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Geography

Advanced

Unit 3: Contested Planet

ADVANCE INFORMATION

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Information

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SECTION B

The following resources relate to Question 6.

SUPERPOWER GEOGRAPHIES

EAST ASIAN NEIGHBOURS

Geopolitical tensions

Surrounding the Yellow and East China Seas in East Asia (Figure 1) are the countries of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of South Korea, Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). These four countries operate very different political systems as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: East Asia



Although close geographical neighbours, the four countries have sometimes experienced tense geopolitical relationships due to recent and ongoing conflicts in the region:

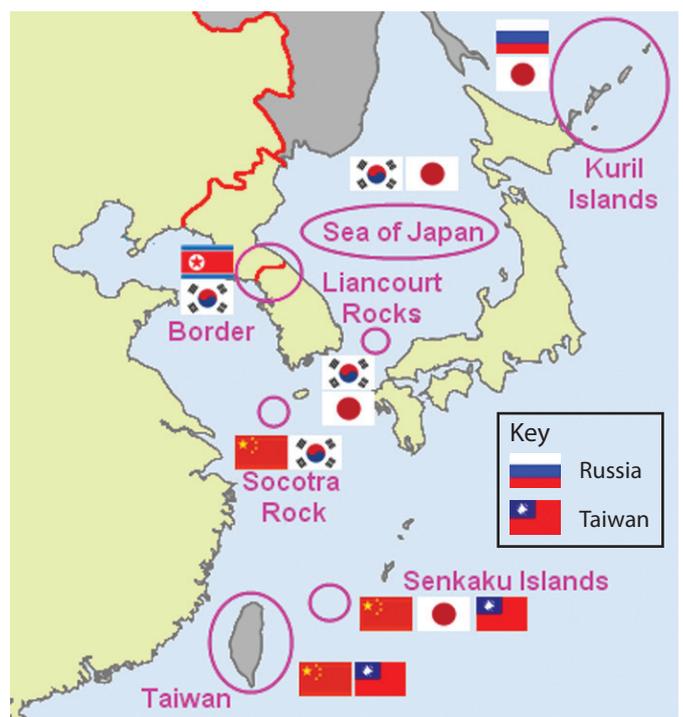
- Resentment in South Korea and China over their occupation by Japan during **WWII** and an ongoing dispute about the versions of history taught in the respective countries.
- The Korean War, 1950–53, was one of several armed conflicts during the **Cold War** which divided the region and the world. Korea remains divided today.

- Japan and South Korea have followed a **capitalist**, free market development model whereas China and North Korea are state-planned **communist** systems.
- There are numerous **border disputes** and unresolved **territorial claims** in the region (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Political systems

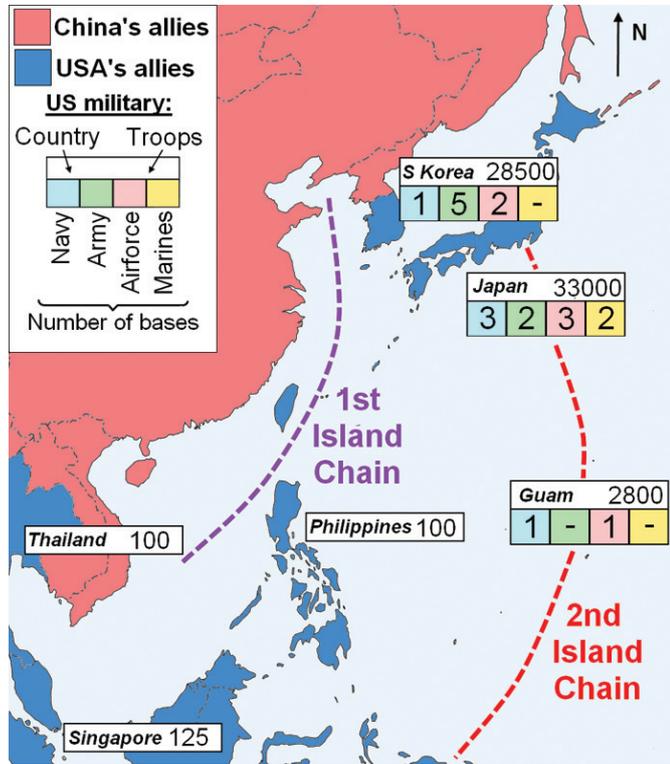
Country	Head of State, 2011	Political system
 Japan	Emperor Akihito	Constitutional monarchy. Elected parliament.
 China	President Hu Jintao	One-party communist state. Strictly limited political freedoms.
 North Korea	Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il	One-party communist dictatorship, with a hereditary leadership and absence of political freedoms.
 South Korea	President Lee Myung-bak	Presidential Republic. Free elections since 1987.

