

East Asia in the World

An Introduction



FOUNDATIONS IN GLOBAL STUDIES SERIES

Edited by Anne Prescott



East Asia in the World

From the *Foundations in Global Studies* series, this text offers students a fresh, comprehensive, multidisciplinary entry point to East Asia, with an emphasis on the globalizing processes the region is undergoing. After a brief introduction to the study of East Asia, the early chapters of the book survey the essentials of East Asian history and offer an overview of the region's languages, economic development, and global connections. Students are guided through the material with relevant maps, resource boxes, and text boxes that support further independent exploration of the topics at hand.

The second half of the book presents an interdisciplinary portrait of the region through a set of case studies that explore key aspects of the cultural, economic, and political life in specific countries, sometimes holding up a mirror to the region as a whole. Readers will come away from this book with an understanding of current issues that have particular relevance in East Asia as we know it today and of the larger globalizing forces shaping the region and beyond.

Anne Prescott is the director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies in Massachusetts and a national director for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia, a leading provider of professional development training on East Asia. Trained as an ethnomusicologist specializing in traditional Japanese music, she spent eight years in Japan. She has been an administrator at area studies centers since 2002.

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East Asia in the World

An Introduction

Edited by Anne Prescott

First published 2015
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
East Asia in the world : an introduction / edited by Anne Prescott.
pages cm. — (Foundations in global studies)
Includes index.

1. East Asia. 2. East Asia—Civilization. 3. East Asia—Social conditions.
4. Globalization—East Asia. I. Prescott, Anne (Director), editor.
DS504.5.E263 2015
950—dc23
2014043225

ISBN: 978-0-7656-4321-6 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-7656-4322-3 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-71734-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK

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About This Book

East Asia in the World: An Introduction—the third book in M.E. Sharpe’s *Foundations in Global Studies: The Regional Landscape* series—provides a fresh, systematic, and comprehensive overview of East Asia. Including coverage of China (including Taiwan), North Korea, South Korea, and Japan, the East Asia considered here is cogent and diverse at the same time; the vast areas under this formulation share patterns of history and culture, but also diverge in dramatic ways across the broad reach of its geography. For instance, these East Asian countries are not only tied together by their physical proximity, but also by two prominent cultural bonds that originated in China: the first being Confucianism and the second being the use of Chinese characters in their writing systems. These regions, often considered under a separate rubric in the traditional area studies approach, are considered critical here in understanding how “East Asia” developed across the centuries and how it is defined today. And while the focus is on the more typical “core” East Asian countries rather than those in Southeast Asia, the globalized complexion of East Asia is made clear in our broader reach.

The exploration of globalizing processes is indeed the focus of *East Asia in the World*, and the series as a whole. As we examine a host of global patterns that are reflected in and that shape the region—money flows, diasporic movements, hybridity in language, political movements affected by worldwide media and movement of ideas—the “in the World” part of the title gets a full hearing. Indeed, the variations in this wide region’s social, cultural, economic, and political life are explored within the context of the globalizing forces affecting *all* regions of the world.

In a simple strategy that all books in the series employ, this volume begins with an overview and foundational material (including chapters on history, language, and economic development), moves to a discussion of globalization, and then focuses the investigation more specifically through the use of case studies. The set of case studies exposes readers to various disciplinary lenses that bring the region to life through subjects of high interest and importance to today’s readers. Among others, these topics include the new car culture in China; the use of the radio as new media and technology in colonial Korea; the effect that Japan’s March 2011 Triple Disaster had on minorities; Confucianism in modern East Asia; and the growing effect of China’s one-child policy on the country’s urban daughters.

A deliberate attempt has been made to illustrate the connections between peoples and countries that make up East Asia, and to counter the contemporary media focus on turmoil in the region. The chapters in [Part Two](#), on history and language, illustrate clearly, for instance, that the region is much more than the sum of its civil and regional conflicts.

In addition to her own contributions as author of the overview and fundamentals chapters, the editor, Anne Prescott, director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies at Smith College, has assembled a team of specialists, primarily from the Five Colleges (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) to contribute case studies to the volume. The team represents the full range of disciplines brought to bear in the study of East Asia, including, among others, anthropology, communications and media, geography and the environment, geopolitics and international affairs, history, linguistics, and political economy.

Resource boxes, an important feature of the books in this series, are included to preserve currency and add utility. They offer links that point readers to excellent sources—mostly online—on the topics discussed. The links, which include connections to timely data, reports on recent events, official sites, local and country-based media, and visual material, establish a rich archive of additional material for readers to draw on. The URLs included are known to be current as of July 1, 2014, and in the case of expired URLs, enough information has been provided for the reader to locate the same, or similarly useful, resources.

As with all books about regions with writing systems different than the Roman alphabet, we needed to determine the best way to transliterate “foreign” words. Our decision was to follow specific systems, but not to be dogmatic in their application. Specifically, the spellings of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese words were standardized with the use of, respectively, the *hanyu pinyin* (usually referred to simply as Pinyin), Revised Romanization of Korean (RR), and revised Hepburn transliteration systems. However, when the spellings prescribed by these systems went against legitimate, more commonly accepted alternatives, we usually decided to use the more prevalent spelling. In particular, the RR system was developed relatively recently. We chose to use it, however, because it is the one officially endorsed by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and it lends itself well to computer input as it does not rely on diacritical marks. However, because the RR system was developed in 1995 and adopted in 2000, most resources do not yet use this system. We have assisted the reader, where necessary, by providing what are perhaps more familiar spellings of words, particularly Korean place and personal names. For example, the city of Pyongyang is Pyeongyang and former President Roh Tae-woo’s name is No Tae-u in Revised Romanization.

