From “Education Beyond Utility” to Utility for Legitimacy:

Contemporary Opposition to Article 9 Revision in the Context of the Sōka Gakkai’s Historical Development

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Religion in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This study examines the contemporary debate over proposals to revise the Japanese “Peace Constitution” from the perspective of its meaning to the Sōka Gakkai. To the present, the LDP’s chief target for revision has been the war- and military renunciation clauses of Article 9. In connection with its argument that Article 9 undermines Japan’s national security, the LDP has made the specification of collective self-defense a prime focus of its efforts to produce a draft for a new Japanese Constitution. During the last decade the LDP’s best chance to date to achieve this goal arose by the convergence of a number of domestic and international circumstances. However, in the end, the LDP was prevented from realizing its revision aims on account of opposition from its coalition partner, the Kōmeitō, which itself sought to preserve Article 9 at the behest of its core constituent, the Sōka Gakkai. After having been excommunicated from the Nichiren Shōshū in 1991 Gakkai leaders prioritized activism on behalf of Article 9 as the pivotal component of an innovative hermeneutical strategy devised to evince that the movement had retained its legitimacy through the split. By contextualizing this hermeneutical strategy within the Sōka Gakkai’s overall historical development and analyzing the streams of activity put into motion thereby until their eventual intersection (via the Kōmeitō) with the LDP’s reform agenda, it has been revealed that the chance to impact the Constitutional revision process has served a critical function in enabling the Sōka Gakkai to demonstrate its legitimacy as a wholly independent lay religious movement, and thus to remain a viable factor within today’s Japanese religious landscape.
Key Terms:
The Sōka Gakkai, “Peace Constitution,” Constitutional revision, Article 9, the National Diet, the Kōmeitō, the LDP, Makiguchi Tunesaburō, value-creation, Toda Jōsei, Nichiren Daishōnin, Risshō ankoku-ron, mappō, True Dharma, daimoku, dai-gohonzon, the Nichiren Shōshū, shakubuku, Ikeda Daisaku, “absolute pacifism,” ōbutsu myōgō, kōsen rufu, SGI, excommunication, lay movement, interpretive authority, creative hermeneutics, religious legitimacy, collective self-defense, U.N. PKOs, Ozawa Ichirō, the SDF, Koizumi Junichirō, Mori Draft, the DPJ
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1. Introduction

1.1 Significance of the Issue

The possible revision of its so-called “Peace Constitution” is without question one of the most pressing political issues with which contemporary Japan is faced. Over the past two decades, proposals for Constitutional change have been occurring with ever increasing frequency – and generating ever more intense debate, popularly as well as within political circles. Among the specific sections coming under greater scrutiny over this period have been various clauses Conservative detractors allege typify the “excesses of individualism” imposed upon Japan by Allied Occupation forces at the time of the present document’s writing in 1947, such as the “essential equality of the sexes” phrase of article 24\(^1\), and the Constitution’s Preamble itself, which they argue reads like a “clumsy translation” rather than the elegant Japanese that would befit the opening statement to the highest law of the land.\(^2\) However, no part of the Constitution of Japan has been as singularly identified with the *Nihon-koku kenpō kaisei mondai* (or “the Revision of the Japanese Constitution Issue”) as has Article 9, which proclaims the Japanese nation’s eternal renunciation of its sovereign right to use military force as a means of settling international disputes. As the revision process continues to unfold, participants and observers alike are aligning themselves in one of two camps, on the basis of position toward Article 9: the first, led by the Japanese mainstream political

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\(^2\) Ibid, p.237, see note #8.
establishment, contends that Article 9 is one of Japan's greatest hindrances to contributing to international society, if not its greatest; and the second, led in part by a growing number of national and international non-profit organizations ("NPOs"), holds that if the nation would only renew its commitment to the pacifist principles behind the document in the first place, Article 9 would in fact be Japan's greatest contribution to international society.\(^3\) No resolution appears imminent, but when the debate's eventual outcome reveals Japan's stance on the matter, it is possible the outcome could cause the largest, most fundamental shift of trajectory in Japan's relations with the rest of the world that the country has experienced since the end of the Second World War.

Reflecting on the potential magnitude of the ramifications of any change to Article 9 (and the tremendous breadth of the scope over which its implications would be felt\(^4\)) erases any difficulty in understanding why the matter has garnered such attention. Indeed, the spectrum of those offering comment in recent years ranges from ordinary citizens (many of whom are working at the grass-roots level to promote public awareness of the issue, such as by creating internet sites for NPOs); to numerous Japanese television personalities (for example, comedian and popular essayist Ōta Hikari\(^5\) teamed with Tama University anthropologist Nakazawa Shinichi to pen a well-

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\(^5\) Following convention, Japanese names throughout this paper are given in the traditional Japanese order of family name first, given name second. Also, macrons are omitted from vowels in words and geographical names which have become familiar in English usage (e.g., Tōkyō is Tokyo, et cetera).
received book entitled *Let’s Make Article 9 a World Heritage*, published in 2006); to various past and present political figures and other civic leaders around the world; to members of the global intellectual community representing an equally impressive and expansive array of academic disciplines. Scholars of religion are finding themselves among those within this final category, and as Helen Hardacre noted in an influential 2005 article, there are two reasons specifically why the Constitutional revision debate is deserving of their interest: one, religious groups in Japan naturally stand to be affected by its ultimate course; and two, there is further a need to consider how religious organizations, as civil society actors, are themselves affecting the revision process. The present paper adopts this line of thought in each of its dimensions, analyzing the development of the ideology and activities of the “new religion” the Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement in conjunction with the group’s opposition to the revision of Article 9, in an effort to explore how one particular religious movement has thus far both influenced and been influenced by the debate over Constitutional revision.

### 1.2 The Influence of the Sōka Gakkai on the Constitutional Revision Process

The general public seems to have remained somewhat unmindful of the Sōka Gakkai’s involvement in the revision process, but scholars in the religious studies and political science fields are demonstrating a growing awareness of the group’s impact. Their primary focus has been upon the Gakkai’s role through the Kōmeitō, a political

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party the Sōka Gakkai originally founded in 1964 and with which it maintains close ties today, despite the two entities’ having declared formal separation on the organizational level in 1970. Toward this end, the work of a number of individuals has begun to draw notice to the manner in which the Kōmeitō successfully kept the much more powerful Conservative Jiyū minshutō 自由民主党 (English: Liberal Democratic Party, hereafter “LDP”) in check during a ten-year run as “make-or-break partner” to the Liberal Democrats in a governing coalition between 1999 and 2009, in terms of preventing the latter from realizing its agenda of rewriting the Constitution to allow for an expansion of

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8 The details of the two organizations’ separation—which happened amidst an alleged scandal that was debated before the Japanese Diet in 1970—and the history of the relationship between the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō in general will be covered at length in the pages to follow. In any event, the exact nature of the ties between the organizations has been the subject of much controversy for as long as the party has existed, and in the eyes of many remains lacking in sufficient clarity still today. Even several scholars who closely monitor the subject have argued the “line of demarcation” concerning where the Sōka Gakkai ends and the Kōmeitō begins can be challenging to decipher (see Benedict, Timothy O. “Inroads or Crossroads?: The Soka Gakkai’s Pacifist Endeavours in Japanese Foreign Policy.” Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies. 2011. (March 10, 2011). http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2011/Benedict.html. p.10). Japanese literature on the Sōka Gakkai in particular is dominated by works viewing the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō relationship with negativity, or outright suspicion (see, for example, Yamasaki, Masatomo. Sōka Gakkai/ Kōmeitō no hanzai hakusho. Tokyo: Daisan shokan, 2001; or Okkotsu, Masao. Kōmeitō = Sōka Gakkai no shinjitsu: 「ji / sō「 yagōseiken wo utsu, II. Kyoto: Kamogawa shuppan, 2003). What is clear is that the membership of the Sōka Gakkai continues to represent the overwhelming source of strength of the Kōmeitō’s electoral support base. For its part, the Sōka Gakkai argues that this condition is merely the logical consequence of the “elective affinity” that persists between the goals and values of the religious organization and the political party (see Métraux, Daniel A. “Religion, politics, and constitutional reform in Japan: how the Soka Gakkai and Komeito have thwarted Conservative attempts to revise the 1947 constitution,” Southeast Review of Asian Studies, vol.29 (Annual, 2007): p.163), and there is “no attempt... to coerce the party” (see Métraux, Daniel A. “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles as Opposition Forces in Japanese Politics in the 1990s,” American Asian Review, vol.17, no.3 (Fall, 1999): p.62).

9 So put by researcher Timothy Benedict (see Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): pp.6-7). The reasons for his use of such a term will become clearer as the dynamics of the relationship between the Kōmeitō and the LDP are discussed throughout this paper.
Japan’s military capabilities. For instance, independent Japan-based researcher Timothy Benedict has recently remarked how, while representing the overall interests of their (Sōka Gakkai) religious supporters, members of the Kōmeitō have “take[n] pride in their role as a hadome (brake) and occasional mitigator of the LDP’s right wing tendencies... slight departures [in order to] deal with the realities of policy making” after entering into the coalition with the LDP notwithstanding. Similarly, religion scholar Daniel Métraux, who has written extensively on the history of the Sōka Gakkai and its network of overseas associations, Soka Gakkai International (hereafter, SGI), has stated that regardless of compromises in other areas, the unwillingness of the Kōmeitō to hedge on its devotion to the safeguarding of Article 9 in its present wording “created limits as to what the Conservatives... [could] achieve.” Chief among these limits were with concern to the notion of “collective self-defense”: whereas the current Constitution has been interpreted in a way that permits Japan to use force to defend itself (“individual self-defense;” Japanese: kobetsu-teki jieiken 個別的自衛権) if necessary, the LDP has pushed for explicit constitutional recognition of Japan’s freedom to exercise the right of collective self-defense (shūdan-teki jieiken 集団的自衛権), or the ability to come to the defense of a key ally (e.g., the U.S.) in the event that that nation is attacked.

However, on the basis of a posture toward Article 9 which, Métraux argues, is imbued

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with the ideology of the Sōka Gakkai, the Kōmeitō took advantage of the LDP’s need to rely on it for gaining a majority in the Upper House of the national parliament (“the Diet”) to block the LDP from entering the concept of collective self-defense into Japan’s Constitution.\textsuperscript{13} Political scientist Patrick Hein likewise has observed the omission of collective self-defense from the draft proposal the LDP submitted for a new constitution – amidst much anticipation, as part of the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the party’s founding – in November, 2005, via a committee with former prime minister Mori Yoshirō at its head. His analysis of the draft implicitly attests to the strength of the Kōmeitō’s opposition, as he shows how the LDP proposal “settled” for a call to amend Article 9 with a provision stipulating the right to possess a defense force\textsuperscript{14} controlled by the prime minister and having the power to “participate in international activities” (this section would be known as “Article 9-2”), which happens to represent a plan for revision striking in resemblance to the basic type of solution advocated by the Kōmeitō.\textsuperscript{15} Even more

\textsuperscript{14} The government’s draft used the word “army” (Japanese: \textit{Jieigun} 自衛軍) a term avoided in the present document. The Kōmeitō has favored maintaining the label “defense force” (\textit{Jieitai} 自衛隊). See Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.297-98.
\textsuperscript{15} Despite not having budged regarding its position on Article 9 up to the present – the point Métraux was emphasizing in his statement – the Kōmeitō has arrived at a view which does not preclude the possibility of compromise on the matter altogether. In principle, the party has contended that both paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 9 (see page 161 of this paper) should remain as are; however, it has indicated an openness to the possibility of adding LDP proposals which it does not take to violate the “Peace Constitution’s” essence into the already existing document (see Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.296-300). The LDP’s preferred approach before the submission of this November, 2005 draft had typically been \textit{kai-ken} 改憲, or scrapping the present Constitution and rewriting a new one from scratch, so this proposal looked like a sizable step toward the (current) Kōmeitō approach (known as \textit{ka-ken} 加憲, or a strategy for revision based on the augmentation of the current Constitution with new clauses/ rights). See Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.245.
powerfully and clearly underscoring the centrality of the Kōmeitō’s role is that just prior to the draft’s submission, expert on the Constitutional revision process Richard J. Samuels had speculated, “[If] Kōmeitō opposition forces the LDP to abandon a revision that clarifies... the right to collective self-defense, then it will have been a huge defeat for the revisionists.” And to this, finally, Hardacre has succinctly and poignantly added: “The leading political party (the LDP) was unable to proceed with its highest priority revision” because of the Kōmeitō’s position, “which itself originates with [Honorary President and “spiritual leader” of the Sōka Gakkai movement] Ikeda Daisaku.” When one considers these scholars’ opinions in the cumulative, there appear to be compelling grounds to conclude that, to date, the Sōka Gakkai has done more to practically affect the Constitutional revision debate than has any other religious organization in Japan.

1.3 How the Sōka Gakkai Itself is Being Influenced

On the other hand, the question of how the Sōka Gakkai is itself being affected by its participation in the process has received considerably less attention. The studies that have been carried out, including those by Benedict, Métraux (2007), and leading scholar of Japanese new religions Robert Kisala, have essentially focused on the general

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challenges the Kōmeitō’s involvement in the realm of politics has presented for the Sōka Gakkai and its members, in light of the still-close relationship between the two organizations; or in other words, how the pragmatic approach the Kōmeitō must adopt toward the political realities with which it is continuously confronted has led the party to, at times, make decisions or support policies that are in conflict with the Sōka Gakkai’s cherished spiritual ideals. A particularly illustrative and relevant example on this point is provided by Kisala, in his assessment of the way efforts to “play a role in mainstream society” have caused the Sōka Gakkai to make sacrifices with regard to its long-professed principle of “absolute pacifism.”19 Kisala contends that any organization truly seeking to maintain an “absolute pacifist” stance would have to accept being indefinitely relegated to the “periphery” of the social structure. The multi-million member Sōka Gakkai, contrarily, has sought to gain and exercise a certain measure of political power, attempting not only to influence foreign policy, but to realize progressive legislation in domestic arenas like education and welfare, as well, through the Kōmeitō. Yet inasmuch as the Kōmeitō encounters “practical” issues in its everyday functioning that force some degree of compromise on its part to be unavoidable, the party has not proved a reliable companion to the Sōka Gakkai in the campaign to reject violence outright, even though

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the Kōmeitō appears to have sincerely tried to uphold the Gakkai’s values. Rather, the Kōmeitō has for its own purposes redefined peace as an ultimate goal. At the same time, it has made an associated concession that occasionally force may have to be employed “as ‘just means’ along the way” (hence the party’s supporting the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty since the 1980s, approving the 1992 Peacekeeping Operations Bill, acquiescing to the dispatchment of Japanese Self-Defense Force personnel to Iraq in 2004, et cetera). In response, the Sōka Gakkai has had to either dissociate itself from the Kōmeitō, and consequently surrender its potential to affect the political process, over such compromises, or withstand a great deal of uncomfortable tension whenever the need to make them has arisen. Since it continues to back the Kōmeitō, thereby manifesting an attitude that the former option constitutes a price too high to pay, Kisala holds that from a logical standpoint the Sōka Gakkai’s claims of absolute pacifism have been debased. Accordingly, in Kisala’s view, the position of the Sōka Gakkai today should more accurately be understood as having shifted to “conditional pacifism.” This development can be seen as one substantial way the group has been impacted by its activity in the political sphere.

However, as useful as this perspective proves, Kisala’s and similar works convey only a very limited snapshot of a much larger picture. When one takes up a more inclusive outlook incorporating the Sōka Gakkai’s opposition to the attempted revision

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21 Kisala, Prophets of Peace, 2005: p.86.
of Article 9 into the equation, the issue becomes far murkier. After all, how does it make sense for the Sōka Gakkai to devote so much of its energy and resources to the protection of a document it champions to begin with for said document's commitment to pacifism, when the means of doing so extract the toll of concomitantly weakening the movement's own pacifistic character? And, faced with this conundrum, would it not behoove the Sōka Gakkai to withdraw from the world of politics altogether, so that it could rededicate itself to upholding its core religious principles (especially when many of its members, according to Sōka Gakkai Vice President Maeda Kunishige, persist in calling for absolute pacifism23)? Through careful reflection upon these dilemmas, the thoroughgoing degree to which the Sōka Gakkai has been impelled to reevaluate and prioritize its goals and values by its involvement in the Constitutional revision debate becomes evident. That it remains engaged regardless indicates the leadership of the Sōka Gakkai sees a much larger purpose to its activism in support of Article 9 than simply the defense of any single given religious belief. The question, then, is what exactly Article 9 represents to the Sōka Gakkai movement.

1.4 The Peace Movement and the Meaning of Article 9 to the Sōka Gakkai

In short, a look at the matter on the macro-level seems to indicate that the primary reason behind the Sōka Gakkai's decision to immerse itself full-scale in the controversy surrounding the “Peace Constitution” in recent years is tied to the

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legitimacy the group has stood to gain from staking out the position of Article 9’s “protector,” through its peace movement. This is not meant to suggest the Sōka Gakkai or its members or leaders have intended only to “use” Article 9 in a manipulative or mercenary fashion, for their own benefit24; there are literally thousands of publications and millions of person-hours of volunteer labor on the part of Sōka Gakkai adherents dedicated to the cause of maintaining the present Constitution, stretching over more than a half-century, that would testify to the depth and genuine nature of the convictions held by countless of them. Rather, the idea that involvement in the issue has been part of an impulse to deliberately “court legitimacy”25 should be contextualized and assessed within the Sōka Gakkai’s overall development, in which case such a course is detected to have been a very plausible, possibly necessary, reaction to events taking place at one particular, critical moment in the organization’s history. That moment occurred in 1991, when the Sōka Gakkai and all its affiliated overseas chapters were ordered to disband and were excommunicated from the Nichiren Shōshū – the Buddhist school out of which the Sōka Gakkai had originally emerged as a lay movement some sixty years before – after the release of a tape allegedly featuring comments whereby Ikeda Daisaku had

24 Numerous critics of the Sōka Gakkai have, however, made just such accusations, and scholars both in Japan and the West have been among them. Many have charged that activities the Sōka Gakkai claims to undertake to promote the social well-being of ordinary citizens are in reality often motivated by a desire to obtain positive publicity, and, ultimately, financial profit. See especially Furukawa, Toshiaki. Shisutemu to shite no Sōka Gakkai = Kōmeitō. Tokyo: Daisan shokan, 1999 (in particular, pages 6-15 and 51-55). For an example of a scholarly work viewing the motives of the Sōka Gakkai peace movement, in particular, with suspicion, see Naylor, “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement” (1991): pp.51-78.

“disrespected the [Nichiren Shōshū] priesthood and questioned High Priest Abe Nikken’s integrity and doctrinal vision.”

The Shōshū clergy’s action of expelling the Sōka Gakkai brought an abrupt and irreversible end to what had in fact frequently been a rocky relationship, and in the process, it caused a short-term decline in worldwide Sōka Gakkai membership, and necessitated adjustments to Gakkai believers’ daily practice. But by far, the most serious problem with which the Sōka Gakkai was left to deal in the aftermath of its excommunication was the quandary of how, as a lay movement with no orthodox religious parent organization, the group could continue to be perceived by the public as having a legitimate claim to religious authority.

Perhaps predictably, the Sōka Gakkai sought to validate its legitimacy by systematically demonstrating how it, and not the Nichiren Shōshū, was qualified to be

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27 For example, membership declined from 40,000 to 24,000 in the Brazilian Soka Gakkai International branch, as many members left the movement out of disgust toward what they saw as a power struggle driven by selfishness and greed (Ibid, pp.98-99). Although American followers did not withdraw in the numbers that their Brazilian counterparts did, they also reported being troubled by the circumstances surrounding the Sōka Gakkai’s dismissal, according to religion scholar David Machacek (see Machacek, David W. “Immigrant Buddhism in America: A Model of Religious Change,” Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, vol.5, no.1 (2001): p.78). William Alnor observed that the schism affected membership numbers in Japan, too. He noted that, although domestic membership growth in the Sōka Gakkai had slowed considerably between 1970 and 1991 (after a period of phenomenal expansion during the 1950s and ’60s), until ’91 the group had still been among the fastest growing religious organizations in the country, and that it was only at the time of the split with the Nichiren Shōshū that the period of increase effectively ended (see Alnor, William M. “Infighting, Division, and Scandal Afflicting Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists,” Christian Research Institute Journal, installment 4 (Winter, 1992): p.1).

the interpreter of the “true” meaning of the Nichiren tradition for the present time and
place. Nichiren’s foundational argument had been that the Lotus Sūtra alone could bring
about buddhahood in the degenerate era of “mappō 末法, or the “Final Age of the
Dharma,” in which he lived, and he had prescribed faithful invocation of the text’s title
(daimoku 题目) as the appropriate method of practicing devotion thereto.29 The Sōka
Gakkai asseverated re-interpretive authority over this legacy by way of a dynamic,
hermeneutically innovative strategy that held Nichiren’s emphasis on the daimoku –
chanting namu-myōhō-renga-kyō – was part of an overall effort to simplify Buddhist praxis
so as to make it more suitable to the needs of the masses of his day; and furthermore,
that the demand of making the teaching relevant to time and place was never ending,
and today, only the Sōka Gakkai was capable of bringing the teaching to the people as
they needed to hear it.30 Actualizing this strategy and assuming its self-appointed status
as proper spiritual heir to the essence of Nichiren Buddhism required the Sōka Gakkai
not only to set about discrediting the Nichiren Shōshū and its competing claim to power
(which it did principally by painting the priesthood as overly “dogmatic,” and
preoccupied with preserving its dominance and prestige), but also to emphasize and
intensify its own practical activities in the broader society. These activities included
various programs for the promotion of culture and education, as well as of other
humanistic values, but foremost among them was the Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement.

29 Stone, Jacqueline I. “Rebuking the Enemies of the Lotus: Nichirenist Exclusivism in Historical
30 Low, Sor-Ching. “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization: Remapping the
The majority of Sōka Gakkai members nowadays are likely to attribute the beginnings of their organization’s peace movement to the resistance of its founder, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō, to the militarist policies of the Japanese wartime government, his subsequent arrest, and his death in prison in 1944. However, both Makiguchi and his disciple and successor as president of the Sōka Gakkai, Toda Jōsei, “fervently believed that Nichiren Buddhism [itself] holds the key to world peace,” with the specific location of that key being found in a treatise Nichiren composed in 1260 entitled *Risshō ankoku-ron* 立正安国論, or “The Treatise on Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Country.”

Ikeda Daisaku has echoed the thoughts of his predecessors, going as far as to say writing the text was the reason for Nichiren’s appearance on earth.

Ikeda’s concise summarization of the contents of the *Risshō ankoku-ron* is as follows: when governance and the ideals of True Buddhism are properly aligned, “Peace and a better world will ensue.” Such a statement lays plain the basic aims and ideological underpinnings of the Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement, and simultaneously, illustrates the foundational reasoning behind the group’s foray into the domain of politics by way of the Kōmeitō. Additionally, from it a third, equally significant inference can be drawn. That is, real authority is vested in that group whose religious practice proves efficacious.

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32 Ikeda actually added that there was one other purpose for Nichiren’s appearance besides writing the *Risshō ankoku-ron*: to inscribe the dai-gohonzon, a mandala which has served as the central object of worship within Sōka Gakkai religious practice. See Métraux, Daniel A. “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of *Risshō Ankukuron*,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol.13, no.1 (1986): pp.40-41.
with such efficacy displayed through a tangible realization of peace and the general well-being of people in the world. Therefore, if LDP-led endeavors at changing, or even abolishing, Article 9 – which is reserved as a potent symbol of peace and human welfare besides the value of its practical mandates – were to meet with success, and total Japanese re-militarization were to come to fruition, the Sōka Gakkai’s assertions of the effectiveness of its practice would be fatally undermined. Especially after the split with the Nichiren Shōshū had more or less stripped the Sōka Gakkai of any means of attaining legitimacy aside from being more useful than other movements within the Nichiren tradition, it could ill-afford to let this happen. At minimum, it needed to have a prominent say in how any revision would be carried out, so it could ensure the pacifist “spirit” of the present document would not be destroyed. It was from a recognition of this fact that the Sōka Gakkai’s active participation in the Constitutional revision debate in the two decades since its excommunication was born.

1.5 Questions to be Considered

As Kisala’s study aptly exposits, however, becoming more involved in the political goings on of the revision process has presented unique challenges for the Sōka Gakkai. A critical look reveals just how many fronts upon which the organization is fighting its defensive battle, and just how difficult is the situation it faces in terms of balancing the contradictory demands being made it by all of its related and interested parties. How, to start, can the differences between the needs of Sōka Gakkai leadership and the wishes of the followers of the movement be reconciled? How can the tension
brought on by compromises of the Sōka Gakkai’s religious principles through the actions of the Kōmeitō – compromises the latter argues are “inevitable” because “the essence of a political party comes down to the ability to realize its policies” – be navigated? In particular, given the progressively expanding role of the organization’s international element during recent years, and that the peace movement is considered a major factor in the Sōka Gakkai’s attractiveness within many foreign chapters, what limits should there be with respect to the leeway afforded the Kōmeitō in compromising on pacifism-related issues (especially those that impact the Article 9 issue)? Still other problem areas have arisen as a result of the Gakkai’s need to generate widespread popular support for the politicians it sponsors, as well as for the preservation of Article 9 generally, in seeking to achieve the aims of its peace movement. First, since this requires the organization to adopt an approach to its social engagement that concentrates on accentuating matters of common concern, what extent of excision of the religious rhetoric from its public message in order to do so should be considered acceptable? And secondly, how should the Gakkai then go about managing criticism from skeptics who interpret the movement’s efforts to downplay certain aspects of its religious ideology for the sake of broadening its popular appeal as reflective of a lack of genuineness? The Gakkai has been fighting non-members’ fiercely negative portrayals of the organization dating to its aggressive proselytizing methods in the early postwar period; in this connection, it remains vulnerable today to allegations that its apparent abandonment of

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a proclaimed ideological commitment (such as to “absolute pacifism”) merely provides
evidence of the peace program’s being driven in truth by a pragmatic, self-centered
desire to shape a more approbative external image for the movement.\textsuperscript{35}

With each of these matters demanding attention, and with even more basic
questions regarding whether the Sōka Gakkai has overstepped the proper boundaries of
a religious organization by endeavoring to influence the political side of the debate
looming constantly in the background, the substantial impact being felt by the Sōka
Gakkai from its participation in the discussion over Constitutional revision is manifest.
On the one hand, the chance to play an integral part in an issue of such import for the
whole of Japanese society has offered the group an opportunity to demonstrate
concretely the efficacy of its practice (i.e., of its peace movement), in the process
furnishing testimony to its claim to interpretive authority over the Nichiren tradition
and serving a legitimizing function, beginning at what had been a precarious moment in
the organization’s history. On the other hand, involvement in the Article 9 debate has
conferred numerous difficulties upon the Sōka Gakkai, as the queries posed in the
foregoing paragraph attest. The focus of the remaining pages of this paper, accordingly,
will be on the doctrinal re-interpretations and actual activities that have constituted the
movement’s response to both these opportunities and these difficulties, with an eye
specifically on how its response eventually enabled the Gakkai to work through the
Kōmeitō to “limit what the Conservatives could achieve” when the controversy over the

“Peace Constitution” reached its most fevered pitch yet in 2005. But prior to undertaking any such larger task, or giving fuller treatment to the current states of Sōka Gakkai practice, the peace program, or the process of Constitutional revision, in the interest of highlighting recent developments pertaining to each it is incumbent at this juncture to turn toward a contextualization of them through an in-depth historical overview of the Sōka Gakkai religious movement.
2. Early History of the Sōka Gakkai

2.1 Current Membership Figures

According to the figures cited on its website, the Sōka Gakkai presently estimates membership in its movement at about 12 million people, scattered throughout no less than 192 countries and territories.¹ Japan is home to the vast majority of followers, as the organization holds a presence in somewhere just over 8 million households in its country of origin.² Impressive Gakkai populations are found elsewhere, also, with SGI’s largest chapters located in South Korea, South America, Southeast Asia, and the United States. The single most sizable overseas branch is SGI-Korea, which boasts as many as one million members.³ The second most voluminous is believed to be that of Brazil, composed of a current membership of approximately 150,000 persons (90 percent of whom are ethnically non-Japanese, showing the religion’s ability to appeal to a highly diverse segment of individuals).⁴ In addition, there are an estimated 71,000 members in Europe, with 4,000 of them concentrated in Great Britain; there are 4,000 in Canada; between 4,000 and 5,000 in Mexico; and 2,500 in Australia, comprised of a heterogeneous

³ Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.28. Note: Overseas branches of the Sōka Gakkai, since the split with the Nichiren Shōshū in 1991, have all been referred to in the way of the example here of “Sōka Gakkai International-Korea;” the U.S. chapter is known as Soka Gakkai International-U.S.A (typically shortened to SGI-USA), the Australian chapter as SGI-Australia, the Canadian chapter as SGI-Canada, and so on. Before that time, they had been called by “Nichiren Shōshū”-plus the name of the branch country.
mix of more than fifty ethnic groups including a large number of ethnic Chinese as well as comparatively high proportions of Korean and Indian immigrants.  

Academics lament the difficulty of securing accurate estimates of membership numbers, pointing out for example that individuals who “tried” the group for a time but are no longer active participants often continue to be counted. For instance, SGI-USA claims 300,000 adherents, yet scholars seem to unanimously agree that this number is “grossly exaggerated” and place the actual total at closer to 45,000. Nonetheless, disputes over exact figures do not diminish the reality that the Sōka Gakkai movement is a major global social force. Even by the conservative estimates it is likely the largest religious organization in Japan, and, without question, one of the largest new religious movements in the world.

**2.2 Under Makiguchi’s Leadership**

**2.2.1 The Establishment of the “Value-Creating Education Society”**

The tremendous contemporary popularity of the Sōka Gakkai is all the more remarkable when one bears in mind its humble origins. The forerunner of today’s Sōka

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Gakkai was established formally as an educational reform movement known as the “Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai” 創価教育学会 (or the “Value-Creating Education Society”) in 1937 by a scholar and high school principal named Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871-1944), together with a group of just sixty other educators who had been studying his ideas under his tutelage. Within the movement, a date seven years earlier – 3 November, 1930 – is now typically held to be the date of the organization’s founding: on that day, Makiguchi and Toda Jōsei 戸田城聖 (1900-58), his chief disciple, published the first section of what would by 1934 evolve into a four-volume treatise detailing Makiguchi’s theory on how to construct “a system for promoting values through education.” The work (the title of which, Sōka kyōikugaku taikei 創価教育学体系 [A System of Value-Creating Pedagogy], would become the source of the later group’s name) was derived from Makiguchi’s professional experiences as an educator between the years 1913 and 1929, a period when the Japanese educational system was characterized by “rigid discipline, the force-feeding of information, and the inculcation of loyalty to

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the state and its aims.” In response to such circumstances, Makiguchi sought through his theory to radically rearrange the power dynamics of the learning process, placing responsibility for the child’s learning in the hands of the student and fixing the teacher’s role as that of “helper” to the child in realizing the fulfillment of his or her innate potential.

2.2.2 The Fundamentals of “Value-Creating Pedagogy”

The key concept behind Makiguchi’s theory was that “education should nourish a student’s sense of values.” Noting the primacy attributed to values here is critical to achieving a deeper grasp of Makiguchi’s thought, for it was his belief that because “human beings cannot create matter, [but we can] create value,” it followed that creating value was in fact “our very humanity.” Makiguchi held that a “happy” life was one in which the individual could unrestrainedly pursue a path toward fully “becoming human” – in other words, toward creating value to the greatest extent possible – and therefore the proper task of education must be to instill in the child an ability to succeed in doing just this. Interestingly, in expounding the theoretical pedagogic means for reforming the public school system in Japan in order to guide it in this direction, he outlined a schema based on an amended form of the traditional Kantian values of truth, goodness, and beauty, differing merely by a substitution of “benefit” for “truth”: if

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students could be taught to distinguish between benefits (something positive that people receive from their relationships to those factors that contribute to the maintenance and development of their lives), goodness (people's contributions of something positive toward forming and developing a harmonious, empathic, human-centered society), and beauty (something perceived through one or more of the five senses that emotionally enriches people's lives), they would at the same time imbibe a mindset that intuitively strove toward finding balance among them. In this way, the education system could transcend its preoccupation with inculcating “life-based knowledge” and above all, with “utility,” and instead be transformed into a vehicle by which individuals learned to instinctively recognize every interaction with others as “an invaluable chance to create value.” Upon the accomplishment of such a perspective, it was presumed, the betterment of the individual human being and of society overall were sure to follow one another in succession as a matter of course.

2.2.3 Suppression and Redirection of the Movement

As the 1930s unfolded, however, Makiguchi became increasingly aware that the militarist regime then prevailing in Japan would render his vision of true educational

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13 Young, C.R., et al. “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai.” Global Education Associates' Papers & Presentations. February, 1994. (March 26, 2011). http://www.g-e-a.org/docs/Young.pdf. p.15. Makiguchi knowingly eschewed “truth” and inserted “benefits” in revising Kant's conceptual framework. He believed that the notion of truth was problematic in that it was inherently “de-contextualized”: out of its sole concern for “that which is,” it neglected the primary importance of relationships in the individual's existence. For Makiguchi, “truth” and “value” were to properly be understood as fundamentally unrelated concepts.

14 Ibid, p.15.
reform impossible to actualize.\textsuperscript{15} Around the time the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai officially formed, Japanese military involvement on mainland China escalated into all-out war, and in the resulting domestic climate democratically-minded social campaigns such as an overhaul of the education system were as a rule suppressed.\textsuperscript{16} Consequently, the system of “value-creating pedagogy” was implemented only at a few elementary schools run by principals who were members of the movement.\textsuperscript{17} Makiguchi developed a conviction that society needed to be changed in a way even more fundamental than education had the power to effect – given the realities of the current political conditions, at least – and he progressively began to incorporate the teachings of a type of Buddhism to which he had converted as a lay believer in 1928, the Nichiren Shōshū \textsuperscript{18} (“Orthodox School of the Nichiren tradition”), into the thought and activities of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai.\textsuperscript{18} In the years after having been exposed to the Nichiren Shōshū (at that point a relatively obscure Buddhist sect) Makiguchi had investigated its worldview deeply, and had found, in his mind, an undeniable congruence between his theories and the principles it espoused.\textsuperscript{19} As a result, he revised his basic \textit{Kachi-ron} \textsuperscript{19} or “Theory of Value,” to express it through language bespeaking this Buddhist influence:

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\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, pp.19-20. Some workshops presenting the theory and its methods were held as well, but again, these were largely carried out by members of the movement or their associates. Attempts to promote the \textit{Kachi-ron} idea as a path to happiness in life among merchants were likewise unsuccessful.
\end{flushright}
“Preference for profit over loss, good over evil, beauty over ugliness, and not to be satisfied until reaching supreme happiness is human nature and ideal. This is what is meant by a life of kachi sōzō 価値創造 (creating value). The ultimate meaning of Buddhism, known as myōhō 妙法 (the “wonderful law”)... is the demonstration of the law of greatest value which corresponds to [the realization of a life of kachi sōzō].”

This statement, in essence equating the life in which the human potential to create value is maximized to a realization of the highest Buddha Dharma, portended an even more complete shift of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai “from an educational organization to a religious one.” Before the conclusion of the decade, the movement’s primary focus had come to be the propagation of Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism. Re-orienting the group in

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20 Hashimoto, Hideo, and William McPherson. “Rise and Decline of Sokagakkai: Japan and the United States,” *Review of Religious Research*, vol.17, no.2 (Winter, 1976): p.92, note #3. James Dator has shown that in its initial version, Makiguchi’s Kachi-ron had a “largely pragmatic and Kantian” character, “almost devoid of the influence of Nichiren Buddhistic thought” (Dator, “The Soka Gakkai in Japanese politics” (1967): p.215). When considering that Makiguchi had already become a lay adherent of the Nichiren Shōshū by the time his first volume was published (see Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.2), a look at Dator’s observation in juxtaposition to this later passage underscores the enormous shift in Makiguchi’s thought, and therefore the enormous shift in the orientation of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai overall, throughout the 1930s. That is, one can detect a change from what appears to have been an intentional attempt to keep ideas about religion and educational reform separate, to an active approach of integrating them as completely as possible. The shift would seem to suggest in Makiguchi an evolving, ever-deepening belief in the applicability of Nichiren practice to his historical setting – a belief apparently made stronger as he witnessed the rapidly deteriorating social circumstances facing the ordinary Japanese around him at that time.

21 Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): pp.201-02. Specifically, Makiguchi and Toda promoted the idea that Nichiren Shōshū practice was the ideal means for cultivating the inherent potential for buddhahood that is within all human beings.
such a fashion successfully served to open it up to people of all walks and stages of life, and by 1941 membership had swelled to more than 3,000 individuals.  

2.2.4 Makiguchi’s Imprisonment and Death

But just at the time the movement was achieving something of a modest foothold, the Japanese government promulgated the *Shūkyō dantai hō* 宗教団体法 (“Religious Organizations Law”), forcing consolidation upon several religious groups in its continued effort to expand the reach of its Shintō-based nationalist ideological apparatus. The Nichiren Shōshū was among the affected organizations, as one aspect of the government’s plan called for a forced merging of all Nichiren sects into one. Makiguchi, incensed, resisted. He defied the regime by refusing to accept a talisman (ofuda 大麻) from the imperial Ise Jingu, the receipt of which was mandatory for all citizens subsequent to having undergone purification rites performed by Shintō governmental representatives. When resisting Makiguchi argued that, in the same way the Kamakura bakufu had ultimately crumbled because it did not devote itself to the *Lotus Sūtra* as Nichiren had prescribed, the Japan (i.e., the emperor and the government) of his day was doomed to be defeated in the intensifying war it was then fighting if it

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23 Ibid, p.20. Although the Meiji Constitution contained a clause guaranteeing “freedom of religious belief,” this was only insofar as such belief did not represent a threat to peace and order, nor violate the duty of showing loyalty to the emperor. The government used the vagueness of each of these conditions to keep the constitutionality of laws like the *Shūkyō dantai hō* beyond question.
continued to fail to adopt the *Lotus Sūtra* and the Nichiren Shōshū.\(^{25}\) For opposing the authorities on these fronts, in July, 1943, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō was arrested and imprisoned, as were twenty-one other members of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai, including Chairman Toda Jōsei. The charges were “lèse majesté” and violation of the 1928 imperial edict known as the “Peace Preservation Act,” which, incidentally, had recently been amended to allow for the indefinite preventative detention of political activists deemed to pose a threat to public security.\(^{26}\) While in prison Makiguchi dismissed instruction from the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood itself to comply with the government’s demands, “steadfastly refusing” to recant his beliefs in spite of being forced to endure gruelling interrogations and torture.\(^{27}\) His body was eventually unable to withstand the harsh

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\(^{25}\) Matsuoka, Mikio. “Makiguchi Tsunesaburō no sensōkan to sono jissenteki tenkai,” *Tōyō tetsugaku kenkyū shokiyō*, vol.18 (2002): p.33. On the other hand, according to Makiguchi, if the government and emperor did accept them, based on a principle known as ōbutsu myōgō (see pages 47 and 63-68 of this paper), in time the whole world would be converted to the Nichiren Shōshū and all of humankind would be saved (see Etō and Wajō, *Jimintō / Sōka Gakkai / Kōmeitō*, 2003: pp.20-21).

\(^{26}\) Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.2. Strictly speaking, it was his refusal to accept the talisman from Ise Jingu that triggered Makiguchi’s arrest. However, there is no doubt that his active denial of the consolidating measures (as they concerned the Nichiren Shōshū) within the *Shūkyō dantai ho* had made him a target of the militarists – especially since the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood itself acquiesced to the merger, as well as the government’s demands of enshrining a talisman of the Sun Goddess Tenshō Daijin at its head temple, Taiseki-ji, and thereafter “disavowed” Makiguchi (for fear of government reprisals stemming from association with a “thought criminal”). See Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): p.202; and Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.326, note #2.

\(^{27}\) Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): p.202. Seventeen of the twenty-two imprisoned members of the movement did renounce their convictions, per the instructions of the priesthood, and were released early; Makiguchi, Toda, and three others remained resolute (see Dator, “The Soka Gakkai in Japanese politics” (1967): p.212). Reportedly, Makiguchi reiterated his stance that if it continued to reject Nichiren’s teachings (Japanese: *Nichiren buppō* 日蓮仏法) Japan would be ravaged by war, famine, natural disasters, et cetera, and ultimately cease to exist, while
treatment and “the privations of prison life,” however, and on 18 November, 1944, at the age of 73, Makiguchi died of malnutrition while being held in solitary confinement at the Tokyo Detention House.28

2.3 Re-formation of the Movement as the Sōka Gakkai under Toda’s Leadership

At the point of its founder’s death, the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai was for all intents and purposes non-existent. But when Toda was released from prison just prior to the end of the Pacific War on 3 July, 1945, he immediately set out to reassemble the movement and carry on the work of his late mentor. Starting with the recruitment of as many fellow former members as he could mobilize, Toda accelerated the society’s inclination toward religion and away from the original educational reform ideas of Makiguchi, as he oriented the group toward a status of “lay organization” in support of the Nichiren Shōshū almost from the very beginning of its post-war incarnation.29 Toda dropped the word kyōiku from the movement’s name in February, 1946, in order to concretely reflect this “new” direction: the Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (literally translated as “Value-Creation Society”) was officially moving beyond a focus on issues primarily related to education, to even broader goals.30 Aided by an environment conducive to the

under interrogation in prison, as well. See Matsuoka, “Makiguchi Tsunesaburō no sensōkan” (2002): p.34.
29 Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.2. Toda is said to have recited “a Buddhist mantra” – presumably the daimoku – one million times while incarcerated, before awakening to the “Truth” and deciding to dedicate his entire life, should he be released, to the propagation of Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism.
proliferation of new religious movements due to the enactment by the American-led Allied Occupation (which seemed adamantly set on heaping culpability for Japanese wartime aggression upon a nebulous “State Shintō”) of several legal measures designed to proscribe government interference in matters of religion, the Sōka Gakkai soon flourished.\(^{31}\) The Society held its first executive meeting in May of 1946; by 10 July, 1950, it had generated a wide enough base of support to begin publishing its first monthly magazine (\textit{Daibyaku renge} 第百蓮華), and by 20 April, 1951, it was publishing its first newspaper (\textit{Seikyō shinbun} 聖教新聞). On 3 May, 1951, Toda was formally introduced as the second president of the Sōka Gakkai movement.\(^{32}\)

\section*{2.4 Factors Behind the Sōka Gakkai's Early Success}

The manner in which Toda weaved together the teachings of value-creation and Nichiren Buddhism to “help relieve people’s suffering in the postwar chaos” enabled the re-organized Sōka Gakkai to continue to experience rapid growth in the next several decades after the end of World War II.\(^{33}\) First and foremost, Toda’s Sōka Gakkai appealed to many by the promise of “worldly benefits,” as understood within the group’s basic conceptual framework – which is to say, creating value entails both being a benefit to \textit{and} benefitting from one’s surrounding environment. Practical and liberal in terms of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Not the least of these measures, of course, was the strict separation between religion and the state provided for in the new Constitution. See Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): p.17.
\end{footnotes}
character of its ethics, the Gakkai placed strong emphasis upon the notion of *genshō*, which literally means “actual proof” or “actual evidence,” but within the context of the movement referred to the “secular benefits or rewards that come from one’s faith” and hence are “evidence” of the religion’s efficacy. To the hungry, dispossessed, disenfranchised, dispirited Japanese masses mired in the wake of a wartime defeat theretofore unthinkable in scale, the attractiveness of a movement offering “happiness” in the concrete forms of food, shelter, health, finding a mate, securing employment, and

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34 Contrary to “Western” religious traditions such as Christianity, within the Sōka Gakkai there were very rarely “particular moral exhortations” or “codes [specifying] the desirability or unacceptability of... explicit acts.” Certain orientations and dispositions were enjoined, but these were considered standards of behavior expected to arise naturally in a believer who cultivated a lifestyle conducive to the realization of his or her Buddha-nature. The Sōka Gakkai’s approach to regulating followers’ ethics can therefore be thought of as quite flexible, even permissive. The doctrinal onus was rather on taking responsibility for making judgments and decisions about one’s own life, “while remembering that the shortcomings of others were [also members’] problems” (see Dawson, “The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements” (2001): p.358).


36 Religion scholar Ted Solomon has argued that being defeated by the Allied powers “shattered” the Japanese people’s “cosmological orientation” as well as “the heart of their ideological and spiritual frame of reference,” stemming from the fact that the religious values around which life in Japan was organized historically were grounded in the understanding that humanity and “the basic institutions of family and state” were integral parts of the divinely-established universe. The Japanese notion of *kokutai* typified such a worldview (literally “national body,” but usually translated as “national polity,” this concept was much maligned by the Occupation as a hallmark of the emperor-worshipping “State Shintō”). It held that the *kokutai* of Japan was “coeval with heaven and earth, and therefore eternal or immutable,” thereby expressing a belief in the fundamental unity of the transcendent and phenomenal worlds. The destruction of this cosmological orientation, not surprisingly, was accompanied by a “normlessness” or “rootlessness” in early postwar Japan. According to Solomon, the most effective religious response to these conditions came not from the established Japanese religious institutions of Shintō and Buddhism (although he cites the Zen, Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 [“True Pure Land”], and Shingon 真言 [“True Word”] sects as exceptions, without providing details) but from the “new religions,” with the Sōka Gakkai in particular at the fore. See Solomon, Ted J. “The Response of Three New Religions to the Crisis in the Japanese Value System,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol.16, no.1 (1977): pp.1-2, including notes #1 and #2.
so forth, cannot be stated strongly enough. On the other side of the equation, Toda’s application of Nichiren thought in his explanation of the factors behind the tremendous contemporary social and political unrest proved equally compelling to prospective converts. Recalling Makiguchi’s warning to the imperial government not long before its demise, Toda held that Japan’s destruction at the conclusion of the Second World War was in fact the fulfillment of Nichiren’s prophecy regarding the fate of the nation which neglected “True Buddhism” in favor of devotion to other religions (in this case, according to Toda, to “State Shintō”). Specifically, he was referring to Nichiren’s once having claimed that Brahma, a deity depicted as “world-ruling” in many canonical texts presenting notions of Buddhist cosmology, “would punish a country that slandered the True Dharma,” or in other words, rejected the Lotus Sūtra. Toda argued that at the end of World War II General Douglas MacArthur had played the role of Brahma toward Japan, having carried out the task of penalizing the nation for its calumniations against the Lotus Sūtra. But by the same token, in Toda’s view, MacArthur had also provided an opportunity for the Japanese to rectify the hopelessness of their situation when he mandated freedom of religion, because such a provision enabled the re-establishment (and then the potential for unmolested expansion) of the one group that possessed the knowledge of the “true” source and only cure for Japan’s sufferings, the Sōka Gakkai.

On the basis of this viewpoint, the Gakkai actively portrayed itself as “guardian of the

people,” charged with the duty “to warn [the people] of the dangers that exist in the world today, and to show them how to escape this misery.”

Thus, not only did the movement gain widespread appeal because it offered greater material prosperity to followers, but also because it empowered them to create value for society as a whole: members could envision themselves as playing a leading role in an “unfolding drama... of human salvation,” and recognize their personal efforts as “directly linked to world transformation.”

Toda’s explanatory schema brought meaning to the harsh life circumstances believers had experienced, and at the same time, showed them what they must do to take responsibility toward improving conditions for themselves and others from that point forward.

### 2.5 Improving Karma through the Religious Practice of the Sōka Gakkai

Two interrelated foci for praxis within the movement constituted the exact means by which Sōka Gakkai adherents were to secure postwar Japan’s “escape from misery” and rebirth as a Pure Land (Toda’s apparent vision for the country). The first centered on the performance of daily devotional activities intended to effect positive changes in the karma of the individual believer. Following convention of Nichiren Shōshū doctrine, chief among these was intense, “sincere” chanting of the daimoku, or the phrase namu-

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41 Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Risshō Ankokuron” (1986): p.39. Métraux notes the similarity between the Sōka Gakkai’s adoption of this orientation and how Nichiren “appointed himself as spokesman of the people in his treatise [the Risshō Ankokuron],” suggesting such was the inspiration behind the Sōka Gakkai’s approach.


