



Recommendations for the Takaichi Administration's Immigration Policy

A Long-Term Strategy for Immigration Policy in an Era of Demographic Change and AI

Tomohisa Ishikawa*

ishikawa.tomohisa@jri.co.jp

This is an English version of Japanese report ” 高市政権の外国人政策～秩序維持、人口動態、AI の影響等を踏まえた長期戦略を ”

■ The Takaichi Administration's Foreign Resident Policy: A First Step Toward Orderly Coexistence

The government's recently released Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform—commonly known as the “Honebuto”—placed notable emphasis on foreign resident policy. Its main measures include: (1) responding firmly to illegal acts and violations of rules by some foreign nationals, while strengthening efforts to address public anxiety and perceptions of unfairness; (2) using funds secured through a review of residence permit fees and the introduction of the Japan Electronic System for Travel Authorization (JESTA) to support foreign resident policy; (3) vigorously advancing the “Zero Illegal Residents Plan” and establishing the institutional capacity needed to combat unauthorized employment; (4) ensuring proper operation of private lodging businesses, in light of disputes that have arisen between some operators and local residents; and (5) expanding education for foreign nationals on the Japanese language as well as Japan's institutions and rules.

With the number of foreign residents in Japan now exceeding four million, the government deserves credit for beginning to put in place the institutional foundations needed to avoid a de facto, unmanaged expansion of immigration. This can fairly be described as a first step toward orderly coexistence. Internationally, public opinion toward foreign residence and immigration has also become less permissive than in the past, with greater attention being paid to managing inflows and preserving domestic order. In particular, as illustrated by the recent influx of large numbers of Moroccans into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, concern has grown over the “weaponization of migrants and refugees”—the deliberate movement of people into advanced economies to create disruption. Seen in this context, the government's policy direction is broadly consistent with an international trend toward maintaining order.

*Research Director / Chief Economist (Economics Department, The Japan Research Institute, Limited)

■ Japan Needs a Long-Term Vision That Accounts for Technological Change

At the same time, the conditions surrounding the acceptance of foreign workers and residents differ substantially by region and industry. Some areas retain relatively ample capacity to receive foreign human resources, while others are already facing strains on local infrastructure and public services. Likewise, labor shortages are acute in certain industries, many of which have become increasingly dependent on foreign workers. For this reason, policy design cannot stop at a uniform national framework. A more granular approach is essential—one that reflects each region’s absorptive capacity and industrial structure.

Moreover, any forward-looking foreign resident policy must take more explicit account of how technological innovation will affect labor demand. The diffusion of AI and robotics could reshape not only white-collar work but also blue-collar occupations. In the United States and China, where AI adoption is advancing rapidly, policy debates increasingly focus not only on how to address labor shortages, but also on how to preserve employment in the face of technological substitution. In other words, future policy challenges will not be confined to coping with “labor shortages”; they will also require preparation for the possibility of “labor surpluses.”

On August 7, the government convened the first meeting of the Working Group on the Basic Approach to the Acceptance of Foreign Nationals. The meeting indicated that the working group would seek consistency with the “comprehensive strategy” being developed by the Headquarters for Population Strategy. Given that the government is also pursuing measures to address the declining birthrate, this is a necessary perspective: if those measures prove effective, Japan’s reliance on foreign workers would naturally be expected to diminish.

That said, while the socioeconomic impact of foreign nationals is included among the issues under consideration, the question of how far technological innovation—particularly AI—will change the number of foreign workers Japan needs has not yet been brought sufficiently to the fore. To make foreign resident policy sustainable, Japan needs a long-term strategy that integrates demographic trends, regional absorptive capacity, sector-specific labor shortages, and shifts in labor demand driven by AI, robotics, and related technologies.

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