Prisoners of Geography
Reading Guide for Chapter 8, Korea & Japan

Pages 208-212 explain the history of the current political tensions around North Korea.

209. A **Catch-22** is a paradoxical situation from which an individual cannot escape because of contradictory rules or limitations. The term was coined by Joseph Heller, who used it in his 1961 novel *Catch-22*. For example: "How can I get any experience until I get a job that gives me experience?" Catch-22s often result from rules, regulations, or procedures that an individual is subject to, but has no control over, because to fight the rule is to accept it.

211 **Kim Jong Un** (born 8 January 1983 or 1984) is a North Korean politician currently the Supreme Leader of North Korea since 2011 and Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea since 2012. Kim is the son of Kim Jong-il, the country's second leader from 1994 to 2011 & the grandson of Kim Il-sung, the founder and first leader of North Korea from 1948 to 1994.

212 **The Hermit Kingdom**

The Yalu River | The 38th Parallel | The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

212-215 summarizes World War II in East Asia and the Korean War of 1950-1953. 215-216. The chapter shifts its focus to South Korea. Make sure you know what the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is.

216-218. This section explains how a war might proceed between North Korea and South Korea and that it would likely be catastrophic.
218-220. Why war on the Korean peninsula would have grave political & economic consequences.

220-222. This section explores Japan’s geography and how it shaped its history…

The 4 Major Islands of Japan  Kamikaze, or “the Divine Wind”

Today, Japan’s 127 million people live mainly on four islands…It became a maritime power which imitated the western model in the late 1800s and in 1905 defeated Russia. But, then as now, it has few natural resources and must import gas, oil & coal.

222-224. Japan’s role in WWII, why it attacked the USA at Pearl Harbor, why it was a massive overstretch which led to the nuclear catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and why Japan has only recently begun re-arming militarily.
224. Chapter II, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution…
224. “Collective Defense”

225. Know why it is important that the Japanese have an aircraft carrier now (and why it is officially a “helicopter-carrying destroyer.”

225. The islands called Senkaku or Diaoyu, respectively, and why they are important.
226-227. This last section explains that China is expanding its power and influence in the region, which is a big reason why Japan keeps good ties with the USA—and why the US is staying in both Korea and Japan—the US 7th Fleet in Tokyo Bay and US Marines on Okinawa.

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