Figure 3: Selected disputed territories and claimants



Geopolitics in the region are influenced by the presence of a large number of **US** military bases (Figure 4) and the **expansionist** policies of China. US military presence has its origins in the Cold War and the policy of containing Chinese and Russian communist influence. The USA's **7th Fleet** is based at Yokosuka in Japan.

Figure 4: USA military presence in the region



China is said to be expanding its military sphere of influence in the region. One aspect of this is the construction of a **blue water navy**, including aircraft carriers, which will be able to operate beyond China's coastal waters (the '1st Island Chain') and into the seas and oceans of the wider region. This has been referred to as the '**2nd Island Chain policy**' (Figure 4) and would move the Chinese Navy into areas considered to be the sphere of the USA since the end of WWII. Armed forces in the region are very varied as shown in Figure 5. Military hardware may, in the case of some countries, be old and even obsolete. In addition to the forces shown, several of the countries have very large numbers of reserve troops. In the case of both North and South Korea there are 8 million reservists. Some countries in the region possess nuclear weapons:

☢ China may have around 400 active nuclear warheads and has **ICBMs** with a range of up to 15,000km. It is probable that it has, or is developing, submarine launch capacity.

- ☢ North Korea appears to have tested nuclear weapons in 2006 and 2009 but is thought not to have an effective launch capability yet.
- ☢ Both Russia and the USA have active warheads numbering in the 1000s, with the capability for submarine and land-based launch.

Figure 5: Military strength compared

2010 estimates	China	Japan	North Korea	South Korea
Active troops	2.3 million	0.2 million	1.1 million	0.7 million
Tanks	8500	900	4200	2700
Fighter jets	1110	370	900	650
Submarines	70	16	70	25
Destroyers	26	13	20	6

Profiling the neighbours

Figure 6 gives some comparative development data for the four countries.

Figure 6: Development data

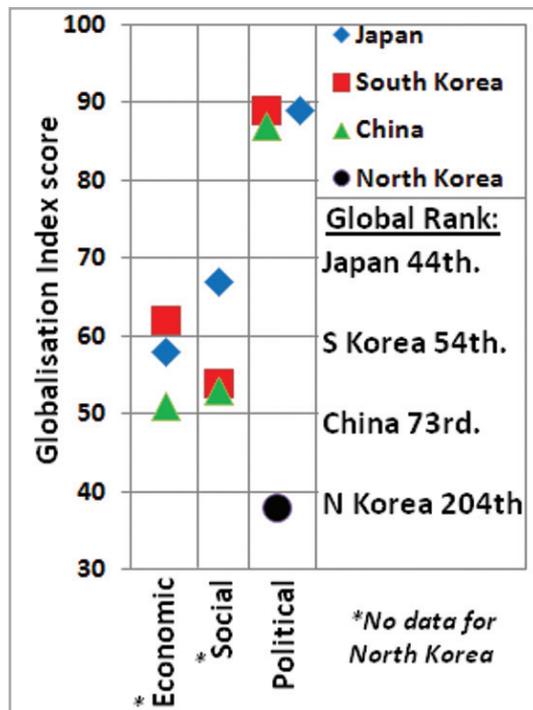
2010 / 2011 Data. *1995 data.	China	Japan	North Korea	South Korea
Population (millions)	1336	126.5	24.5	48.7
HDI	0.66	0.88	0.76*	0.88
Urban population (%)	47	67	60	83
Infant mortality rate (-/1000)	16	3	27	4
Literacy (%)	92	99	99	98
Life expectancy (years)	75	82	69	79
GDP per capita (PPP US \$)	7600	34000	1800	30000
Labour force in agriculture (%)	38	4	35	7

Japan's **economic miracle** began around 1960 and continued for 3 decades with annual economic growth rates of between 5% and 10%. Since 1990 the Japanese economy has stalled and has barely grown at all. In Japan the 1990s are often referred to as the '**lost decade**'. South Korea was one of the original '**Asian Tiger**' countries whose economy was transformed by industrialisation in the 1980s and 1990s. China has seen phenomenal economic success since 2000 and in 2010 overtook Japan as the world's second largest economy. Many of East Asia's companies have become major TNCs (Figure 7) although North Korea has no globally-known brands.

Figure 7: Top 3 TNCs by brand equity 2010

South Korea	Japan	China
Samsung	Toyota	China Mobile
Hyundai	Canon	ICBC
LG	Honda	Bank of China

Figure 8: Globalisation Index



The 4 countries have different degrees of globalisation (Figure 8) with Japan ranking as the 44th most globalised country according to one index. Figure 9 shows one measure of educational excellence comparing university quality within the region and beyond.