PART ONE

Overview

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Introducing East Asia

ANNE PRESCOTT

East Asia is geographically expansive, culturally diverse, economically vital, and the source of traditions both old and new. It is also often misunderstood. Indeed, the term “East Asia” conjures up many images: of Japanese cosplay (“costume play”—dressing up in costumes to represent a character, often from manga or anime), kung fu (*gongfu*), or kimchi (spicy Korean vegetables); of Kim Jong-un, Mao Zedong, or Ichiro Suzuki; and of the films of Miyazaki Hayao, the music of Psy, or the art of Ai Weiwei.

There is no single highway through the historical and cultural landscape of East Asia; each person approaches it from a different place on the map, and we can choose any number of roads to begin to learn about—and understand—this region in the western Pacific that is home to 20 percent of the world’s population. Once distanced from much of the rest of the world by geographical barriers and long journeys, today technology has helped bridge the gap and allows us to interact with the people of East Asia, leading us to discoveries about how they have become part of today’s global landscape.

This chapter briefly considers some of defining characteristics of the region as well as the geographical, historical, and cultural traits that distinguish each of the countries of East Asia. (See [Table 1.1](#) for a statistical snapshot of East Asia.) It focuses on those characteristics critical to understanding the role these nations play in globalization, and on a number of the challenges they face, either individually or as a region. With this introduction, each reader will begin to discover the best route for traveling through the complexities of East Asia in today’s world.

Defining East Asia

The countries of China (including Taiwan), North Korea, South Korea, and Japan are grouped together under the umbrella of “East Asia,” based on their geographic proximity as well as historical and modern cultural and economic ties, particularly two prominent common cultural bonds originating in China. The first is Confucianism, an ethical and philosophical system that permeates deeply into East Asian societies. (See [Chapter 12](#) for a discussion of Confucianism in East Asia today.) The second is the use of Chinese characters (called *hanzi* in Chinese) in



East Asia: China (including Taiwan), Japan, North Korea and South Korea, its neighbors, and the major geographical features and cities cited in this introduction.



their writing systems. Adopted centuries ago in Korea and Japan, the people in those countries continue to refer to this writing system as “Chinese characters” in their languages (*kanji* in Japanese, *hanja* in Korean). Examples of how the characters are used will be found in the chapter on languages. China, the Koreans, and Japan are also facing many of the same environmental, economic and cultural hurdles in the twenty-first century, some of which are the result of or exacerbated by an increasingly integrated global world.

Based on these criteria, Vietnam may also be considered a part of the greater sphere of Chinese influence, and, as such, some scholars include Vietnam in East Asia. Although Confucianism continues to be important in Vietnamese culture, Chinese characters are no longer used in its written language, and many scholars and scholarly organizations classify Vietnam as a Southeast Asian country. Mongolia is geographically just to the north of China, but neither Confucianism nor the Chinese writing system have played a role in the culture and society of that region. As a result, Mongolia is usually grouped with other Inner Asian (sometimes referred to as Eurasian) countries such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Scholars of Inner Asia may also study the people in the Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet regions of China.

The Sinor Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies (<http://www.indiana.edu/~srias/>) and the Inner Asian & Uralic National Resource Center (<http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/>), both at Indiana University, are good resources for understanding the differences between East Asia and Inner Asia.

Geography and Climate

The climates in East Asia range from subarctic in the north to tropical in the south, and are influenced by continental winds from the northwest, monsoon winds from the southwest, and typhoons that crawl up the coasts of China, Korea, and Japan. Long rivers traverse the continent, while much shorter rivers flow from the mountains to the sea on the Korean Peninsula and in Japan. Desert lands spread out in northwestern China, and the high Tibetan plateau is known as the “roof of the world.” The Pacific basin is bordered by the Ring of Fire, a seismically active belt that spawns frequent earthquakes and volcanoes that affect East Asia. Mountains feature prominently in the history and culture of the region. Koreans consider Mount Paektu, on the border between China and Korea, to be the sacred place of their ancestral origin. Mount Fuji is one of the three sacred mountains in Japan, and in 2013 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Himalayas, the tallest mountain range in the world, mark part of China’s western boundary, and the Five Great Mountains—Taishan, Huashan, Hengshan (in Hunan Province), Hengshan (in Shanxi Province) and Songshan—are important landmarks in China.

