

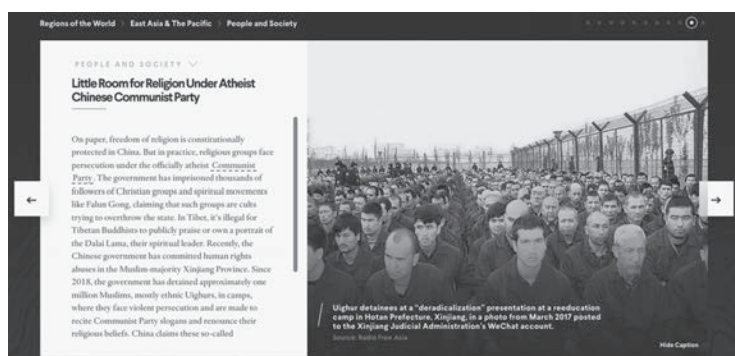
Teaching Asia through Think Tanks

By Alexander Scott and Lucien Ellington

Editor's Introduction: Think tanks are institutes, corporations, or groups organized to study a particular subject (such as a policy issue or a scientific problem) and provide information, ideas, and advice. In introducing Asia to readers who have little or no background in Asian studies, it is imperative that an emphasis be placed upon teaching students how to think and not what to think. Many, but not all think tanks, are identified as liberal or conservative, but often even these think tanks are supported and opposed by individuals who identify as liberals and conservatives, respectively. Scholars affiliated with the think tanks described in this column combine deep expertise with an ability to write for general audiences. They also are largely independent of the constraints governments or universities might impose upon certain perspectives.

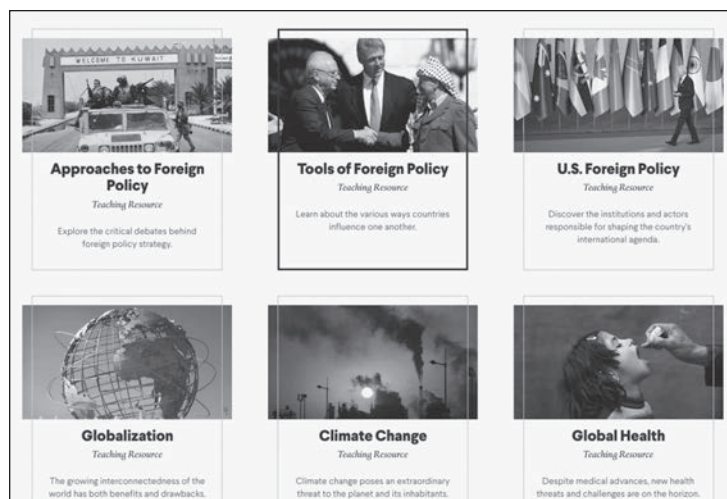
This issue's Facts About Asia column includes an extensive description of an exemplary digital teaching module and complements this resource with samples of essays and teaching data sources from a variety of think tanks on Asia-related topics. Links and graphics are also available in the online supplements on the main *EAA* website at <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/>.

The Council on Foreign Relations *World 101*, <https://world101.cfr.org/>.



The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), is a US independent, non-partisan think tank and publisher specializing in US foreign policy and international relations. CFR features an excellent website called *World101*. Although intended for secondary school classes, the high quality content makes the website useful as well for undergraduate, and even advanced middle school classes. In particular, the section on Regions of the World offers a module on East Asia and the Pacific that includes succinct explainers—concise summaries of particular topics—on the history, culture, economies, and politics of this part of the world. *World101* also includes resources that help teachers implement this content into the classroom.

