

# Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities: From Populism to Multicultural Coexistence

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## 1. Introduction: Which questions are raised regarding immigrants and refugees?

### 1) Number of immigrants and refugees

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the world was flooded with 272 million immigrants and 79.5 million refugees. In addition, there are already minorities in almost every country created by the movement of people and changes to borders. Since 2013, Germany has surpassed the United States for the number of immigrants in developed countries but the United States has the world's highest number of immigrants: 22.4 million. Japan ranked 4th in 2017 for the increase in immigrants and 2.2 million for total immigrants, 8th among the developed nations. However, in Japan many of these people are not permanent immigrants, like the US and the EU. Many are temporary immigrants, such as international students and technical intern trainees.

OECD data covers only advanced countries and does not include countries and regions that accept large numbers of migrants and refugees from neighboring countries, such as Turkey, and countries in North Africa and Central America, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Yearly immigrants influx, OECD statistics

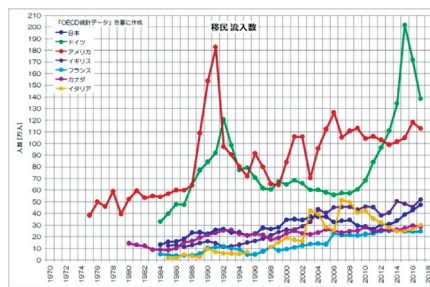


Table 2. Total number of immigrants, OECD statistics

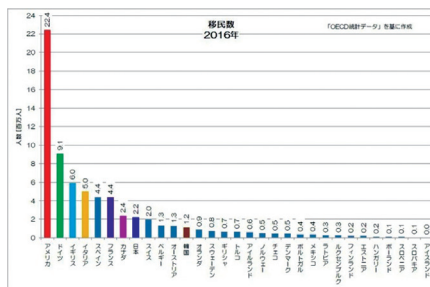


Table 1 and Table 2.

Source : Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries : DIOC, 1970–2018,  
Data : *Japan's economic statistics and turning points*, Ogawa Seisakusho, July 29, 2020,  
<https://ogawa-tech.jp/2021/12/18/immigrant-1/>

Immigrants and refugees stay in their own countries initially, and then flow out to neighboring countries in large numbers, aiming to reach developed countries. Therefore, the data from OECD developed countries alone might cause misunderstandings when used for a global comparison.

The percentage of immigrants to total populations is 1. Germany 12.8%; 2. United Kingdom 9.0%; 3. Italy 8.5%; 4. France 6.9%; 5. USA 6.9%; 6. Canada 6.5%; and 7. Japan 2.0%. However, regarding the outflow of refugees, internally displaced persons accounted for 41.3 million (60%) out of 70.8 million in 2018.

The overwhelming majority of refugee outflow countries are 1. Syria 6.7 million; 2. Afghanistan 2.7 million; and 3. South Sudan 2.3 million. The host countries, in order, are 1. Turkey 3.7 million; 2. Pakistan 1.4 million; 3. Uganda 1.2 million; and 4. (tied) Sudan and Germany 1.1 million. Japan has too few people to be effectively counted, only 42 in 2018.

## **2) What caused the conflict between immigrants/refugees and existing (internal) workers? Why did populism and xenophobia (fear of strangers) occur?**

Why has the immigrant and refugee question caused enormous social conflict in the first two decades of the 21st century and united people to exclude immigrants?

This conflict can be attributed to three points: First is the collapse of the socialist system due to the end of the Cold War and the subsequent turmoil; second is open borders, the expansion of globalization, and the movement of people that has created disparities in many regions; and third is the growth of emerging countries that employ cheap labor and distribute cheap products as well as the intensification of competition from countries with neoliberal economies. Point 3 created the downfall and poverty of the middle class in developed countries that has, in a short time, extended social disparities into the 21st century. These three points have promoted the poverty, unemployment, and living difficulties of middle-class workers in developed countries.

Among internal workers, this situation created xenophobia toward refugees who would otherwise have jointly demanded higher wages and improved working conditions *along with immigrants* in the host country. This situation also continues to bolster the belief that refugees should be excluded. As well, unskilled and low-wage workers' antagonism toward immigrants has been weakening traditional political parties. The idea that immigrants and refugees are taking jobs away from workers has been fueled by populists, including the idea that immigrants and refugees are worsening the lives of existing (internal) workers.

## **3) Beyond xenophobia and populism**

The direction for resolving this problem is not the exclusion of immigrants or restrictions on immigrants and refugees.

