


ARTICLE

Japanese Postwar Success: The Impact of Moral Re-Armament

Eric B. Dent
Stephanie L. Torrico 
Craig Randall

After World War II, Japan was severely degraded, and its people were generally devastated. For the country's very survival, the beleaguered Japanese people sought to rebuild economically and reputationally. During this postwar period, Japanese business, union, and government leaders grappled with lagging progress and the necessary abandonment of prior transwar social and business arrangements. They sought new strategies to stimulate advancement in the wake of a governmental vacuum, labor unrest, and the threat of communism. In this context, Moral Re-Armament (MRA) took root in some areas of Japan during the period when Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) grew from \$102 billion in 1945 to \$420 billion by 1961. MRA introduced Western-oriented societal values, intended to help nurture individual and societal change, including collaborative relations between unions and management. Of the first eight Japanese prime ministers after World War II, six either worked openly with or endorsed the MRA movement.

Keywords: Japan; Moral Re-Armament; Labor; Transwar

Japanese Postwar Success

In November 1945, Japan's postwar production reached only 9 percent of its World War II levels, and "the bombed-out streets of Tokyo were a landscape of wayward veterans, orphaned children, and maimed civilians; of black markets, prostitutes, and drunk intellectuals."¹ As Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), one of the first tasks undertaken by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur entailed providing food to a country on the brink of starvation. Coal production failed to meet the needs of operating the railroads, let alone heating homes.

Corresponding author: Eric B. Dent; Email: dr.eric.dent@gmail.com

1. Hofmann, "What's Left of the Right," 410.

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Only 20 percent of the cotton textile plants remained functional, and almost none of the steel mills and shipyards functioned. To make matters worse, the population spiked as over five million Japanese citizens returned from China, Korea, the Soviet Union, and other places where they had colonized, occupied, or served in the military. Moreover, high birth rates added five million more mouths to feed by 1950, and top leaders perceived the increasing populace as the nation's biggest challenge.² Inflation ran rampant. The cost of rice, the main staple of the island, increased 400% in 1946, 600% in 1947, and 200% in 1948. Thus, starvation and lack of jobs persisted as the main government concerns prior to 1950.³ Japan's defeat shattered morale, and its failed transwar ideology left a sense of disillusionment among many ordinary citizens. The imperial system with ever-increasing territorial ambitions brought disaster. Rebuilding the country's ethos by channeling the indomitable Japanese spirit [*yamato-damashii*] proved as important as rebuilding its infrastructure. Moreover, Japan suffered worldwide condemnation, particularly among neighbors such as China and the Philippines, where animosities ran deep even before the war.

Ultimately, the turnaround in Japan was extraordinary. In 1945, GDP was \$102 billion, and by 1961 had grown to \$420 billion. Even more dramatically, over that period, GDP per capita more than tripled, far surpassing Germany's less than 200 percent increase and the United Kingdom's (UK's) increase of about 26 percent.

The purpose of this article is to document an unexplored factor that assisted in this economic growth:⁴ the work of an external nongovernment organization, Moral Re-Armament (MRA), in the moral rebuilding of postwar Japan. In a June 1948 *Time* article, Paul Hoffman (administrator of the Marshall Plan) described MRA's role as giving the world "the ideological counterpart of the Marshall Plan."⁵ Others have documented the importance of many other factors, such as the allied occupation, the growth of the managerial enterprise,⁶ quality movement, and eventually the national focus on exports. MRA came at the challenge from a vastly different angle, moral development.

MRA's abundant activities and impact have mostly been lost to history. This article expounds MRA's substantial but largely forgotten⁷ impact on Japan's transformation to a respected international power: an example of an endogenous nongovernmental influence. Although this article primarily features the story of labor, industrial relations, and business, the success of Japan's companies in the 1950s was intertwined with national culture and politics. As such, this history cannot be properly told without that important context. Ichiro Ishikawa⁸ (first president and Chairman of Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations [*Keidanren*] and later the inaugural chairman of Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers)⁹

2. "Japanese Leaders Meet Here."

3. Gordon, "Paternalism and Direct Management."

4. Paul Hoffman, the administrator of the Marshall Plan, in June 1948, described MRA's role as giving the world "the ideological counterpart of the Marshall Plan" (Twitchell).

5. "Religion: To Change the World," 4.

6. Morikawa, "The Role of Managerial Enterprise in Post-War Japan's Economic Growth."

7. Hofmann, "The Conservative Imaginary," 79.

8. The Appendix "Cast of Characters" includes a list of names and titles of those mentioned throughout the article.

9. "New Showa Denko Head."

as one of the top industrial leaders in the country said, “The development of the Japanese economy after the war is said to be due to the strong ties between the political, government, and business worlds, so strong that they are known as the ‘iron triangle.’”¹⁰ Okazaki¹¹ also demonstrated an important role played by the cooperation of the Ministry of Finance, Japan Development Bank, and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

The Overall Moral and Political Challenge

As noted, the initial postwar challenge for Japan required simply providing basic food and shelter to avoid a humanitarian calamity. After satisfying survival necessities, many observers believed that the larger challenges became the moral and structural reinvigoration of the country. Issues included strong pressure for communism within much of Japan, reindustrialization of the nation, escalation of conflict between unions and management,¹² and reconciliation and integration with formerly occupied or invaded countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. By 1949, Japan experienced “a surge of labour institutional creativity”¹³ with over 34,000 new unions and nearly seven million new union workers, half of whom maintained affiliation with the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan [*Sohyo*]. As a left-wing organization, *Sohyo* supported “sympathy for the pro-Soviet global labour camp” until political exigencies prevented it from joining its prior organization, the World Federation of Trade Unions.¹⁴

It was with this backdrop that MRA went to work. Some Japanese leaders became familiar with how MRA had been instrumental in establishing Germany’s moral foundation, overcoming the communist challenge,¹⁵ helping to create the country’s economic resurgence, and reconciling with international neighbors, particularly France. The importance of the support offered by key Japanese political leaders to MRA cannot be overemphasized. It is unlikely, though, that the motivation of the prime ministers, chief executive officers (CEOs), and union leaders was solely an interest in increasing the morality of the Japanese. For example, Hofmann (2021) noted, “whether it was Nakasone’s believe in state power through remilitarization, Hatoyama’s desire for national harmony, or Kishi’s emphasis on a new Japan-centered regionalism, they found in the political language of MRA a register to reconfigure prewar principles as postwar values, updated to safeguard democracy from the Left, and a decolonizing Asia from the spread of international communism.”¹⁶

Yukihisa Fujita, former Member of Japan’s House of Representatives, former Member of the House of Councillors, and currently on the board of directors of the International MRA

10. Fukusawa, “Ichiro Ishikawa, the First Chairman of Keidanren Talks about His ‘chemistry Life’ and the Way Economic Organization Should Be: From an Interview on April 5, 1955.”

11. Okazaki, “The Evolution of the Financial System in Post-War Japan.”

12. Gordon, “Paternalism and Direct Management.”

13. Ostapenko, “Forging Regional Connections,” 63.

14. Ostapenko, “Forging Regional Connections,” 64.

15. Hasegawa, “Jacobin”; Kowalski, “An inoffensive rearmament: The making of the postwar Japanese army”; Luttwak, “Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement.”

16. Hofmann, “The Conservative Imaginary,” 97–98.

Association of Japan, explained how MRA's principles fit, or not, into Japan's cultural context, paying particular attention to dynamics such as the role of conflict, compromise, and apology. Fujita¹⁷ noted that some of the relevant cultural dynamics date to Prince Shotoku, born in the sixth century. In particular, the Shotoku Constitution stated that harmony should be valued and quarrels avoided. Conflict exposed a failure of the leader. Moreover, in traditional Japanese society, an apology must not be expressed visibly. At the same time, the belief that it is never too late to make amends remained consistent with how Samurai saw "a manly leader."¹⁸ Despite these prevailing cultural norms, in a vacuum of devastation and loss of pride after the war, the Japanese openly welcomed new ways of conflict resolution. Witnessing the dramatic reconciliation between Germany and France, and through humble interaction with MRA Western foreigners, helped both the leaders and common people perceive the new norms of apology and reconciliation that were novel in Japanese culture.¹⁹

Fujita also commented on how the Cold War context influenced MRA's reception in Japan. He noted that the proximity of the Korean peninsula, and its West versus East conflict, challenged the Japanese with the issue of whether communism would be viable for, or thrust upon, them. MRA arrived with Western faces, but the espoused message was not a religion, and their respect for traditional Japanese values made the message of opposition to communism impactful in Japan. Finally, their method of sharing and staging plays and performing songs, some written in Japanese, fit well into Japanese culture.²⁰

What Was Moral Re-Armament?