The East Asia and Pacific module (<https://tinyurl.com/4uvhwstdd>) is where most instructors teaching about East Asia should start. It contains six sections with detailed information on various aspects of life throughout Asia. "Modern History" (<https://tinyurl.com/yc8fydsv>) begins with the formation of the Japanese Empire leading up to World War II, continues through the 1949 Communist takeover of China, the 1945 division between North and South Korea, and Britain's 1997 handover of Hong Kong to the Chinese. This section is up to date as of 2020, and gives useful context to many of the issues facing East Asia today. "People and Society" (<https://tinyurl.com/39c3cypn>), updated in 2020, includes demographics, religion, education, and Asian countries' initial responses to COVID-19. "Politics" (<https://tinyurl.com/4mu4ydcz>) covers the varied levels of democracy and authoritarianism in different countries, as well as ethnic and religious violence in Southeast Asia, and the totalitarian rule of the Communist Kim family in North Korea. "Economics" (<https://tinyurl.com/2ycfrf57>) depicts the rise of Asian economies following World War II and their role in global manufacturing, with special attention to China's growth, particularly its Belt and Road Initiative, as of 2019. "Geopolitics" (<https://tinyurl.com/5dw6bd4>) discusses the tensions in the region (2021), including North Korea's nuclear ambitions, China and Japan's claims over various islands and nearby waters, and the effects



Examples of topics in the "Teaching Resources" section. Source: *World101* at <https://tinyurl.com/bd93e9mr>.

of climate change on Indonesia. "US Foreign Policy" (<https://tinyurl.com/yc6auwdd>) focuses on the United States' role in the region, from its 1898 victory in the Spanish-American War, to the entry into World War II against Japan, to the Vietnam War, to the US's contemporary ambiguous relationship with Taiwan.

Content in the explainers features interactive visual aids, such as maps, charts, and photos, that help illustrate and provide further information on the various topics. Students can mouse over a graph of per capita GDP to get a better idea of how Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong have grown their economies over the years. Photos of Shanghai and Singapore feature visual sliders that instructors and students can use to compare the modern skyscrapers to the more modest skylines of decades past. "Politics" includes a map with further detail on ethnic conflicts from Xinjiang to Papua (Indonesia). Nearly all charts and graphs include links to the data, which can provide further opportunities for study and research for students' own projects.

In addition to the explainer module, *World101* also features a section on Instructor Resources (<https://tinyurl.com/2n2pf524>) to help teachers implement this information in a secondary-level classroom. "Syllabi" (<https://tinyurl.com/mpz45rft>) doesn't contain syllabi specific to East Asia, but instructors might want to look at the SUNY Oswego Upper-Level Courses Toolkit and the *World101* and American Democracy Project Toolkit (2021–2022), which both contain links to outside articles and videos on issues related to the region. They can be found under the previous URL. Instructors can also develop their own syllabus and submit it for others to use. "LMS (Learning Management System) Integration" (<https://tinyurl.com/5ezy5752>) contains instructions on how to integrate the modules with Canvas and Blackboard.

“Standards Search” and “Teaching Resources” may be useful regarding East Asia. With “Standards Search,” secondary school instructors can search for content according to recommended grade level and academic standards from each state, provided by EdGate (<https://edgate.com/>). This search engine includes an “Advanced Options” button, so that one simply has to type “East Asia” (or perhaps “Japan” or “Vietnam”) in order to locate relevant articles and resources throughout *World101*. This is especially useful for finding sources on East Asia from outside the Regions of the World modules, such as an article on North and South Korean approaches to development. “Teaching Resources” (<https://tinyurl.com/33356c9c>) provides suggested essays, model diplomacy sessions, reading lists, and lesson plans for the classroom, with a specific section for East Asia (<https://tinyurl.com/fbas55x8>). These can also appear as results in the Standards Search, if one wants to more easily find resources in other sections.

High school teachers, undergraduate instructors, and honors-level middle school teachers who want their students to learn more about modern East Asia will find *World101* to be an excellent resource. Its explainers are concise summaries of the region, its history, politics, and peoples, with interactive, data-driven illustrations to expand on topics. Secondary school teachers can also connect them with state standards and find tips on how to apply content to the classroom.

