees of access to privilege, power, and prestige. Through the convergence of ethnic and class shifts, Japanese public discourse has undergone a paradigmatic transformation, shifting toward a cultural focus. This shift marks a significant departure that has fuelled numerous recent studies on Japanese culture. The present volume mirrors this fresh framework, characterised by the 'multicultural model' of Japanese society, shedding light on the various ways in which Japanese culture is diversified and stratified along the lines of class, region, generation, gender, and more (Sugimoto, 2009: 2).

Most of Japan's foreign resident population consists of "permanently settled, highly assimilated, and, in many cases, native-born but non-citizen residents." Among them, the most notable minority group is the Zainichi Koreans—ethnic Koreans who immigrated to Japan during the colonial period and their descendants. While some Zainichi Koreans have opted for Japanese citizenship through naturalisation, legal restrictions on dual nationality in Japan, South Korea, and North Korea have led many to maintain a special permanent resident status in Japan. This unique situation has given rise to a community of long-term, permanent, and generational foreign residents in Japan, significantly influencing the formulation of integration policies for all foreign residents (Harrison & Sakudo, 2023).

Mitigation Efforts by the Japanese Government Among Japanese and Foreign Residents

In the face of various challenges, the Japanese government has undertaken commendable measures to mitigate issues affecting both its native population and foreign residents. These efforts reflect the government's commitment to fostering an inclusive and resilient society. The Japanese government's mitigation efforts reflect a commitment to the well-being of both its native population and foreign residents. By the early twentieth century, many Japanese leaders had travelled abroad and learned Western ideas of democracy and socialism. One way of advancing internationalisation and bringing trade to participating localities was the establishment of social, business and educational exchange programmes (Graburn & Ertl, 2008). In addressing various challenges through comprehensive strategies and fostering inclusivity, Japan strives to build a more resilient and harmonious society for all. The Japanese government's 2006 plan has been regarded as "a pragmatic administrative effort to alleviate the mounting real and perceived pressures stemming from an increasing number of foreign residents" [Nagy 2015]. Japan's demographic crisis, shaped by ageing and low birth rates, propelled this plan forward. Multiculturalism is intrinsically linked to the notion of an "international Japan," positioning it as a significant player in the globalised world. This concept also creates the impression that diversity is a new facet for Japan, although reality contradicts this notion (Demelius, 2020). In a significant departure from its known closed-door immigration policy, the government did sanction a plan to broaden the range of job categories accessible to foreign workers. This change paves the way for potential future permanent residency, a notable shift in a country grappling with a dwindling population. Experts assert that Japan's conservative government must undertake further measures to elevate wages, enhance working conditions, and foster inclusivity for minorities and individuals with non-Japanese origins. These efforts are crucial to attracting foreign workers to relocate to Japan and encouraging their sustained presence (Yamaguchi, 2023).

The Japanese government urges the nation's higher education institutions to internationalise to promote sustainable development within the global knowledge-based society. While a select number of Japanese universities are highly regarded in world university rankings, many Japanese observers argue that most of their higher education institutions are not sufficiently internationalised compared to other industrialised countries. Recruiting international students to Japan has traditionally been seen as the prime internationalisation strategy, but studying abroad for Japanese students is now being seen as an effective way to enhance their international experience and cross-cultural understanding and thus contribute to the internationalisation of Japanese universities (Ninomiya et al., 2009, p. 117).

Moves toward "multicultural coexistence" have been seen in government agencies. For example, the Cabinet Office established the Liaison Committee among Ministries and Agencies on Foreign Workers Issues (Gaikokujin-rōdōsha Mondai Kankei Shōchō Renraku Kaigi) in December 2006. It published the Comprehensive Plan for Dealing with the Issues Related to the Foreigners as Residents. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan stressed the critical role of regional "multicultural coexistence" programs in the creation of "an environment where these members of the society can enjoy the same public services as Japanese nationals do", necessary for a more welcoming society (Cabinet Office, 2006; cited in Liang, 2023:41).

