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Promoting Social Justice, Human Rights, and Peace

JAPAN'S PEACE CONSTITUTION

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Transcript courtesy of Siglo Films (<http://www.cine.co.jp/>)

Part One

Opening text: We, the Japanese people, resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. (Preamble, the Constitution of Japan)

John Dower : Every war has been waged in the name of self-defense.

Douglas Lummis : The right of belligerency is the right to kill.

Unidentified older man at Henoko: Bearing arms is not civilized.

Koizumi Junichiro (speech at the Diet): To openly call the Self Defense Force an army that protects our peace and independence, I think we ought to change the Constitution in the future.

George W. Bush (speech on aircraft carrier): In the Battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.

Koizumi (speech at Diet): Japan can't do this, Japan can't do that...

Chalmers Johnson: Koizumi has to go down as one of the least clever Japanese prime ministers in modern times.

Hidaka Rokuro: If we revise Article 9 of the Constitution, it will freeze relations throughout Asia.

Noam Chomsky: I wouldn't say it's a move back to the 20th century; it's a move towards barbarism.

Koizumi (at a press conference): The will of the state is being questioned. The spirit of Japanese is on trial. Read the Constitution.

John Dower : Here I was in the mid-1960s and I was just beginning to discover Japan. I looked at Asia, and Asia was engulfed in war, an American war in Vietnam, a war which I thought was atrocious. That's when I began to wrestle with these issues of war and peace.

Particularly as someone who came up seeing another war in Asia, people being devastated in Asia, I had a lot of respect for the Japanese people who cherish those ideals and fought for them and tried to understand them.

What held together that idealism of the early years, what made that survive over the decades of the 50s' and 60s' was not the Japanese government so much as ordinary Japanese people, a slot of them women or men who had served in the war, who remembered the war.

People who remembered what war was really like said, "We can't do this again. We have to cherish these ideals." The government, however, was saying, "Oh, we've got to go along with America." And so you have this split in Japan.

Profile text: John W. Dower. MIT Professor of History. Author of Pulitzer Prize-winning book on postwar Japan, Embracing Defeat.

John Dower : So despite that ideal that Japan can become a model for a non-militaristic Asia and for non-militaristic solutions, the Japanese governments never produced the statesmen. They never produced the articulate people. They never produced the wherewithal to make the break - well, you don't break with America, but you say, "We can be a genuinely sovereign great nation."

Japan's a great nation. But they never had the courage to speak with their particular voice and articulate those ideas vis a vis the United States. So the conservatives will now come in and say, "Well, we're not a 'normal' nation. We have to become a 'normal' nation. We have to change the Constitution, we have to revise Article 9, we have to recognize that have a military." And I do think that something has to be done.

Japan does have a military, so changes have to be made. But I'm not impressed by wanting to be a 'normal' nation because I don't know what that means. If you want to be "normal" like the United States, I find that terrifying as this moment in history because America has become a very militaristic society.

Doug Lummis: The thing that I remember most, or the thing that had the most powerful influence on me at the time, was that being on the base as a Marine, you're totally cut off from any kind of equal or decent relationship with the people outside the base.

Towards the end of the year that I was here, I began to make a few friends, some university students and some people I met in a coffee shop which was not a shop designed for G.I. business. And it was very helpful spiritually or whatever.

But still, they couldn't forget that I was a Marine. I couldn't not be an occupying troop. And so when my year here was up, that was also the end of my three years in the Marine Corps. And instead of going back, I got my discharge here. And that was a fateful decision - I'm still here.

Profile text: C. Douglas Lummis . Political theorist. First came to Japan in 1960 as a Marine; now writes and teaches in Okinawa.

Doug Lummis: Then after I got out, I went to Nara and started studying Japanese at a Japanese university. This was 1961, right after the big 1960 uprising. So this was the 1960 Ampo generation of students. I started getting lots and lots of lectures from the students about Article 9 and peace.

College students in 1960 had experience the war. This was a college in Osaka. And that means that after World War II, Osaka was flattened like Tokyo [from the American bombing missions]. So they'd seen that. And that's the first thing they always told me, "We know what war is and you don't." I couldn't stand people telling me that they knew something I didn't know, being young and American. But it turns out they did. They knew something I didn't know. They experience a war as children and they knew that they didn't want to see that ever again.

