

**Module: Southeast and East Asia**  
**Topic Content: East Asia**

**East Asia**



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## Module: Southeast and East Asia

### Topic Content: East Asia

#### Introduction



East Asia is located on the Pacific coast of the Asian continent. The region extends inland from the coast, toward Central Asia. East Asia includes peninsulas, islands, and archipelagos. There are six countries located in East Asia. These countries are China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and Mongolia.

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#### China (People's Republic of China)



China is the second largest country in Asia, and the fourth largest country in the world. It is also the world's most populous country, with an estimated 1.4 billion people.

The official name of the country is the People's Republic of China. This name was adopted in 1949, when a communist government was established under Mao Zedong. Under Mao's regime, personal and political freedoms were severely restricted. Mao remained in power until his death in 1976. During his rule, as many as 70 million people were killed through execution, forced labor, and famine.

In the 1980s, the Chinese government began to shift from a planned economy to a market economy. Individuals and companies began to control production, rather than the government. These policy changes led to rapid economic growth. They have also increased the standard of living for much of the population; however, political freedom is still limited. Today, China has the second largest economy in the world.

Han Chinese make up around 90% of the population, but the country is also home to dozens of minority ethnic groups. Mandarin, also called standard Chinese, is the country's official language. Around half of the population identifies as non-religious. The rest practice Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and Confucianism.

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**Major Cities in China**



Click each point to learn more.

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**Beijing**

Click each point on the map to learn more

**Beijing**



Capital of China

Located in northern China

Dates back 3,000 years

Contains the Forbidden City

Important center for culture, business, and education

Major transportation hub

Has the second busiest airport in the world

Close

Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China. It is located in northern China, northwest of the Yellow Sea. The name Beijing actually translates to "northern capital." The city has a long and rich history that dates back around 3,000 years. Beijing contains the Forbidden City, which was once the home of the Chinese emperor. In modern times, Beijing is an important center for culture, business, and education. It is also a major transportation hub. The city lies at heart of an elaborate network of highways, railways, and subways. The Beijing Capital International Airport is the second busiest airport in the world.



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**Shanghai**

Click each point on the map to learn more

**Shanghai**



Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River

Most populous city in China

Port of Shanghai is the busiest seaport in the world

Trade was restricted under Mao Zedong

Trade resumed in the 1980s

Important center for global business and finance

Close

Shanghai is located on the coast of the East China Sea, at the mouth of the Yangtze River. It is the most populous city in China, with more than 26 million people. Shanghai is an international center for shipping and trade. The Port of Shanghai is the busiest seaport in the world. When China was controlled by Mao Zedong, trade with non-communist nations was restricted. During this time, Shanghai's economic influence was limited. During the 1980s, China transitioned to a market economy from a command economy. This shift allowed Shanghai to become one of the most important centers for global business and finance.

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**Hong Kong**

Continue

**Hong Kong**



- Spans multiple islands and a small peninsula
- Ceded to the British in 1842
- British colony for over 150 years
- Returned to China in 1997
- Has limited self-governance
- Capitalist economy
- Most residents identify as citizens of Hong Kong