In addition to enhancing Japanese language education, the government has displayed increased concern for the educational challenges faced by foreign children accompanying their parents to Japan. In response to the imperative of ensuring equal rights for foreigners to access public services, as outlined in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) convened a research committee. The committee worked on developing comprehensive guidelines for institutions and educators dealing with the education of foreign children at the primary and secondary education levels. Subsequently, the Measures to Enhance the Education for Foreign Children Students were published in 2008. The report explicitly emphasised that while foreign children were not compelled to attend Japanese schools, their right to "be accepted for free and receive Japanese language and other educational guidance" should be guaranteed as long as their parents or guardians wished. Furthermore, the report underscored the importance of implementing comprehensive reforms involving "all the faculty members in schools, including those in administrative positions," to establish a more effective system for accommodating foreign students (MEXT, 2008; cited in Liang, 2023:42).

The official endorsement of "multicultural coexistence" at the national level has further catalysed local and national efforts to advance the building of a multicultural society. As indicated in the report on Good Practices in the Promotion of Multicultural Coexistence published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) in 2017, all major cities and 94% of prefectures had formulated regional multicultural coexistence plans by April 2016. Concurrently, the government launched the Ministerial Conference on Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals in 2018 and released the Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals (Gaikoku Jinzai no Ukeire Kyōsei no Tame no Sōgō-Teki Taiō-Saku) as an update to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. The objective is to promote a unified system of acceptance and foster an environment for harmonious coexistence at a government-wide level (Liang, 2023, p. 42).

In 2019, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) reinstated the Research Committee on Multicultural Coexistence Promotion. This decision aimed

to update the national guidelines and paradigm in response to the rising number of foreign residents, the new visa category "Highly skilled professional," and socioeconomic trends indicating a shift toward a diverse and inclusive society. The result was the publication of the revised edition of the Multicultural Coexistence Plan in 2020. In this updated plan, the emphasis has been placed on contributing to the revitalisation and globalisation of local communities, ensuring the active engagement of foreign residents in the local community across various dimensions, and enhancing the living environment to facilitate the inflow of highly skilled foreigners while promoting urban de-concentration. These aspects are crucial in present-day local multicultural coexistence policies, with a specific vision of rejuvenating daily life patterns (aratana nichijō) towards a diverse and inclusive society (MIC, 2020, p. 3).

The Japanese government is expanding efforts to create a more inclusive environment for cohabitation with foreign migrants. In 2022, the Ministerial Conference on Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals published the Roadmap for the Realization of a Society of Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals. This update distinguishes itself from previous multicultural policies and initiatives primarily focused on short-term problem-solving. The new roadmap adopts a mid- and long-term orientation, emphasising the smooth access of foreign residents to Japanese language education, information on living, practical assistance, and improving social infrastructure. This includes public multicultural awareness, information collection and management, and establishing proactive support networks led by non-governmental organisations. Despite the progressive measures addressing the settlement needs of foreign migrants and the increasing attention to human rights issues, the discussion does not extend to establishing legislative frameworks to ensure inclusivity and equality. Moreover, there is no consideration for improving institutional access to political participation. In this sense, these renewed visions of "multicultural coexistence" continue to adhere to the principle of restrictive inclusion (Liang, 2023, p. 43).

In their critical analysis, Harrison and Sakudo (2023) highlight that Japan's official immigration policies predominantly cater to high-income earners, supplemented by 'side door' migration policies to attract lower-skilled, short-term labour. Despite the Ministry of Justice traditionally overseeing official immigration, the trajectory of migration policies is frequently shaped by the influence of various government ministries, agencies, and businesses. Language issues have traditionally posed challenges for foreign students. Therefore, in the early 1980s, the government encouraged national universities to establish graduate-level programs and courses taught in English. The ability to submit an academic dissertation in English and undergo an English examination was also approved. These measures successfully attracted more foreign PhD students to Japan (Ninomiya et al., 2009, p. 121).

The proposal "Asian Gateway Initiatives" (Council for Asian Gateway Initiatives, 2007) and the "Plan of 300,000 Foreign Students" illustrate the critical strategies of internationalisation and indicate another significant change in the national internationalisation policy. The basic premise of these proposals is as follows: Japan must have more than 300,000 foreign students if it aims to be an "Opened Japan." Furthermore, Japan's role is to become the Asian Gateway by accommodating at least 5% to 10% of international student mobility in the international strategy (Ninomiya et al., 2009, p. 122).