Doug Lummis (talk at club): Japan hasn't waged war for over half a century. It hasn't fought a war. I am an American citizen, and my country has fought war after war. If you live in America, war [overseas] is a fact of life. It's just a given. In Japan, not fighting wars is a given. There's an implicit pacifism here. Peace is taken for granted; it's a matter of course. Since Article 9 was enacted, until today, not one person has been killed in belligerency by the Self Defense Force. That is the ultimate purpose of Article 9.

So, in that sense, Article 9 may be battered and beaten, but it is still alive, it's still succeeding. Not one person has been killed in an act of state belligerency. Japan's constitution is based on the principle of popular sovereignty. Grammatically, the subject is: "We, the Japanese people"... It takes the form of an order from the people to the government. That's popular sovereignty. The government was re-formed and told, "You can do this, but you can't do that. We give you this authority, but not that authority." That's what a constitution is. You write one to restrict the powers of the state. In the middle of the Constitution, Article 9 says, "You cannot wage war." It's not, "You should avoid war." It's not a suggestion. It says, "We do not give the government the power or the authority to wage war."

Hidaka Rokuro: I usually refer to it as the 15-year War. When that war ended in defeat, with the Proclamation on August 15, 1945, I was 28 years old. I was

teaching sociology at the University of Tokyo. A call went out to the university faculty to gather at Yasuda Auditorium before noon, around 11am on the 15th. So I listened to the emperor's Proclamation in Yasuda Auditorium.

Profile text: Hidaka Rokuro. Sociologist, born in China in 1917. Former University of Tokyo professor, now lives and writes in Paris.

Hidaka Rokuro: I personally reached the conclusion early on that the war was lost. It was pretty obvious. Why hadn't the Japanese government lifted a finger before the situation turned into this kind of defeat? Going back further, why had it invaded Manchuria to begin with? That's how I felt, so I didn't shed a tear; the tears just didn't come.

John Dower : People at the time said, "One of the real reasons this happened is because Japan wasn't a democracy. Japan was a militaristic country, was a repressive country. And militaristic leaders were able to take the Japanese people and move them into aggression. And this is what has happened."

So, how can we make sure this doesn't happen again? Japan has to become more democratic. It has to become less militaristic. And they're related; that democracy and anti-militarism are part of the same thing, they're not separate.

So there was an idea that to make Japan a country where people had a voice and really had rights and could speak out against militarists and other people seizing the state and moving it in militaristic directions, you had to have a new Constitution. So the Americans came into Japan after the defeat. And they said to the Japanese government, but they said this in public, "You need to change the Meiji Constitution."

Hidaka Rokuro: So the Shidehara cabinet selected a committee, and appointed Matsumoto Joji as its chair. It was called the Constitutional Problem Investigation Committee.

Nowadays, when people talk about the need to revise the constitution, they say that the constitution was imposed on Japan by the Occupation so we need to establish an "independent constitution." But, in fact, Japan did write an independent constitution. It was clearly written as an independent constitution; that's a fact.

That independent constitution was given to the Occupation in early February. The draft was delivered in early February 1946. But before that, on February 1, something happened that took both the government and the Occupation by surprise. In a famous press scoop, the Mainichi Shimbun printed a copy of the draft constitution. It was all over the front page. It was the Mainichi newspaper, and my family subscribed to the Asahi, but I happened to go out and I saw the big banners at the Mainichi newsstand. I bought the paper right away and I was shocked when I read it. "So this is going to be Japan's postwar constitution?!" My father, brother,

and I discussed it. What was the Shidehara cabinet thinking of? We couldn't understand their motive in presenting such a draft constitution. Did they really think this was the right way to go? Did they expect the draft would be rejected anyway? Or did they know it'd be rejected and think that Japan and the US would then get together and talk about it jointly? We really didn't know. If they thought it'd be accepted, they [obviously] hadn't read the Potsdam Declaration. None of the language of Potsdam was in the draft; no mention of militarism or democracy. There was no mention of the freedom of expression or any other [democratic] provisions.

John Dower : And the Americans looked at this, and they said, "The government is never going to give us the kind of constitution we want." At the point, General MacArthur came in and looked at the situation. And he said, "We've got to go in and give the Japanese a model draft Constitution."

Beate Gordon: At that time, civilians were not allowed into occupied Japan. You had to find work with the military. So I found a job right away and returned to Japan in December 1945.

