Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia

*Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia* focuses on the dynamics of Northeast Asia as a region. The chapters in this book offer a nuanced approach for understanding the geo-politics of this strategically critical area of the world.

Focusing on China, Japan, Russia, and the Koreas, as well as the involvement of the United States, the contributors to the volume offer a timely and critical analysis of Northeast Asia. They collectively emphasize the different scales at which the region holds significance, and particularly note how the region is often granted significance by local political forces as well as national interests. Borderlands and sub-regions are especially important in this perspective, and the contributors show how regionalism influences the people living in these areas and how they in turn shape the political priorities of states. At the same time, the worsening of relations between Japan and the Koreas and the increasing assertiveness of both China and Russia make it essential to understand the dynamics of the region, as well as how they have changed during and following the Trump era.

*Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia* is essential reading for students and scholars of Political Geography, International Relations and Strategic Studies, as well as for those with a research focus on Northeast Asia, or the wider Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions.

**Akihiro Iwashita** is a professor at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University. His research focuses on the Sino-Russian borderlands and on the Japan-Russia “Northern Territories” issue. He has authored and edited several books and numerous articles, notably *Japan’s Border Issues: Pitfalls and Prospects* (Routledge, 2016) and *A 4,000 Kilometer Journey Along the Sino-Russian Border* (Slavic Research Center, 2004). He served as Coordinator of Border Region in Transition XII Conference (Fukuoka-Busan: 2012) and as President of Association for Borderlands Studies (2015–2016). He has received many grants and fellowship, including at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (2007–2008), and prizes, such as IBRU’s 2nd Milefsky Award (2019), the 24th Regional Publication Prize (2011), and the 4th Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Prize (2007). He was also nominated for the *Asahi* Newspaper’s 6th Osaragi Jirō Prize for Commentary (2006).
Yong-Chool Ha is the Korean Foundation Professor at the Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, and is an emeritus professor at Seoul National University. He has written extensively on North Korea, South Korea, East Asia, and Russian foreign policy, as well as on late industrialization and social change. Particular research interests include community building and international relations theories, and changing elite-mass relations in late industrializing countries. He is currently finishing a book examining Late Industrialization, the State and Social Change in a comparative perspective. Major publications include *The Dynamics of Strong States* (SNU Press, 2006), *Late Industrialization, the State and Tradition: the Emergence of Neofamilism in Korea* (CPS, 2007), and the edited volumes *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910–1945* (University of Washington Press, 2013) and *International Impact of Colonial Rule in Korea, 1910–1945* (University of Washington Press, 2019).

Edward Boyle is an associate professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, and is editor of the *Japan Review*. He researches the boundaries and borderland spaces of Japan and its neighborhood, as well as in India’s Northeast and in the wider Asia-Pacific. He has written extensively on historical borders in Northeast Asia, and his doctoral research examined the incorporation of Hokkaido into Japan prior to the nineteenth century. Subsequent research on the contemporary transformation of Japan’s borders and policies has been supported by JSPS, SSHRC, Jean Monnet Network funding, and the Borders in Globalization project. Particular interests include maps and representation, territoriality, infrastructure, heritage, and memory. Recent projects include an investigation into the Borders of Memory that shape the political role of heritage within and between Asian states.
Politics in Asia

China and Human Rights in North Korea
Debating a “Developmental Approach” in Northeast Asia

The Volatility and Future of Democracies in Asia
Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao and Alan Hao Yang

Chinese Election Interference in Taiwan
Edward Barss

Japanese Public Sentiment on South Korea
Popular Opinion and International Relations
Edited by Tetsuro Kobayashi and Atsushi Tago

Taiwan and the Changing Dynamics of Sino-US Relations
A Relational Approach
Hung-Jen Wang

Dictionary of the Modern Politics of Southeast Asia
Joseph Chinyong Liow

Nuclear Governance in the Asia-Pacific
Mely Caballero-Anthony and Julius Cesar I. Trajano

Strategic Triangles Reshaping International Relations in East Asia
Gilbert Rozman

Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia
Edited by Akihiro Iwashita, Yong-Chool Ha and Edward Boyle

Substantive Representation of Women in Asian Parliaments
Edited Devin K. Joshi and Christian Echle

For more information about this series, please visit:
Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia

Edited by Akihiro Iwashita, Yong-Chool Ha and Edward Boyle
In memory of Tsuneo Akaha and Ulises Granados Quiroz, two wonderful scholars of Northeast Asia, and persistent advocates for the region.
Contents

List of Figures xi
List of Tables xii
List of Contributors xiii
Prologue xvii
Acknowledgments xxii

Introduction: Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia 1
AKIHIRO IWASHITA AND EDWARD BOYLE

1 Debunking the Myth of Northeast Asia 14
YONG-CHOOL HA AND AKIHIRO IWASHITA

PART I
Reconsidering Geo-Political Pathways 31

2 The Transformation of China in Northeast Asia Since 1990: From Regional Power to Global Power 33
YOSHIFUMI NAKAI

3 The Impact of the Donald Trump Presidency on Northeast Asia 57
YASUHIRO IZUMIKAWA

4 Crises for North Korea and Its Neighbors 75
MITSUHIRO MIMURA

PART II
(B)ordering Society and the Region 93

5 Maritime Challenges to the Northeast Asian Region 95
YUJI FUKUHARA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chinese Land Deals and Migration in the Russian Far East: Positionality Changes in the Borderlands</td>
<td>NORIO HORIE</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exorcising Phantoms: Development at Border Islands in Northeast Asia</td>
<td>NAOKI AMANO</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART III</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Shared Future?</td>
<td></td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Competing Sovereignty Regimes Within Northeast Asia</td>
<td>MIHOKO KATO</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Economic Integration in Northeast Asia from the 1990s</td>
<td>SHINICHIRO TABATA</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In Search of Northeast Asia’s Least Common Denominator: Regional Issues Through the Lens of Political Culture</td>
<td>DAVID WOLFF</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Politics of (Mis)Trust in Northeast Asia: Social Inclusion, Empathy and Reconciliation</td>
<td>NAOMI CHI</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Conclusion: Reflecting on Regional Community in Northeast Asia</td>
<td>AKIHIRO IWASHITA AND EDWARD BOYLE</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index 227
Figures

0.1 Scaling Northeast Asia’s Geo-politics: Flipped map of the region, centered on the Korea Peninsula 9
5.1 Complex and Contentious Fishery Arrangements in Northeast Asia’s Seas 97
7.1 The Percentages of Putin’s Votes in the Presidential Elections 2000–2018 144
7.2 Votes in the Gubernatorial Elections of Sakhalin Oblast 2003–2019 145
7.3 Votes in the Gubernatorial Elections of Okinawa Prefecture 2002–2018 148
9.1 Russia’s exports of crude oil by destination, in million tons 176
9.2 Share of Russia in imports of crude oil by China, Japan, and Korea, in percent 177
9.3 Japan’s imports of LNG by country, in million tons 178
## Tables

