

	Country	Capital	Continent
▶	United States	Washington, DC	North America
▶	China	Beijing	Asia
▲	Japan	Tokyo	Asia

In 1603, a Tokugawa shogunate (military dictatorship) ushered in a long period of isolation from foreign influence in order to secure its power. For 250 years this policy enabled Japan to enjoy stability and a flowering of its indigenous culture. Following the Treaty of Kanagawa with the US in 1854, Japan opened its ports and began to intensively modernize and industrialize. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Japan became a regional power that was able to defeat the forces of both China and Russia. It occupied Korea, Formosa (Taiwan), and southern Sakhalin Island. In 1931-32 Japan occupied Manchuria, and in 1937 it launched a full-scale invasion of China. Japan attacked US forces in 1941 - triggering America's entry into World War II - and soon occupied much of East and Southeast Asia. After its defeat in World War II, Japan recovered to become an economic power and a staunch ally of the US. While the emperor retains his throne as a symbol of national unity, actual power rests in networks of powerful politicians, bureaucrats, and business executives. The economy experienced a major slowdown starting in the 1990s following three decades of unprecedented growth, but Japan still remains a major economic power, both in Asia and globally. In 2005, Japan began a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

▶	India	New Delhi	Asia
▲	Germany	Berlin	Europe

As Europe's largest economy and second most populous nation, Germany remains a key member of the continent's economic, political, and defense organizations. European power struggles immersed Germany in two devastating World Wars in the first half of the 20th century and left the country occupied by the victorious Allied powers of the US, UK, France, and the Soviet Union in 1945. With the advent of the Cold War, two German states were formed in 1949: the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR). The democratic FRG embedded itself in key Western economic and security organizations, the EC, which became the EU, and NATO, while the Communist GDR was on the front line of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The decline of the USSR and the end of the Cold War allowed for German unification in 1990. Since then, Germany has expended considerable funds to bring Eastern productivity and wages up to Western standards. In January 1999, Germany and 10 other EU countries introduced a common European exchange currency, the euro.

▶	United Kingdom	London	Europe
▶	France	Paris	Europe
▶	Italy	Rome	Europe
▶	Russia	Moscow	Asia
▶	Brazil	Brasilia	South America
▶	Canada	Ottawa	North America
▶	Mexico	Mexico (Distrito Federal)	North America
▶	Spain	Madrid	Europe
▶	South Korea	Seoul	Asia
▶	Indonesia	Jakarta	Asia