

Immigration without Settlement: Causes and Consequences of Exclusionary Migration Regime in East Asia

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Abstract : Studying migration regimes enables one to identify clusters of countries with policy features in common. A few researchers have pointed out the origin of hardship experienced by foreign workers in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, stems from their exclusionary migration regime. This paper aims to understand the causes and consequences of the East Asia migration regime, exploring the common exclusionary policies features of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, focusing on the foreign labor policy. It will then present explanations as to factors shaping migration regime; the perspective of factors within political system is adopted, as opposed to political economy and pluralist society approach. In the minds of political elites across East Asia, there exists a powerful belief in mono-ethnicity, namely, the benefits of mono-ethnicity and the social ill of “minority problems”. Guest workers policies of various alterations become the compromise between the want for foreign labor and the desire to maintain mono-ethnicity. The paper discusses the absence of immigrant settlement and formation of ethnic communities as a result of the reluctant hosts. Migrant workers in these societies commonly suffer from irregular working conditions as well as unprotected rights out of their denied legality. The case of Taiwan will be presented with greater details, drawing on data from both first-hand and secondary sources.

Keywords : migration regime, guest worker policies, East Asia, society

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