The diversification also prompts the Japanese government to acknowledge and address the needs of foreigners nominally. This has led to the creation of services aimed at better-accommodating individuals from diverse backgrounds, although the scope of these services remains limited. There is a growing availability of signs and official documents in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other languages. However, due to the constraints on such resources, foreigners still encounter various challenges. Many workers are unaware of their rights, and some have been brought to Japan by employers under false pretences, failing to receive the legal minimum wage or other benefits that employers should provide (Douglas & Roberts, 2000; Shipper, 2008, cited in Capobianco, 2020, p. 6).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) officially introduced *"gaikokugo katsudou"* (Foreign Language Activities) to all Japanese public elementary schools as a revision to the national curriculum in 2011. One of the core objectives underpinning this policy reform was, and continues to be in 2020, to "...lay the groundwork for pupils' communication abilities in foreign languages while fostering an understanding of languages and cultures." This objective was further elucidated in a 2019 publication by MEXT, which underscored the imperative role of foreign language education in cultivating "globally-minded individuals who possess exceptional language skills, communication abilities, subjectivity, and an appreciation for diverse cultures, starting from the early stages of elementary education..." MEXT also aimed to fortify foreign language education, "including English," while also nurturing students' global perspectives concerning societal challenges (MEXT, 2019, cited in Efron, 2020).

In their endeavours to foster an understanding of cultural differences, Japanese teachers frequently introduce food, fashion, and festivals from the homelands of newcomer children. This "Three-F" approach proves effective in bolstering self-esteem among newcomer children and enhancing cultural awareness among Japanese children, provided it is thoughtfully orchestrated. However, education centred on newcomers has faced criticism for its tendency to overly focus on the three Fs and present diverse cultures as if they were preserved exhibits in a stagnant museum. In this educational context, most Japanese individuals, ostensibly practising tolerance, become mere spectators of diverse cultures performed and exhibited by

foreigners (Tai, 2007). Undoubtedly, Japan exerts a captivating allure over many foreigners. Its diverse range of restaurants, bars, hotels, and transportation services have all flourished thanks to the influx of visitors.

A profound emphasis on social harmony and diligent work ethics characterises Japanese culture. Numerous festivals within this rich culture warmly welcome foreigners (residents and tourists), inviting them to partake and immerse themselves in the local experiences. These festivities allow for shared enjoyment and provide a platform to delve into the depths of Japanese history and tradition. As a foreigner, engaging in these exceptional opportunities meant for the community grants you a unique insight into the area's essence. Japan boasts a myriad of Matsuris, many of which extend an open invitation to visitors and tourists. Participation often requires only casual attire, allowing you to revel in parades, capture picturesque moments through your lens, and actively engage in the revelry. The Japanese tea ceremony, a cornerstone of cultural exchange, aims to foster connections between hosts and guests while cultivating inner tranquillity amid life's hustle and bustle. This ritual holds immense significance as it traces its roots back to esteemed Zen monks and has been practised by noble warlords throughout history. For foreigners, an avenue to truly embrace this experience lies in donning traditional Japanese attire, dancing in unison, and even partaking in carrying the revered mikoshi. However, it is imperative to receive proper training beforehand, acquainting yourself with the rituals, traditions, and protocols. Since bearing a mikoshi is a sacred endeavour, understanding and adhering to the customs is paramount. With a central focus on harmony, Japan is steeped in customs, traditions, and etiquettes designed to forge social bonds. Modesty and humility are integral facets of the Japanese persona, often expressed through the age-old practice of bowing. This simple yet profound gesture conveys respect, gratitude, and understanding, echoing the deep-rooted values that underpin Japanese society. In essence, Japan's culture is an intricate tapestry of values that echo through its festivals, ceremonies, and interactions, inviting travellers to witness and become an active part of its captivating narrative.

Foreigners in Japan face no restrictions when celebrating and organising their native country's festivals. For instance, Nepalese and Indian communities actively engage in events such as Dashain, Diwali, and Holi festivals. They also host weddings, receptions, fairs, and exhibitions that showcase and promote their cultural heritage within Japan. Similarly, individuals from Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, European, and American backgrounds also contribute to the vibrant festival landscape in Japan. The Japanese population deeply appreciates these festivals and events organised by foreign communities. These cultural celebrations have been pivotal in fostering understanding and connection between Japanese and foreign cultures, contributing significantly to cultural exchange and integration.

