

John Dower Teaching Guide Transcript

00:04 What is ANPO?

Japan went through a very long occupation that ended with a peace treaty that was treaty with many, many nations. And a military treaty that was a bilateral treaty between the U.S. and Japan — only those two countries.

ANPO is an abbreviation or a catch phrase that almost all Japanese would recognize. The word comes from the original creation of that security relationship in 1952. The U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, when Japan regained independence after World War II.

By 1950, the Americans were so obsessed with the rise of Communism, that they looked at Japan as America's major potential military base and military support in Asia. By 1950, China, originally our ally in World War II, originally seen as our postwar ally, had become a Communist nation the People's Republic was created in 1949.

Japan is now going to be the ally, China is obviously the new enemy in Asia, in Washington's eyes. And, with the Korean War, the Americans start to make very clear they're not going to leave Japan militarily, because we've got all those bases there.

Japan becomes a place of rest and recreation for the troops, it also becomes a place where the Japanese are engaged in production for the U.S. military, and in fact, the Korean War boom lifts Japan out of what is a very bad recession that many people felt in 1950 was heading toward a depression.

So the Korean War boom saves Japan, but it also leads to the notion of the re-militarization of Japan in two ways. One, Japan will be encouraged to re-militarize. And two, Japan will allow the Americans to remain in Japan militarily. The understanding is, then, that Japan will be given its sovereignty if it allows the United States to maintain bases in Japan indefinitely.

Even if Japan gets sovereignty, Okinawa will not. Okinawa is the forward base for American containment in Asia, containment vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, containment vis-a-vis the People's Republic of China.

03:09 Legacy of Postwar Occupation

So from the 1950s through the 1960s into the early 1970s, there were these burning feelings in Japan that we didn't really get our independence. ANPO then becomes, to Japanese, a catchword, not just for the U.S.-Japan military relationship, but a catchword for American bases throughout Japan, a catchword for Okinawa being detached from Japan and turned into a grotesque American militarized neo-colony.

One of the great, great open sores, and one of the terrible legacies of the occupation period is that the American government, together with the conservative Japanese government, made a deal: we will sell out Okinawa, in order to get independence for the rest of Japan. And the phrase that emerges among people is, "America's protected us, fine, that's good, we can

concentrate on other things, but this is subordinate independence. This is dependent independence. It's certainly not equality."

Japan in theory is independent, but this is 1952, the war in Korea is still going on...

They look at the bases in Japan and nothing has changed, the occupation has, has ended, but the bases remain, the foreign troops are there in enormous numbers with no particular end in sight. The airplanes are flying over the fields, ah, there, there's, ah, all of the corruption of a society that comes with foreign bases on the soil, including the honky-tonk towns, the bars, the prostitution, the corruption that inevitably comes with occupying another area.

05:22 Japanese War Casualties

Many Japanese had come out of the war and welcomed the early occupation because they said, "we can't go through another war like this." Everyone in Japan had lost someone or knew someone who was killed in the War. Over sixty cities were firebombed during World War II. Japanese were quite happy to have that Peace Constitution, even though the Americans initially drafted it, it became seen as a very precious thing, to many, many Japanese.

Over 100,000 were killed in Tokyo alone, 140,000 in Hiroshima, over 70,000 in, Nagasaki and there's over sixty other cities that are firebombed. And the people welcomed the end of the war. And they really didn't trust their leaders. There was a lot of skepticism and fear that militarism might come again. So, when the occupation ends, those people who had welcomed the Peace Constitution, suddenly see, what? War in Korea, and the end of the occupation sees all of the old politicians re-emerging and taking prominent positions in the conservative party, which takes the name in 1954 of "Liberal Democratic Party." The conservative party is America's client.

So by 1954, in this cauldron of, "where has peace gone?" comes the famous Bikini incident, in which the Americans have a mammoth nuclear test on the island of Bikini in the Pacific, and a Japanese fishing boat, the so called "Lucky Dragon," a very ironic name, is within the area of fallout. And these Japanese fishermen, the crew becomes irradiated, they come back to Japan, and one of the fishermen dies. And the Japanese are saying, "my god, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and now they're building bombs that are vastly more devastating, and once again a Japanese person has been killed, and we're under enormous pressure from the United States and from the conservative government to have a tighter relationship and participate in this nuclear development."