Center for Strategic and International Studies

“North Korea’s Missile Crossed the Northern Limit Line,”

November 2, 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/4fbfp5jn>.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is a bipartisan, nonprofit policy research organization dedicated to advancing practical ideas to address the world’s greatest challenges. In this resource, Ellen Kim uses a question-and-answer format to explain an incident on November 2, 2022, in which North Korea launched twenty-five missiles from its coasts, the most in a single day. One missile flew twenty-six kilometers (16.2 miles) below the Northern Limit Line (NLL), a boundary in the oceans between North and South Korea. Another 100 shells ended up in the buffer zone in South Korea’s territorial waters, violating a 2019 agreement between the two countries. The launches seem to be a response to Operation Vigilant Storm, a joint US-South Korean exercise to improve defense preparations. A top North Korean military official accused the US and South Korea of using this exercise to plan an attack against North Korea. The US denied this, while South Korea responded with its own missiles, fired toward the north of the NLL from F-15K and KF-16 fighter jets. Ellen Kim predicts incidents like these will be a “new normal” for the Korean peninsula, and will likely increase, based on North Korea’s tendency to act aggressively when the three countries aren’t actively negotiating.

Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

“India Stiffens Censorship, Blocking BBC Documentary Critical of Modi,” February 3, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/2z64745w>.

While India is a multiparty democracy, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has presided over discriminatory policies and a rise in persecution affecting the Muslim population.

—Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2023: India, <https://tinyurl.com/yc24xdfv>.

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada), established by the Canadian government, is an independent, non-profit organization focused on Canada’s relations with Asia. This article from APF Canada summarizes recent press restrictions in India. In 2002, after the deaths of Hindu pilgrims in a train fire, riots broke out in the Indian state of Gujarat, killing over a thousand people, mostly Muslims. Gujarat’s chief minister, Narendra Modi, was accused of involvement in the riots, but acquitted by the Supreme Court of India. He went on to become India’s Prime Minister, currently serving

his second term. In January, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) released a documentary, *India: The Modi Question*, which explores Modi’s role in the Gujarat riots. The Indian government has tried to censor this documentary by blocking links, interfering with student screenings, even cutting off power and jamming the internet at universities. They accuse the BBC of smearing India, spreading “neocolonial propaganda,” and even suggest Chinese influence. However, these crackdowns have only served to draw more attention to the documentary, not only from Indians, but also from the international community, which had condemned and sanctioned Modi over the riots before he became Prime Minister. They also expose increasing restrictions on India’s free press, including violence against journalists and increased media consolidation.

The Foreign Policy Research Institute

“Japan’s New National Security Strategy is Making Waves,”

January 4, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/2hehstt>.

The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) is a nonpartisan Philadelphia-based think tank dedicated to strengthening US national security and improving American foreign policy. Ryan Ashley, of FPRI summarizes the new National Security Strategy (NSS) released by Japan, which has raised concerns from its neighbors that Japan is abandoning its post-World War II pacifism. The NSS pledges Japan to raise its defense spending to two percent of its GDP, its biggest increase since World War II. This would include funds toward cyber warfare, space, and new fighter aircraft. The Strategy also clarifies Japan’s right to counterattack against possible missile strikes with new, longer-range missiles, giving it the ability to potentially launch into mainland Asia. Japan considers the strategy necessary because of the threat it sees from North Korea and China, with Russia presenting an additional challenge since its invasion of Ukraine. The most vocal opposition has come from North Korea and China, warning that Japan could pose a threat to the rest of Asia, with China directly invoking the war crimes of the Japanese Empire. Thailand and South Korea have more mixed reactions, with both also recalling their past with Japan. The US, India, and Taiwan have expressed their support. The author connects the NSS to growing concern in Japan of reduced American commitment to the region that could leave Japan vulnerable. He also notes the support for the new strategy among the Japanese public, compared to the 2015 protests against Prime Minister Abe’s reforms. Finally, he believes Japan is still committed to pacifism; rather, the strategy is purely about ensuring Japan’s ability to defend itself within its own borders.

Brookings Institution

“The Pressing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party to US National Defense,” February 9, 2023 (testimony given on Feb. 7),

<https://tinyurl.com/5n8tpbbb>.

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to conduct in-depth research that leads to



INDIA: The Modi Question (Parts 1 and 2) are available to stream on Amazon/BBC Select in the US. The series is also available on *Dailymotion* (with ads) at <https://tinyurl.com/a6xnhv53>.