Challenges Ahead

International marriages (kokusai kekkon) continue to occur, and individuals of biracial heritage are becoming more noticeable in Japanese society. What stands out as a novel phenomenon is the rising number of biracial individuals and the increasing attention they are receiving. The scale of these phenomena, along with the attention they generate, differs considerably in the historical context (Capobianco, 2020: 7). Despite its benefits, internationalisation in Japan is facing challenges. These challenges encompass language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and resistance to change. Nevertheless, implementing proactive measures such as language training programs and cultural exchange initiatives can help surmount these hurdles. By harnessing the potential of internationalisation, Japan can revitalise its workforce, boost economic growth, and enhance its global influence.

The increasing trend of Japanese individuals marrying foreigners impacts the couples themselves and extends to their families and relatives. This phenomenon brings the in-laws of Japanese people marrying foreigners closer to foreign differences on a larger and more noticeable scale. This contact challenges and destabilises existing stereotypes about foreign differences, reshaping how foreigners and Japanese are positioned in society. As more Japanese families encounter foreigners through their relatives, such as spouses, children, siblings, and others, there is a greater potential for genuine connections to form on a personal and emotional level. These intimate relationships within families can lay the groundwork for a more positive and nuanced understanding of foreigners' lives in Japan. Consequently, as more Japanese individuals marry foreigners, it is likely to raise awareness and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the foreign presence in Japan, shifting it from an abstract concept to a tangible reality through personal connections with close relatives (Capobianco, 2020, p. 7).

Undoubtedly, foreign residents encounter significant challenges when adapting to life in Japan, and much work remains to ensure the effective functioning of Japan's new immigration system. From a policy perspective, the central government has made minimal efforts to aid foreigners residing in Japan or to facilitate their integration into society. In contrast, local governments and non-profit organisations have diligently bridged the gap at the regional and community levels. For instance, municipal governments such as Nagoya and Kitakyūshū, along with the Nagano prefectural government, have designated an annual "multicultural month" dedicated to educating the public about cultural diversity and fostering tolerance. Regarding legal frameworks, Miyagi Prefecture has taken a leading role by enacting the Ordinance to promote the formation of a Multicultural Society. This ordinance strives to "cultivate a community that upholds the human rights and social participation of all prefectural residents, regardless of nationality or ethnicity." The government has also established a support centre and other multilingual resources for foreign nationals while regularly

organising social events that bring together Japanese residents and foreigners under the Technical Intern Training Program. Shizuoka Prefecture has similarly enacted a comparable ordinance. In the central Tokyo municipality of Shinjuku, which hosts a sizable foreign population, a community council was established through a local ordinance to construct a more harmonious and liveable environment for Japanese and foreign residents. The Shinjuku Multicultural Community Building Committee holds regular gatherings where representatives from diverse ethnic backgrounds openly share their experiences and viewpoints (Toshihiro, 2020).

According to Toshihiro (2020), the 2015 Shinjuku survey asked foreign residents about the frequency with which they experienced discrimination or prejudice in their interactions with Japanese individuals. A notable 35% of respondents indicated that they encountered such incidents "sometimes," while 7.5% reported facing them "often." Among these experiences, the majority (51.9%) singled out "apartment hunting" as the primary situation in which they encountered discrimination. The second most commonly mentioned scenario was "job hunting" (33.2%), followed by "administrative procedures" (25.6%). The language barrier challenge consistently emerged as a hindrance to integration within the local community. Within the survey, 58.6% of participants expressed difficulties with the Japanese language. Specifically, "reading newspapers and notices" ranked as the most prevalent issue (49.3%), trailed by challenges in "comprehending instructions from municipal officials and hospital staff" (46.6%), as well as engaging in "ordinary conversation" (37.6%). Among the remarks provided in the open-ended section were requests for multilingual versions of the Guide to Living in Shinjuku and other informative materials. A Chinese woman commented, "It is quite common to break the rules due to an inability to read Japanese inadvertently".