Table 1.1

A Statistical Snapshot of East Asian Countries

	Area (km ²)	Arable land	Urbanization, 2011	Population, July 2014 est.	Cell phones	Life expectancy, 2014 est. (male and female)	Literacy
China (PRC)	9,596,961	11.62%	50.6%	1.36 billion	1.1 billion (2012)	m: 73.09 f: 77.43	95.1% (2010 est.)
Taiwan (ROC)	35,980	24.00%	NA	23.36 million	29.5 million (2012)	m: 76.72 f: 83.20	96.1% (2003)
Hong Kong	1,104	5.05%	100.0%	7.11 million	16.4 million (2012)	m: 80.18 f: 85.71	93.5% (2002)
Macao	28.2	0.00%	100.0%	607,500	1.6 million (2012)	m: 81.52 f: 87.59	95.6% (2011 est.)
Japan	377,915	11.26%	91.3%	127.10 million	138.4 million (2011)	m: 81.13 f: 87.99	99.0% (2002)
South Korea (ROK)	99,720	14.93%	83.2%	49.04 million	53.6 million (2012)	m: 76.67 f: 83.13	97.9% (2002)
North Korea (DPRK)	120,538	19.08%	60.3%	24.85 million	1.7 million (2012)	m: 65.96 f: 73.86	100% (2008 est.)

Source: Compiled from the CIA *World Factbook*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_eas.html, accessed May 16, 2014.

China

Historically, “China” referred to a collection of kingdoms and empires, commonly called dynasties. The area under dynastic rule changed over time as lands were conquered or lost in wars. Through much of history, the Chinese believed in the Mandate of Heaven, the idea that heaven gives the emperor (usually a male) the right to rule based on his ability to govern rather than his social status. Using this reasoning, even a commoner or a foreigner could be accepted as the ruler. Poverty and disaster were seen as signs from heaven that the ruling emperor was unjust and should be replaced.

Chinese Dynasties and Key Events

- Xia, ca. 2100–1600 BCE.
- Shang, ca. 1600–1050 BCE. Oldest written history dates from this dynasty.
- Zhou, ca. 1046–256 BCE. Longest-lasting dynasty in Chinese history.
- Qin, 221–206 BCE. Capital at Chang’an (Xi’an); created a unified state by imposing a centralized government; Qin emperor died in 210 and was buried with Terracotta Warriors.
- Han, 206 BCE–220 CE. Confucianism officially established as the basis for the Chinese state; the name of the dominant ethnic group in China, the Han, comes from the name of this dynasty, as does the name of the Chinese writing system, *hanzi* (literally “Chinese writing”). Silk Road began.
- Six Dynasties Period, 220–589 CE. Period of instability following the fall of the Han; Buddhism introduced to China.
- Sui, 581–618 CE. Reunification of China.
- Tang, 618–906 CE. Golden age of Chinese civilization. Chang’an (presently Xi’an) was the capital; at the eastern end of the Silk Road, it was the most populous city in the world at that time. The Tang Dynasty had great cultural influence on Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.
- Five Dynasties Period, 907–960 CE.
- Song, 960–1279 CE. Great economic and social changes occurred during this period.
- Yuan, 1279–1368 CE. Established by the Mongols under Kublai Khan; the Mongols reigned from Beijing over most of what we know as China today.
- Ming, 1368–1644 CE. Han reestablished rule.
- Qing, 1644–1912 CE. Manchus reigned from Beijing.

Source: Asia for Educators website, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china_timeline.htm.

A fun way to memorize the sequence of the Chinese dynasties is to sing them, as is shown in a YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJis9TSw1rE>) sponsored by ChinaX, part of Harvard's edX online learning offerings.

Under pressure from reformers hoping for modernization and a republican-style government, the last Manchu emperor abdicated in 1912, and the Qing Dynasty ended. During the first half of the twentieth century, various forces struggled to establish the modern state of China, leading up to the Chinese Civil War, which ended in 1949 with the exile of the Nationalists on the offshore island of Taiwan and the Communists in control of the mainland. Today China can refer to the People's Republic of China (PRC), or mainland China, and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. Since 1949 both governments, separated by the narrow Taiwan Strait, have claimed to be the official representatives of the Chinese people. The United Nations acknowledged the PRC as the lawful representative of China in 1971. The United States recognized the ROC as the official representative of the Chinese people until 1979, at which time it recognized the PRC as the legitimate representative.

The People's Republic of China (PRC, or Mainland China)

The People's Republic of China is the fourth-largest country (in area) in the world (after Russia, Canada, and the United States), and with an estimated 1.35 billion people, it has the world's largest population (followed closely by India, with the United States a distant third). The population is primarily concentrated on the eastern coast, and with the exception of a few regional cities, the western and central sections of the country are relatively sparsely inhabited. The major urban areas of the country include the capital, Beijing, in the northeast; Shanghai, in the east; Chongqing, the former provisional capital of Chiang Kai-shek's government during World War II, in the southwest; and Shenzhen and Guangzhou, two important cities on the Pearl River Delta in the south.

The official name of the country today is Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo (People's Republic of China), but the Chinese usually refer to their country as Zhongguo, which means "Middle Kingdom." Zhongguo has been used as the name of a collection of united provinces in the central plain for more than 2,500 years, and it reflects the Chinese idea that it resides at the center of the world. Given this name, it should come as no surprise that China shares borders with 14 countries.