The problem is that globalization and neoliberal competition policies have forced companies to become increasingly competitive by lowering the wages of unskilled workers, and many unskilled workers have suffered from the resulting declines in their wages. Given the current social disparities (the gap between the “haves” and the “have-not’s”), it is now required that the majority of workers, as well as immigrants, need to have guaranteed wages and livelihoods suited to basic human rights, while collaborating with emerging countries for their economies, and should include the

immigrants, refugees, and minorities already in the country.

#### **4) Bombs from developed countries and refugees: Why do refugees appear?**

The developed countries, such as the US and the EU who won the Cold War, set the values of “democracy, liberalism, and marketization,” and the wish to change to “democratization” from the authoritarian systems that remain in Central Asia, the Middle East, such as Afghanistan, and many parts of Africa. Developed countries have the responsibility to watch over and support how a country achieves its own “democratization from the inside,” rather than actively participating in the change by destroying the old order by force. The bombs of developed countries are resulting in a huge number of refugees.

In general, people in developed countries are aware that immigrants and refugees “come from outside,” even though they do not want to invite them. Instead, it is necessary to understand that developed countries are attracting cheap labor for corporate and national interests (one reason), and many refugees appear as a result of conflicts (the other reason).

Many millions of refugees have emerged as the result of developed countries intruding into the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa to support democratization and to continue bombing terrorists. Even during the coronavirus pandemic, the largest number of refugees since World War II have emerged because bombing and terrorism continued.

In that sense, international politics and wars in faraway countries are not distant issues, but issues that we should take responsibility for. We are responsible for both immigrants and refugee around the world.

In this paper, given the difficulty of the issue of immigrants and refugees, we first consider why immigrants and refugees appear and “who is humane” during the actual situation of conflicts, the outflow countries of immigrants and refugees, and neighboring countries. Next, from the perspective of those cases, there is an exploration of populism and xenophobia in European countries swayed by immigrants and refugees, as well as why there is stronger populism and why xenophobia occurs more in developed countries against immigrants and refugees than in immigrant and refugee outflow countries and neighboring countries. Finally, this paper looks at the reality of multiethnic coexistence, the lives and current situation of minorities, and the actual situation of immigrants.

## **2. Why do immigration and refugee problems occur?**

### **1) Essential problems of immigrants and refugees**

There are few books that investigate why immigrants move, what they want to do, how we can help resolve these problems, and whether they and we can be happy together. Despite the fact that there are many countries that support immigrants and refugees, why does Japan see the immigration issue as someone else’s problem?

The issue of immigration, refugees, and minorities is a problem that we, the citizens in developed countries, are unavoidably exacerbating as a result of globalization, competition, and widening disparities of the middle classes.

Many developed countries and companies have attracted immigrants in response to their government’s declining birthrate and aging population, as well as the influx of cheap and

hardworking labor, and now immigrants work not only at 3K jobs (*kitanai, kiken, kitsui* or 汚い “dirty”, 危険 “dangerous”, きつい “demanding”) and but with their brains as well. This inflow of new workers is also the result of a neoliberal policy where low wages, high technology, and language skills create competitiveness.

Especially during the explosive COVID-19 pandemic, in many countries around the world, immigrants and so-called BAME (black, Asian, minority, ethnic) workers are required to perform dangerous tasks such as transporting cadavers and handling dangerous waste, including medical waste. The same has occurred for minority ethnic groups. In Europe, it is commonly believed that many of the medical workers who have died from COVID-19 were from the BAME groups.

Nevertheless, many people and governments tend to think that the immigrant and refugee problem is “caused by immigrants/refugees themselves.” Because there is almost no awareness that this situation is caused by developed countries, it is necessary to investigate what happened.

## 2) Disparity and migration

As Thomas Piketty pointed out in *New Capital Theory*, disparities are currently causing significant problems in developed countries. Companies in developed countries have created this disparity. The movement of labor from countries with cheap, highly skilled workers was inevitable in the global, capitalist, free society of the 21st century.

Therefore, it is a top priority for companies and countries to learn how to guarantee livelihoods and reemployment for the unemployed and unskilled workers who are currently flooding into the country, as well as for immigrants. In other words, by dividing and confronting those who should not be in conflict, companies and countries can eventually lessen the inconvenience to themselves, making workers less hostile, while keeping the labor force cheap. What is required are legal developments and a growing understanding of immigrants and unemployed people. If this information is shared broadly, unemployed workers will not have to become nationalistic and attack migrants, and both groups will be able to move toward institutional reforms in search of better wages and social security.