4.1 Foreign Trade of North Korea 84

5.1 Number of Foreign Fishing Boats Inspected by the Fisheries Agency 98

5.2 Number of Foreign Fishing Boats Captured by the Fisheries Agency 99

5.3 Illegal Fishing Equipment Confiscated by the Fisheries Agency 99

5.4 Number of Eviction Warnings issued by the Fisheries Agency at Yamato Bank 101

5.5 Catches of Squid off the East Coast of South Korea and the Export of Squid From China to South Korea 102

5.6 Quotas for North and South Korean Boats in Primorsky Krai’s EEZ 102

5.7 Conflicts Over Fishing Grounds in the Western Part of the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea 108

6.1 Occupations and Foreign Agricultural Workers in the Borderlands in 2011 130

9.1 Foreign trade relations among China, Japan, and Korea, in percent 172

9.2 Share of Northeast Asian countries in Russia’s foreign trade, in percent 172

9.3 Trade intensity index among Northeast Asian countries 173

9.4 Grubel-Lloyd index of machine-building industries among Japan, China, and Korea 174

9.5 Grubel-Lloyd index of machine-building industries of Russia with China, Japan, and Korea 175

9.6 Inbound FDI to Northeast Asian countries by country of origin, stock data at the end of 2018, in percent 179

9.7 Outbound FDI by Northeast Asian countries by country of destination, stock data at the end of 2018, in percent 179

9.8 Ultimate ownership of inward foreign direct investment, stock data at the end of 2017, in percent 180
Contributors

**Naoki Amano** is an associate professor at Yamagata University. For many years he has been engaged in historical research on Sakhalin Island, the border island between Japan and Russia. He is one of the few scholars in the world who have worked on both the history of Sakhalin Island under Japanese rule and that under Russia and the Soviet Union and has published many works in Japanese, English, and Russian. In recent years, he has been engaged in the comparative history of the border islands, extending his analysis to the Kuril Islands, Okinawa Islands, and the Amami Islands.

**Edward Boyle** is an associate professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, and is editor of the *Japan Review*. He researches the boundaries and borderland spaces of Japan and its neighborhood, as well as in India’s Northeast and in the wider Asia-Pacific. He has written extensively on historical borders in Northeast Asia, and his doctoral research examined the incorporation of Hokkaido into Japan prior to the nineteenth century. Subsequent research on the contemporary transformation of Japan's borders and policies has been supported by JSPS, SSHRC, Jean Monnet Network funding, and the Borders in Globalization project. Particular interests include maps and representation, territoriality, infrastructure, heritage, and memory. Recent projects include an investigation into the Borders of Memory that shape the political role of heritage within and between Asian states.

**Naomi Chi** is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Public Policy, Hokkaido University. Her area of specialization is East Asian politics, with an emphasis on migration, demographic changes, multiculturalism, gender, ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as human security in East Asia. Her recent publications include “Japan’s New Wave of Immigration? Focusing on the Strategies of Local Government in Japan” (*Annals of Public Policy Studies*, March 2020). She served as President of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS) for 2021–2022.

**Yuji Fukuhara** is a professor of international relations at the University of Shimane, Hamada, Japan. He currently works on politics and diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula, border studies, fishery policies, and disputes over historical

**Yong-Chool Ha** is the Korean Foundation Professor at the Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, and is an emeritus professor at Seoul National University. He has written extensively on North Korea, South Korea, East Asia, and Russian foreign policy, as well as on late industrialization and social change. Particular research interests include community building and international relations theories, and changing elite-mass relations in late industrializing countries. He is currently finishing a book examining Late Industrialization, the State and Social Change in a comparative perspective. Major publications include *The Dynamics of Strong States* (SNU Press, 2006), *Late Industrialization, the State and Tradition: the Emergence of Neofamilism in Korea* (CPS, 2007), and the edited volumes *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910–1945* (University of Washington Press, 2013) and *International Impact of Colonial Rule in Korea, 1910–1945* (UW Press, 2019).

**Norio Horie** is a professor at the Center for Far Eastern Studies, University of Toyama, Japan. His main areas of research cover the economics of transition, human resource management, and the study of migration in Russia. He focuses on the status and changing demographics of labor in Russia in particular, adopting a trans-disciplinary approach to issues associated with human resource management and labor migration issues. He is one of Japan’s leading researchers on Chinese and Central Asian labor migration to Russia, particularly on the effects of Chinese labor on local economies in the borderland areas lying between China and Russia. He was awarded the Japan Consortium for Area Studies Award in 2011.