Profile text: Beate Sirota Gordon. Born in 1923 in Vienna; came to Japan at age 5. After college in the US, returned to Japan as staff for the Occupation.

Beate Gordon: On February 4, General Whitney, the chief of Government Section, called us together and told us, "This will be a top secret meeting." Then he said, "Under orders from General MacArthur, it is your duty to draft a new Japanese constitution." And it was decided it had to be done in one week. Of course, we were very surprised. We never imagined we'd be given that assignment. We worked from morning to night. Of course, it was a big job to draft a constitution in just one week. I had worked as a researcher for Time magazine so I understood research. So if I was going to draft a constitution, I wanted some reference books. I jumped in a Jeep and started looking for libraries. I wanted to look at other countries' constitutions for reference. I don't remember at all where we went. Tokyo was totally devastated. The Japanese driver found several libraries, but I don't know where they were. There were hardly any buildings left, so it must have been difficult. We found ten volumes. The German Weimar constitution, the Soviet constitution, and several constitutions from Scandinavian countries.

I brought them all back to our office. They were in great demand and everyone wanted to look at them. The others who were drafting the constitution wanted to refer to them, so I let everyone borrow the books. So we read constitutions from morning till night. And I was surprised that many of the European constitutions not only guaranteed basic rights but also included social welfare rights for women. The American constitution doesn't have these, but the European ones did. I studied these and tried to figure out what fit with Japanese society.

Japanese women had no rights at all before the war, so I wanted to include as many rights as possible in the constitution, social welfare rights as well. But all that

remained was the equal rights clause, Article 24. I had written two or three pages, including all kinds of liberties, but just this little bit remained. But it has had a good influence on Japanese society, so I'm pleased.

The steering committee knew that the Socialist Party and a group called the Constitutional Research Association had also written drafts, and Colonel Kades and other had seen them. They got many ideas from those [independent] draft constitutions.

Hidaka Rokuro: The Constitutional Research Association was led by Takano Iwasaburo and Suzuki Yasuzo. They were very clear [in their wording]. For example they wrote, "The people are equal before the law; discrimination by birth or social status is prohibited." Or [another example], "The people will not be subjected to torture." They had these clauses in their draft. And Japan's constitution [explicitly] prohibits torture, so I imagine that the Occupation GHQ read this [draft] avidly. These were good concepts. In conception, it was exactly the same as today's Japanese Constitution.

So, two independent constitutions were drafted. One was drafted by Matsumoto Joji's Investigation Committee. And the other was this [independent] private sector draft by the Takano group.

John Dower : The Americans knew about these other Japanese committees that were coming out with a variety of progressive proposals, so when someone came in and said, "Well, Matsumoto is the Japanese government, but don't confuse the conservative Japanese government with the Japanese people. There are many Japanese who are able to think in much more liberal or progressive ways than the government's committee." It was a very conservative committee.

Hidaka Rokuro: When Foreign Minister Yoshida and others went to hear GHQ's response to the Matsumoto draft, GHQ had already completed the American draft. The Japanese draft was rejected. GHQ would never accept it, and the Allied Powers would clearly reject it. They were given the American draft instead. They say that Yoshida and the others turned sheet white with shock, but they took the draft and began discussing it.

John Dower : So, it's true that this is the MacArthur Constitution, but it's also true that there was a lot of government input, that there was serious debate in the parliament, that there was great public interest, and that there was widespread support for this.

The question then becomes, what happens to this constitution over time? And of course that brings us to the present moment in which now, today, almost 60 years afterwards, not a word of the constitution has been changes. It's never been revised. America has nothing to do with that.

And what really happens, I think, is that over those 60 years, the constitution is debated, but it becomes the Japanese Constitution. It's the Japanese Constitution. Americans have nothing to do with the fact that it hasn't been revised.

And in fact, as soon as the Cold War heated up - the Constitution came into effect in 1947, and in fact by 1948 it was clear that China was going to fall to the Communists, and it was clear that the Cold War was heating up. By 1949, you have the Peoples Republic of China established. In 1950, you had the Korean War. By that time, Americans are saying, "We don't want a disarmed Japan. We want a Japan that will be re-armed and fighting on our side," literally fighting in Korea. They really wanted the Japanese to fight with them in Korea. Five years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the end of the war, the Americans want the Japanese re-armed and fighting with them against the Communists. The Americans want the constitution revised. And they put that pressure on the Japanese from an early date.

