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Be cautious about letting Chinese and Korean immigrants in Japan

By ITO Masanori

Inspired by an article "Who is leading Japan's migration policies?" by Ms. Masako KURANISHI posted on "Giron-Hyakushutsu" on April 12th, I would like to make a remark which reads; the Japanese government should be particularly cautious as to opening the door to immigrants of Chinese and (both North and South) Korean nationals.

Despite the proximity as well as the history of annexation and war in the past, the number of Chinese and Korean immigrants living in Japan is considerably larger in comparison to that of the other nationals. Indeed, the Chinese immigrants in Japan amounted to 695,522 and the Korean counterpart 453,096 in 2016. These numbers are significantly larger than the number of foreigners but Chinese and Korean nationals living in Japan.

As it was the case in the annexation of Crimea where Moscow found the justification of its act in "a right to protect Russian nationals in Ukraine", it is not implausible that China would one day breach the integrity of Japan, claiming "a right to protect Chinese nationals in Japan". Provided that international cooperation to respond to refugee crisis and the lack of work force due to population aging combined with decreasing birthrate inevitably require admitting immigrants, we need to consider letting those of non-Chinese and non-Korean nationals in first.

Japan has also some ASEAN countries around, leaving aside the three countries, China, South and North Korea. If Japan will have to open the door to immigrants, the country should start receiving those from Philippine and Vietnam, both of which are ASEAN member countries, for example. It must be noted that this article is a sole reflection of my own thoughts and does not speak of what I stand on as myself belong to The Japan Forum on International Relations.

(This is an English translation of the article written by ITO Masanori, Senior Research Fellow at The Japan Forum on International Relations, which originally appeared on the e-forum “Giron-Hyakushutsu (Hundred Views in Full Perspective)” of GFJ on April 12, 2017.)