

(Article)

Kyosei Philosophy and CSR Management in Multinational Enterprises: A Case Study of Canon, Inc.

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1. Introduction

In a global economy, the production and consumption of goods or services proceed quickly and globally, and the driving force of globalization is multinational enterprises (MNEs). MNEs have played key roles in the development of technological, commercial, financial and cultural globalization. A new understanding of MNE's economic development in a long term approach has occurred accompanying the rapid globalization of business activities. It is noted that the economic growth in the context of globalization depends on the increase of business competitiveness and efficiency, but the development of global companies has highlighted the need of the solution of global problems and challenges as MNEs' corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Multinational enterprises are facing new challenges such as the pressure for global markets. According to J. Cramer, R. Kim and E. Dam (2004), businesses are facing a double challenge. On one hand, shareholders ask for good financial results so companies tend to focus on short-term benefits in order to ensure shareholder value. On the other hand, the pressure of other stakeholders are requiring companies to take their needs into account. The double challenge for companies is to harmonize shareholders and other stakeholders' expectations in terms of financial performance and social and environmental activities. In other words, MNEs nowadays are required to give best financial performances for their shareholders and, at the same time, earn sustainable trust from their stakeholders through CSR practices.

For most MNEs in the global economy, CSR strategies have become the key parts of their business performances. Making profits along with the market needs with consideration of international environmental and social problems has become an essential global management issue. Today, MNEs are committing to making business decisions by balancing economic, social and environmental performances. Also, *Kyosei* concept has been adopted by many MNEs as the corporate philosophy to support their CSR strategies in order to gain a win-win relationship with

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their stakeholders.

In this article, the author will explore the interpretation of *Kyosei* philosophy in MNEs' CSR policies and analyze CSR practices implemented in MNEs based on the concept of *Kyosei* by doing a case study on Canon Incorporation (hereafter Canon). *Kyosei* is an approach toward the integration of business and society and MNEs that promote CSR based on *Kyosei* philosophy will be positively evaluated and respected by their shareholders and stakeholders.

2. *Kyosei* Philosophy and Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies in MNEs

Today, *Kyosei* has been used in many statements in Japanese corporate philosophies as codes of conduct for responsible business. The term "*Kyosei*" is written with two Chinese characters; '*Kyo*' meaning 'together' and '*Sei*' meaning 'living'. "*Kyosei*" can be translated literally to be 'living together', which means living together with others in a harmonious way. The application of *Kyosei* philosophy has been internationally introduced to many MNE's CSR implementations. In 1988, Japanese MNE Canon introduced the concept of *Kyosei* as its key concept for the CSR practices. According to Canon's interpretation, *Kyosei* aspires to a society in which all people, regardless of culture, custom, language or ethnicity, harmoniously live and work together for the common good. Based on the concept of *kyosei*, and in pursuit of the "excellent global corporation" ideal defined by this philosophy, Canon endeavors to bear the responsibility for the impact of its activities on society, not only in its business but also in other human endeavors¹⁾.

Under the corporate philosophy of *kyosei*, Canon provides products and services with the purpose of contributing to society through its technological excellence, while at the same time promoting social and cultural support activities in response to the various needs and problems facing communities worldwide. Canon focuses on a range of important social issues, including protection of the global environment, relief activities for disaster-stricken areas, the growth and development of the international community, educating and nurturing young people, social welfare, and development of the arts, culture and sports. Guided by its corporate philosophy of *kyosei*, Canon, as a good corporate citizen, focuses its efforts on diverse activities that help to build a society where all people can comfortably and peacefully live together, while also making meaningful contributions to society through its business operations.

Like Canon, in recent years, *Kyosei* philosophy and corporate social responsibility have been given more and more attention, and many MNEs have followed this trend and have become engaged in corporate social responsibility activities based on the *Kyosei* philosophy. *Kyosei* provides a view of corporate social responsibility above pursuit of profit in terms of respecting of the interests of stakeholders and establishing harmonious relations with suppliers, competitors, and the natural environment (Boardman, 2003).

However, MNEs are still often accused of ignoring environmental and labor problems. Based upon the consideration of costs, MNEs choose to build factories, purchase machines and hire employees with lower costs and find places where the human capital and environmental awareness are lower, and where the laws are less strict. The reason behind this is to reduce the costs and increase the benefits and market shares. When MNEs determine a method of investment following this low-cost policy, they often make the workers helpless because of the parent-subsidiary

relationships and the structures of upstream suppliers and downstream customers. It is an important management issue for MNEs to focus on the interests of the workers and the environmental problems based on the *Kyosei* philosophy.