China is not a homogenous nation. Han Chinese make up 91.6 percent of the population, with the remaining 8.4 percent, or nearly 115 million people, belonging to one of 55 ethnic minority groups recognized by the Chinese government (CIA *World Factbook*). These include Koreans, who live primarily in the region near the border with North Korea; Tibetans; Manchus; Mongols; and Uyghurs (also spelled Uighurs

or Uyghurs). Although the official language is Mandarin Chinese, other languages and regional dialects are spoken, and several autonomous regions have additional official languages. Regardless of the dialect—Cantonese or Mandarin, for example—the written language is the same. It is therefore not unusual in major cities to see two Chinese people who speak different dialects communicating with each other by writing words down. Minority issues, including those relating to domestic migrants, are thus very much a part of the reality of local, as well as global, exchanges and discourse. Increasingly, another set of minorities, foreign residents attracted to the burgeoning economic market, are an important part of the discussion of minority concerns.

Autonomous Regions in China

China has designated five regions as autonomous areas, established for ethnic minorities living within the Chinese state:

- Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Located in the south, established in 1958; home to the Zhuang people.
- Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Located in the north, established in 1947; home to the Mongolian people.
- Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Located in the north, established in 1958; home to the Hui people.
- Tibet Autonomous Region. Located in the west, established in 1965; home to the Tibetan people and the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest, or Chomolungma in Tibetan.
- Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Located in the northwest, established in 1955; home to the Uyghur people.

Operating at the same administrative level as provinces of China, the autonomous regions have greater local control than do other provinces. In some cases, especially in the Tibetan and Uyghar regions, considerable political controversy exists regarding Chinese control over the regions.

Special administrative regions (SARs) have also been designated—one for Macau, once a Portuguese colony, and one for Hong Kong, once under the control of the United Kingdom. See below for more on these two SARs.

A list of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China can be found at “56 Ethnic Groups” (http://english1.english.gov.cn/2006-02/08/content_182626.htm), a web page of the Chinese government's Official Web Portal.

The waters to the east of China include the Korea Bay, East China Sea, South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait, which separates the mainland from the island of Taiwan. The Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands in Japanese), strategically located in the East China Sea northeast of Taiwan and southwest of Japan, are a source of controversy because they are claimed by the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Japan.

The Yangtze (also Chang Jiang or Yangzi) River is the longest river in China, and the Yellow (Huang He) River is the second longest; both play an important role in the history, culture, and economy of China. The Yellow River valley was the major population center and the source of early Chinese history and culture, and thus it is called the Cradle of Chinese Civilization. The Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric power station in the world, completed in 2012, is on the Yangtze River, which originates in the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau and empties into the East China Sea at Shanghai. The Yellow River, named for the color of the soil that washes down from the Loess Plateau in the north-central region of the country, runs through what was once the most prosperous region in China, which was the birthplace of ancient Chinese civilization. The Pearl River Delta, where the Pearl River flows into the South China Sea, includes the cities of Guangdong, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong, which is administered as a special autonomous region (SAR) of China. It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world and also one of the centers of great economic growth in contemporary China. In fact, more than half of all commerce conducted between the United States and China passes through Hong Kong.

Table 1.2

Population of Major Cities in China and Taiwan

City	Population (million)	Year of data
Shanghai, PRC	16.575	2011
Beijing, PRC	15.594	2011
Chongqing, PRC	9.401	2011
Shenzhen, PRC	9.005	2011
Guangzhou, PRC	8.884	2011
Hong Kong, PRC	7.112	July 2014 est.
Macau, PRC	0.588	July 2014 est.
New Taipei City, ROC	3.900	August 2011
Kaohsiung, ROC	2.777	no date available
Taichung, ROC	2.647	2010
Taipei, ROC	2.673	2012

Source: Compiled from the CIA *World Factbook*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_eas.html, accessed May 16, 2014; for the cities in the ROC, compiled from the official government websites (<http://English.taipei.gov.tw>; <http://www.kgc.gov.tw>; <http://eng.taichung.gov.tw>), accessed July 3, 2014.

Republic of China (ROC, or Taiwan)

The Republic of China (ROC), commonly referred to as Taiwan, was established by the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan in December 1949, following its defeat on the mainland in the civil war with the Communists under Mao Zedong. The strategic location of this small island in the East China Sea has made it a much-desired territory throughout history. It is less than 200 miles east of Fujian Province on the mainland, 69 miles from Yonaguni Island, Japan, and about 300 miles north of the Philippines across the Luzon Strait.

Taiwan was inhabited primarily by indigenous people until the seventeenth century, when settlers from the mainland began to migrate to the island. In the seventeenth century, the Spanish, Dutch, and Chinese all claimed it as their own at one time or another. The Portuguese named the island Formosa, or Beautiful Island, in 1544, and this name is sometimes still used today, particularly in the tourism sector. The Qing Dynasty conquered the island in 1683 and ruled through the nineteenth century. Japan occupied Taiwan for 50 years, from 1895, when it defeated the Qing Dynasty in the Sino-Japanese War, until the end of World War II. In 1945, Japan surrendered control of Taiwan to the Nationalist Party-led Republic of China (ROC), which was the ruling government of China. During this time of upheaval on the island, China was engaged in a civil war between the Communists, led by Mao Zedong, and the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek. The Communist victory over the Nationalists in 1949 resulted in the ousting of Chiang Kai-shek as the leader of the Republic of China on the mainland and his flight to Taiwan, where he reestablished the ROC. (At that point, the Communist mainland became the People's Republic of China.) Taiwan went through the process of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s and is now a multiparty democracy.