**Akihiro Iwashita** is a professor at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University. His research focuses on the Sino-Russian borderlands and on the Japan-Russia “Northern Territories” issue. He has authored and edited several books and numerous articles, notably *Japan’s Border Issues: Pitfalls and Prospects* (Routledge, 2016) and *A 4,000 Kilometer Journey Along the Sino-Russian Border* (Slavic Research Center, 2004). He served as Coordinator of Border Region in Transition XII Conference (Fukuoka-Busan: 2012) and as President of Association for Borderlands Studies (2015–2016). He has received many grants and fellowship, including at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (2007–2008), and prizes, such as IBRU’s 2nd Milefsky Award (2019), the 24th Regional Publication Prize (2011), and the 4th Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Prize (2007). He was also nominated for the *Asahi* Newspaper’s 6th Osaragi Jirō Prize for Commentary (2006).
Yasuhiro Izumikawa is a professor at the Department of International Politics, at Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo. While his research is primarily focused on international relations theory, his research covers alliance politics, US foreign and security policy, and East Asian security. He has published articles in IR and policy journals, such as *Asia Policy*, *Asian Security*, *International Studies Quarterly*, and *Security Studies*. His recent article from *International Security* (2020), “Network Connection and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia,” won the Outstanding Article Award of the International History and Politics section of the American Political Science Association in 2021.

Mihoko Kato is a lecturer at the Hiroshima Peace Institute, Hiroshima City University. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in history and area studies from Hokkaido University. She specializes in Russia’s foreign and security policy in the post-Cold War period. Recently, her research focuses on the question of why and how Russia restores bilateral and multilateral relations with former Soviet allies, such as China, India, Vietnam, and North Korea, and it looks to examine what sort of impact those relations have on the new Eurasian international order. Her publications include “Competing Sovereignties: Increasing Tensions over Maritime Border in Northeast Asia,” *Pathways to Peace and Security* 58:1 (2020): 63–77.

Mitsuhiro Mimura is a senior research fellow at the Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA) in Niigata, Japan. His expertise includes North Korean law and economy, as well as Northeast Asian cooperation, mainly in the economic sphere. He is one of very few Japanese scholars who are able to regularly exchange views and opinions with North Korean scholars and others in Pyongyang. Collaborating extensively with colleagues in both Koreas, China, Russia, the United States, the European Union, and Japan, his research offers a key window into Northeast Asia. Recent research results and publications can be accessed through https://researchmap.jp/mimura?lang=en.

Yoshifumi Nakai is a professor emeritus of Gakushuin University, Tokyo. He conducts research relating to both the domestic politics and diplomatic policies of the People’s Republic of China, as well as on relations between the two. He particularly focuses on the interactions between understandings of socialism and capitalism in the mutual learning and human resource development taking place among mid-level bureaucrats in China and its neighbors in Asia. A recent project investigates the role of local cadres in Southeast Asia actively engaging in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Shinichiro Tabata is a professor at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University. He holds a concurrent appointment as professor at the Arctic Research Center, Hokkaido University. His research specializes in the economics of Russia, particularly of its Far Eastern and Arctic areas. He has conducted extensive statistical analysis on these economies. Recent publications in English include the edited volume *Russia’s Far North: The Contested*
Contributors


David Wolff is a professor of history at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University. He is the author of To the Harbin Station (Stanford, 1999; Tokyo: Kodansha 2014) and Le KGB et les pays baltes (Belin, 2005). He also served as co-editor of The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero in two volumes (Brill, 2005; 2007) and most recently, Russia’s Great War and Revolution in the Far East (Slavica, 2019). He is now writing on Stalin’s Far East policy after World War II.
Layering Up the Region, and This Project

This book explores regional integration and community building in Northeast Asia. Interest and excitement regarding these possibilities for the Northeast Asian region peaked in the 1990s, largely due to the heightened hopes that existed for a new international and regional order in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the enlargement of NATO and the reshaping of the EU. This euphoria about an impending “new world order” was naturally carried over and applied to Northeast Asia as well. Most of the authors in this collection, who began their research careers in the 1990s, participated in the expectation that Northeast Asia would develop a regional order along the lines of the European community emerging at the other end of the Eurasian continent.