With the spread of COVID-19, the number of infected people continues to increase to 268 million infections and 5 million deaths worldwide (December 2021). Consequently the number of bodies keeps increasing and these are cared for by evacuees because immigrants, minorities, and evacuees are working in body disposal. Society demands that these people are the most necessary workers during the coronavirus epidemic. As they are essential, can countries and companies guarantee their lives? It is necessary to consider the actual situation. The COVID pandemic amplified the contradictions in society but did not change the fundamental situation. When immigrants are forced to return to their home country, the labor shortage does not go away. Is it really “humane” for developed countries to put BAME workers on the front lines of death?

As mentioned, the immigrant question is dealt with by companies and states whose economics and disparity are in their corporate and national interests because of 1) declining birthrates and aging populations, 2) labor shortages, and 3) social and technical demands. This is closely related to corporate strategies. There is no doubt that this strategy is a crucial factor for strengthening economic competition in developed countries. Given that this is the case, then it is not a problem

that can be solved by populism or xenophobia that excludes or attacks immigrants. In the international global economy, the inflow of migrant workers and the expansion of nonregular employment are the survival tactics of developed countries that are being challenged and replaced by emerging countries. Low wages, long hours, and discriminatory treatment should not be directed at immigrants; the emphasis should be on jointly finding ways to make improvements. The issue of immigrants is an inevitable problem due to our way of life and work.

### **3. Refugee crisis and bombs from developed countries**

The refugee problem, on the other hand, is more related to international politics and international norms. There is a crisis—1 million refugees have entered Europe since 2015—and the refugee crisis has occurred in various ways.

#### **1) Regional conflicts and bombing that surpasses World War II**

Why were there 75 million refugees in the world in the first place? Behind this situation, the growth of regional conflicts continued after the end of the Cold War. Regional conflicts might be more numerous after World War II, and the increasing number has already caused many refugee outflows around the world, especially from the Middle East, Central Africa, and Syria. Thirty years after the Cold War ended, regional conflicts have grown significantly. Worldwide, there are 2.33 billion people and 89 countries experiencing conflicts.

One-third of the world is experiencing some sort of conflict. Most of these are due to the democratization of former socialist nations, authoritarian states, and dictatorships, or they are religious or ethnic conflicts.

People in developed countries were panicking when one million refugees flowed into Europe. However, these refugees represented only one seventy-fifth of all the 75 million refugees worldwide. Half of these refugees were staying in their home country or were accepted by neighboring countries, at first.

#### **2) Which countries accept refugees? Who is humane, in fact?**

Half of all refugees are internally displaced persons. More than half of the 75 million refugees, or 46 million, have had their homes burned, have lost family members, and are in danger of being internally displaced in their home country.

There are three reasons that people abandon their homes and leave. The first is domestic armed conflict and the collapse of public security, the spread of violence. The second reason is persecution. *The Refugee Convention, 1951* in the foreword (A.2) cites refugees leaving their home country because “life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions.” This situation has also been referred to as “what you are blaming.” The third reason is serious poverty and unemployment in developing countries. People in these conflict areas are forced to abandon their homes, and sometimes their families, to become refugees.

Refugees then flee conflicts to neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Iraq, Niger, and Central American countries, who are accepting large numbers of refugees. Niger in West Africa and Central

American countries have accepted large numbers of refugees from neighboring countries, albeit into countries that are by no means rich and developed themselves.

Mutual help could be a natural phenomenon because these neighboring countries are a “relay station” on the way to a final destination. Many refugees are helped by neighbor countries around the parties to the conflicts, even if they are poor as well, instead of being rejected as immigrants and refugees as they are under populist regimes in Europe, for example.

We are growing accustomed to media coverage that highlights European and US humanitarian standards, where dictatorships and parties to conflicts are blamed for creating refugees. That is why it is necessary to re-examine the refugee problem using the essential facts and by asking the fundamental question, “Who is humane?”

The 8th of the United Nations’ 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) is to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.” The goal is to provide vocational training and skill training programs aimed at increasing employment opportunities and improving livelihoods for all, including refugees. For sustainable development, self-help, self-earning, and working are a matter of course, and host countries need to guarantee these types of opportunities.

By accepting refugees and providing them with opportunities to learn as well as improve their lives and work skills, the burden on the country will be reduced, and refugees will be able to get jobs and support their families. Indeed, “win-win self-help and support for others” is being realized in countries that receive refugees.