The population of Taiwan—with a land mass just about the size of the U.S. states of Maryland and Delaware combined—is 23.3 million. The capital of Taiwan is Taipei, and the largest city in terms of population, New Taipei City, surrounds Taipei. Located on the northern end of the island, their populations total over 6.6 million. The second largest city, Kaohsiung, is at the southern end of the island and has a population of over 2.7 million. About two-thirds of the island is rugged mountains, with flatter plains on the western end. Taiwanese, including Hakka, make up 84 percent of the population, while 2 percent are aboriginal people (Austronesian people who were living on the island before Han Chinese immigration began in the seventeenth century), and the remaining 14 percent are mainland Chinese (CIA *World Factbook*). Mandarin Chinese is the official language, but a significant number of people speak Taiwanese and Hakka dialects. One of the results of Japanese colonization is that many elderly people also speak Japanese. Taiwanese are free to practice any religion, with 93 percent, according to the *World Factbook*, following Buddhist and/or Daoist traditions.

Indigenous people in Taiwan actively promote their history and traditions, including through the following resources:

- Taiwan Indigenous Culture Park (<http://www.tacp.gov.tw/tacpeng>)
- Taiwan First Nations (<http://www.taiwanfirstnations.org/>)

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the PRC

Hong Kong (officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, or Hong Kong SAR) has played an important strategic role in global trade for centuries. Hong Kong Island and the adjacent Kowloon Peninsula were claimed by the United Kingdom (U.K.) as colonies during the Opium Wars. Near the end of that era, in 1897, the New Territories, bordering the Kowloon Peninsula, were leased by China to the United Kingdom for 100 years. The United Kingdom controlled this valuable piece of land for more than a century, with the exception of a short period during World War II when Japan occupied the region, but as 1997 approached, the British government negotiated a peaceful return of the leased land and colonial territory back to China.

Hong Kong operates under the “one country, two systems” principle. This means that the Hong Kong SAR functions under a capitalist system and maintains control of most of its affairs, including political and economic systems, while the remainder of the mainland (PRC) follows a socialist system, with political and economic systems under the control of the central government in Beijing. Chinese and English are its official languages, and it has its own currency issued by Hong Kong banks. Hong Kong plays a vital role as a hub for global commerce; it is home to numerous international companies and banks, and is one of the busiest shipping ports in the world.

Macau Special Administrative Region of the PRC

Macau (Macau Special Administrative Region, or Macau SAR) was administered by Portugal from the mid-sixteenth century until its return to the People’s Republic of China in 1999. As with Hong Kong, Macau also operates under the “one country, two systems” model and retains local control over most of its affairs. In recent years Macau has become a major gambling resort. Chinese and Portuguese are both official languages in this small area, which is less than one-sixth the size of Washington, D.C. It also has its own currency, and Portuguese culture is still very much evident.

Korean Peninsula

The Joseon (also romanized as Choson or Chosun) Dynasty (1392–1897), which controlled what are today North Korea and South Korea, was the last Korean dynasty and the

longest-lasting Confucian dynasty in East Asia. Much of modern Korean etiquette and cultural norms, as well as the modern Korean spoken and written language, dates from this period. Other notable achievements of the Joseon Dynasty were the development of the *hanggeul* (*hangul*) syllabic writing system by King Sejong (ruled 1418–1450) and nearly 200 years of unbroken peace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1897, King Gojong (ruled 1863–1907) ended the Joseon Dynasty when he declared the founding of the Korean Empire, which he continued to rule until 1905. In that year Korea became a protectorate of Japan, and in 1910 Japan annexed Korea by force.

At the conclusion of World War II, in 1945, Japan's rule of the Korean Peninsula ended. The Soviet Union and the United States became trustees of the land, which was divided roughly along the 38th parallel into North Korea, overseen by the Soviet Union, and South Korea, which was under U.S. supervision. The Yalu River marks the northern boundary of North Korea with China, and the peninsula is separated from Japan by the East Sea, also called the Sea of Japan. The West Sea (known outside of Korea as the Yellow Sea) lies between the peninsula and China, and the South Sea (known outside of Korea as the East China Sea) is to the south. Since the 1950s, the two Koreas have evolved in very different directions. North Korea has been heavily influenced, both politically and culturally, by the former Soviet Union, while South Korea, which still has a strong U.S. military presence, has been influenced by the United States. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a no-man's land separating the two countries, is jointly administered by the two Koreas and United Nations Peacekeeping Forces.

An age-old issue for Korea is its geographical and historical position as a “shrimp caught between two whales”: the physical, cultural, and economic giant, China, to the west and its former colonizer and economic power, Japan, to the east. The period of Japanese colonization (1910–1945) left a deep cultural scar on the people. Although still in the shadows of its neighbors, South Korea is strongly asserting itself on a global stage, presenting its individuality through economic achievement and showcasing its cultural treasures.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea)

North Korea is ruled autocratically by Kim Jong-un (given as b. 1983), the grandson of the founder “Great Leader” Kim Il-sung (1912–1994) and son of “Supreme Leader” (formerly known as “Dear Leader”) Kim Jong-il (1941–2011). The official name of the country, which is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Mississippi, is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and its capital is Pyongyang. North Koreans informally refer to their country as Joseon (or Choson, the name of the last Korean dynasty to rule the peninsula). Kaesong is an important city for cross-border economic exchange with South Korea, and Rason is a Special Economic Zone bordered by the East Sea (Sea of Japan), Russia, and China.