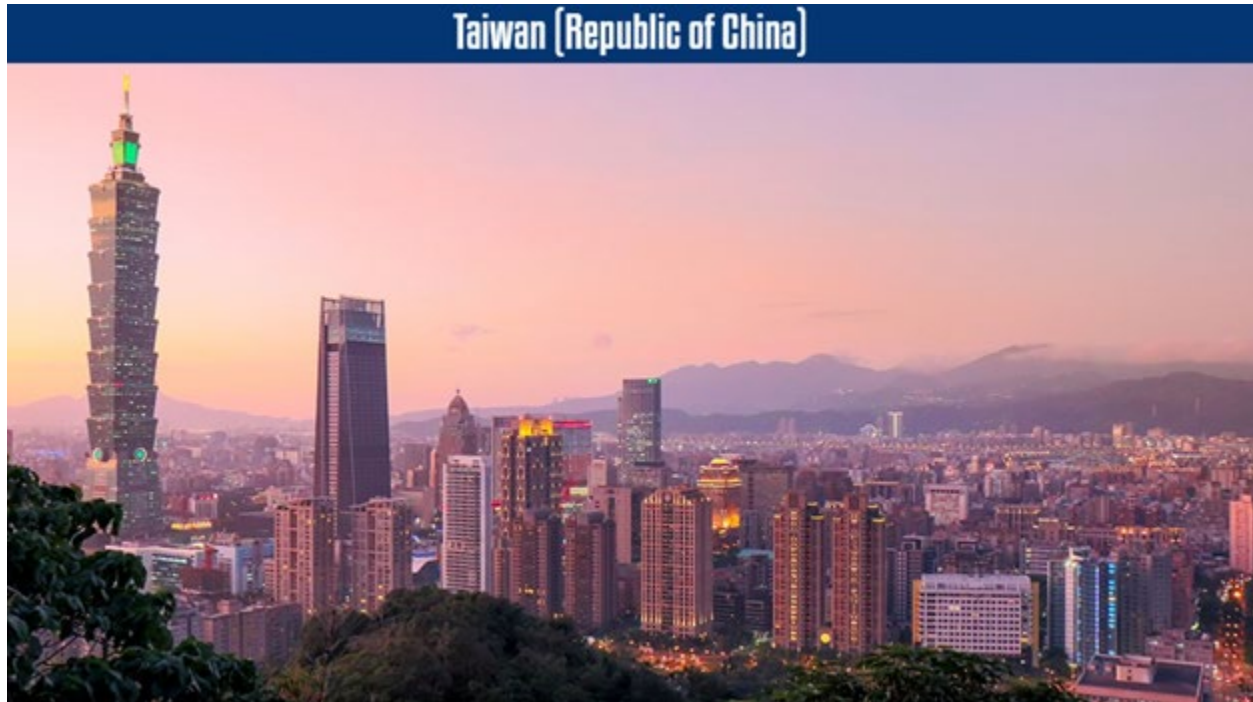
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Hong Kong is located on the southern coast of China, in the South China Sea. The city spans multiple islands and a small peninsula. Hong Kong was ceded to the British in 1842. It served as a British colony for more than 150 years, and was returned to China in 1997. Upon its return, Hong Kong was allowed special administrative status. Although it is considered a part of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong has limited self-governance. It also has a capitalist economy. Although 90% of the population is ethnically Chinese, most residents view themselves as citizens of Hong Kong, not China. The city itself is densely populated and highly developed.

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#### Taiwan (The Republic of China)



Taiwan is an island located off the southeastern coast of mainland China, between the South China Sea and the East China Sea. This island nation is officially named the Republic of China. In 1949, Mao Zedong led a communist revolution that overthrew the Chinese Nationalist government. Nationalists fled to the island of Taiwan and established the Republic of China. The communist government of the People's Republic of China claims Taiwan as its province. It does not acknowledge the nation's sovereignty. The Republic of China claims that it is the legitimate government of mainland China.

Taiwan was controlled by a military dictatorship for many years. Free elections were held in the 1990s, and the country has remained democratic since. In the late twentieth century, Taiwan experienced rapid economic growth. It is highly developed with a strong economy and a skilled workforce. Han Chinese make up more than 90% of the population, and Mandarin Chinese is the official language. The population identifies as Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Christian, or nonreligious.



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#### Japan



Japan is located on an archipelago off the coast of mainland Asia. The country lies between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, also called the East Sea. Tokyo is the capital and most populous city of Japan. It is located on the largest Japanese island, at a harbor site on the Pacific coast. The greater metropolitan area of Tokyo is the most populated in the world, with 38 million people.

Japan remained isolated from foreign influence for hundreds of years; however, the United States Navy forced the country to open its ports to trade in 1854. Despite centuries of isolation, Japan was able to industrialize rapidly. By the twentieth century, Japan had established a modern military and a colonial empire. During World War II, Japan was allied with Germany and seized many territories throughout East and Southeast Asia. In 1945, Japan surrendered to the United States and its allies.

Since the end of the war, Japan has grown into one of the world's leading economic powers. It is a major exporter of automobiles, electronics, and high-tech goods. 98% of the population is ethnic Japanese. Shintoism and Buddhism are the most widely practiced religions. Many Japanese people practice both.

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#### South Korea



South Korea is located on the southern half of the Korean Peninsula. It is bordered by the Yellow Sea in the west, the East China Sea in the south, and the East Sea, also called the Sea of Japan, in the east. In the north, South Korea shares a border with North Korea. Seoul is the capital and most populous city in South Korea. It is located on the Han River in the northwestern part of the country. Seoul also serves as the country's business and financial center.