#### **4. Why is populism, including immigrant exclusion, still powerful in developed countries?**

##### **1) “Welfare nationalism” and restoring sovereignty**

The key issues in granting refugee status are “welfare nationalism,” where immigrants are thought to “steal our generous social security” and restoring national sovereignty from the European Union. There is dissatisfaction among many people in the United Kingdom who feel, mistakenly, that the EU is just taking in taxes and giving out no benefits, leading to the downfall of traditional England and Wales, as well as harming the elderly and rural people who take pride in Great Britain and want to regain the sovereignty of the British Empire. Included among the groups of the dissatisfied are middle-class and lower-tier workers in Central and Eastern Europe; it became clear to them that they had a slightly larger majority than the “elites.” As a result, “social security nationalism” was born in the Nordic countries, including the United Kingdom, which has advanced medical technology and social security.

In reality, immigrants have increased tax revenues and in turn have paid toward social security, but the UK’s GDP has shrunk, and neoliberal economic policies have reduced social security and widened disparities. The tightness of people’s lives in the UK seems, to some, to be deteriorating their social security, not because of the state or companies, but because of immigrants.

Under these circumstances, social friction emerged, and exclusion from local communities began. Especially in close rural communities, immigrants now feel more alienated, and conflicts or sometimes crimes against people led to increased immigrant vigilance. Xenophobia (fear of strangers) began to grow. Ultimately, while expectations for the workforce remained unchanged,

widespread movements for excluding immigrants increased in rural communities. Taking advantage of these feelings and fueling them, populist political parties grew up in Europe, and sometimes came into power, further fostering the momentum for conflict and division within countries and against immigrants.

In this way, the inflow of immigrants—who were initially called in by the government and companies to solve the problem of a lack of workers, especially low-wage workers—has created a new social division, and this problem has been blamed on immigrants. As seen under the Trump administration, the question arose of how to treat the Rust Belt workers in the US. Relying on non-immigrant workers who are opposed to immigrants and driving them out, is not a strategy that will restore the national economy. This backlash creates serious issues for the economy, education, culture, and society in one's own country.

## **5. Conflicts between Western and Eastern Europe**

Refugee policies have put a heavy tax burden on Europe, already shaken by the Euro Crisis and financial crises in individual countries. In particular, there is a mistaken belief that the generous “from the cradle to the grave” social security system that is characteristic of Nordic countries is being provided to immigrants and refugees. This “social welfare nationalism” is thought by some groups to significantly reduce the quality of their social security. After the Euro Crisis, the rise of populist parties in Europe followed the removal of more liberal political parties. Behind this movement was the failure of neoliberal competition policies during the expansion of Europe in the 21st century that had undermined Europe's advanced social security system and advanced medical practices, leading to the downfall of the middle class and widening disparities.

### **1) Eastern Europe's dispute with the EU**

There was wide-spread sympathy for Britain's withdrawal from the EU in Central and Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Immediately after Britain's decision to leave the EU—due to different perceptions of national power and historical influence—Japanese media was generally positive toward Britain. Fear of the EU spread, and this expanded into other EU countries, one after another.

The mainstream beliefs were that the movement to leave the EU would spread and that the EU could survive. There were also many criticisms of the EU, including that Britain's decision was the result of EU bureaucratic centralization that restricted sovereignty. Following Brexit, Greece's Grexit (departure from the EU) and even a rebellion by French politician Marine Le Pen were being considered.

### **2) Schengen Agreement and immigrants**

At an international conference held at MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) in Russia in 2002, Russian scholars were raising the alarm that “Europe is trying to build a wall against the east again,” and the Schengen Agreement and NATO were expanding. (Although I wrote reports and articles about these beliefs, it was difficult to find a convincing argument for them.)

Hungary and Poland have stepped up the exclusion of immigrants and have introduced a

conservative dictatorship that is opposed to the EU. On the other hand, the EU criticized Fidesz, the Hungarian Civil Alliance, a right-wing populist party. The EU refused to accept immigrants from the Eastern European countries, Poland and Hungary, subsequently adopted sanctions against those countries.

After that happened, Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán, did not advocate leaving the EU, as Britain had done, instead he declared that Hungary would remain "inside the EU," and that an "illiberal democracy" was being created by a "workfare society," and this became Hungary's policy. Orbán stated, "We do not deny liberalism, but in contemporary international society non-liberal states are more successful, powerful and wealthy. These are China, India, Singapore, Turkey, and so on." This argument seems to be a fairly logical policy, at least theoretically. In essence, Orbán clearly states that Hungary will remain in the EU and achieve democracy, but not become liberal, but illiberal. Where is the standard of strong exclusion from the EU, even when compared with the claims of Britain's Boris Johnson and UKIP's (United Kingdom Independence Party) Nigel Farage, who explicitly declared their departure from the EU, or Marine Le Pen's French National Front, who proposed exclusion of immigrants? It seems that there was no clear line dividing West and East on the question of immigrants and refugees.