Japan absorbed Western customs and manners shortly after the Meiji Reformation in 1868, and Westernization accelerated rapidly after World War II (JNCFU, 1958:866). Tazawa et al. (1973) emphasised that if contemporary Japanese individuals allowed themselves to be unquestioningly engulfed by the tide of Western civilisation, it would necessitate urgent alterations in their thinking and actions. Simultaneously, those lamenting the decline of traditional Japanese culture without substantiating their claims with specific factual evidence might benefit from revisiting the history of Japanese cultural development and re-evaluating their understanding of Japanese culture. Present-day Japanese society is a fusion of cultures—a longstanding indigenous tradition nurtured over centuries and deeply influenced by the civilisation of the Asian continent, as well as Western culture, which was introduced and embraced as a means to modernise Japanese society (Watanabe, 1999, p. 104). European influence extended not only to religious doctrines but also to the arts. Numerous European luxury items, including glass and velvet, were imported, and the Japanese acquired the skills to manufacture them. A missionary even remarked

that the bread sold during the Edo period was the most delectable in the world, a testament to the Japanese's swift mastery of European techniques (Keene, 2002, p. 41).

An effort was undertaken to solicit respondents' viewpoints regarding a statement: "In recent times, Western ideals have thoroughly transformed the ambience of Japan, influencing aspects such as clothing brands, restaurants, English signage, etc." The respondents were asked to rate this statement using a five-point scale. The subsequent table illustrates the cross-tabulation of responses based on sex and age group. The data reveals that 37.89% expressed a Neutral viewpoint, 35.79% indicated Agreement, 13.68% expressed Strong Agreement, and so forth.

Table 2: Crosstabulation of responses on "In recent times, Western ideals have entirely changed the atmosphere of Japan, from clothing brands to restaurants, English signs, etc." by Gender and age group.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Gender	Female	0	8	40	38	15	101
	Male	4	12	30	29	11	86
	Not specified	0	0	2	1	0	3
Age	Below 20	1	2	11	21	3	38
	20-40	1	9	23	19	13	65
	40-60	2	7	31	15	5	60
	Above 60	0	2	7	13	5	27
Total respondents		4	20	72	68	26	190
Percentage		2.11	10.53	37.89	35.79	13.68	100

Source: Author's Survey Data 2022

Additionally, the outcome is visually depicted through a pie chart, as shown in Figure 1.
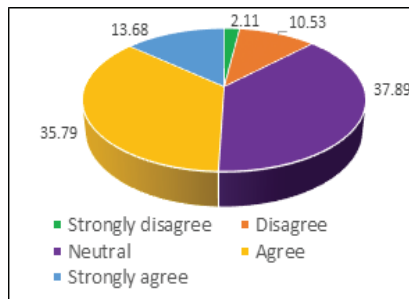

Figure 1: Responses on "In recent times, Western ideals have entirely changed the atmosphere of Japan, from clothing brands to restaurants, English signs, etc."

Essential qualities instilled in Japanese managers and leaders include teamwork, focus, and determination (honesty). The preceding generation of Japan drew inspiration from the philosophy of building the country first and then shaping identity and prosperity (Ghimire, 2022a). 1893, at the Chicago Conference,

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) emphasised "Look to the east," directing attention towards Japan. Japan stands as a fertile ground for Buddhism and Eastern Culture, showcasing accurate preservation and practices of Buddhism. Buddhism has profoundly and broadly permeated Japanese life and culture, rendering it impossible to truly comprehend Japanese history without acknowledging its Buddhist influence (Ghimire, 2017). Contemporary Japanese society demonstrates significant advancements in science and technology, which might make it appear Westernized and modernised. Despite this advancement often associated with detachment from religion, Japan has effectively maintained a balance between engaging with technological modernity and upholding traditional religious and spiritual aspects. Japan can be an ideal destination for studying human societies, cultures, and evolution. The Japanese take their culture, heritage, honesty, and nation-building seriously (Ghimire, 2022a; Ghimire, 2023).

An effort was undertaken to gather respondents' opinions regarding the statement, "Younger generations are drawn to Western culture and lack interest in traditional culture and heritage." This was accomplished using a five-point rating scale. The subsequent table presents the cross-tabulation of responses for the statement's rating, organised by sex and age group. The data reveals that 33.16% hold a Neutral viewpoint, 26.64% Disagree, 19.47% Agree, and so forth.