"myōhō-renge-kyō" 南無妙法蓮華経 ("homage to the Lotus Sūtra"), in front of an image of the dai-gohonzon 大御本尊, a mandala of Chinese and Sanskrit characters representing the Lotus Sūtra originally inscribed by Nichiren shortly before his death. (Because the dai-gohonzon was held to have been imbued with the saving powers of the Lotus Sūtra, as well as those of Nichiren himself, it was regarded as the central object of worship within Gakkai practice.44) However, it was also believed that society had a collective karma of its own, and that above all it was society’s karma that needed to be improved. The orientation of this societal karma was determined by none other than the aggregate of all of the karmas of all of the individuals who comprised the given community, and so it could be deduced that the spiritual reformation of oneself was truly indispensable to the elevation of the state of society overall.45 But, it additionally followed that one’s own happiness and suffering were inextricably linked with those of others, in the most concrete sense possible, and for that reason efforts at self-transformation alone were not enough.46 One was further obligated to assist in bringing about an improvement of others’ karmas. Within Nichiren Buddhism, this was held to only become possible when the people relinquished their attachment to “false teachings,” as otherwise they would

44 According to Dator, the dai-gohonzon was not understood merely to represent Nichiren or his thought, but “to be Nichiren, to embody Nichiren... There is, in effect, a doctrine of ‘real presence’ in the gohonzon. Moreover, since Nichiren himself is believed to be the True Buddha [by believers of the Nichiren Shōshū and the Sōka Gakkai], the gohonzon has enormous importance and power as an object of worship.” See Dator, “The Soka Gakkai in Japanese politics” (1967): p.215.
continue to accrue unwholesome karma indefinitely – until inevitably that unwholesome karma was manifested through the type of hatred and violence responsible for the desperate circumstances the general Japanese public happened at that time to be facing. Accordingly, the second focus of Sōka Gakkai practice was upon mass-scale conversion of the citizenry to the “True Dharma,” a principle referred to within the Nichiren tradition as kōsen rufu 広宣流布 (defined by the Sōka Gakkai as “propagating the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishōnin 日蓮大聖人 widely to achieve peace and happiness for all mankind”). This goal of kōsen rufu was of extraordinary significance in terms of defining the direction the movement would take, largely because of the method of “practice” chosen to pursue it: an aggressive style of evangelizing that rejected all manner of religious devotion not based on the Nichiren understanding of the Lotus Sūtra, known as shakubuku.

2.6 The Doctrine of Shakubuku

2.6.1 Nichiren and Shakubuku

The concept of shakubuku 折伏 (literally, “to break and subdue,” or “to bend and subjugate”) has been central to Nichiren Buddhism since the life of Nichiren (1222-82) himself. Given the inherently confrontational nature of his basic claim that the only path to liberation in the Age of mappō まほう lay in devotion to the Lotus Sūtra, it was

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48 Noted scholar of the Nichiren tradition Jacqueline Stone has pointed out that Nichiren was not alone in forwarding such an “exclusive truth claim” during the period in which he lived. The Tendai 天台 institution on Mount Hiei 比叡山 had been splintering for some time by then, with each faction claiming to have “unique possession of the most profound Dharma;” the newly-
necessary that he integrate responses to challenges from other Buddhist teachings into the formal structure of his thought.\textsuperscript{49} Therefore, he described two strategies for teaching the Dharma: the first, \textit{shōju} 摂受 (“to embrace and accept”), represented a “mild method of leading others gradually without criticizing their position;” and the second was \textit{shakubuku}, characterized as a “stern method of explicitly rejecting ‘wrong views.’”\textsuperscript{50}

Nichiren established his criteria for determining the conditions under which each approach was appropriate in a major work entitled the \textit{Kaimoku shō} 開目抄.\textsuperscript{51} In it, he drew a distinction between countries that were merely “evil” – based on the fact that the inhabitants were ignorant of the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} – and countries that “destroy the Dharma” – that is, where inhabitants were not ignorant of the \textit{Lotus Sūtra}, yet still supported wrong teachings.\textsuperscript{52} As logic would dictate from these premises, in the former case, \textit{shōju} was the suitable method for spreading the teaching, while in the latter, the employment of \textit{shakubuku} had to be taken up as compulsory.\textsuperscript{53} The Japan of Nichiren’s lifetime fit into emerging Kamakura schools often devoted themselves to a single form of practice, which would then come to have “absolute” status within that school (she cites the example of the \textit{nenbutsu} 念仏 in the Pure Land [Jōdo 浄土] tradition, first articulated by former Tendai monk Hōnen 法然 [1133-1212]). In terms of why the Japanese tradition shifted toward the “sole validity of a single path” after having up to that time generally regarded a variety of teachings and practices as “liberating ‘skillful means’ (\textit{hōben} 方便; also commonly translated ‘expedient means’),” she suggests it likely stemmed from social and political upheavals or apprehensions within the monastic community related to theories about the Final Age (that of \textit{mappō}), but concedes that the exact cause is not clear. Whatever the reason, as she has argued, the contention by Nichiren – himself a former Tendai monk – that the sole path to liberation lay in chanting the \textit{daimoku} should be viewed in this context. See Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the \textit{Lotus}” (1994): pp.232-33.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p.233.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, p.233, including note #1.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, p.235. \textit{Shakubuku} was, according to Nichiren, “not a partisan self-assertiveness but the
this second category, with the masses as well as the rulers following various provisional teachings that in the Final Dharma Age\(^{54}\) could no longer lead to buddhahood and hence were “enemies” of the one vehicle.\(^{55}\) Thus, the only “compassionate” course available to Nichiren, in his eyes, was a uniform application of *shakubuku* that unqualifiedly rejected even all other forms of Buddhism as illegitimate.\(^{56}\)

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\(^{54}\) Incidentally, Nichiren’s understanding that he was living in the era of *mappō* was shaped by his firsthand experience of numerous disasters, including floods, an earthquake which leveled Kamakura in 1258, widespread famine (1259), several epidemics (e.g., in Kamakura, in 1261, when “more than half the populace died”), a series of destructive fires, and, of course, the imminence of invasion at the hands of the Mongols. See Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the *Lotus*” (1994): p.234; also, Naylor, “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement” (1991): p.69; and Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Rishō Ankukuron” (1986): p.32.

\(^{55}\) The “one vehicle” (Sanskrit: *ekayāna*) refers to the basic hermeneutic stance taken by the *Lotus Sūtra*, which holds that, because all living beings will eventually achieve enlightenment, all Buddhist teachings – whether regarded as Hinayāna or Mahāyāna – could be seen as “skillful means” offering provisional guidance for beings at certain stages of the path through the course of their innumerable lifetimes. In other words, there was no need to reject other devotional traditions, since all were simply preparing beings to ultimately be able to receive the one True teaching, expressed in the *Lotus Sūtra*, at some later point anyway. In the era of *mappō*, however, due to beings’ progressively deteriorating ability to hear and understand the Buddha’s Dharma, Nichiren believed that by the time such provisional teachings could finally lead beings to the *Lotus Sūtra*, it would be too late (in the sense that the Dharma would have already disappeared from this world). Thus, in the Final Dharma Age these other teachings could not be considered part of the one vehicle, but, in light of the urgency of the situation, had to be thought of as dangerous enemies.

2.6.2 The Sōka Gakkai’s Adoption of *Shakubuku*

Although Nichiren had upheld in principle that, depending on the context, a less combative strategy might be the superior means of bringing the masses to a recognition of the *Lotus* as the sole possessor of authority, and the tradition that succeeded him was rarely “monolithically committed to confrontational *shakubuku* practice [but rather exhibited] ongoing tension between confrontational and accommodating factions,” Toda chose a continuation of Nichiren’s same mission of *shakubuku* in setting the course for propagation within his own group, as well. There were two overriding factors that

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57 Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the *Lotus*” (1994): p.255. The history of this “tension between confrontational and accommodating factions” within the Nichiren tradition is complex and beyond the scope of this paper. The interested reader should see Stone (1994), particularly pages 237-49. This section begins with a discussion of how “the dynamics of confrontational exclusivism” were frequently played out in Nichiren Buddhism through “admonishing the state” (*kokka kangyō* 国家諌暁) via letters modeled after Nichiren’s *Risshō Ankoku-ron*, which he wrote for and sent to the most influential figure in the Kamakura bakufu at that time, retired regent Hōjō Tokiyori; it continues through Stone’s treatment of the so-called Nichiren *fuju fuse* movement (“to neither receive nor offer,” referring to a position that held devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra* should not receive alms from nor bestow alms upon non-believers – even the ruler himself) of the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Stone notes that, along with Christianity, the *fuju fuse* movement was proscribed by the Tokugawa regime, and an edict designed specifically to eliminate it was promulgated in 1665); and it concludes with an analysis of scholar Udana-in Nichiki’s 優陀那院日輝 (1800-59) contention that while *shakubuku* was an effective expedient during Nichiren’s lifetime, it was no longer suited to the contemporary context, as in his day “attacks on other sects could drive previously innocent people to commit the sin of slandering the *Lotus Sūtra*.” Also relevant toward a further understanding of the interplay between the factions in support of *shōju* versus those in support of *shakubuku* throughout the Nichiren tradition’s history are pages 250-51, which deal with the period of perhaps the height of advocacy of militant *shakubuku* that accompanied the onset of the Meiji era and lasted through WWII. For example, in 1931, lay evangelist of the “Nichirenism” movement (*Nichireishugi* 日蓮主義, a “popularized Nichiren doctrine welded to nationalistic aspirations”) Tanaka Chigaku 田中智學 (1861-1939) wrote in a work dedicated to the imperial family entitled *Bukkyō fūfu ron* 仏教夫婦論 that *shakubuku* meant to “conquer aggressively,” which is exactly what the Japanese imperial army was doing in its invasion of Manchuria China. Tanaka posited that: “Nichiren is the general of the army that will unite the world. Japan is his headquarters. The people of Japan are his troops; teachers and scholars of Nichiren Buddhism are his officers. The Nichiren creed is a declaration of war, and *shakubuku* is the plan of attack... Japan truly has a heavenly mandate to unite the world.”
made him predisposed toward selection of *shakubuku* as opposed to *shōju* when reorganizing the Sōka Gakkai after the War. The first was the strong line of symmetry Toda identified between his socio-political circumstances and those of Nichiren. To Toda it was plain that global society in 1945 was “in a state of general chaos and turmoil so that the individual’s life [was] a life of illness, privation, exploitation, misery, and continual warfare,” all of which amounted to a degree of suffering that served to confirm his suspicion that he was indeed living, as Nichiren had been, during the degenerate Age of *mappō.*”

It has also been demonstrated above that Toda perceived Japan’s crushing defeat in the Pacific War as having resulted from the nation’s slander of the True Dharma (*hōbō* 謗法), rooted in the militarist government’s rejection of the *Lotus*

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58 Ingram, Paul O. “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito: Buddhism and Political Power in Japan,” *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, vol.10, no.3 (1969): p.165. There are several schools of thought within Buddhism generally, and multiple even within the Nichiren tradition specifically, with regard to when and how *mappō* actually plays out in the world. According to Paul Ingram, the version of the theory which came to be accepted by Toda and the Sōka Gakkai is as follows: “*Mappō*... is the last of three periods of gradual degeneration of Gautama the Buddha’s doctrines, beginning from his enlightenment experience under the [Bodh Gaya]... The first five hundred years after his death are called the period of ‘correct doctrine’ [*shōbō* 正法 in Japanese]. As the cycle of history progresses life becomes more degenerate and corrupt the further away time moves from Gautama’s death. Thus *shōbō* evolves into *zōbō* 像法, the period of ‘counterfeit doctrine.’ This age lasts for one thousand years and is a time when very few people understand the correct doctrines and attain enlightenment through their practice. *Mappō*, the last age of the cycle, is an age of total moral, spiritual, and social corruption and decay because it is an age in which the ‘energy’ of Gautama’s teachings has ‘run down.’ This period lasts for ten thousand years” (Ingram (1969): pp.165-66, note #25). The adoption of this schema and time frame of *mappō* is paramount, as some configurations have conceived of *mappō* as, for example, the fifth of five 500-year periods in the deterioration of the Dharma after Śākyamuni Buddha’s *pāranirvāṇa*, which, used in conjunction with traditional Buddhist dating methods, would indicate the age of *mappō* had already passed (having ended just 300 years or so after Nichiren’s death, in fact – on this point, see Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the *Lotus*” (1994): p.247). That the Sōka Gakkai was on the other hand situated squarely in the same era of decline as was Nichiren, by Toda’s estimation, imbued the Sōka Gakkai’s message with the same urgency it had had during the life of the mission’s forebearer nearly 700 years before.
Sūtra and adherence to a Shintō-based ideology he understood as “State Shintō.” In order to “subdue” the nation and put an end to the tragedies its people themselves were causing to occur all around them, then, Toda believed his fellow citizens needed to be “broken” of their attachments to such slanderous teachings, and accordingly it stood to reason that he would lean toward adopting the aggressive option Nichiren had employed when faced with a comparable imperative.

The other most pertinent element playing into the Sōka Gakkai’s embracement of shakubuku was the particular orientation it inherited from its parent organization, the Nichiren Shōshū. Prior to the emergence of the Sōka Gakkai, the Nichiren Shōshū had been an almost entirely priesthood-based sect, courting (and counting) very few lay devotees and being characterized by its “insularity.” Historically speaking, the Nichiren Shōshū school, one of numerous comprising the Nichiren tradition, was established when Nikkō 日光 (a prominent disciple of Nichiren’s; lived 1246-1333) built Taiseki-ji 大石寺 near Mount Fuji not long after Nichiren’s death, to continue the movement initiated by the founder. Spiritual and administrative authority are said to have been passed down through a succession of head priests since that time, enabling the Nichiren Shōshū to claim that its priests have a direct, unbroken lineage dating to

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59 As Machacek has commented, “insular” is perhaps a somewhat curious disposition for a school calling itself the “most orthodox” within the Nichiren tradition, being that Nichiren’s reform efforts to begin with were focused on converting all of society to his understanding of Buddhism. The priesthood, for its part, holds that its inward-looking focus stems from the primacy it gives to protecting the integrity of the “true” teachings of Nichiren. See Machacek, “Immigrant Buddhism in America” (2001): p.75.

Nikkō, and thus, to Nichiren himself. Its proclamation of itself as the “most orthodox” Nichiren sect is grounded in this claim. Even as the Nichiren Shōshū amassed appreciable wealth with the development of the “Temple Buddhism” system – whereby people living in a given area were required to register as parishioners at their local temple, and an arrangement of main-local temple linkages took shape – in the Edo Period, and occasionally engaged with the broader religious community such as by sending representatives to participate in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, for the most part the Nichiren Shōshū contented itself with looking after internal affairs. Significantly, as a result of its basic stance of self-imposed isolation from the politics of the outside world, the Nichiren Shōshū was able “to maintain an identity as the most rigorously purist of all Nichiren denominations,” and also, to avoid being forced to compromise on its unrelenting refutation of “un-orthodox” teachings. The Sōka Gakkai ostensibly took on this “purist” demeanor of the Nichiren Shōshū, but as a lay movement its very existence was predicated upon interaction with the broader

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63 Perhaps reflecting the resurgence of confrontational shakubuku brought on by the Meiji Restoration (which in some cases saw the Nichiren tradition tied to nationalist aims – see note #57 of this chapter), the two Nichiren Shōshū prelates dispatched to Chicago actually wrote to Chairman of the World Parliament of Religions John Barrow in advance of the convention to request that he not allow representation there of “illegitimate forms of Buddhism.” While the request was denied yet they participated anyway, this event clearly illustrates the school’s rejection of the “accommodationist” trend within the tradition – at least in the Meiji through pre-war period of its history, during which the Sōka Gakkai emerged from it (Stone has suggested this was always the position of the Nichiren Shōshū, at any rate). See Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the Lotus” (1994): pp.250-52.
society. Hence, in the Sōka Gakkai, stern rejection of other devotional traditions was best to be manifested through confrontational shakubuku.

At the ceremony inaugurating him as president of the Sōka Gakkai in May, 1951, Toda made a famous declaration which would become a rallying cry for all who proselytized on behalf of the Sōka Gakkai during the 1950s: “If I fail to convert 750,000 families through shakubuku, don’t hold a funeral for me – just dump my ashes into the sea off Shinagawa.”65 Considering that at that time membership in the Gakkai was less than 5,000 households, the sheer audacity of Toda’s vision is noteworthy.66 In any event, with this one statement Toda ushered in the “great march of shakubuku” (shakubuku no daikōshin 折伏の大行進), and for years after it was underway, members utilized a strategy resembling “by any means necessary” in pursuit of their single-minded objective of securing as many conversions as possible. One contemporary source observed that shakubuku “involves a combination of threats, pleadings, arguments, and intimidations. Usually a small group of Sōka Gakkai members [visit] a single non-member and appl[y] whatever group psychological pressure is needed to effect a conversion.”67 A particularly contentious practice in which adherents regularly engaged was known as hōbōbarai 謗法祓, or “the duty of converts to remove all other objects of worship [i.e., all “slanderous” non-Nichiren images or icons] from their homes.”68 On this basis there were scores of instances in which “over-zealous evangelizers,” despite

being officially admonished to refrain from doing so, destroyed family ancestral tablets (ihai 位牌) connected to other Buddhist traditions in the homes of prospective converts, or did so in their own homes without the permission of other family members.69 As a byproduct of such activities, the Sōka Gakkai developed an extremely negative public image during this period.

On the other hand, it can also be seen that the Society’s aggressive shakubuku concurrently mobilized an extraordinary amount of energy, devotion, and self-sacrifice toward propagation of the True Dharma.70 A manner of especially confrontational proselytization proved well-suited to creating a sense of urgency about the movement, which was crucial to the mission of convincing the populace of the terrible consequences of continuing to neglect the Lotus Sūtra in the degenerate age in which it found itself (the concrete evidence provided by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of course then still very fresh in the minds of the people, also “assisted”). Chapters came to routinely vie for the highest monthly and yearly totals of converts gained; eventually, member shakubuku quotas became commonplace, and extremely competitive. In effect, the practice of shakubuku, as the means of pursuing kōsen rufu, became understood as a way to demonstrate one’s faith, with a greater number of conversions earned equaling a

70 Ibid, 256. Naturally, Toda anticipated that shakubuku would be more conducive to mobilizing large numbers of people (and thereby fostering the explosive growth the movement was seeking at this stage in its development) than would have been a more subdued approach, and this should be included as a third, and critically important, factor which made him “predisposed” to shakubuku over shōju when selecting a method by which to spread the group’s teachings.
more “faithful” practitioner. Moreover, shakubuku made manifest a member’s growth as far as comprehension of the meaning of Nichiren’s teachings. Followers were taught that while individuals gained immediate and substantial benefits upon conversion to the Sōka Gakkai, “total happiness” could not be a feasible possibility until all of society was converted to the religious, moral, and social principles of Nichiren. A shift in the focus of one’s practice from oneself (e.g., chanting the daimoku for the sake of having one’s prayers answered) to others (as illustrated by finding great success in the performance of shakubuku) was to be taken as a sign of elevated understanding, and so, represented the individual’s advancement as a member. And finally, an additional aspect of shakubuku which proved beneficial was the powerful way it helped build in-group solidarity. For while shakubuku was an outwardly directed practice – toward those seen as denying the True Dharma – it is also had a reflexive quality, in the sense that it assured those engaged in it it is we who have the capacity to liberate humankind, because it is we who are the rightful upholders of Nichiren’s example. All of these factors in combination

73 See Ōkubo, “The Acceptance of Nichiren Shōshū/ Sōka Gakkai in Mexico” (1991): p.203. This should not be mistaken for a de-emphasis of individual practices like chanting the daimoku before the gohonzon at some certain point of the Sōka Gakkai path, however, as such constantly remained necessary for the purpose of changing one’s karma. Rather, it should be viewed as reflecting, in parallel fashion, how one’s grasp of the concept of karma was to properly develop: progressing from primary concern for oneself to primary concern for the greater society. As alluded to earlier, a member would ideally come to see even the effort to improve his or her own individual karma as ultimately for the sake of bettering the collective societal karma, and then through such a shift in motivation one would also become a more productive evangelizer.
allowed the Sōka Gakkai to generate a tremendous momentum through its *shakubuku* efforts, and by Toda’s death in 1958, membership had indeed surpassed 750,000 households. This phenomenal proliferation was by far the most remarkable of any religious group’s in Japan in the early postwar period, and it laid the foundation for the Sōka Gakkai’s yet-to-be-challenged status as the largest of the Japanese new religions.\(^{76}\)

### 2.7 Legacies of the Toda Presidency

In sum, the era of Toda’s leadership firmly established the Sōka Gakkai as a movement of significant import within Japanese society. Toda himself is responsible for having prevented the group from succumbing to the ephemerality to which new religious movements are always prone at the loss of their founders, and leading it into a period of unparalleled expansion.\(^{77}\) He achieved this, one, by fitting his lay organization to the orthodox religious legitimacy of the Nichiren Shōshū so as to realize a “[compelling reconfiguration] of the central claim of Nichiren Buddhism for the exclusive truth of the *Lotus Sūtra*”\(^{78}\), and two, by applying Makiguchi’s original theory of value-creation to the contemporary social malaise in a way that brought meaning to the lives and circumstances of multitudes of mostly lower-middle class Japanese then in


\(^{77}\) According to scholars Hashimoto Hideo and William McPherson, citing figures published by the organization itself (and likely therefore somewhat optimistic), the total number of Sōka Gakkai members in Japan increased from 5,728 households in 1951 to roughly 1,050,000 households in 1958. The rate of yearly membership increase featured a 289% boom from 1951 to 1952; a 213% increase from 1952-53; growth of 135% from 1953-54; and a positive change of between 37% and 87% each year from 1954-58. See Hashimoto and McPherson, “Rise and Decline of Sokagakkai” (1976): p.84.

search of hope for the future. Within the Sōka Gakkai’s message of “happiness and control over [one’s] life” – a message that had a truly “unique appeal” in the Japan of World War II’s immediate aftermath\textsuperscript{79} – these people found an unambiguous, easy-to-understand explanation for the current state of the world, not compartmentalizing life into “religious” and “mundane” aspects, but on the contrary openly sanctioning the acquisition of material benefits as a “fruit” of proper religious practice; and they also found a style of praxis that would not overly burden them with a need for contemplation and philosophical reflection (insofar as chanting the daimoku is repetitive in nature, and shakubuku is inherently active), yet could still enable them to transform society by transforming themselves.\textsuperscript{80} At the same time, however, Toda’s redefinition of kōsen rufu as aggressive proselytization in the form of “shakubuku one by one” led to the perpetration of numerous rampant acts of “over-evangelizing” by Society members, which in turn earned him the reputation of “agitator,” and the Sōka Gakkai that of nothing short of belligerent menace to society, in the mainstream public eye.\textsuperscript{81} For Toda’s part, he and other organizational leaders displayed an attitude of ambivalence toward this unflattering image the group was obtaining, publicly lamenting that shakubuku was being wrongly portrayed by the media establishment as something “violent,” while simultaneously likening the reproachful treatment the movement was receiving to the

\textsuperscript{79} Machacek, “Immigrant Buddhism in America” (2001): p.76.
persecution Nichiren had also faced in his defense of True Buddhism, internally.\footnote{Hashimoto and McPherson, “Rise and Decline of Sokagakkai” (1976): p.89.}

Nonetheless, for the next administration of Sōka Gakkai leadership, headed by Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (b. 1928), countering the negative popular perception would become a topic of central concern.

There were two other trends set in motion during Toda’s presidency which would come to effectuate even more profound shifts in the focus of the Sōka Gakkai’s activities under Ikeda. The first was rooted in Toda’s decision to involve the Gakkai in the nation’s politics, by forming a political department within the movement called the \textit{Kōmei seiji renmei} 公明政治連盟 (“the Clean Politics Federation;” usually abbreviated in Japanese as \textit{Kōseiren}), and sponsoring candidates for elections at the local level beginning in 1955.\footnote{Ingram, “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): p.158.} As a matter of fact, Toda had been encouraging members of the organization to run for local political offices, and to “stress their Sōka Gakkai membership” when doing so, for some time already by then.\footnote{Dator, “The Soka Gakkai: A Socio-Political Interpretation” (1965): pp.219-20. It should be made clear that the Sōka Gakkai was not the first religious organization to send candidates forth onto the postwar Japanese political scene. The first appears to have been Seichō no Ie 生長の家 (literally, “the House of Growth”), a new religious movement originally founded in 1930 which organized a political section no sooner than World War II had ended in 1945. Its stated focus was upon “overcoming materialist thought” through the normalization of education, as well as upon cooperating with political rightists (many of whom would some years later combine forces to found the LDP) in order to establish a new constitution. Additionally, besides this political arm of Seichō no Ie there were numerous candidates who ran for office on the strength of the backing of a specific religious group – some of which were established religious institutions, some of which were new religions – in the first postwar general election for the House of Representatives (the Lower House of the National Diet) in 1946, and also in the first for the newly-established House of Councilors (the Upper House) in 1947. None matched the Sōka Gakkai's success in terms of having candidates actually triumph on election day, however. See Okuyama, “Soka Gakkai as a...
behind his determination to enter the realm of politics was that the withdrawal of the
Allied Occupation in 1952 had afforded chances for “reactionary political forces,” such
as those which had been engaged in the push for a state-endorsed Shintō before the war,
to make headway toward (re)gaining an upper hand in the country’s governance, and
there was a general sentiment that to stave off possible retaliatory legislative measures it
was necessary for the group to protect itself via political avenues. But from Toda’s own
writings, it is sufficiently clear that his primary motive arose from his interpretation of a
religious principle in Nichiren Buddhism known as ōbutsu myōgō, or
approximately, “the wondrous fusion of secular law with Buddhist law.” Between
August of 1956 and April, 1957, in a series of nine articles published in the Sōka Gakkai’s
monthly Daibyaku renge, Toda revived the “germ” of this concept from Nichiren’s Risshō
ankoku-ron (wherein Nichiren warned the incumbent regime of its impending demise
should it remain inattentive to the True Dharma) and outlined his views regarding it in
his Ōbutsu myōgō-ron (“Discourses on ōbutsu myōgō”). While his treatises consisted of

85 The Sōka Gakkai was not alone in harboring this fear. It had also served as the motivation for
several other new religious movements to collectively form the “Federation of New Religious
Organizations of Japan,” abbreviated in Japanese as Shinshūren 新宗連, in 1951 (in anticipation of
the Occupation’s vacating Japan). With respect to the legality of such political endeavoring by
these and other religious groups, invariably a subject of much consternation in light of the
postwar Constitution’s call for the strict separation of religion and state: the document’s Article 20
clearly prohibited any religious organization from receiving special treatment from the
government, but did leave some interpretive gray area concerning religious groups’ rights to
86 Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): pp.60-61. The idea of ōbutsu myōgō was
also featured peripherally in another Nichiren text, the Sandai hihō shō 三大秘法抄, or “Writings
on the Three Great Secret Laws” (written a year prior to Nichiren’s death, in 1281).
technical arguments detailing points of doctrine, their basic thrust was that *kōsen rufu* dictated a need for society’s acceptance of Nichiren’s prescripts to extend so fully that governance according to Nichiren’s political ideals would ultimately result, as well.\(^87\) In 1955, this rhetoric was as yet muted in the public sphere, and little support was offered in advancing the candidacy of the first Sōka Gakkai members to seek public office even by the organization’s own media; rather, a minor story appeared in its *Seikyō shinbun*, and “campaigning” was limited to some candidates’ paid advertisements displaying their pictures and biographies on the day before the elections.\(^88\) This can be understood, though, as the group’s taking a cautious approach to its initial incursion into the political sphere, because after fifty-three Sōka Gakkai-sponsored candidates successfully earned bids to serve on local councils and assemblies that year (running on tickets ranging the gamut from Independent, to *Minshū* 民主 [Democratic], to *Jiyū* 自由 [Liberal], to Socialist, as the *Kōseiren* itself was not a legally recognized political party), promotional efforts promptly escalated.\(^89\) By the following year (1956), expanded advocacy of its political facet paid off for the Sōka Gakkai in the form of its polling nearly one million votes nationally, and more importantly, in its success at having three *Kōseiren* members elected as representatives to the Upper House of the National Diet, the House of Councilors.\(^90\) Toda’s survey of the fabric and layout of the country’s political

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\(^87\) For a synopsis of the treatises’ contents, see Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): p.61.


\(^89\) Ibid, pp.219-20.

environment had revealed a potential niche therein for the Sōka Gakkai, and it was evident that if followers’ enthusiasm could continue to be refined and channeled, there existed an opportunity for the Gakkai to wield significant political clout in the future.

Finally, the second additional stream of activity initiated by Toda that would come to play a vital role in setting the movement’s future direction originated in his unqualified support for the pacifist principles expressed in Japan’s postwar Constitution (Japanese: sengo kenpō 戦後憲法), often referred to in common usage as the “Peace Constitution” (heiwa kenpō 平和憲法). Although strong opposition to the document was present literally from the time it was formally adopted by Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru 吉田茂 on 3 May, 194791, and the Political Right’s demands to “purge” Japan of

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91 The two primary parties involved in the process of establishing the Japanese postwar Constitution, the Japanese nation and the American leaders of the Allied Occupation, each held strong disagreements internally and with their counterparts over what provisions should be included in the document – and once it went into effect, the friction only became more intense on all sides. To begin, although the Japanese public was demanding a democratic constitution upon the conclusion of the Pacific War, a sizable faction within the Japanese government sought to base the country’s new Fundamental Law upon a highly Conservative draft proposed by the “Matsumoto Committee” (so-called because it was chaired by a lawyer named Matsumoto Jōji) which had been formed by then-Japanese Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō 平野喜重郎 (in office from 1945-46) in late 1945 to conduct study and research on reforming Japan’s previous Meiji Constitution [see: Ishida, Takeshi. “The Iraq War and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution,” Hiroshima Research News (Hiroshima Peace Institute), vol.7, no.1 (July, 2004): p.1]. The Occupation authorities rejected the Matsumoto Committee’s proposal, and organized a commission of their own to lead the Japanese government in drafting a new constitution. It was the version composed under the direction of this commission, which featured active participation on the part of Allied Supreme Commander General MacArthur, that Yoshida’s cabinet ultimately ratified in 1947. To Conservatives in Japan’s Diet, several measures stipulated in the document were contentious, stemming from what was interpreted as Occupation leadership’s excessive determination to root the new Japanese constitution in the principles of “popular sovereignty” and the “guarantee of fundamental human rights.” The enforcement of such notions according to the West’s definitions thereof undermined the autonomy of the Japanese state, they held, as had the over-involvement of Occupation authorities in the writing of their nation’s constitution in the first place. The aspect
of the document they regarded as most objectionable from this standpoint was the radical doctrine of war- and military-renunciation expressed in Article 9, an idea they argued had been imposed by MacArthur personally (some commentators since have speculated that MacArthur negotiated Article 9 as a concession for sparing then-Emperor Hirohito from a pending war crime tribunal). MacArthur maintained, and would continue to maintain later even in a trial in the U.S. Senate, that the concept for Article 9 originated with Shidehara, and Shidehara likewise unwaveringly stated the idea was his own; however, because no records exist from the private bilateral conference between the leaders on 24 January, 1946, in which the notion was initially “floated,” such cannot be verified with certainty (Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.287-88). In any event, Shidehara repeatedly stressed that his unequivocal support for Article 9 was “under no compulsion from anybody,” but rather was grounded, one, in his reasoning that conventional armies were no longer sufficient to provide for the nation’s defense in a nuclear age anyway, and two, in his desire to uphold the will of the people, who strongly favored the clause’s pacifist principles as a show of “repentance for the wars of aggression the nation had waged in the past” and additionally of their genuine desire for peace in the future (Ishida (2004): p.1). Meanwhile, despite MacArthur’s advocacy of Article 9, there was significant opposition to its dicta in the Allied/ American camp, too. According to the records of East Asian Affairs specialist Robert A. Fearey, a number of Occupation officials below MacArthur were already by 1946 calling for Article 9 to include a conditional statement that would allow for it to be amended “without great difficulty… at an early date to permit rearmament.” MacArthur had been able to avoid the adoption of such a proviso in the period leading up to the Constitution’s acceptance by convincing his counterparts that Article 9’s pacifism was in concert with the wishes of the citizenry, and that the citizenry needed to see the international authorities’ belief in the sustainability of and commitment to war renunciation as a legitimate political principle. Yet even MacArthur could not hold the upper hand in the debate long, and with the arrival of Special Representative to the President John Foster Dulles (who would go on to become U.S. Secretary of State under Dwight Eisenhower from 1953-59) on the scene to barter the terms of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, plus the outbreak of the Korean War, in 1950, MacArthur actually was forced to reverse field and begin instructing the Japanese to rearm on a limited scale. Again, Fearey’s records reveal that although it was against what the rest of the world understood as the right course of action with respect to Japan, Dulles explicitly told Japanese political leaders in 1952, “You (have) got to have a military... We want you to have a military of 300,000, 350,000 men” (Hein (2009): pp.286-90). Yoshida, Shidehara’s successor as prime minister and Dulles’ interlocutor, was opposed to rearmament, having famously remarked that it would be “poison” for Japan to utilize military force even for the purpose of individual self-defense in the case the country were attacked by an enemy (Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.238, note #16). But within just a year of the conclusion of the conflict in Korea, Yoshida would also change his tune, in response both to Dulles’ pressure and to the changing domestic political tides which saw the Right regaining considerable power, and he signed the legislation that created Japan’s current SDF (see Chapter 5, note #49 of the present text). The extreme heatedness of this contestation over the “Peace Constitution” from just after the Pacific War to the middle of the next decade can be understood as having set the tone for a life of frequent and intense debate for Article 9. The more historically recent episodes pertaining to such controversialism that will be discussed in the pages of this paper to follow must be viewed
its “foreign elements” were already in full tilt by the time normal autonomy was returned to the state five years later, Toda was adamant in his defense of its underlying ideals. In particular, he praised the Constitution for its provision of freedom of religion (as mentioned above), and, most especially, for its total renunciation of war. He undertook a concerted effort to contribute toward the uprooting of worldwide militarism, which he saw as a continuation of Makiguchi’s ultimate goal, focusing from within a Cold War global context principally on the cultivation of broad-based popular sentiment against nuclear weapons. The hallmark of his activism on this front was the publishing of his “Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Ban Proclamation” in 1957, in which he not only called for a total ban on all nuclear weapons but further condemned them as an “absolute evil that threatens the people’s right of existence.” An excerpt from his statement illustrates the intensity and passion of his convictions:

“Although a movement calling for a ban on the testing of atomic or nuclear weapons has arisen around the world, it is my wish to go further, to attack the problem at its root. I want to expose and rip out the claws that lie hidden in the very depths of such weapons. I wish to declare that anyone who ventures to use nuclear weapons, irrespective of their nationality or whether their country is victorious or defeated, should be sentenced to death without exception.”

against this backdrop in order to be properly understood.

The militant tenor of his denouncement may compel one to take pause given his declared pacifism, but within the Sōka Gakkai his comments have been understood symbolically as signifying the need to forcefully, aggressively, absolutely oppose all aspects of the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, everywhere, at all times. Although through the course of subsequent decades the organization’s apprehension of just what “pacifism” entailed would grow far more nuanced, Toda’s Proclamation was pivotal in that it announced to the world the Sōka Gakkai was resolved to be a leader in the quest to abolish nuclear arms in the latter half of the twentieth century. As such, through it Toda formally “set the basis” for the peace movement which would become arguably the single most important facet of Sōka Gakkai thought and practice under Ikeda Daisaku.  

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3. Diversification of the Movement under Ikeda’s Leadership: 1960-90

3.1 Expanded Meaning of kōsen rufu

When Ikeda Daisaku was chosen to succeed Toda Jōsei as the third president of the Sōka Gakkai movement in 1960, he was tabbed at the unusually young age of thirty-two years old. At the time, he was chief of the organization’s Young Men’s Division1, having been a disciple of Toda’s since joining the Society while still a teenager shortly after the War.2 Ikeda was described in terms of character as “dynamic, self-confident, and aggressive,” displaying overall attributes “similar to those of a successful businessman,” and therefore, in spite of his youth, he was viewed as a leader capable of overseeing the process of consolidation made requisite by the group’s ever-accelerating expansion.3 Within just months of his presidential inauguration – which took place 3 May, 1960, exactly nine years to the day of Toda’s – Ikeda would prove himself capable of pushing that expansion to brand new heights altogether. He did so by carrying the doctrine of kōsen rufu to its logical extreme: in order for conditions to truly improve for humankind in this Age of mappō, it was necessary that not merely Japan, but the entire

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1 The Young Mens’ Division, designated for male members under the age of 40 years old, was one of five separate overarching units into which the Sōka Gakkai was organized. The other four were: the Young Women’s Division (for unmarried women and/ or women under the age of 40); the Women’s Division (for married women and/ or women over 40); the Men’s Division (for men over 40); and the “Futures” Division (Japanese: mirai bu 未来部; i.e., the section for children). See Inose, “Influential Factors in the Intergenerational Transmission of Religion” (2005): p.374.
world be brought under the sway of the True Dharma.  
With this idea in mind, in his first significant public act as Sōka Gakkai president, Ikeda departed Japan in October of 1960 with the intention of launching a global mission for the “broad propagation” of the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishōnin.  

Electing to begin in countries sharing substantial historical ties with Japan and counting large communities of Japanese emigrants among their inhabitants, Ikeda traveled to Brazil and the United States to try to grow the seeds of the Sōka Gakkai movement already sowed in somewhat sizable measure within each nation. In Brazil, the first Sōka Gakkai members actually had arrived as settlers in the late 1950s, and when Ikeda and his traveling companions landed in São Paulo on the initial leg of their sojourn on 19 October, 1960 (a day that would come to be known as “SGI-Brazil Foundation Day”), Brazilian membership in the Society consisted of some one hundred households.  

A group of twenty to thirty of the adherents welcomed Ikeda at the airport, and 120 more attended the “convention” held at a local Japanese restaurant the next day at which the first Sōka Gakkai chapter outside of Japan was officially announced.  

A roughly equivalent total number of Sōka Gakkai practitioners were living in the U.S. at the point of the Gakkai president’s arrival there, the overwhelming majority of whom were Japanese wives of American military personnel that had brought the religion with them when they relocated abroad with their spouses after the Occupation ended. So as  

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to foster an atmosphere conducive to branching out recruitment to include non-Japanese, Ikeda set about making the movement more palatable for American tastes, urging followers to assimilate themselves to the norms of local culture – he instructed them, for example, to learn to drive a car, to master English, and to refrain from wearing clothes that would make them stand out.\(^8\) He also made a special point of promoting the “parallels between the doctrines of [the Sōka Gakkai] and American democratic culture.”\(^9\) It was not until the middle of the decade that the organization would begin to expand appreciably through proselytization among non-ethnic Japanese, and it was not until the end of the decade that meaningful steps toward the greater “Americanization” of the group would be implemented on a large scale.\(^10\) But Ikeda’s inaugural visit to the U.S., like that to Brazil, proved decisive, because of the pattern it established with concern to how the Sōka Gakkai would thenceforth approach the pursuit of internationalized kōsen rufu: that is, the movement had committed to aligning itself with the cultural norms and values of whatever country it entered. As new chapters were formed over the next several years in one country after another (Canada, on this same trip; nine different European nations, including Great Britain and France, in 1961; Australia in 1964; Mexico in 1965, et cetera), an orientation toward seeking affinities between Gakkai teachings and national characteristics, in an effort to accentuate the

\(^9\) Machacek, “Immigrant Buddhism in America” (2001): pp.77-78. For instance, Ikeda pointed to the Lotus Sūtra’s assertion of the potential for enlightenment inherent in every living being as evidence that the Gakkai’s teaching was compatible with the prevailing democratic ethos in America (see Corless, “What Accounts for the Success of Soka Gakkai?” (2003): p.6).
strengths of its foreign branches' host countries, would become more and more deeply ingrained into the fiber of Ikeda’s Sōka Gakkai.

### 3.2 The Formation of the Kōmeitō

While most of Ikeda’s attention during the first few years of his presidency was occupied with innovating as far as his overseas objectives for the movement, a continuation domestically of the aggressive policies and *shakubuku* practices inherited from the Toda era enabled the growth of the Sōka Gakkai’s membership within Japan to persist unabated through 1964, and at a decelerated rate for the remainder of the decade thereafter.\(^{11}\) By the end of 1965, with an estimated total of between five-and-a-half and six million households in its followership, the Sōka Gakkai had become the single largest voluntary organization of any kind in Japan, embracing more than ten percent of the nation’s total population.\(^{12}\) Ikeda took advantage of the attendant steady incline in societal influence to further the political initiatives begun by Toda, building a formidable

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\(^{11}\) According to the Sōka Gakkai’s published statistics, membership (in number of households) increased from 1,720,000 in 1960 to 2,336,152 in 1961 – a 33% rate of growth. The figure jumped to 3,106,301 in 1962 (up 35% from the previous year); then to 3,968,242 in 1963 (a 27% increase); and then to 5,246,458 in 1964 (32%). Growth slowed in terms of rate from that point onward (before leveling off after 1970), but was nonetheless quite substantial: at the end of 1965, membership counted an estimated 5,852,728 households (an 11% increase compared to one year prior); in 1966, it was 6,100,000 (a 4% increase); in 1967, it was 6,500,000 (6%); in 1968, it was 6,876,084 (6%); in 1969, it was 7 million even (2%); and finally in 1970, the total grew to 7,550,000, representing an 8% spike over 1969. (These statistics are quoted from Hashimoto and McPherson, “Rise and Decline of Sokagakkai” (1976): p.84.)

\(^{12}\) See Dator, “The Soka Gakkai in Japanese politics” (1967): p.214, note #5. Again, the difficulty in determining actual membership figures should be borne in mind, as should the fact that these were the numbers reported by the Sōka Gakkai itself, when considering such assertions. Regardless, the spread of the Sōka Gakkai movement throughout Japanese society in the 1950s and ’60s can be seen as nothing short of meteoric.

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base of Gakkai representation at the municipal and prefectural levels, and extending the organization’s reach in the House of Councilors. Already by 1962, in fact, the Köseiren delegation constituted the third largest in the Diet’s Upper House, despite its still not bearing the official designation of “political party.” The awkwardness of this situation made the Sōka Gakkai the target of widespread criticism, and skeptics increasingly called its motives for becoming more involved in politics into question.13 At that time Ikeda denied any serious political ambitions on the part of the movement, stating that it had no intentions of forming a regular party or pursuing the election of its members to the real locus of political power in Japan, the Lower House of the Diet (the House of Representatives).14 Rather, he said, the presence of Society adherents in positions of public office throughout the country was “merely symbolic,” part of an effort to bring attention to the graft and corruption he held were then occurring on all levels of Japanese government.15

Yet the group risked an erosion of the very capacity to “clean up” the governing process it was striving to acquire if it failed to give greater clarification to its aims, due to developments concurrently taking shape within the Japanese political landscape at large. The reason was that the dominant LDP, after having been the recipient of negative

14 According to Dator, the powers of the House of Representatives are distinctly superior to those of the House of Councilors, the latter of which was “originally conceived by the framers of the Japanese Constitution to be a ‘non-political’ check on the House of Representatives” in 1947. Although the Upper House ostensibly came to wield greater influence over the legislative process than initially intended, its subordinate status was and is clear. See Dator, “The Soka Gakkai in Japanese politics” (1967): p.226.
backlash against the revised agreement it had struck in 1960 to keep the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in effect (thereby pushing the nation squarely into the heart of the U.S. military imperium), actively had begun enlisting the support of other rapidly proliferating new religions' believers, who were eager to offer votes in exchange for the LDP's guarding against a “stronger presence of the Sōka Gakkai in society.”¹⁶ The Kōseiren members in the Upper House combated the opposition by reorganizing as a new association called the Kōmeikai 光明会 (or “the Clean Politics Association”), and through so doing they were able to create a more unified foundation from which to negotiate with the other parties represented in the Diet.¹⁷ Less than two years later, in May, 1964, the success of their approach to restructuring coupled with the continuing enlargement of the powerful Sōka Gakkai voting bloc – which was responsible for the total number of Gakkai representatives throughout Japan's having swelled to more than 1,000 by that point – emboldened Ikeda to make an about-face regarding the movement's (official) political aspirations.¹⁸ He proclaimed that, from then on, the Sōka Gakkai planned to “send many men... into the political world,” and in order to dissociate its religious functioning from the governing process in the direct sense, it had determined to establish a proper, fully-fledged political party.¹⁹

the latter aspect of this plan became reality, with the formal launching of the Kōmeitō 公明党, or “the Clean Politics Party,” through the issuance of the so-called “Declaration of [the] Kōmeitō.” In the address Ikeda specified the current instability of the international situation, as well as the “stagnant social conditions” domestically which were a consequence of the way “the irresponsible Japanese government [had] divorced itself from the general public,” in explaining the rationale behind his decision to create a party at that particular juncture. However, many suspected that the complete immersion of the Sōka Gakkai in the sphere of politics had privately been Ikeda’s design all along, that irrespective of what he had stated publicly his formation of a political party had been a foregone conclusion ever since he became president of the movement.20

Soon after its founding the Kōmeitō became the recipient of political analysts’ ire, drawing criticism for a “tendency toward overgeneralization and vagueness,” and also for the party’s “lack [of] political acumen.”21 The early politicians of the Kōmeitō contended in reply to such charges that an occasional lack of clarity and consistency with respect to an overarching political orientation was the price of their conscious effort to assume stances on given social and political issues, instead of interacting with every topic of concern simply from the standpoint of a party-line platitude.22 The Kōmeitō

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22 Ingram has argued that there was a perceptible pattern of Kōmeitō politicians making calculated decisions as far as which issues to concentrate on, however: they generally chose to focus on those matters that would place them in opposition to their rivals in the major parties, but that at the same time would make the Kōmeitō appear as “champions of the people” in front of the general populace. See Ibid, pp.171-72.
stressed that its focus was upon impacting those “material and practical” domestic problems it possessed the power to solve, such as those in the areas of housing, public safety, the environment, and education.\textsuperscript{23} For this it quickly secured a popular reputation as a “party of the people\textsuperscript{24},” and earned credit for alleviating the degree of “instrumental alienation from the political system” felt by many Japanese at that time.\textsuperscript{25} The party’s approach to foreign affairs contrasted sharply with its emphasis on practicality in the domestic sphere, as the Kōmeitō’s position in the realm of international politics was characterized by a radical, “absolutist” expressed commitment to complete neutrality for Japan.\textsuperscript{26} First and foremost, this was highlighted by a call for the nation to free itself from any and all military alliances; specifically, the Kōmeitō demanded immediate abrogation of the United States-Japan security pact.\textsuperscript{27} The party held that after Japan was freed from the diplomatic constraints imposed on it by virtue of its special relationship to the U.S., the way toward the consummation of the Kōmeitō’s foreign policy objectives on a number of additional levels – including the normalization of Japanese relations with all other Asian nations, and with China in particular – would in turn be paved.\textsuperscript{28} The repeal

\textsuperscript{23} Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): pp.69-70.
\textsuperscript{26} Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): p.71.
\textsuperscript{28} The Kōmeitō worked with the Socialists and several members of a liberal wing of the LDP to attempt to bring about the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations from the infancy of the party’s existence. Its stance on the matter was that: one, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) should be recognized as the legitimate and only government of China (and accordingly there should be a peace treaty between Tokyo and Peking); two, the “Taiwan problem” should be
of the Treaty would furthermore allow for the reorganization of the existing Self-Defense Force into a National Guard, which would testify to Japan's determination to uphold its Constitution's Article 9 (considered the underlying source of the Kōmeitō's ideological posture) by guaranteeing the country maintained only “the minimum strength necessary” to ensure its peaceful existence and total neutrality. Finally, in lieu of the military protection theretofore afforded Japan by the American armed forces, the Kōmeitō argued for a “rejuvenation” of the United Nations, through a strengthening of the U.N.’s peacekeeping functions as well as the establishment of a universal security system binding on all states. Such a framework would, among other benefits, permit Japan to serve as a model to other nations by encouraging abandonment of the testing, manufacturing, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Hence, according to the party’s leadership’s reasoning, neutrality and support for a viable U.N. were in fact the best course for providing for Japan's own long-term self-defense, at the same time as representing the option most suited to the ultimate goal of the Kōmeitō and its parent organization, the Sōka Gakkai: global peace. Overall, although the reforms proposed by the Kōmeitō in the area of foreign policy were too sweeping to be implementable, they did permit the organization to challenge the positions forwarded by other political

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30 The Kōmeitō’s advocacy of the U.N. was often as creative as it was ambitious. This would be best exemplified by the party’s 1969 proposal for the creation of a U.N. headquarters for Asia and the Far East, to be located in Tokyo. See Ingram, “Sōka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): p.174.
groups, most notably the LDP. The party exerted a moderating influence upon Japan's conduct on the international stage as a result, an intangible contribution toward policy that the Kōmeitō’s early critics largely neglected to acknowledge.