In the event, however, our hopes and dreams were destined to be dashed, as these kinds of confident predictions were replaced with frustration at the stagnation of democratization in China and absence of reform in North Korea. Looking back at this period from the standpoint of today, over twenty years later and with Northeast Asia more fractured than ever, it seems as though the 1990s were a special and exceptional period. That decade seems something of a mirage now. Thirty years later, it is an appropriate time to ask what happened to this Northeast Asia of the 1990s. Exploring this issue does mean not just reinterpreting the history of the region but also seeking to discover a way to overcome the challenges which Northeast Asia and the world are experiencing today.

Why, then, do we now feature Northeast Asia, when events of the last thirty years appear to have merely highlighted its failure? First, the configuration of the region has dramatically shifted since the 1990s. Nobody then could imagine the extent of China’s regional presence today. Few of those who discussed the region in the 1990s would have anticipated that North Korea would survive and, in certain respects, thrive. Who, indeed, could have anticipated a US President like Donald Trump, with a policy towards Northeast Asia that appeared disinterested and whimsical by turns? Back in the 1990s, how many people would have confidently forecasted the alliance currently developing between Russia and China against the United States? As relations between Japan and South Korea fall to their lowest point since the war, it is clear that the structure of the region has
altered significantly over the past thirty years, and this must be accounted for in any autopsy conducted of earlier hopes for the region.

Second, beyond the contested issues of interstate relations, challenges to the region as a whole have continued to develop. Maritime conflicts in the region, in the Okhotsk, the Japan and East China Seas, and in the Pacific Ocean, are greater risks than any potential benefits from cooperation in the fishery, environmental, security fields. Nuclear competition within the region could be accelerated by North Korean’s build-up of its arsenal, enriching the possibilities for catastrophic missteps. While economic interdependence has developed beyond national borders, the region still lacks integrative mechanisms to manage this. Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has led all the states in the region to pull down their shutters to the outside world. This suggests that we should pay attention not only to the behavior of individual states but also to the region, as it appears to be moving in lockstep even in the absence of formal cooperation.

Third, in parallel to these two tendencies, there have been important developments in sub-regional interaction through and beyond national borders. Particularly, sub-regions and cities located along national borders and facing outwards to the world have developed their own advantageous geographic positions through economic and human/cultural relations. During the Cold War, in Northeast Asia as elsewhere, such borderland locations were designated as frontlines or fortresses. However, these former bastions have frequently transformed into gateways facilitating the movement of people and material across national borders, reflecting in a small way the openness and transparency that was expected for the region as a whole in the 1990s. Local trade and tourism in such spaces have emerged as for resources for economic growth and, in turn, developing relations across the border itself, a process that has occasionally contributed to the improvement of state-to-state relations.

We consider these three important regional trends, concerning the state, the region, and its sub-regions (and particularly its borderlands), as being of central importance to analyzing the region, and they structure our analysis accordingly. The details of this collection’s key questions and the analytical approach used to tackle them will be given in the Introduction, written by my co-editors, while Chapter 1 will provide an overview of thirty years of Northeast Asia in order to set up the detailed case studies offered in the remainder of the collection.

This book project is the outcome of a combination of personal and institutional efforts. Most of all, the project would not have been possible without the passionate commitment of Professor Akihiro Iwashita of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University. Professor Iwashita initiated the development of border studies in Japan, a field that has expanded steadily in recent years. This project has developed as a new field of application for border studies, drawing our attention to dynamics in border areas and their significance for the future of Northeast Asia. Incorporating this approach provides a unique opportunity to locate clues for understanding the future of Northeast Asia and beyond. Reflecting on the region from its borders allows for the recovery of positive signs of
cooperation which would not be visible or significant to conventional international relations theories. It is precisely the spontaneous and lively cooperation across various borders in Northeast Asia which eventually led the editors of this volume to question the conventional, dim view of the future of Northeast Asia and to start thinking seriously about a different trajectory of regional development from that of Western Europe.