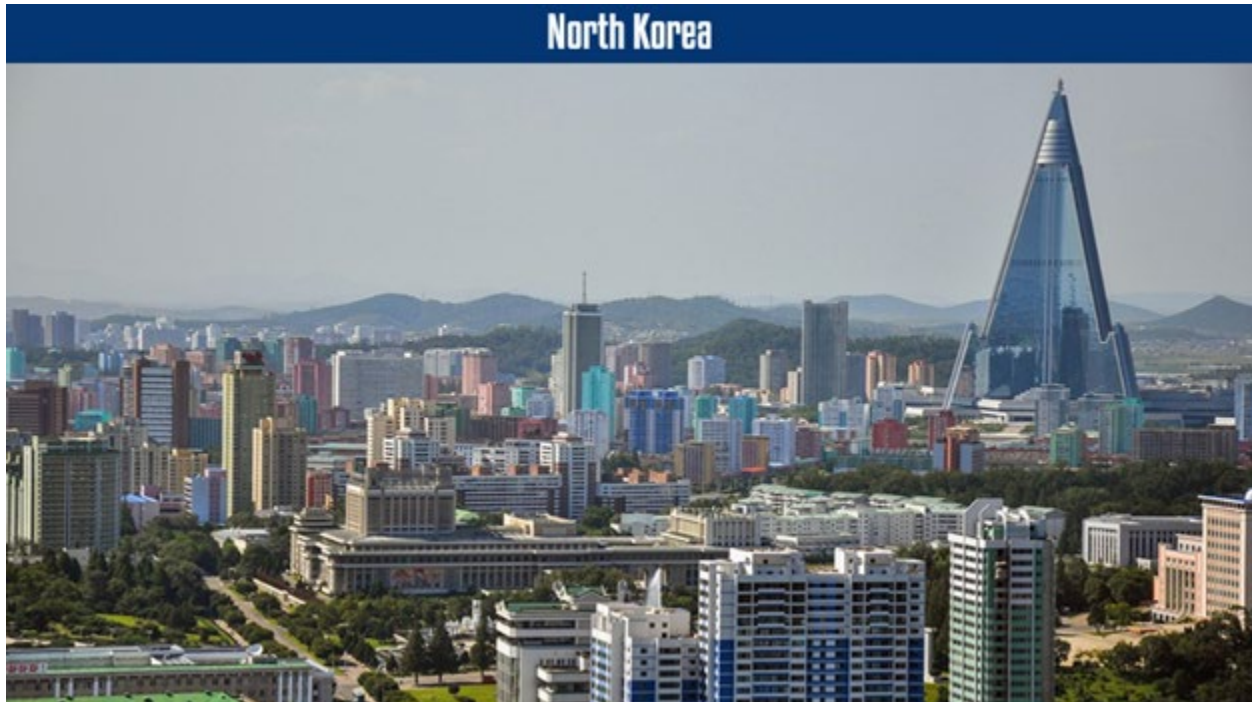
South Korea is a democratic nation with a market economy. It is highly developed with a high standard of living. Its main exports include electronics, high-tech goods, and automobiles. Many people live in densely populated urban areas.

South Korea has a homogenous population of ethnic Koreans. Korean is the official language, but English is widely taught as a second language. More than half the country identifies as nonreligious. The rest practice Christianity, Buddhism, or Confucianism.

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#### North Korea



North Korea is located on the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. It is bordered by the Yellow Sea in the west, and the Sea of Japan in the east. In the north, North Korea shares a border with China. In the south, it shares a border with South Korea.

The official name of North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The country is controlled by a communist dictatorship. The government is heavily involved in people's lives. Personal and political freedoms are very restricted. It is estimated that approximately 200,000 people are held in forced labor camps as political prisoners.

North Korea has a centrally planned economy, also called a command economy. This means nearly all aspects of production are controlled by the government. The country is extremely poor. Industrialization attempts are slow and there have been multiple food shortages. Hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have died from starvation.



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#### Mongolia



Mongolia is a landlocked country located north of China and south of Russia. It is one of the least densely populated countries in the world. It contains vast areas of semiarid steppe and part of the Gobi Desert.

Mongolia is famous for being the home of the Mongol Empire. The Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire in history. It was founded by Genghis Khan in 1206 A.D. (C.E.). At its peak, the Mongol Empire extended across most of Eurasia, from the Black Sea to the Sea of Japan. Tribal horse culture remains an important part of modern day Mongolia. Around one-third of the population has a nomadic or seminomadic lifestyle.

The Mongolian economy is supported by rich deposits of coal, copper, iron, and gold. Ethnic Mongols are 95% of the population. Mongolian is the official language, but there are a few regional dialects of Mongolian. Approximately half the population identifies as Buddhist. Many Mongolians are nonreligious and some practice a traditional shamanistic religion.