

Essay and Discussion Questions

East Asia & the Pacific Higher Education Questions

Help students understand East Asia and the Pacific through these essay and discussion questions.

Question 1

To what extent does China's "century of humiliation" drive the country's contemporary geopolitics? Discuss China's contemporary foreign policy goals and explain the tools it is using to accomplish them.

- What effect did Japanese and European colonization have on China?
- In what ways did Mao Zedong work to increase China's global standing in the middle of the 20th century?
- How have Chinese leaders used China's "century of humiliation" to justify their domestic and foreign policy goals?
- How effectively is contemporary China pursuing its foreign policy goals?

Question 2

Evaluate the different political systems that exist in East Asia and the Pacific. What factors have influenced this wide variety in political systems?

- How have some countries in the region been able to develop strong democracies?
- To what extent are countries in Southeast Asia experiencing democratic backsliding?
- In what ways are the political models used by China and Singapore similar? How have the political models used by China and Singapore benefited the development of these two countries? What drawbacks are associated with each political model?
- What drove the division between North and South Korea? To what extent can North Korea be considered a political outlier in the region?

Question 3

To what extent are territorial disputes in the region driven by natural resources? By strategic geopolitical positioning? By preexisting political tensions? To what extent should the United States involve itself in these disputes?

- How do territorial disputes in the region affect countries' economies, strategic positionings, and geopolitical relationships?
- How do high levels of militarization raise the stakes of territorial disputes in the region?
- Why might the United States involve itself in territorial disputes in the region?

Question 4

How and why has the standard of living in East Asia and the Pacific changed over time? To what extent is this rise being challenged? How can countries throughout the region work to guard against the drivers of this precarity?

- How have the paths to economic success experienced by China, Japan, and the four Asian Tigers differed?
- To what extent has education policy in the region contributed to the region's economic growth?
- What are the impacts of climate change on the region?
- What challenges does an aging population pose in East Asia & the Pacific?

Question 5

To what extent can strong national identities be considered a factor of the region's economic, social, and political development? What challenges does linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity in the region pose?

- Why do certain countries in the region have stronger national identities than others?
- How do strong national identities serve to benefit countries in the region? How can strong national identities be understood as a drawback for countries in the region?

Question 6

How should the United States respond to a rising China? To what extent have United States foreign policy goals in the region changed in response to China's rise?

- How might other countries in the region respond to increasing United States involvement?
- How are other countries in the region responding to China's rise?
- To what extent does contemporary United States foreign policy in the region compare to United States foreign policy in the region during the Cold War?
- How might China respond to a more aggressive United States foreign policy?