3.3 The Nature of the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō Relationship

By the end of 1966, the Kōmeitō had achieved an electoral momentum such that Ikeda reversed another previously stated stance in relation to the Sōka Gakkai movement’s political ambitions, by announcing that the Kōmeitō would run candidates in the next general election for the House of Representatives. In its first attempt at the Lower House, on 29 January, 1967, twenty-five of thirty-two Kōmeitō candidates emerged victorious – an especially impressive triumph because, contrary to the House of Councilors, which according to the Japanese electoral system as configured at that time were voted in by nation-wide balloting (and thus the Kōmeitō could have members elected via block voting tactics), election to the House of Representatives was determined through electoral districts. Within another two years the number of

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33 Ingram, “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): p.161. The general structure of the Japanese electoral system in 1967 was one of “multi-member districts,” rather than “single-member districts,” like in the U.S. or U.K. That is, when Japan was divided into electoral districts for national elections (elections were held every three years for one-half of the 250 members of the House of Councilors, as terms were for six years; and voting was carried out every four years for the House of Representatives, with elected candidates winning terms of four years), instead of only the one top vote-getter in a given district being chosen, anywhere from two to five to fifty candidates would earn inclusion into the Diet, with the number being figured as a proportion of the district’s total population and varying depending on the type of election. This multi-member district system “greatly aid[ed] the chances of minor parties in securing some representation in parliament, just as the Anglo-American single-member district system work[ed] against the rise of minor parties by requiring a candidate to obtain a majority, or strong plurality, of votes in
Kōmeitō delegates in the Lower House had nearly doubled, and the Kōmeitō appeared well on its way to reaching its new goal of becoming the leading opposition party by the early 1970s. However, its successes also invited accusations that the Kōmeitō’s “religious agenda” and relationship to the Sōka Gakkai violated the Constitutional principle of separation of religion and state. Continued engagement in shakubuku had caused an escalation of anti-Gakkai sentiment amongst the general public, and fears mounted with each Kōmeitō victory that the Sōka Gakkai’s true intention was to impose Nichiren Shōshū on all Japanese as a state religion. Fueling the criticism were comments from Ikeda himself such as the following (made in 1968), concerning the nature of the two entities’ connection: “The Sōka Gakkai is a religious organization and the Kōmeitō, a political party. These are the different names of the same organization whose members believe in the teachings of Nichiren Daishōnin and aim at the achievement of ōbutsu myōgō... the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō are one and

order to win,” and indeed made the Kōmeitō’s ascension to political force possible. The Liberal Democratic Party, not surprisingly, long proposed to replace the multi-member district system with a single-member plan, and the rise of the Kōmeitō triggered support for their proposal from even the LDP’s chief rival, the Socialist Party (see Dator, “The Soka Gakkai: A Socio-Political Interpretation” (1965): p.231, note #21). The system was eventually reformed, but fierce opposition from the Kōmeitō and the Communist Party, as well as a host of other, smaller parties, prevented this from happening until 1994. Even then, reconfiguration did not take the form of a complete scrapping of the multi-member structure, but rather there was a reorganization of the former 511 Lower House seat-system into a combination of 300 single-seat constituencies and 180 proportional representation seats. [The impact of the 1994 election reform will be discussed in Chapter five, section 6 of this paper; also, see Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles” (1999): p.69.]

inseparable." Although the Kōmeitō’s constitutionality would never be put under challenge in any court system, the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion enkindled repeated explanations from Ikeda with regard thereto, in an effort especially to clarify the meaning of the doctrine of ōbutsu myōgō.38

According to Ikeda, the essential purpose of government should be understood as “to help individuals achieve the happiness they seek.”39 Because the happiness of the individual is dependent in an intimate way upon the character and actions of the government, the unfavorable contemporary circumstances could be attributed to a failure on the part of the incumbent political authorities to appropriately align their policies with the wishes and needs of the people: while the people wanted peace, major governments were headed for war; while the people wanted prosperity, unsound economic practices yielded widespread unemployment; while the people wanted health, insufficient commitment of resources to research in the proper areas led to more people dying of cancer every year, et cetera.40 Ikeda held that the Japanese government’s corruption and ineffectiveness were the result of a “lack of guiding principles grounded on religiously prescribed values” informing its activities, or in other words, that society’s fortunes could only improve once governance was reoriented toward an acceptance of the “Three Great Secret Laws” (Japanese: Sandai hihō 三大秘法) of True Buddhism.41

40 Ibid, p.218.
41 Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): pp.60; 72-73.
These Three Great Secret Laws (which in Nichiren Shōshū thought were the encapsulation of the second of the “Three Jewels” of Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, respectively) referred to, one, the *dai-gohonzon*, two, the *daimoku*, and three, the *honmon no kaidan* 本門の戒壇, or the “High Sanctuary of True Buddhism,” the structure that was to hold the *dai-gohonzon* and be the site of practice of the *daimoku*. Nichiren's vision had been that one day a great ordination platform (the *kaidan*) would be erected by “imperial edict and shogunal decree,” which would serve as a material expression of the conversion of both the sovereign and the citizenry to True Buddhism – and, most crucially in the view of the Sōka Gakkai, of the fusion of Buddhism and worldly rule, i.e., the realization of ōbutsu myōgō. While the Nichiren tradition had generally come to interpret the *kaidan* element of the “Three Secrets” abstractly, meaning that a *kaidan* was symbolically erected at whatever place a follower of Nichiren embraced faith in the Lotus Sutra and chanted *namu-myōhō-renge-kyō*, Ikeda and the Gakkai took a literal view, and asserted that the raising of a concrete edifice for

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43 Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.329, including note #4. “High Sanctuary of True Buddhism” is Métraux's rendering of *honmon no kaidan*; a literal translation would be “True Buddhism's Ordination Platform.”
44 Stone, “‘By Imperial Edict and Shogunal Decree: Politics and the Issue of the Ordination Platform in Modern Lay Nichiren Buddhism,” *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptation of an Ancient Tradition* (ed. Steven Heine and Charles Prebish). New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.194. The Sōka Gakkai summed up the essence of the “Three Secrets” by the phrase *shiki shin funi* 式心不二, meaning that “form/ matter” and “spirit” are “not two,” but one, and held that the application of *shiki shin funi* to the social and political realms was ōbutsu myōgō. It also criticized other religions and ideologies as being one-sided in their worldviews on the basis of *shiki shin funi* – for instance, that Christianity was fundamentally flawed due to its emphasis of “spirit over form,” while the same held true in the opposite sense for Marxism because it was focused on “form over spirit.” See Ingram, “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): pp.164-65.
worship was necessary.\textsuperscript{45} The doctrine’s logic indicated that through the adoption of the principles of the Three Great Secret Laws, the “complete integration of the secular law of the state and the ‘religious law of the universe’ as revealed by Nichiren” would be demonstrated, and \textit{ōbutsu myōgō} would be actualized.\textsuperscript{46} Upon this happening, all selfish egoism at the cost of societal union and common good would be eliminated, and at the same time any attempt to forcibly impose unity in society (such as leads to the type of militarism seen in the previous era of Japanese history) would be precluded. In short, a harmonious relationship between the individual and the whole – the “confluence of social prosperity and individual felicity,” in Ikeda’s words – would naturally arise as a corollary to the realization of \textit{ōbutsu myōgō}.\textsuperscript{47}

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\textsuperscript{45} Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.30. In fact, there has been much debate throughout the history of the Nichiren tradition as to whether the \textit{kaidan} was an abstract symbol of Nichiren’s hopes, or whether Nichiren’s intention was for the rulers of Japan to construct an actual physical ordination platform. Again, a full analysis of the sects’ competing arguments is beyond the scope of this paper (for such a discussion, the interested reader should see Stone, “By Imperial Edict and Shogunal Decree,” 2003, especially p.197), but the salient point is that while some interpreted Nichiren’s meaning as concerned with a head temple to house the eventual \textit{kaidan} structure, others saw the \textit{kaidan} idea as the embodiment of Nichiren’s hope for the acceptance of his doctrines after his having been marginalized and suffering persecution during his lifetime. The factions adhering to the latter understanding devised the “symbolic” interpretation based on a claim by Nichiren that “wherever one chants the \textit{daimoku} is the Buddha land;” this view gained the upper hand in the Tokugawa period (although its acceptance was not uniform across all sects – notably, the Nichiren Shōshū maintained the former position), when religious proselytization was restricted to such an extent that the chances of a concrete \textit{kaidan} being built at any point “by imperial edict and shogunal decree” seemed too remote to ever allow for True Buddhism’s establishment in the country. With the rise of religiously oriented nationalism after the Meiji Restoration some sects began understanding the doctrine literally once again, but for the most part the trend toward symbolic interpretation continued to hold true. Certainly in the postwar context, the Nichiren Shōshū’s, and hence, the Sōka Gakkai’s, stance was the exception as opposed to the norm.


\textsuperscript{47} Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): p.62. The reason being that the “ō” (王)
Ikeda’s conclusion was that because the Sōka Gakkai alone had the capacity to bring about the materializing of humankind’s true happiness, through its unique and all-important knowledge of the “correct relationship” between politics and religion, in point of fact the organization was obligated to “try to send persons into the political world to enable the people to attain their wishes.”

Its being a religious group was not to deter it from doing so; in any case, the Gakkai-Tō connection was not in violation of the principle of separation of religion and state as codified in Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution because the Kōmeitō did not seek or introduce legislation “that would in any way favor” the Sōka Gakkai or its members, and so the Sōka Gakkai’s founding of component of the formula provides for the flourishing of the society’s public activities, while buppō (仏法) offers true happiness in the life of the individual by educating people in terms of how to uproot the fundamental causes of suffering inherent in human life.


49 Okuyama, “Soka Gakkai as a Challenge to Japanese Society and Politics” (2010): p.85. Article 20 reads in full: “Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite, or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity” (quoted from Ingram, “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): p.156, note #4). It may be observed that, in light of the article’s second clause of its second sentence, the Sōka Gakkai’s involvement in the political sphere at least prior to its founding of the Kōmeitō could certainly have been construed as unconstitutional, possibly lending credence to frequent charges that the establishment of a formal political party by the movement had been out of necessity. Nonetheless, the accusations in doubt of the Kōmeitō’s constitutional legitimacy in general also underscore the disingenuousness of some of the Gakkai’s most vociferous faultfinders, the politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party, and a number of rival “new religions” that had become important LDP supporters. The LDP had a track record of recruiting the assistance of new religious movements and their members whenever expedient, and many of these religious groups had either tried to engage in politics but withdrawn after attaining little success, or harbored designs of entering the political world only to be “beaten to the punch” by the Sōka Gakkai. (It is perhaps the case that this limited credibility of its disparagers’ is what spared the Sōka Gakkai from ever having to defend its participation in politics as not representing an attempt to “exercise any political authority” in a court of law.)
the Kōmeitō was qualitatively the same as the entrance into politics of “any other group which thinks it has a complete political theory based upon the people’s genuine desires.”

The Society’s continued backing of the Kōmeitō, likewise, was no different than an endorsement any civil group (e.g., a labor union) would give a political party of which it was in support. As to the doctrine of ōbutsu myōgō specifically, Ikeda refuted the notion that its aim was theocracy or a restoration of the saisei itchi (“oneness of rites and government”) of ancient Japan, stressing that such would involve entreating the High Priest of the Nichiren Shōshū to become prime minister, which was not the Sōka Gakkai’s agendum. To the contrary, Ikeda held that it would be an act of “grave hōbō” to depend on any temporal power to extend the influence of the True Dharma, that ōbutsu myōgō did not seek the conflation of religious and political leadership but “from ancient times” had distinguished a religious leader from a political one. Insofar as the two organizations’ fundamental roles in the process of bringing happiness to the people followed this principle of distinction, there was no reason to change, or cover up, the interlocking nature of the Gakkai and the Kōmeitō.

The Kōmeitō remained the target of intense criticism in spite of these

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51 Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.163. And, it also followed that the politicians of the Kōmeitō were merely the politicians who were supported by the followers of the True Buddhism, that they were different from other politicians only in that they “believe[d] in the supreme religion... and not in [for example] Christianity or any other established sect of Buddhism” (see Oh, “Fusion of politics and religion in Japan” (1972): p.64).
53 Ibid, pp.63-65, including note #22. Ikeda emphasized that even Śākyamuni himself had held no political power.
rationalizations, but its relationship with the Sōka Gakkai nevertheless allowed it to continue to prosper. The Kōmeitō took advantage of its “grass-roots”-level organizational structure, which was due to its support base’s coming from the Sōka Gakkai membership, to effectively monitor the pulse of the masses in campaign- and election-planning, and to enable a far better two-way flow of communication (from constituents to representatives and vice versa) than that typical in other political parties. From the standpoint of Sōka Gakkai followers themselves, electoral activities were seen as an opportunity to feel united to the movement to which they belonged, as well as feel the victory of their faith if the Kōmeitō won. Since an important characteristic manifestation of “correct faith” according to Sōka Gakkai doctrine was the acquisition of the political power necessary to realize kōsen rufu, believers supported the Kōmeitō’s aims at the establishment of “universal brotherhood” (Japanese: chikyū minzoku shugi 地球民族主義), humanistic socialism (ningensei shakaishugi 人間性社会主義), and ultimately, a Buddhist democracy (buppō minshushugi 仏法民主主義), as vigorously as they engaged in any aspect of their religious practice. Accordingly, whatever the dynamics of the separation of powers among leadership in the two organizations, to the source from whence each drew its considerable strength – the Sōka Gakkai membership – the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō were, indeed, “one and inseparable.”

3.4 The “Freedom of the Press Incident” and Formal Split of the Gakkai-Tō Alliance

However, in 1969, reports of a scandal emerged that would drastically change the nature of the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō relationship, and bring about a redirection of the Sōka Gakkai movement as a whole. In that year, it was exposed that Ikeda and other organizational leaders had attempted to suppress the publication of two academic works critical of the Sōka Gakkai’s political involvement through the Kōmeitō, Sōka Gakkai o kiru 創価学会を斬る (I Denounce the Sōka Gakkai) by Fujiwara Hirotatsu, and Kōmeitō no sugao 公明党の素顔 (The Real Face of the Kōmeitō), by Kasahara Kazuo.59 A massive public outcry ensued, and it was charged that the Sōka Gakkai’s efforts to obstruct the books’ going to press amounted to a violation of the Constitutional principles of freedom of speech and of the press.60 When the issue went forth to the National Diet for deliberations in early 1970, the Communist Party-led interrogation revealed that the head of the Kōmeitō, Takeiri Yoshikatsu 竹入義勝, had secretly contacted influential politician Tanaka Kakuei 田中角栄 (a close personal friend of Ikeda’s) to ask him to persuade Fujiwara to give up publishing the results of a research project essentially alleging the Kōmeitō’s “strings” were pulled by Ikeda.61 Fujiwara disclosed to the Communist Party that Tanaka had approached him to make such a request, at which point an investigation uncovered Ikeda’s own complicity in the affair, and that Gakkai-

60 Ibid, p.92.
61 Ibid, pp.93-94.
Tō leaders had tried to block the release of Kasahara’s study, as well.\(^{62}\) The matter was complicated still further by the recovery of Sōka Gakkai internal documents indicating Society officials had tapped the phones of Communist Party leader Miyamoto Kenji afterward, as part of a plan to retaliate against the Communist Party for spearheading the probe.\(^{63}\)

During questioning over this so-called “Obstruction of Free Speech and Press” Incident (Japanese: genron shuppan bōgai jiken 言論出版妨害事件; more commonly known in English simply as the “Freedom of the Press Incident”), proceedings eventually reverted back to becoming a forum for challenging the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō relationship under the principle of seikyō bunri 政教分離 – the “separation of politics and religion.”\(^{64}\) Much uncomfortable attention was brought to the numerous religious ideals, such as ôbutsu myōgō, that were incorporated into the political party’s foundational manifesto (as expressed in the “Declaration of Kōmeitō”), and these were forwarded as evidence of the religious group’s exercising an undue influence in the political party’s functioning.\(^{65}\) In the end, Ikeda, Takeiri, and all other leaders affiliated with the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō escaped formal charges, and the government affirmed in an official statement that “Article 20 of the Constitution is interpreted to mean that the state must not bestow such governmental power [as taxation, the exercise of police power,
and judiciary proceedings] on any religious organization,” not that such organizations are prohibited from democratic participation in the political process.\(^\text{66}\) However, as an outcome of the furor, Ikeda was forced to make a public apology, and after doing so he announced that the organizations of the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō would henceforth “follow the principle of their separation.”\(^\text{67}\) In a similar proclamation at its Eighth National Convention, held later in 1970, the Kōmeitō also went on the record to declare it was “severing ties” with the Society.\(^\text{68}\) As of that moment, all Kōmeitō dietmen were considered resigned from any executive posts they previously had held within the Sōka Gakkai.\(^\text{69}\)

Ikeda elaborated on the Gakkai’s position at that year’s 33\(^{\text{rd}}\) General Headquarters Assembly of the organization. Now “financially and administratively separate from the Kōmeitō,” the Sōka Gakkai would no longer be represented among the attendants of the political party’s meetings, and Ikeda himself would attempt to avoid commenting on political matters in the future.\(^\text{70}\) Furthermore, the Sōka Gakkai would in general take steps to engender a more democratic orientation for the movement, thereby leaving “the political plane” to the Kōmeitō and religious matters to the individual.\(^\text{71}\) Along these lines the Sōka Gakkai would refrain from invoking the

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\(^{71}\) Nakano, *Sengo nihon no shūkyō to seiji*, 2003: pp.181-82. Just how completely the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō ties were actually disestablished remained a subject of controversy, however. At that
rhetoric of a *kokuritsu* (state-sponsored) *kaidan*; as Japan was a democracy, the “national sanctuary” was to be understood as one erected not on the basis of an imperial order but by the popular will of the people, and a new temple then under construction at Taiseki-ji – being built to house the *dai-gohonzon*, using funds accumulated from Sōka Gakkai pilgrims’ donations\(^{72}\) – already would qualify.\(^{73}\) The notion of *ōbutsu myōgō* was modernized in like fashion. Ikeda posited that its “*ō*” element was not simply referring to a ruler or governmental administration, but rather in a democracy to “society as a whole.” Thus, its concern should be with *all* social activities that better the lives of citizens, whether in the political, governmental, and economic, or the educational, artistic, and literary public realms.\(^{74}\) Finally, Ikeda included in his speech several definitive statements on his idealized Buddhist society. He summarized that there were three principles at the heart of Nichiren’s message for today’s world, which in fact were not limited to any particular religion, race, or creed, but were derived from the essential nature of human existence: these were absolute pacifism, the sanctity of life, and respect

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\(^{74}\) Ibid, pp.61-62.
for human dignity. The Sōka Gakkai, therefore, was committing itself to bridging the gaps between religious aims (the establishment of the True Dharma by way of a “human revolution” of individual faith) and social aims (the bringing about of the people’s happiness and prosperity, leading to world peace) as conceptualized by the movement, while taking on a more moderate, conciliatory tone in dealing with persons of alternative religious backgrounds in the process. In order to realize this newfound perspective, the Sōka Gakkai would re-focus itself toward an overall promotion of universalistic humanism.

### 3.5 Diversification of the Movement

#### 3.5.1 Factors and Principles Behind Diversification

Ikeda’s address to the Assembly marked what would come to be considered a “watershed” moment in the Sōka Gakkai’s history, as in order to implement the objectives he had outlined the organization began a thoroughgoing process of top-to-bottom diversification. For the most part, it would not be incorrect to view the effort as a pragmatic response to changes in the factual situation with which the movement was then faced. The emphasis on chanting the *daimoku* for the sake of procuring material benefits, which had appealed to so many followers since the Toda era (in spite of being derogatorily referred to by critics as the practice of “name it and claim it”), lost a

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76 Ibid, pp.181-82.
significant degree of its luster concomitant with the burgeoning economic affluence brought on for Japanese society by the decade of the 1970s. With the former sense of urgency muted by the receding of the hardships of the immediate postwar period, a large portion of the more peripherally-engaged adherents left the movement, and for the first time since its 1945 rebirth, the Sōka Gakkai struggled to attract new converts. Membership continued to increase incrementally, but at a pace negligible in comparison to what the group had been experiencing. Students and young people in general expressed a disdain for the Sōka Gakkai as a “crutch” needed by the preceding generation, as opposed to a representation of something to aspire to themselves. The relative stagnation of membership was exacerbated by the manner in which the “Freedom of the Press” scandal had tarnished the image of the Kōmeitō, whose reputation as a “party of the people” had been the one area the Sōka Gakkai enjoyed a positive perception in the eyes of the broader public. By 1972 the Kōmeitō had fallen back to only the fourth most-represented party in the Diet (behind the LDP, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party), and with its decline came a serious lessening of the Sōka Gakkai’s potential to effect change in the political sphere. To avoid a forfeiture of the relevancy it had acquired over the previous twenty-five years, the Gakkai was forced to demonstrate it could react to steady economic prosperity and social consolidation.

81 Ibid, p.85.
82 Ibid, p.86.
Ikeda’s redefinition of happiness in more philosophical terms, as including, for instance, “character formation,” and “socially beneficial work,” was intended for just this purpose.\(^{83}\)

On the other hand, the Sōka Gakkai’s “re-creation” of itself also had an air of authenticity in that few of its “new” positions amounted to departures from its prior activities at all. Rather, in much the same way Toda had relaxed Makiguchi’s focus on educational reform and magnified the movement’s already-existing connection to Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism when reconstructing the Sōka Gakkai after his release from prison at the end of the War, it could be construed that Ikeda was simply de-emphasizing certain organizational trajectories so as to concentrate on others already introduced by Makiguchi, Toda, or himself. When Ikeda called for a decentralization and segmentation of the Society’s bureaucratic system of administration, this was in keeping with the Sōka Gakkai’s long-standing goal of configuring its organizational structure in a manner that provided for the equality, care, and dignity of all members.\(^{84}\)

When Sōka University was founded in the Tokyo suburb of Hachiōji in 1971 to promote the Gakkai’s educational aims by way of liberal arts programs geared toward the cultivation of wisdom, character, and creativity, in addition to appreciation for diversity and respect for the natural environment, this reflected an attempt to recapture the movement’s foundational roots of rearing socially-conscious (now globally-conscious)

citizens. Toward this end, Ikeda had already – at the same site as the college, nine years earlier – established the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, dedicated to making the heritage of Asian thought and philosophy more accessible to people around the world by supporting research on Buddhism, Buddhist thought, comparative religion, and the relationships between science and religion, and religion and society; he had also realized the primary component of Makiguchi’s educational vision in 1968, completing a kindergarten-to-high school humanistic education system in Kodaira, Tokyo, which sought to put into practice the founder’s “value-creating pedagogy” through a system-wide stressing of mutual learning between students and teachers, the building of a spirit of human solidarity, the nurturing of each student’s inherent potential for enlightenment, and the formation of “whole” human beings, instead of merely a concern with instilling in students large stores of information. Moreover, the cultural exchange programs through which the Sōka Gakkai strove to actualize its social aims, and in so doing contribute to the development of a base of common understanding among the nations of the world, were conceived of similarly. That is, the Gakkai’s sponsorship of various regional cultural festivals, musical and dance performances, plays, poetry

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87 Straus, “Mission and Dialogue in the Soka Gakkai International” (1997): p.110. Sōka Gakkai schools were not (and are not) “religious,” but the approach used is considered to be informed by Buddhist values toward humanism. According to the movement, this means that a central importance is placed on basic human dignity and worth. The idea of “forming the whole human being” is understood as particularly crucial, and the Sōka Gakkai has frequently criticized other schools for over-emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge while ignoring ethics.
readings, and so forth, was to be taken as an indication that the movement was
dedicated to upholding the entire breadth of the fundamental principles outlined in
Makiguchi's *Kachi-ron*. In diversifying the organization's functioning through a
“reformation” of each of these areas, then, Ikeda was not only reacting pragmatically to
adverse social circumstances, but was recovering and/or highlighting certain of the Sōka
Gakkai's most deep-seated core value commitments, as well.

3.5.2 Establishment of Soka Gakkai International

At the same time, by expanding its concern with education and culture the Sōka
Gakkai was also signaling that the international aspect of the organization was set to
take on a more central role. As a matter of fact, the shift toward its becoming so had
already begun; to be sure, it could be argued that Ikeda's redirection of the Society's
focus to less particularistic and more universalistic principles was in response to the
situation confronting the Sōka Gakkai on the level of its foreign activity to every bit the
extent, or more, that it was informed by the corresponding domestic state of affairs.
Beginning with Ikeda's initial venture to pursue the movement's interests abroad in
1960, the Sōka Gakkai had started coming into contact with various alternative religious
traditions, and originally it sought to turn people away from these through the
aggressive exercise of *shakubuku*. Confrontational proselytization campaigns in foreign
branch host countries served as rallying points for Gakkai adherents, just as they had in
Japan. But as had also been the case in Japan, the methods associated with aggressive

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*shakubuku* practice additionally elicited criticism and animosity from substantial portions of the host nations’ populaces, risking stigmatization for the movement and ultimately threatening to undercut its progress and potential. As a result, Ikeda had begun to counsel Sōka Gakkai chapters outside Japan to deliberately soften their stances. Furthermore, by the mid-1960s Ikeda had already taken a number of related steps to make the organization less oppositional, including modifying the understanding of *kōsen rufu* to mean the Society did not necessarily have to convert entire foreign populations but rather could achieve its objectives in any country where one-third of the population became followers of True Buddhism, and invoking the Nichiren concept of *zuihō bini* (*随法毘尼*) (“expedient measures with regard to cases for which no specific provision is made in the code of Precepts”), which held that one should proselytize with respect for local customs and practices so long as they did not run counter to the principles of the True Dharma. However, these were often only vaguely introduced to leaders in foreign

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90 Machacek, “Immigrant Buddhism in America” (2001): p.70. The combative approach sometimes triggered suspicion from foreign authorities, as well – most notably from the government of Brazil. Opponents of the Sōka Gakkai emerging from within the general Brazilian citizenry after a series of mass *shakubuku* drives in 1965-66 exploited the fact that Kōmeitō parliamentarians were then making regular visits to Japanese-Brazilian communities, so as to bring government officials’ attention to the movement. Brazil was at that time under a military regime, and the authorities, becoming doubtful of the Gakkai’s political intentions in the country, soon began to monitor and restrict the group’s activities. A proposed visit to Brazil by Ikeda in 1974 even had to be canceled, as Ikeda was barred from setting foot on Brazilian soil. (It would take ten years, and a changing of hands of Brazil’s government, before the Gakkai leader was permitted to return).

91 The idea was that this one-third would exert a “profound and lasting” influence on the rest of the people of that country through their outlook and behavior. Also, another one-third of the population was to become “supporters” of the Sōka Gakkai, although it was not mandated that they be converted. No relationship to the Sōka Gakkai was required of the remaining one-third. See Ingram, “Soka Gakkai and the Komeito” (1969): pp.169-70, note #34.

chapters and to members themselves, which resulted in confusion as far as how the ideas were to be practically implemented. An important part of Ikeda’s purpose in his 1970 speech at the Assembly was thus to provide the explicit clarification that had been lacking to incorporate interreligious sensitivity – the need for which was brought on by the movement’s overseas advancement, but the observance of which was now reflexively being adapted back into the realm of domestic activity – into Sōka Gakkai practice on an organization-wide scope.

The turn away from outright denunciation of other religions (i.e., from confrontational shakubuku) as a matter of principle enabled the Gakkai to assimilate more readily to the foreign cultures it encountered, and to direct its attention toward tackling other challenges it faced as an alien religion in new lands. Instead of focusing resources merely on gaining converts, overseas branches began to place a more formal emphasis upon member retention, particularly by building more local centers for laity training and support; diluting the “foreignness” (including addressing the language doctrine of zuihō-bini was adopted as presented in Nichiren’s “Collected Writings” (Japanese: gosho zenshū 御書全集), page 1202.

94 The shift did not imply shakubuku was never to be practiced, however. Rather, a strategy of utilizing aggressive and accommodating methods in tandem was devised. For example, in Brazil, until the late 1990s Afro-Brazilian and “Spiritualist” religions were rejected completely, via shakubuku, while the group refrained from attacking Catholicism. This sparked criticism from opponents, who alleged the “double standard” was born solely from the Sōka Gakkai’s self-interested thinking of its public image; the Gakkai countered that insofar as Catholicism constituted “an integral part of Brazilian religious and cultural life,” a denunciation of it would be tantamount to a denunciation of the person, and such would violate the movement’s principal values of compassion and respect for the inherent dignity of humanity. See Clarke, “Globalization and the pursuit of a shared understanding of the absolute,” 2005: p.133.
barrier) of the movement's teachings, rituals, and practices and repackaging them in a way more compatible with the preferences of individuals in a given nation; appointing non-ethnic Japanese local staff to positions of organizational administration; and continuing to concentrate on developing a deeper understanding of the distinctive features of the host country's "national character." Proselytizing naturally remained a key component of Sōka Gakkai practice, but "targets" were chosen much more carefully. Unlike in the past when efforts primarily centered on those segments of society deemed most likely to join (housewives, or students and other transient socio-economic demographics), recruiting shifted to focus on those segments recognized as most likely to remain, in the sense of becoming permanent members. Although this shift involved sacrificing short-term growth, it furnished enough stability in enough countries that by a 26 January, 1975 meeting in Guam, the movement possessed an infrastructure and support base sufficiently powerful to reorganize and register its overseas bodies as official branches of Soka Gakkai International. President Ikeda Daisaku explicated the

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95 As an example, it was at this point that the "Americanization" of the U.S. branch – which Ikeda had called for as far back as his 1960 visit – began to be realized in appreciable measure. Among other relatively minor changes members started wearing shoes and sitting on chairs at meetings, and English came to be used, at the behest of American converts (see Machacek, "Immigrant Buddhism in America" (2001): pp.77-78). More fundamentally, all traces of the rhetoric of intolerance that had characterized the movement in the previous decades was stripped away out of concern for American pluralistic spiritual sensibilities, and instead the universalist aspects of Buddhism generally were accentuated (see Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements" (2001): p.358).

98 Corless, "What Accounts for the Success of Soka Gakkai?" (2003): p.3. Technically, they were made members of the "International Buddhist League," as SGI was initially called. Soon after, they were referred to according to the "Nichiren Shōshū-name of host country" format explained.
newly founded organization's purposes and principles in a formal Charter, the contents of which have been restated as follows: to cultivate the virtues of wisdom and compassion; to embrace an unconditional respect for the sanctity of human life; to respect and protect the freedom of religious expression; to promote tolerance and respect for human rights; to pursue nonviolent social change through inner reformation and dialogue; and to contribute to peace and to the culture and education of the communities of the world.\(^9\) From the beginning, the single value which undergirded all the others was that of global peace.

### 3.6 Foundations of the Peace Movement

#### 3.6.1 Ideological Basis

As an organization, the Sōka Gakkai has referred to its peace movement as “perhaps its most important activity,” and “the expression of its philosophy in the world.”\(^{100}\) Resistance to militarism became part of the group's identity with Makiguchi's opposition of the wartime government's policies\(^{101}\), and pacifism, with Toda's support of
the postwar “Peace Constitution” and repeated denouncements of nuclear weapons.102

But as introduced at the outset of this study, the explanation for the Society’s commitment to peace must be traced to even deeper roots. To review, both Makiguchi’s and Toda’s actions were based upon belief in Nichiren’s social philosophy, which held that the betterment of the nation was corollary to the betterment of the individual, and

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hence the spread of True Buddhism – the one and only means of genuine betterment –
itself was the way to provide for the peace and well-being of the nation.\textsuperscript{103} Nichiren had
expounded this view in his seminal work, the \textit{Risshō ankoku-ron}, between 1259-60,
having undertaken to write the text in order to rectify the fortunes of the state after the
performance of various Buddhist and non-Buddhist religions’ rites by the ruling powers
of his day (the bakufu) proved to no avail in putting an end to the series of disasters
Japan was then experiencing. Makiguchi and Toda accepted Nichiren’s conclusion that
for the arising of further calamities to be prevented Nichiren’s form of Buddhism had to
be adopted as a political tool, as well as the path to personal salvation, and it was thus
the \textit{Risshō ankoku-ron} which in truth served as the Sōka Gakkai peace movement’s
ideological foundation.\textsuperscript{104}

The \textit{Risshō ankoku-ron} was written by Nichiren in the style of a dialogue between
a wise “host” Buddhist priest (Japanese: \textit{shujin} 主人, the “master,” or Nichiren himself)
and an unnamed traveling “guest” (\textit{kyaku} 客) who asks many provocative and leading
questions to which Nichiren replies with detailed answers. The opening section sets the
scene by having the guest compare Japan’s current state to what the Buddha had said in
the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} would happen at the dawning of the age of \textit{mappō} to a nation which

\textsuperscript{103} Matsuoka, “Makiguchi Tsunesaburō no sensōkan” (2002): p.36. Matsuoka has held that this
explains the apparent lack of an “anti-war movement” within the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai pointed
out by Higuma (see note #101 in this chapter, just prior): to Makiguchi, spreading the religious
teachings of Nichiren was the anti-war movement.

\textsuperscript{104} Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of \textit{Risshō Ankokuron}”
disregarded the True Dharma and instead supported false doctrines\textsuperscript{105}, and it is revealed that the guest has come to Nichiren to ask for advice. Nichiren responds:

“I racked my brain and read sutras [to find out the cause of the calamities]. At last I have reached the following conclusion. The [government and] people of this country are standing against the True Dharma. They believe wrong teachings. Therefore, gods have deserted this country and saints have left us. They will never return to us again. Maras and devils have come instead. Therefore, the calamities have taken place... [The Buddha says:] When my teaching is about to be eliminated [in a country],... my precepts will be forgotten,... the earth will quake,... the mountains will erupt. Dragons in heaven will not send rain. Seedlings will die... Everything will be dried up all over the country, and many ill omens will be seen from time to time... All gods who are compassionate towards all living beings will leave that defiled country and go to some other place.”\textsuperscript{106}

As a solution, Nichiren counseled adoption of the \textit{Lotus Sūtra}, the most appropriate “nation-protecting sūtra” for the times because of its teaching that all sentient beings

\textsuperscript{105} In the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} there are described seven types of disasters which would be visited upon such a country: the sun and moon would not move regularly (and) the seasons would not follow one another regularly; the stars and planets would change their appearances from time to time; the nation would be ravaged by great fires; great floods would drown people; great winds would cause havoc; droughts would kill all plants; and the country would be disrupted by foreign invasions and internal rebellions. Nichiren predicted that the only disaster which had not as then occurred – the final set of “foreign invasions” and “internal rebellions” – was sure to befall the nation if it persisted in supporting wrong teachings. At the time of his writing the \textit{Risshō ankoku-ron} Korea had already fallen victim to Mongol aggression and Kublai Khan was in the process of attempting to subjugate the peoples of Sakhalin, but Nichiren’s prediction still led to his being thought of by many as a prophet, as invasion of Japan increasingly came to seem imminent by the end of the decade of the 1260s. In his own mind, the circumstances provided yet further reassurance as to the correctness of the teachings of the \textit{Lotus Sūtra}. Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Risshō Ankoku-ron” (1986): p.35.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, p.35.

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possessed the potential for buddhahood, in addition to its assurance from Śākyamuni that he would bring enlightenment to all who invoked even a part of the sūtra as a sign of their faith. In fact, to the extent that the present age was dominated by evil, adherence to the Lotus Sūtra’s teaching and the practice of chanting the Title (daimoku) had to be understood as the only course available for human beings’ awakening. Nichiren intended specifically this message for the treatise’s addressee – the former shogunal regent Hōjō Tokiyori, then the most authoritative figure in Japan – out of his conviction that the support by Japan’s secular leaders of “false” religious sects and “wrong teachings” was primarily responsible for the misery being faced by the people.\textsuperscript{107} Nichiren urged that such support be withdrawn immediately, and the government take “sole initiative” in exclusively devoting itself to Nichiren and his followers, who alone possessed the power and ability to save Japan. The full acceptance of his version of Buddhism would in turn give rise to the “peace of the nation,” and transform the transient realm of Japan into a paradise, the elaborate description of which constitutes the conclusion of the Risshō ankoku-ron.\textsuperscript{108}

Nichiren suffered great persecution as a consequence of provoking the governing authorities\textsuperscript{109}, but he persisted because he believed that his recognition of the essence of

\textsuperscript{109} Adherents of the Nichiren tradition consider there to have been four major instances of maltreatment Nichiren faced in protecting the “True Dharma” during his lifetime. Chronologically: his hermitage at Matsubagayatsu was destroyed by Pure Land believers – who apparently had been incited by priests – in 1260 (known as the “Matsubagaya Persecution”); he
the *Lotus Sūtra* obligated him to spread its meaning to his fellow human beings.\textsuperscript{110} The Sōka Gakkai assumed this burden of “establishing the correct teaching,” or *risshō*, for the present day and age under Toda, and under Ikeda the movement began to prioritize the *ankoku* aspect of Nichiren’s thought – except, given the currents of global events and the particular way these had affected the development of the Sōka Gakkai’s attitude toward and interaction with society, the goal was no longer merely the peace of the nation but that of the whole world. The following excerpt from an Ikeda speech clearly illustrates the manner in which the Sōka Gakkai came to conceive its unique responsibility to spread peace to all humanity:

“All people in the world desire the tranquility of their land; they wish to be happy and peaceful throughout their whole lives. Therefore, many philosophers, thinkers, and leaders have made efforts for the achievement of this state. This is the reason for the growth of religion. But disasters did not cease, wars broke out, and misfortune came in succession. This is because they did not know the highest Buddhism in the world. Now, the Sōka Gakkai alone knows the fundamentals, and so I positively state that it must be bravely advanced for the benefit of the individual, Japan, and the whole

was banished to Izu Province in 1261 (the “Izu Exile”); he received a slash on his forehead and had his left hand broken upon being attacked by swordsmen of the lord of the Komatsubara region in 1264 (the “Komatsubara Persecution”); and he was exiled to Sado Island in 1271 (the “Tatsunokuchi Persecution”). The tradition holds that on the occasion of this fourth “great persecution” Nichiren only narrowly escaped with his life, that on the night of his apprehension the bakufu officials planned to have him beheaded. However, when “a luminous object, streaking across the sky, suddenly lit up the darkness and terrified his would-be executioners,” Nichiren was spared, and the authorities transported him to Sado Island to carry out his sentence. See Stone, Jacqueline. “Review Article: Biographical Studies of Nichiren,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol.26, no.3-4 (1999): p.447.

world, making others understand the Daishōnin’s (Nichiren’s) Buddhism.”

Precisely speaking, when mentioning “the fundamentals” which “the Sōka Gakkai alone knows,” Ikeda was referring to the Gakkai’s singular possessorship of the key to improving society’s collective karma. Because unwholesome karmic orientations yield hatred and violence, while wholesome karma fosters love and mutual courtesy, ultimately the only path to peace was via the gradual improvement of all human beings’ karmas. And since this could not be accomplished except through observance of the practices devised by Nichiren and faithfully preserved by the Nichiren Shōshū, in its charge to bring True Buddhism to the people of the world the Sōka Gakkai was to be seen as offering humankind’s lone “genuine and effective peace movement.”

### 3.6.2 Activities of the Sōka Gakkai Peace Movement (Prior to 1991)

Like his predecessor, Ikeda attributed Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War to its government's and citizenry's neglect of the teachings of Nichiren. In stating his case, Ikeda reasoned that, due to the fact people had “ignore[d] the *dai-gohonzon* transmitted in Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism,” the guardian Buddhist deities could not be revitalized by the “right sūtra,” and thus had been unable or had chosen not to perform their

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112 Ibid, p.41.
113 Ibid, p.41.
protection roles. Even as Japan achieved unprecedented levels of material prosperity in the 1970s, Ikeda and other Sōka Gakkai leaders pointed to numerous studies in the social science fields intimating the Japanese were “an unhappy, insecure race,” suffering from “a severe identity crisis,” as proof that Japan in the postwar era was no better off than the country had been thirty years prior, and in some respects, was in a worse condition. These social problems, too, Ikeda insisted, stemmed from the basic cause of the agitation of the Buddhist gods, as Nichiren had described; however, Ikeda re-interpreted Nichiren’s meaning to suit the modern context, claiming that the “disturbance of Buddhist gods” here signified disordered thought (i.e., conflicting economic or political ideologies, “prejudiced views” that prevailed in society, and so forth). Ikeda’s semantic maneuvering on this point is significant, in that it exemplifies his sensitivity toward the demand to make the movement’s message more intelligible for a broader audience amid changing circumstances. The impulse to do so became increasingly pronounced as the Sōka Gakkai’s overseas diffusion intensified throughout his presidency, because the attempt to realize the aims of the Risshō ankoku-ron on a global scale required the Gakkai to develop an ability to communicate with all varieties of people. Accordingly, parallel to its endeavoring to propagate the religious teachings of Nichiren per se (kōsen rufu), the Sōka Gakkai began to place greater emphasis upon the means of making its peace movement the most relevant to the most people – that is,

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through practical programs of concrete action.

The first way it sought to do this was by a general raising of public “peace consciousness.” This included some efforts with very particular goals, such as applying pressure toward bringing about the normalization of Japanese relations with China to ease tensions within the East Asian region, or advocating the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. The latter issue especially occupied the Sōka Gakkai peace movement’s time and resources, in keeping with Toda’s anti-nuclear position. Toward this end, in 1971 the Kōmeitō – reflecting the sentiment of the Sōka Gakkai members who still constituted its votership – helped pass legislation that established the “three non-nuclear principles” as part of a program for Japan to promote an international anti-nuclear campaign; by the terms of the law, Japan was not to produce, possess, or permit within its boundaries any nuclear arms for any purpose.¹¹⁷ Three years later, the Gakkai collected ten million signatures on a petition calling for unqualified nuclear disarmament throughout the world.¹¹⁸ Also in that same year the Kōmeitō delivered a compelling official statement clarifying the rationale behind its political support for the movement’s absolute rejection of nuclear weapons: “Because of the fact that this nation is the only victim of atomic bombs and also in view of the Preamble and Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, since our party’s formation [the Kōmeitō] has persistently

¹¹⁷ It has recently been revealed that, on the basis of a secret agreement with the Japanese government, the U.S. routinely docked ships carrying nuclear weapons in Japanese ports and stored components for their construction in military bases within Japan’s national territory, even after the “three non-nuclear principles” law went into effect. See Fuwa, Tetsuzo. *Nichi-Bei kakumitsu yaku: rekishi to shinjitsu*. Tokyo: Shin-Nihon Press, 2010.

demanded the total abolition of nuclear weapons, upholding the policy that all nations 
should prohibit nuclear detonations, as well as the manufacture and use of nuclear 
weapons, regardless of aims or reasons.”

From its religious approach to this perspective, the Sōka Gakkai continued actively opposing moves by Conservative Japanese politicians to stimulate the rearment of Japan, or even to make Japan itself nuclear-capable, and additionally the group criticized the nuclear programs of Japan’s allies, especially by way of outspoken advocacy for the nation to resist the foreign and nuclear policies of the American Reagan administration.

The Kōmeitō relaxed its hard-line stance against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1981 for reasons of political expediency in perhaps the party’s most fundamental deviation from its “parent organization” up to that point, but the Sōka Gakkai maintained its refusal to support the U.S. nuclear umbrella in any way, and Society officials led protests which caused the Kōmeitō to initiate a formal review of its policy toward the Treaty in 1984.

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121 Ibid, p.47. The Kōmeitō began to soften its stance in 1980, when it accepted a motion for “the eventual abrogation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty by mutual consent.” Pertinently, this came at a time when the party’s sway in the Diet was at an all-time low. On its behalf the Kōmeitō contended that allowing the Treaty to remain in effect “until the world situation changed” was the more “realistic stand... for now,” and it cited a recognition that “Japan’s friendly relations with the United States [were] an important premise and foothold for Japan’s international policies.” Hence, the Kōmeitō held, it was best to avoid a provocation of antagonism from the U.S., such as would occur by an immediate revoking of the agreement. By the following year, however, the Kōmeitō had dropped its calls for abrogation of the pact entirely. In the end the review process that was forced by the Sōka Gakkai’s protests failed to prompt major revisions in the position at which the Kōmeitō had arrived, and the Kōmeitō has continued to accept the necessity of the Treaty, “for the sake of Japan’s peace and national security,” to the present (for instance, in 2002 the Kōmeitō’s website would proclaim that “the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty must
In addition to these activities geared toward resolution of selected issues, the Sōka Gakkai also sought to enhance “peace consciousness” through more open-ended methods. One of the most well known has been the so-called “peace dialogues” in which Ikeda began engaging with the leaders of various nations, as well as with a diverse range of major international intellectual and cultural figures, from the late 1960s onward. Intended primarily for the symbolic purpose of arousing public discourse regarding peace-related topics, Ikeda has promoted the conversations as upholding an emphasis upon humanistic dialogue for peace demonstrated throughout the history of the Buddhist tradition, dating to Śākyamuni himself.\textsuperscript{122} Partners for his talks have included Mikhail Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Henry Kissinger, British historian Arnold Toynbee, Oxford scholar Bryan Wilson, and American scientist Linus Pauling, among more than fifty others, and the Sōka Gakkai has published many of the more high-profile of the peace dialogues in book form.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{122} Ikeda has held that the inspiration for his peace dialogues comes from a traditional story in the life of the Buddha: when the ancient Indian state of Magadha was “bent upon the conquest of its neighboring state of Vajji,” Śākyamuni met with the ruler of Magadha and, “rather than scolding him... discussed the principles by which nations prosper or decline, and was [in this way] able to dissuade him from his planned invasion” (see Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.6). It is highly significant that the Sōka Gakkai has linked these peace dialogues and other facets of its peace movement to the actions of the prominent figures of Buddhism’s earliest history (another example is the movement’s referring to its anti-war activities as a continuation of the Indian Buddhist King Ashoka the Great’s (304-232 B.C.E) renunciation of violence [see Yoshimura, \textit{Ikeda Daisaku: heiwa e no tabi}, 1981: p.207]), insasmuch as it constitutes the Gakkai’s attempt to present itself as the contemporary “caretaker” of a peaceful, humanitarian tradition that has been that way from the start. For Ikeda, Nichiren had been the heir to this orientation in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, and thus, toward it the Sōka Gakkai became heir in the 20\textsuperscript{th}.

\textsuperscript{123} See the “Works Referenced” section at the end of this study for bibliographic information on
all, the spirit of hopefulness and friendship in which the communications are initiated and carried out is seen as an important way of building trust (itself held by the Sōka Gakkai peace movement to be a necessary precondition for the elimination of war) and combating dogmatism and prejudice. In a similar vein, Ikeda on his own also started annually submitting public “peace proposals” to be circulated among world international affairs experts each 26 January – the anniversary of SGI’s foundation – in 1983. These have contained reflections on the current state of the world, and focused upon ideas for fostering anti-war sentiment in grass-roots level organizations while offering critiques of global trends and prevailing ideologies. Through his proposals, which are presented as a further dimension of the effort to stimulate ongoing humanistic peace dialogue, Ikeda has viewed himself as making an earnest attempt at applying Buddhist philosophical principles to the practical realities of international affairs, in order to non-violently and compassionately challenge “the forces threatening to oppress people’s humanity.”

Featured in each proposal has been a decrying of nuclear weapons, and in each, Ikeda has included concrete suggestions for strengthening the United Nations.

According to Ikeda, with the level of scientific and technological advancement humankind achieved midway through the twentieth century it became anachronistic for several published dialogues.