There are no independent media outlets, and radios and televisions sold in North Korea are pre-tuned to the four official state-owned stations. Recent reports indicate that cell phones and smuggled DVDs are beginning to infiltrate the country, making it possible for citizens to learn about other countries. Although 19 percent of the land

is arable, the country has been subjected to numerous droughts and flooding in recent years and has reportedly suffered from widespread famines.

Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea)

Known officially as the Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea is commonly called Hanguk (or Hanguk) by the country's citizens. Roughly the size of the U.S. state of Indiana, South Korea is slightly smaller than North Korea. It also has less arable land than North Korea, but it supports about twice as many people. The southern half of the Korean peninsula is mostly hills and mountains, with coastal plains in the west and south. The largest city in this multiparty democracy is the capital, Seoul; other major cities include Busan (or Pusan), Incheon (or Inchon), Daegu (or Taegu), and Daejeon (or Taejeon). South Korea's industrial strengths are well known in the world, and it is a major player in the global economy. The diasporic community—as well as the large number of students, both at the secondary and postsecondary levels, who live in the United States—has been instrumental in raising awareness of the country's history and culture.

Following the June Democracy Movement in 1987, South Korea held its first democratic elections in December 1987, and the first democratically elected President, Roh Tae-woo, was inaugurated in February 1988. On February 25, 2013, Park Geun-hye became not only the first female leader of Korea, but also the first female leader in East Asia in modern times.

The people of South Korea are free to observe any religion they choose, and Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity (divided into Protestantism and Catholicism) and Shamanism are all practiced there today. The growth of Christianity in Korea, particularly since World War II, is quite striking, with more than 31 percent of the population claiming to be Christians. Only slightly more than 24 percent are Buddhist, the next largest religious affiliation (CIA *World Factbook*). In addition, a number of new religions, including the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (often known simply as the Unification Church) founded by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, are active in Korea.

The island of Dokdo (Takeshima in Japanese) lies in the Korea Strait between South Korea and Japan, and is claimed by both countries. Each nation bases its claims on historical documents dating as far back as the sixth century. Dokdo comprises two small islets, which have been inhabited by a small number of South Koreans (mostly police and military) since 1965 and are valued for their fishing grounds and possible natural gas reserves.

South Korea and Japan both have websites in English presenting the rationale for their claims to the island of Dokdo (Takeshima in Japanese). The Korean side is presented on the Dokdo Research Institute's website (<http://www.dokdohistory.com>), and the Japanese case can be explored at the "Takeshima" page of the Shimane Prefectural Government's website (http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/soumu/takesima_eng).

Across the DMZ

Even though the border between the two Koreas is virtually impenetrable, attempts have been made to bridge the divide. South Korean companies have established a limited number of business ventures in North Korea, but political interference from North Korea has hindered their operations. In 1998 the Mt. Geumgang (or Kumgang, “Diamond Mountain”) tourist region, known for its scenic beauty since ancient times, was established by a South Korean company, Hyundai Asan, for South Koreans. Originally accessible only by boat, a road across the DMZ eventually linked North and South, allowing 2 million South Koreans to visit the region until its closure in 2008. In order to obtain hard currency, North Korea required monetary transactions at the resort to be carried out in U.S. dollars. In July 2008, a South Korean tourist was shot and killed for allegedly wandering into a North Korean military site. Visits to Mt. Geumgang have been suspended since that time, and the South Korean-owned properties were seized by North Korea.

In 2003 the Kaesong Industrial Zone, largely financed by South Korea, was established in the city of Kaesong, which is six miles north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in North Korea. Operated jointly by North Korea and South Korea, it houses more than 120 South Korean companies that employ more than 50,000 North Koreans. Relations between the two countries deteriorated after Pyongyang conducted a nuclear test in February 2013, and the facility was closed for five months as the two countries negotiated its reopening.

Table 1.3

Population of Major Cities in Korea

City	Population (million)	Year of data
Seoul, ROK	9.794	2010
Busan, ROK	3.415	2010
Incheon, ROK	2.663	2010
Daegu, ROK	2.446	2010
Daejeon, ROK	1.502	2010
Pyongyang, DPRK	3.255	2008
Kaesong, DPRK	0.310	2011

Source: Compiled from the Korean Statistical Information Service (<http://kosis.kr>) and the United Nations Statistics Division (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/default.htm), accessed July 3, 2014.

Japan

Japan consists of four main islands: from north to south, they are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. South of Kyushu is the Ryukyu Island chain (in Okinawa Prefecture); many of those islands are closer to China than to the major cities in Japan. Over 91 percent of the people of Japan live in cities (CIA *World Factbook*), which are concentrated on the eastern coast of the main island of Honshu. Tokyo is the largest metropolitan area; other major population centers include the metropolitan region of Osaka-Kobe and the city of Nagoya on Honshu, the metropolitan area of Fukuoka/Kita-Kyushu on Kyushu, and the city of Sapporo on Hokkaido. The majority of people are ethnic Japanese (98.5 percent), but substantial numbers of Koreans, Chinese, and South Americans of Japanese ancestry also live in Japan. The Japanese call their country Nippon or Nihon (different pronunciations reflect regional pronunciations). Literally, this means “the base of the sun,” and it is often translated as the Land of the Rising Sun.

