

“Japan, Asia, and the U.S.”



1. (From left) Mimi Yu, Associate Director, EAI, Dr. Wanxiang Yao, Director, EAI, Councilman Ron Nirenberg, CG Takaoka, Dr. John Frederick, Provost of UTSA, Rosemary Kowalski, CEO Emeritus of the RK Catering Group, Vice Consul Yuki Ochiai, Sherry Dowlatshahi, Chief of Protocol, International Relations of City of San Antonio
2. (From left) Councilman Ron Nirenberg, CG Takaoka, Vice Consul Yuki Ochiai
3. Audience at CG Takaoka's lecture

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On Tuesday, March 17, 2015, the East Asia Institute (EAI) hosted Nozomu Takaoka, Consul General of Japan in Houston, to present a lecture entitled “Japan, Asia, and the U.S.” This event was free and open to the public. Students and faculty from many different areas of study attended to hear what the Consul General had to say about the recent developments of Japan and the relationship Japan and Texas have.

Consul General Nozomu Takaoka graduated from the University of Tokyo with a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts. Later, he studied International Relations at Oxford University. An experienced diplomat, Takaoka has worked in many official posts around the world including the United Kingdom, Egypt, United States, Italy, Sweden and Iran.

When Takaoka served as Political Director at the Japanese Consulate in New York, he was able to observe American politics during President Clinton's administration. His immediate previous post was as Minister of the Japanese Embassy in Iran.

In Japan, Takaoka has served as director in charge of Cultural Exchange of the Foreign Ministry and director in charge of

Immigration Control of the Justice Department. The mission of his current position in Houston is to further develop political and economic ties between Japan and the U.S., share Japanese culture with American citizens, and support the Japanese community in Texas and Oklahoma.

Before the lecture, a private reception was held in honor of Takaoka. Those who attended the reception were faculty of UTSA from several departments, city officials, past and current Japan American Society of San Antonio board members, officers of the Japanese Self-Defense Air Force officers and student representatives of UTSA. Dr. Wanxiang Yao, Director of East Asia Institute, and Dr. John Frederick, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, addressed their welcoming remarks to the guests. Councilman Ron Nirenberg, City of San Antonio District 8, formally introduced the Guest of Honor, Consul General Nozomu Takaoka.

After the reception, Takaoka and the group moved into the lecture hall to begin his presentation, where students and faculty were waiting. Takaoka discussed the market trend status of Japan and the United States, and how

the trade deficit is decreasing rapidly through the production and trade of oil and energy sources. The main sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) are chemical, IT and electronics, transportation, and energy. Yet, the producer of an immense amount of Japan's revenue is Toyota, and a large part of that revenue comes from Texas. Due to heavy trade with the United States, it was considered beneficial to have Japanese company headquarters in the center of U.S. as a producer. "Even the future is bigger for Japan and Texas," said Takaoka. "Democratic energy alliance between the U.S. and Japan" is mutually beneficial, such as investments in energy, transportation, and technology. Japan has 6% of all FDI projects in Texas, and is also heavily invested in companies for the development and production of shale oil. Japan is the largest financial provider to widen the Panama Canal to pass a mega-tanker through in 25 days rather than in 50 days.

Texas is a very important state in the U.S. for Japanese companies. In the 80's, when Japanese companies were moving to the states, most of the Japanese companies were located on the west coast since it was closer to Japan. At the time, those companies would import materials from Japan to develop items. Soon this method was very costly since the shipping time was long. Companies also moved to the east coast of the United States. So shipping materials to the east coast become very costly and timely. It was decided that rather than importing materials from Japan, it would be better to manufacture in the United States to lower shipping costs and time. Also building factories in the middle of the United States can get materials to both the east and west coast very fast. Texas was a good location for Japanese companies because there is a lot of land everywhere. Texas is a great place for businesses to blossom, and it is exactly in the middle of the United States.

Takaoka next talked about high speed rail in Texas between Houston and Dallas planned to be done by 2020, capable of reaching speeds of 200 mph and moving passengers from one city to the other in less than 90 minutes. An environmental survey is currently underway through the Texas Central Railway, for this private, market-led project. The high speed rail train will help businesses connect with each other from the two major cities of Texas. Also, the train will pave the way for other rails to be built around Texas, and eventually, the United States. This is an example of how a part of Japan is present in Texas.

The last high technology project presented by the Takaoka was Kounotori, an unmanned space capsule designed to launch exclusively to International Space Station (ISS). It will be able to be caught and guided by a robotic arm installed in ISS for the purpose of fast delivery of goods.

In addition, Takaoka talked about some recent government developments from Japan on how Japan can handle international threats. In the past, the Japanese constitution said Japan can not engage in war only if they were attacked on their main island or any other Japanese islands. This would have prevented Japan helping their allies if the support was needed. Last July, the Japanese Diet reinterpreted the Japanese constitution to change the war clause. Now Japan can send troops to allied nations for support only if the survival of Japan is threatened.

At the end of the lecture, Consul General Takaoka took the time to answer a few questions from the audience members. One of the attendees asked why Japan's apologies for their involvement in World War II are not being accepted in Asia in the same way that Germany's apologies were accepted in Europe. The reason behind this, according to the Consul General, is that because Europe was making an effort at the

time to produce a unified Europe. Germany's apology would have needed to be accepted in order for them to move on with this plan. But Asia did not have any plans for unification or making the Germany's apology would have needed to be accepted in order for them to move on with this plan. However, Asia did not have any plans for unification or making the states equal, so it was not as easy for them to accept Japan's apology and promise to become a peaceful nation. Another reason for this problem was the history both continents have experienced for hundreds of years. Europe has a long history of warfare within the continent. Europe was used to having war so the people can use history to learn about forgiving countries. In Asia, it is the opposite. The only country to forgive Japan so far is South Korea and that is why their economies are superior. The only thing Japan can do for now is to "keep apologizing".

The lecture was officially concluded with Dr. Yao presenting a gift to Consul General Takaoka on behalf of the East Asia Institute. The audience members had a chance to meet with Takaoka to say hello or ask a question. An audience member said "I did not know Japan had a huge presence in Texas. This seems like the Japan and Texas relationship will grow in the future".

The UTSA East Asia Institute's mission is to promote appreciation and understanding of East Asian societies and cultures both on campus and in the community through research, outreach, networking, education, student/faculty exchange, and business development and cooperation.

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1: Vice Consul Ochiai with two Japanese self-defense air force officers, and Masanao Watanabe (middle), Treasurer of Toyota Motor Manufacturing of TX (TMMTX), and Yoshihisa Nagatani, Corporate Advisor of TMMTX (far left)
2. CG Takaoka with Dr. Lisa Montoya, Associate Dean, College of Business (left) and Taeg Nishimoto, Professor of Architecture