MRA consisted of a group of volunteers committed to following, and spreading to the world, a particular set of principles that *The New York Times* characterized as "to keep the peace and make it permanent; to make the wealth and work of the world available to all and for the exploitation of none; and with peace and prosperity as our servants and not our masters, to build a new world, create a new culture, bring in a golden age."²¹ No one in the organization ever received wages or a salary. These workers traveled the world, staffing various initiatives as needed. Countless others maintained other employment and supported MRA however they could.

The Oxford Group, MRA's earlier iteration, was a successful evangelical movement in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1938, it launched an enlarged program to offer the world a way to address global political crises by calling on all individuals to embrace a change of heart and make themselves available to the larger goal of world-changing. MRA's birth was marked by an official launch in the cradle of the British labor movement in East Ham, London, on May 29, 1938. Meeting attendance consisted of about 3,000 people, including 26 mayors and

17. Yukihiisa Fujita (Chairman International Initiatives of Change Association of Japan and Former Member of the Diet of Japan), email correspondence with Professor Dr. h.c. Ulrich Teichler (University of Kassel), forwarded to author, June 1, 2024.

18. Yukihiisa Fujita, email correspondence, forwarded to author, June 1, 2024.

19. Yukihiisa Fujita, email correspondence, forwarded to author, June 1, 2024.

20. Yukihiisa Fujita, email correspondence, forwarded to author, June 1, 2024.

21. "Rally to Be Climax of Peace Crusade," 10.

chairmen of town councils; workers from factories, docks, and railways; and many who were unemployed. The specter of what would later be called World War II loomed on the horizon. The MRA leaders believed that such a war could be averted if countries reconciled, and they worked very hard toward that end. However, in a little over a year, Germany invaded Poland, and the hope of preventing war died quickly. Still, the name Moral Re-Armament fit for the effort ahead – to foster in the world a stronger moral foundation to match the stronger armament needed to defeat the Axis powers.

From very early in its evolution, MRA developed as a Christian-based endeavor that reached out to and worked with others, regardless of religion, as in the examples of India, Japan, and indigenous peoples. While it maintained a spiritual core, it minimized its focus on the trappings of Christianity and found common ground with non-Christian traditions by emphasizing morality. Its founder, Frank Buchman, articulated his purpose as fostering “a new social order under the control of the spirit of God, making for better human relations, for unselfish cooperation, for cleaner business, clear politics, for the elimination of political, industrial and racial antagonisms.”²² From July 1943, Buchman referred to MRA as an ideology. Its dramatically rapid growth was described by the Nazis in a classified report as a formidable enemy, “seldom has any religious revival movement succeeded, as the Oxford Group [MRA’s earlier name] has, in establishing itself in such a relatively short time in almost all the countries in the world.”²³

MRA functioned very much like an entrepreneurial organization, quickly pivoting as opportunities arose. In 1941, the group wrote a pamphlet entitled *You Can Defend America* and later created a revue by the same title. Both soared in popularity as the war effort gathered steam. In the immediate post-World War II world, MRA started working on reconciliation in Germany before Japan, and its success there inspired many Japanese leaders, thereby increasing its influence once the war ended. This article will illustrate and elucidate several MRA practices and philosophies.

Methodology

This study employs historical archival research methods centered on the postwar period during and after the occupation to investigate the influence of moral development on Japan’s economic development through the lens of business practices, government policies, and union activities. Specific attention is given to studying the MRA movement as a catalyst for ethical transformation across Japanese institutions during this formative time.

Primary data for this study were collected from four major repositories: (1) the Nippon Times Archives with extensive coverage of MRA activities during the postwar period, (2) MRA’s For a New World Archives containing records of MRA’s activities worldwide, (3) the US Library of Congress Archives with a generous section for various sources of MRA’s activities, including personal letters and photographs, (4) US Congressional Records with

22. “Oxford Group Will Meet: Summer House Party Planned at Karuizawa next Month for Moral Rearmament,” 3.

23. Church, “The Nazis on the Oxford Group,” 156.

statements by Japanese Diet members. Additionally, contemporary Japanese business periodicals were consulted, including the *Journal of Economics* [*Keizai Bunka*], and recent personal communications with Y. Fujita provided important contextual insights into historical interpretation. Special attention was given to Japanese primary sources (i.e., *The Nippon Times*) to prioritize Japanese perspectives over Western interpretations, including Tamai's "A Note on the Origin of Social Security in Japan; History of Forgotten Disputes" [日本型社会保障の原型に関する覚え書]. Documents were translated when necessary and organized chronologically to trace the evolution of MRA's involvement during Japan's postwar period.

To situate the primary materials within the historical context, scholarly works on business ethics and economic development were consulted. Testimonies were also analyzed in both Japanese and Western media, including extensive coverage in *The Nippon Times* of MRA activities and key events. This approach is intended to avoid culturally biased evaluations of Japanese business practices to discern the distinctive nature of Japanese moral development. Valuable theoretical framing was provided by Hofmann's analyses and Dent and Randall's examinations. The research examined and contextualized cultural traits that enabled the cultivation and development of MRA principles in Japan.

Limitations of this archival approach warrant acknowledgment: archives preserve formal documents, which may present idealized and espoused practices rather than those enacted and tacit. This limitation is addressed by corroborating MRA claims with independent sources (such as *The Nippon Times* coverage) and critically examining evidence found in secular business publications and governmental records in an effort to maintain a balanced historical assessment. Additionally, as with any historical research, interpretation is influenced by contemporary understanding. To mitigate this retrospective bias, period-specific explanations are prioritized. This approach aligns with the study's aim to legitimize non-Western perspectives on Japan's moral development as a factor in its transformation. This methodology seeks to present a balanced analysis that respects historical actors' perspectives while maintaining scholarly critical distance.

MRA in Prewar Japan

Although this chronicle of MRA in Japan begins postwar, MRA workers previously made meaningful inroads, winning supporters in Japanese society dating to MRA founder Frank Buchman's first trip to Japan in 1918, in which "he became friends with two of the creators of modern Japan, Baron Morimura and Viscount Shibusawa."²⁴ Takasumi Mitsui (of the powerful merchant and industrialist Mitsui family, of whom Takateru Mitsui was listed as the tenth wealthiest Japanese in 1947 and who donated a Tokyo home to MRA²⁵), the Chairman of the Mitsui Foundation,²⁶ studied earlier at Oxford University and became an MRA adherent then. In 1939, Mitsui delivered a series of lectures about MRA to business clubs in Japan,

24. Marcel, *Fresh Hope for the World: Moral Re-Armament in Action*, 159.

25. "6 Zaibatsu Families Rank Nation's 10 Richest Men, Finance Bureau Reveals"; "MRA Founder given Mitsui Home Here."

26. "Moral Rearmament Meet Hears Japanese Views," 1.

including to 200 Mitsui executives. In 1935, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kensuke Horinouchi met Basil Entwistle, who later lived in Japan for most of the 1950s, leading MRA work. Entwistle convinced Horinouchi and his wife to embrace the MRA principles.²⁷ Toyotane and Tokiko Sohma (former viscount, physician, and women's rights leader, respectively) previously engaged with MRA. They had travelled throughout Europe with an international MRA team.²⁸

The First Formal Postwar MRA Conference

Around 1948, MRA activity in Japan increased substantially. At a time when SCAP prevented nearly all international travel, thirty US congressmen and others on MacArthur's staff engaged in protracted negotiations, ultimately arranging for nine prominent Japanese to attend the tenth World Assembly of Moral Re-Armament conference in Riverside, California, USA.²⁹ They were invited by over eighty US senators and members of the House of Representatives.³⁰ At this meeting, Dr. Chen Li-fu, Vice President of the Legislative Yuan of China, showed how MRA applied beyond its Christian beginnings, "If Confucius were alive today he would [be] an ardent supporter ... Moral Re-Armament is the foundation of Chinese social life ... [it is] substantially what Gen. Chiang Kai-shek implied in his New Life movement for China in 1934."³¹ The Japanese saw that although MRA began as a Christian evangelical organization, its mission had adapted, now transcending religion. They also joined with an estimated 15,000 people who viewed the MRA musical revue *The Good Road* in the Hollywood Bowl and heard about MRA's efforts in nearly 20 countries.