Table 3: Crosstabulation of responses on " Younger generations are attracted to Western culture and have no interest in traditional culture and heritage" by Gender and Group

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Gender	Female	4	27	35	19	16	101
	Male	6	23	27	18	12	86
	Not specified	0	1	1	0	1	3
Age	Below 20	4	9	9	10	6	38
	20-40	5	14	22	12	12	65
	40-60	1	23	23	9	4	60
	Above 60	0	5	9	6	7	27
Total respondents		10	51	63	37	29	190
Percentage		5.26	26.84	33.16	19.47	15.26	100

Source: Author's Survey Data 2022

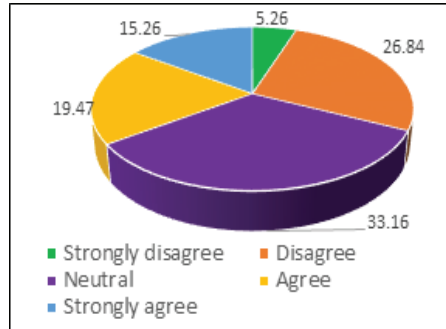Furthermore, the result is presented by Pie-Chart in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Responses on "Younger generations are attracted to Western
culture and have no interest on traditional culture and heritage".

Japan's traditional norms have gradually changed, influenced by globalisation and foreign factors, particularly from the West (Zhu & Mito, 2022). The influx of Western European culture, and more recently, American culture, continues to gain momentum in Japan (Watanabe, 1999, p. 106). As mass culture gradually revived in the post-war period, it was accompanied by a significant "Americanization" of life – at least on a popular level – due to the pervasive influence of the United States on Japan, both during and after the Occupation. The era of phenomenal economic growth eventually concluded in the 1980s, when the Japanese populace mainly acquired the fundamental material treasures of a mass-culture society (Varley, 2000). The notion that Japan is a monoculture society with minimal internal cultural divergence and stratification, once taken for granted, is now losing its dominance in portraying Japanese culture (Sugimoto, 2009, p. 1). Due to the materialistic way of life, the world is becoming increasingly competitive, with limited time and financial resources. The distinctions between the young and old are becoming more evident, leading to a shift in society towards micro-families or a desire for individualistic lives. Younger generations hold different expectations and pursue distinct career and life goals.

The influx of foreign cultures through international migration has sparked debates about preserving Japanese cultural identity and heritage. While cultural exchange can be enriching, there are concerns about erasing traditional values and customs. Moreover, questions arise regarding the extent to which Japan is embracing multiculturalism versus perpetuating ethnocentric narratives. A critical analysis of cultural implications should examine the tensions between cultural preservation and adaptation and the role of cultural policies in fostering mutual understanding and respect.

An effort was undertaken to gather respondents' viewpoints regarding the statement, "Due to the increasing influence of the West, there arises a concern about the

preservation of authentic Japanese culture and heritage," utilising a five-point rating scale. The subsequent table illustrates the cross-tabulation of responses based on gender and age groups. The data reveals that 32.11% agree, 26.84% hold a neutral stance, and 20.00% strongly agree, among other responses.

Table 4: Crosstabulation of responses on " Because of the growing influence of the West, there is a question of the survival of authentic Japanese culture and heritage" by gender and age group

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Gender	Female	0	15	30	34	22	101
	Male	10	14	21	26	15	86
	Not specified	0	1	0	1	1	3
Age	Below 20	1	3	10	17	7	38
	20-40	4	11	14	22	14	65
	40-60	2	14	20	14	10	60
	Above 60	3	2	7	8	7	27
Total respondents		10	30	51	61	38	190
Percentage		5.26	15.79	26.84	32.11	20.00	100

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2022

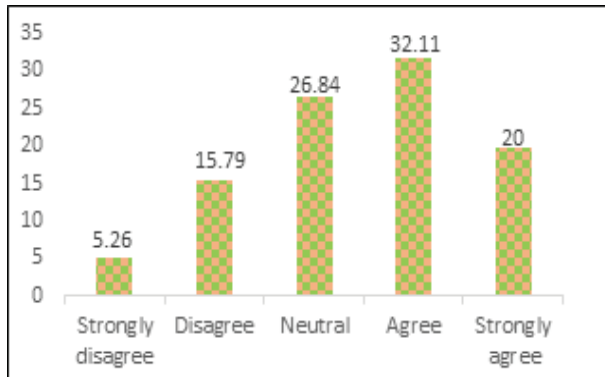Moreover, the outcome is visualised through a bar diagram in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Responses on " Because of the growing influence of the West, there is a question of the survival of authentic Japanese culture and heritage".

