

Northeast Asia Regional Program



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Col. Takayuki Terasaki is a career Japan Air Self-Defense Force officer, responsible for managing Mid-Term Defense Planning. He began his fellowship with three objectives: 1) to enhance his knowledge of international security; 2) to hone his practical skills to develop security policy as a future leader; and 3) to establish a professional network of experts. In particular, he focused his fellowship questions on three aspects of Northeast Asian security, which he characterized as a “tangled web of national interests.”

U.S.-China Relations: China’s unprecedented economic growth and development over the past two decades culminated in its economy overtaking Japan’s for the first time last year to achieve the world’s second highest GDP. China’s military modernization in conjunction with its strong economy and perceived tough approach to territorial disputes in the South China Sea has caused some concern among both its neighbors and the United States. Since a continued U.S. Asian presence is considered necessary to maintain a regional power balance—particularly by Japan and South Korea which rely on the U.S. security umbrella—the health of U.S.-China relations directly impacts East Asian regional stability overall. Col. Terasaki met with numerous security experts such as the Stimson Center’s Alan Romberg and the Brookings Institute’s Richard Bush, who explained that while both countries share a high level of economic interdependence, both harbor a degree of mutual suspicion about each other’s security strategies, yet both have also consciously expanded cooperation and confidence building in certain areas. Jacques deLisle, Director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for East Asian Studies, described U.S. policy towards China as *conagement*, a combination of engagement and containment. On the other hand, David Lai of the U.S. Army War College provided a valuable overview of China’s perspective of its own foreign policy priorities. In this view, China’s central concern is to maintain regional stability and the important tool for that is a strong military.

The North Korea Nuclear Issue: After discussions with numerous experts on the Korean peninsula nuclear problem, Col. Terasaki concluded that no clear consensus exists on the best way to engage North Korea. During Col. Terasaki’s fellowship U.S. and North Korean officials met in Geneva for a second round of bilateral meetings aimed at jump-starting the Six Party Talks, without immediate indication of progress. Col. Terasaki realizes that it will take a substantial amount of patience and time to resolve the North Korea problem. The various parties to the Six Party Talks have not been able to fully harmonize their positions and interests. For example, China has prioritized stability on the Korean peninsula over denuclearization. The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation’s Duyeon Kim and CSIS’s Yongsoon Hwang told Col. Terasaki that although North Korea will talk with South Korea, they consider their primary dialogue partner to be the U.S. and will seize any opportunity to engage the U.S.

The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: The core of the U.S.-Japan relationship over the past half century has been the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1960. Most experts Col. Terasaki talked with affirmed the alliance’s importance to regional stability while commenting as well on occasional areas of concern such as Japan’s weak political leadership and the controversy surrounding the planned relocation of Futenma Marine Corps Base. Visits to the Department of Air Force and Joint Chiefs of Staff gave Col. Terasaki an opportunity to exchange frank views on U.S. security strategy in Japan and the broader Asia-Pacific as well.

Col. Terasaki’s immediate plans after returning to Japan are to talk to junior and mid-level officers and contribute an article on his fellowship to his service’s internal journal. In the longer term he hopes to be involved in Japan’s defense policy planning and maintain contact with the network of people he met on his fellowship.

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