Professor Iwashita’s long-term vision for the vitality of the region along its borders inspired me to initiate the Northeast Asia Community Building Consortium in 2011. Scholars from South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, and the United States all participated in order to seek to institutionalize regional cooperation, such as through the Institute for Northeast Asia Community Building. The Consortium was a timely development, given the then-upcoming Vladivostok APEC Summit, and it featured several rounds of discussions that focused on the importance of the Russian Far East for the future of Northeast Asia. Although short-lived, the Consortium raised critical questions regarding the direction of change in Northeast Asia. The region is characterized by different patterns of industrialization and modernization, not only between the Northeast Asian states themselves but also in comparison with the West. Meanwhile, the role of colonialism and imperialism here also does not map neatly onto the European experience. The Consortium, therefore, raised important questions regarding how different paths of modernization can and will affect the future course of cooperation among countries in Northeast Asia.

The individual vision and commitment displayed in the production of this collection could not have been realized as a research project without institutional support. First of all, this book project is an outcome of the Northeast Asia area studies project initiated by National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) in Japan in 2015. NIHU is an institution that has long been interested in the future of area studies, including Northeast Asia, and it sponsored several umbrella conferences. At the kick-off symposium in Osaka in January 2016, Professor Iwashita organized a session on the “Rediscovery of Northeast Asia,” which provocatively challenged us to reflect on why Northeast Asian states have not seen the emergence of cross-border cooperation. This provided the framework within which to study new dimensions of Northeast Asian regionalism across the six-year term of the project.

A follow-up conference was held in December 2016, in Kokura, part of city of Kitakyushu. In addition to the support from NIHU, the cooperation of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, the Center for Asia-Pacific Future Studies at Kyushu University, and the University of Kitakyushu was vital for providing the resources and energies required to make the conferences successful. It is through these conferences that the main themes of this book were developed and communicated with our fantastic contributors.

The core question that this book raises is how to understand the future of Northeast Asia. This collection looks to focus on the distinctiveness of regional patterns of development, particularly when compared to Western Europe. This book urges scholars and practitioners to pay greater attention to the multiple
layers at which the Northeast Asian region is brought into being, including the micro-level changes that are rarely featured in conventional studies of Northeast Asia. The volume also sheds light not only on the realignment of the region’s states but also on the shifts which have occurred in sub-regional interaction beyond those state’s borders, in order to indicate possible paths for overcoming pessimistic views regarding the region’s future.

It is also worth mentioning that Northeast Asia has undergone tremendous changes during the preparation of this book. Most important is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the impact of this is by no means restricted to Northeast Asia, it is remarkable to note that the pandemic further highlighted the importance of the questions that this book raises. As has occurred elsewhere, the pandemic has revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of the region in coping with the seemingly resilient power of the virus. On the one hand, countries in the region have been doing rather well in managing the pandemic situation, and sometimes better than other regions. On the other hand, the region has once again been reminded of the fact that when faced with a crisis like the pandemic, there exist no institutional mechanisms for cooperation at the regional level. This volume concludes by discussing issues relating to the pandemic and their significance for the future of the region, and these questions will inevitably remain as subjects for future discussion.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, after this manuscript had been submitted to the publishers. With its actions, Russia promises to fundamentally undermine international norms, such as the peaceful resolution of disputes and the non-use of force, which are generally accepted by states in the contemporary world.

The invasion has dramatically raised fears in Europe, to the point that a second Cold War is being mentioned, but Northeast Asia is also not immune from the effects of Russia’s actions. The Russian-Ukrainian war promises to have a chilling effect on regional integration, and to further widen existing fault lines. The region’s dependence on external states for its security has traditionally restricted the possibilities for regionalism, despite the excitement generated by the end of the Cold War and ensuing globalization in the 1990s. The war promises to entrench the divides between states based upon their domestic political systems. This will complicate the situation around the Korean Peninsula, rendering the denuclearization of North Korea all the more difficult.

Already, during its 11th Emergency Session, the United National General Assembly voted on March 24 to adopt a resolution entitled Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine which explicitly noted Russia as the aggressor. While 140 countries voted for the resolution, China was one of 38 which abstained, while the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea joined Russia as one of five countries to oppose the resolution. Northeast Asia therefore may become a region upon which Russia will increasingly lean in the future.

