

# **CEPEX JSA Scholar Tokyo Internship Experience Report 2017**

Takahiro Kinoshita

## **Part I: Starting Out**

As I arrived to my hotel in Akasaka after my flight on a Tuesday afternoon, I felt a fresh sense of excitement as I unpacked my suitcase and prepped for my first day at the Sojitz Research Institute (Soken). The next morning, I woke up two hours earlier than I had planned not because of jet lag, but from the mix of excitement and nervousness I felt. On the first day, I discussed possible topics for my research for the next ten days and hoped to cover something with the new American administration or defense policy in the Middle East as I had general knowledge behind these areas, however, during my internship at the Washington branch, I had brought up other topics in defense issues that had recently interested me. The conversation I had with Tada-san was encouraging to get me to explore a relatively new topic for me which was cybersecurity. I expressed my interest for this area in the past but had never gone so much deeper than to read a few articles. Moreover, what better time to gain a better understanding of such topics like cybersecurity than during this internship where Sojitz can offer even greater resources from a business security perspective? The first week included only three days which had passed relatively quickly.

Soken members such as Eiko-san and Ichikawa-san were very supportive in helping me further my research offering me helpful people I could talk to and places I could go to. Through this, I was able to meet with members of the aerospace division and air defense division on their role in Sojitz. The encounters I had throughout all of these moments would be difficult even if I had stayed in Washington. On top of these meetings and overall explanations of the divisions in the company, I was also able to visit the Ministry of Defense in Ichigaya. During this visit, I was able to see Japan's history of its military mostly emphasizing the post-war history but also covering its foreign policy since the Meiji period. Since I had an interest in early-Showa period history before, I was able to take away a lot being able to apply my previous knowledge of contemporary Japanese history. Additionally, I was able to learn in greater detail regarding the sections within the Ministry of Defense such as the National Institute of Defense Studies which was described as a major think tank within the Ministry of Defense. As I have attended numerous think tanks during my D.C. portion of the internship, this was an interesting point seeing it as a possible reflection to the American think tanks.

While my research began to take its initial shape and I began to feel more comfortable in the office of the 24<sup>th</sup> floor, I was consistently amazed with the people of Sojitz and the beautiful building itself overlooking Tokyo Tower. Even a light stroll around the area revealed a prestigious feel where I was able to see the National Diet building peek out among the high-rise building within Chiyoda-ku. Along with this, as a rising senior looking toward my post-undergraduate career, I was able to receive valuable insights through the many conversations I had with Sojitz professionals and provide advice to students like me who had carried strong interests in developing a career in the Japanese professional field post-undergrad.



(Entrance to Akasaka Station on Tokyo Metro)



(Ichigaya Memorial Hall at the Ichigayadai Ministry of Defense)



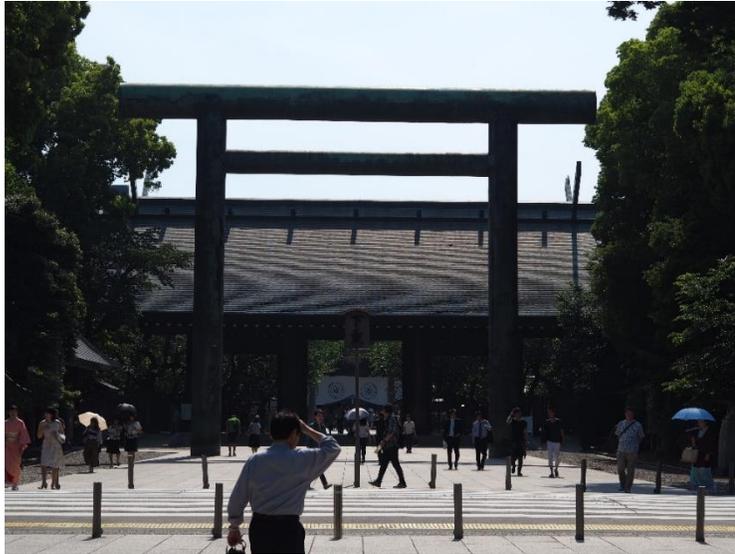
(National Institute for Defense Studies at Ichigayadai Ministry of Defense)

## Part II: Old Friends and New Encounters

After an eventful three days full of new experiences as a Soken intern, the weekend came as quickly as it passed. Over the weekend I was able to meet with friends from high school and other fellow interns from Washington. Reuniting with the high school friends was nothing short of good timing to be in Tokyo. Catching up from over two years ago in Tokyo felt familiar despite all of us being so far away from Illinois. While most of these reunions took place at night, I was able to do make some personal excursions during the day seeing temples and other landmarks within Tokyo. I was able to enjoy places like the Yasukuni Shrine where Eiko-san from Soken had recommended to me when I mentioned that I was interested in learning about modern Japanese political controversies stemming from the pre-war period. In short, this gave me further motivation to continue researching this topic!