MRA and Theater

MRA extensively used plays, revues, and movies (such as the aforementioned *The Good Road* and *You Can Defend America*) to facilitate change in people's mindsets.³² Walt Disney described an MRA production as "the happiest, most hard-hitting way of saying what America is all about that I have ever seen or heard."³³ The use of theatrical performances was central to MRA's approach. Scores of people have testified that the viewing of the plays alone caused them to make dramatic changes in their lives, demonstrating the critical importance of plays in fostering MRA principles. For example, in February 1955, two dozen of Japan's top

27. Horinouchi was later Japan's Ambassador to the United States. He resigned from this position when he was asked to pass to Washington misleading diplomatic messages, a violation of his MRA commitment to be absolutely honest (Horner, "Tokyo's Amiable Envoy Leaving Today with Talk Unfulfilled," 2.). He was photographed with Buchman upon his departure from San Francisco (Martin, *Always a Little Further: Four Lives of a Luckie Felowe*, 182).

28. Sohma, "The Hidden Ingredient of Japan's Post-War Miracle," 81.

29. Sohma, 83.

30. Sohma, "MRA Big Force in Bringing World's People Together," 4.

31. "Defeat for Communism Seen by China Leader," 16.

32. Dent and Randall, "Moral Re-Armament."

33. "Inaugural Program for Mackinac College."

industrialists led by Taizo Ishizaka (President of Tokyo Shibaura/Toshiba, Chairman of the National Productivity Council, and later Ishikawa's successor as Chairman of the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations [*Keidanren*]) previewed the play *The Boss* as discussed below. MRA plays "had an easily discernible moral or religious message. The idea was that audiences might be awakened by drama in a way that direct preaching could not achieve."³⁴ The Boss had that effect on several men in the room who had tears on their faces, and they decided to stage more performances. Each night, a different national leader introduced the play.³⁵

The World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament at Caux-sur-Montreux, 1949

In summer 1949, a delegation of Japanese attended The World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Caux, Switzerland. Once again, their travel had to be personally approved by General MacArthur. Most of these leaders who attended were new to MRA and understood very little of what lay ahead.³⁶ Tetsu Katayama (former Prime Minister and current Socialist Party Chairman) led the delegation, accompanied by two reporters from *Mainichi Shimbun*, Japan's largest newspaper at the time. A competing paper, *Asahi*, commissioned Katayama. This resulted in extensive reporting of the trip as these two papers rivaled for the best coverage. Even though conference attendance exceeded 5,000 people from seventy countries, MRA rolled out the red carpet for the Japanese with their inclusion of "To discover with Japanese leaders the most effective way of rooting democracy in that country and of training inspired leadership to make it work successfully"³⁷ as one of the six agenda items. At the end of the meeting, Katayama remarked, "the Moral Rearmament Movement is one of the big things Japan should adopt."³⁸ Here, Japanese leaders grew familiar with MRA's instrumentality in establishing Germany's moral foundation and overcoming the communist challenge,³⁹ creating the country's economic resurgence, and reconciling with international neighbors, particularly France.

After attending the conference, the Japanese delegation visited several locations in Germany, Paris, London, New York, Washington, Los Angeles, and Seattle before returning home. Likely the first Japanese to visit Germany postwar, they saw MRA's extensive work underway in the industrial Ruhr Valley. High government officials and industry leaders received the party.

MRA Principles: Apologizing/Confessing

A significant component of the meetings the Japanese delegations attended in 1948 and 1949 included speakers confessing and offering apologies. MRA's experience had been, not surprisingly, that if people take time to listen to their consciences, they will likely surface and

34. Boobbyer, "The Cold War in the Plays of Peter Howard," 221.

35. Hofmann, "The Conservative Imaginary," 88.

36. Sohma, "The Hidden Ingredient of Japan's Post-War Miracle," 84.

37. "Where a New Society Is Created," 2.

38. "Katayama Hopes to Find Spur to Democratization," 1.

39. Hasegawa, "Jacobin"; Kowalski, "An inoffensive rearmament: The making of the postwar Japanese army"; Luttwak, "Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement."

disclose information about their errors in interacting with other people.⁴⁰ To elaborate, MRA advocated that if you participate in a relationship that is not ideal, even if you think the other person is 99 percent at fault and you contribute only 1 percent of the fault, approach that person and apologize for your portion. For example, James D. Newton (an MRA volunteer who previously served as a senior executive of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company) frequently told the story of conflict with another executive. Their bitterness trickled down to their hundreds of employees. Although Newton attributed the issues as primarily the other executive's fault, he nonetheless attempted reconciliation by confessing and apologizing for his perceived 1 percent. Once Newton apologized, his colleague soon reciprocated.⁴¹ Adherents reported that almost always (over time), the other party responded and apologized for their role, leading to reconciliation of the relationship. Luttwak and others have reported on the mastery of MRA workers at this technique, using it impactfully, even as it is conveyed as subtle and unobtrusive.⁴²

Takasumi Mitsui put this lesson immediately into action. On his way home from the 1949 conference, he and his wife, Hideko, set foot in Burma as the first Japanese since the war. Takasumi Mitsui announced in Rangoon, "I want to apologise for the wrong we have done to the people of Burma" as quoted in a *New Times of Burma* story entitled "New Framework of Unity through Change: Japanese Business Magnate Stresses Burma-Japan Teamwork."⁴³

In a dramatic demonstration at the next conference described below, Katsuji Nakajima (head of the metal workers' union) discovered Eiji Suzuki (Osaka police chief) was also in the delegation. Nakajima hated Suzuki passionately because he believed Suzuki used excessive force in policing labor protests. Nakajima spent many sleepless nights at the conference, as the various speakers' courage and confessions weighed upon his mind. Ultimately, he decided to face Suzuki and admitted that, despite their differences, Nakajima was wrong to hate Suzuki and asked him for forgiveness. The conversation deeply moved both men. The next day, they spoke together from the conference platform and agreed to work toward unity in Japan.

Nakajima: "I spoke no word to him for my comrades had been beaten and dragged through the streets. A million men hated him. But Caux taught me to reach out my hands to him."

Suzuki: "When Mr. Nakajima came to my room I felt as though an electric shock had gone through me. I felt that the activities of Communism in Japan were preventing the proper development of labour unions, and I directed my force and hate against the union. ... I grasped Mr. Nakajima's hand and we both wept together."⁴⁴

The 1950 'Mission to the West'⁴⁵

At the suggestion of Prime Minister Katayama and the 1949 Japanese Caux delegation, in February 1950, MRA sent American Ken Twitchell and Englishman Basil Entwistle for an

40. Dent and Randall, "North American Aviation's Dramatic Transformation and the Influence of Moral Re-Armament in 1941-1945."

41. Dent and Randall, "Moral Re-Armament."

42. Luttwak, "Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement."

43. "Man in the Crow's Nest," 12.

44. "World Industrial Assembly," 121.

45. A movie recording of this mission can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/154718582>.

extended period of work in Japan. Subsequently, Entwistle moved his wife and young children to Tokyo for eight years. Many believed that reviving the country's spirit was critical to the economic recovery of Japan.

Shortly after Twitchell and Entwistle arrived in Tokyo in 1950⁴⁶ Shinzo Hamai (Hiroshima's mayor) asked for a meeting. He explained that his citizens needed to hear the MRA message and hence invited them to Hiroshima. During their five-month stay, they spoke at over fifty lunches and dinners with civic and industrial organizations⁴⁷ that included a meeting with General MacArthur.⁴⁸

The Toshiba company extended an invitation that included an extensive tour of the facilities, dinner, and a late evening discussion with the executive team. After the war, the communist party had gained control of many labor unions, including Toshiba. The succeeding aggressive tactics included strikes and violence that nearly bankrupted the company. Ultimately, General MacArthur's organization and the government intervened to oust the communists from control of the Toshiba union. This happened at companies in many industries. Such coercive intervention by SCAP, though a relief to some workers, contributed to resentment by many others and backfired later when communists were allowed back into union leadership positions. Under the leadership of Toshiba President Taizo Ishizaka, the company began to thrive again.