Figure 9: 2010 HEEACT rankings

HEEACT 2010 World University Rankings	Number in the global top 500	Country's highest ranking university
USA	159	Harvard 1st
UK	38	Oxford 10th
Japan	28	Tokyo 14th
China	16	Tsinghua 117th
South Korea	10	Seoul 67th

In terms of research and development into new technologies the four countries submit patent applications through WIPO (Figure 10) and some countries are well known for their hi-tech industries.

Figure 10: Patent applications, 2009 (WIPO)

China	Japan	North Korea	South Korea
7,906	29,807	-	8,049

The four countries play some role in international decision making (Figure 11). The international community has spent much time on the **Six-Party Talks** which aim to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions. These talks stalled in 2009. The sinking of the South Korean naval ship *Cheonan* in 2010, possibly by a North Korean torpedo, further soured diplomatic relations.

Figure 11: Membership of selected international organisations

	China	Japan	North Korea	South Korea
WTO	✓	✓	✗	✓
UN Security Council (permanent member)	✓	✗	✗	✗
G20 member	✓	✓	✗	✓
UN ICCPR ratified	✗	✓	✓	✓

The **East Asian Games** have been held every four years since 1993. Nine countries participate, although North Korea has only attended 3 of the 5 games. China tops the cumulative gold medal league with 492, followed by Japan with 241, South Korea with 173 and North Korea with 22.

China and Japan: looking forward

Since 1990 the Chinese economy has grown strongly whereas the Japanese one has stagnated (Figure 12). While many in China have been getting wealthier, incomes in Japan have remained static since 1990.

Figure 12: Chinese and Japanese GDP growth

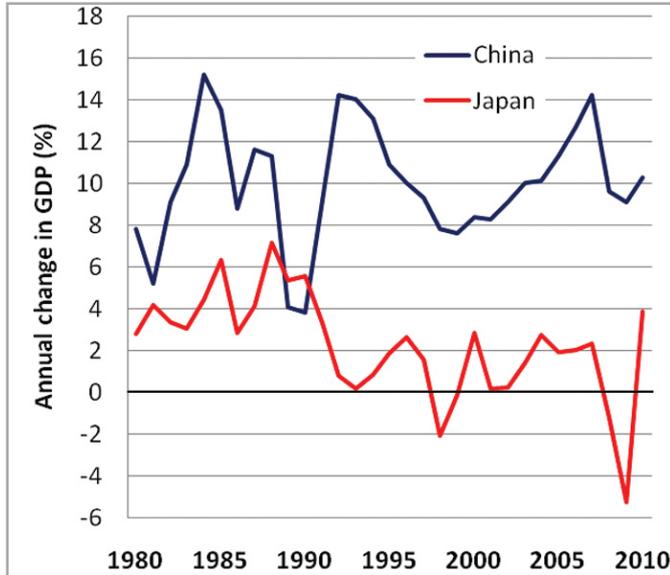


Figure 13 compares population, resource use and food in the two countries.

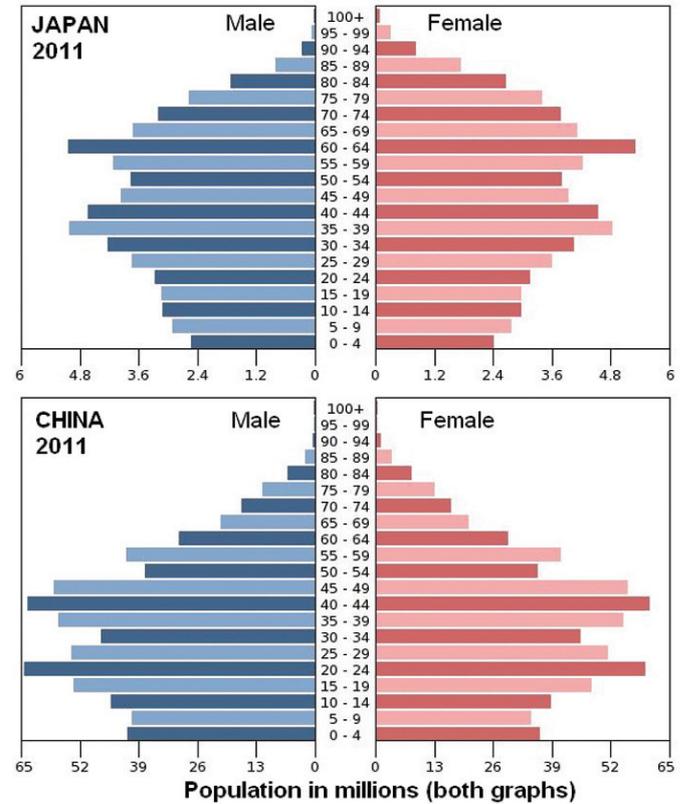
Figure 13: Food supply in China and Japan