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nations to continue fortifying their borders and making war on one another. Rather, he
held, the aim of world leaders should be a global federation. Because of the pacifist
character of its Charter (which Ikeda has described as “cognate with the principles of
Buddhist humanism [of] peace, equality, and compassion”), and because of its status
as an international organization to which nearly all nations belonged, Ikeda considered
the U.N. an appropriate locus for the promotion of such a concept of “global
citizenship.” The Sōka Gakkai peace movement thus became actively involved in
supporting U.N. humanitarian programs beginning in the 1970s, providing assistance to
refugees in Africa, Asia, and Europe through yearly fund-raising campaigns, collecting
medical aid and food supplies, and carrying out numerous other services on the U.N.’s
behalf since that time.

SGI, which formally registered as a non-governmental
organization (“NGO”) with the U.N. Department of Public Information (UNDPI) in
1981, began organizing a series of multimedia “citizen educational exhibitions”
sponsored by U.N. agencies to tour major cities of the world in 1982, designing these to
engender awareness of the need for a “global no-war agreement,” to push for “pervasive
reforms” in the international political realm, and to cause fundamental changes in
people’s lifestyles and manners of thinking.

Gakkai support for the U.N. in subsequent

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130 Ibid, p.204. The first of these, entitled “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World,” was created out of
a desire to “inspire anti-war feeling and support for notions of human dignity,” and was jointly
sponsored by the UNDPI and SGI, with the support of the municipalities of Hiroshima and
Nagasaki. The exhibit featured lurid pictures of bombed buildings in each of the two cities, a
years consisted not only of continued supplying of aid for disarmament and humanitarian relief programs, but also voter education, environmental protection, direct contributions to such undertakings as the U.N. Oral History Project, and an overall advocacy of the U.N.’s basic mission in various public forums.\textsuperscript{131} The U.N. Special Commendation for Outstanding NGOs was bestowed upon SGI in 1988 in recognition of the vast support; and Ikeda personally received numerous additional accolades, including earning the U.N.’s highest individual honor, the U.N. Peace Award, in 1983, and being granted the prestigious Humanitarian Award in 1989.\textsuperscript{132}

However, Ikeda’s belief that “the key to international relationships lies not only in negotiations between governments but also in a steady cultural and educational interflow among peoples” led the movement to see the bulk of its most important work as taking place on a subtler level.\textsuperscript{133} Its consistent and considerable attention to the removal of the grossest manifestations of inhumane-ness (e.g., through its anti-nuclear campaigning) notwithstanding, as the peace movement developed the Sōka Gakkai’s graphic image of the charred body of a young boy in Nagasaki, and a map of New York City illustrating what would happen if a one megaton bomb were dropped over Manhattan. It also included general information with respect to problems related to war, such as hunger, poverty, and environmental degradation, and raised questions about human survival into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Initially presented at U.N. Headquarters in New York City, the display was then shown in twenty-three cities in sixteen countries throughout Asia and Europe, drawing a total of 1.2 million viewers.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, p.18. With the honors again came criticism from the Sōka Gakkai’s and Ikeda’s skeptics, who suspected that the opportunity to earn such prestige on the international stage was in fact the motivation behind the peace movement in the first place. For more on popular perceptions of the movement’s peace activities during the time period being covered here, see Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Risshō Ankokuuron” (1986): pp.50-55.
rhetoric came to center more and more on the forging of a “new way of life” by which people could dedicate their positive energies toward living in harmony with their fellow human beings. In other words, “peace” did not simply mean “a period of brief respite between wars,” in the manner achieved by political solutions. On the basis of this view the Sōka Gakkai’s culture and education programs in fact came to constitute critical elements of the organization’s peace movement, as evidenced especially by the breadth of the educational facet’s reach into society both in Japan and abroad. Domestically, for instance, the Gakkai was confronted by the Japanese people’s increasing “indifference” to war, owing in its estimation to the absence of effective peace education in schools and the reality that the greater portion of the population by then had no direct knowledge of war’s true suffering and terror. The organization responded by publishing a 56-

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135 The diversification of the culture program was accelerated to a significant degree throughout the course of the 1980s, so as to facilitate a global exchange of cultural ideas and values for the sake of cultivating transnational consensus and cosmopolitanism – important fundamentals, according to the Sōka Gakkai, for world peace. Just a few examples of the effort to do so included the founding of the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum by Ikeda in 1983; SGI-Brazil’s contributions of people and financial resources to help carry out the Brazilian Department of Education’s “Literacy Project” for adults beginning in 1987 (this was also in part an attempt to improve strained relations with the political leadership of that country – see note #90 of this chapter); and the establishment of the Taplow Court Grand Culture Center near London, England, in 1989, to house literature and art and additionally serve as a holding place of various seminars and meetings (see Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): p.205).
136 Métraux has argued that prior to the Sōka Gakkai’s movement – with the LDP in control of the Ministry of Education – there was “an almost deliberate effort in Japan’s schools to ignore the Second World War... despite [its having] led to the country’s greatest tragedies.” A case in point is that in the 1984 edition of the textbook then used most widely nationally, a mere six pages were devoted to WWII (fewer than were committed to WWI, in which Japan was only minimally involved), with three to four paragraphs on the American bombings of cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe, and less than a page on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No
volume series of books recounting Japanese citizens' firsthand experiences of the Pacific War, entitled *Sensō wo shiranai sedai e* (To The Generations Who Do Not Know War). These accounts were not intended for scholarly, didactic purposes, and contained no discussion of the causes for war, but it was presumed that by evoking strong emotional reactions in readers the victims' stories were helping to instill lasting anti-war sentiment in their audiences.\(^{137}\)

Another avenue by which the Society sought to pursue its aims of peace was an extension of the Sōka education system. New Sōka elementary, junior high, and high schools were established in Osaka between 1973 and 1982, and a junior college for women was added in Hachiōji, Tokyo, in 1985. Sōka University developed exchange programs with colleges in several countries around the world, and in 1987, became officially linked with the first overseas Sōka educational institution, Soka University of America, located near Los Angeles, California. Each of these schools' curricula was premised on Makiguchi's value-creating pedagogy, and the corresponding notion that every student possessed the “limitless ability to... achieve harmony with others and with [his or her] environment.”\(^{138}\) Hence, the founding of the various schools was seen as a spreading, nationally and internationally, of the means to educate individuals capable of living in the world peacefully.

\(^{137}\) Ibid, p.44.

And lastly, ordinary Sōka Gakkai believers themselves also played an active role in promoting the movement’s peace education objectives. International exchange groups were formed by numerous Sōka Gakkai divisions, including short-stay programs to China for youth members, as part of the continuing effort to raise intercultural awareness and understanding. Moreover, at monthly meetings in members’ homes discussion of peace-related topics was encouraged, and adherents were urged to study Sōka Gakkai publications as well as attend speaking events through which Ikeda provided edification regarding the exemplary lives of the global intellectual leaders with whom he visited. The members were expected to pass the knowledge they accumulated on to others, such as by volunteering to help in the creation of U.N. educational pamphlets on issues connected to war and peace. In these ways, just as Nichiren had petitioned the government with a diagnosis and cure for the problems of his day, the Sōka Gakkai peace movement sought first to educate humankind about the horror of war, and then to show it how True Buddhism could bring eternal peace. Yet at the same time, to do so the Sōka Gakkai was assuming for itself interpretive authority over the Nichiren tradition, and it was not long before this put the group on a direct collision course with the leadership of its parent organization, the Nichiren Shōshū.

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142 Ibid, p.42.
4. Excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū

4.1 Historical Tensions between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū

By 1990, all of the positive momentum the Sōka Gakkai had succeeded in generating through its culture and education programs – and most especially its peace movement – over the course of the previous two decades had enabled the organization to distance itself from the negativity and backlash of the earlier “Freedom of the Press” scandal. Membership growth in Japan remained slow, but was stable, and while the earlier popular image of the group as “aggressive, militant, even fanatical” largely persisted, new incidents of “over-zealous” evangelizing directed toward the followers of different religious traditions were minimized by the more accommodating posture the group had adopted.¹ On a variety of fronts the Sōka Gakkai had effectively “mainstreamed” in order to deal with the changing realities of its relationship to the greater society, becoming less confrontational and more conventional in terms of both behavior and doctrine.² Naturally, the proliferation of the overseas SGI assisted tremendously in the process, infusing the movement as a whole with a purpose and a vigor it likely could not have sustained had it stayed strictly a national phenomenon. However, the events which transpired over a one-year period beginning in November, 1990 not only squelched the group’s momentum, domestically and internationally, but also cast the organization’s future survival into doubt for the first time since Toda’s

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having taken on its leadership immediately after the War. The reason was that these events culminated (as mentioned at the outset of this paper) in a 8 November, 1991 order by Nichiren Shōshū High Priest Abe Nikken for the dissolution of the Sōka Gakkai movement, as well as the priesthood’s official declaration twenty days later of the Society’s excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū.³

There were many factors involved in the Nichiren Shōshū’s decision to expel the Gakkai at that time, but these must be viewed in the context of a broader history of antagonism between the two entities. In fact, the first instances of friction between the Nichiren Shōshū and the Sōka Gakkai dated as far back as to the life of Makiguchi himself, when the priesthood consented to the wartime government’s demands and refused to support Makiguchi in his resistance of its policies.⁴ Makiguchi’s imprisonment and death as well as his own confinement aside, Toda ostensibly excused the priesthood as having also been entrammeled by the militarist authorities when he re-organized the movement, because he did not hesitate to re-establish ties with Taiseki-ji upon his release. Even so, an outline written by Toda in the late 1940s with respect to the suitability of a lay movement for the pursuit of kōsen rufu in modern circumstances displayed an attitude and understanding toward the two groups’ respective roles that portended conflict could arise:

“A lay organization is necessary as a buffer to protect the head
temple from all direct responsibilities and trouble that might arise
during the campaign to win new members to the faith.
A lay organization is essential to persevere boldly in a total
membership campaign that can be conducted while protecting the
head temple from the outside.
The priesthood’s leadership methods and ways of conducting
religious affairs in the past will probably be insufficient to bring the
True Dharma to the ordinary people of today and tomorrow.
Furthermore, the clergy is too limited in number to provide
leadership for large numbers of believers. To compensate for these
weaknesses, a large lay organization is essential.
An organization of lay believers is the most modern and ideal means
to carry True Buddhism into all phases of society. Furthermore,
such an organization can naturally and efficiently accelerate the
pace at which the true faith can be carried to the world.”

While this statement was presented as a rather innocuous justification for the Sōka
Gakkai’s existence and mission, demonstrating as it did a respect for the proper
separation of the duties of the priesthood from those of its lay organization, the reality
that Toda regularly criticized Nichiren Shōshū clergy throughout his period as head of
the Society for their insularity (i.e., their general failure to reach out to the people, who
had need of the means to salvation they possessed) belied the mildness with which he
here displaced “the priesthood’s leadership methods and ways of conducting religious
affairs in the past.” At any rate, it is clear that already under Toda there was an
incongruence in the vision for the lay movement as seen by Nichiren Shōshū leaders
versus as it was seen by the Sōka Gakkai itself, and it is also clear that the Gakkai had

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5 Quoted from Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū
already then begun making some effort to assert its prioritized status in the modern world relative to the Nichiren Shōshū.

Upon Ikeda’s becoming president, he supported the priesthood outwardly, yet as has been illustrated above he frequently attempted to re-interpret Nichiren Shōshū doctrine as the movement diversified and expanded. One relevant example was the shift away from traditional Nichirenist exclusivism he led increasingly after 1970. From Ikeda’s vantage, the most viable method for propagation of the True Dharma in contemporary society had become the Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement and cultural and educational activities, and thus it was counterproductive to continue practicing confrontational shakubuku and incurring negative publicity. Ikeda also at one point reportedly made comments comparing Nichiren’s harsh public image unfavorably to the more gentle view popularly held of Shinran 親鸞 (the founder of Jōdo Shinshū; lived 1173-1263), and he urged that the compassionate side of Nichiren be emphasized as a requirement of proselytization from then on. Nichiren Shōshū leaders rejected this suggestion, countering that practitioners must follow Nichiren’s teachings, not social opinion, and selecting only the “congenial aspects” of Nichiren thought would be to distort it. Another instance of re-interpretation by Ikeda that occurred around the same

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9 Ibid, pp.254-55. Ikeda described Nichiren as having “excel[led] in compassion,” as exemplified by his striving to “put the seven words of the Title into the mouths of the people of Japan, as a mother in pity tries to put milk into the mouth of her infant” (see Naylor, “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement” (1991): p.72).
time concerned the *kaidan* issue, and this became a point of contention, as well. The Nichiren Shōshū maintained its traditional strict adherence to the belief that a state-sponsored *kaidan* was meant to be a “material reality,” and refuted the notion that a temple built by the “will of the people” was sufficient, as Ikeda had begun arguing without its approval.\(^\text{11}\) To the Sōka Gakkai, the priesthood’s positions were emblematic of its typical over-attentiveness to the world within the temple, at the expense of an appropriate focus upon the suffering by which ordinary people were afflicted.\(^\text{12}\) In truth, according to Ikeda, it was precisely this lack of care for what was happening in the “real world” on the part of the Nichiren Shōshū’s leaders which drove the Gakkai to take initiative and respond itself.

In these connections, it can be seen that the conservative Nichiren Shōshū was never equipped for wide-scale interaction with society at large, and therefore the exponential growth of the Sōka Gakkai movement was an inherent source of tension. First, and most fundamentally, there was a “structural contradiction” in the fact that the Nichiren Shōshū owed its own prosperity to an entity it considered a subsidiary organization working on its behalf.\(^\text{13}\) Prior to Makiguchi’s conversion the sect is characterized as having been “small” and “weak,” and its considerable enlargement as far as number of temples, clergy, and lay members by the 1970s was made possible due

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\(^\text{12}\) Ibid, p.29.

to the donations and activities of Sōka Gakkai followers.\textsuperscript{14} As logic would dictate the Nichiren Shōshū’s claims to authority over the Sōka Gakkai were undermined by this condition of the lay movement’s representing its principal material benefactor. Secondly, the outgoing nature and global outlook that were responsible for the Sōka Gakkai’s expansion posed a multitude of problems for the priesthood.\textsuperscript{15} Contrary to the Gakkai’s populist and egalitarian view toward religion, the Nichiren Shōshū’s historical isolation had led to its taking on a status-conscious and hierarchical orientation, developing according to a model of especially rigid differentiation of the reciprocal roles of the clergy and the laity.\textsuperscript{16} The priesthood insisted that the sacred power of the tradition was largely vested in its system of hierarchy, which itself was the primary “source of belief” for believers of the sect, because of its direct link to Nichiren.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, the focus of the Soka Gakkai’s outreach was on putting spiritual power into lay people’s hands, through their own practice\textsuperscript{18}; in the view of Nichiren Shōshū officials, this amounted to a failure on the part of the Society to give adequate attention to supporting

\textsuperscript{14} Hashimoto and McPherson, “Rise and Decline of Sokagakkai” (1976): p.87.
\textsuperscript{17} Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.331.
\textsuperscript{18} Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.28. The Sōka Gakkai argued that the core teaching of the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} was that of equality, and thus to reject the equality of the clergy and the laity was in actuality to reject the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} – which meant a rejection of Buddhism altogether. On this point, a comment by Ikeda at the time of the two organization’s formal split is telling: “What can we possibly say about those who are mad enough to try to bring... prejudice and discrimination into the teachings of Nichiren Daishōnin [by] declaring the priesthood superior to lay followers and [claiming] that only by relying on the priesthood can we attain Buddhahood?” (See Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): pp.331-32.)
the priesthood. The additional source of sacred authority within the Nichiren Shōshū, as understood by the clergy, was the temple (a view which also stemmed from the organization’s strong historical roots in the system of “Temple Buddhism”). In this area, too, the Sōka Gakkai’s remarkable external advancement caused conflict to arise. As a lay movement spreading overseas, it concentrated on members’ gathering sites as the locus of spiritual activity, instead of upon temples, which in the eyes of the clergy threatened to bring about a gradual decentering of the religion of the Nichiren Shōshū. To speak concretely Sōka Gakkai community centers did indeed – even in Japan – come to assume many of the functions that had formerly been served by the temple, and senior Gakkai members came to take on roles that had previously been performed by priests. The effect was that large numbers of Nichiren Shōshū priests during that time began to blame the community centers for their own inability to land permanent positions, without which they had no opportunity to earn income by performing rituals for the laity.19

4.2 Ikeda’s Forced Resignation as Sōka Gakkai President

Immense stress was building between the Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū as a consequence of these issues, and the relationship between Ikeda and priesthood leadership in turn worsened severely. On 24 April, 1979, matters came to a head when Ikeda was forced to resign from his post as Sōka Gakkai President.20 It is difficult to find

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20 When Ikeda left his post, his then-Senior Vice President Hōjō Hiroshi 北条浩 became the fourth
unbiased accounts of the event, but Kisala has stated that Ikeda “resigned... in an attempt to repair the already strained relationship with the Shōshū monks.” Kisala also noted that there was deep-seated resentment among Nichiren Shōshū officials “over Ikeda’s power and the personality cult built around him,” and that such was a factor may also be inferred from the Sōka Gakkai’s version of the story. The Gakkai conceded that the priesthood’s ire was aroused specifically as a result of comments made in praise of Ikeda by Fukushima Genjirō (who was at that time a vice president of the Sōka Gakkai) that at the same time openly disparaged then-High Priest Hosoi Nittatsu (1902-1979). Even after Ikeda issued a formal apology with regard to Fukushima’s remarks, the priesthood remained outraged, and demanded the dismissal of Ikeda. The Sōka Gakkai has repeatedly held that Ikeda consented to allowing himself to be deposed, in spite of no wrongdoing on his part, because he reasoned that “he could

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21 Ibid, p.149.
22 According to a feature on a SGI-affiliated website, Fukushima is reported to have said: “When President Ikeda goes to the head temple, Gakkai members eagerly greet him, calling him ‘Sensei.’ But they do not go near the High Priest. Nor do they yearn to see him. Even if the High Priest walks by, they simply wonder, who is that old man? So priests are jealous and accuse us of treating the President as the true Buddha...” Interestingly, it is added that Fukushima later quit the Sōka Gakkai and became an outspoken critic of Ikeda and of the organization overall. He also came to lend support to Hosoi’s successor as Nichiren Shōshū high priest, Abe Nikken. (See the article: “April 24th: Day of Justice;” GakkaiOnline.Net. 1997. (May 15, 2011). http://www.gakkaionline.net/apr24/beginning.html.)
Ikeda’s resignation in fact had a negligible effect upon his involvement with the organization in the long-term, as he retained his position as SGI President, was named Sōka Gakkai Honorary President, and continued to be considered the movement’s figurehead and de facto leader; if anything, in light of the quite dramatic portrayals of his “selfless” act of stepping down that permeate Sōka Gakkai literature, its greatest impact was rather to galvanize his supporters. By the same token, it also served to rearrange the dynamics of the conflict between the two parties in a substantial way, and opened up a very public power struggle for which there could be no easy resolution.

It was not long before Ikeda and the leaders of the Nichiren Shōshū sect resumed engaging in mutual criticism, irrespective of Ikeda’s diminished official capacity within the Gakkai. Ikeda argued that the priesthood’s attempts to mute him were consistent

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24 For the next several years (a period Ikeda has referred to as his “exile”), however, Nichiren Shōshū leaders forbade Ikeda from speaking at large Sōka Gakkai meetings, and prohibited him from having his articles – or even his photograph – published in the Seikyō shinbun or other Gakkai print sources. Ikeda’s response, incidentally, was to undertake a large-scale effort to make “home visits” to the residences of ordinary members, in order to carry out meetings with them personally (he would complete more than 500 of these “home visits” over the course of his “exile”); to attend and participate in as many cultural festivals as possible; and to concentrate on developing the international stream of the movement. Ibid.

25 It is said that Ikeda went directly to the Kanagawa Culture Center after having announced his resignation, in order to “reflect upon the significance of [Nichiren] Daishōnin’s persecution.” There, in Ikeda’s words: “I took up my calligraphy brush and wrote the single word ‘Justice’ (Japanese: seigi 正義) in Chinese characters... entrusting the small group of disciples at my side with the mission of passing on and conveying to later generations the spirit with which I wrote that word.” As a result, the date 24 April has come to now widely be known throughout the Sōka Gakkai movement as “the Day of Justice.” (See Ibid.)
with its “hard power” understanding of authority\textsuperscript{26}; that is, that it could use coercion or oppression as it saw necessary, to claim the means of enlightenment for itself while “foster[ing] the notion that nobody can be saved without priestly intervention.”\textsuperscript{27} As a lay movement, the Sōka Gakkai’s position conversely was that awakening could only come through the direct actions of the individual believer, that spiritual attainment was contingent upon matters such as one’s level of devotion in chanting, the kindness and respect one showed toward others on a regular basis, and the sincerity with which one approached proselytizing.\textsuperscript{28} In their viewpoint, instead of focusing on empty rituals or the provision of support for a class of spiritual adepts from whom one would be conferred salvation in exchange for the provision of material sustenance, the goal was for members to try to make manifest their intrinsic Buddha-nature through their own daily actions.\textsuperscript{29} For this type of state to be realizable, individuals had to further concern themselves with cultivating the “inner directed process” of faith\textsuperscript{30} – and yet, the validity of internal faith or individually developed ethics was de-emphasized, if not entirely

\textsuperscript{26} Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.33. Harvard University professor Joseph Nye has used the terms “hard power” (military superiority, political authority, economic strength, et cetera) versus “soft power” (knowledge and information, culture and ideas) in describing the different ways in which influence has been wielded throughout human history. Ikeda has frequently made use of the concepts himself in explicating the Sōka Gakkai’s methods of acting for social change.


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, pp.331-32.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p.331.

refused, by the Nichiren Shōshū’s version of Buddhism. Accordingly, in Ikeda and the Sōka Gakkai’s estimation, by going against its properly designated role of guiding the faith of the laity so as to help common individuals find enlightenment, and alternatively becoming consumed by its own status and prestige, the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood had for all practical intents and purposes abandoned the teachings of Nichiren. By this time it was obvious that the gulf between the two organizations’ conceptions of religiosity had become untraversable, and an unamicable end to the relationship was rendered a foregone conclusion. The Nichiren Shōshū officials were simply biding their time toward making that end final when their opportunity arrived on 16 November, 1990, at the Sōka Gakkai’s Thirty-fifth Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

4.3 “Written Notification of Excommunication”

On the occasion of that meeting, Ikeda delivered a speech which included several points deemed objectionable in the eyes of the Nichiren Shōshū Bureau of Administrative Affairs. Allegedly, Ikeda made remarks that insinuated Head Priest Abe Nikken was prioritizing his own power above the best interests of his followers, and furthermore, that his teachings were “outdated and dogmatic” (Abe had succeeded Hosoi as high priest upon the latter’s death just three months after Ikeda’s

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32 Ibid, p.332.
resignation from the presidency of the Sōka Gakkai).\textsuperscript{34} A tape of the speech was produced by Nichiren Shōshū General Administrator Reverend Fujimoto Nichijun from a sealed envelope at a press conference on 13 December, and sect officials proceeded to criticize Ikeda roundly for his insubordination.\textsuperscript{35} Fujimoto also at that time requisitioned written explanations from the Sōka Gakkai to a series of questions the priesthood held with regard to the speech. Then-Gakkai president Akiya Einosuke 秋谷栄助 declined the order to do so, suggesting instead that the parties meet for a face-to-face discussion. Taiseki-ji neglected to even acknowledge Akiya’s request, and on 17 December sent a questionnaire to Sōka Gakkai Headquarters with demands that it be completed and returned to the Bureau within one week.\textsuperscript{36} The Sōka Gakkai complied, and its rejoinder – written in letter form with answers to the priesthood’s queries, plus a second request for dialogue – was received by the Nichiren Shōshū on 23 December. However, whatever the details of the reply’s contents, the Shōshū leaders considered the Gakkai’s effort inadequate. Fujimoto once again ignored the Sōka Gakkai officials’ supplication to engage in direct conversation, and on 26 December sent another note back to Sōka Gakkai Headquarters stating that Taiseki-ji viewed the response as “indicative of a lack of will to provide written answers to the questions.”\textsuperscript{37} A meeting of the Nichiren Shōshū Council was convened the next day in order to determine the appropriate course for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.327.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Pereira, “The Transplantation of Soka Gakkai to Brazil” (2008): p.100.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): pp.327-28.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid, pp.327-28.
\end{itemize}
handling the matter. The congress concluded in a revision of the Nichiren Shōshū Rules that in essence relieved Ikeda from the Shōshū post he had managed to retain after 1979, head of the Hokkekyō Believers’ Association, which was the umbrella organization for all Nichiren Shōshū lay societies in the collective.\(^{38}\) Other Sōka Gakkai leaders were likewise dispossessed of their positions as leaders of individual Nichiren Shōshū lay groups and deprived of their statuses as Nichiren Shōshū senior lay representatives. As a final inclusion, Fujimoto threatened “punitive actions” against lay believers who criticized the priesthood’s administrators in the future.\(^{39}\)

The troubles continued to escalate over the next several months. Ikeda, Akiya, and others affiliated with the Sōka Gakkai did not refrain from criticizing the priesthood, but rather became more vocal, and increasingly bold in terms of stating their disapproval in public. They also extended the scope of their criticism to include attacks upon the moral character of the Nichiren Shōshū clergy. For instance, the Sōka Gakkai accused the priesthood of taking advantage of believers through the improper sale of \(tōba\) 塔婆, a kind of wooden memorial tablet presented as an offering to a deceased family member. Rites involving these items were traditionally to be performed as an aid in providing for the tranquility of the departed on certain anniversaries of the loved one’s death, only. Yet according to the Sōka Gakkai, the priesthood was offering \(tōba\) for

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\(^{38}\) Notably, it was only after being stripped of said title at this point that Ikeda’s picture was removed from Nichiren Shōshū altars worldwide, despite the vast turmoil of the previous decade-plus. See Alnor, “Infighting, Division, and Scandal” (1992): p.1.

sale at inappropriate times, such as New Year’s, and then deceiving followers into
buying the tablets by promising that those who bought and offered tōba would derive
special spiritual and material benefits from doing so.\(^{40}\) The Gakkai made further
accusations that the clergy were using the proceeds from these sales in an untoward
fashion, claiming that one influential priest had used the funds to purchase
memberships at two prestigious Japanese country clubs.\(^{41}\) An even more alarming
alleged episode of the Shōshū leaders’ unethical exploitation of their status was reported
in an overseas branch, in the United States. In the instance in question, it was said that a
group of several priests visiting Sōka Gakkai community centers in California
demanded to be provided, at their convenience, with sex workers throughout their
stay.\(^{42}\) The Society’s domestic print media took up the story and began to “offer readers a
flood of anti-priestly propaganda” in this vein, holding that in fact the clergy often had
“wild parties,” many had mistresses, and some even ran a lucrative pornographic movie
industry on the side.\(^{43}\)

The priesthood did not respond to such allegations directly, but in return, fired

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\(^{40}\) The Sōka Gakkai alleged that the priesthood went as far as to send flyers to the houses of all
registered Nichiren Shōshū believers to urge people’s participation in a proposed New Year’s Day
sale. See Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood”

\(^{41}\) Ibid, p.332-33.

\(^{42}\) The priesthood was accordingly accused by the Sōka Gakkai to have “shocked and alienated”
many American lay believers, on account of these clergy members’ licentiousness, amorality,
opportunism, and hubris – not to mention, of course, that their conduct was an “open violation of

\(^{43}\) Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992):
p.334.
back that the Gakkai was not the clean, honorable lay organization it made pretenses of being. The Shōshū pointed to a succession of occasions on which Sōka Gakkai officials had been implicated in questionable financial dealings over the previous two years. These implications had come amidst a wave of intense scrutiny regarding the nature of the Gakkai’s incredible wealth, set off when a safe discarded in a scrap yard by a Seikyō shinbun delivery truck in 1989 was found to contain bundles of cash totaling the yen equivalent of $1.2 million USD. A former managing director of the newspaper had claimed the safe belonged to him, that the money had no connection to the Sōka Gakkai itself but was his own personal profit from the sale of souvenirs at a Nichiren Shōshū temple, and that he had simply forgotten about it. However, skeptical governmental authorities undertook a full-scale investigation of the Gakkai’s financial records, which eventually disclosed in excess of $17 million in unreported income from a joint-venture graveyard business (selling and renting funerary sites near Mount Fuji) the Sōka Gakkai operated with the Mitsubishi Corporation, and the Gakkai was required to pay $4.5 million in unmet obligations lest its executives face criminal prosecution for tax evasion.

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44 Alnor, “Infighting, Division, and Scandal” (1992): p.2. The Gakkai’s privileged financial status as a religious organization under Japanese law has rendered securing accurate information as to the group’s economic wealth very difficult, but it has been speculated that as of today the value of its assets is perhaps (if converted to U.S. dollars) in excess of a hundred billion, with Ikeda’s own personal wealth near $10 billion USD. Given that Japanese researcher Shimada Hiromi has stated the main organization in Japan reports offerings from members currently total around 300 billion yen each year, and that the figure had been twice that annually during the period of the so-called “bubble economy” in Japan – which coincides with when the scandals discussed in this section occurred – it would appear safe to assume the Sōka Gakkai’s condition of financial abundance was at least relatively similar in 1989. See Shimada, Hiromi. Minzokuka suru Sōka Gakkai: Yudayajin no kita michi wo tadoru hitobito. Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 2008: pp.136-37.
The priesthood also brought attention to the Sōka Gakkai’s receipt of nearly $3.3 million in improper compensation from brokerage houses for market losses incurred during the Japanese stock market's collapse in 1990, placing the lay religious group in the thick of a scandal in which several of the nation’s largest banks and securities institutions paid in aggregate more than $1 billion in illegitimate compensatory support to Japan’s most powerful corporations, while most ordinary investors received nothing. In 1991 another scandal arose, involving the disappearance of funds procured from the Sōka Gakkai’s already questionable acquisition of two Renoir paintings (again in cooperation with the Mitsubishi Corporation), and once more the Nichiren Shōshū leaders blasted their counterparts within the Gakkai.

At last, the Nichiren Shōshū Bureau of Administrative Affairs definitively took the “punitive action” toward the Sōka Gakkai that it had promised to level against lay organizations which criticized the priesthood, by issuing the order for the disbandment of the Society and all its overseas branches on 8 November, 1991. President Akiya summarily asserted the Sōka Gakkai’s refusal to comply with Taiseki-ji’s decree in the Seikyō shinbun, on the grounds that the Gakkai was “an independent religious organization.” Then, on the twenty-eighth day of the month, Abe Nikken finally brought the parties’ dispute to an irrevocable conclusion, officially severing ties with the

Sōka Gakkai and its international chapters through the promulgation of “the Written Notification of Excommunication to the Sōka Gakkai.” The focal point of the order was as follows:

“The Sōka Gakkai has become an organization which greatly vilifies Buddhist Law, which goes against the repeated mercy and guidance of the Chief Priest and the Sect, which is conspicuously changing the creed and the faith of this Sect, and which is destroying Buddhist teachings. This being the case, this sect can no longer recognize the Sōka Gakkai, no matter how great its services of protection from the outside may have been in the past...”

In the latter portion of his statement, Abe further urged Sōka Gakkai followers to resign their memberships in the Society and devote their loyalties to the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood. Thus, with this declaration, Taiseki-ji not only effectively bastardized the progeny which had delivered it its greatest prosperity, it also commenced a formal effort to put that organization out of existence altogether.

4.4 Specific Problems Presented by Excommunication

In trying to pry followers away from the Sōka Gakkai and toward itself, the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood not surprisingly attacked the Gakkai in relation to the now-unaffiliated lay organization’s apparent lack of proper religious authority. Abe Nikken did so clearly when he expanded upon the Shōshū’s reasoning for ousting the Sōka

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51 Quoted from Ibid, p.330.
52 Ibid, p.328.
Gakkai in a lengthy article in the February, 1992 issue of the popular Japanese monthly literary magazine *Bungei shunju* 文藝春秋, arguing that the expulsion was a necessary action to protect the integrity of orthodox sect doctrine from Ikeda’s attempts to corrupt it. In particular, by positing that the clergy and laity were entirely equal, Ikeda was subverting the Nichiren Shōshū’s teaching with respect to the “Three Jewels,” which held, first, that Nichiren was in fact the True Buddha; second, that – as discussed above – the “Three Great Secret Laws” constituted the True Dharma; and finally, that the authority vested in the linkage of head priests tracing its succession unbrokenly to Nichiren and Nikkō was itself the True Sangha. Ikeda had blatantly disregarded the all-important implications of the third aspect of this doctrine out of his sole concern to obtain full control of the sect for himself, Abe contended, and his hateful and contemptuous attitude toward the priesthood stemmed from the same ambition. On numerous other occasions Abe insisted that while the first two presidents of the Sōka Gakkai had cooperated with the priesthood in propagating the faith, the situation had changed dramatically when Ikeda came into power, as Ikeda assumed the role of “virtual dictator” and inaugurated “a full religious revolution” by claiming the authority to interpret religious dogma, and demanding total loyalty from Sōka Gakkai believers.

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55 Ibid, pp.386-89. It has already been seen that Ikeda had altered the second component of the Nichiren Shōshū understanding of the Three Jewels within the Sōka Gakkai, as well, by redefining the meaning of the *kaidan*.  
56 Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.329. As demonstrated above, in actuality Toda had also criticized the priesthood with
Abe held that in a similar manner to how Ikeda had formed the Kōmeitō in an effort to provide himself with a foundation of political might, he had caused the Gakkai to come to “function like a cult, with promises... of happiness in exchange for unquestioning allegiance” so as to solidify and broaden his social power base in general. The result was that members of his Sōka Gakkai had in reality become adherents of the Ikeda-shū ("Ikeda Sect"), misguidedly seeking spiritual instruction and leadership from Ikeda instead of from Taiseki-ji. Because Ikeda wielded no true religious authority and was interested merely in self-profit, the Sōka Gakkai could therefore not be referred to as a “Buddhist” movement, but was rather a “dangerous enemy” to Buddhism, Abe said. The priesthood had on the other hand always valued its guardianship over the “orthodox” teachings of Nichiren above all else, and the need to “protect the sanctity of Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism” in this case left it no option other than to rid the sect of Ikeda’s and the Sōka Gakkai’s debasing influence once and for all.

The Shōshū’s vituperations notwithstanding, given the astounding success the

regularity. Additionally, by intimating that the two groups’ relationship had always been harmonious prior to Ikeda’s taking leadership, Abe was conveniently turning a blind eye to the priesthood’s ostracization of Makiguchi during the war years. It is not clear whether Abe was being disingenuous as part of a strategy to vilify Ikeda, or whether the Nichiren Shōshū leaders really perceived things this way (perhaps because the extent of Toda’s criticism was so much lesser, and it was in any event less directly confrontational; or because the tensions of previous conflicts had been glossed over due to the presence of extenuating circumstances when they occurred – World War II in Makiguchi’s case, and the exceptionally rapid growth of the Toda era). However, there would appear to be ample reason to question this line of Abe’s argumentation as indicative of a case of highly manufactured revisionist history.

60 Ibid, p.329.
Sōka Gakkai had achieved throughout the postwar period, that it had immense resources and assets at its disposal, that it still possessed an overwhelmingly vast worldwide membership, and that it had already demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt itself to various contexts and respond to adverse circumstances up to that point, it may appear that the problems excommunication brought were no more than temporary setbacks for the group. To be sure, it became incumbent upon the organization to manage a way of countering the negative characterization forwarded by the priesthood, but it was almost impossible to imagine the movement could fold up completely; the trajectories of its global activities (e.g., its status as a highly-decorated U.N.-registered NGO, the recognition it had gained by contributing toward international, supra-religious causes through its peace, culture, and education programs, et cetera), the political presence it maintained within Japan by its (unofficial) association with the Kōmeitō, and especially, the depth of its believers’ devotion to “Ikeda-sensei,” more or less assured that the Sōka Gakkai and/ or SGI would persist in some capacity. However, as to the question of its religious authority, the issues highlighted by Abe’s exposition struck an extremely deep chord: the Sōka Gakkai had always insisted that it was a religious organization, that all of its activities in the material world were merely manifestations of its “spiritual mandate from Nichiren”, and excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū had made the Sōka Gakkai’s continued existence as a legitimate

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religious organization seem very tenuous.\textsuperscript{62} And this, in turn, did pose a serious threat to the long-term viability of the movement's many humanitarian endeavors, as well. How, for instance, could the Sōka Gakkai claim that it offered the world’s only “genuine and effective peace movement” when it no longer held the key – according to its own rhetoric – to transforming karma, the \textit{dai-gohonzon}? There was also a major problem in terms of how the movement would grow in the future, i.e., how \textit{kōsen rufu} would be carried out: since the Sōka Gakkai had been cut off from Taiseki-ji as well as the unmediated access to the spiritual power of Nichiren it previously possessed through its connection to the priesthood’s direct line of transmission dating to the Daishōnin himself, on what grounds could it legitimately pursue \textit{kōsen rufu}? Above all, how could its proselytization efforts bring about societal transformation if they lacked the religious basis to do so? It was one thing for the group to spin excommunication in a positive light in the public domain, such as by hailing 28 November, 1991 internationally as “Independence Day for the Soul\textsuperscript{63},” but the fact remained that these problems demanded a re-envisioning of several of the most central tenets within Sōka Gakkai thought and practice in order for the movement to continue to be considered the purveyor of Nichiren’s message to the modern world.


4.5 The Sōka Gakkai’s Response

4.5.1 Defining the Movement’s Legitimacy vis-à-vis the Priesthood’s

The Sōka Gakkai accordingly embarked upon a campaign to prove that its religious identity had not been compromised by the rupture from its parent organization, nor the incidental isolation from the traditional sources of spiritual power entailed. To do so, it followed a pattern that was by that time well-established within the movement’s historical mode of development, employing a strategy which drew upon and emphasized certain already-existing trends in regard to its revisionist stances on key Nichiren Buddhist concepts as well as its activities in the wider society. The difference was that, in the present case, the objective and the “opposition” were much more narrowly defined than they ever previously had been: whereas in the past the Sōka Gakkai’s efforts to revamp itself were undertaken – typically with the mind of fostering a more positive public perception – in response to loosely-conceived outside forces, in this instance the Sōka Gakkai was charged with finding a means of affirming its religious legitimacy, a task which necessitated confronting the priesthood directly to show how it was the Sōka Gakkai that was properly upholding the Nichiren heritage. Yet here, too, the Gakkai could look backward to look forward, as the Nichiren tradition offered ample precedent of debates between schools whereby one would attempt to undermine the credibility of another over disputes of

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doctrined.\textsuperscript{65} The Sōka Gakkai highlighted such intra-sectarian jockeying as evidence that “the claim to possess the sole Dharma leading to liberation in the final Dharma age” was endemic to Nichiren Buddhism\textsuperscript{66}, and had been so since the tradition was founded upon the assertion that it was the Daishōnin who fulfilled Śākyamuni’s prediction in the \textit{Lotus Sūtra} that the True Dharma would “lose its validity and fall into confusion” in a future degenerate age (the Age of \textit{mappō}) only to be revived by “a great teacher [who] would propagate the correct form of Buddhism for the new era.”\textsuperscript{67} In other words, just as Nichiren’s method of propagation had been “correct” because, in reducing all Buddhist principles to their core essence (the \textit{daimoku}) he had interpreted and spread the True Dharma in accordance with the needs of his contemporary world, so too his successors were obligated to constantly present and re-present the teaching of the lone path to awakening in the Age of \textit{mappō} in a fashion suitable to the future environments in which they were to transmit it, over time and across space. It was the ability to effectively do exactly this, the Sōka Gakkai argued, by which one given individual or group was imbued with spiritual authority as opposed to another; within the tradition, legitimacy was not and never had been a product of formal institutions or a specific status.

\textsuperscript{65} Religion scholar Sor-ching Low, who has conducted research on SGI in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore, has pointed out that Nichiren factions’ alternating utilization of the approaches of \textit{shakubuku} and \textit{shōju} came about not only as a consequence of confrontations against political authorities but also through the process of “each [Nichiren sub-sect] defining itself against its historical past and social present” in debates within the tradition. (See Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.35-36; for details of specific cases, see Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the \textit{Lotus}” (1994): pp.237-249.)


Provided the Gakkai could demonstrate the appropriateness for the current time and place of the several changes to articles of Nichiren Shōshū faith it had implemented, the same doctrinal modifications for which it was being criticized by the priesthood could be recast contrarily as, in truth, the very reason the movement had to be recognized as religiously legitimate.

Of course, such an effort first called for a dismantling of the Nichiren Shōshū clergy’s rival claim to interpretive authority over the tradition, and this posed a unique predicament for the Sōka Gakkai. Quarrels rooted in competing averments as to the singular possession of the means to salvation for a particular context were as old as Nichiren Buddhism itself, but in this case the Sōka Gakkai had to turn against that source from which it had originally emerged and which had once nurtured it, and hence the stakes were much higher.68 Because the Gakkai’s credibility as a lay movement had been dependent upon the Nichiren Shōshū, and because the organization’s legitimacy as a religious group had until then been bound up with the sect and temple, if the Sōka Gakkai made a wrong move in its attempt to discredit the priesthood and devalue Taiseki-ji, it could amount to self-mutilation.69 Ostensibly, it was imperative that the Sōka Gakkai pursue its strategy with great care. Ikeda and other leaders of the Society were clearly cognizant of the situation’s delicacy, as reflected by the evolved understanding toward the association between the Daishōnin and Head Priest Abe they elected at that

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69 Ibid, pp.34-36.
point to adopt. They realized that it did not behoove the Sōka Gakkai to completely
dismiss the connection asserted by the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood to the tradition’s
historical founder, since the Gakkai itself had always proselytized from a standpoint of
emphasizing the authority it also derived (via its relationship to the clergy) from this
direct line of transmission – due to the corresponding purity of sect teachings, it now
more explicitly stressed – in appealing to prospective converts prior to
excommunication. Therefore, Sōka Gakkai leadership chose to simply downplay the
priesthood’s proximity to Nichiren through this ongoing link, and instead focus upon
how the Shōshū had forfeited its role as protector of the True Dharma by its behavior
throughout the contemporary period. That is, the Sōka Gakkai brought increased
attention to the various ways it held the priesthood had let fearful uncertainty over any
perceived dilution of the sect’s prestige cause its members to forget that its spiritual
authority was ultimately reliant upon the words and actions of Nichiren. As such the
clergy had come to mistakenly believe sacred power resided intrinsically within its
lineage, and the temple, and the objects housed therein, and it neglected to carry out
Nichiren’s fundamental commitment to adapting the “correct teaching” as dictated by
the times. To the converse, Ikeda argued that in habitually putting self-preservation
ahead of keeping pace with the democratic mood of the modern era, the priesthood had
rather contrived in effect to adulterate True Buddhism:

“The Nichiren Shōshū priesthood has consistently catered to the nationalist current of [the day]. When the various other Nichiren schools petitioned the imperial government to confer upon Nichiren Daishōnin the title (of Risshō Daishi 立正大師, “Great Teacher in Establishing Uprightness,” in September, 1922), the Nichiren Shōshū joined them in advancing this cause. And when pressure from the military authorities intensified, it accepted the Shintō talisman from Ise Shrine... from start to finish, the priesthood was solely concerned with protecting itself and currying favor with the authorities.”

As mentioned above, the clash that resulted in the Sōka Gakkai’s expulsion from the sect was born from the clergy’s same preoccupation with maintaining its dominant position and refusal to change according to the world’s needs, in the view of Gakkai leaders. Ikeda insisted that the priesthood’s repeated accusations of “insubordination” on his part were in reality no more than a guise to cover up its actual intention of reversing the trend by which the Society was coming to take on greater influence than had the parent organization itself; he further alleged that the Nichiren Shōshū administration saw the Gakkai as having “seized its prerogatives,” leading to an

71 Quoted from Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.34-35. This painting of the priesthood as “nationalistic” has been pivotal to the Sōka Gakkai’s response to the organizations’ split, as again attested to by even more forceful denouncements Ikeda stated along these lines in a 2003 essay he penned on grasping the meaning of the Gosho 御書 (the writings of Nichiren). In that work Ikeda decried the “Nichirenists” within wartime Japan’s Shōshū ranks as having followed the lead of Tanaka Chigaku (see Chapter 2, note #57 of this paper) in “completely distorting the Daishōnin’s teaching to fashion a nationalist ideology... Grounded in the ideology of nationalism and State Shintō, their interpretation sought to make the Daishōnin’s words compatible with [the militarist government's] aims” (as cited in Low (2010): p.36). Of course, such recriminations should be viewed as part of the Sōka Gakkai’s wider effort to re-frame excommunication – to portray the imposed exclusion as the climax of a dispute which arose because, in conflict with the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood’s staleness and mendacity, the Sōka Gakkai strove to re-construe Nichiren’s message in a democratic style attuned to modern settings.

“erosion of its authority... thus [potentially] rendering the priesthood irrelevant,” and the banishing of the lay movement was essentially a reaction based out of these fears. At the same time, Ikeda artfully juxtaposed this illustration of the priesthood’s continued “anachronistic” adherence to the exercise of “hard power” in exerting its will against the Sōka Gakkai’s own consciousness that in today’s democratic age only “soft power,” or “those convictions and motivations that stem from inner-directed processes” had the capacity to serve as a true foundation for consensus and mutual understanding such as can lead to the type of peaceful society envisioned by Nichiren. Moreover, while Shōshū leadership had “consistently catered to the nationalistic current of the day,” the Sōka Gakkai’s idea of ningen kakumei 人間革命 (“human revolution”), the fundamental transformation of one’s manner of thinking and living in order to develop a clear awareness of one’s purpose in life and thereby become of value to the wider network of humanity, “transcended all material and national constraints.”

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75 Ikeda actively invoked the rhetoric of the “human revolution,” a concept originally forwarded by Toda, from such an angle in the interest of promoting the Sōka Gakkai’s “Buddhist humanism without borders.” He then contrasted the cosmopolitan outlook of this “Buddhist humanism,” which was “personal and independent of country and creed,” with the priesthood’s “cave-in to nationalistic pressure,” to show that the Shōshū clergy had ceded their former authority over the Nichiren tradition to the Sōka Gakkai as a result of the orthodox sect leaders’ pettiness and narrow-mindedness. Ikeda’s inclusion of a quote from the Indian poet Raindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in his essay criticizing the Shōshū priesthood for attempting to align the teachings of Nichiren with “the militarist government’s aims” (see note #71, on the previous page) provides a further demonstration of his method of attacking the clergy on these grounds. Referencing Tagore that, “For the sake of humanity we must stand up and give warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age, eating into its moral vitality,” he “in a single stroke” conjured up a representation of the priests as
priesthood, and empowering average (lay) Buddhists everywhere, in these ways, Ikeda enabled the Sōka Gakkai to reposition itself so as to successfully secure a popular image in many countries as “a Buddhist organization keeping up with modernity” — and incidentally, in the process he also afforded the movement some much-needed perceptual distance in the public eye from the financial impropriety scandals in which he and other Sōka Gakkai officials had just before excommunication been enmeshed.

4.5.2 Legitimacy through the Various Manifestations of a “Creative Hermeneutic”

As concerned the exigent demand of evincing its own religious legitimacy, however, the onus still dwelt within the Sōka Gakkai’s ability to persuasively substantiate the congeniality of its re-interpretations of Nichiren Shōshū doctrine itself to present-day circumstances. Ikeda set about to do so by systematically reorienting the scope of the alterations the Sōka Gakkai had previously instituted to Shōshū praxis in light of the creative hermeneutical scheme by which the lay movement now sought to validate its case for authority in opposition to the priesthood; fitting with the Gakkai’s establishment of authoritativeness as something wholly extrinsic, educed through the act of contextualizing and bringing to the masses the True Dharma, Ikeda reshaped the Society’s move away from strict shakubuku, its redefining of the kaidan issue, its de-

“nationalistic, weak, and even… [lacking in] moral fiber.” On the other hand there was the Sōka Gakkai, whose values and principles were presented as resonating most superiorly with the needs of global society in its current state. See Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.35-37.

Ibid, pp.33, 41.

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emphasis of the centrality of Taiseki-ji, the primacy it ascribed to the laity and to individual practice in general, et cetera, as constituting the manifestations by which the Sōka Gakkai strove to make Nichiren's teachings relevant to the modern era.

Significantly, the Gakkai furthermore escalated its activity level germane to each of these areas following excommunication. It did so toward the end of presenting such modifications, again, in stark juxtaposition to the backward, dogmatic postures of the clergy which not only had held the Sōka Gakkai back but more importantly had threatened to deny liberation to those in need. In no respect were the changes that resulted from the Sōka Gakkai's accelerated development of these impulses post-split as strikingly evident, and as radical, as were those pertaining to the moderate style of inter-religious engagement the group increasingly chose to espouse.

