When Revolutions Fail: The 1960 Anpo Protests and the Origins of Contemporary Japan

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About This Talk

In 1960, Japan was wracked by the largest protests in its modern history, as millions of people took to the streets to oppose a revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Known as "Anpo" in Japanese, this is the treaty that to this day allows the United States to maintain military bases on Japanese soil. Although the protests ultimately failed to stop passage of the revised treaty, they culminated in a violent storming of the Japanese national legislature which brought down the conservative government of Japanese prime minister Kishi Nobusuke and caused the cancellation of a planned visit to Japan by US president Dwight Eisenhower. This talk considers the lasting legacies and ongoing contemporary relevance of these massive protests in Japan, and the ways they transformed the U.S.-Japan alliance and Japanese politics, society, and culture in ensuing decades.

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Nick Kapur received his Ph.D. in Japanese history from Harvard University and is presently Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University's Camden campus, where he teaches Japanese and East Asian history. His research interests focus on modern Japan and East Asia in transnational and comparative perspective. His book Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo (Harvard University Press, 2018) details transformations in Japanese politics, culture and society, as well as US-Japan relations and the Cold War international system, that unfolded in the aftermath of the massive 1960 protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty. In addition, he has recently published research on Chinese and Japanese environmental policy since 1970, US-Japan relations during the John F. Kennedy administration, and the 1968 centennial celebrations of Japan's Meiji Restoration.