A few days after the Toshiba visit, Ichiro Ishikawa, one of the key people who helped to establish an MRA home in Tokyo in 1951–1952,⁴⁹ invited Twitchell and Entwistle to address a luncheon of top industrialists. The pair traveled to factories and communities in several cities and convinced many to commit to MRA principles and bolstered already supportive MRA followers. As all these Japanese proponents advocated MRA principles, they also assembled the delegation of labor, business, and government leaders willing to leave their work for weeks of Caux-bound travel for the 1950 conference. Before their departure on June 12, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida hosted a luncheon and said to the party, "In 1870 Japanese representatives went to the West and changed the course of Japanese history. This time, Japanese representatives will build a new Japan by going to Caux."⁵⁰ After the conference, Ishizaka said, "The new understanding and unity I found with Japanese labour at the Caux conference would influence greatly the industrial condition of Japan. The whole world is hungry for something new. Nations cannot survive without an ideology which is beyond class and race—the ideology of Caux. I start with change in myself: personal change is the basic foundation for world prosperity and the priority task for an industrialist."⁵¹

Many believed the "Mission to the West" represented the turning point in a new approach to labor-management relations. It received worldwide press and resulted in a forty-seven page booklet describing the events in Caux, Switzerland; Italy; Germany; France; England; and in

46. "MRA Leaders Expected."

47. Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade*, 22.

48. Entwistle, 34.

49. Shibusawa, *Asia Center Odawara: Postwar Japan and the Work of Moral Re-Armament (40th Anniversary Publication)*, 19.

50. Hofmann, "The Conservative Imaginary," 102.

51. *Mission to the West*, 121.

the United States—New York, Washington, Detroit, Mackinac Island (a second MRA conference), and Los Angeles. Diet Member Chojiro Kuriyama spoke as the first foreign dignitary in the chambers of the US House of Representatives. He offered a deep, heartfelt apology.⁵² to which the editors of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the most widely-read periodical for middle-class Americans, responded, “the idea of a nation admitting that it could be mistaken about anything has a refreshing impact ... Already most of us feel somewhat softer toward Japan than we swore on a stack of Bibles we would ever feel. Perhaps even Americans could think up a few past occasions of which it could be safely said, ‘We certainly fouled things up that time.’”⁵³

Diet Member Tokutaro Kitamura spoke on the floor of the US Senate and said,

We had thought the first step we must take was an economic and material rehabilitation in our nation, but we have discovered that the far greater and far more basic rehabilitation is the establishment of a true moral order in the Far East and in our nation. Only on the basis of this moral order can a true economic order be established ... [At] the Assembly at Caux, Switzerland [we] discovered there that the four basic standards set forth by the program for Moral Re-Armament (absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love) are the real basis on which a true rehabilitation and reconstruction can be carried out in our nation.⁵⁴

The delegation of about seventy who made this trip included top labor, banking, and industrial leaders; senior Diet members of all parties; seven prefectural governors, and the mayors of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Yasuhiro Nakasone (a thirty-two-year-old delegation member) remarked to Entwistle, “I am the youngest Diet Member, and I am going to become Prime Minister,”⁵⁵ an office he later achieved.

In each country, leading political and industrial figures hosted the delegation. This included a special audience with Pope Pius XII. A subset of such activities included meeting delegates from forty-seven countries in Caux, Switzerland; Willie Benedens (German union leader); Hans Dütting (employer of 82,000 at the Gelsenkirchen Coal Company); sitting in the box of French President Auriol for the Bastille Day Parade on the Champs-Élysées; attending a meeting where 1,500 union workers in West Ham, England, packed into a hall designed to accommodate only 900; meeting Trygve Lie (Secretary General of the United Nations in New York City); meeting Congress of Industrial Organizations leader Allan Haywood in Washington and Victor Reuther of the United Automobile Workers in Detroit; and participating in Los Angeles in a special Columbia Broadcasting System national show commemorating the fifth anniversary of the bombardment of Hiroshima. During this broadcast, Yukika Sohma said, “We saw the four standards of Moral Re-Armament—absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love—become the cornerstones of a new world order. We saw that with this new spirit Japan can become reborn and become a nation loved by the rest of the world.”⁵⁶

52. “Statement by Japanese Diet Member Chojiro Kuriyama,” 11300.

53. “Japanese Propensity to Apologize May Prove Latent National Asset,” 12.

54. “Statement by Japanese Diet Member Tokutaro Kitamura,” 11383.

55. Hofmann, “The Conservative Imaginary,” 83.

56. *Mission to the West*, 43.

MRA and the Absolute Standards

The four absolute standards mentioned by the speakers above represent one of the core tenets of MRA, that people should live their lives according to absolute honesty, absolute love, absolute unselfishness, and absolute purity. Buchman first extracted these principles from the New Testament of the Christian Bible. As MRA expanded worldwide, the absolutes became locally defined to attain consistency with every major religion, including Confucianism, as Chen Li-fu noted above, plus secular humanism.⁵⁷ The standards contribute directly to the importance of asking for forgiveness, as discussed. Absolute honesty also played a critical role in the MRA principle, “make decisions based not on *who* is right (power and opinion), but *what* is right (principle and common goals).” This phrase means that it does not matter *who* one is in terms of status, level, or other dimensions of power. MRA proponents make decisions based on principle rather than power. Of all aspects of MRA’s approach, this commitment likely played the largest role in improving relations between labor and management in industrial settings. As in the earlier example of Newton at Firestone, he and his work colleague agreed to make decisions jointly based on what is right, not who is right. As described below, this standard proved an enormous factor in improving industrial relations in Japan in the 1950s. For example, Nakasone “as a freshman lawmaker in 1951, [in] a 28-page letter to General MacArthur criticizing the occupation, a brazen move at the time,”⁵⁸ used the principle of “what is right, not who is right” as his central argument.⁵⁹

Consistent MRA World Assembly Attendance by High-Level Japanese

For the next several years, Japan routinely sent major delegations to MRA’s World Assemblies, usually held in Mackinac Island, Michigan, USA and Caux, Switzerland. At the 1951 World Assembly at Mackinac Island, Chojiro Kuriyama read a statement on behalf of Prime Minister Yoshida expressing his strong support of MRA. Katsuji Nakajima reported that in towns with deep MRA penetration, twenty-four previously communist leaders within his Metal Workers’ Union fell in defeat in the most recent election.⁶⁰ At the World Assembly for the Reconstruction of Pacific Relations held in Los Angeles, California July 6–16, 1951, Mr. Takahashi (Managing Director of Toshiba) together with Morio Hasegawa (Toshiba’s union chairman) “proposed a new basis of industrial cooperation and pledged themselves to work for ‘what is right’ in their industry.”⁶¹

MRA also orchestrated many of the events for the Japanese at the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951. An ardent MRA advocate, Prime Minister Yoshida led the delegation. Among many meetings arranged by Buchman, the delegation experienced

57. Sack, *Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Movement*, 136.

58. Fackler, “At 91, Japanese Statesman Sees Value in Contradictions,” 3.

59. Hofmann, “The Conservative Imaginary,” 85.

60. “Japanese MRA Delegates Report to World Meeting,” 1.

61. Hunter, “Pacific Report,” 133.

the MRA musical *Jotham Valley*.⁶² At the 1952 Assembly at Mackinac Island, Michigan, USA, representatives from fourteen national parliaments participated. The Japanese delegation included two former cabinet officials, and as a group, they pledged to support the work of MRA by convening and funding (largely from their own salaries) regular MRA meetings in Tokyo. Diet member and former Cabinet member Kanju Kato said, “We are convinced that Moral Re-Armament is the ideology on which both East and West can unite.”⁶³

Although the world assemblies typically lasted about two weeks, many specialized meetings (e.g., industrial relations, Korean peninsula) later continued throughout the warmer months at Caux and Mackinac Island. Shunichiro Nakagawa (Mitsubishi Electric Company’s industrial relations manager) traveled directly from such meetings in Mackinac to those in Caux. He told the audience of the healing he experienced at Mackinac from the hatred he harbored over the death of his wife and daughter due to the atom bomb. He said, “As we face the problems of world labour and the conflict of ideologies, I know that only Moral Re-Armament will be able to solve them.”⁶⁴

MRA Full-Time Workers and the MRA House

Once the Entwistle family arrived in Japan in November 1951, local activity accelerated in earnest. They were greatly encouraged by Hideko and Takasumi Mitsui (who had worked closely with the movement since their days at Oxford in the 1930s), Yasutane and Yukika Sohma (whose previous work with MRA had also resulted in commitment to full-time service), and Shidzue Kato⁶⁵ (part of the delegation that signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty).