Richard Nixon (speech on visit to Japan in 1953): If we want peace, during this time of international tension, we must remain militarily stronger.

Voiceover narration from archival film of 1953 Nixon visit: Vice-president Nixon declared the Peace Constitution a mistake, and created a stir by calling for [Japanese] armed forces to resist Communism. Having dropped this bombshell, Nixon left Japan on the 20th (of November) and the controversy over remilitarization intensifies.

Hidaka Rokuro: From the moment Article 9 was announced, in newspapers and among the general public, it was greeted positively and with great sympathy. In that sense, the existence of Article 9 strongly influenced the posture of the general public, the public's response to the Japanese Constitution as a whole. At the time, Prime Minister Shidehara really talked about Article 9 with a great deal of pride. That was only natural. In fact, MacArthur too had a deep affection for Article 9, a sense of pride that he had come up with the idea in the first place.

John Dower : I think he believed this was good for Japan and good for the world. MacArthur was a very complex man. He was very conservative and very radical. He was a man of war, but he also, as many men of war do, had a real sense of how precious and fragile peace is, and how horrible war is. Many military men have a profound sense of the horrors of war and how this must be avoided. But beyond that, what MacArthur understood and what then the Japanese government came to understand is, the world did not trust Japan. The world saw Japan as inherently militaristic. And what MacArthur was saying was, "You can turn this around. You can become a symbol, not of militarism and aggression and repression, but of anti-militarism. And we can put this in a legal form. And it will be accompanied by rights and popular sovereignty. And it's all one package. And that will be the way for you to earn the respect of the world. And instead of being a model of aggression like Nazi Germany, or other aggressive countries, you can become a model of the

way people should go in the future. You can start over - you can embody the highest ideals of a world without war."

Voiceover newsreel narration (1947): In May, the new constitution came into force. Comic artist Yokoyama Ryuichi turned his brush to the theme: "The new constitution eliminates war and women can run for office."

Hidaka Rokuro: In reality, the instant they say it, most citizens thought, "Ah, now we will never have to experience war again." There was a sense of relief that Japan had changed. This was very strong. But in fact, it wasn't enough for the Japanese people to take solace in the provisions of the Constitution, as welcome as they were. Article 9 actually had significance in an international context. I don't think the Japanese people really grasped this at the time. But internationally, what it meant was Japan, as the aggressor nation, made a pledge to the world about its future conduct, especially a pledge to the people of Asia. And it was received as such by people in Asia. At the same time, there was a deep suspicion that even with Article 9 in place, Japan would remilitarize - that the Japanese have this tendency. This strong suspicion was held by China, Australia, Holland, Britain, and of course by America - that Japan would someday discard Article 9 and it would rearm.

Archival newsreel of Hatoyama speech in 1952: The National Police Reserve that we fund with 180 billion yen - are they constables or soldiers? They are, after all, an army, and the constitution has to be revised. Thank you.

Archival footage of Prime Minister Kishi speech in 1958: This is a very serious issue for Japan. And to consider it seriously, we have appointed experts to a constitutional research committee. As to whether Article 9 is a potential subject of revision, I have responded that Article 9 is also under consideration.

Doug Lummis: There's nothing wrong with a forced Constitution. All good Constitutions are forced on governments. Each step towards constitutional government has been achieved through pressuring the government from below. The French Revolution produced the first French Republican Constitution and the American Revolution produced the US Constitution. All good Constitutions are forced in some way, usually by the people.

In the case of the Japanese Constitution, it was forced on the government by a brief alliance which didn't last more than a few months - a brief alliance between the occupation forces and the Japanese people. They were an objective alliance that forced the Japanese government to choke down this Constitution that reduced its power.

So from the standpoint of the people in the government, from then to now, they feel it forced on them. They feel that it limits their power, which it does. But it wasn't forced on Japan. It wasn't forced on the people. And it's only lasted this long because the people have continued to force it on the government.

Of course, most people outside of Japan, and increasing number of people inside Japan, call Article 9 unrealistic. And they call themselves realists: "We realists understand that although war is a terrible thing, you have to have military power to protect the lives of the people."

There's a big problem with that argument. I agree that it's important to be realistic. I'm not interested in being anything but realistic when we're talking about national security, the security of the society. You don't want to pursue some dream and have a million people killed. You have to be realistic, that's true.