The islands that make up Japan are long and narrow and stretch from approximately 46° latitude in the north to 20° latitude in the south. This results in climates as varied as the snowy northern island of Hokkaido (with its main city Sapporo) to temperate Tokyo and subtropical Okinawa. With the exception of Hokkaido, the country experiences a rainy season lasting about six weeks in late spring (in the south) and early summer (farther north). More than 50 percent of Japan is mountainous, and the highest peak is Mount Fuji (3,776 meters, or 12,388 feet).

The indigenous religion of Japan is Shinto, with Buddhism imported from China around the sixth century. Shinto and Buddhism play different roles in the spiritual life of the people: Shinto focuses on the here-and-now, while Buddhism is more concerned with the afterlife. It is common for people to follow practices of both Shinto and Buddhism, and to incorporate aspects of Christianity into their lives as well. For example, Shinto *kami* (gods) may be seen as buddhas in different stages of rebirth, rituals associated with the Christian marriage ceremony are common, and practicing Christians often have a small Buddhist altar in their homes to pay respects to their deceased relatives.

Table 1.4

Population of Major Cities in Japan (2009)

City	Population (million)
Tokyo metro area	36.51
Osaka-Kobe	11.33
Nagoya	3.26
Fukuoka/Kita-Kyushu	2.81
Sapporo	2.67

Source: Compiled from the CIA *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>, accessed May 16, 2014.

Japan is a constitutional monarchy and the only country in the world today with an emperor. Theoretically, the imperial lineage can be traced back from the current emperor, Akihito, in an unbroken line to the first, Jimmu, who ruled from 660–585 BCE. For much of Japan's history, however, the country was not controlled by the emperors, but rather by military commanders called *shogun*. At the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, the emperor was restored to the throne and the country underwent significant changes, including a shift from a feudal society to a market economy, land reforms, accelerated industrialization, and the abolishment of the four divisions of society (samurai, peasants, artists, and merchants), which were important in the preceding Edo period (1600–1867).

The indigenous people of Hokkaido, the Ainu, are unrelated to the majority Japanese and have their own language and traditions. Today they have largely been assimilated into the Japanese population, but in recent years there has been a movement among the Ainu to reclaim their culture. The native people of the Ryukyu Islands also have their own language and traditions, and they have been heavily influenced by the cultures of China and Southeast Asia. The Ryukyu Kingdom was established in 1429 and formally annexed by the Meiji government of Japan in 1879.

Current and Future Challenges

In the twenty-first century China, Japan, and Korea are facing many challenges as individual countries, as a region, and as global citizens. Because these challenges, including environmental problems, territorial disputes and national security, and aging populations, nearly always impact other countries, the causes and solutions are best understood from the broader perspective of global awareness.

Issues of Sovereignty and Rights in China

The status of the Uyghur and Tibetan minorities in their respective autonomous regions is a major issue for China, as is the level of rural-to-urban migration. Both of these concerns affect China's political and economic relations with other countries. The Uyghurs are ethnic Turkic people, mostly Muslim, who live in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in western China, which is their historical homeland. Since 1949 an influx of Han people into the region has changed the dynamics in Xinjiang. This has led to a strong separatist movement, and clashes between the Uyghur separatists and the ruling government have occasionally become violent. Tibetans, who practice Tibetan Buddhism, live mainly in the Tibet Autonomous Region in western China. Like Xinjiang, the area has been under nominal Chinese rule for generations, but since 1951 the region has been subject to increased control from the central government. In 1950, after the Chinese Civil War, the Chinese government took firm control of the region, and the Dalai Lama, Tibet's religious leader, went into exile during the 1959 Tibetan Rebellion. Both the Uyghur and Tibetans are harnessing media and technology to tell their stories, and both have supporters throughout the world, creating global interest in these domestic situations.

The rights of migrants who have been moving in droves from rural areas to urban cities, usually in search of work, have also posed challenges to China's system of social and economic control. Under the *hukou* system of household registration created in 1958, Chinese citizens are only allowed to reside in the locality where they are registered. Therefore, large and growing settlements are home to illegal domestic migrants who are not registered in the city where they reside, thus rendering them ineligible for basic services such as access to education, health care, and social services. Despite this lack of access to services, these workers play a vital role in the economic success of the cities where they live. Indeed, the global economy would be impacted negatively without their labor. Therefore, pressure to change the *hukou* system, or in some way allow for the rights of internal migrants, continues to build.

Japan's Aging Population

Population aging is a challenge facing many countries in the world with declining birth rates, and Japan is among the most severely impacted. The economic and cultural effects are felt beyond the immediate world of the elderly. In Japan, one of the most pressing problems related to the growing number of elderly persons is a shortage of health-care professionals. To address this issue, the Japanese government is allowing highly skilled workers, primarily from Southeast Asia, to enter the country and seek employment in this field.