Even in 1951, it still proved difficult to find housing for extra people in Japan. As a testament to the high level at which MRA worked, Toshiba President Ishizaka housed an MRA worker in his home. Other full-time MRA workers included Don Libby⁶⁶ (an American who spoke Japanese and Chinese) who lived with National Railways board member Yoshinobu Kataoka;⁶⁷ Mas Mitani (fluent in English and Japanese); Roland Harker (who taught in Japan for several years prior); Toyotane (Yasutane’s brother); and Tokiko Sohma, Toneko Kimura, Katsuji Nakajima, and Hideo Nakajima (no relation to Katsuji). For years, this group of people worked, ate, and often lived together once the Japanese acquired an MRA home in 1952.⁶⁸ Norwegian Jens Wilhelmsen arrived in 1953 and stayed five years.⁶⁹ Notably

62. Shibusawa, *Asia Center Odawara: Postwar Japan and the Work of Moral Re-Armament (40th Anniversary Publication)*, 17.

63. “MRA Delegates Leave ‘Frisco for Honolulu.”

64. “International Trade Union Leaders on MRA,” 51.

65. Kato was an early Japanese feminist and the first woman to campaign for office and be elected to the Diet. Her husband Kanju Kato had been jailed 105 times for his fiery Marxist labor leadership. “Dietman Kato Praises MRA,” 2.

66. Shidzue and Kanju Kato earlier invited Libby to live with them, where he better demonstrated the practice of receiving guidance each morning. He later lived with Viscount Yasu and Yukika Sohma. Libby, *A Thousand Steps*, 50.

67. Libby, *A Thousand Steps*, 53.

68. Entwistle, 66.

69. “Karuizawa News.”

unusual for Japan at that time, this MRA team spanned age, wealth, and class distinctions. The Sohmas were aristocrats, K. Nakajima served as a young labor leader with the All Japan Metal Workers Union, H. Nakajima toiled as the son of a poor farmer, and Toyotane Sohma worked as a physician.

Other MRA supporters made brief trips to Japan. For example, Republican US Senator Alexander Smith traveled to Japan with his Democrat counterpart on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Sparkman. In addition to official business, Smith (father-in-law to the aforementioned Twitchell) attended a dinner in the MRA house with several Japanese leaders including Chikao Honda (President of the *Mainichi* newspaper), Hisato Ichimada (Governor of the Bank of Japan), and Hitoshi Kubo (National Chairman of the Telecommunications Workers Union), with the purpose of advancing MRA's mission in Japan.

After the 'Mission to the West'

As noted above, this trip made a splash worldwide and garnered support at home for a different reason: primarily that the delegation included members of political parties normally at odds with each other. They returned from their travels in unity on several issues. For example, even within the same socialist party, Satoko Togano of the Diet Lower House and Shidzue Kato of the Upper House often battled in opposition. At the MRA conferences, they developed into "dear friends and uniters of their party at critical times."⁷⁰ After a later meeting, Takeichi Aono ("a Left-Wing Socialist Party member" of the Diet) remarked, "This is the first time in my life that I have seen capitalists, labor leaders, representatives of all races, classes and creeds living together in a true atmosphere of unity."⁷¹ MRA pointedly recruited politicians of all parties in Japan and elsewhere in the world where they worked.

The seven Diet politicians spoke at companies and other organizations throughout the country, often in conjunction with a political counterpart. Future Prime Minister Nakasone "spoke on the average three times a day and within three months of his return had addressed audiences of some 50,000."⁷²

Nakajima joined with his new friend, Suzuki, and worked with Toshiba at the invitation of President Ishizaka. They assisted greatly in fostering teamwork between union workers and management. The Telecommunications part of the government and National Railways, both of whose unions remained heavily influenced by communists at the time, asked people with MRA training to work with them. The latter union became so inculcated with MRA principles beginning in late 1951 that by 1956 "National Railways became linked with Moral Re-Armament in the minds of thousands of Japanese."⁷³ National Railways hosted monthly meetings on MRA principles in its headquarters,⁷⁴ and board member Yoshinobu Kataoka established himself as instrumental in MRA work.

70. Libby, *A Thousand Steps*, 48.

71. "Dietmen Impressed by Spirit of MRA," 4.

72. Entwistle, 57.

73. "600 Railway People See Tokyo MRA Play"; Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade*, 76.

74. "News in Brief, 12."

Another important intervention occurred when MRA workers spoke to the presidents and top executives of the Electrical Manufacturers Association, including its four largest companies: Hitachi, Toshiba, Mitsubishi, and Fuji. The *Nikkeiren Times* published the following account: “Post-war Japan has suffered economic and moral confusion, which has led our labour-management relationships down a wrong path. ... the MRA ideology to labour-management relations will affect the increase of production and job security ... A big idea – Communism – ... has brought a great loss to the world through division and strife. What can answer a vital ideology of either left or right, which might sway a nation? Moral Re-Armament is the answering ideology.”⁷⁵ Subsequently, top union leaders and top executives of companies such as Mitsubishi and Toshiba started meeting on a topic other than negotiation for the first time.

For Toshiba, a breakthrough started at the Caux World Assembly in the summer of 1953, themed “Teamwork in Industry.” Etsuro Yamamura (union head) and Ryozauro Kawahara (industrial chief) reconciled at the conference and then returned to Tokyo, where they testified publicly about their commitment to negotiating the current wage dispute using the principles of MRA.⁷⁶ Industrial relations suffered so badly that they had failed to agree on a formal contract for years. The impact was immediate when they reached an agreed-upon contract one day before a strike deadline. One plant running enormous deficits was slated to close but quickly turned around, achieving profitability. Yamamura and Kawahara then spoke about their collaboration and spirit at an industrial conference in Japan and to companies such as Toyo Rayon, the Mitsui and Hitachi Shipyards, Yawata Steel, and Ishikawajima Shipbuilding. In the latter, Union President Renzo Yanagisawa persuaded Company President Toshiwo Doko to open the books to the union, an unheard-of idea at the time. Doko agreed, and the company transformed as a result.⁷⁷

German Coal Mine Union Leader and Former Communist Arrives in Japan

Arguably, MRA’s initial entrance into postwar Japan influenced businesses and political leaders more than unions. This changed in the fall of 1953 when Max Bladeck, a German coal mine union leader, arrived in Japan on six months’ leave from his position. Bladeck, with MRA workers Jens Wilhelmsen and Frowin Junker (a former member of the Nazi youth), traveled throughout Japan, primarily meeting with unions and their leadership. They spent time with the leaders of the National Railways Workers Union, Heavy Electrical Manufacturers’ Association, Paper and Pulp Manufacturers’ Association, Toshiba,⁷⁸ and many other organizations. The governors of all prefectures invited them to address a conference they attended.⁷⁹ They met with the seamen’s union, the chemical worker’s union,

75. Entwistle, 78–79.

76. “Asian Nations See Japan in Moral Rearming Lead”, 8; Wilhelmsen, *Eyewitness to the Impossible: Building Trust on Three Continents*, 78.

77. Entwistle, 93.

78. Toshiba President Taizo Ishizaka had met Bladeck in Germany in 1950. Wilhelmsen, *Eyewitness to the Impossible: Building Trust on Three Continents*, 72.

79. Entwistle, 94.

the post and telecommunications workers' union, the metalworkers' union, the railway workers' union, the coal miners' union, and the three trade union federations: *Sohyo* (Japan's largest, headed by a self-professed Marxist⁸⁰), *Domei*, and *Dokuritsuroren*. They still addressed executives at companies such as Hitachi and Mitsubishi and spoke to the top leadership of the National Rural Police.⁸¹ Down to the individual officer level, there existed no sense of unity but "many people groping in the dark."⁸² Bladeck was an expert on Marxism and straightforwardly skewered its shortcomings when speaking with communists. George Eastman (a wealthy American business owner)⁸³ joined Bladeck, enthralled many Japanese who saw a capitalist and a union leader (and former communist) advocating for the same life philosophy. Their surprise mimicked their experience when Japanese politicians from opposing political parties embraced MRA, suddenly collaborating. Bladeck and Eastman led training sessions at companies such as International Telephone and Telegraph, Hitachi Shipbuilding, Mitsui Coal Mining, Mitsubishi Electric, and Ishikawajima Shipbuilding.⁸⁴

Japanese MRA Philosophy Grows

Contemporaneously, several young Japanese union leaders became regular weekly visitors to the MRA House.⁸⁵ These union leaders of the coal miners, national railway workers, telecommunications workers, postal workers, and chemical workers all won seats in the Upper House of the Diet and opposed the conservatives in power, but did it respectfully and did not implement the extreme and violent approaches preferred by some of their left-wing colleagues.