08:17 Prime Minister Kishi and the ANPO Treaty

And then comes 1957, Kishi Nobusuke is now the head of the Liberal Democratic Party, America's man in Japan. Kishi signed the declaration of war against the United States, as a very young man. He was very, very deeply involved in Japan's occupation of China and Manchuria. He was arrested as a war criminal because among other things he had been involved in mobilizing Chinese labor which we called slave labor, during the war.

And so, what seems to be imperiled in Japan, to many people, is not simply peace, but democracy. And it's Kishi who the U.S. will be dealing with when the time comes to revise ANPO, to revise the Mutual Security Treaty, in 1960.

Secretary of State, Christian Herter, at one point comes in and says to the committee, "this is the most unequal treaty that the United States has entered into with any country in the world since World War II. We've got to let the Japanese come in and have a little bit more say in what is done."

09:52 The ANPO Movement

But in Japan at this time what you see is the whole anti-base, anti-war, anti-return-of-the-old-fascists, pro-democracy, pro-antimilitarism movement, coming up, it's a nationwide movement. People want change, people are opposing the state, people are willing to go out there and challenge the state. They're saying, "we want greater democracy, we want greater equality, we want to be more independent, we want something different for Japan."

There is a very left-wing labor movement, there is a very left-wing student movement that is communist-affiliated, and there is a romanticization of communist China, among the extreme left, and that is what the Americans are looking at. And of course, Americans lump everyone together, you know, Communists, Socialists, Labor, they all get lumped together sort of as "the enemy," we must throw our support to the conservatives, whose face is now Kishi.

But what the film shows is that it's a congeries of people coming from everywhere, some of them who hadn't really participated in politics until this moment, and they feel — this is so important — "we've got to participate," so women, so housewives, this is where the people are coming out, the businessmen, the shopkeepers, the people who may have been conservative even, are so, have a sense "no, we have to seize this moment to be heard."

And so to suddenly be sitting there, and saying "we are creating a kind of grassroots democracy in Japan" — and then look, and suddenly confront the fact that the police are pouring into the Diet, it looks like 1930s Japan!

12:00 The Aftermath of ANPO

When they fail, because the conservatives win, the LDP wins, the American government breathes an enormous sigh of relief, all the agencies that are mentioned in your film like the CIA that are putting money to the LDP and to Kishi personally, breathe a sigh of relief, we've surmounted this crisis — and something dies in Japan.

ANPO was the beginning of the death of a kind of sense that we can really make a difference as citizens. The next Prime Minister after Kishi says, "we've got to take that energy and put it into, divert it into, building up the economy."

There was a great deal of positive outcome of that; Japan became prosperous very quickly. If you are able to imagine the poverty and misery of Japan when the war ended, with those sixty-plus cities in rubble... They do build up the economy, energies get very much diverted into economic matters, but it kind of takes the soul out a political idealism.

I think what the film does is it brings to us many things that were buried or forgotten or even never seen, that are very true to the spirit of the times. The artists' work that was being produced then, is stunning, is stunning.

The U.S.-Japan relationship is not a relationship of equals. It's a relationship of un-equals and it always has been.

I think it comes through in your film, the humiliation, the anger, and even a kind of resentment, and in some cases bordering on hatred toward the U.S. And you can see where that comes from if you see those planes flying so low over neighborhoods. You see it, uh, of course you see it in the base accidents like that horrendous scene of the youngster that's been run over by an American military truck. Ah, it emerges in rapes which take place near the bases, but it emerges where all the bars and the prostitutes are, where the soldiers are swaggering, and it's a sense that, your land has been violated.

Okinawa has just become a terrible place because of those bases. Environmentally, and in every way. It's hard for us to, as Americans, because we're so privileged and we're so free of this feeling, to understand that, but I think that also comes out of the film. How would we feel if the situation were reversed? That's very hard for people to, to reverse places, to change places in that way, but the film helps us do that.

And I think the visuals have real, real integrity. It's a Japan most people have never seen. It doesn't fit American stereotypes. Japan isn't just Hello Kitty. It isn't just monger of girls with great big eyes and, and eyelashes. It's a very complex society, and it reached a kind of a fiery moment in 1960.

Dr. John Dower

Dr. John Dower is MIT emeritus professor of Japanese history. He is the widely respected author of multiple books about modern Japanese history, including [Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of WWII](#), about the U.S. Occupation of Japan, that received the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Bancroft Prize, the Fairbanks Prize, and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize.

He also co-founded [MIT's Visualizing Cultures](#) project, pioneering the use of visual materials to reexamine the experience of Japan and China in the modern world.