This has necessitated the modification of immigration laws, special Japanese language training programs, and the creation of licensing programs that can accommodate workers who are not yet fluent in Japanese. It has also generated frank discussions on cultural integration issues, both for the care workers, who may struggle with unknown cultural practices, and for their patients and employers, who are likely unfamiliar with the customs of the caregivers.

Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation is one of the most pressing issues across the region, and in recent years air pollution originating in China has been one of the most visible examples. A number of factors have produced choking levels of air pollution in cities across the country, including Chinese dependence on coal as a major energy source for industry and home heating and the rapid increase in private car ownership (see [Chapter 9](#)). Air pollution originating in China extends beyond national borders as winds carry particulates to Korea, Japan, and even as far as the United States.

The United States and other countries contribute to the problem when manufacturing is outsourced to China, since increased industrial production is partly responsible for the rise in air pollution. In addition, goods manufactured in China must be shipped to their destinations, which results in additional pollutants from the transport vehicles. In effect, one of the prices we pay for cheap consumer goods is poor air quality, which results in global health issues and added economic burdens due to lost productivity.



Heavy industry, such as the coal and steel production plants in Benxi in eastern China, contribute significantly to air pollution in the country. (*WikiMedia Commons, Andreas Habich, <http://tinyurl.com/k8ehx65>*).

Intraregional—and International—Security Concerns

A regional issue that can elicit strong feelings of national loyalty and often colors sentiments on a wide range of matters involves territorial disputes over islands in the waters between China, Japan, and Korea. Although most of the islands concerned are uninhabited or sparsely settled, legal possession of these islands comes with fishing and mineral rights as well as visibility in strategic locations. These disputes cause tension in the region, occasionally leading to protests and minor acts of violence by private citizens. The territorial assertions have also found their way into school textbooks as each country works to cement its version of history in the minds of younger generations. Some of these disputes impact the United States, which is bound by treaty to provide military support to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan should one of them face aggression from other countries. Although solutions, such as submission of the claims to the Permanent Court of Arbitration, have been suggested, no such actions have been taken to date, and these disputes are likely to continue well into the future.

The disputed territories are:

- Senkaku (in Japanese)/Diaoyu (in Chinese) Islands. Claimed by Japan, China, and Taiwan. The islands were administered by the United States from 1945 to 1972, when they reverted to Japanese control (along with Okinawa).

- Nansha (in Chinese)/Spratly Islands. Claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.
- Dokdo (in Korean)/Takeshima (in Japanese)/Liancourt Rocks. Claimed by South Korea and Japan, currently inhabited by South Korea.
- South Kuril Islands. Claimed by Russia and Japan, currently inhabited and administered by Russia.
- Huangyan Dao (Chinese)/Scarborough Shoal. Claimed by China and the Philippines.



Protests in 2013 in Japan over the conflict with China concerning the Senkaku (in Japanese)/Diaoyu (in Chinese) Islands. (*WikiMedia Commons, Alper Çuğun, <http://tinyurl.com/na7pff7>*).

Information and documents on the U.S. treaties with South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan that dictate actions the United States will take to protect the interests of those countries are available from the following websites:

- Mutual Defense and Status of Forces Agreements between the United States and South Korea (<http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/sofa>)
- Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and Japan (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/agree0009.html>)
- Taiwan Relations Act (<http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html>)

Japan's Current Pacifism and Past Militarization

Global security is often viewed as a responsibility to be shared among the countries of the world. Japan is increasingly being asked to step up and provide trained military personnel to peacekeeping missions around the world. Such requests have stirred a passionate response in a country that, according to Article 9 of its Constitution, has renounced the right to wage war:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

In fact, Japan does have trained military troops, the so-called Self-Defense Forces (SDF), which were established under the Self-Defense Forces Law of 1954. According to this law, the actions of the SDF are limited to defending the country against attacks. In 1957 the Basic Policy for National Defense allowed Self-Defense Forces to assist in domestic emergencies, such as the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake and the 2011 Triple Disaster—an earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown—that struck the Tohoku region. Since 1992 the SDF has supplied UN Peacekeeping Missions with Self-Defense personnel, who are limited to non-combat humanitarian and support roles. At the request of the United States, the SDF also deployed noncombat troops to assist in Iraq. Both the 1992 and 2004 overseas deployments triggered much debate as the Japanese people dealt with the competing demands of the limits of Article 9 of the Constitution and being an equal partner in international support and collaboration.

Japan's actions during the Pacific War (1937–1945) continue to present serious obstacles to regional integration. These activities included expansion and colonization under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity movement, mass killings (e.g., the Nanjing Massacre in China in 1937), human medical experiments conducted on civilians and prisoners of war in China (e.g., Unit 731); forced labor and forcing women (in both cases, mostly Koreans) to serve as sexual slaves, or “comfort women,” for military personnel. Memories of these atrocities are brought to the forefront by Japanese elected officials' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, often occurring around the August 15 anniversary of the end of the Pacific War. Japan's wartime dead, including Class A war criminals, are enshrined as *kami*, or gods, at this Shinto shrine. These visits are interpreted by many as government approval of the atrocities committed against the nations and people of the region during the war, and apologies by the Japanese government to China and Korea for wartime atrocities are seen as insincere or rendered meaningless by visits to the Yasukuni Shrine.