Whether MNEs fulfill their corporate social responsibilities have essential impacts on their brand images. When the consumers have started to focus on environmental and labor issues, the image of a brand may increase or decrease the willingness of the consumers in terms of purchasing the associated products. If the society as a whole can come to a consensus and urge corporations to not just establish charity foundations or sell environmental-friendly products to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities, but instead improve the labor and environmental problems depending on the facts and circumstances of each region. If so, the interests of the society can be benefited as the corporations pursue their interests.

3. Strategical Meanings of CSR in MNEs

Though there is no clear and definite definition of CSR but the most academically adopted CSR definition should be A. B. Carroll's CSR pyramid model. A. B. Carroll (1991) presented CSR as a multi-layered concept that consists of four interrelated aspects, which are economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. Carroll proposed a pyramid that analyses the dimension of CSR²⁾. It starts with economic responsibilities saying companies are created to provide goods and services to the public and to make a profit. This is the foundation upon which the other three responsibilities rest. The second layer consists of the legal responsibilities of a company. The third layer ethical responsibilities are practices that have not been codified into the law. Social members expect a company to do what is right and fair. Lastly, at the top of the pyramid companies have a philanthropic responsibility. Companies are expected to be good corporate citizens and to improve the quality of life. CSR has evolved into a complex concept that is now a key component of the corporate decision-making of a number of MNEs that are considered to be the frontrunners in integrating CSR.

Regarding the strategic meanings of CSR, our research group conducted a questionnaires survey in Japanese MNEs from Mar. 30 to Apr. 23, 2007. We sent questionnaires to 99 company members of BERC (Business Ethics Research Center) and asked them about CSR questions³⁾. 50 companies answered and sent the questionnaire sheets back.

As shown in figure 1, most companies (90%) disagree that 'CSR should not be discussed with corporate strategy at the same time'. On the contrary, 56% agree and 26% partially agree that CSR should be regarded as one part of corporate goal. Also, most companies deny that CSR should only be implemented when companies have extra resources. Obviously, most Japanese enterprises are regarding CSR as an important part of their business strategies and try to promote CSR along with their business activities.

Though there are various definitions about CSR, it is generally considered to encompass four main areas, which are the environment, the workplace, the community and the marketplace (J. Andfrof and M. Mcintosh, 2001). Within these areas companies are making a difference by conducting specific programs to respond to various social demands. Employees will be productive when they are fairly evaluated and paid. Enterprises that treat the environment with respect will

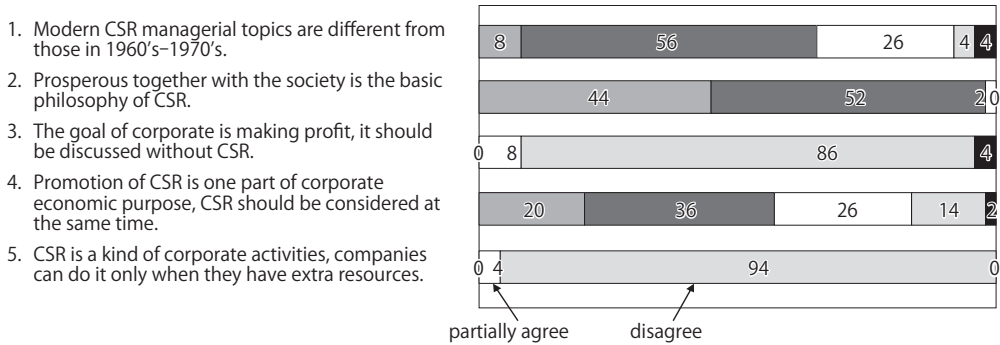


Figure 1: The meanings of CSR to business administration

Source: Hayama (2010), "Corporate Social Responsibility: An Approach toward the integration of Business and Society", *Social Welfare Research Bulletin*, special issue, p.23

eventually earn the trust of customers and their business partners. Business enterprises will function more smoothly when they have good relationship with the community. Enterprises are desired to take economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in the modern society (A. B. Carroll, 1991; Tanimoto, 2004).

It is not necessary to say that MNEs have duties and responsibilities to provide goods and services that meet customer demands and offer them at reasonable prices. Enterprises have been contributing to the society by creating employment, paying tax and innovating social value. It is no doubt that business enterprises have been desired to play leading actors in this global economy.

This article provides the reasons for growing interest in CSR in the global market as follows⁴⁾.