It has already been shown that Ikeda began relaxing the constancy of the Sōka Gakkai's practice of shakubuku relatively early in his leadership of the movement, first for the sake of avoiding friction with alternative traditions encountered in foreign branch nations, then to stabilize membership, and eventually, in aspiring to enhance Nichiren's overall public image. But the work of displacing the organization's former exclusivistic manner of recruiting new members was intensified dramatically after the events of 1990 to 1991 that brought the Shōshū-Gakkai relationship to its finality. Almost immediately, Society leaders began championing the split as having "liberated Nichiren Buddhist believers from the dogma of a 'dominant elite' [which in turn] opened up opportunities for the Sōka Gakkai to engage in sensible and practical cooperation with other religious
movements on issues of shared concern.” Officials pledged the Sōka Gakkai and SGI would “enter... a new era of outreach, striving to become even more broadly based humanistic and democratic organizations, while remaining dedicated to finding peaceful solutions to some of humanity’s most pressing problems.” The tremendous salience with which dialogue had come to be endowed in the Sōka Gakkai’s search for answers to such global quandaries was amply testified to in the group’s history under Ikeda, and yet the Nichiren Shōshū clergy’s unyielding stance toward its traditional adherence to confrontational shakubuku had, Ikeda and others contended, precluded the Gakkai from extending its participation in the especially pertinent form of communicative exchange that was interfaith dialogue, for as long as the lay movement was subject to the authority of the priesthood. With separation, though, the Sōka Gakkai indeed found itself free to explore “outreach” and “sensible cooperation” with other religions – at a particularly auspicious time, no less, since a burgeoning “dialogue movement” was concurrently taking firm root in several of the advanced Western nations where the Society had branches in the early 1990s. At any rate, it was a

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79 It would have been difficult for the organization to initiate its interfaith outreach in Japan due to the “history of troubled relations between the Sōka Gakkai and other religions” there, so the situation truly was opportune. In any case, the Gakkai’s incorporation of itself into the so-called “dialogue movement” can be seen as most notable in the American chapter. Subsequent to excommunication, SGI-USA formally differentiated between three types of dialogue the organization would seek to carry out: that geared toward generating cooperative projects on peace and human rights; scholarly dialogue in search of truth and humanism; and that undertaken in response to encounters with different faiths for the sake of interreligious harmony (see Straus, “Mission and Dialogue in the Soka Gakkai International” (1997): pp.108-10). While
heightened sharpness to its departure from shakubuku upon becoming a fully autonomous organization which permitted the Sōka Gakkai to expand its activities with regard to interfaith cooperation. The shift has been referred to by many commentators as a substitution of the Nichiren tradition’s less disputatious method for propagating the teachings, shōju, in place of shakubuku. British sociologist of religion Peter Clarke has pointed out that the Sōka Gakkai’s approach to interacting with those of differing religious backgrounds underwent a more extreme transmutation, one embodying a “simultaneous pursuit of a mixed strategy of shakubuku and shōju.” For its part, the Sōka Gakkai offered its own clarification with respect to its position on the matter:

“Based on the teachings of Nichiren, the Sōka Gakkai does not adopt the Sōka Gakkai had long been engaging in the first two varieties, the third was held to have only become genuinely possible after the split with the priesthood. By 1993, when the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (its name would be changed to the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue on 3 July, 2009) was founded adjacent to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to provide for the facilitation of various meetings, seminars, and forums on interfaith issues, the organization had already taken advantage of its newfound “freedom,” and immersed itself fully into the dialogue movement. (For more on this topic, see Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): p.209; and Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.19.)

80 Interestingly, Stone has argued that the word “shakubuku” itself underwent a semantic shift around this time, coming to be used simply as “a synonym for proselytizing.” She held that even where shakubuku was purportedly applied after that point it lacked the forcefulness by which the practice had been characterized in previous decades. See Stone, “Rebuking the Enemies of the Lotus” (1994): p.254.

81 Clarke has detailed at length the fundamentality of the role the movement’s globalization played in the shaping of this strategy. In his view, shakubuku-shōju brought about “something approaching a revolution in the way... members of the Sōka Gakkai think about and interact with other religions” (Clarke qualified his statement by affixing it to members of SGI-Brazil, on whom his research was conducted, but it would appear to fit with equal veracity to other overseas branches and even to the original Japanese organization itself, as well). See Clarke, “Globalization and the pursuit of a shared understanding of the absolute,” 2005: pp.123, 133.
an exclusive adherence to either しょじゅ or しゃくぶく. Nor does the Sōka Gakkai adopt a stance of pragmatically shifting from one to the other depending on the age or the circumstances. Rather, within the 80-year history of the Sōka Gakkai, there has been ‘dialogue based on the fusion of しょじゅ and しゃくぶく.’ This path of dialogue was created by the three presidents of the Sōka Gakkai, based on holding dear the correct teaching, respect for all people, and empathy with those who are suffering.”

82 Quote provided through Low’s personal correspondence with the SGI Public Relations Office in Tokyo, Japan, in 2009, and cited here from Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.33. There are two points of especial relevance in this statement. First, there is a tacit imputation therein that, although the Sōka Gakkai’s path of dialogue was deemed to have been formulated over the course of its eighty year history and to have included contributions from each of its (first) three presidents, the movement had been unable to impart its methods on the scale it desired until the split with the priesthood. And second, the assertion, “Nor does the Sōka Gakkai adopt a stance of pragmatically shifting from one to the other (しゃくぶく to しょじゅ or vice versa) depending on the age or the circumstances,” is deserving of further attention. This part of the declaration seems to contradict the organization’s persistent rhetoric as far as making the teaching compatible with time and place, and it is rendered all the more perplexing by the fact that Low reported the SGI PR Office stressed the move toward a fusion of しゃくぶく and しょじゅ was guided by Nichiren’s own injunction to choose carefully the appropriate method of proselytization based on “whichever one accords with the time,” in the same correspondence. Clearly, the thrust of this comment was to rebut criticism that the group’s newfound inclusivism was merely a face-saving reaction to external events. But it is worth looking past the PR Office’s dismissal of such charges, and to examine whether the Gakkai was guilty of “pragmatically shifting from one [style] to the other depending on the age or the circumstances;” after all, was it not disingenuous for the movement to claim it had not “adopted an exclusive adherence” to しゃくぶく during the Toda years, or during the early 1960s under Ikeda? Also, in considering its motives, one must look at how the Sōka Gakkai stood to benefit – particularly anent the heightened importance with which its foreign branches had been impregnated – by taking on a more accommodating tone at present. For instance, Clarke concluded from his research on SGI-Brazil that the organization’s more open attitude served to enable it to compete on more favorable terms in the Brazilian religious landscape with other less confrontational Japanese new religions (such as Seichō no Ie and Sekai Kyūseikyō 世界救世教) boasting significantly larger memberships there. As “a minority movement in a dominant religious culture characterized by tolerance and openness, or in a world of keen competition with other alternative religions, spiritualities, and philosophies,” it was to the Sōka Gakkai’s great advantage to “proclaim its... identity as a universal humanist philosophy, an identification that obliged it to demonstrate to its ethnically varied membership and to potential members from a variety of other faiths that it not only had the capacity to engage in dialogue with them but also to offer them something new.” Thus, in Clarke’s estimation the Sōka Gakkai’s newly-arisen interreligious sensitivity was grounded in pragmatism, in that the group changed itself with the mind of maximizing its appeal to the masses (see Clarke, “Globalization and the pursuit of a shared understanding of the absolute,” 2005: p.135). It seems more likely that the question of the
In realizing this more moderate outlook, to start the obligation of converted followers to reject their previous tradition(s) was eliminated, and a view of “qualified engagement with the beliefs and philosophies of other religions” gained acceptance as the norm. Members were still taught that the Sōka Gakkai provided the effective spiritual means to transform the world, but other potential means were no longer to be denied out of hand. Instead, a “culture of experimentation” was fostered to overtake the place of exclusivist claims concerning the ability of one’s own and only one’s own movement to bring about the “human revolution.” Perhaps most extraordinarily, the once doctrinally restrictive Sōka Gakkai went so far as to not only tolerate but admit in principle religious diversity within its own ranks, as SGI adherents in some countries

Sōka Gakkai’s “actual” intent either has many answers, or none at all. But the very existence of such debate sheds much light upon the inherently problematic nature of the hermeneutical strategy devised by the movement (and explains why the Sōka Gakkai continues to be so controversial), as well as simultaneously upon the strategy’s exceptional strength and flexibility: if the teaching is rightly to be re-interpreted to “accord with the times,” it follows that the way to demonstrate the correctness of one’s re-interpretation would be to successfully bring the teaching to the greatest number of individuals possible. Based on this logic, the Sōka Gakkai is justified in positing its primarily employing shakubuku in the Toda era, and its primarily utilizing a softer approach resembling shōju after 1991, were indicative not of self-seeking pragmatism, but as evidence of the organization’s status as the true upholder of Nichiren’s Dharma – for these methods did prove in the real world to be the most effective means of bringing the teaching to the largest number of people in each of the eras in which they were respectively prioritized.


84 Ibid, 2005: pp.123, 135. Ikeda and other leaders of the organization urged that “believers [should ideally] adopt an attitude of openness to others even as they hold fast to their religious conviction.” They also advocated the notion that the “unique power and efficacy of the Sōka Gakkai’s practice” would be sufficient to protect members from any dangerous influences they might receive through contact with unlike religions (Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.33).
were allowed to maintain memberships in more than one tradition⁸⁵, on the basis of the idea that “everyone has enough intelligence to know what is best for them” and hence should decide for themselves what to believe.⁸⁶ Compared to forty years earlier, the organization’s attitude and behavior toward other religions by the mid-1990s were “almost unrecognizable” as Sōka Gakkai.⁸⁷ But through the lens of its innovative hermeneutical posture, precisely such fortitude to adapt to the prevailing democratic sensibilities of modernity displayed how the Gakkai was rightly observing the dictates of Nichiren.

Ikeda continued to refashion the movement’s stance on the matter of the kaidan similarly, by taking the final logical step toward its interpretive conclusion. He began to argue unequivocally that the concept of a state-endorsed kaidan should be seen as having merely “symbolic significance” – the High Sanctuary was in fact generated by the power of any group of people gathered in sincere devotion to the teachings of the Daishōnin at any one time at any one place, and ultimately no tangible structure was necessary at all.⁸⁸ Since up until this point the Sōka Gakkai was asseverating that the kaidan had

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⁸⁵ A prime example being Brazil, as SGI-Brazil officials even commenced permitting followers to take part in Afro-Brazilian and “Spiritualist” rites and ceremonies; see Pereira, “The Transplantation of Soka Gakkai to Brazil” (2008): p.107.
⁸⁸ For the progression by which the Sōka Gakkai arrived at this position with regard to the kaidan, see Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.30 and 39, as well as notes #45 and #73 of the present paper. Of note in Ikeda’s rendering of the issue in the aftermath of excommunication, he conspicuously omitted any reference to the dai-gohonzon; before, the largest reason the recently-built main temple building at Taiseki-ji had been infused with such import as to be held to satisfy Nichiren’s “national sanctuary” requirement was that it
already been made a material actuality in the form of the temple building at Taiseki-ji constructed by pilgrims’ donations, the altered approach can be seen as a definitive, finalizing maneuver in the organization’s evolution toward fundamentally negating the attachment of primacy to any single physical location over others in the present context. Most of all, it was one aspect of an interrelated attempt to deliberately expose the traditional center at the foot of Mount Fuji as bereft of inherent sacrality. The primary component of the strategy by which the Sōka Gakkai sought to effect such an emptying out of the sanctity of the head temple was an increase in its creation of the type of community activity sites, or kaikan 会館, introduced above, supplemented by an accompanying empowerment of these multiple new centers as well as of the ordinary members who made them function from within. As the kaikan proceeded to flourish housed this central object of Sōka Gakkai worship. However, upon being denied access to the worship object (and the temple), it was crucial for the Gakkai leaders to demonstrate how the spiritual power even of the dai-gohonzon was superseded by that brought forth through believers’ faith in the teachings of Nichiren as well as their endeavoring to “bring every possible facet of [their lives] into line” with True Buddhism. This explanation was maintained, moreover, once gohonzon distribution at special gojukai 御授会 ceremonies – now performed by senior group members – for newly inducted adherents of the Sōka Gakkai resumed after 1993 [at that time initiates began receiving copies of a gohonzon transcribed in 1720 by the 26th High Priest Nichikan Shōnin 日間聖人 (1665–1726), whom the Sōka Gakkai venerates as having “revived Nichiren’s original spirit” at a point when it had been almost completely lost; his mandala was issued to the Society by the Jōenji temple in Oyama, Tochigi Prefecture – see Pereira, “The Transplantation of Soka Gakkai to Brazil” (2008): p.101]. Succinctly speaking, post-split with the Nichiren Shōshū the Sōka Gakkai essayed a consistent and active subjugation of what was presented as being of “symbolic” meaning to the kind of faithful practice which could bring about “human revolution,” and its re-constructed approaches toward a national kaidan and the dai-gohonzon played a significant part in this effort.

90 Incidentally, this suggests that the priesthood’s earlier fears as to the Sōka Gakkai causing a decentralization of the tradition through the kaikan had likely been warranted, because these kaikan essentially became the “new and movable temple.” Regarding the nature of the kaikan

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enormously\textsuperscript{91}, their magnified importance served to obviate the need for Taiseki-ji, and
in one fell swoop the Sōka Gakkai’s adeptness at reading the pulse of the times in
contrast to the priesthood’s unwillingness and inability to change was underscored
further.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, in wholly unencumbering itself of all confining ties to Japan as a spiritual
homeland and styling as the new locus of sacred power any place where believers
congregate (in addition to reaching out to those of all different religious backgrounds),
themselves, Low has offered a detailed description, excerpted here: “Typically, a kaikan functions
much like [any] venue for events... [and therefore] in the West it is simply called the ‘community
center.’ The interior layout consists of a main hall where members would assemble before a big
gohonzon (excluding the period from 1991-93) for group chanting, and offices and rooms for study
and music practice. On any given day, there are activities going on at the kaikan as members
belonging to the Youth, Men’s, and Women’s divisions gather for study and cultural activities
such as dancing, musical performance, and singing. It is also a venue for monthly art
exhibitions and cultural seminars... What is also remarkable about the kaikan is its lack of any
religious specificity, as is suggested by its literal English translation... Indeed one would be hard-
pressed to recognize any ‘religion’ in any of these buildings. No statue of the Buddha or even of
Nichiren could be found. Occasionally, there is a picture of Ikeda;” however, even these are
“displayed with caution,” as there have been cases where Ikeda’s picture has been “taken down
over fears that the group might be construed as worshipping Ikeda.” See Low, “The Re-invention
\textsuperscript{91} For an elaboration on how the kaikan have prospered, see Ibid, pp.38-39.
\textsuperscript{92} Nichiren Shōshū leadership did make one very bold move toward change some years later, but
rather than rectifying the image of the priesthood as insular, overly conservative, and “out of
touch” this actually reinforced it. That is, in a sermon on 5 April, 1998, Head Priest Abe attributed
a recent earthquake, volcanic eruption, and tsunami in Japan to “the great slander of Ikeda’s Sōka
Gakkai,” and Abe responded by ordering the demolition of Taiseki-ji’s main temple building. The
command was carried out the following year, despite protests from not only Sōka Gakkai
members, but also architectural and academic communities all over the world. It is unclear what
outcome Abe expected his actions would yield, but there is little question his decision backfired
whatever he had in mind. The Sōka Gakkai was only minimally affected by this loss of its
(former) historical base, since it had already successfully uprooted itself from the erstwhile axis
mundi; on the other hand, the Nichiren Shōshū lost a lucrative source of income, because
occasionally Gakkai believers had still been performing pilgrimages to Taiseki-ji. In the end,
destroying the temple amounted to the Nichiren Shōshū’s dealing itself its own final death blow
in a battle it had already been losing against the banished lay movement, and from that time
onward, the Shōshū returned to its status as a Temple Buddhism sect of limited appeal. See Ibid,
p.34, including note #15.
the Gakkai developed the doctrinal means to attract more lay people to True Buddhism than ever before. Concomitantly, the movement greatly strengthened its claim to interpretive authority over the Nichiren tradition, subsequent to the “vacating” thereof by the Shōshū priesthood.

4.5.3 Distillation of the True Dharma to Its Essence in the Modern World

However, in view of the current environment with which it was faced as well as its own historical orientation, the Sōka Gakkai’s credibility as a religious organization could not be fully restored on grounds of doctrinal repositioning alone. A critical facet of the Gakkai’s appeal throughout the postwar period had been the unique manner in which it “remapped the sacred,” by collapsing the classical divide between the “religious” and the “profane.” This had given rise to the movement’s insistence that the efficaciousness of one’s religion and the correctness of one’s faith were intimately connected with one’s lot in the material world, and therefore the genshō adherents derived through the beliefs and practices of the Sōka Gakkai had proffered evidence that the Society was in the end the viable religious option; it was on such a basis that the sentiment “it just works” had always been one of the foremost associations with and draws of sympathizers to the Sōka Gakkai. At the time excommunication brought on the organization’s greatest vulnerability since World War II, it was of especial

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93 Dawson, “The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements” (2001): p.357. This point was supported by the findings of a well-known empirical study on SGI published by Karel Dobbelaere and Bryan Wilson in 1994; please refer to Dobbelaere and Wilson, A time to chant, 1994: p.201.
importance the Gakkai now demonstrate concretely that its religious activities still worked, that the group had maintained its power to engender increased enjoyment of life for individual members and improved conditions for human society on a global scale in spite of the break with the Nichiren Shōshū. Proving its ability to re-interpret the dogma of the clergy in a way suited to the present circumstances affirmed that Sōka Gakkai practices intended to ameliorate an individual’s karmic legacy remained efficacious – for instance, by how Ikeda showed that whether or not chanting of the dainoku was performed before the Shōshū dai-gohonzon, if it was done with a faithful heart benefits and rewards could be obtained.  

But according to the Gakkai’s own self-declared mandate (in terms of the pursuit of kōsen rufu) the vital need of conveying the means of salvation more broadly so as to better the overall societal karma also persisted, and this required that the organization not only streamline its presentation of the meaning of Nichiren’s message for today but additionally spread the teaching through practical, effective programs.  

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94 Examples attesting to the widespread acceptance this revision gained are found in the countless reports from members since 1991 that chanting helped them be cured of such afflictions as depression, asthma, eczema, cancer, epilepsy, rheumatoid arthritis, breast abscesses, multiple sclerosis, drug addiction, and alcoholism. See Dawson, “The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements” (2001): p.359.

95 Upon close examination, it becomes clear that even the hermeneutical scheme the movement had adopted implicitly called for action in order to be made complete. This was because, as pointed out by Low, within it were two contradictory trajectories: on the one hand, the Sōka Gakkai was continuing to insist that its teachings could not be understood outside the Nichiren tradition, but on the other, it was holding that the essence of those teachings was transcultural (see Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.28). The only way the tension between the two could be counterbalanced – which was necessary, namely, in the first case for the Gakkai to avoid undercutting its own claim to be the true upholder of Nichiren’s teachings, and in the second, so that the movement could reach the global masses – was for the
In the final analysis, it was such demands that provided the impetus for the innovation by which Ikeda at this juncture capped the Sōka Gakkai’s hermeneutical strategy for promoting its religious legitimacy after having been ejected from the Nichiren Shōshū. As on so many previous occasions, he did so by applying aspects already contained within Sōka Gakkai thought and practice, and reconfiguring them in a fashion whereby their situatedness was deepened and their contribution toward fortifying the movement was maximized. Specifically in this case Ikeda concentrated on the organization’s peace, culture, and education activities as the instruments for both expanding the reach of True Buddhism in society and exhibiting the Gakkai’s continued potential to bring about palpable, beneficial change. While on the surface such an approach would seem to be lacking in newness – since for over two decades the Sōka Gakkai had been seeking global presence and relevancy through its various humanitarian works – the lay group’s now-unaffiliated character altered the tenor of its endeavoring in these regards immeasurably. The increased state of urgency was hardly lost upon Ikeda, and he responded by amending his earlier claim that the peace, education, and culture programs were presently the most feasible methods for propagating the teaching, in a manner that tied the fortunes of the movement as a whole ever more thoroughly to the success of these programs: henceforth, humanistic efforts on behalf of all who comprise the global citizenry, under the banners of peace, culture,

lay group to show that its version of Nichiren Buddhism “worked better” than did the priesthood’s as far as improving the collective welfare of humanity in a “this-worldly” sense.
and education, were to be viewed as in fact the essence of the True Dharma in the modern world. The monumental, even *revolutionary*, significance of this deceptively subtle shift would be impossible to overstate. Synchronous to furnishing the linchpin for the organization’s hermeneutically creative scheme to recast the authoritative roles of the lay group and the priesthood, with it, the True Dharma became equivalent to compassionate, socially-engaged Buddhist action, and *kōsen rufu*, to the spread of the Sōka Gakkai’s peace, culture, and education movements. What is more, the distillation of the entirety of True Buddhism to a single, unitary core in this way can be recognized as Ikeda’s ultimate attempt to align the Sōka Gakkai with the Daishōnin himself, being that Ikeda felt Nichiren’s prescription of the *daimoku* had been born of the same ambition. Naturally, the position was a bold one to take, and its validation hinged upon the procurement of tangible evidence. Because the Gakkai argued that a religion’s “rightness” was expressed through its efficacy in the “real world,” if the Sōka Gakkai’s re-shaping of the tenets of the tradition were truly those most faithfully keeping alive the aims and spirit of Nichiren, such should be reflected by a power to improve society through the focal point of the group’s re-interpretive strategy, its peace, culture, and education movements. Given how the organization had defined “authority,” this *had* to be so. For otherwise, with no alternative source upon which to rely for credibility, the irreconcilable fissures that would emerge in the Society’s rhetoric could sabotage the foundation of its averments in relation to its religious legitimacy. As an independent lay

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religious group, then, it was no longer sufficient for the Sōka Gakkai to make its peace, 
education, and culture activities the “most relevant to the most people;” from 
excommunication onward, the movement’s utility became directly proportional to the 
movement’s legitimacy.
5. The Sōka Gakkai’s Place In Society Since 1991

5.1 The Contemporary Culture and Education Programs

5.1.1 Developments with regard to the Culture Program

Framed by this imperative, in the two decades since its separation from the Nichiren Shōshū the Sōka Gakkai has made substantial advancements in the areas of its peace, culture, and education programs. Through the organization’s strong governance it has found increasingly more efficient ways to make use of its human resources, and in tandem with adherents' high levels of individual commitment, it has been able to consolidate and mobilize membership toward the fulfillment of its universalistic aims, allowing the movement to extend its operations into now nearly two hundred countries while maintaining a “medium level of tension” with its environs.¹

Under the rubric of culture, to begin, Ikeda has since 1991 presided over the implementation of several progressive measures which have furthered the Sōka Gakkai’s social visibility in the nations of its overseas chapters² and attested to the religion’s capacity to figure positively in the lives of a diverse range of peoples. These initiatives have been rooted in Ikeda’s understanding that “for the sake of human happiness, culture is even more

² As in the case of its broadened interfaith outreach efforts (see Chapter 4, note #79, above), it made the most sense for the Gakkai to concentrate the practical applications of its Buddhist humanism’s cultural, educational, and peace-related dimensions in places where the group is not so stigmatized as it is in Japan (for more, see Machacek, “Immigrant Buddhism in America” (2001): p.69). Plus, confronted with such pressing needs to, one, proliferate, and two, be of wide-scale utility, logically speaking these initiatives were best pursued in locations offering greater growth potential and cultural/ethnic heterogeneity. For these reasons SGI took the lead, and suitable changes were made in Japan reflexively, at later dates.
important than such fields as science, politics, and economics,” and along these lines in recent years he has strengthened his earlier affixation of cultural development to value-creation by holding it is by culture which “human beings [work] to become human.”

He has appraised culture as inseparable from Buddhism, as well, in that both are linked through their shared fundamental concern with self-cultivation and refinement:

“Culture is the flowering of each individual’s true humanity, which is why it transcends national boundaries, time periods, and all other distinctions... Likewise, correct Buddhist practice means cultivating oneself and serving as an inspiration for others to lead truly cultured lives.”

Accordingly, the processes of inner- and societal-transformation advocated in the Sōka Gakkai’s concept of the “human revolution” are today to be sought directly alongside a spiritual apprehension of Nichiren’s remark that, “The real meaning of Lord Śākyamuni Buddha’s appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being.”

Positing culture as such an integral facet of kōsen rufū has necessitated the Gakkai be chameleon-like in taking on forms which prevent its clashing with the customs and norms of the societies it enters, yet to appeal in a mass fashion beyond its local borders the movement is also confronted with the constant challenge of “presenting a unified

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3 Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): pp.204-05. As mentioned previously, Makiguchi believed that the path toward fully “becoming human” was paved by an individual’s creating value to the greatest extent possible. Ikeda is very deliberately recalling Makiguchi’s principles, therefore, in making this statement.


message to a pluralistic world,” the realms of life within which are filled with competing interests.⁶ There are three primary ways the Sōka Gakkai has balanced these contradictory impulsions with respect to fostering the expansion of its culture program. First, wherever the group is active it promotes the embracing of globalization⁷, modernity⁸, and, especially, diversity. The make-up of the congregations of SGI-USA community centers at present, for example, illustrates the Gakkai’s culturally-pluralist orientation clearly. Through conscious efforts to incorporate diversity into its ranks, SGI-USA features centers in Washington, D.C. that are predominantly African-American; in Honolulu, Filipino-Pacific Islanders account for the largest number of followers; and in other social regions the constituencies also have begun to move toward reflecting the demographics of the areas in which they are located.⁹ In addition to racial and class diversity, the Sōka Gakkai has striven to realize greater gender-equality consciousness since the early 1990s, as well. For instance, Ikeda has changed his public stance from “all men should be college-educated” to “if possible, everyone should go to college

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⁸ Low has for instance noted SGI’s stress upon the ease of its practice and how such is compatible with fast-paced modern lifestyles. The current movement emphasizes mobility in particular – a disposition not surprising considering the manner in which the Gakkai has uprooted itself from its historical center after the break with the Nichiren Shōshū. One example cited by Low toward this end was of a Singaporean woman he interviewed who carried with her in her suitcase a miniature copy of the gohonzon no longer than her finger, enabling her to practice wherever she went (Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.42). Even more on point, as has been shown in the preceding pages, no object of worship is strictly speaking seen as requisite at all today, and so the Sōka Gakkai’s practice of chanting the daimoku can literally be performed anywhere, at any time.
[regardless of gender],” and he has referred to “the 21st century [as] the century for women” while consistently instructing male adherents of the importance of respecting women.10 Today’s Society moreover not just accepts, but actively celebrates, the inclusion of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals.11 Secondly, the growth of the Sōka Gakkai’s culture movement has been facilitated by leadership’s careful excision of the most overtly religious overtones from the organization’s style of expression.12 Activities in the public sphere are interpreted as being motivated by humanistic ideals pertaining to culture, not “religion,” and religious ceremonies are termed as “events” in an effort to make them more welcoming (and to reduce their foreignness).13 Where allusions to religion are invoked, there is a tendency for SGI branches to focus on their “Buddhist” as opposed to “Nichiren Buddhist” character, e.g., in a resolution attentive to religious diversity adopted for the SGI-USA Charter in the late-1990s whereby the organization pledged that, “...based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, [SGI-USA shall] respect other religions, engage in dialogue, and cooperate with them in resolving

10 In addition, Ikeda has frequently written that the widely-referred to “social breakdown” of Japan stems from an overemphasis of “the ideology and values of ‘androcentric’ society” (see Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): pp.244-45).
12 Likely the most visible signifiers of this de-emphasis of outward religiosity across the board within both SGI and the Japanese Sōka Gakkai are the kaikan, which as noted previously (see Chapter 4, note #90 of this paper) are constructed to lack a religious identity altogether, and to serve simply as gathering places. See Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.35-39.
13 Watanabe, “The Development of Japanese New Religions in Brazil” (2008): p.131. Such moves can be viewed as informed by the Sōka Gakkai’s commitment to making its religious teachings relevant to daily life, rather than merely “religion for religion’s sake.” Incidentally, they are also held to have been enacted on the basis of the doctrine of zuihō bini, which has been discussed above.
fundamental issues concerning humanity.” SGI’s official self-description is as “a global network of lay practitioners of a type of Buddhism that takes the Nichiren school of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as its philosophical foundation,” but downplaying any sectarian affiliation popularly enables the movement to demonstrate its dedication to upholding pluralism, “transcend the national and cultural boundaries which once circumscribed Nichiren Buddhism,” and benefit from the positive image of Buddhism prevalent in many countries, such as its being a religion which has successfully co-existed with the local cultures it has encountered in its historical diffusion from one nation to another. Finally, the Sōka Gakkai’s culture program has flourished owing to how the group has systematically accumulated knowledge of the respective strengths and weaknesses of the various countries to which it has spread, and then endeavored to apply that knowledge in a way which permits the Gakkai to be of optimum use to each host nation while simultaneously assisting the organization in the achievement of its own ideological objectives. On the one hand, this consists of arranging itself in strategic

14 Italics added; cited from Straus, “Mission and Dialogue in the Soka Gakkai International” (1997): p.113. Thus, the shift toward accentuating the universalistic aspects of Buddhism generally which had been put into actual practice as circumstances dictated nearly two decades prior was at this point formalized.
16 Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.27, 40-41. In terms of “upholding pluralism,” practically speaking, Low has stated that his interviewees in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia unanimously reported feeling membership in the Society did not compromise their own racial, ethnic, and national identities. Needless to say, this represents an immense departure from the organization’s perception as intolerant and confrontational in the past, and shows the effectiveness with which the Sōka Gakkai has forwarded its sensitivity to pluralism in recent years.
accord with the social trends or developmental currents within a given country (in Mexico, where poverty rates are alarmingly high, the Gakkai concentrates recruitment on those “who are on the periphery of their territorial, consanguineal, and religious communities,” and in this light SGI-Mexico presents itself as offering followers a “co-suffering community” in multicultural societies like Australia and the U.S., propagation efforts are often centered in immigrant communities, to provide “fellowship with other recent immigrants” trying to carve out a niche in a new land; and so on), much as Ikeda has called for ever since his first overseas proselytization trip in 1960. On the other, it plays out through even more particularized and targeted undertakings. As representative examples, because France has a widely-admired literary tradition, SGI-France acquired the Château des Roches outside of Paris in 1991 and subsequently founded the Victor Hugo House of Literature, a literary museum aiming to enrich perception of the French writer as a humanist and champion of social justice. Also, since the U.S. is seen as a country with a unique capability to influence international politics and is home to the U.N.’s headquarters, SGI-USA established an

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18 Ōkubo, “The Acceptance of Nichiren Shōshū/ Sōka Gakkai in Mexico” (1991): p.201. As a tangential note on another way SGI-Mexico has reshaped itself so as to compliment the local culture, the group rearranged its observance of the Japanese obon お盆 holiday (sometimes translated as “the Festival of Souls”) and placed it in the first few days of November – instead of in July or August as in Japan – to make it correspond with the highly popular Catholic “Days of the Dead” event (see Ōkubo (1991): p.207).


international peace institute, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, in 1993.\textsuperscript{21} But perhaps best exemplifying the specificity of certain manifestations of the employment of this strategy has been the conduct of SGI-Brazil. As the nation is the locale of the Amazonian rainforest, the Gakkai’s cultural activities in Brazil have typically been geared toward ecology. In 1992, SGI-Brazil participated in the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (better known as “The Earth Summit”) held in Rio de Janeiro, through the sponsorship of its own exhibition and seminar. In the same year it founded the Amazon Ecological Research Center in the state of Amazonas, and since 2001 the Ikeda Laboratory for Ecological Research has operated jointly at the site.\textsuperscript{22} The forest in which the Center is found has been designated as a natural heritage site by the Brazilian Environmental Ministry; on a tract of land now called the “Daisaku Ikeda Archaeological Site” within its area, artifacts of tools used by native inhabitants some 1,200 to 1,500 years ago have been excavated, and in addition a new species of flying insect has been discovered – once more Ikeda was made its namesake, as the scientists of the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology christened the bug \textit{Euhybus ikedai} in his honor – on the Center’s grounds.\textsuperscript{23} Such accomplishments of the Gakkai’s ecological activism programs are interpreted from the viewpoint of the movement’s notion of global culture, and cast as contributing thereto above all by their

\textsuperscript{21} See Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.17; and Chapter 4, note #79 of this paper.


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p.110.
promotion of environmental responsibility and sustainable development.\textsuperscript{24} Naturally, the activities are every bit as or more valuable to the Sōka Gakkai in the practical sense of how they have opened doors for the forging of a broad network of fruitful relationships with the media, university researchers, environmental protection groups, politicians, and government agencies, both domestically within Brazil and internationally.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, the projects of the Sōka Gakkai’s culture movement, whether pursued in Brazil, France, the U.S., or elsewhere, and whether conducted by means of

\textsuperscript{24} Ikeda has argued that a person possessed of such a spirit of global citizenship “would never fail to recognize the inherent contradiction in economic activity that is destined to make those segments of society that are wealthy even more so, while further impoverishing those that are poor... [They would] clearly recognize the extreme dangers of economic growth that keeps thriving at the expense of the global environment and the delicate ecological balance of nature.” See Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): p.8.

\textsuperscript{25} Testifying to the manner in which the work of its Amazon Ecological Research Center has helped the Sōka Gakkai strengthen relations with mainstream media organizations globally, in August of 2002, the American television news enterprise CNN produced a report on the Center’s sustainable development project and efforts to restore trees in Brazilian tropical rainforests. It should be added that the spotlight brought favorable publicity not only to the Sōka Gakkai, but also to the government of Brazil for its support of the movement’s labors – a highly relevant side benefit for the Gakkai, as it continues trying to repair and expand ties with Brazilian authorities after the occasional troubles of the past (see Chapter 3, note #90 of the current text). In the same vein, besides ecology, SGI-Brazil is also very active in augmenting the human rights-related programs of the Brazilian government, as well as initiating ones of its own. Brazil has a long history of extermination of its native peoples, of military coups, and of cases of police abuse and torture; slavery lasted longer in the country than it did in others in the Western hemisphere; and there exist in Brazil today tens of thousands of street children, a chronic gap between social classes, a condition of low access to education and health care amongst the impoverished, and a very high rate of illiteracy, et cetera; and so the Gakkai’s seminars and exhibitions like “Human Rights, Rights of Everyone,” held at the Ministry of Justice in 1996, have proved tremendously productive (as has the group’s ongoing assistance of the Brazilian Department of Education’s Literacy Project, and its associated Makiguchi in Action Project, through which a team of educators within SGI-Brazil published a Portuguese edition of Makiguchi’s Education for Creative Living in 1994 and subsequently have instituted an assortment of programs intended to bring to fruition Makiguchi’s theories in more than 150 Brazilian elementary and junior high schools, reaching by the present nearly three-quarters of a million children – see Pereira, “The Transplantation of Soka Gakkai to Brazil” (2008): pp.110-11).
advocating ecological accountability, the literary, auditory, visual, or performing arts, athletic events, or all varieties of national celebrations, festivals, and holidays, display a conspicuous pattern of “court[ing] political favor by a strategy of cooperation with governmental programs.” Yet by the same token the organization is technically holding true to its promise to refrain from directly involving itself in the politics of any country.

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26 The Sōka Gakkai’s environmental awareness campaign has been spearheaded by its activities in Brazil, but is not limited to what is taking place in that country. For instance, SGI-USA’s Culture Department developed an exhibition devoted to raising consciousness regarding the interconnectivity between humans and the natural world, entitled “Ecology and Human Life,” that showed in several cities in the mid-1990s; in Japan an exposition was held in 1993 which focused on climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, and desertification resulting from overdevelopment of land (Gakkai members themselves volunteered to perform the research which was presented in the exhibit, and photographs and videos of their work were featured therein); and like displays have been shown and “Clean Up Day” programs established in chapters in a number of additional countries in North and South America, in Europe, and in Australia (see Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): pp.9-10).

27 In the spirit of Japanese undōkai (comparable to American “Track and Field Day(s)”), the Sōka Gakkai regularly sponsors good-natured physical fitness-oriented competitions in each of the countries in which it has branches. Sometimes, these take the form of quite large-scale events, such as the 2007 Commonwealth Games put on by SGI-Malaysia (Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): p.37).

28 Ibid, p.37. Traces of such an inclination within SGI had been apparent since the group’s foundation (and well before, actually), but the disposition became markedly more pronounced following excommunication. To no surprise, as a result of this state of affairs the Sōka Gakkai has from some circles worldwide attracted a constantly escalating degree of criticism with regard to the motivation behind its humanitarian endeavors. Ikeda himself as an individual has as well; it has frequently been alleged that the staggering number of honors with which he has been bestowed after 1991 (the figure had already been eye-catching before then, but of the more than 300 awards – including the Rosa Parks Humanitarian Award from the United States in 1993; the Order of Civil Merit of the Liberator Simón Bolívar in the Grade of Grand Cross from Bolivia in 2002; the Anugerah Budaya GAPENA [a federation of national newswire associations] Cultural Award, which comes with the title “Grand Universal Sage,” from Malaysia in 2007; and the Hwa-Gwan Order of Cultural Merit from the Republic of Korea in 2009 – and in excess of 690 honorary citizenships from cities, states, and local governments around the world Ikeda has to date been granted, nearly ninety percent have been conferred post-split with the Nichiren Shōshū) are more reflective of the personal contacts Ikeda has cultivated than of his true contributions to humanity. [Details about Ikeda’s various awards and honors are available at his official website; see: http://www.daisakuikeda.org/main/profile/daisaku-ikeda-cv.html. (June16, 2011).]
outside of Japan\textsuperscript{29}, and due to how the Sōka Gakkai has equated the dissemination of its manner of proponing culture with True Buddhism, by its ideological framework the Society’s reshaping of its cultural activities in such mutually profitable ways can only be seen as its striving to extend the foothold of the True Dharma. In other words, by its effectiveness in so doing, the Gakkai has continued to magnify the “correctness” of its interpretation of the Nichiren tradition.

5.1.2 Developments with regard to the Education Program

The Sōka Gakkai’s education movement has functioned similarly over the past twenty years, and complements the organization’s culture program by pulling on many of the same threads. While Ikeda postulates that culture is the implement by which humanity is realized, he argues that because what we learn is the source of our inspiration to become “fully and truly human,” education must be “the propelling force for an eternally unfolding humanitarian quest,” as well as “a lifelong pursuit of self-awareness and development.”\textsuperscript{30} Hence, Ikeda has defined the basic thrust of the Sōka Gakkai’s educational philosophy to be the engendering of a mentality which imagines international civil society “as a human global neighborhood, characterized by the civility of its discourse,” and which “stop[s] thinking in old paradigms and unquestioningly moving along the old continuums.”\textsuperscript{31} Such a mindset is unattainable, in Ikeda’s view, without “the universalism of the academic world,” and consequently, recent years have

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, pp.19-20.
witnessed a marked intensification in the Gakkai’s efforts toward internationalizing its Sōka system of education.\(^\text{32}\) First, the Society has widened its presence in the global educational sphere by creating schools for youth in several new branch countries: in September, 1992, it established the Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten; in January, 1993, the Singapore Soka Kindergarten; in April, 1995, the Malaysia Soka Kindergarten; in June, 2001 the Brazil Soka Kindergarten; in, February, 2003 the Brazil Soka School (which combined the kindergarten with an elementary school); and in March, 2008, the organization founded the Korea Soka Happiness Kindergarten. Additionally, the Sōka Gakkai has considerably expanded its educational objectives where it already had higher-level institutions for learning and research, in the United States and Japan. In the U.S., aiming to facilitate the exchange of ideas between theorists, policy makers, and activists, the Gakkai built the independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research in 1996, in Honolulu, Hawai‘i.\(^\text{33}\) Furthermore, a new $220 million USD main campus for Soka University of America (“SUA”) was completed in May of 2001, in Orange County, California.\(^\text{34}\) SUA also has assumed directorship of the Pacific Basin Research Center, which awards postdoctoral fellowships to researchers studying public policy dealing with the Pacific Rim region, in conjunction with Harvard University.\(^\text{35}\) In Japan, in April of 1997 the Institute for the Study of Sōka Education was


opened, followed two years later by the establishment of the Institute of Natural Science and Education in the Sōka School System, and then in September, 2001, the conglomeration of Sōka scholastic facilities in Tokyo added the Sōka Educational Center to its composite. Meanwhile, Sōka University itself has seen enrollment increase to over 7000 students, approximately 250 of whom come from foreign countries (purportedly the largest international student population of any university in Japan). On its primary campus the school today operates multiple centers for advanced research, not only the previously introduced Institute of Oriental Philosophy, but the Institute for Peace Studies and the Institute for the Comparative Study of Cultures, as well. Sōka University has aggressively continued forming partnerships with overseas institutions so as to foster educational exchange programs, with some 105 universities in 44 countries now serving host to Sōka study abroad participants each year. The globalized inter-institutional connectivity has likewise played a part in providing opportunities for...
Ikeda to make his own personal contribution toward “academic universalism,” in his having visited countless universities around the world to engage in dialogues and deliver lectures on Buddhism. Among the sites at which Ikeda has given addresses are Moscow State University, the University of Buenos Aires, the University of the Philippines, the University of Bologna (the oldest university in the world today, having been founded in 1088), the University of Havana, Peking University, the University of California at Los Angeles, Harvard University (where he has spoken on multiple occasions), and many others. Significantly, the subjects of Ikeda’s talks have most typically revolved around certain generalized Buddhist principles regarded as well-attuned to modern and/or rational sensibilities, coinciding with the movement’s strategy discussed above in connection to seeking broad-based support for its cultural activities. For example, Ikeda frequently lectures on the “theory” of co-dependent

39 Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): pp.206-07. Ikeda’s tirelessness as an international lecturer has brought him an exceptional renown within the global academic community, to the extent that on top of his humanitarian awards and honorary citizenships Ikeda has now received in excess of 300 honorary degrees from universities around the world. However, in this area, too, the notoriety has been accompanied with widespread suspicion about Ikeda’s motives. All manners of this sort of skepticism stem in Ikeda’s mind from a fundamental misapprehension of the Sōka Gakkai’s mission; over the past several years, in large part to counter such criticisms and to attempt to elucidate the reasoning behind his and the movement’s methods, Ikeda has begun to actively appeal to an idea of Makiguchi’s that humankind would need to abandon competition in the economic, political, and military realms in favor of “humanitarian competition” if ever it was to improve its condition (for a discussion of Makiguchi’s original concept, see Matsuoka, “Makiguchi Tsunesaburō no sensōkan” (2002): pp.29-30). A case in point is that Ikeda made “humanitarian competition” the theme of his annual peace proposal in 2009 (see Ikeda, Daisaku. “Toward Humanitarian Competition: A New Current in History.” 2009 Peace Proposal, January 26, 2009. daisakuikeda.org. (March 27, 2011). http://www.daisakuikeda.org/assets/files/peace2009.pdf). He again made reference to the notion in his most recent, 2011 proposal (see Ikeda, Daisaku. “Toward a World of Dignity for All: The Triumph of the Creative Life.” 2011 Peace Proposal, January 26, 2011. daisakuikeda.org. (March 27, 2011). http://www.daisakuikeda.org/assets/files/peace2011.pdf. p.17).
origination, on Buddhism’s inherent reverence for life according to belief in all beings’ innate potential for buddhahood, and on the *bodhisattva* ideal of Buddhist compassion. These ideas are important to Sōka Gakkai thought in and of themselves, but at least equally beneficial in speaking on them is how it enables Ikeda to promote values essentially corresponding to those of the “human revolution” – e.g., through the congruence between the proclamation that all phenomena in the cosmos are interdependent and therefore the separation of humankind from any other phenomenon is illusory⁴⁰ and the understanding expressed in Gakkai literature that “[In our world of] all-pervasive mutual relationships... working for the happiness of the other person is tantamount to working for one’s own happiness” – in relatively familiar, non-sectarian language.⁴¹ The activities associated with the “human revolution” themselves are then presented as the practical application of such principles in the real world, and thus Ikeda’s university addresses serve as the evidence by which the Sōka Gakkai asserts its leader has “pioneered the communication of applied Buddhist philosophy [in the West].”⁴² In any case, the receptiveness on the part of so great a breadth of audiences to Ikeda’s lectures, in combination with the progress the organization has made in spreading its Sōka education system, are seen by the Sōka Gakkai as justifying the

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⁴¹ Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): pp.5, 8. Incidentally, Ikeda has explicitly cited the idea of co-dependent origination in relation to the movement’s ecological activism, holding that since “no environment exists apart from living things,” Buddhists are precluded from tolerating “wanton destruction” of their physical surroundings and instead “must take responsibility for the condition of [their] environment.”
degree of salience the group attributes to education as a channel for propagating True Buddhism in the contemporary age. By the same measure, naturally, the successes are argued to lend further support to the movement’s overall claim to interpretive authority over the Nichiren tradition.

5.2 The Meaning and Focus of the Contemporary Peace Movement

As it had been prior to excommunication, however, the central goal of all Sōka Gakkai humanitarian endeavors has remained that of global peace. In the ultimate sense, the culture and education programs are still none other than supplemental means toward the greater aim of “establishing the correct teaching” in order to bring peace to the world. Positing these programs as aspects of kōsen rufu has not changed their basic character in this respect, because if the Gakkai is correct its cultural and educational activities should contribute toward what the organization contends is kōsen rufu’s true objective – the uprooting of the fundamental causes of inter-human conflict – rather than merely secure advancements within their own delimited domains. Accordingly, the Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement retained its primacy in terms of the group’s functioning in society through the split with the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood, and since that point has become the single most critical avenue for the Gakkai to evince the rightness of its interpretation of Nichiren Buddhism. The Sōka Gakkai has persisted in pursuing the actualization of its peace initiatives through its campaign to instill into the public a
“peace consciousness,” underscored by Ikeda’s frequent peace dialogues and annual peace proposals as well as by the organization’s continued, uniform backing of the U.N., and also through the movement’s consistent striving to bring about a popular re-conceptualization of peace as the outcome of a “dynamic process of self-transformation” which rests upon the replacing of fear with confidence, of the tendency toward destruction with that toward creation, of the impulse to hate with the practice of compassion, and so forth. But above all, with the need for its peace program to be of

43 Among Ikeda’s peace dialogue partners in recent years have been Argentinean Nobel peace laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel; Kenyan Nobel peace laureate and environmental activist Wangari Maathai; Polish-born and British-naturalized physicist Joseph Rotblat; leading Turkish social anthropologist and Harvard University professor Nur Yalman; and Quaker sociologist Elise Boulding.

44 For example, the Sōka Gakkai has continued to sponsor numerous exhibitions as part of an effort to reinforce the aspirations of the U.N., such as one shown at the U.N. Office in Geneva in 1993 to commemorate the adoption of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (another similar display, dedicated to examining the threat to human rights posed by nuclear weapons, opened in 2008 in Geneva). Also, in 1994 and 1995 SGI-USA participated with several other activist groups to create educational events memorializing the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the U.N. itself in San Francisco, New York, Washington, D.C., and Boston, and at that time members organized “neighborhood meetings” across the country to cultivate support for the U.N. Sōka University became involved in 1995, as well, working with the “Sōka Gakkai Peace Committee” and joining with the Simon Wiesenthal Center to put on a U.N.-affiliated Holocaust Exhibit at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan. In 1996 SGI produced an exhibition called “Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities,” to advocate the goals outlined by the U.N. General Assembly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child several years prior (see Straus, “Mission and Dialogue in the Soka Gakkai International” (1997): p.111). Yet another, more recent example was a 2007 presentation entitled “From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit,” which explored a variety of issues related to human security and argued for the abandonment of “hard power” strategies of keeping “artificial boundaries” (of the nation-state) intact in favor of a “soft power” approach to promoting social order (through ideas such as democracy, social development, and human rights) in a way befitting the 21st century. [See http://www.sgi-usa.org/newsandevents/exhibitions/transformingthehumanspirit.php. (June 20, 2011).]