However, if you want to be realistic, you've got to look at reality. Reality in this case is the historical record of the 20th century. The 20th century was the century in which this great experiment was done. Let's set up an international system in which each state has the right of legitimate violence and the right of belligerency and monopolizes that. And, through the balance of power and so forth, each of these states will protect its citizens. That was the big experiment of the 20th century. What happened? We know the result. More people were killed through violence in the 20th century than any other hundred year period in the history of the world. And who killed these people? It wasn't the mafia, it wasn't the yakuza, it wasn't gangs, it wasn't drug wars, it was the state. The state killed over 200 million people.

So having huge military power, in fact, doesn't make you safer. And that's one thing you don't need to explain to Okinawan people because in Okinawa, they have no historical memory every of a military group here bringing safety to the people. The more the military has been here, the more dangerous it has been for Okinawans.

Part Two

Henoko protester at proposed site of a US military helicopter base: About 8 years ago, I was thinking I could live here in peace, then the helicopter base issue came up. A base is a tool to be used in war. I've been fighting so that we would never again allow war to take place. I experienced that bitterness. I'm a survivor so I must sustain that cause. We old folks will stop it even if it means sacrificing ourselves.

Henoko protester on day 57 of the opposition sit-in (June 14, 2004): Having seen the Battle of Okinawa, we cannot pass that cruel tragedy on to the next generations, our children and grandchildren. Peace is not something that simply flows in with the times. Peace has to be sustained and passed on to future generations. That's the job of the people who live in the present world.

Henoko protester: One of the keys to the Constitution is the idea that rights are "maintained by the constant endeavor of the people." Rights are not simply enjoyed - they don't just exist at birth. People have to respond to unjust acts of the state, the suspension of rights, through constant effort, to fight the building of bases, for

example, and resist the war policies of state power. What we're doing here is putting into practice that "constant endeavor."

Henoko protester: It's corruption, not revision of the Constitution. To take a country that renounced war back to war is inexcusable. To just do America's bidding, to join the US in sending troops to Iraq, to join in a UN military force, it's outrageous! It can't be allowed. America's Bush is a dangerous man. On a world scale today, Bush is the supreme commander of terrorism.

Koizumi speech to the Diet: You claim that the Bush administration is a danger - what will become of Japanese-American friendship? Just tell me that!

Koizumi at a press conference: America is an ally of Japan and I believe Japan must be a trusted ally of America.

Richard Armitage, US Deputy Secretary of State: I've used the analogy, perhaps people will laugh at me when I do, but I use the analogy of a baseball game. It's time for Japan to get out of the stands and come down and take one of the nine positions on the field.

Chalmers Johnson (former professor in political science at University of California, current president of Japan Policy Research Institute): According to the Pentagon's annual inventory of real estate, its so-called "Base Structure Report", we have over 725 military bases in some 132 countries around the world.

By the way, no American, unless you actually lived next door to one of them, can imagine what this entails. There are no foreign military bases in the United States. There are 38 on the island of Okinawa, for example, where revolt against the bases has been endemic for 50 years. This vast network of American bases constitutes a new form of empire, an empire of military enclaves rather than of colonies as in older forms of empire.

In 1996, Governor Ota Masahide of Okinawa invited me to come to Okinawa and discuss the incident that had occurred in September the previous year when two US Marines and a US Navy man abducted, beat, and raped a 12 year-old girl. This led to the largest anti-American demonstration in Japan since the security treaty had been signed.

I was truly shocked by the impact of 38 American military bases on a very small island with 1,300,000 people living cheek by jowl with the Third Marine Division. As I began to do research, however, on the over 700 American bases in other peoples' countries, which is the subject of my new book, I began to realize that "No, Okinawa was not exceptional. It was typical, I'm sorry to say." And that then led me into this whole study of the base world, of an empire of military bases.

Many Americans believe that the rest of the world sees us through our music or our popular culture or Hollywood films. The truth of the matter is, the rest of the world sees us through heavily armed members of the special forces. Whether they have any contact with them or not, they can't avoid the conclusion that the United States prefers to deal with the rest of the world through military force.

If you want to go along with American military policy around the world and the kind of megalomania you get from the neoconservatives in the Pentagon, then indeed the litmus test, the acid test for George Bush was "Will you support me in Iraq?" He put that to Koizumi. And Koizumi, like the proper little cocker spaniel, comes up with something illegal, worthless, and likely to cause lasting resentment throughout the Islamic world against Japan by this token dispatch of troops to Iraq. It is as good an example as I can think of of a genuine mistake in international affairs.