Living in Japan presents foreigners with numerous challenges and issues. Among these, a prominent obstacle is the language barrier, which significantly hinders their ability to assimilate and thrive across various spheres of life. The language barrier poses a significant challenge for immigrants, both children and adults. Insufficient Japanese proficiency frequently results in academic underachievement and social isolation within schools. Simply "appearing foreign" can trigger instances of bullying in numerous cases. Several parents opt to enrol their children in international schools to safeguard them. However, for many, the cost of tuition serves as a barrier. Children who experience bullying or exclusion at school are

prone to abandoning their education, subsequently growing up with inadequate schooling. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and isolation (Toshihiro, 2020). The intricacies of the Japanese language render it arduous for foreigners to learn and communicate effectively, resulting in difficulties comprehending local regulations, the education system, waste disposal protocols, and other crucial facets of daily existence. This linguistic challenge further complicates the search for suitable schools for their children and appropriate employment opportunities for themselves. Foreigners who decide to enrol their children in Japanese schools or have children born in Japan confront a distinctive set of hurdles known as "double limited" issues. These challenges stem from limitations in both their native language and Japanese proficiency. Consequently, foreign children attending Japanese schools might gradually lose connection to their native languages and cultures while grappling to excel academically in Japanese. Meanwhile, their proficiency in Japanese remains limited due to the difficulty of the language barrier. This phenomenon is observed among various groups, including Nepalis, Brazilians, and Filipinos residing in Japan. Similarly, children born in Japan to foreign parents often lack fluency in their parents' mother tongue. They may encounter difficulties shaping a clear identity, including inquiries about their nationality and cultural heritage. In the context of Nepalese individuals living in Japan, seeking assistance from the Nepalese embassy or the local community can be arduous. Accessing essential services and support becomes even more challenging without established connections, acquaintances, or networks. This can amplify feelings of isolation and impede their ability to surmount various obstacles (Upreti, 2023).

Even without a comprehensive national immigration policy, Japan is destined to undergo migration flows, whether managed or not. Suppose large-scale, unassimilated, or insufficiently integrated immigrant numbers become prominent across Japan. In that case, there are potential disruptions to social welfare, heightened human rights abuses, and transformative shifts in Japanese society. Such scenarios would underscore the need for enhanced protections for foreign residents. The political dimensions of international migration in Japan encompass a range of issues, from immigration policies to national identity politics. Government responses to international migration, including visa regulations and refugee resettlement programs, shape the experiences of migrants and influence public perceptions. Moreover, international migration intersects with broader geopolitical dynamics, impacting Japan's relations with neighbouring countries and its position in the global arena. A critical assessment of political considerations sheds light on the underlying power struggles and ideological conflicts shaping migration discourse and policy formulation.

Japanese individuals should cultivate a deeper understanding and heightened awareness of the diverse challenges confronting the international community

today, including global environmental degradation, poverty, drug-related issues, and racial discrimination. This enables them to perceive these challenges not as distant problems but as integral issues of their concern. It is not an exaggeration to assert that the international community closely observes the perspectives and actions of each Japanese person. In particular, there is a critical need to educate and enlighten the youth, as they are responsible for shaping the future society.

Merits of Internationalisation in Japan

"Internationalisation" in Japan is a recognised concept and ongoing process aimed at integrating international perspectives, practices, and people into Japanese society and institutions. International migration brings together diverse cultural groups within a unified society, presenting opportunities and challenges. Embracing multiculturalism in Japan fosters integration and facilitates the exchange of ideas, leading to innovation and stronger collaborative relationships. Having individuals from varied cultural backgrounds in your organisation offers unique problem-solving approaches and fosters appreciation for individuality and distinct skills.