45 Young, et al, “The Buddhist Perspective of the Soka Gakkai” (1994): pp.3-4, 7. The perspective of today’s Sōka Gakkai on what makes the rejuvenation of society possible – i.e., the “human revolution” – can more or less be summarized thus, and again, it is in this direction that the
utility more acute than ever before, the Sōka Gakkai has sought to concentrate its resources toward engagement in one specific peace-related issue that circumstances have granted it a unique ability to concretely impact. The issue's history is long and involved domestically within Japan, and in fact the Sōka Gakkai’s strong stance with regard to it began developing almost immediately after the dawning of the post-war era; however, global events concurrent with the struggle between the Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood recharged the matter’s relevancy on the worldwide stage, resulting in a heated, highly-visible debate with major security implications on an international scale. The issue in question, of course, is the Nihon-koku kenpō kaisei mondai.

For the Sōka Gakkai, the opportunity to exert an influence over the Constitutional revision process has represented a crucial chance to showcase the efficacy of the movement’s belief and practice – and by the same token, to put an emphatic end to any lingering doubt about the Gakkai’s legitimacy as a religious organization. But in order to

Gakkai’s culture and education programs should be seen as intended. Grasped in this light, it is clear why the Sōka Gakkai maintains education, in particular, is paramount, because it is in the end “the informed individual” who has the power to transform him- or herself and do something about “the pressing issues of our complex and conflict-ridden era on a global scale.” At any rate, two 1995 quotes from Ikeda are especially revealing with concern to the Sōka Gakkai’s emphasis upon the need to nurture more aware individuals as a pre-requisite to peace: “During my travels [for dialogues]... I have worked for cultural and educational exchanges and have lectured at the invitation of numerous universities. These experiences have convinced me that the best possible security system is an untiring cultivation of mutual acquaintance and respect among all peoples. Of course, consultation among political leaders is important; but, as history shows, peace achieved without understanding on all sides is always fragile.” And: “Under the sway of the 19th century cult of progress, in this [20th] century we have feverishly devoted ourselves to enhancing the structures of society and the state, laboring under the delusion that this alone is the path to human happiness. But to the extent that we have skirted the fundamental issue of how to reform and revitalize individual human beings, our most conscientious efforts for peace and happiness have produced just the opposite result.” See Straus, “Peace, Culture, and Education Activities” (1995): pp.200-01, 207.
understand exactly how such an opportunity came about, it is first necessary to take a
closer look at the way the events which shaped the unfolding of the revision debate
starting in the early 1990s allowed the Sōka Gakkai to, from that point onward, occupy a
prominent place on the drama’s center stage.

5.3 Inflammation of the Article 9 Revision Debate Surrounding
the first Gulf War

5.3.1 Period of Relative Dormancy of the Debate: 1954-1990

Although some Conservatives in the Diet had continued to periodically voice
opinions bemoaning the “unwholesome situation” which saw the Japanese allegedly
“[not] in possession of a constitution of their own making” through the fast-growth
years of the 1960s to the “bubble” years of the late 1980s (much as they had, more
vociferously, from 1947 until the late ’50s), the majority of politicians and voters alike
were concerned with enough other issues over that period that serious discussion of
revising or rewriting the “Peace Constitution” was averted. As a result, by 1990, the
Japanese Constitution was already the oldest wholly unaltered documental expression
of a nation’s Fundamental Law existing in the world. The matter of interpreting the

remains such today. For perspective, the Norwegian constitution has been amended 139 times
since originally being ratified in 1814; the Swiss constitution was amended 132 times between
ratification in 1874 and the drafting of an entirely new document in 1999; the American
constitution has been amended 27 times since ratification in 1788; the current French constitution
is that nation’s 17th version of its Fundamental Law since 1791; the Italian constitution has been
amended 14 times since having been formally adopted in 1947; and (the Federal Republic of)
Constitution, and Article 9 in particular – authority over which was wielded by a governmental body of legal scholars known as the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB) – was somewhat less settled during that time, and a nearly forty-year succession of LDP administrations made use of the CLB’s having upheld the constitutionality of “a land, sea, and air force explicitly assigned to the task of defending the country from external threats” (the Japanese Self-Defense Force, or SDF; Japanese: jieitai 自衛隊) formed in 1954 by then-Prime Minister Yoshida (who served terms from 1946-47 and 1948-54) to develop Japan’s defense capability such that it came to rank among the most formidable globally. Yet regardless of the buildup, the CLB steadily maintained an insistence that Germany’s constitution has gone through dozens of transformations since the end of World War II, as well – all facts pointed out by the LDP, which argues that for a nation to revise its constitution is a normal process of constitutional government, “necessary to maintain a balance between fundamental principles and changing reality” (see Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.236). The considerable attention that has been given to the proposals the LDP has made to revise Japan’s Constitution, accordingly, should not be seen as related to a question of whether Japan has the right to change its constitution – its right, and every sovereign nation’s right, to do so is indisputable, which is what prompted Japan scholars Glenn D. Hook and Gavan McCormack to comment in 2001 that, “It is perhaps more remarkable that the [Japanese] Constitution has survived intact as long as it has, than that its revision is now being seriously contemplated” [Hook, Glenn D., and Gavan McCormack. *Japan’s Contested Constitution: documents and analysis*. London and New York: Sheffield Center for Japanese Studies / Routledge Series, 2001: p.3] – but rather it stems from the issue of how the LDP has gone about the matter (namely, that there has been a glaring lack of open deliberation between ruling and opposition parties with regard to it in the Japanese Diet, and that the LDP itself had until very recently often failed to clearly state a consistent, unified position as far as its goals and purposes for revision). Of course, the high degree of scrutiny also stems, fairly or unfairly, from the unique character of the present document, and correspondingly the monumental implications any change thereto could have in terms of affecting Japan’s relations with other countries of the world.

49 Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: pp.6-8. The baffling reality of Japan’s possessing one of the world’s most expansive militaries despite the presence of its pacifist Constitution was originally set into motion in 1952, with the CLB’s first formal interpretation of Article 9. Supporting an assertion by Yoshida that while Article 9 proscribed the realization of “war potential” (senryoku 戦力) this should not necessarily be understood as a refusal of the right to maintain forces strictly for the sake of repelling a direct attack – that is, for individual self-defense,
the right of the Japanese nation to engage in self-defense was “conditioned by [the] three scenarios” of, one, the presence of an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression against Japan; two, the absence of appropriate means other than the use of the right of self-defense to repel this aggression; and three, a confinement of the armed strength used in repelling this aggression to the “minimum necessary level,” which served to prevent actual deployment of the SDF.\textsuperscript{50} Prime Minister Satō Eisaku’s 佐藤栄作 (in office 1963–72)

to which Yoshida had argued through the early portion of the Korean War that Japan was not entitled under its Constitution – the CLB held: “[War potential] refers to a force with the equipment and organization capable of conducting modern warfare... Determining what constitutes war potential requires a concrete judgment taking into account the temporal and spatial environment of the country in question... It is neither unconstitutional to maintain capabilities that fall short of war potential nor to utilize these capabilities to defend the nation from direct invasion” (from Nakamura, Akira. Senso Seiji ni Yureta Kenpō Kyūjō: Naikaku Hoseikyoku no Jishin to Tsuyosa. Tokyo: Chūōkeizai-sha, 2001: p.99; cited here as translated by Boyd and Samuels (2005): p.7). This statement successfully assured Japan of the right to individual self-defense, but exactly what “concrete judgments” could determine exactly what constituted “war potential” was the subject of much confusion. Eventually, the director-general of the National Safety Agency, Kimura Tokutarō, admitted that there were “no clear quantitative measures” for doing so and appealed to “the people’s common sense,” at which point the CLB espoused the position that “war potential” was “definable only in relation to other states’ capabilities and [general] international conditions.” According to Boyd and Samuels, Yoshida then utilized this ambiguous interpretation as both “a shield against U.S. demands for extensive rearmament and as a wedge to split his domestic opponents seeking to abolish Article 9’s constraints.” Two years later, “as the Cold War progressed and U.S. demands on its Japanese partner intensified, Yoshida took full advantage of his new flexibility... to establish the SDF [without amending Article 9].” The CLB subsequently affirmed the SDF’s constitutionality, on the grounds that it was for individual self-defense purposes only – a reading to which the CLB has continued to adhere since, even as the capability and reach of the SDF have been extended exponentially in the decades that have followed.

\textsuperscript{50} Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.293. The key to the three-part framework outlined here is the standard of rejecting participation in any military action – or even the possession of any military capability, for that matter – in excess of the “minimum necessary level” to repel direct attack. This interpretation was arrived at in the same year (1954) as the creation of the SDF, shortly after the Hatoyama Ichirō 喜多方一郎 government assumed power from Yoshida’s administration; in large part it was reached by the CLB as a response to angst in the Diet related to the shortcomings of the Bureau’s 1952 official statement on Article 9 (referred to in note #49 on the preceding page). Still, because of the inherent subjectivity and the number of variables
strong stance against providing direct assistance to American forces in Vietnam offered a practical demonstration of the prevalence of the CLB’s narrow interpretation of Article 9, and perhaps still more tellingly in this regard, between 1954 and the close of the 1980s, the SDF was prohibited even from hypothetically aiding a U.S. warship assailed while defending Japan. Public opinion polls conducted by the Yomiuri shinbun beginning in 1981 showed that Article 9 was consistently recognized by the Japanese populace, as well, as representing a deeply cherished core principle to the country as a whole, despite the citizenry’s “tacit acceptance of the SDF and of the right to limited self-defense.” In short, when the calendar turned to the year 1990, the basic pacifist ideals underlying the “Peace Constitution” were enjoying a broad and very high level of support in Japanese society, to the degree that it appeared the clause most famously expressing them would remain reasonably free in the future, too, from threats to revise its original wording (which follows):

involved, the “minimum necessary level” criterion has in fact been viewed as a more flexible baseline for the military development which can be permitted under Article 9 than was the mandate from the earlier judgment it replaced, of remaining beneath a level of “force... capable of conducting 'modern warfare.'” Political scientists consider the booming scale of the SDF’s proliferation since its inception to have been made possible by this shift. Nonetheless, the “three scenarios” enumerated by the CLB proved sufficiently rigid to keep the country entirely out of armed international conflict through the 1980s, while simultaneously helping to ensure the constitutionality of the SDF by clarifying the legal meaning of “self-defense” and further circumscribing the SDF’s functioning as toward “nonaggressive” ends (see Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: pp.7-8).

53 Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.285, 300. Throughout the decade of the 1980s, popular opposition to the revision of Article 9 was without exception in excess of eighty percent.
[Article 9, Paragraph 1]: “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
[Article 9, Paragraph 2]: “In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”54

The outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East just eight months later, however, caused things to start to quickly change, in a drastic and irreversible way.

5.3.2 “Checkbook Diplomacy,” and Stimulation of the Revision Issue

On 2 August, 1990, Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, and shortly thereafter the latter state was overwhelmed and annexed by its aggressor neighbor. Iraq's actions elicited immediate international condemnation, and in addition, a swift imposition of economic sanctions by the U.N. Security Council. Early the next year, in the face of continued Iraqi belligerence, a U.N.-authorized coalition force headed by the United States embarked upon a military offensive to restore sovereignty to Kuwait. The U.S. sought assistance from its allies in terms of bearing the burden of the costly war effort both financially and militarily, with the liberation army eventually consisting of soldiery from thirty-four nations (especially large contributions were made by the U.K., Saudi Arabia, and Egypt). Japan became involved as well when the George H.W. Bush Administration requested

troops and $13 billion USD in Japanese support toward the campaign. The degree to which the country should participate naturally at that point became a major issue in the Diet. Amidst a political climate of uncertainty highlighted by jostling between conservative and moderate factions within the LDP, the U.S.’s entreaties provided the leverage long searched for by those demanding Japan take on a more assertive foreign policy. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki 海部俊樹 (head of government from 1989-91) was able to secure an initial sum of $1.3 billion USD in aid; and although his cabinet was somewhat divided over how to proceed, it also detailed a plan originating with influential Constitutional revision advocate LDP Secretary-General Ozawa Ichirō 小沢一郎 to send “a contingent of lightly armed SDF members” as part of a “U.N. peace cooperation team” to Saudi Arabia. However, this attempt, plus another by Kaifu to push through the Diet measures to allow for the dispatch of five SDF airplanes for airlifts, proved unsuccessful, as pacifist-minded politicians in other parties began to rally opposition against the prospect of Japan’s contributing its own personnel toward the effort out of consideration for Article 9. Ultimately, parliament settled on approving a hotly contested bill on a relief package of approximately $9 billion USD. But this did not

56 See Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: p.27. The plan, put forward by Ozawa and his allies in the United Nations Peace Cooperation Corps (UNPCC) Bill, called for SDF personnel to take part in activities like the monitoring of cease-fire agreements, and in providing medical, communication, and transportation support for both the U.N.-sanctioned forces and civilians.
57 Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: p.28. When submitting his proposal (in the form of the UNPCC Bill) Ozawa included an accompanying new Constitutional interpretation, but this was refused by the CLB, which declared that there was “some room for doubt about the constitutionality of SDF participation in a United Nations force.”
change negative international perception of Japan’s “balking” response as “slow and insufficient.”

Numerous commentators around the world disparagingly labeled the approach taken by the Japanese “a case of checkbook diplomacy.”

Even after combat ceased upon the U.N.’s successful reinstating of Kuwaiti self-rule, global criticism of Japan persisted. In the eyes of many worldwide, the country’s failure to provide troops was indicative of an unwillingness on the part of Japan to contribute to international uses of force in a manner befitting its level of economic power. Domestically, the entire episode was seen as a national embarrassment. Kaifu’s administration took advantage of a consequent shift in the sentiments of the Japanese public to bring about the dispatch of SDF minesweepers to the Persian Gulf region “without seeking or getting approval from [the Diet],” but it did not stop there.

Revisionists in the government began to paint Article 9 as “an obstacle to ‘international cooperation’ and the cause of “the humiliation of ‘checkbook diplomacy,”’ and, assisted by conservatives in the media, an increasing number of leading members of the LDP intensified the party’s insistence that financial cooperation was not enough, that Japan must demonstrate its determination to offer up its “sweat and blood” to global peacekeeping activities. From that time onward, efforts to revise the Constitution so Japan would be able to send military personnel abroad (under the strict supervision of

the U.N.) were escalated. Some moderates within the party continued to caution that such an extreme measure would be harmful to national unity, and to seek a way of re-interpreting Article 9 in order that it could be maintained while still leaving room for overseas cooperation under certain circumstances.\(^{64}\) But for really the first time since the document’s establishment the revisionists won out, and in late 1991 they began to seize command of the debate in their bid to rewrite the Japanese “Peace Constitution.”\(^{65}\)

### 5.4 “For” and “Against” Sides to the Dispute

While proponents of revision were gaining sway on the basis of their contention that Article 9’s stated pacifism was “nothing but a sentimental anachronism... too idealistic to meet the challenges of today’s world situation,” those against were galvanized, as well.\(^{66}\) In the past, criticisms of the Constitution and proposals for unconstrained Japanese rearmament were diffused less through reasoned argumentation pertaining to the desirability of upholding the war renunciation clause, than through vague appeals to the memory of World War II; the collapse of public consensus in favor of keeping the postwar Constitution entirely intact, however, forced pacifists to articulate their stances with greater precision and persuasiveness than they ever had before.\(^{67}\) The opinions they expressed covered a very broad range of concerns

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\(^{67}\) Analysts both in Japan and in the West have lamented that Japanese politicians often fail to forthrightly explain to the public what motivates their actions and decisions, and the debate over Article 9 is an example to which they have frequently pointed (see Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.287). One analyst arguing along these lines, American political
dealing with Japan’s place in a post-Cold War global society, from national security, to Japanese self-identity, to inter-regional relations, to negotiating the ever-present after-effects stemming from the atrocities the country had committed during its militarist

scientist Steven Green, has held that this sort of vagueness in defending constitutionally mandated pacifism has been utilized to perpetuate a myth – that of “pacifist Japan” – planted by the U.S. at the conclusion of the Pacific War, then nurtured by various politicians from different parties, citizens’ movements, and educators so that each could promote the idea to advance their own ends (“albeit [always] in the name of the collective interest”). According to Green, the U.S. already planned to rebuild Japan as a liberal democratic state by the spring of 1945, and the Occupation leaders realized that in order to do so it would be necessary to condemn Japanese expansionism and treatment of the POWs and Asian populations which had fallen under Japan’s control in a strategic fashion. Their solution was to exploit the idea that the average Japanese who carried out the war effort were merely obeying authorities, and the trials and executions of selected war criminals, in combination with the exoneration of the emperor, were used to show that the militarists of wartime Japan had betrayed even the imperial family. As a result, the Japanese people were able to see themselves, and be seen by others globally, as victims of their nation’s military during the war (Green, “The Myth of Pacifism” (2007): pp.219-21); furthermore, Japan’s unique status as sekai yuuitsu no hibakukoku 世界唯一の被爆国 (“the one and only country in the world to have suffered an atomic bombing”) led the populace to feel a sense of “dual victimization” at the American military attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (as remarked by Ikegami-Andersson Masako and referenced from Hein (2009): p.297). It is this “victim consciousness” or higaisha-ishiki 被害者意識, in Green’s view, that has functioned as the bedrock of the “pacifist myth,” which in turn has obfuscated and even precluded constructive exploration of alternative, perhaps more “coherent,” defense policies by essentially rendering serious talk of changing the Constitution off limits. While neglecting to address this situation directly, the stakeholders in the issue have consistently endeavored to put Japan’s perceived “antimilitarist norm” to work in the way most advantageous to themselves: in the case of the LDP’s political opponents, it was invoked whenever needed to stimulate popular resistance to the ruling party’s vision for Japanese internationalism; for certain grass-roots level organizations taking up the cause of protecting Article 9, it was forwarded in “holding up Japan as a beacon for a global peace movement;” et cetera. (Ironically, as Green sees it, the LDP was as guilty of complicity as was any interest group, having conveniently employed the “myth of pacifism” in the early postwar period to avoid the costs associated with full-scale rearmament at the same time as obtaining “security on the cheap... under the U.S. [military] umbrella,” and later on to deflect the risks inherent in collective defense arrangements like the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty by insisting that it was constitutionally prohibited from doing any more militarily to help – see Green (2007): pp.218-23.) The antipathetic international backlash surrounding Japan’s “checkbook diplomacy” in the Gulf War and the consequent domestic shift in public opinion toward the side of the revisionists began to bring at least the merits of continued Japanese pacifism under question, and finally obliged those for and against Constitutional revision to open up a more objective dialogue.
period. Conservative revisionists were concentrating on the same issues but from
different viewpoints, and thus a back-and-forth between the two sides which would
come to more or less set the parameters of the debate for the next two decades ensued at
that time.

Among the parties most active in “positioning themselves as defenders of the
1947 Constitution” in the Diet were the Communists and the Socialists.\(^{68}\) Kunihiro
Masao, a leading spokesman of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), gave voice to the
sentiments of many within his organization as well as those within its fellow opposition
party the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) by arguing that the Constitution was not
idealistic at all, but rather provided important practical benefits for Japan. Kunihiro held
that, first and last, it would have been impossible for Japan to gain the prosperity and
stability by which it was then thriving without Article 9, as the nation had amassed its
considerable economic wealth in no small part because of the implicit trust the
international community had placed upon its resolve to become a peace-loving country;
in particular, without a “spirit of tolerance” for the defeated Japan on the part of its
Asian neighbors, the remarkably high standard of living achieved by the Japanese in the
postwar period would have been unthinkable.\(^{69}\) Kunihiro continued that most Japanese
people by the early 1990s were not fully cognizant of the cruelties and injustices
perpetrated, under the banner of \(\text{Daitōwa kyōei ken}\) 大東和共栄券 ("the Greater East Asia

Co-prosperity Sphere”), by Japan’s wartime regime, and that revising Article 9 would expose the gap between Japanese and other Asians’ perceptions. He postulated that an “atmosphere of doubt and suspicion among victims of Japan’s imperialism” would be created as a result. In any event, according to Kunihiro, the world in general did not want Japan to contribute to international well-being militarily, but to do so instead by becoming a “global civilian power” – i.e., by focusing on finding a cure for AIDS, increasing the viability of renewable energy sources, and so on.70 Finally, Kunihiro indicated his strong disagreement with not just the revisionists but also those more moderate LDP members who believed there to be room for maneuvering under the Constitution in its current wording. Stressing that the Constitution was “not so much to be interpreted as to be faithfully executed,” he reiterated that under no circumstances was Japan permitted to conduct SDF activities abroad, whatever the reason, and that as long as the Constitution remained as was there could be no arguing this point.71 Rooted in this view, the lawfulness of Kaifu’s having sent the SDF minesweepers to the Middle East in the aftermath of the Gulf War deserved to be questioned.

The debate spilled over out of the parliament and into mainstream society, and several of its most fervent interlocutors came to be found among civil society associations, members of the media, and, especially, in academic circles.72 A number of

71 Ibid, p.149.
72 Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.236, note #3. It should be mentioned that the particular commentators whose opinions will be presented over the following pages were selected not necessarily based on their own individual merits, but on the
themes of emphasis emerged from these groups, and one common concern on the liberal side was refuting the frequent charge of the revisionists' that Article 9 encouraged isolationism. For instance, professor of philosophy and ethics at Keisen Women's College Suzuki Yugo noted that, as of 1992, Japan was first globally in donating overseas developmental aid through the United Nations and second in average annual contribution to the U.N. budget (only the U.S. gave more), facts upon which he contested the notion that Japan was failing to shoulder its fair share of the international burden due to its “isolationist” Constitution. Suzuki also echoed the thoughts of Kunihiro and many others in promoting the idea that Japan’s “Peace Constitution” should be understood as the foremost contribution the nation could possibly make to the world community: his belief was that, since major global problems like “environmental destruction, the population explosion, the increasing [disparity] between the developed North and the developing South in terms of economic and political power, and ethnic conflicts in Asia, Africa, [and] Eastern Europe” were solvable only through peaceful means, abolishing Article 9 would in truth constitute shirking “the unique responsibility that Japan alone bears in the post-Cold War era.” Thus, it would be a mistake for Japan to respond to “power politics” by altering its Constitution, and the country should to the representativeness of their arguments. This section is intended above all to give an overview of the common terms in which the matter was being discussed; the multifariousness of the perspectives involved; and the great breadth of high-stakes social, political, historical, and ideological considerations that were factoring in as the Constitutional revision debate evolved at this point, in light of Japan’s negative experience of the Gulf War.

74 Ibid, pp.149, 153.
contrary attempt to inspire others to emulate its stance by maintaining a strict adherence to the present document. Suzuki added that it was incumbent upon those who genuinely desired peace to recognize, one, that Japan's military aggression of the past was still vividly in the memories of more than a billion people throughout Asia (and yet more worldwide), and two, that in order for peace to truly prevail, a permanent reduction in military forces globally, not an increase, was required.75

Another scholar concurring with Kunihiro was Tokyo University constitutional law professor Higuchi Yōichi. Higuchi concentrated on what he saw as a disturbing trend of repeated failure by the Japanese government specifically to acknowledge its wartime responsibility, and wondered with skepticism as to the true reason behind the revisionists' push for Constitutional reform. As examples of the government's denial of Japan's past misdeeds, he referred to the widely-accepted allegations that Japanese political leaders were forcing authors to substitute the term “extension” for “aggression” when discussing the country's imperialist expansion, as part of a systematic effort to “whitewash” early 20th-century Japanese history in school textbooks; and additionally, he pointed to the authorities' perennial declination to delve into what is known as the “comfort women” issue – accusations made by Korean, Chinese, and other Asian women that they had been forced to act as prostitutes for the Japanese imperial soldiers during the Second World War – on the dubious stated grounds that these women's

claims could not be corroborated through documentary evidence. Given this pattern of apparent disingenuousness, Higuchi’s fear was that removing or watering down Article 9 could in actuality serve as a pretext in terms of paving the way for a resurrection of the old militaristic tendencies of Japan’s ruling Conservatives.

Whereas Kunihiro, Suzuki, and Higuchi lucubrated upon factors which should dissuade the government from either changing the existing Constitution or adopting a looser interpretation thereof, political science professor Sakamoto Yoshikazu of Meiji Gakuin University followed a quite different tack. Seeking a solution through some semblance of middle territory in the dilemma, Sakamoto offered that in certain situations Japan could contribute to international uses of force without breaching its pacifist Constitutional principles. He held that, inasmuch as the Preamble to the Japanese Constitution declared the people’s sincere desire to uphold peace and “[banish] tyranny and slavery, oppression, and intolerance for all time from the earth,” in cases when an international body of governance (that is, the U.N.) sanctioned military action for said purpose it was not unconstitutional for Japan to take part, provided that participation was in a supporting, non-combat role. To clarify his position, Sakamoto

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76 Ibid, pp.149-50.
77 Helen Hardacre would later characterize this fear as among the most common held by adversaries of the LDP’s plans for rewriting the 1947 Constitution, positing that opponents detected in the revisionists’ rhetoric “echoes of prewar fascism, militarism, a determination to ignore growing social inequalities, and a desire to roll back the progressive achievements of the postwar period.” See Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.235.
drew a distinction between the U.N. police force and the U.N. armed forces. The former, as he explained, referred to a unit recruited from around the globe under the auspices of the United Nations strictly for the sake of keeping order among citizens in accordance with international laws and regulations (and accountable solely to the U.N.); the latter referred to armies from individual nations which happened to form themselves together at some specified point in time, for the accomplishment of some specified military objective.\footnote{Suzuki, “Should the Japanese Constitution be Amended?” (1993): p.150.} Because the U.N. armed forces by definition aimed for the destruction of their enemies, they were susceptible to engaging in episodes of mass killings of civilians – of the kind that regrettably had occurred during Operation Desert Storm – and therefore direct Japanese involvement in their ranks could not be justified. But on the other hand, the fundamentally dissimilar mode of the armed forces’ regulative

“We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representative of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people. This is a universal principle of mankind upon which this Constitution is founded. We reject and revoke all constitutions, laws, ordinances and rescripts in conflict herewith. “We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security, and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want. “We believe that no nation is responsible to itself alone, but that laws of political morality are universal; and that obedience to such laws is incumbent upon all nations who would sustain their own sovereignty and justify their sovereign relationship with other nations. “We, the Japanese people, pledge our national honor to accomplish these high ideals and purposes with all our resources.”
counterparts' functioning fully permitted Japan to “train and provide personnel for the U.N. police force without violating the spirit of the Constitution in general and Article 9 in particular.”80 In fact, from Sakamoto’s perspective, Japan could actually demonstrate a higher degree of faithfulness to its Preamble by doing so than it ever could by tying itself to an outright refusal to cooperate in the resolution of overseas military conflicts regardless of circumstances. Observed from this vantage, there was no need for proposals to rewrite the Constitution. Nor would such a course be desirable, for Sakamoto. Cultivation of a more flexible understanding of the document was the most appropriate approach, while the postwar Constitution itself should be preserved “at all costs as axiomatic to the nation that once terrorized its neighbor nations.”81

Takubo Tadae, a political scientist known as one of the most “forthright” revisionist opinion leaders in the press at the time, was in agreement with a number of Sakamoto’s assessments of the implications of the Constitution with respect to Japanese participation in international missions, but differed in his thought about how the matter must ultimately be handled. Like Sakamoto, Takubo believed that Japan was allowed to join in U.N. peacekeeping efforts abroad even if no modifications were made to the current Constitution. Toward this end, he remarked that: “The PKO (Peacekeeping Operation) is an important part of the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations... that it was the 1988 Nobel Peace recipient amply indicates its honorable place in today’s

81 Ibid, p.147.
world.” And again like Sakamoto, Takubo attributed primacy to the aspirations laid out in the Preamble when explaining his reasons for calling Japan’s decision not to take part in U.N. PKO activities during the Gulf War “a deep shame.” However, Takubo diverged sharply from Sakamoto in asserting further that Japan should not have abstained from contributing militarily to the U.N. coalition force which liberated Kuwait. In his estimation, because the U.N. authorized the offensive conducted against Iraq so as to punish Saddam Hussein for his blatant violation of international law, if Japan was earnest in its commitment to striving for “the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression, and intolerance” from the earth, the country should have seen it as “mandatory to send armed forces overseas under a U.N. flag.” Of course, realistically speaking, for military cooperation to enter as a serious option into the decision-making process there were substantial hurdles which would have to be cleared, namely the CLB’s narrow reading of Article 9. Takubo’s suggestion was to strike the second paragraph of Article 9 from the Constitution, both in order to spare the Diet much unnecessary debate in comparable future instances, and so that all doubt as far as the constitutionality of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces would at last be eliminated. The first paragraph would be left alone completely, which he insisted would be “enough to

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assure the world of the genuineness of Japan's intention to be a truly peace-loving nation.”

In the Diet, Conservatives favoring revision mulled over proposals such as Takubo's and responded to the pacifists' defenses of the “Peace Constitution,” as well as reiterated many of their own same criticisms from the past. For example, several members of the LDP lamented that “the Constitution [had] not functioned as the source of national unity,” which again was held to be due to its having been imposed by the Allied forces during the Occupation. 

Not only were conditions made obligatory that were “not akin to the Japanese tradition,” those expressing this view opined, but the presupposition of one-sided culpability for the events of WWII pervading what was ostensibly the foundational statement of the nation’s values robbed the citizens of Japan of the opportunity to feel pride in their country, culture, and history. The suspect origins of the 1947 Constitution, moreover, rendered its very presence a constant reminder of Japan’s humiliation after the Pacific War, and accordingly, until this situation was remedied through the document’s revision, the postwar period would simply continue indefinitely.

Perhaps the most significant argument for rewriting the Constitution which gained momentum among Conservative politicians at that time, however, had to do

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86 As in, there was no way of knowing for certain whether the idea of Article 9 originated with Prime Minister Shidehara or with General MacArthur (see Chapter 2, note #91 of this paper).
with the concept of collective self-defense. There was nothing new about LDP calls for the incorporation of collective self-defense into Japan’s security strategies: it had been a point of contention since 1951, when the vice-minister of foreign affairs, reacting to U.S. demands that Japan conventionally rearm itself and develop the capability “[to engage] in collective self-defense operations within the regional theater” so as to carry its weight in the recently-signed U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, had pledged Japanese support to U.S. troops in the event they were attacked on Okinawa, only to be overruled by Prime Minister Yoshida’s declaration that such would “run counter to Article 9 and the overwhelming will of the Japanese people.”

The CLB’s restriction of Japan’s right to employ self-defense to the confluence of the “three scenarios” described above made a ban on collective self-defense official policy three years later, by its specification that the use of force was permissible solely in the case of “an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression against Japan [emphasis added].” This prohibition of collective self-defense action was an incessant draw of the revisionists’ ire, especially as according to multiple international statutes Japan’s right to militarily come to the aid of an ally under attack was guaranteed. Hence, in May, 1981, the CLB issued a formal interpretation expositing on the relationship between international law, collective self-defense, and Article 9:

88 Okinawa was then not even a Japanese territory. See Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: pp.9, 21.
89 Foremost among the international codes providing for Japan’s right to collective self-defense was Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which reads in full: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the UN, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-
It is recognized under international law that a state has the right of collective self-defense, which is the right to use actual force to stop an armed attack on a foreign country with which it has close relations, even when the state itself is not under direct attack. It is therefore self-evident that since it is a sovereign state, Japan has the right of collective self-defense under international law. The Japanese government nevertheless takes the view that the exercise of the right of self-defense as authorized under Article 9 of the Constitution is confined to the minimum necessary level for the defense of the country. The government believes that the exercise of the right of collective self-defense exceeds that limit and is not, therefore, permissible under the Constitution.\textsuperscript{90}

But within just one decade after the CLB’s clarification, the Gulf War fiasco had put this interpretation under severe stress, and emboldened Conservatives on the far right such as Ozawa Ichirō to resume their efforts to have the forbiddance of collective self-defense overturned. They continued to speak out against Article 9’s “prevention” of Japan from “full-fledged membership in the international community,” and warned that a failure to forge more equal partnerships with allies in the future could potentially compromise Japanese national security amidst the rapidly changing global order.\textsuperscript{91} In particular, because the collapse of the Soviet Union had reduced its strategic importance to the defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.” The LDP has frequently made explicit reference to Article 51 in its arguments for incorporating collective self-defense into a revised Japanese constitution (see Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.293-94).


United States, Japan faced a new pressure to increase its contributions to the U.S.-Japan security alliance “or risk being abandoned,” they held. For the most extreme revisionists, the precariousness of this state of affairs underscored the essentiality of the country’s rearmament claim to Japanese self-identity in the years to come. They pressed hard for a constitution which would allow Japan to have unimpeded rights to expand its military power, to protect and pursue its national interests in the same way as any other state, including by explicitly providing for the freedom to choose to engage in collective self-defense operations. A still sizable contingent of moderates within the party were not yet willing to go that far, instead endorsing lesser changes to the existing Constitution to enable limited-scope international deployment of the SDF for U.N. peacekeeping missions, and/or recommending the document be updated to reflect the long-since established recognition of Japan’s right to individual self-defense. Because the Constitution stipulated that a two-thirds majority in both houses of the National Diet was required to ratify any amendment, and defeats in the previous election had sapped the LDP’s strength in the Upper House, the resistance from the moderates was enough to cause the more ambitious revisionists to relax their clamor for collective self-defense, at least temporarily. They had succeeded in putting collective self-defense on the

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94 Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.237, note #8. As a matter of fact, the primary method for accepting or rejecting a proposed constitutional amendment spelled out in the present document was to hold a national referendum, but such a step could be forewent with the achievement of the two-thirds majority in both houses. At any rate, even with the losses in the House of Councilors elections, the dissension by many within the LDP itself, and
docket once again, but for the time being, they rather took up a more pragmatic approach, looking to chip away at the foundation of Article 9 where they could by fostering party-wide cooperation on those issues toward which both currents of the LDP already were able to agree.

5.5 (Re-)Involvement of the Kōmeitō in the Sōka Gakkai Peace Movement

5.5.1 1992 U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Bill

Pursuant to this milder plan of attack, Ozawa and his supporters initiated preparations for “side-stepping” Article 9 when the regular session of the Diet convened on 24 January, 1992, through the introduction of new legislation targeted to permit SDF participation in overseas peacekeeping activities.95 Their thinking was that a “factual revision” of the “Peace Constitution” could be set in motion via concrete policy changes intended to stretch the CLB’s prevailing interpretation to its limits, and eventually, as circumstances continued to evolve, an “actual revision” would have to result so as to bring Article 9 into accord with that reality. The area of international PKOs was identified as especially fertile terrain for facilitating the type of compromise they sought. Not only had other party members come to approve of Japanese involvement in peacekeeping missions under U.N. command in foreign regions, but in general, public

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the public’s shift toward opening up to considering the possibility of revision, support for collective self-defense remained far stronger in the Diet than amongst the general populace, and thus it was widely understood that the parliament would have had to be the locus of any serious-minded attempt to insert the principle into the Constitution.

opinion concurred, as well: a broad segment of the ordinary citizenry accepted the revisionists' contention that the embarrassment stemming from Japan's inaction during the Gulf War could have been avoided had the nation merely not failed to dispatch SDF personnel to Saudi Arabia for “peace cooperation” purposes, in the manner proposed by Ozawa's faction. Spurred by the converging of all these elements, an “influential LDP ad hoc panel” chaired by Ozawa but consisting of both moderates and rightists opportunistically brokered an agreement known as the U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Bill on 15 June, 1992, without Article 9 revision or even formal re-interpretation entering into the equation.\textsuperscript{96} The bill, derived from the thwarted Ozawa-led revision plan of less than two years prior, won the backing of Kaifu's successor Miyazawa Kiichi (in office 1991-93) and the CLB because it authorized Japan to take part in the functioning of U.N. multinational forces without challenging the disallowance of engagement in military combat.\textsuperscript{97} It was adopted by a vote of 329 to 17 in the Diet's Upper House, after having easily proceeded through the Lower House (where the LDP still enjoyed tremendous strength).\textsuperscript{98} Remarkably, the PKO Bill's passage marked the first revision of what amounted to a ban on the overseas dispatch of the SDF in nearly forty years.\textsuperscript{99} And yet, such facts viewed in isolation might obscure the story of the intense resistance and extensive debate that was overcome in enacting the bill into law.

The draft that became the U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Bill was actually a

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, p.28.
compromise measure negotiated in late May, 1992, in a second session of the Diet which was required specifically to settle the PKO matter – and significantly, the primary party whose cooperation the LDP was counting upon at that time was none other than the Kōmeitō. Until that point, the Socialists had been leading a number of opposition parties among whom there may have been enough votes in aggregate to block the Conservatives' legislation (in light of the LDP's weakened position in the Upper House), had they been able to secure the assistance of the Kōmeitō, which remained the third most-represented party overall in the parliament. This would also have seemed like the more natural fit for the Kōmeitō, in any case, as it had been outspokenly against sending the SDF to the Persian Gulf region during Operation Desert Storm, even in a "background support capacity." But by the same token, there were several factors driving the Kōmeitō to side with the LDP on the bill, as well. First, the two parties had on occasion joined forces toward advancing certain social welfare programs in the past, so there was something of a history of a working relationship between them. Second,

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101 Kōmeitō chairman Ishida Kōshirō had stated that, “Sending Self-Defense Forces members abroad in ambiguous terms should never be tolerated.” Also, at the initial outbreak of conflict, the party had actively urged a diplomatic solution. See Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.8.
102 See Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles” (1999): p.63. As pointed out by Japanese sociologist of religion Tamano Kazushi, after the mid-1970s the Kōmeitō’s political approach underwent a deliberate shift toward a pursuit of what the party considered “realism.” That is, the Kōmeitō began to move away from calls for radical change, and to seek higher social status for itself by exerting influence where possible through “moderate means” within the context of representative democracy under the protective measures of the existing governmental power structure. This impulse led the Kōmeitō to begin eagerly cooperating with the ruling LDP on specific programs and legislation it deemed would not cause the party to stray too far from its founding principles. In the process, the Kōmeitō not only boosted its overall political viability, but,
the “Five Principles” (or five prerequisite conditions to be met for Japan to participate in overseas peacekeeping operations) written by the LDP as the centerpiece of the PKO Bill had been developed to have a close compatibility with the CLB's earlier interpretations, and their qualifications matched well with the Kōmeitō’s pacifist sensibilities. For instance, under the proposed law the Japanese government would face a clear mandate to “withdraw its troops at the first sign of hostilities,” the SDF would continue to be denied the right to “use force to accomplish the mission of [a] U.N. operation,” et cetera. And third, built into the legislation were a number of substantial “concessions” the LDP had already granted the Kōmeitō the year before, after the latter not only had opposed the former’s “peace cooperation” bill, but was the final holdout against the acceptance of the $9 billion relief package Japan ultimately put toward the war effort. These included above all a reduction in the defense budget to defray the cost – cuts which were to be upheld again in relation to the PKO Bill, in spite of the new expenditures – and assurance that that aid package plus similar ones in the future would coincidentally, it was also able to enhance the image it wanted to promote of itself as a party concerned with actual issues rather than with mere ideological attachments (Tamano, Kazushi. Sōka Gakkai no kenkyū. Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 2008: pp.174-75). Finally, when analyzing the “working relationship” between the Kōmeitō and the LDP, it should be remembered that several members of the former had been close with long-time LDP leader, two-term prime minister Tanaka Kakuei, since the early 1970s.

103 Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: pp.28-29. Officially, the “Five Principles” enumerated in the bill were: “(1) the parties involved in the conflict must have agreed to a cease-fire; (2) the parties involved in the conflict must have consented to the introduction of peacekeeping personnel; (3) the neutrality of peacekeeping forces must be strictly observed; (4) Japanese personnel must be withdrawn in the event that the above conditions are not fully met; and (5) the use of small arms is authorized only in the event that such action is deemed absolutely necessary to protect the lives of peacekeeping forces” (see Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.300).
be “limited to non-military use.” Considering the obvious additional benefits as far as having its own legislation passed through at later dates in exchange for helping the largest party in the Diet now, it is not surprising that the Kōmeitō was willing to listen to the LDP’s entreaties to partner on the PKO Bill.

Nonetheless, the Kōmeitō’s support was not automatic, and Kōmeitō demands played a large part in prolonging discussions into a reconvened term of the Diet and forcing the LDP to amend its initially proposed bill. The party’s key sticking point was its call for a “freeze” on Japanese U.N. Peacekeeping Force (PKF) engagement, which essentially meant that SDF deployed on overseas PKOs would be precluded from performing such duties as cease-fire monitoring, weapons collection and disposal, and buffer zone patrols. At length, the LDP assented to incorporating the freeze into a second draft of the bill, and subsequently, after yet further “extensive study” on the matter, the Kōmeitō agreed to give its vote. Another of the centrist parties with whom the Liberal Democrats had been negotiating, the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP; since disbanded), maintained its opposition, citing the need to make involvement of Japanese personnel in international peacekeeping operations subject to prior approval from the Diet, and advocating a mandatory review of the bill’s effectiveness after three years. This stalemate was resolved when both of the insistences at the behest of the DSP were conceded by the LDP; however, and the U.N. PKO Bill was at last finalized, more than

four months after deliberations upon it had begun. It passed into law the next month on
the strength of the overwhelming margin of victory mentioned previously, owing to the
compromises the LDP had struck; the seventeen parliamentarians who voted against the
bill in the Upper House all belonged to the Japanese Communist Party, the Socialists
chose to boycott the election, and every other Diet member voted “for.” Still, from the
revisionists’ standpoint, the victory was neither as convincing nor as dramatic as it
looked on the outside. The basic objective of “[revising] the ban on overseas dispatch of
the SDF” had indeed been attained, but relying so heavily upon the other parties with
whom it collaborated to enact the law had more or less submitted the LDP to new
constraints to replace the old ones. Incidentally, the group experiencing the greatest
change as a consequence of the PKO Bill’s passage (or more accurately, the process
leading up to the bill’s passage) was the Kōmeitō. Within a matter of months, the
Kōmeitō had gone from almost thirty years of adhering to a firm, but disengaged and
largely ineffectual, pacifist stance on the far fringes of the dispute over Article 9-related
issues, to providing the clinching support for a quite un-pacifist piece of legislation
which had arisen from the party it was born to oppose. By the time the dust settled, the
“Clean Politics Party” had been thrust into the thick of the mainstream Constitutional
revision debate, for good.

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108 Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.300-01. Again, it should be stressed
that all such politicking was taking place in the Upper House of the National Diet. The bill was
guaranteed easy passage through the LDP-dominated Lower House, even prior to the
compromise sections’ introduction.

5.5.2 Tying the Peace Program to the Kōmeitō/ Article 9: Opportunities and Challenges

By following this circuitous path toward engrossment in the revision discussion the Kōmeitō impelled the Sōka Gakkai, as well, into the mix, as despite the two organizations’ formal separation more than two decades prior the Gakkai had never relinquished its role as the “constituency that [provides] electoral support to the party.”110 Throughout the decade of the 1980s, the Kōmeitō had attempted to focus on promoting its own autonomy, increasingly developing an independent, pragmatic, and “flexible” party orientation, gradually drifting toward the political center111, and consciously downplaying its religious ties.112 Kōmeitō leadership at that time declared that, while the Sōka Gakkai’s main prerogatives were providing for “the needs of its members” and furthering “the propagation of its doctrines,” the party’s were and would continue to be endeavoring to enlarge its presence in the Diet, and influencing the policy-making process to the greatest extent possible.113 Yet for all such efforts to assert itself and appeal to a broader base for support, the Kōmeitō had been unable to significantly expand beyond the sustentation of the Gakkai membership.114 Quite simply, the Kōmeitō still depended upon the Sōka Gakkai for the latter’s “organizational muscle,” counting on Society members to comprise the party’s activist network and

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111 In fact, during that period the Kōmeitō “dropped the word ‘progressive’ from its founding expression of being ‘progressive centrist,’” as noted by Timothy Benedict. See Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.6.
113 Ibid, pp.61-62.
round up the votership at election time, much as it had done since its original founding as the political arm of the Gakkai in 1964.\textsuperscript{115} Of course, for the Sōka Gakkai, too, the maintenance of this arrangement was beneficial: because the views and positions held by it and the Kōmeitō remained so similar (the two organizations agreed on welfare, social security, and political and educational reform, in addition to numerous other domestic issues), even if there had been no history of formal connection between them the religious group would likely have preferred Kōmeitō candidates in office.\textsuperscript{116}

Accordingly, although there were occasional instances in which the Kōmeitō leaders’ perspective on the differences in the two entities’ respective purposes led to decisions that individual Gakkai members or groups of members reacted against by outspokenly backing politicians from other parties, in the end any tensions had caused the relationship to adapt and evolve, not to deteriorate.\textsuperscript{117} Albeit now more demonstrably in the form of “supporting organization and supported political party\textsuperscript{118},” it was apparent

\textsuperscript{115} Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): p.16. For example, according to Benedict, Sōka Gakkai members continued the practice of placing telephone calls “to nearly everyone they knew to encourage voting for their party of choice (the Kōmeitō)” in days leading up to elections (Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.3).


\textsuperscript{118} This positive characterization of the nature of the current Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō relationship was given by Nakano Tsuyoshi, an adherent of the Sōka Gakkai and a professor of sociology at Sōka University. Nakano pointed to experiences of friction between Gakkai followers and Kōmeitō leaders, and the democratic avenues pursued in resolving them (i.e., followers supporting alternative candidates, or even participating in and organizing protests), as providing evidence for his view [see Nakano, \textit{Sengo nihon no shūkyō to seiji}, 2003: pp.181-82]. However, many others have remained highly critical toward the two organizations’ close links, perhaps none more scathingly than Japanese independent journalist Furukawa Toshiaki. Furukawa has alleged that personnel management of the Kōmeitō has been decided “dictatorially” by Ikeda Daisaku, and detailed how each individual holding the position of party chairman – not only Takeiri
the “Gakkai-Tō Alliance” persisted, nonetheless.

With that said, as of the start of the Persian Gulf War organization-wide Sōka Gakkai involvement in the affairs of the Kōmeitō was at a relative low point. And then, through the conflict itself, and the subsequent passage of the U.N. PKO Bill, the Sōka Gakkai stayed conspicuously on the sidelines. Why? This was essentially because Society officials were too preoccupied with internal issues to do anything about it – namely, they had to deal with the fallout from the dispute with the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood. In such a climate, their primary tasks were to manage perception (especially abroad) and worry about defining the future direction of the movement, and the U.N.-led military campaign’s onset came too suddenly to allow for them to switch gears and take an active role in trying to influence the Kōmeitō’s handling of the situation. Since the Sōka Gakkai membership displayed a high degree of ambivalence regarding what the party should do, a clear statement from Gakkai leaders on both the role the

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Yoshikatsu, as mentioned previously, but also his successors Yano Junya and Ishida Kōshirō – from the first time the Kōmeitō had members elected to the House of Representatives in 1967 through 1994 was personally appointed by Ikeda, without a vote. Moreover, Furukawa has denounced the “opacity” of the Kōmeitō’s everyday decision-making, stemming again from over-involvement on the part of Ikeda. Allowing that some hierarchy of authority is inherent within religious movements, Furukawa’s stance is that for such qualities to carry over to an organization founded by a religious group in the realm of politics, in which there is a need for openness and accountability, must be recognized as unacceptable (see Furukawa, Toshiaki. *Jimintō / Kōmei ha: jūnen no kōzai*. Tokyo: Daisan shokan, 2008: pp.2-4; 9; 16; 61.

119 In a survey conducted by Robert Kisala shortly after the PKO Bill’s approval, 92% of Sōka Gakkai respondents supported Japanese involvement in U.N. peacekeeping operations, but 75% believed that the Gulf War should have been solved by non-violent means. Also, while 90% of adherents questioned agreed with the basic idea that the use of force was permissible in cases of individual self-defense, respondents were nearly unanimous in stating they would oppose Japanese participation in any future military campaign (these statistics are quoted from Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.5).
religious group wished to see Japan thenceforth play in the resolution of international conflicts generally, and how the Kōmeitō could use its political sway in order to bring this to fruition, would be necessary sooner rather than later. But for the time being, Ikeda and his fellow top executives concentrated on the problems posed by excommunication, and left to the Kōmeitō the matter of navigating the large distance between the party’s goals and the difficult realities of the present socio-political circumstances in the Middle East and at home.