By the time I was back in the Soken office on Monday, I was able to feel comfortable being able to work in a setting that I would not have been able to imagine myself to be in the last year. In the first half of the week, I was able to gather even more information for my research through the conversations with members of the IT planning department within Sojitz and discussions with the members of Salon de Eigo as well who were familiar with certain exercises that the company performed to combat cyber-attacks.

In addition to all the discussions I was able to have regarding professional life in Japan and cybersecurity, the talk on the Middle East with Chino Hayashi-san was especially interesting. Hayashi-san was able to explain to me Sojitz's history with certain countries in the region and general information regarding the region including the recent election that went on in Iran. Hearing about her works gave me great insight into how academia and business approaches to analyzing the regional on-goings could yield significant information that could be useful to both fields. On top of this, I was truly able to experience the passion that people had for their work in Soken that they demonstrated by establishing valuable information not limited to the academic field but in business as well.



(Main Gate of Yasukuni Shrine)



(Meat Sushi from Shibuya)

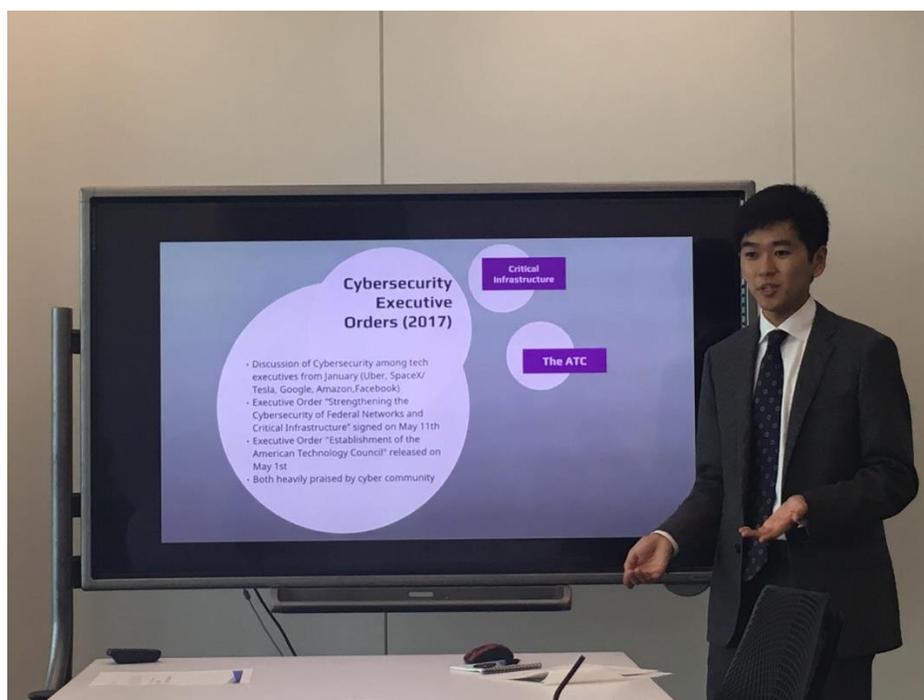
### Part III: The Value of Information: “Give and Take”

With two days left of the internship, I was much more motivated to talk to even more people as I continued preparing for the presentation. Such meetings included having lunch with some of the relatively new workers to Sojitz in order to get a better understanding on the importance of “entering the company” (入社) and the ambitions that they held within the company. Each of the workers were less than five years into Sojitz but had such exciting stories to tell regarding their work both overseas and at the main office.

At the same time, my last day seemed to be the most eventful day as Tada-san had invited me to join him at the Prime Minister’s Office for a meeting with a special advisor to the Prime Minister, Mr. Sogaku Miyamoto. On top of this, I was even able to discuss my research and presentation during the meeting and although I had never felt so nervous in my life, the privilege I had been given for such a unique opportunity to tour the Prime Minister’s Offices was truly one of a kind. Something that will continue to echo in my memories from this experience was how Tada-san had talked to me while I rehearsed my materials over with him before the visit and strongly emphasized the value in the “give and take” of information.

Soon after, I proceeded to present the same materials I was able to display at the Prime Minister’s Office to the members of Soken and Global HR. Being able to speak to an audience such as the special advisor to the Prime Minister also provided additional confidence to my presentation at Sojitz.

While the ten days felt very much like a mere instant, there are countless things that I can look back to and draw any lessons from the experience. I was consistently impressed with the level of sophistication that the office was able to maintain and how the power of information was truly utilized. In combination of people originating from all sorts of backgrounds whether it be academia or business, made it an even fertile ground for success. Sojitz’s approach to research is both pragmatic and malleable in the sense that the work can translate well between business and academia. Moving forward, I have no doubt that I will continue to work within a field that will incorporate both Japanese and American relations on the global stage.



(Presenting cybersecurity research to Sojitz staff)



(Visiting the Prime Minister's Office, with Mr. Sogaku Miyamoto)



(Group picture with Sojitz Members after Presentation)