

JAPAN

Continent: Asia

[Population](#): 125.7 million

[Life Expectancy \(at Birth\)](#):

[Governance System](#): Constitutional Monarchy

Capital: Tokyo

[Area](#): 364,500 km²

Major Languages: Japanese

[GDP \(2021\)](#): 4,937,422 US\$ Millions

Select Global Rankings

[Human Development Index](#): 19th

[Fragile States Index \(Inverted\)](#): 19th

[Soft Power 30 rank](#): 8th

[Human Freedom Index](#): 15th

[World Happiness Ranking](#): 54th

[Good Country Index](#): 34th

Elite Sport System Rankings

[Global Cup Ranking](#): 8th

[Per Capita Cup Ranking](#): 40th

[Olympic Medals – Summer '20](#): 5th

[Olympic Medals – Winter '22](#): 18th

Football/World Cup Profile

[FIFA Region](#): AFC

[FIFA Ranking](#): 24

World Cup Appearances: 7

Best World Cup Performance(s): Round of 16 (2002, 2010, 2018)

Qualification: AFC Group B winners

[World Cup Group](#): E

Last World Cup Appearance: 2018

JAPAN in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Japan is a high-functioning democracy. After generations of Japanese monarchs that had divine authority; today, the Japanese monarch is ceremonial. The Diet is Japan's national legislature and main governing body. The Diet is bicameral with both a lower and an upper house. The current governing party is the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); the LDP is typically attributed to conservatism and neoliberal economic policy.

The main religions in Japan are Shintō and Buddhism. The most popular sport in Japan is baseball, with Sumo wrestling in second, and soccer (football) in third.

Japan has the 11th largest population, and the third highest GDP. The Japan Exchange Group is the [fourth largest stock exchange](#) in the world in terms of market capitalization. The story of Japan's economic success starts with the reforms and advancements made in Meiji Restoration (1866); the Meiji Restoration catalyzed Japan's turn with the Industrial Revolution and propelled its national power to a status akin to those in the Concert of Europe. The Empire of Japan began after the Meiji Restoration and until defeat in World War II. After a brutal record of conquest in World War II, post-War, Japan reconstructed remarkably with corporations like Sony, Toyota, and Canon

leading the way. U.S. financial and human resources were essential to this post-War reconstruction.

While Japan remains a very prosperous country, it currently faces [a demographic challenge](#) regarding its ageing population and shrinking workforce. [28% of the Japanese population is 65 and above](#), which is the highest in the world.

Historically and contemporarily, Japan's main geopolitical competitor is China. Both ancient civilizations, Japan and China have gone through ebbs and flows in their relationship with different political entities at the helm. Of note in the modern era, The First Sino-Japanese War took place between 1894-1895 over the Korean Peninsula (this occurred during the Qing Dynasty and the Meiji Emperor, respectively). Fierce adversaries in World War II, Japan and China began fighting in 1937 which is two years before war broke out on the European Continent. Today, Japan (a parliamentary democracy) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) (an authoritarian one-party state) remain competitors. China and Japan are territorial disputants over the [Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea](#), which can fuel nationalist sentiments that strongly exist in both countries.

Japan's relations with the Republic of Korea also deserve highlighting. After an atrocious colonial and imperial record in Korea, such as the institutional employment of "[comfort women](#)", Japan has still yet to truly make amends (Imperial Japanese war crimes committed in China are also a factor in the Japan-China relationship). Apart from these embedded historical grievances, the Republic of Korea and Japan both have aligning interests: they both believe in democratic values, are suspicious of the PRC, and have like-minded visions for the liberal rules-based international order. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and newly elected South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol have maintained cool relations with one another, although there are some signs of hope for a détente.

The principal security partner of Japan is the United States. They are formal allies through the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. Through the uncertainty of the Cold War, the Japanese home islands were defended by U.S. security guarantees, as the Japanese constitution ruled out robust military buildups. Over roughly the past decade, Japan has begun a process of reestablishing stronger military capabilities—a controversial political issue within Japan.

Finally, in the weeks ahead, one must remember that Japan is mourning longtime Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was tragically assassinated on 8 July, 2022.