Just a very short while after the PKO Bill was passed, however, the leadership of the Sōka Gakkai realized that perhaps the Kōmeitō held the key to overcoming the troubles with which it was faced itself, as well. As described above, Ikeda’s strategy for claiming interpretive authority over the Nichiren tradition *vis à vis* the Shōshū clergy, and thereby affirming the Gakkai’s religious legitimacy in spite of its break from its orthodox parent sect, hinged upon the ability of the movement to effect progress toward peace (*ankoku*, the Daishōnin’s “ultimate goal”). Urging support for the U.N. and raising the public’s “peace consciousness” were a few manners of doing so, and certainly very important ones. Still, in view of the argument that a religion’s “correctness” would be borne out through its efficacy, if the Sōka Gakkai could find another method capable of achieving results of a more consistent, tangible utility toward the end of bringing about peace, it would have that much more powerful a way to illustrate its capacity to interpret Nichiren and “establish the correct teaching” (*risshō*) in the contemporary world. By its relationship with the Kōmeitō, the Gakkai had exactly such a way. The
Kōmeitō did not merely offer the potential to impact the processes whereby the nation decided whether to engage in the exercise of military force or advocate peace; it had already concretely proven that it was a determining factor in the choices Japan made in these areas. Observing this fact, Ikeda recognized that it was through the Kōmeitō the Sōka Gakkai peace movement could make its most practical gains, and strove to expand the party’s role within what had become – according to the hermeneutical scheme he had devised to counter the competing claims forwarded by the priesthood – the Society’s primary means of pursuing kōsen rufu. Thus, ironically, due to the complicated events surrounding a war fought half a world away the Sōka Gakkai’s response to excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū was finally fortified with an attempt to re-acquire greater influence in the sphere of politics, as the last, pivotal component of its strategy for justifying its legitimacy as a religion.120

120 Etō and Wajō, Jimintō / Sōka Gakkai / Kōmeitō, 2003: p.58. It is worth calling attention to the fact that here, yet again, the “new” element introduced in Ikeda’s strategy for answering some crisis with which the organization was faced was none other than a highlighting of a certain stream of activity already long since present within the Sōka Gakkai’s scope of operations. There should be no mistaking that the Kōmeitō had had an integral place in the Gakkai peace movement for nearly the entire history since its inception; some considered successfully generating support for the “three non-nuclear principles” and pushing for improved relations with China as the peace program’s most substantial achievements prior to the time of the Persian Gulf War, and obviously, each of these initiatives was undertaken by working through the Kōmeitō (Métraux could be counted among those who felt this way – see Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Risshō Ankokuron” (1986): pp.62-63). The only reasons the Kōmeitō needed to be “re-involved” in the peace movement in the early 1990s were, one, the party’s policy of “realism” during the previous decade had led to a change in its posture on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, and many Sōka Gakkai members objected, and two, over that same span the Sōka Gakkai had been emphasizing specific U.N.-sponsored projects in its peace movement rather than Kōmeitō/ politically-oriented action, as it sought to build and enhance ties with the United Nations. When conditions changed, as a consequence of excommunication in conjunction with Operation Desert Storm, “checkbook diplomacy,” debate over the PKO Bill, et cetera, Ikeda
In particular, Ikeda focused on how the Kōmeitō could contribute to the peace movement by giving political “teeth” to the Gakkai’s position on Article 9. As it had been since Toda’s presidency, the Sōka Gakkai was absolutely opposed to the prospect of the Japanese “Peace Constitution’s” seminal statement being modified in any way. Historically speaking this defense of Article 9 had constituted a basic ideological position that gave expression to the group’s underlying pacifist principles, in addition to informing the direction of the peace program, more so than having served as a locus of activism in and of itself. But with the enlivening of the Constitutional revision debate, and the Sōka Gakkai’s being “pushed” into it via the Kōmeitō, Ikeda identified that there was a perfect opportunity to make protecting the “peace clause” take on a whole new level of meaning for the organization. To begin, a campaign intended to that effect could provide the immediate benefit of helping rally the Society membership (then still reeling from the multitude of accusations hurled at its leaders during the dispute with the resourcefully restored primacy to the Kōmeitō connection, once more following the overarching pattern he had developed of seeking to utilize all organizational assets in the fashion that best met the needs dictated by a given situation.

121 The Sōka Gakkai had never gone quite as far as some other Japanese new religious movements with regard to the importance it attributed to Article 9 – for example, the Mukyōkai ("The Non-Church Society;" founded in 1901 by Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三) published a treatise entitled “The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Peace Constitution” which notably claimed Japan’s postwar Constitution was a “precious jewel” given by God to all humanity and its protection was the will of Jesus Christ [see Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): pp.158-59] – but defending the pacifist Constitution, along with opposition of nuclear weapons, was one of the two most consistently held positions throughout the history of its peace movement (according to Benedict – Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.9). Testifying to the fundamentality of the Sōka Gakkai’s stance on Article 9 was that Ikeda made such a focal point of his very first “annual peace proposal,” issued in 1983. In his address, Ikeda summarized: “Our position on the Japanese Constitution is consistent: we aim to protect it, in all eventualities, in the quest for lasting peace” (cited from Benedict (2011): p.5).
Nichiren Shōshū clergy) around an objective that all followers could identify with and, judging by the strong opinions conveyed by Gakkai adherents on how Operation Desert Storm should have been handled, and whether or not Japan should participate in international PKOs, one that many harbored extremely fierce convictions toward. More critical still, the debate gave the Sōka Gakkai a potential channel to score precisely the kind of readily measurable “victory” it sought for its version of “True Buddhism.” The past couple of years had shown the great seriousness of the threat under which the LDP Conservatives’ agenda for revision put the Constitution. For the Sōka Gakkai to be able to fortify the Kōmeitō representation (or discern whatever other measure) so as to successfully oppose that revisionist thrust in the Diet would be indicative of the religion’s possessing a true and formidable might; in turn, of course, it would go a tremendously long way in legitimizing the Sōka Gakkai, given the elemental significance affixed by the movement to the belief that the peace of the country followed the adoption of the “correct” value system, and that by Article 9 Japan proclaimed pacifism was and would remain one of the nation’s foundational principles.

Furthermore, because of the highly symbolic nature of the document, securing the

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122 It had by that time been postulated by numerous commentators that the principal function of the peace movement itself should be seen similarly – that is, as a means of “increasing, motivating, reinforcing, or uniting Gakkai membership” around a single cause everyone understood (Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Risshō Ankokuuron” (1986): p.55). Regardless of how much or little such thinking in actuality factored into the peace program’s establishment, Ikeda was no doubt highly cognizant of the usefulness of a mechanism of this sort. In this case, making the safeguarding of an under attack-Article 9 the centerpiece of the peace movement enabled that much more “unifying energy” to be generated, and at the same time supplied it an even more specific aim toward which to be concentrated.

maintenance of the existing Constitution as was would have implications in terms of restoring and expanding the Gakkai’s viability internationally, every bit as much as domestically. The Sōka Gakkai had always held that, through its teachings of respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and for the sanctity of all life, as well as of the need to build common bonds and fellowship based on love and trust, it could turn Japan into “a symbol of peace and brotherhood for the world” if accepted sincerely throughout the land.124 This emphasis on “Japan as a symbol for the world” was sustained as the movement spread overseas under the watch of Ikeda, for attainment of the real goal of achieving a unified total collective of “global citizens” could only become feasible if Japan first became the model sub-collective.125 Article 9 portended that Japan could indeed be such a model126, and if Japan deepened its embrace of the responsibility to become so at this crucial moment Ikeda and the Sōka Gakkai could rightfully hold up the nation as the example to which all others that “[genuinely] aspired toward peace” looked.127 With all of these factors at stake, Ikeda therefore commenced seeking to

126 “The Spiritual Father of Article 9,” Shidehara Kijūrō, had envisioned as much when working with General MacArthur to draft the Japanese “Peace Constitution.” His hope was for Japan to take the international lead in “convincing other nations that it would be in the mutual interest of collective security to abolish military forces and weapons worldwide,” and to concentrate its diplomatic efforts on encouraging other countries to “adopt similar peace clauses in their constitutions and work toward renunciation of [their] military forces, of state violence, and of war as an end of politics.” In the process, he believed, Japan could “move [human society] much closer to peace” and serve as a “role model” for the world. Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.289, 302-03.
engender support through the Kōmeitō for the introduction of a “human revolution-based philosophy,” described as “the globalization of Japan’s peaceful Constitution” or “the universal application of Article 9\[128\],” into the heart of Japan’s thinking on the Constitutional revision issue. From then on, making this notion take root – in the parliament, above all, but also in general among the Gakkai membership – became the bedrock of the peace movement. If the Sōka Gakkai could prevail in accomplishing its ambition in this right, its effectiveness as the authoritative interpreter of the True Dharma in the modern world would be undeniable.

However, the strategy was not without its hazards. First and foremost, obviously, it could not withstand failure as an option. Once the Sōka Gakkai stepped into the fray, the organization absolutely could not permit abolishment of, or even drastic change to, Article 9, or it would risk having every one of its claims for legitimacy undermined. At the very least, it was incumbent upon the Society to reinforce the Kōmeitō to be of sufficient strength to have a say in any potential revision, in order that the party could ensure retention of the document’s basic pacifist tenor in the overall sense. Another aspect of the strategy that presented a substantial challenge for Gakkai leaders to surmount was how it gave the impression that practical or “worldly” concerns were trumping the more overtly religious practices of the movement. This was actually less an issue for followers of the Sōka Gakkai, perhaps the majority of whom (in Japan and

\[128\] By this Ikeda meant promoting the idea that the provision to renounce military aggression reflected more than concern with eliminating threats to Japan, but instead was aimed at removing the causes of war altogether – and hence was, in truth, intended for the benefit of all nations, and all humankind. See Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.9.
abroad) had always found the religion’s insistence that the realms of the “mundane” and the “spiritual” were not two, but one, among its most attractive features. But increasingly downplaying familiar, traditional “religious” rhetoric in favor of attempting to influence what most would see as a political matter was sure to invite intensified criticism in the public eye of the Sōka Gakkai as unduly “pragmatic.” It would also inflame anti-Gakkai sentiment among those charging that the Sōka Gakkai-Kōmeitō relationship violated the principle of separation of religion and state, and accordingly Ikeda and others would have to be very careful to distinguish between activities set forth in each respective domain. Finally, there was the inherent problem of how to manage Sōka Gakkai member reaction in the event political circumstances caused the Kōmeitō to make compromises that seemed to veer from the religious group’s stated ideal of “absolute pacifism.” One needed look no further than the recently concluded Persian Gulf conflict to understand that this would be a mammoth hurdle for the leadership of both organizations to conquer if the Sōka Gakkai’s approach was to succeed. A statement released by then-Kōmeitō Chairman Ishida Kōshirō in the aftermath of the “checkbook diplomacy” controversy provided a case in point, implicitly reflecting the enormous pressure the party faced, even at that time, to actualize the pacifist will of its overwhelmingly Gakkai constituency:

“Pacifism as opposition to all acts of war may be naturally important for this nation. However, should we always keep ourselves pent up in the enclave of pacifism no matter what circumstances? When peace
has been destroyed, how will we try to recover it? And when we make such effort, can Japan simply remain an idle bystander without doing anything to help in the effort? In such an instance, should Japan not make some kind of contribution to the restoration of peace if such effort is centered on the United Nations? [Since] Japan cannot send any of its Self-Defense Forces to the Persian Gulf area due to the anti-war provisions of the Constitution’s Article 9, shouldn't Japan at least cooperate in the United Nations-centered international activities for peace through extension of fiscal support?" 129

Aside from such appeals to Sōka Gakkai followers to respect the difficulty of the situation with which they had been confronted, as early as the 1991 Kōmeitō National Convention party officials had begun putting “a new spin on what it meant to be a pacifist nation” to help explain their decisions to ultimately cooperate with the LDP on certain of its legislative measures in connection with the U.S.-led war effort. 130 They stressed that, with Japan entering a new (post-Cold War) era in which it would be required to contribute to the international community at a level commensurate with its affluent status in order to be a valued member therein, the country needed to “step out of [its] past mindset of single-nation, anti-war pacifism,” and move toward a “creative pacifism” grounded in “the construction of a new kind of peace and order... [through] a universal collective system of security guarantees centered upon the United Nations.” 131 Ikeda chose to keep pulling on these threads going forward, applying them toward edifying the Sōka Gakkai membership with reference to the separate paths the Kōmeitō

130 Ibid, p.9.
131 Ibid, pp.8-10.
and the Gakkai would have to take in pursuit of their common goals. That is, he clarified
that while the Sōka Gakkai would continue to endorse “absolute pacifism” in striving
after the organizations' shared commitment to “eternal peace,” the political demands to
which the Kōmeitō was subject would on occasion force the party to accept “necessary
 evils” like SDF participation in overseas PKOs, or the U.S.-Japan security pact, in the
short-term, and consequently the Kōmeitō's task must be to endeavor to uphold
pacifism in this complex new “creative” form. It followed that there then had to be a
different set of expectations germane to each group’s methods, mutual understanding of
which it was hoped would alleviate some of the tension that could arise when the
courses of the two diverged from time to time. However, by the same token, nothing
could grant the Kōmeitō total immunity to backlash from Sōka Gakkai believers when
the latter felt the former “did not look active enough” in doing its part to promote the

132 Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.10. As far as Ikeda’s own position, the SGI
president refrained from unambiguously declaring at that time on which side of the “absolute”/
“creative” pacifism ledger he fell, and his actions and statements on associated issues make his
stance more muddled than one would likely anticipate. On the one hand, Ikeda had long
professed a complete and utter opposition to all forms of war, “no matter what reason might be
given” [see Benedict (2011): p.1], but on the other hand he more recently had supported the
concept of international peacekeeping operations (provided “responsibility for PKO missions to
conflict regions lies exclusively with the U.N.”) and even permitted that in extreme circumstances
the use of force for the sake of maintaining order should not be “absolutely ruled out” (again,
under the assumption that the U.N. was solely responsible for the exercise of that force – and that
Japan had no part, as such would be unconstitutional under Article 9) [see Métraux, “Religion,
Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.164]. For his “equivocation” Ikeda has
been criticized, and perhaps not unreasonably so; yet, any apparent hedging on Ikeda’s behalf
should also be seen within the context of his attempts to facilitate a re-strengthening of the
relationship between the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō. If Ikeda believed that the Gakkai-Tō
relationship could be instrumental in bringing the world closer to the most highly-prioritized
goal of “eternal peace,” for example by helping preserve Japan's Constitution, his “inconsistency”
could just as easily be interpreted as a case of an effective leader trying to bring two parties with
conflicting viewpoints together, by showing sympathy for the thought processes of each.
overarching objectives of the peace movement. Pressure to represent Gakkai interests pertaining to Article 9, in other words, would stay an unavoidable fact of the Kōmeitō’s existence, improved mutual understanding or not.

5.6 Formation of the Coalition with the LDP

As the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō focused upon negotiating these various challenges posed by their redefined relationship, most of the rest of the decade of the 1990s provided something of a respite – and a valuable opportunity to consolidate resources – on the peace movement front, in that the momentum of the revisionists’ push to alter Article 9 once again began to wane. Meanwhile, though, the period witnessed a series of seismic changes to the Japanese political landscape, and the Kōmeitō’s role in the nation’s governance was transformed radically, and repeatedly, as a result of its catalyzing many of the shifts. At any rate, the initial tremor to hit as the process unfolded happened in 1993, when a weak election showing by the LDP cost the incumbent ruling party its majority in the Lower House, and thus control of the cabinet, for essentially the first time since its formation in 1955. Behind the LDP’s loss was the emergence of a number of newly created political parties offering “fresh Conservative

133 Okuyama, “Soka Gakkai as a Challenge to Japanese Society and Politics” (2010): pp.93-94. This was amply evident when passage of the U.N. PKO Law enabled Japan to in subsequent years send SDF personnel to Cambodia and Mozambique (as peacekeeping troops) and then to Rwanda (to participate in refugee relief efforts), and pockets of Sōka Gakkai adherents responded by protesting Kōmeitō officials for their part in allowing it to happen. The number of protestors was small enough to indicate the majority of Gakkai members were willing to accept some degree of compromise, but large enough to demonstrate the standard of accountability to which Kōmeitō leaders would be held by their constituents on peace-related matters. See Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito's Changing Roles” (1999): pp.61-63.
perspectives,” including the “Japan Renewal Party” (led by none other than Ozawa Ichirō), the “Japan New Party,” and the “New Harbinger Party;” with these groups having opened the door, the Kōmeitō, out of its own effort to forge a “citizen-oriented centrist alliance” capable of supplying an alternative to the “ruling ‘iron triangle’ of LDP politicians, big business, and top bureaucrats,” then joined them, establishing the so-called “rainbow coalition” governments of Hosokawa Morihiro 細川護煕 and Hata Tsutomu 羽田孜 in 1993-94. However, these administrations folded quickly, Hata’s lasting a mere nine weeks. This was because the LDP was surprisingly able to convince the members of a new opposition party composed of leftist legislators that had belonged to the now-defunct JSP (the Social Democratic Party of Japan; SDPJ) to combine votes to oust Hata, in return for which they agreed to enter into a coalition that would be dominated by the LDP but feature SDPJ leader Murayama Tomiichi 村山富市 (in office 1994-96) at the head.

Approximately at that same juncture, another round of upheavals was set off by the implementation in summer, 1994, of an election reform law passed several months

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134 The Kōmeitō received four cabinet posts in the Hosokawa government, six in Hata’s, and naturally, the Kōmeitō representatives occupying these positions were members of the Sōka Gakkai (incidentally, attesting to an achievement of outstanding success on the Gakkai’s part with respect to its plan to pursue greater political authority as a way of evincing the “power” of its interpretive claim, in the early years after excommunication). Many journalists in Japan expressed skepticism toward this situation, speculating that the real powers behind the coalition were Ozawa and Ikeda. Furthermore, scholars alleged that the Sōka Gakkai itself was Ozawa’s “chief source of funds,” and that Ikeda enjoyed influence due to his financial hold over Ozawa. For their part, Sōka Gakkai officials denied these charges, and in fact denied that any political party, including the Kōmeitō, was backed financially by their organization. See Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles” (1999): pp.60, 67; also, p.68, note #21.

135 Ibid, p.69.
earlier. The long-awaited bill called for a restructuring of Japan's “multi-member parliamentary districts [in]to a mix of single-member ones, such as in the U.S. or Great Britain, and proportional representation.” Fearing that the new system (which unlike the old arrangement placed a premium upon maximum national-level following and funding support networks) would enable the LDP to “decimate a disorganized opposition,” officials from the Kōmeitō, the Japan Renewal Party, the DSP, and six other minority parties struck an agreement to craft a new opposition group, to be called the “New Frontier Party” (Shinshintō 新進党). The decision to take part in such an organization was an onerous one for the Kōmeitō since doing so meant it, like each other individual member, would have to first dissolve its current configuration, but the New Frontier Party's preliminary success in the Upper House elections of 1995 helped ease the transition. The LDP reacted immediately and aggressively to its new threat. Specifically, the government took aim at its opponent's most influential backer, the Sōka Gakkai, through the process of pushing for legislation to revise the 1951 Religious

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138 Ibid, pp.70-73. Of course, the primary reason the decision was so difficult was that Kōmeitō leadership needed to make sure the followers of the Sōka Gakkai would be on board with such a monumental change. Indeed, many Gakkai members did indicate disappointment with the choice, stating that because they “[had] identified themselves with the Kōmeitō for so long, the end of the party as a distinct entity meant a partial loss of identity” for them. Some worried that the unique values of the Kōmeitō would be lost in a new “megaparty,” while others even reported feeling “betrayed” by the Kōmeitō's actions. These sentiments did not cause the Sōka Gakkai to seriously consider withdrawing its endorsement of the New Frontier Party. However, they certainly highlight the challenge Ikeda and other organizational leaders faced in terms of bridging the gap between adherents' wishes and the practical restrictions that had an impact upon the movement.
Corporations Law in the wake of the Sarin gas attacks that had been perpetrated by the new religious movement Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教 (roughly, “Religion of Truth;” founded in 1984 by Asahara Shōkō 麻原彰晃) on the Tokyo subway on 20 March, 1995.\textsuperscript{139} According to leading LDP politicians, the original 1951 law contained provisions that “made it difficult for public authorities to act to protect public safety against religious organizations that worked against the public good” – owing to its having been enacted by Occupation officials who, blaming the Japanese wartime regime’s “State Shintō” apparatus for the country’s misdeeds during the Pacific War, went too far in trying to keep the government out of religious affairs – and the “Aum Shinrikyō Incident” had happened as a result.\textsuperscript{140} While seeking measures to remedy this situation by giving authorities greater power to supervise religious groups’ activities\textsuperscript{141}, the Murayama and succeeding Hashimoto Ryūtarō 橋本龍太郎 (served two consecutive terms as prime minister between 1996-98) cabinets implicated the Sōka Gakkai as an example of a “religious organization working against the public good,” and they used the prevailing atmosphere of consternation amongst the citizenry as an opportunity to fan flames of

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\textsuperscript{141} A revised version of the Religious Corporations Law was indeed approved in December, 1997. It placed religions with a financial base of over 80 million yen under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (Japanese: Monbukagakushō 文部科学省), rather than under the control of prefectural governments, as had previously been the case. The new law enabled the Ministry to require religious groups to submit to them detailed financial reports, gave courts the power to order the disbandment of any religious organization, and allowed “any person adversely affected by members of a religious corporation” the right to request a review of that corporation’s financial and other documents by authorities. Critics have argued the legislation impinges upon religious freedom, and works against the principle of the separation of religion and the state. See Ibid, p.76.
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suspicion toward the Gakkai’s, and by association, the New Frontier Party’s, intentions.\(^{142}\) Partly due to negativity brought on by these attacks from the LDP, partly due to general disorganization as far as party management and lack of ideological consensus on key issues and policies, the New Frontier Party was unable to sustain its initial electoral success, and hastily disbanded in December of 1997. Yet it was only then that the turbulent decade took its most unexpected turn.

Faced with the decision of how to regroup after their crushing failure, the members of the former New Frontier Party went their separate ways. Many joined a recently formed grouping of parties called the *Nihon minshutō* 日本民主党 (“The Democratic Party of Japan;” hereafter, abbreviated DPJ), which had been established by dissidents from the New Harbinger Party, together with a contingent of representatives from the SDPJ after the breakup of that party’s coalition with the LDP, in 1996. Others joined a new faction christened the “Liberal Party,” under the leadership of Ozawa

\(^{142}\) Eventually, Gakkai president Akiya Einosuke was required to appear before Parliament to answer questions about the organization’s political activity through the Kōmeitō/ New Frontier Party (see Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): p.17). This was not the only avenue by which the LDP targeted the Sōka Gakkai for adverse publicity at that time, however. Before the 1996 general elections, the party also gave extensive coverage in its press to a civil court case brought by a former Sōka Gakkai Women’s Division leader, a Mrs. Nobuhira, against Ikeda, who she claimed had sexually assaulted her on numerous occasions in the past. The Sōka Gakkai vehemently denied the charges, holding that the case was filed out of resentment and financial distress stemming from Mrs. Nobuhira and her husband’s having been dismissed from the organization for failing to repay “massive loans” made to them by other Society members. The case ended up being thrown out by a Tokyo court in 1998, with the Nobuhiras being ordered to repay more than 53 million yen in unpaid loan debts, and the LDP subsequently issuing a printed apology to the Sōka Gakkai for accusations made during its newspaper’s reporting of the event (Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles” (1999): pp.75, 77-78).
Those who had belonged to the Kōmeitō predominantly took a wait-and-see approach. Such individuals who ran in the 1998 Upper House elections campaigned simply as “Kōmei” candidates endorsed by the Sōka Gakkai. However, when the Kōmei politicians went on to meet with a success that smashed all projections, garnering 7.74 million votes (13.8% of the overall vote, the highest figure earned in a proportional representation race in the history of the Kōmeitō organization) and adding nine new members, the former Kōmeitō was encouraged to re-create itself as the “New Kōmeitō,” at which point it instantly became the second-largest opposition party in the Diet with a combined membership in the Upper and Lower Houses of sixty-six representatives.

The largest opposition force, all of a sudden, was the DPJ (headed by veteran parliamentarian Kan Naoto), which had greatly cut into the LDP’s supremacy on

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144 The party was able to efficiently reestablish itself at this time as a consequence of the way it had gone about disbanding when the New Frontier Party was founded four years before. That is, at the Kōmeitō National Convention in Tokyo on 5 November, 1994, a decision had been made to split the party into two groups: all Kōmeitō representatives in the Lower House and those up for re-election in 1995 in the Upper House would follow through with joining the New Frontier Party, as proposed, while those not then up for re-election in the Upper House, plus all 3000 prefectoral and municipal assembly officials belonging to the Kōmeitō across the nation, would retain a separate structure (as the “Kōmei” organization) for the time being. Leadership stated the reason for keeping such a distinction was that the New Frontier Party was not yet equipped to handle the costs of assuming all levels of the organization in their entirety. Many analysts, though, have expressed skepticism with regard to the Kōmeitō’s choice to “[preserve] a party structure that could easily be revived.” Toward this cynicism Métraux has admitted that, although he believed the Kōmeitō’s intentions upon entering into the New Frontier Party were “sincere,” in truth “the dissolution of the Kōmeitō was more fiction than fact.” In any case, given how the situation played out, the party’s decision to split itself in the end constituted a necessary and beneficial “insurance policy.” See Ibid, pp.70-71.
the national scale by polling 12.2 million votes in comparison with the latter's 14.1. In fact, the LDP won only forty-four of one hundred twenty-five contested seats, a defeat considered so decisive it prompted Hashimoto to resign, and the party, to begin seeking a coalition partner in order to re-attain a majority throughout the Diet. With the DPJ entrenched as a viable competitor, the only parties with the numerical strength to qualify as potential options for the LDP were the Communist Party, which had always refused to work with the LDP on principle, and the Kōmeitō, with which the LDP had recently quarrelled but had a history of cooperation on various bills and programs. The LDP elected to concentrate on mending fences with and recruiting the support of the Kōmeitō; Kōmeitō leaders, who were looking to optimize their refashioned party's capacity to implement policy (also the chief concern of the leaders of the party's primary constituent, the Sōka Gakkai) and sensing that their best chance had arrived, proved a receptive audience for the LDP's entreaties. The courtship soon culminated in a formal invitation from new prime minister Obuchi Keizō 小渕恵三 (in office until April, 2000) for the two to enter into a ruling coalition, to which the Kōmeitō consented on 5 October, 1999. With that, in spite of the highly irregular route it had had to take to get there – an

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146 Though officially the “New Kōmeitō” since its re-consolidation, the party will continue to be referred to as simply the “Kōmeitō” throughout the remainder of this text – one, for ease of readability, and two, to reflect the continuity in the objectives and policies by which the organization can be characterized both just before and after the period between 1994-98.
147 Sōka Gakkai members, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, showed considerable enthusiasm in agreement with the Kōmeitō’s entrance into this coalition with the LDP (as a matter of fact, compared to LDP supporters, a much higher proportion of Kōmeitō supporters – i.e., adherents of the Gakkai – favored the alliance [see Wu, Ming-shan, and Chun-ta Lee. “A Study of Komeito allyance [...]]
LDP-Kōmeitō alliance would have been unthinkable literally just a year prior – the Kōmeitō found itself in the power political position it had long been seeking. At the same time, through the process the Sōka Gakkai had made an announcement which came across more loudly still: even as a parentless lay religious organization, the Gakkai was, and would continue to be, a force to be reckoned with in Japanese society.

5.7 LDP-Kōmeitō, the Gakkai-Tō, and Constitutional Revision in a Post-9/11 World

5.7.1 Tenor of the LDP-Kōmeitō Alliance and LDP Response to 9/11 Terrorist Attacks

Not unpredictably, the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition encountered its share of awkward moments, and on the whole the arrangement yielded mixed results for both sides. On the one hand, it afforded each party substantial success from an electoral standpoint. Kōmeitō backers came to represent important votes for the LDP in single-seat constituency races not featuring candidates from the Kōmeitō. The Kōmeitō prospered,

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as a Critical Minority Party in Japanese Coalition Regimes,” Asian Social Science, vol.7, no.9 (September, 2011): pp.10, 15). In part, the positive response was indicative of the continued pride the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō each took in their stances of “conceivably endors[ing] candidates across the political spectrum,” provided in their perceptions those candidates were genuinely committed to working for the betterment of society. Even more so, it demonstrated the degree to which Gakkai followers were re-invigorated by the re-formation of the Kōmeitō, and additionally, how effective Sōka Gakkai leadership was with respect to making its post-excommunion strategy of expanding the group’s political influence through the Kōmeitō take root. In this connection, it should be observed that through their reactions to the formation of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance members did exhibit a heightened openness to the idea of accepting compromise on particular bills, in exchange for having a political ally (the LDP) to consider Kōmeitō positions on the movement’s core issues (at least at this initial point). See Métraux, “The Soka Gakkai and Komeito’s Changing Roles” (1999): pp.66-67; 71-72.

148 Tamano has explained that the agreement with the Kōmeitō brought a new segment of votership which helped the LDP offset much of the effect of losing its traditional bastion of older,
as well, and to an unprecedented degree, as the party topped the eight million vote plateau for the first time in proportional balloting in the year 2000. In addition, in terms of parliamentary politics, the LDP did indeed regain the requisite strength to pass its bills through both Houses, while the Kōmeitō was able via compromises to realize a number of its policies with concern for education and health issues, and to secure a sizable expansion of the welfare budget, because of its status as a ruling partner. But on the other hand, the deep ideological divide between the two groups rendered many of their most cherished respective ambitions virtually irreconcilably at odds. These of course had mainly to do with foreign and defense policies. The LDP was focused on enhancing Japan’s contributions to the U.S.-Japan security alliance, by military means if need be; the sway of the party’s far-right faction had started growing again after North Korea launched a long-range missile over Japan into the Pacific Ocean in 1998, and by rural, middle-class Conservative supporters around this time (the loss was owing to the LDP’s largely neglecting that former base in order to pursue “neo-liberalist” policies appealing to the wealthy in urban areas – a course that would especially intensify under the leadership of Koizumi Junichirō from 2001-06; see Tamano, Sōka Gakkai no kenkyū, 2008: pp.183-84). To drive home this point: Boyd and Samuels have suggested that the LDP may have lost as many as 81 seats between both chambers of the parliament in the 2003 elections in the absence of the Kōmeitō’s support (Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: p.51).

The total figure would swell by another 1.2 million votes in the 2005 elections. Shimada has estimated that perhaps as many as 1.5 million of that number were gained based on cooperation with the LDP. See Shimada, Hiromi. Kōmeitō vs. Sōka Gakkai. Tokyo: Asahi shinbun-sha, 2007: pp.180-81.

149 Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): pp.17-18. In 2009, the Kōmeitō would claim achievement of “a 98% [rate of] fulfillment of 123 social and welfare policies by legislative practices” over the course of its coalition with the LDP (cited from Wu and Lee, “A Study of Komeito as a Critical Minority Party” (2011): p.15). The majority of these successes, it should be pointed out, occurred during the Obuchi and ensuing Mori Yoshirō administrations; Benedict has shown that as its own popularity hit an upsurge with Koizumi Junichirō in office after 2001, the LDP began attributing a markedly diminished value to the Kōmeitō’s role as partner in ordinary processes of governance (see Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.12).
2000 the LDP had established an internal research committee to study the security implications of Constitutional revision in the face of the “current global transitions.”

Contrarily, the Kōmeitō’s battle lines were drawn around Article 9 itself. Understanding the LDP’s intentions, the Kōmeitō formed its own Research Commission on the Constitution (as a matter of fact, pre-empting the LDP’s committee by a few months), a defensive maneuver aimed at identifying possible revisions that could satisfy the Conservatives yet keep the core of Article 9 intact. Just a short time later, however, a deluge of unforeseeable external factors seriously undercut the Kōmeitō’s efforts to counterbalance the increasing tendency toward the Right on the part of the LDP.

The terrorist attacks carried out on the United States on 11 September, 2001 brought a new urgency to LDP demands that Japan step up its military contributions to the U.S.-Japan security agreement. Determined not to allow a replay of the trauma which had so affected the nation during the Persian Gulf crisis ten years before, the Japanese government – behind the leadership of new prime minister Koizumi Junichirō

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151 Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.236. The North Korean missile’s overflight of the Japanese islands also served as part of the impetus behind the passage of the “Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations and Areas Surrounding Japan” (so-called “SIAS-J”) in 1999. This law did not constitute a fundamental change in the trajectory of Japan’s recent security policy, but rather built upon the 1992 PKO Law (incidentally, the PKO Law was itself revised in 1998, to clarify the blurring definitions of “war” and “war zones” in the contemporary context) by allowing for Japanese SDF to conduct “rear area search and rescue activities” in the case participants in a U.S.-led combat operation went missing in a region proximate Japan. Because it was not seen as a fundamental departure from previous measures, and because Japan had by then built up a record of benign SDF deployments for overseas support missions, the Kōmeitō actually voted with the LDP in favor of the SIAS-J bill (see Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.301; and Wu and Lee, “A Study of Komeito as a Critical Minority Party” (2011): p.10).

小泉純一郎（who would serve in the office from 2001-06, the longest continuous stretch managed by any individual since 1972）– immediately expressed its support for the American-initiated “War on Terror,” and pledged Japan’s willingness to offer “boots on the ground” assistance for its ally’s objectives.\textsuperscript{153} The next month, the Diet followed through on its promise by enacting the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, legislation which facilitated the dispatch of Maritime SDF troops and vessels to the Indian Ocean to provide refuelling services for military ships and aircraft taking part in the U.S.-led mission against al-Qaida and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{154} Koizumi and American president George W. Bush continued striving to cultivate heightened military cooperation between the two countries as the “War on Terror” progressed. Their efforts led to Japan’s adopting an additional “special measures” bill pertaining to Iraq (known as the “Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq”) in July, 2003, after the U.S. had sent forces into Iraqi territory to remove Saddam Hussein from power in March of that year.\textsuperscript{155} Then, in February of 2004, Koizumi proceeded to boldly deploy over six hundred Air and Ground SDF personnel to the Middle East region, an event which marked the first time Japan had sent soldiers into an active combat zone overseas without an international mandate since the end of

Members of the SDF were forbidden to engage in actual fighting, working instead at completing various construction and engineering projects, transporting water and other supplies, administering medical care, and, when having been given prior parliamentary approval, helping to monitor achieved ceasefires, but Koizumi’s choice to enter Iraq was extremely controversial nonetheless. Public opinion polls indicated that as much as seventy percent of the Japanese populace was opposed to SDF involvement in the Iraq mission, largely due to its having been undertaken at the unilateral behest of the United States, without U.N. sanction. Many liberals within the

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156 Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.300. In the process, Japan became one of just three Pacific region states (the others being Australia and South Korea) to dispatch troops abroad in support of the U.S.-led military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq (Green, “The Myth of Pacifism” (2007): p.223). Ground SDF would not be withdrawn from Iraq until 2006, while Air SDF personnel would remain in the area until December of 2008.

157 Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.166. Under the terms of their engagement, SDF troops were required to report any breakdown of a ceasefire at once, and in such a case to return immediately to Japan. SDF personnel were not permitted to use weapons except in such instances where it was deemed absolutely necessary for their protection or the protection of those with whom they were working, and strict limits had to be observed regarding which weapons could be carried in which circumstances. If a Self-Defense Force member harmed another person, he or she would have to prove that the action was performed as a legitimate and necessary exercise of the right to personal self-defense.

158 Extraordinarily, despite this high rate of disapproval of Koizumi’s actions on what is ostensibly such a major issue, his party did not suffer losses in subsequent elections. Rather, in 2005, the LDP’s share of the vote in both the Upper and Lower House elections actually increased, and Koizumi’s own popularity soared as a result of his being seen as a strong, “maverick” leader, as well as as a capable economic reformer (Green, “The Myth of Pacifism” (2007): pp.219, 223). The reality of the situation has caused many scholars – not only Green – to criticize the Japanese people’s oft-professed sense of pride in the image of their nation as one “imbued with pacifist norms;” for example, Hein has questioned whether the popular understanding of Article 9 in Japan today is “based on a new form of pragmatic, convenient – maybe even naïve – anti-militarism” [Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.296], while Métraux has commented that “the notion [of upholding Japan’s ‘Peace Constitution’] remains a kind of romantic ideal” that accordingly is unable to stop Conservative re-interpretations of the document such as have enabled the factual rearrangement of Japan to occur [Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.164].
academic world and the media voiced similar negative sentiments, and accused the LDP of merely caving in to pressure from the U.S.\textsuperscript{159} Koizumi and his cabinet, meanwhile, ignored the criticism, insisting that strengthening defense ties with the U.S. was then more than ever in the best interest of Japanese national security. In truth, they were highly concerned with responding to American pressure, in that they wanted to show Japan’s readiness to support its most important ally in cases when the use of force was deemed essential: LDP party leaders reasoned that if theoretically the U.S. was supposed to defend Japan in the event Japan was attacked but Japan was unwilling to come to the aid of the U.S. when necessary from America’s perspective, the lack of reciprocity could severely undermine the reliability of any American promises to contribute to the defense of Japan, which was an especially unsettling prospect in an age of globalized terrorist networks and the proliferation of “weapons of mass destruction.”\textsuperscript{160} Significantly, this line of thought also brought the Constitutional revision issue back into the picture. “Unable” to assist in uses of force was in effect no different than “unwilling,” and therefore the prohibition of collective self-defense under Article 9 had to be understood as a considerable, self-imposed obstacle to national security, the LDP held. In other words, in the party’s view of the matter, by its preclusion of the country from aiding U.S. military operations any further Article 9 was pushing Japan perilously close to falling into exactly the kind of circumstance the revisionists had warned of at the dawning of

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, p.238.
the post-Cold War era: that of risking an erosion of American confidence in Japan as an equal partner. The Conservatives argued that for security purposes the situation had to be corrected immediately, and since Japan had already “reached [the] limit in strained interpretations of Article 9,” the only option left was to once and for all revise the “peace clause.” 161 Thus, although the party did not abandon its familiar rhetoric of “closing the postwar period” and “restoring normalcy to the Japanese state” by “putting the Japanese in possession of a constitution of their own making,” as the debate flared up yet again at this critical point the specification of the right to collective self-defense re-emerged to become – this time nearly unanimously – the LDP’s top priority for Constitutional revision.162

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161 Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): pp.237-38. However, Hein has strongly cautioned that the argument Article 9 must be revised so Japan may provide for its security should be approached critically. According to his research, since the late 1980s more than four trillion yen of Japanese taxpayers’ money has gone toward military expenditures annually. Included in the budget – despite the government’s claims to be pursuing an “exclusively defense-oriented security policy,” to provide only the “minimum necessary level” of defense – have been “the modification of Aegis-equipped escort ships and the improvement of Patriot missile capabilities in order to respond to a ballistic missile attack” (development of the latter of which was begun, with minimal open discussion in the Diet, not long after the North Korean missile scare in 1998, when it came to Japan’s immediate attention that a three-stage Taepodong 1 missile launched from Pyongyang could reach Tokyo in less than ten minutes). Furthermore, Japan has over time built up the largest destroyer force and the most advanced submarine fleet in the Pacific region, as well as the second-most capable fleet of F-2 strike fighters in East Asia, after those only of the U.S. Concluding that in point of fact Article 9 has not represented a particularly stringent restraint to Japanese military advancement, Hein at last supported his finding with the results of a study conducted by Professor Michael Steigel of Nanzan University: “Depending on how military spending and defense capability are measured, it can be argued that (as of 2005) Japan ha[d] the second-largest defense capability in the world” (See Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): p.296).

5.7.2 The Kōmeitō’s Role in the Revision Debate Surrounding the “Mori Draft”

In light of the dramatically rearranged geopolitical climate, the research committee on Constitutional revision that had been formed by the LDP in 2000 took on a more aggressive tone, working quickly (at the prodding of Koizumi) in an effort to draft a proposal for a new constitution that would incorporate the freedom to engage in collective self-defense operations. On 10 June, 2004, the committee issued a discussion paper in both Houses of the parliament toward that end.\(^{163}\) The “areas of concern” outlined in it were far from being confined to Article 9 and other defense-related matters. The document identified a number of additional important aspects of revision in the LDP’s eyes, and included a listing of further articles and associated pieces of legislation policy which would permit full-scale Japanese participation in U.S.-led military missions, and America’s position of leverage over Japan owing to the history of Japanese dependency on the American military umbrella for defense since 1945, have caused numerous commentators to speculate that the U.S. was actively attempting at this time to force Japan to revise the “Peace Constitution.” Hardacre has demonstrated that there is reason to suspect so, noting that in October, 2000, former Under-Secretary of State Richard Armitage had written in an Institute for National Security Studies Special Report, “The United States and Japan: advancing toward a mature partnership,” that “Japan’s prohibition against collective self-defense [was] a constraint on the alliance;” and also, that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell was quoted in an interview with a group of Japanese journalists in early 2004 as saying Japan would have to “seriously re-examine” its stance on Article 9 if it wanted to be considered for a coveted permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council (one of the main obligations for which is military contribution to U.N.-sanctioned international uses of force). Hence, in Hardacre’s estimation, while the U.S. may not have explicitly asked Japan as much, it has sought to apply pressure which “implicitly forces [Japan] to agree to the alleged need to revise [its] Constitution” (see Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): pp.238-39). By the same measure, Boyd and Samuels have downplayed the U.S.’s influence in the push to provide for collective self-defense in the Constitution, attributing responsibility for it instead to Conservative Japanese politicians. They have pointed to the many past occasions on which LDP calls for collective self-defense have “preceded or exceeded U.S. demands therefor” (Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: p.12).

the party sought to introduce or rewrite. To summarize the most major of these, the LDP expressed its advocacy of: redrafting the Preamble to the Constitution; officially naming the Emperor head of state; eliminating the “essential equality of the sexes” phrase from Article 24, as part of a broader attempt to restore the family, rather than the individual, to the status of the smallest unit of national community\textsuperscript{164}; strengthening the primacy of the House of Representatives (the Lower House) in the Diet; mandating the education system to “imbue pupils with a sense of patriotism and national pride” through changes to the 1947 Fundamental Law on Education (Japanese: \textit{kyōiku kihonhō} 教育基本法)\textsuperscript{165};

\textsuperscript{164} The “essential equality of the sexes” phrase in the incumbent document occurs within the context of a disallowance of forced marriage and a guarantee of citizens’ rights to individual dignity in issues concerning the family. (In full, Article 24 reads: “[1] Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis; and [2] with regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.”) The LDP’s efforts to strike the clause from the Constitution are grounded in the party’s view of the current Article 24 as wrongfully overemphasizing Western-style individualistic values and ignoring the need to allocate “proper” gender roles to men and women in society, factors which are held accordingly to render the Article’s statements antithetical to “the Japanese national character.” Importantly, the Kōmeitō and the Sōka Gakkai have been candid and active in their opposition to the LDP’s stance on Article 24, countering that such notions impinge on “freedom of conscience and [actually] undermine traditional culture” (see Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.159). Deputy Kōmeitō Chairperson and leading party spokeswoman Hamayotsu Toshiko has earned recognition for being particularly critical of the LDP’s designs at revising the “essential equality” phrase (which have, as yet, gone unfulfilled), as well as for having outspokenly advocated “expanded social and political participation for women” in general (Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.244).

\textsuperscript{165} However, the Kōmeitō refused to accept any constitutional draft which included the term “\textit{aikokushin}” 爱国心, “patriotism,” which Hardacre has argued diluted “the LDP’s hopes to mandate the education system to become an engine for patriot production” (Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions” (2005): p.237, note #9). Indeed, the LDP ultimately succeeded in having a separate reform bill to amend the Fundamental Law on Education passed in 2006, but not until the Kōmeitō had forced the Liberal Democrats to “water down considerably some of the bill’s more nationalistic and patriotic language” (see Métraux,
revamping the division of Japanese territories from the present *to-dō-fu-ken* 都道府県
organizational format in favor of a “unitary system based on states (*shū* 州);”
constitutionally establishing the *hi no maru* 日の丸 as the national flag and *kimi ga yo* 君
が代 as the national anthem; codifying the Duty of the People (*kokumin no sekimu* 国民の
責務) to protect the independence and security of the nation, and also of the family; and
codifying “the right to privacy, freedom of information, environmental rights, rights of
victims of crimes, and the right to protection from defamation or libel.”\(^{166}\) Still, collective
self-defense was the true focal point of the committee’s report. The research group
recommended for the party to consent to retaining the first paragraph of Article 9, the
“war renunciation” clause, in its entirety, in exchange for an insertion into the second,

\(^{166}\) The LDP enumerated five basic principles behind these sweeping proposals for legislative
reform, and behind its approach to the question of Constitutional revision (in its non-defense-
related dimensions) overall. One, the LDP believed that the new constitution should include a
statement of commitment to the “universal values” of popular sovereignty, pacifism, and respect
for human rights already found within the present Constitution. Two, the new document should
include a statement expressing that Japanese history “reveals a unitary and unchanging set of
values” (e.g., “a love of peace and reverence for nature”), such as is not found within the present
Constitution. Three, the process of revision should be seen as adding “an appropriate expression
of Japanese values” to the “universal values” emphasized in the current Constitution. Four,
problems with the present Constitution like its overemphasis on individual rights, its inadequate
expression of the obligations of citizens, its not having been established by the Japanese people
themselves, its inadequate expression of the Japanese national characteristics, its positing the
people and the government in a relation of opposition, et cetera, should be addressed to reflect
the changed circumstances (globalization, new security threats) and social problems (people
regarding economic gain as the highest good, “exaggerated individualism”) not dealt with in the
1947 Constitution. And five, the benefits to revision, such as its ability to clarify the Japanese
national identity, that Japan and its people will become more trusted and “dignified” in the views
of other nations, and that the rules for the proper cooperative relationship between the
government and the people for the sake of promoting the national interest will be set forth,
should be understood clearly. See Hardacre, “Constitutional Revision and Japanese Religions”
“military renunciation” clause, of one statement recognizing the SDF and another explicitly guaranteeing collective self-defense.\(^{167}\) This appeared a sound strategy, and it reflected the mood of the public by that time, as well. In both the Yomiuri shinbun’s 2004 and 2005 polls, around sixty-five percent of a national sample affirmed the statement that, “Because a limit has been reached in applying interpretations of Article 9, it should be changed,” with survey participants most commonly expressing a wish to see paragraph one preserved and any revision carried out in paragraph two.\(^{168}\) Given these factors and the tremendous election-day success that had steadily re-expanded the Liberal Democrats’ presence in the Diet over the past five years (the party was then on the verge of achieving its own outright majority in the Lower House), the LDP seemed poised to formulate a draft of a new constitution that could genuinely challenge to make its revision designs at last become reality.

However, in a shocking turn of events, when the LDP put forth its ensuing “Tentative Plan” for revision on 16 November, 2004, it had backed off its stance on collective self-defense, and rather made Article 24 the party’s principal revision target. The document made note of a “new” understanding of the entire self-defense issue, according to which individual and collective self-defense could not be clearly differentiated under the concept of self-defense generally (although the Plan included an


indication that the matter would be addressed again “later”). Just a short time afterward, the party withdrew its Tentative Plan. In April of 2005 a new drafting group was created, led by Mori Yoshirō 森喜朗, who had been prime minister from 2000-01. This new panel declared an intention to submit a draft proposal for an original constitution within months, and at that point it was widely presumed that the LDP would resume its former push for the specification of collective self-defense. But on 6 June, 2005, the LDP announced that the so-called “Mori Draft,” too, would stop short of any direct reference to collective self-defense. What reason could the LDP have possibly had for backtracking from what had been its self-stated primary objective in bringing up Constitutional revision at that particular juncture in the first place? The mitigating influence of its coalition partner, the Kōmeitō, was the answer.

Despite having gained a majority in the Lower House in the elections of early 2005, the LDP remained unable to carry the Upper House without the Kōmeitō’s vote, and Article 96 of the postwar Constitution stipulated that any Constitutional amendment had to be “initiated by the Diet, through a concurring vote of two-thirds or more of all the members of each House [emphasis added].” This essentially meant that if the LDP could not acquire the backing of the Kōmeitō, the Mori Draft stood no realistic chance of being adopted. The Kōmeitō had shown an openness to compromising on a variety of defense-related issues since entering into its coalition with the LDP – going

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170 Ibid, pp.239-40.
along with the “Special Measures” anti-terrorism bills, echoing the LDP’s calls to continue fortifying the U.S.-Japan security alliance, consenting to the purchase of aerial refuelling tankers to extend the flight range of the SDF in 2001, acquiescing to the deployment of SDF ships “equipped with the advanced Aegis weapons system” to support the American-led “War on Terror” in the Middle East in 2004, and so on173 – and had even explored the idea of making certain concessions with respect to Article 9 since establishing its Research Commission on revision in 1999. However, it maintained steadfastly that it would not budge on collective self-defense.

