

This video is a transcript of an interview discussing Japan's engagement with international law and its historical context, particularly during the 19th century. The speaker, Andrew, reflects on his motivations for contributing a chapter on Japan and international law to an edited volume, emphasizing both his academic background in this field and the significance of Japan's late entry into international legal discourse.

Key points include:

- Japan faced significant challenges due to its lack of experience with international treaties when it was confronted by Western powers in the mid-19th century, a period marked by the arrival of "black ships" (American vessels).
- The historical context prior to this was dominated by a Sinocentric world order where China held a central position, and Japan operated within a tribute system.
- The transition to international law involved substantial political and cultural shifts, necessitating the translation of Western legal concepts and practices into Japanese.
- Japanese authorities found the introduction of Western legal systems politically charged and contentious, leading to domestic tensions and reforms.
- Ultimately, Japan became the first non-Western country to revise unequal treaties and show its capabilities in the international legal arena, thereby establishing itself as a civilized nation in the eyes of Western powers.

Andrew also draws parallels between Japan's historical international relations and current global dynamics, suggesting that modern multipolarity has roots in Japan's 19th-century adaptations to international norms. The discussion concludes with reflections on the ongoing evolution of international law and state sovereignty.