This will be damaging to Japan. It will be damaging in other ways though, given the fact that the Constitution, whether it should be reformed or not, has not yet been reformed, and the dispatch of troops to Iraq strongly suggests that the claim of the rule of law in Japan spurious. The government of Japan seemed indifferent to the moral commitments put into its highest law. And for nothing. It is perfectly obvious today that the United States has only two choices in Iraq. That is, one, to get out while it can or be thrown out.

Koizumi Junichiro (speech in Diet on Oct. 5, 2001): To assert the right to collective self defense, we'd change the constitution. But the time is not ripe for changing the constitution. So we're exploring the possibilities, using all our wits, the gaps between the Preamble and Article 9 of the Constitution, and relying on the wisdom of all the Diet members, we're deciding what Japan is able to do.

Interview 1 on the streets of Damascus: They should withdraw. There's no problem with humanitarian aid, but we oppose troops in support of the US.

Street interview 2: Ordinary civilians will suffer. Innocent children will suffer.

Street interview 3: I agree entirely. Peace and safety - that's what matters! We have no use for violence or terror, and we don't want war.

Street interview 4: Japan has suffered more from war than any other country because American dropped atomic bombs on it. So it shouldn't send troops to resolve conflict. That will only make orphans of children. I'm sure the Japanese people don't want that to happen.

Michel Kilo (Syrian writer who was jailed for 3 years for opposition activities. He was a leader of the Damascus Spring Movement in 2000): The SDF occupation violates international law. If they came under a UN resolution, the Iraqis might welcome them, but it was a decision of the United States. With no lawful

government in place, in a country where the US appoints the government, that occupation is not based on international law. Article 9 is a precious clause and Japan should maintain it. Japan should take the path of peace and not return to militarism. For Japan's sake, for our sake, for all humankind, violence shouldn't be used to resolve international problems. Humanity is one, so we should help each other and resolve problems with fraternity, peace, and progress.

Josef Samaha (editor of Al-Safir newspaper in Beirut. Founded Al-Yaum Al-Sabeh, a pan-Arab magazine, in Paris in 1980): The issue of the troop dispatch can't be understood without looking at the broader Iraqi situation. Japan may say, "This is a legal UN-sanctioned humanitarian action. We won't get involved in armed conflict", but the tendency throughout the Middle East is to strongly oppose the occupation of Iraq by foreign militaries.

Regarding the Constitution, Japan first needs to talk to its neighbors. A painful history is shared by Japan and its neighbors. The influence of the Cold War remains in the Far East more than anywhere in the world. And it's still felt intensely today, for example, on the Korean Peninsula and between China and Taiwan. A fragile balance is maintained, so wisdom must be exercised and talks continually held so as to reassure the other countries [in the region].

The solemn pledge Japan made after reflecting on the experience of war, "We will never use our military against another country again" needs to be reaffirmed. This is not just an issue that concerns the Far East. It's a pressing issue for the future of the entire world.

Chalmers Johnson: Japan has long been criticized for not having apologized for its aggression during World War II, certainly not in the way that postwar Germany did. I've always felt, and I first arrived in Japan in 1953 when these issues were still very much alive, that the Japanese did not apologize. The apology was Article 9.

It was a statement to the rest of East Asia: "You have no reason in the future ever to fear Japanese military behavior of the sort that occurred during the 1930s and 1940s because we have now formally, publicly, legally renounced the use of armed force except as a final resort in our own self defense."

To formally renounce Article 9 is to renounce the apology and, I believe, to re-open for the entire world of China, for people of Chinese ancestry throughout Southeast Asia, for the Koreans, the issue of, "Did Japan ever really apologize? Does it really understand the weight of war crimes on it?"

Hidaka Rokuro: I believe that we, as Japanese, need to understand the feelings of other Asian peoples better. After all, in the Fifteen Year War, some 20 million people died. In small villages and towns... the Nanking Massacre always gets a lot of attention, but we need to know what took place in small towns and villages. Of

course, the soldiers who went to war know this and many confessed or talked about it after the war. But what the Chinese people felt back then gives me great pain.