Having been charged with defending the “Peace Constitution” from political attack by its Sōka Gakkai constituency, the Kōmeitō had come to focus through the LDP’s onslaught against Article 9 after September 11th on doing what it could to uphold the “pacifist essence” of the document. Permitting collective self-defense, and thereby “paving the way for [Japan] to reinforce military alliances with the U.S. and other countries and send the SDF around the world,” was regarded as an irreversible affront to that essence.174 Kōmeitō Diet member and ex-Chairman of the House of Representatives’ Committee on Education Endō Otohiko explained his party’s view of the situation:

“Article 9 is one of the most important sections of our Constitution. It commits Japan to a path of non-violence and non-belligerence. Thus

far Japan has adhered very closely to this path, avoiding any major conflicts... But this could well change if we abandon the true principles of Article 9. Yes, [we are open to agreeing] to change Article 9, but only in a way that states our [sole] military involvement will be in support of U.N. peace missions.”

Sōka Gakkai leaders added pressure, continuing to rally the organization’s membership around the issue. After stating in his 2001 annual peace proposal that, “I am concerned above all that the principles and spirit of the Peace Constitution not be eroded... and for this reason, I feel that Article 9 should not be touched,” Ikeda reiterated his view in his 2005 proposal, saying, “I have always said that Article 9 should be left untouched, and that is still my belief.” Gakkai Vice President Maeda Kunishige refused collective self-defense directly, stressing that, “We can never allow Japan to engage in collective self-defense... [or] any plan which might undermine the pacifist principles of Article 9.”

Armed with this base of support and, most crucially, aware that the LDP needed to rely on his party to actualize its revision ambitions, Kōmeitō Chairman Kanzaki Takenori re-affirmed the Kōmeitō’s commitment to protecting Article 9 “without change,” on 3 May (the Japanese holiday, “Constitution Day”), 2005. In so doing, Kanzaki forced the LDP to leave collective self-defense aside, and at that point the direction of the Liberal Democrats’ overall efforts to revise the Constitution began to

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shift until the entire process looked, according to Hardacre, “increasingly like a piecemeal business of addressing those few issues where a broad political consensus could be obtained.” Although excitement was nevertheless high when the Mori Draft was presented at the LDP’s 50th anniversary celebration on 22 November, 2005, the proposal’s total omission of collective self-defense in its revised Article 9 noticeably contradicted the drafting panel’s promotion of the document as having been designed to let Japan play a greater international security role. Afterward, the draft failed to generate sufficient support to warrant deliberation in the Diet with opposition parties. And with that, the Kōmeitō’s resistance to collective self-defense had derailed the LDP’s best chance at rewriting the Constitution.

5.7.3 Sōka Gakkai Sentiment toward the Kōmeitō’s Behavior as LDP Coalition Partner

In consideration of the hermeneutical strategy devised by Sōka Gakkai leadership to evince the movement’s ability to properly interpret the True Dharma after excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū, the Kōmeitō’s experience of success at defending the “Peace Constitution” meant putting questions about the Gakkai’s religious legitimacy in the rear-view mirror. Japan had been preserved as the “model nation” for peace-loving countries everywhere, which was especially important to the health of SGI, given that the peace movement was routinely cited as one of the group’s most appealing aspects by members in overseas branches of the Society. The peace

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program’s efficacy was made plain at home, too, by the facts that after 2005 more and more Japanese started once again favoring the maintenance of the Constitution in its present form\textsuperscript{180}, and that scores of others began to involve themselves in NGOs or other grass-roots-level organizations working to strengthen support for Article 9.\textsuperscript{181} But

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{180}{By April, 2008, the Yomiuri shinbun’s regular poll indicated that a majority of Japanese people were opposed to Constitutional revision – the first time that had been the case in more than a decade-and-a-half. The survey’s results were as follows: 42.5% of respondents answered that the Constitution should be revised, while 43.1% said it should not be changed; 12.5% of respondents stated that they wished to see Article 9, clause 1 changed, while 81.6% believed there was no need to change it; and 36.8% of respondents expressed a desire to see Article 9, clause 2 changed, while 54.5% felt there was no need to change it. An April, 2009, poll conducted by the Asahi shinbun demonstrated support for the “Peace Constitution” continued to grow from that point. According to that newspaper’s research, 64% of a national sample believed that Article 9 “should not be amended,” compared to only 26% who felt that Article 9 “should be amended.” Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.296; 299-300. }

\footnote{181}{There were already a handful of citizens' organizations that had been formed in response to the Article 9 revision issue as of the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century (the first major one was the “No to Constitutional Revision Citizens’ Network,” formed in 1999). However, after the severity of the threat against the “peace clause” rose immensely amidst Constitutional revision discussions aimed at allowing Japan a more active role in America’s “War on Terror” in the years from 2001 to 2005, a veritable “renaissance [of] grass-roots pacifist activism” was triggered in Japan (Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.295-96, 302) – to the extent that by 2008 there were more than 8000 NGOs, NPOs, and other financially independent social movement groups taking the protection of Article 9 as their core purpose nationwide (see Port, Kenneth L. “The Story of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.” The Berkeley Electronic Press [from the SelectedWorks of Kenneth L. Port]. September 10, 2008. [September 23, 2011]. http://works.bepress.com/kenneth_port/4. p.15). Most of these belong to an influential Japanese lobby network known as the “Article 9 Association,” which counts 1994 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Oe Kenzaburô among its promoters and participants. Many other newly-established organizations have operated independently, or through ties with activist groups in other countries, to also succeed in generating a great deal of popular support for Article 9 (such as “Peace Not War Japan,” an NPO that has worked to increase the public’s commitment to finding non-violent solutions to international conflicts through its sponsoring of cultural activities like music concerts and art exhibitions, since having been created seven years ago as an offshoot of a U.K.-based group originally founded to protest the U.S.’s military intervention in Afghanistan). Finally, a number of older Japanese left-wing activist associations have come to make defending Article 9 a priority of theirs’, as well. This has included, for one, the liberal “All-Japan Teachers’ Union.” The largest – and oldest, having been formed in 1947 – labor union for teachers and school staff employees in Japan, the Nikkyôso 日教組, as it is known in Japanese, has decried the LDP’s attempts to officially establish kimi ga yo as Japan’s national anthem, to officially establish
although it was the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition that had made all of this possible, there had been a substantial cost to the Kōmeitō’s participation in the alliance, as well, for both components of the Gakkai-Tō coupling. Sōka Gakkai followers were deeply split over the Kōmeitō’s decision to endorse Koizumi’s dispatch of Maritime Self-Defense Force personnel to the Indian Ocean, and Air and Ground SDF to Iraq, among other actions and inactions that led a sizable portion of the membership to lament that “the nature of 'the party of peace' had changed.” Many adherents, while noting that it was their duty

the hi no maru as Japan’s national flag, and to alter Article 9 as “moves to restore symbolic links to Japan’s Imperial system and past militarism.” The Tokyo-headquartered international NGO “Peace Boat” has been another established liberal organization to take up the cause of protecting Article 9. Founded in 1983, and now with branches in eight different countries and a sister association in Geneva, Switzerland, the “Peace Boat” utilizes bi-annual voyages around the world “in the name of peace” to build solidarity among groups that work for peace, human rights, environmental protection, and sustainable development globally. It now also strives to shield Article 9 from attack through educating the public, lobbying, and engaging in campaigning on behalf of the “peace clause.” See Hein (2009): pp.295-96. (The interested reader should in addition see the Harvard University Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies’ website [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~rijs/crrp/web_archive/ngos.html], as it provides links with information on approximately a dozen more organizations that have sprung up to oppose the revision of Article 9, plus links to several others that are in favor of Constitutional revision.)

182 Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): p.18. Aside from the international deployments of the SDF, likely the issue that elicited the strongest objections from Sōka Gakkai members toward the behavior of the Kōmeitō during the period of its taking part in the governing coalition with the LDP was with respect to the “Yasukuni problem.” Yasukuni Jinja靖国神社, or Yasukuni (literally, “Pacifying the nation”) Shrine, is a Shintō shrine originally built in 1869 at a location in Tokyo chosen by the Meiji Emperor, to honor the “souls” of individuals who died fighting on behalf of the imperial faction in the Boshin War (a Japanese civil war between 1868-69 which resulted in the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the “restoration” of full political power to the imperial court – the event known as the “Meiji Restoration” – as well as the accompanying move of the emperor’s residence from Kyoto to Tokyo). Yasukuni was only one of dozens of such war memorial shrines built at that point, but the site took on increasing centrality as the primary national shrine for the commemoration of Japan’s war dead as the country pursued colonial expansion in East Asia and the Western Pacific region throughout the latter portion of the 19th century until the conclusion of World War II. By 1946, when the shrine was stripped of its state sponsorship as part of the reforms enacted by the Allied Occupation and reduced to the status of a privately funded and operated religious institution, nearly two-and-a-
half million persons killed in the course of Japan's military campaigns were enshrined at
Yasukuni, including thousands of women and children who died while engaging in relief
operations on battlefields, or while working in factories in support of the war efforts.
Controversially, also among them were more than fifty thousand former Japanese colonial
subjects from throughout East Asia. The enshrinement of these individuals was performed
without consultation of surviving family members, or in some cases carried out against family
members' direct stated wishes (many Japanese have also attempted, unsuccessfully, to refuse the
enshrinement of loved ones at Yasukuni), and significantly, once effect ed enshrinement is held to
be permanent: according to Shrine priests, by the process the deceased is converted into a kami
(generally translated as "god" or "deity," kami refers to an "awe-inspiring spirit" of some kind)
which then merges completely with other kami in the same seat, and therefore there is no
possibility for separation and "un-enshrinement" after the fact. Another factor adding still further
to the controversy surrounding Yasukuni is that in 1959 over a thousand Class-B and -C war
criminals, as determined by the 1948 Allied International Military Tribunal for the Far East, were
enshrined there, followed in 1978 by the enshrinement of fourteen convicted Class-A war
criminals. Numerous critics have pointed out that this element of the dilemma becomes even
more contentious when it is considered that, one, enshrinement is believed to wholly absolve the
individual of any evil acts committed during his or her lifetime, and two, as kami, the souls of
those enshrined are not merely prayed for, but rather "worshipped," or prayed to. In any event,
between 2001-06, Prime Minister Koizumi reignited the conflict by making six personal visits to
Yasukuni. Although he maintained he did so on each occasion as a private citizen, Koizumi's
actions were perceived by the victims of Japan's wartime aggression in East Asia as "direct
provocations" and as an official affirmation by Japan of its past deeds. In particular, the Chinese
ambassador to Japan over that time, Wang Yi, was outspokenly critical. Noting that Yasukuni's
precincts feature a museum (the Yūshūkan) and several other exhibits that praise the efforts and
sacrifices of the Japanese soldiers "who fought to liberate Asia from the hold of the Western
imperialists" and make available books "which categorically deny the allegations [pertaining to] the
notorious 1937-38 'Rape of Nanjing,'" yet utterly fail to mention the atrocities committed by
the Japanese soldiers, or the up to thirty million Chinese and twenty million Southeast Asians
killed as a consequence of Japan's militarism, Wang stated after Koizumi's 2005 visit that
"[Koizumi] must shoulder the historical responsibility for damaging Sino-Japanese relations."
The Sōka Gakkai, which had been – along with the Kōmeitō – at the forefront of efforts to
improve the relationship between China and Japan since the late 1960s, vociferously denounced
Koizumi's Yasukuni visits, and followers of the religious group openly blamed the Kōmeitō for
not having done enough to stop Koizumi. Many wanted the Kōmeitō to lead a push that had
emerged to have a new, secular war memorial constructed, to try to help resolve the controversy.
The Kōmeitō has since actively participated in such a push, jointly with the DPJ (albeit one that
has yet to bear fruit in the form of the actual establishment of a new monument), and in fact did
speak out against Koizumi going to Yasukuni during his term as prime minister. But in the view
of a large number of Gakkai adherents, the party's failure to prevent the leader of its coalition
partner from undertaking to repeatedly commit such an offensive gesture throughout his prime
ministership left the Kōmeitō "guilty by association." To them, the entire unsettling episode
provided sufficient reason to worry whether the allegiance the Kōmeitō was being forced to show
to the Conservatives due to the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance was a price too high for the Sōka Gakkai
as supporters of the party to “alert” the Kōmeitō if they believed it was “drifting too far,” stated they did not consider the Kōmeitō to have fundamentally changed, that they rather saw the party as doing its best in spite of having had to make some painful choices such as always is necessary in the realm of politics. Many others, however, felt that the Kōmeitō had reneged on its pledge to uphold its pacifist principles. For example, one group of Sōka Gakkai members brought a petition with 2000 signatures to Kōmeitō headquarters in Tokyo to protest the dispatchment of SDF to Iraq, arguing that the Kōmeitō was simply “following in the LDP’s footsteps,” and that even though the SDF personnel would not be engaging in military operations, their presence alone violated Article 9. Kōmeitō officials, for their part, attempted to clarify their reasoning for not opposing the LDP’s SDF deployments for the overseas missions. Dietman Endō contended that Iraq, as a “disaster area,” was badly in need of humanitarian aid, and that the gesture of providing such aid was fully compatible with the Buddhist notion of compassion. Deputy Chair of the Kōmeitō Hamayotsu Toshiko held that the party’s approval of sending the SDF to Iraq should be understood as having been entirely for the purpose of lending the people of that country support in rebuilding, and not for war, and she likewise stressed that the action was “fully in line with the Kōmeitō’s sense of compassion for the suffering of others;” Hamayotsu further remarked on the value of


Ibid, p.166.
the Kōmeitō’s cooperating with the LDP that it “had brought stability to the once-chaotic affairs of the Diet and given [the Kōmeitō] leverage to forestall the more right-wing members of the LDP who want to remilitarize the nation.”\(^{186}\) These explanations notwithstanding, it would appear accurate to say that both the Kōmeitō and the Sōka Gakkai were struggling to get a firm grasp on just what “creative pacifism” should look like. Before either side had been able to figure it out, the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition (or more precisely, 9/11, international SDF dispatchments, and the Constitutional revision debate as navigated from within the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition) produced circumstances that, aside from affording opportunities for significant triumphs, exposed the gap between Sōka Gakkai members’ ideals and what the Kōmeitō could and chose to try to actually accomplish. The tension surfacing from that gap may not have seriously threatened the organizations’ relationship as a whole, but it was enough to command attention as arguably the biggest challenge the partnership faced moving forward into the future.

### 5.7.4 End of the LDP-Kōmeitō Coalition, and the Present Status of the Revision Debate

Soon after Koizumi stepped down as prime minister in September, 2006, the LDP-Kōmeitō governing alliance began to rapidly fall out of the public’s favor. Koizumi had been extremely popular throughout most of his time in office, despite (in some circles, due to) the controversial nature of several of his decisions in relation to Japan’s foreign policy, because he had made important strides toward stimulating the country’s

moribund economy, and because he had promised to reform his party such that it would stop serving narrow interest groups and start pursuing what was best for all Japanese. Yet the LDP’s basic orientation did not fundamentally change, and as Koizumi’s successors increasingly thinned down his revisionist agenda – plus were subjected to criticism over poor cabinet choices, and ineffective handling of the social security crisis brought on by Japan’s aging population and low birth rates – the DPJ seized the chance to begin regaining ground. The Kōmeitō, too, was running into problems, in that the party was once more finding itself unable to push its votership past certain levels. As observed by Japanese independent journalist Yamada Naoki, the Kōmeitō had spent nearly a decade aiming to reach ten million votes in the proportional representation races, but after topping out at just over nine million in the 2005 elections and then seeing its share decrease sharply again thereafter, party officials were resigning themselves to the fact that “that feasibility was almost nil.” Both the LDP and the Kōmeitō suffered sound defeats at the polls in 2007, resulting in the loss of the coalition’s majority in the 242-seat Upper House, and eliminating any hopes for a quick rebound. Finally, in the 45th General Election of Japan held on 30 August, 2009, an overwhelming rout at the hands of the DPJ brought the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition to its end. The election consisted of parallel voting in all eleven regions of the country for each of the 300 House of Representatives’ seats for single-member constituencies, as well as for each of the 180

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seats for proportional representation in multi-member constituencies. Of the total of 480 contested seats, the DPJ won 308 while the LDP took only 119, which equalled a loss of close to 200 seats for the LDP.\textsuperscript{189} The Kōmeitō, which at the conclusion of July, 2009, had counted thirty-one of its members among the national representation in the Lower House, finished a month later with just twenty-one. It had run eight candidates for single-member constituencies in the August races, including the party’s Chief Representative and Secretary-General, and although they also ran with the official endorsement of the LDP, not a single one had been elected.\textsuperscript{190}

Being ousted from the ruling position it had enjoyed via its alliance with the LDP has brought about numerous challenges for the Kōmeitō, and its Sōka Gakkai support base, since 2009, and one of these has continued to be with concern to the issue of Constitutional revision. Even though the Gakkai-Tō had been able to stall the momentum of the Mori Draft in 2005, the prime minister immediately following Koizumi, Abe Shinzō 安倍晋三, had placed the incorporation of collective self-defense into the nation’s supreme legal document right back onto Japan’s political docket during his one-year term. Abe had lacked the public support – and more pertinently, the full control of the Diet – necessary to realize his revision goals.\textsuperscript{191} However, he had

\begin{footnotes}
\item[190] Ibid, pp.85-86. The total number of votes cast nationwide for the Kōmeitō in the August, 2009 proportional representation balloting was 8,054,007 – a more than ten percent decrease from the tremendous success the party had experienced in 2005.
\item[191] Abe was also frustrated, in no small part because of the Kōmeitō’s opposition, in his efforts to enact legislation that would, one, remove the cabinet’s constraint of having to pre-establish a finite time frame for each overseas mission of the SDF, and two, allow the government to dispatch
\end{footnotes}
succeeded in initiating two concrete measures that ensured defenders of Article 9 would have to keep on their toes in the future, as well. First, Abe accomplished upgrading the Defense Agency to a full-fledged governmental ministry, overseeing its conversion into the Japan Ministry of Defense (MOD; Japanese: ぼえいしょう 防衛省) in 2007. Accompanying the official unveiling of the MOD in January of that year was the release of associated “National Defense Program Guidelines,” which proclaimed Japan’s intention to take on a more assertive role internationally, especially within the East Asian sphere, after years of sheltering beneath the U.S. security umbrella. The Guidelines moreover declared that in view of the “multiple threats” by which Japan is faced today, foreign deployments were thenceforth to be understood as part of the main mission of the SDF.192 Second, in May, 2007, Abe effected approval of a bill that potentially could ease the process of amending or revising the Constitution by altering the stipulations of the incumbent document’s Article 96. Referred to as the “National Referendum Law,” the act proposed a reduction of Article 96’s “two-thirds of the members of both Houses of the Diet” requirement, to “a simple majority in both Houses,” as the figure needed for any revision to be accepted by parliament; in the case such a parliamentary majority was reached, the Law then called for the holding of a national referendum whereby citizens

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192 Ibid, p.298.
would decide by a majority of “casted votes” (no minimum turnout was specified in the legislation) whether or not to adopt the changes. The bill was naturally controversial, to the extent that a “freeze” was put on its implementation until May of 2010. But with this condition, it passed through the Diet relatively smoothly. Its passage was thanks mainly to backing Abe received from a pro-revision network of national delegates known as the “Parliamentarian League for the Amendment of Article 96.” Comprised of politicians representing several different parties, the League was headed by Ozawa Ichirō, who had become a leading member of the Democratic Party of Japan after the merging of his Liberal Party with the DPJ in 2003. Importantly, the presence of revisionists such as Ozawa in the DPJ underscores the fact that Abe’s initiatives not only equated to preliminary steps toward facilitating the launch of another LDP offensive aimed at collective self-defense, if and when the opportunity presents itself, but also that there exists a very real possibility a consensus on rewriting Article 9 could be achieved while the DPJ still holds sway over the Diet. This is the worst-case scenario the Kōmeítō and the Sōka Gakkai have been bracing against at present. Both organizations have remained adamant that the “essence” of the “Peace Constitution” must be maintained, but the sixth and current president of the Sōka Gakkai Harada Minoru 原田稔 has hedged somewhat even on the religious group’s stance with regard to “absolute

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pacifism,” probably out of a recognition that if indeed a serious threat against Article 9 were to be mobilized at this moment the Gakkai and the Kōmeitō are rather limited in terms of what they could do to combat it. A recent, quite nebulous, remark made by Harada on the subject should be seen in this connection: “We should hold fast to the pacifist principles of Article 9. Only after a wide national debate has taken place should we move forward, and we should not tolerate anything done hastily.”195

Yet fortunately for the Gakkai-Tō partnership, although the National Referendum Law has now been in effect for over twenty months, there has to date been no need to “tolerate” anything done to the Constitution at all. Largely due to its political opposition of the LDP, the DPJ has not made Constitutional revision a top priority on its policy agenda, and has dragged its feet on putting together any concrete draft for a new constitution that could be submitted to the public at a national plebiscite in the way called for by the Referendum Law.196 During the prime ministership of long-time party

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195 Benedict, “Inroads or Crossroads?” (2011): p.6. While Ikeda himself has not issued a formal statement on Article 9 since 2005, his position on the matter has not changed, and he continues to advocate the protection of the “peace clause” in lectures and at SGI events in which he participates all over the world. He also has continued to stress his belief in the central roles the U.N., and the individual “global citizen,” must play in any true quest for world peace: “[The U.N.] must serve as the key venue and focus of our efforts to address global issues. To strengthen and reform the U.N., it is necessary to pay ever-greater attention to the voices of civil society and to build a solidarity of concerned citizens” (Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.162).

196 That is, as a party the DPJ has yet to submit an official proposal for a revised constitution, such as the LDP has done with its Mori Draft. A number of individuals within the DPJ, however, have openly advocated personal drafts pertaining at least to important sections of the Constitution, and these have revealed how their composers wish to see revision carried out. Not surprisingly, among these types of personal proposals suggestions have most commonly been aimed at the fashion in which Article 9 should be changed; also not surprisingly, Ozawa has been among those to issue a proposal for revising Article 9. Ozawa’s approach favors adding one sentence at the end
leader Kan Naoto from June, 2010 through August of last year, in fact, the DPJ more or
less shelved revision discussions altogether in order to woo the SDPJ – a group that has
staunchly defended Article 9 – into establishing a governing coalition, showing the
bigger concern for the DPJ has been with trying to further solidify its advantage over the
LDP in parliament.\footnote{Ibid, p.3.}

Still, the DPJ has given ample evidence it is not averse to the prospect of altering
the present Constitution, and there are mixed signals within the party’s security
platform that have not let anti-revisionists’ uneasiness subside.\footnote{Hein, “Realpolitik Versus Principled Politics” (2009): pp.293; 298-302. For instance, in 2005 the DPJ declared its “four basic security pillars” to be: “pacifism,” “civilian control of the SDF,” “U.N. PKO participation,” and “a restricted right to self-defense.” But since that time, the clearest statements the party has made with respect to its national defense policy are that, “Japan has not renounced the exercise of its right to individual self-defense if [the nation is] subject to an unlawful attack from abroad,” and that, “The existence of the current SDF is not unconstitutional.” It has insinuated that it accepts the CLB’s ban on collective self-defense (inasmuch as it has held U.N. approval should be mandatory for involvement in overseas missions, and U.N. approval would not necessarily be required in the event of an invocation of

of the “military renunciation” clause in order to clearly specify the constitutional legitimacy of
Japan’s right to (individual) self-defense: “(1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based
on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation
and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. (2) In order to
accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war
potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.
The regulation in paragraph 2 does not prevent the maintenance of military power for the purpose of
exercising Japan’s right of self-defense against military attack by [an outside] country [emphasis
added].” Another proposal dealing with Article 9 which commanded considerable attention was
that submitted by the DPJ’s first prime minister, Hatoyama Yukio 堺山由紀夫, who was in office
from just after the party’s rousing victory in the election at the end of August, 2009, until June,
2010. Hatoyama’s proposal was actually a call for a total overhaul of Article 9, reading as follows:
“Japan shall maintain land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential. Japan shall neither
use the forces for acts of aggression nor shall Japan employ conscription.” Khan, Shamshad A. “Is
Japan Ready to Shun the Peace Constitution?” Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. May 21,
ready-to-shun-the-peace-constitution/. pp.5-6, notes #2 and #3.

197 Ibid, p.3.
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missions, and U.N. approval would not necessarily be required in the event of an invocation of
Guidelines issued by the MOD in 2010, for example, the DPJ’s ambivalence toward the security questions that are at the crux of the revision issue was once again evident. These Guidelines did not indicate impending plans to revise the Constitution or re-interpret it to allow for collective self-defense, or to substantially increase defense spending, or to develop a law to enable deployment of the SDF without prior legislative permission. However, they did express Japan’s pledges to, one, formulate a “more elaborate” system of defense cooperation with other countries like Australia, South Korea, India, and Southeast Asian and NATO states, and two, draw closer to Washington in response to the threats posed by “an increasingly unpredictable and aggressive nuclear-capable North Korea” and by China’s emerging “maritime assertiveness.” Even more recently, the DPJ has made at least one open gesture toward re-stimulating the Constitutional revision debate. As reported by the Yomiuri shinbun in its 19 September, 2011 edition, with the public slowly drifting back toward a majority favoring amending the postwar the right of collective self-defense to join the military operations of some ally in a third country, e.g., the U.S. in Iraq), although it has yet to declare so unequivocally. Also, the DPJ has echoed the LDP’s opinion that Japan needs to be willing to offer “boots on the ground” to assist in sanctioned international uses of force, but it has not specified a permissible geographic area of such operations. In actual practice, the DPJ has supported inspection of suspicious North Korean cargo vessels, and has upheld SDF participation in an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia originally begun under the LDP in March, 2009. On the other hand, it was then-Prime Minister Hatoyama who brought an end to Japan’s refuelling operations in the Indian Ocean in 2010, by refusing to renew the law that had authorized that mission.

Cited from Chanlett-Avery, Emma. “The U.S.-Japan Alliance,” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (January 18, 2011): pp.4-5. The identifications of North Korea and China as security threats were in reference specifically to the former’s having in recent years conducted two nuclear underground tests (the tests were conducted in 2006 and 2009, in direct defiance of U.N. resolutions; on each occasion, a series of missiles was also launched into the Sea of Japan), and an episode involving the latter in which a Chinese fishing vessel collided with a Japanese Coast Guard ship, thereby sparking a major diplomatic crisis in the fall of 2010.
Constitution (just not revising Article 9) and the LDP set to come within striking distance of the DPJ in the polls prior to the turn of the 2012 calendar year, the Democrats and current prime minister Noda Yoshihiko 野田佳彦 have revived their party's special research panel on revision for the first time in four years in an effort to begin to work to a national consensus on the matter. It is too early to tell what effect this move will have and whether these circumstances will ultimately lead to changes to the Constitution. What is known is that, for the time being, the “Peace Constitution” remains intact, and Article 9 remains a primary staple of Japan’s foreign policy – and as long as such stays the case, the Sōka Gakkai and the political party it supports can truthfully say they are an integral part of the reason why.
6. Conclusion

6.1 Reviewing the Sōka Gakkai’s Impact on the Constitutional Revision Process

In 2006, Sōka Gakkai Vice President and Senior Public Information Spokesman Terasaki Hirotsugu conducted an interview with Daniel Métraux in which he looked back at the events whereby the Kōmeitō had been able to keep the LDP from incorporating the concept of collective self-defense into its Mori Draft for a new Japanese constitution one year earlier. At one point in the conversation, Terasaki summarized of the Kōmeitō’s involvement in the debate, “There are elements within the LDP that want to move to the Right, [to rewrite] the Constitution to remove Article 9 and to rearm Japan, but the Kōmeitō has prevented this from happening by acting as a kind of ‘brake’ on the Conservatives.”¹ Then, in terms of what the Kōmeitō’s accomplishment meant from the perspective of his own organization, he continued:

“The Sōka Gakkai is a religious organization that seeks to help both the individual and society develop peace, harmony, and prosperity. Developing a truly peaceful world is one of our cherished goals, [and hence we] support absolute pacifism, which is a key concept of Buddhism. Unfortunately, we live in a world where many different individuals, groups, and nations are fighting for power. We believe in the idea of engaged Buddhism where we must play an active role in society to achieve better results... We realize the importance of politics, because he who controls the nation’s politics can control the destiny of the nation. In the past, political parties in Japan have had close ties with special interest groups, and the LDP has had close ties with a number of Conservative religious groups over the

years. The Kōmeitō, on the other hand, represents the downtrodden...”

Scrutinized attentively, Terasaki’s comments offer a telling, if indirect, recapitulation of the role the Sōka Gakkai has played in the contemporary Japanese Constitutional revision process. The Kōmeitō has been the group charged with representing what was “best” for the citizens of Japan in the parliament, and it was the Kōmeitō that, by virtue of its empowered status as a coalition partner upon which the LDP had to depend in order to gain control of the Diet’s Upper House during the parties’ decade-long run together, successfully blocked the Liberal Democrats from actualizing efforts to codify the right to go anywhere in the world to defend the interests of the country’s political allies as a constitutional prerogative of the Japanese nation. This latter, tangible achievement has been the Gakkai-Tō’s most visible contribution to the revision process, and accordingly, what recognition the organizations have received in Japan’s vernacular press with regard to the issue has been focused on the Kōmeitō’s resistance to the LDP, without making the link to the Sōka Gakkai. However, by connecting the dots within Terasaki’s remarks, or by observing the congruence between statements made by other Gakkai leaders like Ikeda and Maeda and those made by leading Kōmeitō officials such as Kanzaki, Endō, and Hamayotsu throughout the last ten years, one may discern what

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4 Another striking example of the univocality exhibited by Sōka Gakkai and Kōmeitō leaders on Constitution-related matters can be added in comparing the explanation offered by Endō on his party’s refusal to compromise on any measures that might represent an abandonment or
scholars have been realizing for some time – that behind the scenes, the Sōka Gakkai has exerted a powerful influence on the manner of the Kōmeitō’s handling of the Constitutional revision debate. It is ostensible, first, that it had been the Sōka Gakkai’s exceptionally high level of political activeness as a movement, from leadership down to membership and back up, that generated the electoral fortitude to put the Kōmeitō in its position of strength in the Diet so as to make the party a viable candidate to be recruited into a ruling agreement by the LDP to begin with. And second, it was the Sōka Gakkai which functioned as the source of the value system that informed the Kōmeitō’s approach toward its 1999 to 2009 alliance with the LDP, in general, and certainly, toward the revision question, in particular. Why else would Kōmeitō decision-makers, in instances in which they chose to pursue courses of action that seemed to conflict with their religious constituency’s sensibilities (none could have more so than consenting to send the SDF to Iraq), have showed the utmost concern with justifying how their actions were in accordance with Gakkai principles in one way or other, as they without fail did? Such a point has already been made above, but another quote from Endō helps to drive it home that much more forcefully: “Mahāyāna Buddhism is not confined to inside circumvention of Article 9 during the period of the debate’s hottest contestation (see pages 215-16 of this text above), with the following statement given by Terasaki on the importance of “maintaining the essence of the ‘Peace Constitution’” in 2007: “Article 9 upholds Japan’s commitment to world peace and its role as an active participant in programs to foster a more peaceful and humane world. Any change in Article 9 that would encourage Japan to advance as a military power would run counter to the goals of the Sōka Gakkai movement. As a Buddhist organization we are deeply committed to the principles of pacifism and we cannot support any measures that would dilute this stand.” See Métraux, “Religion, Politics, and Constitutional Reform in Japan” (2007): p.167.
yourself; it is about action in society... It is not about compromise, but application.

Sometimes it seems like compromise, but Buddhist principles are very flexible." What this explanation and others like it clearly indicate is that pressure from the Sōka Gakkai was inherently a guiding factor in the limits Endō and other Kōmeitō representatives set as far as permitting the “application” of any changes to, or compromises on, Article 9. To be sure, it can be said that if the Kōmeitō served as the “brake” on the Conservatives in revision discussions, the entity which “stepped on the gas” or “applied the brakes” for the Kōmeitō as the debate’s path took shape was most definitely none other than the Sōka Gakkai. Thus, there should be no mistaking that the tremendously impactful role the Kōmeitō has played in the revision process, is also the tremendously impactful role the Sōka Gakkai has played in the revision process.

With that established, it is worth reflecting for a moment on the gravity of what exactly the Sōka Gakkai managed in helping stave off the LDP’s attempts to rewrite the country’s postwar Constitution to permit collective self-defense in the crucial period from 2001-06. With the strongest political force in Japan, in the form of a party that had held nearly unbroken control over the national parliament since 1955, arrayed against them and concentrating on the issue as priority number one; with a sizable and influential contingent of the largest opposition group agreeing in principle with the

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6 One Sōka Gakkai member was in fact quoted (also in 2006) as using this very same language that had been employed by Terasaki, only, as here, in reference to the Sōka Gakkai’s relationship to the Kōmeitō, rather than the Kōmeitō’s relationship to the LDP. See Dorman, “Religious Politics, Japanese Style” (2006): p.18.
basic position of that largest overall group; and with legitimate reasons having emerged to fear that unless changes were made the country may no longer be equipped to deal with all of the various security threats facing it in today’s geopolitical context, the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō were able to maintain their ground to prevent revision – at the time when popular support for the document happened to be at its historical nadir, no less. In so doing the organizations preserved the status quo (for better or worse) as pertained to Japan’s relations with its East Asian neighbors, its position within the U.S.-Japan Security alliance, the standing of its SDF, and countless other issues “[associated with] the orientation of the Japanese state in world affairs” and therefore under the scope of the “political manifesto” that is Article 9. The Gakkai-Tō’s anti-revision posture of the early- to mid-2000s, in other words, had implications that could be felt not only by every citizen of Japan, but truly by billions of people worldwide. And while obviously the two groups were far from acting alone in resisting the LDP’s calls for collective self-defense, the reality is that if the LDP had had a pro-revision coalition partner, with a pro-revision support base, in 2004-05, it is quite likely Japan would have a new constitution today in 2012. That the Sōka Gakkai was capable of holding up its end of the opposition efforts as a lay movement divorced from any orthodox religious institution,

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7 The characterization of Article 9 as a “manifesto” is borrowed from Boyd and Samuels (Boyd and Samuels, “Nine Lives?” 2005: p.5), likewise to emphasize the uniqueness of the path the Article charts for Japan’s foreign policy. Boyd and Samuels’ comment in full was: “Article 9 is a political manifesto, a declaration of general principle constraining state action. In this sense, it is similar to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution – only, instead of limiting state power vis-à-vis the citizenry, it curtails state power vis-à-vis other countries by specifying the orientation of the Japanese state in world affairs.”
incidentally, would only seem to make its feats all the more remarkable. From this perspective it is proper to now close with a re-examination of the manner in which the Sōka Gakkai itself has been affected by its engagement in the revision process.

6.2 Reviewing the Impact of the Constitutional Revision Process upon the Sōka Gakkai

Since being ratified in 1947, the Japanese “Peace Constitution” has meant many things to many groups and to many individuals, and no section of the document has elicited more intense sentiments – or fierier controversy – than has Article 9. As has been demonstrated in the preceding pages, to some, Article 9 has been a beacon of hope for the possibility that one day a true global peace can be forged. To some, it has functioned as a progressive supplement to the U.N. Charter’s Article 26, which promotes “the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least [possible] diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources,” and as such, has symbolized Japan’s determination to be both a peace-loving nation and an international civilian power. To some, it has served as a mechanism helping to prevent an arms race in East Asia, and steered Japan clear of “the flawed doctrine of nuclear [proliferation].” To others, it has been an ongoing reminder of an unspeakable national humiliation after a devastating defeat in war at the hands of a foreign enemy; has acted as “an impediment to the realization of national autonomy;” has stunted the country’s

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socio-political development, owing to its “backward” and “isolationist” ideological character; or has constituted a fundamental breach of responsibility on the part of the state, insofar as the primary purpose of any government is to protect the people and homeland, yet Article 9 does the disservice to the people of “deluding” them into believing the international community will defend Japan against its adversaries in the event such a need should arise. Over time some have used Article 9 as a tool for political gain, others have viewed it as an obstacle to be interpreted away, and others have embraced it as an excuse to not bear the costs that would be associated with full-scale, unilateral rearmament.¹¹ Some have seen Article 9 as critical to Japan’s earning the trust of the global society at large, while to others Article 9 has put Japan in danger of losing the trust of the global society at large. Some have argued the “peace clause” has constituted Japan’s greatest contribution toward the well-being of the international community, at the same time others have argued the clause represents Japan’s greatest hindrance to contributing toward the well-being of the international community. To the Sōka Gakkai and its believers Article 9 has drawn out many of the more liberal-minded of these same reactions. But over the past two decades, above all, the significance of Article 9 to the Sōka Gakkai has resided within the surprising route the Peace Constitution’s most famous provision made available for the group to evince its status as a legitimate source of spiritual authority, after circumstances had rendered the Gakkai a wholly independent religious lay movement.

The Sōka Gakkai’s excommunication from the Nichiren Shōshū in November of 1991 had been a chaotic and disputatious affair. It had featured the exposure of numerous scandals on both sides, as well as a series of mutually escalating accusations regarding disagreements between the clergy and the Society over matters ranging from the administrative, to the doctrinal, to the personal. Yet first and foremost, it had been an issue about authority. The Nichiren Shōshū priesthood had claimed “sole authority” over subjects of religious concern, and demanded obedience from the Sōka Gakkai and its lay following in recognition of what the orthodox sect’s leaders saw as the appropriate manner of reciprocal functioning between laity and clergy. The Sōka Gakkai had challenged the priesthood on the grounds of a belief that everyone had equal access to enlightenment, that the clergy’s proper task was to help people fully realize their innate potential by supplying guidance toward true faith (in True Buddhism) using the vast means at its disposal, not to dictatorially wield those means as ends unto themselves. To the Shōshū priests, however, those “means” – a direct link to Nichiren through an uninterrupted chain of succession, possession of the dai-gohonzon, an institutional base at Taiseki-ji – were the source of true faith. The priesthood therefore felt that its authority was beyond questioning, while in the Sōka Gakkai’s estimation such a notion represented a failure on the part of the priesthood to remember its correct place. The rift that grew out of the difference in understandings proved irreconcilable, and ultimately, was responsible for the Sōka Gakkai’s expulsion from the Nichiren Shōshū.
When excommunicated, the Sōka Gakkai instantly lost its safety net, and its long- and short-term survival as a religious organization was far less than assured. The movement continued to profess that it had a “unique spiritual mandate from Nichiren,” but excommunication denied the Gakkai access to the sacred objects upon which it had relied in the past in carrying out its mission of kōsen rufu. Most importantly, the Sōka Gakkai was also stripped of the claim to authority it had always naturally had through its affiliation with the Nichiren Shōshū and the Shōshū’s seven hundred years’ history as an orthodox school of Japanese Buddhism.\footnote{Métraux, “The Dispute Between the Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū Priesthood” (1992): p.326.} Faced with a desperate need to prove the legitimacy of its version of Nichiren Buddhism, Gakkai leadership conceived and implemented a radical “creative hermeneutic” which treated authority as something entirely extrinsic, obtained not by what a person, institution, or object is, but by what that person, institution, or object does. The strategy hinged upon a contention that the authority of the Daishōnin himself had been a product of Nichiren’s ability to reduce True Buddhism to a singular essence (the daimoku) and thereby present the True Dharma to others in his particular time and place in the most effective possible way, and an accompanying argument that only the Sōka Gakkai possessed the wherewithal to realize Nichiren’s ambition to artfully re-interpret True Buddhism in the most relevant and practical fashion for those who needed to hear it in the social present of today.\footnote{Low, “The Re-invention of Nichiren in an Era of Globalization” (2010): pp.29, 41.}

According to the Gakkai, the Nichiren Shōshū had forfeited its right to be seen as the
most worthy upholder of the Daishōnin’s original spirit, due to its inability to change as
the times dictated. The Sōka Gakkai, on the other hand, had already shown its capacity
to reform certain of its practices in order to better suit them to the contemporary context,
such as by curbing the aggressiveness of its proselytization activities, taking up a
symbolic interpretation of the kaidan issue, pushing the movement overseas, and so forth.

It next intended to exhibit its unique knowledge regarding how to most ideally convey
the message of True Buddhism within the current society, so as to leave no doubt that
the Sōka Gakkai was indeed the holder of the key to the vehicle that could deliver the
Truth (i.e., Nichiren’s diagnoses of the cause and cure for humankind’s problems) to the
modern world.\(^{14}\)

Toward this end, Ikeda Daisaku averred that the greatest potential for
“establishing the correct teaching” and engendering the “peace of the [world]” today
was to be found within the Sōka Gakkai’s peace, culture, and education programs. These
programs had steadily been taking on a greater and greater level of emphasis in Ikeda’s
Sōka Gakkai over the course of multiple decades, but upon excommunication the
organization began dramatically rearranging its priorities in a way that fixed humanistic
efforts in support of them at the very center of the movement’s mission. In fact, Ikeda
went so far as to totally conflate the activities of the Sōka Gakkai’s peace, culture, and
education programs with the carrying out of the movement’s most basic goal of kōsen

\(^{14}\) Métraux, “The Sōka Gakkai’s Search for the Realization of the World of Rishō Ankokuuron”
rufu, and to merge these into one. Cynics contended that Ikeda’s “interpretive gymnastics” were merely a case of his taking a pragmatic approach to the breaking of his group’s connection to its former means of pursuing kōsen rufu. However, to the Sōka Gakkai, such a reading of its apparent shift in position could not have been more misguided. The goal of kōsen rufu was to “[propagate] the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishōnin widely,” and the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishōnin was from its beginning aimed at no other purpose than helping human beings help themselves in terms of alleviating their suffering. Changing the individual’s or the community’s karma for the better was not accomplished through blind devotion to status or objects. Rather, the improvement of karma was achieved by sincere practice which was directed toward benefitting others, and which expressed and deepened one’s own faith in the process. The Sōka Gakkai recognized this, and Ikeda’s determination that kōsen rufu should thenceforth be manifested through the spreading of the Gakkai’s peace, culture, and education programs was undertaken accordingly. By the same token, the move was meant above all to align the Sōka Gakkai with Nichiren: just as Nichiren had seven centuries before, the Sōka Gakkai was demonstrating its ability to adapt to the social situation with which it was confronted, to actively engage in a creative re-interpretation of True Buddhism, and ultimately, to distill the True Dharma to a new “essence” for the sake of its contemporary world. In so doing, of course, the Sōka Gakkai was also staking its claim to authority, by earning authority, in precisely the same way it held Nichiren had.
Ikeda’s ingenuity thus gave birth to a strategy that offered the possibility of a comprehensive solution to the Sōka Gakkai’s troubles in regard to proving its religious legitimacy. But first, to verify the accuracy of its assertion that it deserved to be acknowledged as Nichiren’s proper spiritual heir on account of its capability to represent the Daishōnin’s teaching in the fashion most attuned to the needs of the people, the Gakkai had to substantiate that the interpretive changes it had put into effect really did enable the movement to bring True Buddhism to the people in the manner that was needed. How could this be ascertained? Within the Gakkai’s own rhetoric, the assessment mechanism was already in place: because the religious group had always insisted that the procuring of practical, this-worldly benefits was the evidence of “correct” belief, the validity of Ikeda’s interpretation could be judged on the basis of its efficacy in the concrete, everyday world. Specifically, since the Sōka Gakkai contended Nichiren’s ultimate goal had been the creation of a peaceful society, if the group’s peace, culture, and education programs proved more useful in fostering ankoku than did the methods for propagating the True Dharma employed by its counterparts within the Nichiren tradition, the rightness of Ikeda’s expression of the teaching would become clear, and all of the organization’s corresponding claims would likewise be confirmed. Hence, in the strangest of twists of ironies, the net impact of Ikeda’s creative hermeneutical strategy was to propel the Sōka Gakkai – originally founded by Makiguchi Tsunesaburō to reform the educational system of Imperial Japan and provide
students with “an education beyond utility” – into a new era of development, in which
the movement would pursue utility as a way of illustrating its legitimacy.

It was upon the intersection of this newly adopted orientation with the wave of
Conservative calls to change the “Peace Constitution” following the intense international
criticism of Japan’s “inadequate” response to the first Gulf War that the Sōka Gakkai
became involved in earnest in the Constitutional revision process. In the past, the
movement could afford to, and did, assume an absolutist, but rather peripheral, stance
toward defending the Constitution. But inasmuch as it had tied its religious identity to
the level of practical utility it could exert in bringing about peace, sitting on the sidelines
when it came to revision-related issues was no longer an option. The Sōka Gakkai’s
hermeneutical scheme would suffer a severe setback, or worse, with a revisionist victory
on Article 9, and the organization’s leaders knew it. Yet they also knew that for all the
Gakkai had to lose by any realized alteration of the Japanese Constitution’s pacifist
character, the group had as much to gain from establishing itself as the protector of the
“Peace Constitution” and effecting an outcome in its favor. To begin, any attempt at
revision was sure to be met with a great deal of worldwide scrutiny, since the
document’s commitment of Japan to a path of non-aggression caused the country to be
regarded as a “model” for nations everywhere, and since the war renunciation doctrine
of Article 9, in particular, was seen as a compelling and revered symbol by people all
across the globe. Consequently, participation in the revision debate offered the Sōka
Gakkai a fortuitous opportunity to display the movement’s efficacy in a highly-charged,
highly visible forum, such as could not be matched by the other initiatives of the Gakkai peace program. Moreover, because of the strong opinions already held by so many Sōka Gakkai adherents toward maintaining the Constitution in its present form, the revision issue had the power to unite the scandal- and excommunication-rocked membership like no other topic of concern could, as well. With each of these considerations in tow, the Sōka Gakkai therefore enlisted the political sway of its conveniently pre-existing link to the inner workings of the Constitutional revision process – the Kōmeitō – and successfully transformed its earlier, more ideological approach to supporting Article 9 (which might have been characterized as “Article-9-as-a-symbol-of-pacifism-consciousness”) into a robust style of direct activism in the “peace clause’s” defense (expressed through Ikeda’s slogan of “the globalization of Japan’s peaceful Constitution”).

The pressure from Japanese Conservative politicians to revise the “Peace Constitution” in the period just after Operation Desert Storm died down before a serious scare to Article 9 could materialize. However, in a decade’s time, 9/11 would alter the face of Japanese foreign and defense politics forever, and it was not long from that point before the “peace clause” came under its most extreme fire yet. Although a variety of domestic and international factors continued to conspire toward generating a tremendous momentum behind the push to change or even rewrite the Japanese

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15 Nor could it be matched by those of the culture and education programs, which, as described previously, were seen as channels for working toward the most exalted ideal of ankoku and hence were subordinated to the activities of the peace program.
Constitution over those next several years, in the end the revisionists were altogether thwarted from realizing their ambitions – and as has been detailed extensively throughout this study the Sōka Gakkai’s fortification of the Kōmeitō, and its general efforts to raise awareness with respect to safeguarding Article 9, played a pivotal role in deflecting the threat. For the Sōka Gakkai, stepping fully into the revision debate had included risking potential total devastation of its claim to authority. It also included exposure to certain challenges with which the movement is still struggling today (overcoming a re-intensification of negative public perception regarding the nature of the Gakkai-Tō relationship, managing the tension between the wishes of members and the realities faced by their political representatives and organizational leaders, et cetera). But when the Kōmeitō, with the Sōka Gakkai situated very close in the background, took the lead in halting the Conservatives’ attempts to specify collective self-defense in the LDP’s 2005 draft proposal for a new constitution, the Gakkai was able to score exactly the concrete triumph it had been seeking to evince the practical efficaciousness of its interpretation of Nichiren. In comparison to the revisionists who had been frustrated in their efforts to close “the postwar period,” the Sōka Gakkai had apprehended and executed the means to put an end to “the post-excommunication period.” Simultaneously, it rendered all questions about its legitimacy obsolete. In the final analysis, it is this unequivocally positive outcome for the organization that should be seen as the most substantial way the Sōka Gakkai has been impacted by its involvement in the contemporary Constitutional revision process.
Works Referenced