The Lowy Institute *Asia Power Index* interactive page at <https://tinyurl.com/3ap3j3x4>.

new ideas for solving problems facing society at the local, national and global level. In her testimony to the House Armed Services Committee hearing on “The pressing threat of the Chinese Communist Party to US national defense,” Melanie W. Sisson, foreign policy fellow for the Brookings Institution, recommends ways the US can respond to the Chinese aggression against Taiwan. Under the “One-China Policy,” adopted in 1979, the United States has acknowledged China’s claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, but not accepted them. The US also refrains from fully committing to militarily support or oppose Taiwan’s claims of independence, a policy of dual deterrence that avoids both provoking or endorsing any action by China. The US wants a peaceful resolution endorsed by both sides. However, due to China’s enhancements to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), Sisson believes that the US cannot rely on intimidating China with military superiority to protect Taiwan. The PLA has a more advantageous position in the region, and the US would divert too many resources from other essential security priorities. Instead, Sisson recommends other ways the US can convince China that attacking Taiwan is not in its best interests. The US can help Taiwan develop new defensive strategies against the PLA, and remind China that the US can disrupt China’s maritime supply chains, damaging their economy. She also recommends domestic strategies, including unmanned weapons and increased cybersecurity, to discourage a direct strike against the US that would leave Taiwan exposed. In this way, according to Sisson, the Department of Defense can preserve the US’s strategy of dual deterrence and hold China’s growing influence in check. (254)

American Enterprise Institute
 “Xi Jinping’s Strategy of Conflict,”

October 18, 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/s24tezc6>.

The American Enterprise Institute is a public policy think tank dedicated to defending human dignity, expanding human potential, and building a freer and safer world. Following the 20th Party Congress of the People’s Republic of China, Dan Blumenthal and Cindy Chen summarize how Xi Jinping uses political purges, the People’s Liberation Army, and foreign enemies to perpetuate his and the Chinese Communist Party’s own power. Xi has enacted numerous purges against officials, including some in high levels of government, and even some of the purgers themselves. Xi puts his agenda in visceral terms, believing the CCP must “turn the blade inward and carve out its own decaying flesh,” as he is quoted by Blumenthal. He has also strengthened the CCP’s influence over the PLA, claiming that the Soviet Union’s depoliticization of

its military left the Communist Party powerless to enforce its will and prevent its collapse. Therefore, Xi has installed many allies in the military to ensure direct influence, and increasingly tied promotions to ideological purity. He has also boosted the CCP’s influence on Chinese corporations like Alibaba and Tencent, to keep them from getting too powerful themselves. Finally, Xi has stepped up his antagonism toward other countries like the United States and Japan, using their potential threat to justify his purges and consolidation of power. Xi’s policy is cyclical: he wants to make China more powerful; failure to do so weakens him domestically; he then purges anyone who would oppose him. Thus, things can only get worse for Xi Jinping’s China.

Lowy Institute

The Asia Power Index, <https://tinyurl.com/3ap3j3x4>.

The Lowy Institute is an independent, nonpartisan international policy think tank located in Sydney, Australia. It is Australia’s leading think tank, providing high-quality research and distinctive perspectives on the international trends shaping Australia and the world. The think tank operates the *Asia Power Index*, an online resource that ranks the most powerful and influential countries in the region. The site is easy to navigate and contains a wealth of statistical information, with a menu on the left to aid in navigation. “Map” goes to an interactive map that places octagons over each country to signify their level of power; they are also ranked in list form to the side. Power is rated by eight measures: economic capability, military capability, resilience, future resources, economic relationships, defense networks, diplomatic influence, and cultural influence. Users can view rankings according to each measure by clicking either one of the symbols at the top of the screen, on the side of an octagon, or “Measures” in the menu. Each country has a profile page that summarizes its ranking and explores it in greater detail. These can be accessed either by clicking the center of an octagon or going to “Countries” in the menu and clicking on a name. “Compare” allows direct one-on-one comparisons between any two countries on any measure, and “Weightings” averages the countries’ eight measures. “The Power Gap” takes a closer look at where countries over- and underperform. “Network Power” focuses on the various areas where these countries interact and align with each other. Finally, to summarize their data, Lowy publishes a findings report almost every year as a free PDF download, with the most recent being published in 2023. ♦