Testimony of Chinese woman in documentary film: I saw the village chief drag Hou Dong-E off and I saw him hit her in the face. Hou Dong-E was a girl older than me and I called her "big sister". She was taken to the Japanese Army camp and was raped by the captain. She got sick and was sent home. I was raped after that and I was confined for five months.

Ban Zhongyi (writer and documentary filmmaker. Long involved in researching sexual victims of the former Japanese Army): In China, most people know stories like this one because they broadcast these accounts on radio and TV. Everyone knows about the war crimes committed in China by the former Japanese Army - rape, slaughter, arson, and so on. I was born and raised in Fushun, in Liaoning Province. Beginning in grade school, my friends and I often went to Pingdingshan. There is a memorial there for fallen comrades with tall stone monuments. There was an incident there in 1932 after Japan set up the state of Manchukuo. Chinese guerrillas destroyed a railway that Japan had built to a coal mine, and the Japanese Army attacked a village in revenge. That was Pingdingshan.

They say 3,000 villagers were killed and only four people from the village survived. I grew up hearing this story, so I assumed that Japanese knew about it too. But, in fact, they had never heard the name Pingdingshan. I wondered why the Japanese didn't know about such a major war crime, but this is the Japanese perception of the war. They stubbornly hide uncomfortable truths from the past. I was surprised at this and it made me angry.

There is a saying in China that you must take revenge, so there's enmity toward Japanese. But we also say, "Kill someone and all that falls is his head." In other words, "You may hate an enemy, but if he apologizes, forgive him." There's this tradition and value system in China, but the Japanese do the opposite. They don't apologize for misdeeds. They put a lid on crimes and feign innocence. Not only do they refuse to apologize, they claim that China is making this up! This just fans anti-Japanese sentiment in China.

Former "comfort woman" in Korea 1: If the Japanese are really human, they'd know from a cut on their finger about another's pain. Liberation came for us 60 years ago and I watched everyone celebrate and clap their hands in joy while I desperately tried to hide. I worried that they'd learn I had been a so-called comfort woman, and I was terrified. Until I was past 70 years of age, I couldn't even tell my children. There was no way I could, so I kept it hidden. It was so mortifying. If there were many people who suffered like this among the Japanese, would they keep quiet and let the matter drop? We are all the same, but...

Former comfort woman 2: If we'd done something wrong, that'd be one thing. We can't die in peace with things as they are. We were born as human beings, but the

disgrace was too much to bear. We couldn't tell our own families because there was so much shame. We spent our lives frantic to hide it. It's society's problem [to be dealt with properly]. I'm not saying all the Japanese people are bad; it was the world at that time that was wrong. That's why we must make a stand [and speak out].

[text]: December 1, 2004. Protest at the Japanese Embassy. Continuous for 13 years - today is the 634th weekly demonstration.

Shin Heisoo (Representative, Korean Council. Active in Korean and international women's rights and human rights efforts): Some of the women still have nightmares. One of them finds it impossible to sleep alone, and always has to have someone nearby. A few months ago, the incident at Abu Ghraib prison was reported in the press, where US soldiers took Iraqi POWs and stripped them naked and tortured them. Seeing these reports in the newspapers and on TV, one of the women was unable to sleep because it reminded her of how she had been stripped and raped. She went to a demonstration against sending Korean soldiers to Iraq, and she told that story. So you see, the aftereffects are not limited to physical scars. Terrible psychological scars from the intense trauma clearly remain to this day.

Wednesday demonstration (speaker and crowd chanting): Japan must apologize as the international commission directed! Apologize! Apologize! Japan must halt its remilitarization and cooperate in the peaceful reunification of Korea! Cooperate! Cooperate!

[text insert]: Sungkonghoe University, Seoul

Han Hong Koo (Historian and leader of the campaign for a Korean peace museum; his history of the ROK was a bestseller): If Japan's constitution collapses, it will lead to military buildup by both Koreas, China, and Russia. Even if, after revision, the SDF is defined as "an army for self defense", the psychological effect will be to push other countries to expand their militaries. Korean youth, just like the younger generation in Japan, don't know much about history and they're susceptible to government-led campaigns for nationalist expansion.

For example, just as a Japanese hostage was killed in Iraq, a Korean hostage was killed in Iraq last June. While some urged a peaceful response to the incident, others responded more aggressively, [saying]: "This is an affront to the pride of the Korean Republic!" and "We should send troops and smash the insurgents!"