One of the critical aspects of international migration and its impact on Japan's economy is while foreign workers have contributed to addressing labour shortages in specific sectors, questions arise regarding their treatment, including wage differentials, job insecurity, and exploitation. Moreover, concerns persist about the long-term sustainability of relying on migrant labour to prop up essential industries. A critical examination of these economic dimensions is crucial to understanding the actual costs and benefits of international migration for Japan's economy.

As Japanese universities seek to attract more students, inviting foreign scholars becomes crucial for fostering a thriving academic environment and elevating research outcomes. Collaborating with international experts nurtures innovation and enhances the academic community's stature. Internationalisation can benefit Japan by creating a vibrant, inclusive society, attracting global talent, and projecting a positive image internationally.

Despite challenges, extreme forms of bigotry are rare among the general Japanese population. The increasing presence of foreign students and workers, particularly in roles like convenience store staff, is viewed positively by local communities, recognising their contributions and determination. As Japan's native population declines, acknowledgement of the necessity of foreign contributions is growing.

Problems of Internationalisation in Japan

International migration has undoubtedly altered Japan's social landscape, leading to demographic shifts and cultural diversity. However, alongside the potential for enriching social interactions and fostering inclusivity, there are challenges related to social integration, language barriers, and cultural clashes. Exploring the complexities of social dynamics in the context of international migration requires

careful consideration of power dynamics, discrimination, and the role of social institutions in promoting cohesion and solidarity.

In Japan, attitudes toward foreigners vary depending on their country of origin, with those from less developed nations often facing more negativity. Foreign residents encounter difficulties in various aspects of life, such as social security and housing, and the introduction of diverse cultures could lead to social fragmentation if integration is lacking. Language barriers further complicate integration, limiting newcomers' ability to engage fully in society. Japan's work culture is known for its long hours and emphasis on hierarchy and loyalty. This can be challenging for foreigners accustomed to different work styles and expectations, leading to difficulties integrating into the workplace.

Additionally, concerns about security vulnerabilities arise from extremist ideologies exploiting cultural differences. Therefore, Japan must balance embracing diversity with maintaining its cultural identity. Initiatives promoting comprehension, integration, and harmony among diverse groups are necessary while addressing challenges related to illegal immigration, including labour exploitation and occupational hazards. Due to their transient and clandestine status, illegal workers face social isolation and invisibility, exacerbating their vulnerability. Addressing these complexities requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges Japan's cultural context and demographic dynamics.

Conclusion

Japan's rapid modernisation underscores the need for harmonious coexistence between modernity and tradition, necessitating collaboration between Japanese society and the foreign community. This collaboration should focus on creating inclusive environments and supporting integration through language education and cultural programs. As Japan grapples with demographic challenges and labour shortages, internationalisation emerges as a promising solution. By welcoming international talent and implementing effective immigration policies, Japan can invigorate its economy and promote social cohesion. The government's Comprehensive Measures indicate a commitment to fostering foreign nationals' acceptance and harmonious coexistence.

Japanese language proficiency among foreigners is paramount, highlighting the necessity for proactive measures to enhance Japan's appeal as a destination for foreign workers. Equitable opportunities and living conditions for native and immigrant populations are essential for fostering multiculturalism and addressing emerging challenges. Furthermore, encounters with foreigners and mixed-race individuals may improve attitudes towards diversity and cultural differences in Japanese society. Anticipated significant generational differences in perspectives on diversity and foreignness underscore the need for proactive policies and initiatives

to facilitate integration and foster inclusive environments for all residents in Japan.

A forward-looking perspective is essential as Japan grapples with the ongoing challenges and opportunities of international migration. Anticipating future trends in migration patterns, demographic changes, and societal attitudes is crucial for informed decision-making and policy planning. Moreover, exploring alternative narratives and envisioning inclusive visions of Japan's societal landscape can inform efforts to navigate the complexities of multiculturalism and diversity in the coming years. International migration is a transformative force that profoundly reshapes Japan's societal landscape. By critically examining its economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, we can gain deeper insights into the complexities and implications of migration for Japanese society. This critical analysis serves as a foundation for informed dialogue, policy development, and collective action aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable future for all residents of Japan.

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