In May 1954, business leaders, including the heads of Fuji Spinning Company, Nippon Express, Toyo Rayon, Mitsukoshi Department Store, Toshiba, and Bank of Japan, met in the Bank of Japan guest house to further MRA principles. Later that year, five union leaders and former Marxists (Yanagisawa, Ishikawajima Shipyards: Yokokawa, Postal Workers; Yamamura, Heavy Electric Workers; Suzuki, Telecommunications Workers; and Yamahana Chemical Workers) met. They planned a two-day MRA labor conference in Atami Hot Springs, scheduled for January 1955, with the agenda of changing the voice⁸⁶ of *Sohyo's* organized labor federation from combativeness to national unity⁸⁷ while still accomplishing the objectives of union workers. Attending the conference included union leaders representing over one million employees, as well as six socialist Diet officials.

80. Wilhelmsen, *Eyewitness to the Impossible: Building Trust on Three Continents*, 77.

81. Wilhelmsen, 81.

82. Nabeyama, Yatsugi, and Fuchi, "Keisatsu-Kan Saininshiki-Ron No Tōjō [The Appearance of a Theory of Recognition of Police Officers]," 30.

83. "To Attend Japan MRA Meet."

84. Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade*, 97.

85. After their election, the English speakers dubbed this gathering the "Diet breakfast". Smith, *When Are We Going Home?*

86. "Unionist Calls MRA Answer for Japan."

87. Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade*, 100.

The summer of 1954 brought another dramatic unifying step for Japan. As recorded by Shinichi Hasegawa, Associate Editor of *The Nippon Times*:

One of the most touching real-life dramas during the convention was enacted by Choon Sung Lee, son of the Korean Minister to London. He walked up to the platform as the Japanese Diet members finished their talks, shook their hands and said, "As a Korean, I hated the Japanese who occupied my country for 40 years. Now I want to apologize to these Japanese legislators and their people for this hatred. We could build a bridge between Korea and Japan on the basis of the absolute standards of the MRA and the guidance of God."⁸⁸

By the end of 1954, many Japanese, including some in Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida's cabinet, became disenchanted with his leadership. Several Diet officials fled from his Liberal Party to the new Democratic Party. Consequently, Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama replaced Yoshida on December 10, 1954. That month his finance minister, Hisato Ichimada, signaled the new administration's support for MRA by saying, "We are convinced the spirit of Moral Rearmament is gradually permeating the life of our country ... We pledge ourselves to fight with a fresh illumination which shall come to Japanese political life by making the ideology of Moral Rearmament the basis of our policy."⁸⁹

The Boss

The next significant initiative was theatrical. Several Japanese watched the MRA play *The Boss* in London after attending the Caux World Assembly in 1954 and felt that it was the perfect mechanism to further national unity and cooperation between union and management. In February 1955, two dozen of Japan's top leaders, led by Taizo Ishizaka, previewed *The Boss*. After the first performance, Ishizaka, the acknowledged industry captain, commented, "I have talked with the Minister of Labour and like me, he has great expectations of MRA. I am sure, after this evening, you are thinking that *The Boss* is good for the industry. But please realize too that it is good for the whole nation."⁹⁰

Representatives of the conservative and liberal political parties in Australia also attended that evening. They presented a check of 1,250,000 yen for MRA to purchase a car for their work and said the money "comes from the hearts of men and women who a few years ago were fighting the Japanese. Through MRA they have found an answer to the bitterness they have harbored for years, and a uniting ideology to which they have now given their lives."⁹¹

The group decided that *Keidanren*, under the leadership of Chairman Ishikawa, would sponsor several performances of the play in March and April. For each performance, a different leader introduced both the play and MRA to the audience. On April 26, *The Boss* was staged for the prime minister and his cabinet in front of a room full of reporters and three

88. Hasegawa, "Moral Re-Armament Meet Carries Peaceful Hopes," 2.

89. "Japan Leaders Laud World Moral Group," 2.

90. Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade*, 111.

91. "MRA Play Introduced in Tokyo, Check from Australia Presented," 3.

national television broadcasters.⁹² Takashi Sugawara, recently named by *Mainichi* as director of the year, agreed to champion the play.

The Boss

depicted a stand-off in a machine-producing plant. A stubborn and autocratic boss, Mr. Ironbank, clashes with a trade union leader, Mr. Oakrib, over possible job losses. Ironbank's son, Peter, has recently returned from the war where his life was saved by Oakrib's son. When Peter starts to embrace leftwing ideas, Ironbank is furious. However, confronted with the autocratic features of his own character, he learns that he has tried to boss his son around 'like his plant.' He accepts the challenge of personal change, apologises to Oakrib for his attitude, and decides to rescind his decision about job losses. Oakrib in turn admits that he too has behaved like an autocrat to his own son. The two men, it seems, are very much alike. The essential idea of the play is that the underlying tensions in industrial relations are rooted in the character flaws of those involved. Public unrest is rooted in private unrest; there is a seamless continuity between the public and private.⁹³

Leaders with role performances in the play included Ishikawajima Shipyard's union leader, Renzo Yanagisawa, and Yoshinobu Kataoka, director of National Railways.⁹⁴

The Statesmen's Mission and *The Vanishing Island*

Another important MRA foray, "The Statesmen's Mission," arrived in June 1955, with a contingent of 180 people from twenty-five countries (including Denmark, Iran, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Switzerland). They visited Japan for ten days before visiting other Asian countries. Many in the group staged the play *The Vanishing Island*, that

tells the story of two islands, Eiluph'mei (I Love Me) and Weiheit'tui (We Hate You), meant to symbolise the Western and Communist worlds. Odioso, an ambassador from Weiheit'tui, visits Eiluph'mei to demand a share in its riches. In spite of repeated ultimatums, Odioso's demands are rejected and he puts the island under a curse. The leaders of Eiluph'mei send a delegation to Weiheit'tui to try to preserve the reputation of their island, but to no avail. It is found that Eiluph'mei is in danger of disappearing. In this context, the King of Eiluph'mei assumes personal responsibility for the crisis, apologises for his past mistakes, and encourages people to listen to the inner voice of God.⁹⁵

On June 15 at his home, Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama hosted this delegation, union and business leaders, and many in the Diet. Hatoyama concluded that the play drew "closer the bonds of friendship between the East and the West"⁹⁶ and said of the visit, "This has been the

92. "Moral Support," 2.

93. Boobbyer, "The Cold War in the Plays of Peter Howard," 211.

94. "MRA Play Introduced in Tokyo, Check from Australia Presented," 3.

95. Boobbyer, "The Cold War in the Plays of Peter Howard," 212.

96. "Hatoyama Cables MRA Play Welcome," 2.

most memorable moment of my life.”⁹⁷ Upper House President Yahachi Kawai spoke of his highest priority to apply MRA principles in rebuilding Japan.⁹⁸ The invitation for the visit resulted in “longtime bitterly rival factions ... joining in a drive to enlist the country in moral rearmament [including] industrial leaders and chiefs of five top labor unions [and] the four major political parties – two Socialist and two Conservative.”⁹⁹ The President and Speaker of the two Diet Houses each hosted receptions, as did Governor Araki of the Bank of Japan.¹⁰⁰ Although *The Vanishing Island* was well received in Japan, it cost MRA support in the US State Department, which then began to oppose MRA at every turn. Since the play was not pro-Western or pro-capitalist, “a senior staff member’s report [concluded] that the MRA production ‘ridicules the Free World ideals and institutions, such as freedom (portrayed as license and self-indulgence), liberty (a meaningless chant), elections (as a means to avoid responsibility), free enterprise (grasping for endless profits), and so on.’”¹⁰¹

After the visit to Japan, Yukika Sohma, Kanju Kato, Niro Hoshijima, and Katsuji Nakajima accompanied the delegation to other Asian countries such as Taiwan and the Philippines, notably a courageous action because of the hatred those countries felt toward the Japanese. One night, as the play closed in Manila, Hoshijima spoke from the stage. At the sight of him, many in the audience grew loud and menacing. However, Sohma quickly translated through tears, “We must humbly apologize for the past ... Please forgive us. Moral Re-Armament is already building a new Japan, and with Moral Re-Armament all Asia can unite.”¹⁰² Anton Philips listened from the audience and reported the Filipino response was overwhelming.¹⁰³ The next day, they apologized to President Magsaysay, resulting in a larger contingent from Japan headed by Prime Minister Kishi visiting the Philippines in 1957 to express their regret.