What is needed in the present situation is for young Koreans and Japanese to join forces to nurture peaceful sensibilities together. Not the stance, "to make war with a strong military" but to have a peaceful sensibility is essential. That is the only force that can restrain militarism and prevent war.

[text insert]: Sangji University, near the 38th parallel

Kang Man-Gil (President of Sangji University; dean of Korean historians; active in academic exchanges with North Korea): Japan has raised the military threat from North Korea as a justification for its own remilitarization. But nobody believes that North Korea, as impoverished as it is, presents any threat to attack Japan. North-South relations in Korea are on the road to reconciliation; that's a Korean problem that has to be settled through dialogue between North and South Korea. If Japan resumes its place as one East Asian nation, and if China can grow economically without seeking hegemony, we can build a peaceful, regional alliance like the EU. That's what is needed in East Asia today. In the 21st century East Asia, people increasingly wonder why we can't maintain peace on our own. Why do we depend on the US to keep peace in East Asia? Can't East Asians maintain peace by ourselves? That question has been spreading; it's a matter of East Asian sovereignty and pride. East Asia must be able to maintain peace through its own efforts.

[text insert]: Boston, Massachusetts

Noam Chomsky (Linguist and political theorist. Since the Vietnam War, a leading critic of US foreign policy and militarism): Japan can be "normal" the way it was in the 1930s, for example. It was a normal power in the 1930s - brutal, violent, overflowing with lovely rhetoric about the earthly paradise that they were going to bring to the people of Asia if they can only protect them from the Chinese bandits. Yeah, that's normal, unfortunately. Genghis Khan was normal, too [in that sense].

There have been attempts, particularly in the 20th century, to move beyond the savagery and violence and destructiveness of much of history. Largely because it came to be recognized that humans have constructed means of violence so immense that any war involving major powers is going to mean the end of the human species.

The UN Charter was an effort to give some formal structure to a world of peaceful states that would not have the right to resort to force or even the threat of force in international affairs. And that is the framework of modern international law. The UN Charter opens by saying that we want to save humanity from the curse of war, words to that effect.

That sets a reasonable standard for the use of force. And it certainly hasn't been adhered to. The US is, in fact, extreme in its refusal to adhere to it. But it is a standard that the population of the world should impose on their own states. It should force them to adhere to it. And Japan is unfortunately moving away from that.

Japan is caught up in that matrix of [American] power. It can't avoid it. [However,] it can make choices within it - very different choices.

John Dower : what has maintaining the Constitution done for Japan? I think it has done many good things for Japan. If you look at the postwar world, Japan for [more than] 60 years has not been an aggressive power. It has not exacerbated violence in

Asia. It has been more trusted by people because it did not pursue a military path. The problem with what Japan has done in the postwar world is that by adhering to that policy, it has become totally subordinate to American policy. It has followed along with American policy and it's lost its sense of real sovereignty, and that's the problem.

Chalmers Johnson: I believe they ought to be more proud of their Constitution. Though without question, its inspiration was during the American occupation, it became deeply nationalized in Japan beginning in the 1950s in the form of Japan's genuine anti-war sentiment.

I do not see the advantage to Japan of becoming a "normal" power if they mean one with a couple of aircraft carriers, nuclear weapons, cruise missiles, and a munitions industry. Moreover, they will never be a serious military power because, as we know, they simply don't have the manpower to really staff an army again. And that is one of the most pleasant remarks I've made all afternoon.

Ban Zhongyi: I think Article 9 is an extremely noble provision. It's like a treasure that was given to humankind by God. Now, Japan is going to change the constitution that it maintained for [more than 60] years. The older generation that knows the pain of war is dying away and the younger generations know nothing. They are planning to revise Article 9 and revert to the nationalism of the past. This is a foolish and extremely dangerous thing to do. Defending Article 9 is [a task] not just for the Japanese. It is the urgent responsibility of all of humanity.

Hidaka Rokuro: I think Article 9 should be spread, aggressively, on a popular level, to all the people of the world. And first of all, to the people of Asia, the message should be sent that many Japanese believe in this [the peace clause]. Constitutional revision isn't just a domestic problem; it's an international, especially an Asian problem. That's the most important thing.

Beate Sirota Gordon: If there's another war, no one will emerge as the victor. Winners and losers will all be devastated in the same way. Peace is the most important, most serious problem in the world today. It would be wonderful if Japan could become a leader of peace.