This volume has obviously not been able to reflect such recent developments, but readers will be able to understand the background as to why China and
North Korea have supported Russia in the current conflict. Furthermore, this grouping of Northeast Asian states is likely to line up opposite a loose alliance of the United States, South Korea, and Japan, in a rerun of the first Cold War. The book therefore serves guide our debates over how we might position Northeast Asia in this latest transformation of the international order.

Yong-Chool Ha
**Acknowledgments**

This collection is the result of a research project conducted by the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University on “international relations for region-building,” which was one of six projects funded under the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) Area Studies Project for Northeast Asia. Without the generous funding provided by NIHU, this project would not have been possible. We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to the NIHU for their vision and dedication in supporting and revitalizing area studies in Japan, including for Northeast Asia.

The other five projects funded by NIHU under the Area Studies Project for Northeast Asia umbrella were based at the National Museum for Ethnology in Osaka, Center for Northeast Asian Studies (Tohoku University), Center for Far Eastern Studies (Toyama University), Northeast Asia Research Center (University of Shimane), and Waseda Institute of Contemporary Chinese Studies. We are grateful for the collaboration and efforts of our fellow project members at these institutions and more broadly.

The hosting of the research project at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center was possible, thanks to the tremendous efforts of a great many project researchers and administrators. We would like here to acknowledge the vital work done by Mihoko Kato (a key contributor to the current volume), along with Takehiko Inoue, Yoichi Isahaya, Tetsuro Chida, Keiko Saito, Hiroshi Fukuda, Honghui Li, Alexandra Kukulina, Assel Bitabarova, Yan Kaishu Favennec, Kanako Nakajima, Nozomi Kameda, and Megumi Sasaya.

The project also encompassed the Center for Asia-Pacific Future Studies (CAFS) and the Faculty of Law at Kyushu University, and we offer our thanks for the efforts there of Takatoshi Matsubara, Kaoru Izumi, Serghei Golunov, Jong-Seok Park, Beom-Shik Shin, Yasunori Hanamatsu, Naoki Kumano, Haruka Tsuruta, and Yumiko Goda. For assistance in hosting a variety of events in Kyushu, special thanks go to Naoto Takagi, Takayoshi Kabu, Edward Vickers, and Keiko Tamura.

Chisako Masuo, Hiroshi Itani, Yoshihiro Masuda, Akira Ishii, Takuya Sasaki, Alexander Bukh, Mikhail Alexeev, Jarosław Jańczak, Alex Diener, Andrew Grant, and Mia Bennett have provided insightful comments and criticisms on various aspects of the research presented in this collection. On the necessity and importance...
of studying Northeast Asia, the editors have learned much from the expertise of Haruki Wada, T. J. Pempel, Paul Evans, Victor Lin, Sergey Sevatsianov, Dmitry Streltsov, Alexsander Lukin, Guangchang Xing, Huasheng Zhao, and Cheng Yang. Regarding the connections to be drawn between geopolitics and border studies, the editors have particularly benefitted from the insights of Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, Paul Richardson, Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, Tony Payan, Martin Van de Velde, Jussie Laine, John Agnew, Colin Flint, Akihiko Takagi, Takashi Yamazaki, Shinya Kitagawa, Koji Furukawa, Fuminori Kawakubo, Sung-Ho Kim, Stephanie Martel, Sara Shneiderman, Jabin T. Jacob, and, of course, Gerard Toal. Finally, the editors wish to express their gratitude for the contributions of Seth Cervantes and Jonathan Bull.

Elements of the research conducted by the editors for this collection were conducted under JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers JP 16K17071 and 20H01460. The contributions of Akihiro Iwashita and Edward Boyle to this volume reflect ideas which were initially developed in “Bordering and Scaling Northeast Asia,” *Asian Geographer* 38:2 (2021): 119–138.
Introduction
Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia

Akihiro Iwashita and Edward Boyle

Northeast Asia today is largely thought about in relation to the security concerns of its constituent states. In this book, however, the importance of these issues is analyzed and filtered through the lens provided by Northeast Asia as an area of study. We refer to this approach as geo-politics in order to highlight the contested political claims made regarding a loosely defined area of the world, or “geo.” In this Introduction, we will detail the importance of this framework for understanding Northeast Asia as a region, highlight the significance of the hyphen in both separating and linking the twinned terms of geo and politics together, and show how this approach is distinct from “geopolitics” in either its classical or critical variants.