At the time, Japan endured widespread isolation from the rest of Asia, and efforts to rebuild regional ties mostly failed. Yet, Japan’s economy and its future depended on substantial levels of trade. The desire for trade and the slow progress of reconciliation influenced the emergence of MRA in diplomatic efforts. Many saw that MRA’s overarching doctrine and reputation promoted harmony and reconciliation at all levels, whether family, work, or nation. Furthermore, MRA maintained adherents and networks across the globe who could be tapped for assistance, as well as evidence from other previous examples of national reconciliation, such as that of France and Germany. By late 1956, Deputy Prime Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu encouraged Prime Minister Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia that “Moral Re-Armament is an essential factor in the new Asian Unity” and can bring a “uniting ideology to North Africa.”¹⁰⁴

Japan’s next leader, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, well understood MRA’s strengths, and he placed people with MRA connections in his administration. Active MRA members such as

97. “Statement by Congressman Sheppard on the Moral Rearmament Statesmen’s Mission,” 12711.

98. Shibusawa, *Asia Center Odawara: Postwar Japan and the Work of Moral Re-Armament (40th Anniversary Publication)*, 23.

99. “Japan Merging for MRA Drive,” 2.

100. “MRA Vanguard Reaches Tokyo.”

101. Schieder, “To Catch a Tiger by its Toe: The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, Moral Re-Armament, and Cold War Orientalism,” 8.

102. “MRA Audience Hears Apologies for Japan.”

103. A. Philips, personal communication, January 15, 2024.

104. “Shigemitsu Praises MRA in Cable to Tunisia Head,” 2.

Niro Hoshijima and Hisato Ichimada (ex-Governor of the Bank of Japan) also served him as advisors and unofficial diplomats. The first instance of Kishi's linkage to MRA for diplomacy occurred in 1957 at an MRA conference in the Philippines. Organized by the Japanese and Filipino MRA branches, it was intended to serve as an unofficial forum for Asia and Japan to address grievances.¹⁰⁵

The Seinendan and The Road to Tomorrow

Also in 1957, 110 leaders of the Japanese Youth Federation [*Seinendan*] (with 4.3 million members) received competing invitations to visit either Moscow or MRA in Mackinac Island. They voted to accept MRA's invitation and decline Moscow's,¹⁰⁶ thereby dealing a decisive blow to communism. While there, they wrote the play *The Road to Tomorrow* [*Asu e no michi*] (primarily by Yoshinori Yamamoto), and within days they staged it several times in the United States. After returning to Japan, they showed it to many unions in copper mines, coalfields, and shipyards, and companies such as Hitachi Shipyards and National Railways.¹⁰⁷ *The Road to Tomorrow* "tells the story of a farming family who receive a letter from their son overseas, apologising for wrongs he has done them. The letter triggers a chain reaction in the village, from the poor farmer who admits that he has stolen water to old enemies who bury the hatchet. The play was so simple and genuine that the audiences felt that they were a part of the inner life of the village."¹⁰⁸ The Philippines' President sent an emissary to speak after the performance at the Imperial Hotel Theater.¹⁰⁹

At early performances just north of Tokyo in Urawa, National Railways Governor Shinji Sogo found himself in the same audience as Isamu Koyanagi, President of the Railway Workers Union. Railway workers had reputations as some of the most militant in Japan, and they launched a strike resulting in a serious accident. Sogo refused to negotiate unless the union leadership turned over, but the union reelected the same leaders. After the play, Sogo said to Koyanagi, "I was like the old dictator father that we have just seen on the stage. Often I have not done all I could to find a solution to the many conflicts that kept us divided. I am sorry."¹¹⁰ Negotiations in good faith restarted the next day.

Following the example of *The Boss*, union and business leaders performed in many roles. One actor known to be an incredibly shy man was Kichizaemon Sumitomo, head of the third-largest prewar conglomerate in Japan.¹¹¹ He previously traveled in Japan, speaking from the same platform as union leader Renzo Yanagisawa and proclaiming, "This is a picture of the new Japan that Moral Re-Armament is creating."¹¹² The Board of Directors learned of Sumitomo's portrayal in the play and tried to stop it from being shown near headquarters in Osaka.

105. Hofmann, "The Conservative Imaginary."

106. "Japan MRA Team Rejects Red Invite."

107. Seki, "My Son Is With Me," 228.

108. Wilhelmsen, *Eyewitness to the Impossible: Building Trust on Three Continents*, 104.

109. "Japan MRA Team Stages 4-Act Play."

110. Marcel, *Fresh Hope for the World: Moral Re-Armament in Action*, 203.

111. "Say MRA Can Win Orient from Reds."

112. "MRA Ideology Needed Here, Sumitomo Says," 2.

They appealed to Sumitomo that the humiliation of seeing him as a peasant would ruin the reputation of the Sumitomo business and empire. Kichizaemon Sumitomo insisted, and a company director dissolved into tears when he finally saw the play.¹¹³ Many in the audience wrote letters to cast members professing that they had now found a great purpose for their lives.

Apologies to the Regional Countries

While unity developed within Japan, there remained great hatred toward Japan from the countries nearby who suffered at the hands of the Japanese before and during the war. By 1957, the Japanese economy outpaced its prewar production but without access to sufficient markets to sell their products. Prime Minister Kishi decided to visit countries in the region—South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand—in an attempt to restore trade. Several of these countries did not have peace treaties with Japan, let alone trade agreements. Reparations persisted as the sticking point. When MRA supporter Senator Kato heard of Kishi's plan, on behalf of the opposition, she reached out to offer her support. However, she noted this offer was contingent on Kishi agreeing to apologize for Japan's actions toward these countries before and during the war. He was open to the idea but knew of strong opposition to doing so from the Foreign Office and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

The MRA team, with Senators Kato and Sohma, sprang into action. They began with a time of listening to see what guidance they received. They then developed a plan. Kato would speak to Hoshijima, who previously apologized to the Philippines and now acted as speaker of the house in parliament, maintaining a close allyship with Kishi. Hoshijima relayed to Kishi how the Filipinos refused to listen to anything he said until they realized he was apologizing. Kato and Sohma reached out to an MRA friend, Takizo Matsumoto (Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and friend of Kishi), enlisting him to mute the concerns of government bureaucrats. Senator Kato also arranged to question Kishi when he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, offering the opposition's support and strongly advocating for the inclusion of a Japanese apology during the trip as part of her remarks.¹¹⁴

Each of these steps worked beautifully, and Matsumoto also provided Kishi a list of MRA supporters in each of the countries with planned visits. The bureaucrats still opposed an apology, but Kishi insisted upon rewriting his speech after they arrived in Manila. Before the stunned Filipino congress, Kishi apologized. This went a long way toward softening their hearts. Australia was the most difficult stop, with the press attacking their own government for allowing a war criminal into the country. Kishi addressed the Australian parliament and offered a humble apology, "It is my official duty, and my personal desire, to express to you and through you to the people of Australia, our heartfelt sorrow for what occurred in the war."¹¹⁵ Kishi expressed feeling that the atmosphere changed immediately from cold hostility to a warmth of trust. When the Australian prime minister proposed a toast to the Emperor of

113. Marcel, *Fresh Hope for the World: Moral Re-Armament in Action*, 205–206.

114. Entwistle.

115. "A Successful Mission," 2.

Japan, one member of parliament turned to another who the Japanese imprisoned in Malaya and commented that his friend probably never thought he would be toasting the Japanese. The former prisoner, parliamentarian Les Norman, downed the toast, signaling his forgiveness.¹¹⁶

The attitude of the Australian press changed from suspicion to cordiality, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialized, “We cannot afford the luxury of living in the bitter past. ... Kishi handled a delicate mission with skillful tact. His ice-breaking tour ... could hardly have been a pleasant experience. But no one could have gone further in making official amends for the sins of his country.”¹¹⁷ In Indonesia, Prime Minister Kishi completely settled the long-standing reparations conflict during his visit. On the last day of 1957, Japan and South Korea signed a trade agreement.

The *Washington Evening Star* commented, “Premier Kishi is now back in Tokyo after having completed one of the most unusual missions ever undertaken by a statesman of his rank. Over the past three weeks he has visited no fewer than nine nations that Japan occupied or threatened with conquest ... and in each of these lands he has publicly apologized for his country’s actions during the war.”¹¹⁸ On Kishi’s return to Tokyo, he told the press, “I have been impressed by the effectiveness of Moral Re-Armament in creating unity between peoples who have been divided. I have myself experienced the power of honest apology in healing the hurts of the past. This idea is most needed at this critical time in our history.”¹¹⁹

Discussion

This study chronicles an important period in modern human history, specifically, the transformation of postwar Japan from 1945 to the late 1950s. Japan’s industry in 1945 was decimated, and communism had taken root in some prominent labor organizations. Japan still reeled from a fractured war economy and was largely despised internationally for its aggression and atrocities.