Historically, Central and East European countries have always been on the front lines of Western Europe, or the military and security fronts of Russia, between the west and the east. However, unlike the British colonies, many countries have maintained resistance to rule by outside nations and regimes. They have insisted on their independence as a fundamental characteristic of their people and their country.

At the end of the Cold War in 1989, Central and East European countries proclaimed a "return to Europe" with liberalism, democracy, and market economies. However, in 2020, these ideals were gradually transformed into authoritarian states with the aim of excluding immigrants, as well as sovereign independence from the EU and a concentration of power.

## **6. Epilogue: Living together: Inclusion and coexistence**

What does the question of how to deal with immigrants, refugees, and minorities teach us? What is important is that coexistence with immigrants and refugees is indispensable for us, and we must not exclude those people or minorities who already exist, but include them, and allow for a coexistence with diversity. In our immediate vicinity, a terrible conflict could reoccur at any time.

### **1) Japan being shunned: immigrants and refugees**

The Japan Association for Comparative Politics publishes a magazine every year, and the theme this year was "the vulnerability of democracy and the resilience of authoritarianism." According to this magazine, Western democracy and liberalism are out of control, and authoritarian isolation and urban blockades in Asia have successfully overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, and that these Asian economies are recovering. Resilience works in Asia, not in the US and the EU. ASEAN, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and New Zealand are incorporating social inclusion with regional collaboration while quarantining and identifying infections using IT. In Asia, the 11 TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) countries without the United States and the 15 RCEP (Regional Comprehensive



Economic Partnership in Asia) countries have also been developing the world's largest economic zone, without India. China's Xi Jinping is reportedly enthusiastic about participating in the TPP. Regional collaboration in Europe is erratic, and while the United States has followed its own country-centered policy for four years, regional collaboration is progressing in Asia.

In the new 21<sup>st</sup>-century era after COVID-19, multiethnic, heterogeneous, and interracial coexistence, as well as social inclusion, and tolerance of cultures and values will be realized and are important beyond the modern liberalism and democracies of Europe and the United States. The new era is not being established in the upper tiers of society, but is located at the historical boundary, incorporating the role of diverse social exchanges, and the loose coexistence of ethnicity, culture, and religion in daily life. The new era will be one of tolerance, mutual understanding, and inclusion of culture and customs.

Yoshihiko Amino, a professor at Kanagawa University, also states that Japan was originally an open marine ethnic society whose origin was a multiracial hybrid with elements from Southeast Asia and the islands of the South China and the East China Seas in the south, and Mongolia, Eskimos, and the Ainu in the north. The homogeneous nation state concept is now becoming the old order.

According to the UN Statistics covering the outlook in 2019, if there are no immigrants, the population of developed countries will peak, and if immigrants are not introduced, the population of developed countries will decline by half starting from 2030. This is almost the same estimate as data issued by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Even in Japan, 28.4% of the population is already rapidly aging (over 65 years) , and we cannot live without coexistence with immigrants and/or other genders and women. In addition, we are entering an era where it cannot be said that only Japan accepts refugees. On the other hand, as seen from the failure to introduce specific skilled workers, the coming era might continue to be unrealized. The negative reality and information on Japanese migrant workers are widely known. For these immigrants, it is a fact that they will no longer come to Japan even if working hours are shortened, wages are raised, long-term stays and marriages are allowed, education is provided, and a social system is established that makes it easier for minorities to live in Japan. It is also necessary to clarify to the public that the labor shortage can be resolved, that the GDP will be maintained, and that the economy is turning around because of the presence of immigrants.

## **2) Living together with immigrants**

In order to create a society where everyone protects the human rights of immigrants, it is essential to guarantee their human rights and put in place systems that make it possible for minorities to be at ease. In addition, the ideal of a refugee-and minority-friendly society in developed countries is spreading amid global tensions and instability. Immigrants are not responsible for regional conflicts, but rather they accept joint responsibilities from their immediate surroundings. It is necessary to prepare for coronavirus refugees.

For coexistence with immigrants, refugees, and minorities, it is essential to first deeply recognize the reality and think again from the perspective of the other person. For questions surrounding immigrants, refugees, and minorities, an interdisciplinary approach is needed that employs empirical research that incorporates the disciplines of economics, politics, sociology,

history, media theory, etc. And diverse comparative political analysis is indispensable. These questions require intensive analysis with expertise that investigates the politics, sociology, economics and actual conditions of immigrants, refugees, and minorities in each region, as well as those on the front lines that are suffering during conflicts.

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