A Region Misplaced: Northeast Asia After Thirty Years

In the early 1990s, Northeast Asia, the area of the world centered on the Korean peninsula and incorporating, at a minimum, parts of China, Russia, and Japan and others, was viewed as the most dynamic region of the globe. Driven by the extraordinary economic growth of Japan during the 1980s, and with the Asian Tigers following closely in her developmental state footsteps, the region emerged from a period of Cold War tensions in the early 1980s into one of liberalization. In the Soviet Union, perestroika was instituted, while Japan’s economy and currency markets were also internationalized following the Plaza Accords. South Korea innovated politically, experimenting with “democratization” at home and “northern diplomacy” abroad, and China maintained its “reform and opening up” policy as it sought to manage its economic growth. The opening of the following decade appeared to mark the Korean peninsula's transformation from site of conflict to birthplace for regional cooperation. South Korea established formal diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China, North and South Korea simultaneously acceded to the United Nations, and North Korea appeared on the verge of normalizing relations with the United States and Japan. As in Europe, the conclusion of the Cold War in Northeast Asia brought with it visions of a Northeast Asian community which could materialize and expand to encompass Taiwan, Mongolia, and even the West Coast of the United States across the Pacific Ocean.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003288039-1
Indeed, the post-Cold War transformation initially appeared to herald regional integration, as cross-border flows of capital, people, and goods expanded massively. Investment and cooperative networks utilized Japan and Korea as hubs to expand into China and the Russian Far East. Emblematic is the Conference on Northeast Asian Development, held in 1990 in Changchun, which announced the Greater Tumen Initiative as a transnational developmental program to operate at the heart of Northeast Asia’s revitalization. Subsequently adopted by the United Nations Development Program, the Initiative sought to foster sectoral economic cooperation between North Korea, China, Mongolia, South Korea, and Russia, whose spill-over effects would foster peace and security between former ideological foes. These kinds of special economic zones, frequently created through cross-border cooperation between local administrations and non-governmental organizations, were anticipated to provide the basis for more comprehensive regionalization.

These global transformations, and the regional policy responses they engendered, were also reflected at a more local level as the Cold War came to a close. Consequently, ideas of an integrated Northeast Asia community were functioning at a variety of scales. International relations among the region’s constituent states, which were conceptualized as extending to encompass the United States and Mongolia, would be complemented through sub-regional zones of economic integration and a multitude of local interactions across national borders, collectively constituting a new form of “network power” that would tie the region together. The region’s growing economic interdependency, therefore, fostered expectations that increasingly permeable borders would improve relations between neighboring states.

Academics and practitioners both in the region and from further afield were widely predicting the transformation of this formerly contested space into an economically integrated and democratic region. Such utopian visions were common. The former Governor of Russia’s Maritime Province, Vladimir Kuznetsov, predicted in the early 1990s that the Sino-Russian borderlands would become similar to US-Canadian one through the implementation of the open-access plan for “Greater Vladivostok.” The distinguished Japanese historian of the region, Haruki Wada, would write about the imminence of a “Northeast Asian common house” in the early 2000s. Chinese researchers belonging to China’s Northeast region such as Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces published their own visions for Northeast Asian regional cooperation, including around the Tumen River, while certain research institutes in South Korea wanted to use special economic zones and cross-border mobility as leverage for South-North economic cooperation.

The genesis of this book is in this period. The book’s authors, at least the majority of them, vividly remember their shared hopes for regional cooperation and community building in the early 1990s. It was widely expected, as Yong-Chool Ha details in his Prologue, that the hyper-securitized Cold War environment of Northeast Asia would follow in Europe’s footsteps and rapidly thaw out, as holes were slowly punched in the autocratic and ideological walls that had