By 1960, however, it was a strong democracy. It had a significant industrial base and had become a top ten world economy. Its industries had global reach, and it had transformed its image on the world stage into a peaceful nation that rejected any military presence. Thus, Japan had recovered economically from the devastation of war on a steep trajectory of modernizing and enlarging basic industries (i.e., steel and electricity) while promoting new industries (i.e., oil, chemical, atomic, polymer), and engendering trade via new regional and international alliances.

This transformation was not a smooth process with no setbacks. It was chaotic, involving millions of Japanese and foreigners who focused on the need—and the urgency—for Japan to regain prosperity and international standing. Indeed, throughout the 1950s, enormous labor disputes and widespread communist inroads, including at such companies as Toshiba, Ishikawajima Heavy Industries, and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, could have resulted in a

116. “JAPAN: The Traveler.”

117. “A Successful Mission,” 2.

118. “Kishi Apologizes to Nine Nations.”

119. Entwistle, 173.

far different future. Moore claimed even most scholars have demonstrated a “distressing absence of the sensitivity ... to paths not taken and possibilities unfulfilled.”¹²⁰ This paper endeavors to reflect that sensitivity and better demonstrate the influence of one independent organization’s critical meetings, conversations, plays, and its other influences that played a role in Japan’s “success-story.”¹²¹

Not all Japanese were supportive of the transformation. In fact, many were angered and discouraged by the Occupation’s total control over Japan and Japanese foreign relations until 1952. Previously, Japan had a peasant class, a ruling class, and a militaristic and colonial foreign policy.¹²² Even in industry, positions had been class-oriented with separate dining halls and entry gates.¹²³ These ways of life were not easily abandoned by large sectors of the population after the war. This paper highlights only a small part of Japan’s postwar story, focusing on one external factor, MRA, that had an impact on the reintroduction of Japan to the world stage.

In 1985, Toshiwo Doko wrote, “Moral Re-Armament helped the political, financial, and labour leadership of Japan to realize that a sound society must be based on universal moral standards. As President of Ishikawajima Heavy Industries I had personal experience of a full-scale change brought to the company through this influence.”¹²⁴ In 2002, Japan’s MRA program attributed its postwar success to five primary factors: (1) MRA was able to offer a compelling “future-oriented message of fairness for all humanity ... when defeat left the nation bereft of a vision”¹²⁵ into a moral vacuum. (2) The Japanese were attracted to MRA’s emphasis on moral values as such as harmony, love, and selflessness, that resonated with many of their familiar traditions that seemed to be crumbling. (3) MRA, like in Germany, offered Japan a way to be restored to the good graces of the world community. (4) MRA provided a blueprint for a completely different approach to labor-management relations, which deflated communist sympathies, resulting in significant reconciliations in bitterly contested workplaces such as Ishikawajima Heavy Industries, Toshiba, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, and many others. The striking reconciliation between Suzuki and Nakajima was deeply implanted in the Japanese psyche. (5) MRA contacts gave Japan a roadmap for diplomatic and economic policies with countries around the globe. MRA’s influence on and encouragement of key political leaders in Japan cannot be overemphasized. For example, of the first eight prime ministers after World War II, six either worked openly with or endorsed the MRA movement.¹²⁶ Japan expressed its thanks to MRA for this work by presenting Frank Buchman with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star. He was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.¹²⁷

A permanent testament to MRA’s work was established on October 22, 1962, when the Asia Center Odawara opened its doors. Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda and many dignitaries from

120. Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power, 1945-1947*, xiv.

121. Moore, xiv.

122. Tamai, “日本型社会保障の原型に関する覚え書 [A Note on the Origin of Social Security in Japan; History of Forgotten Disputes].”

123. Gordon, “Paternalism and Direct Management.”

124. Entwistle, *Japan’s Decisive Decade*, xv.

125. Shibusawa, *Asia Center Odawara: Postwar Japan and the Work of Moral Re-Armament (40th Anniversary Publication)*, 16.

126. Hofmann, “The Conservative Imaginary.”

127. “27 Are Named for Peace Prize.”

around the world were present on this special occasion. This beautiful facility was purchased using funds donated by Japanese companies that had received tremendous assistance from MRA, and it continued to fulfill its mission of bringing about reconciliation among Asian individuals and organizations.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Moral Re-Armament movement played a previously unrecognized but profoundly influential role in Japan's transformation after World War II. Through archival research, a compelling narrative emerges of moral development as a critical factor in Japan's remarkable postwar resurgence.

The primary sources examined reveal that MRA's influence extended to the highest levels of Japanese leadership across government, business, and labor sectors. Headlines such as "MRA Ideology Needed Here, Sumitomo Says" reflect how thoroughly MRA penetrated Japanese discourse during this formative period. What emerges is not the external imposition of Western values but rather a creative integration of MRA principles with traditional Japanese concepts of harmony.

One significant finding is MRA's role in transforming contentious labor relations when communist influence threatened Japan's emerging democratic order. The transformation of "fiery Marxist" labor leader Kanji Kato exemplifies this phenomenon.

MRA principles shaped Japan's diplomatic approach to rebuilding international relationships. Prime Minister Kishi's visits to nine Asian nations using an honest apology for Japan's wartime behavior represented a moral turning point, earning respect throughout Asia and paving export-based economic pathways vital during this reconstruction period.

This research challenges simplistic narratives that reduce Japan's economic miracle to technological adoption or governmental policy alone. The evidence supports the assertion that moral development constituted a hidden ingredient in Japan's postwar success.

This study reveals an overlooked factor in Japan's remarkable rebound—a moral transformation that enabled unprecedented cooperation. The evidence demonstrates that Japan's economic miracle was both technical and moral—how a defeated nation rebuilt through ethical foundations combined with its people's indomitable Japanese spirit [*yamato-damashii*]. Prime Minister Kishi's MRA-inspired apology tours represent a central chapter in understanding Japan's transformation from wartime aggressor to peaceful economic powerhouse in less than two decades.

ERIC B. DENT is in the Department of Management, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL, USA. E-mail: edent@fgcu.edu

STEPHANIE L. TORRICO is in the Department of Management, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL, USA. Email: storricon@fgcu.edu

CRAIG RANDALL is in the Department of Management, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL, USA. Email: crandall@fgcu.edu

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Appendix—Cast of Characters

Frank Buchman, founder of Moral Re-Armament

Toshiwo Doko, President of Ishikawajima Heavy Industries, President of Toshiba, Chairman of *Keidanren*

Basil Entwistle, MRA worker who lived in Japan, 1951–1958

Shinzo Hamai, Mayor of Hiroshima

Ichiro Hatoyama, Prime Minister, 1954–1956

Kensuke Horinouchi, prewar Ambassador to the United States, Vice Foreign Minister

Hisato Ichimada, Governor of the Bank of Japan, and the Finance Minister

Ichiro Ishikawa, President of Nissan Chemical Industries, the first president of *Keidanren*, and the inaugural chairman of the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE)

Taizo Ishizaka, President of Toshiba, Chairman of the National Productivity Council, and later Chairman of *Keidanren*

Tetsu Katayama, Prime Minister, 1947–1948

Yoshinobu Kataoka, Director, National Railways

Kanju Kato (Marxist leader jailed 105 times, Minister of Labor, Coal Miner’s Union leader, Diet member)

Shidzue Kato (one of the first women elected to the Diet, served in both the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, Japan's leading feminist)

Chojiro Kuriyama, House of Representatives

Takasumi (brother of the head of the Mitsui family) and **Hideko Mitsui** (his wife), MRA workers

Katsuji Nakajima, Executive, All Japan Metal Workers Union

Yasuhiro Nakasone, House of Representatives, 1947–2004, Prime Minister 1982–1987

Toyotane (former viscount and physician) and **Tokiko Sohma** (his wife and women's rights leader), MRA workers

Yasutane (brother of Toyotane, former viscount, landowner) and **Yukika Sohma** (his wife, a daughter of Yukio Ozaki, who is known as the father of the Diet), MRA workers

Eiji Suzuki, Chief of the Osaka Metropolitan Police

Renzo Yanagisawa, Chairman, Ishikawajima Shipyard Workers Union, Diet Member

Shigeru Yoshida, Prime Minister, 1946–1947, 1948–1954

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