2010/11 data unless stated		China	Japan	
Population growth rate / yr		0.5%	-0.3%	
Population density (people / km ²)		139	337	
Arable land as % of all land		15%	12%	
Total renewable water (m ³ /person/year) 2008		2112	3378	
Total renewable water (m ³ /person/year) 2050		1900	3900	
FAO data	Daily calorie intake per person		Daily protein intake (g / person)	
	1999-01	2005-7	1999-01	2005-7
China	2,906	2,974	86	89
Japan	2,874	2,806	95	92

- In **China**, 10% of the population was undernourished in 2007 (130 million people).
- In **Japan**, most people have enough to eat, but the country imports 60% of its food.

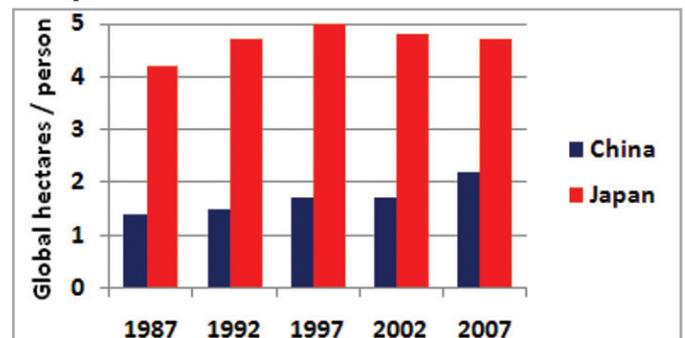
As Figure 14 shows, the **population structures** of the two countries are very different although in both nations questions have been raised about the **sustainability** of population in the long term.

Figure 14: Population pyramids



Both China and Japan are major **energy consumers**. In 2009 Japan imported 177 million tonnes of oil and China imported over 200 million tonnes. Most of China's coal supply is domestic, but Japan relies on imports. Japan imported 86 billion cubic metres of gas in 2009. Figure 15 shows trends in per capita ecological footprints since 1987.

Figure 15: Trends in per capita ecological footprints



In 2007 the global average footprint was 2.7 global hectares, 6.1 in High Income Countries and 2.0 in Middle Income Countries.

Figure 16: Shanghai is one of China's rapidly growing megacities



In 2010 Shanghai had a population of 23 million, up from 16 million in 2000.

Views on East Asia

View 1

"North Korea is a failed state that cannot produce enough to provide for the livelihood of its people. It is a dictatorial gulag state that suppresses political freedom and human rights that have a universal value."

The Korea Times, 2008

View 2

"The challenges China faces in becoming the next superpower are truly daunting. Even as its economic output is expected to exceed \$5 trillion in 2010, per capita income in China will remain under \$4000, roughly one-tenth of the level of the United States and Japan. More than half of the Chinese population still live in villages, most without access to safe drinking water, basic healthcare, or decent education."

The-diplomat.com

View 3

"In the future, the Pentagon believes that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could extend further into the Pacific, using its fleet to control shipping lines and oil concessions. The 'pace and scale' of the PLA's modernisation has been 'broad and sweeping', the Pentagon said."

Daily Telegraph, 2011

View 4

"The Senkaku Islands themselves offer two important strategic advantages. First, sovereignty over the island chain carries with it exploration rights for several oil fields located nearby. According to Chinese estimates, these energy reserves could contain up to 17.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas as well as 20 million barrels of oil. Secondly, and more importantly for China's long-term security planning, sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands pushes a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) outwards, thus allowing for an expanded maritime perimeter."

Inteldaily website, 2010

View 5

"If China's economy expands at 8% a year in the decades ahead, its income per person will reach the current US level in 2031. If at that point China's resource consumption per person were the same as that in the US today, its 1.45 billion people would consume the equivalent of two-thirds of the current world grain harvest. China's paper consumption would be double the world's current production. Say goodbye to the world's forests."

The Guardian, 2006

Websites for further research:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/>

A website about economics and politics in the region.

<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/>

An online magazine concerned with geopolitics.

<http://data.worldbank.org/>

Comprehensive global development data base from the World Bank.

<http://wwf.panda.org/>

Detailed information on ecological footprints and other environmental issues.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Website of the CIA which can be used to compare country data.

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