(1) The roles and participation of NGOs

Some NGOs worry about the globalization trend by claiming that globalization is widening the gap between developing and developed countries. NGO members also claim that globalization leads to environmental degradation and poverty. These concerns are adding opposition to goals of free trade and a global economy. Some developing countries and NGOs have expressed strong dissatisfaction with the promotion of globalization.

In addition to MNEs voluntary social investments in economy and the environment, MNEs may also fulfill CSR by asking professional managers to conduct social investments in order to assist corporations to complete their fulfillment of CSR, for example by charity donations to NGOs with identical public interest beliefs as the corporation, and through the execution by professional public interest organizations fulfill the public interest beliefs of the corporation. This simultaneously grants opportunities of survival and development to the NGOs, and allow them to burden the role of supervising whether MNEs are fulfilling their CSR.

Furthermore, NGOs may also supervise governments to establish laws to regulate how MNEs fulfill CSR. As such, the public interest organizations which receive long-term charity donations

from MNEs may become a branch of such corporations, and increase the efficacy of CSR fulfillment.

(2) Awareness of consumers

It is obvious that customers are increasingly paying attention to a company's reputation when they choose products or services. Consumers have increasingly recommended companies respect human rights, observe fair labor standards, and protect the environment. These demands are in addition to the traditional desire for inexpensive and high-quality products. If an enterprise is viewed as socially and environmentally responsible, its reputation and brand image rises. Furthermore, since the internet network makes it possible for individuals and NGOs worldwide to monitor corporate behavior, if a company harms the environment or tramples on human rights, the facts will be transmitted to the world very shortly. Therefore, it is important that enterprises pay respect to all stakeholders and respond to their demands. There is no doubt that customers demand MNEs to respect the human rights of employees at local factories and affiliated overseas facilities.

(3) Corporate behavior evaluated by investors

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) has been regarded as a good method to encourage and push enterprises to commit to CSR implementation and ethical business. When deciding where to invest their money, more and more investors are now judging not only from economic performance but also from a company's commitment to CSR. SRI represents a significant change in the relationship between investors and enterprises. In order to earn investors' trust, business enterprises are developing specific CSR strategies to improve their corporate social and economic performance and appeal to their stakeholders actively (Tanimoto,2003). Also, SRI has become a helpful channel to urge MNEs to be socially and environmentally responsible.

(4) Socially conscious workforce

Employees are increasingly examining a company's CSR performance before they apply for jobs. It is known that a company with good reputation is easier to attract talented employees and those who are labelled 'Black corporations' will draw less attraction from the potential employees. In order to respond to such a socially conscious workforce, MNEs are claiming their basic CSR principles and policies through homepages to reflect their social and environmental viewpoints to their potential employees. This helps embed a sense of accountability and guides the behavior of enterprises (Tanaka & Mizuo, 2013).

(5) CRS international guidelines

(a) Caux Round Table Principles for Business⁵⁾

The Caux Round Table is an international network of business leaders from Japan, the United States and Europe who meet once a year in Caux to exchange opinions on corporate ethics and behavior from a global perspective since 1994. It is based on the understanding that the principles are necessary for resolving trade friction problems and the most basic requirement is that

enterprises act responsibly. These principles embody ideals brought to the table by participants from all three regions- the Japanese concept of *kyosei* (the idea of living and working together for the common good, enabling cooperation and mutual prosperity to coexist with healthy and fair competition), an American statement called The Minnesota Principles (guidelines on fair corporate behavior), and an European proposal on human dignity (the individual dignity of each person to be respected by corporations while they pursue their activities). The Principles were offered in the hope they would serve as a reference for corporate behavior in developing countries, and in countries beginning the transition to a market economy.

The Caux Round Table believes that the world business community should play an important role in improving economic and social conditions. Through an extensive and collaborative process in 1994, business leaders developed the CRT Principles for Business to embody the aspiration of principled business leadership. The CRT Principles for Business are a worldwide vision for ethical and responsible corporate behavior and serve as a foundation for action for business leaders worldwide. The CRT Principles aim to express a world standard against which business behavior can be measured.

(b) The Global Compact⁶⁾

In 1999, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan mentioned that globalization is promoting the advancement of developing countries but there are also negative results such as poverty and environmental degradation. He argued that these problems can be only resolved through the collective action of enterprises that are active. Global Compact principles are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the principles embodied in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Companies participating in the Global Compact process agree to support and promote the Compact's 10 principles on human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption and are required to send the UN Global Compact office an annual report on their activities. Responsible companies enact the same values and principles wherever they have a presence, and know that good practices in one area do not offset harm in another. By incorporating the Global Compact principles into

Table 1: The Global Compact's 10 principles

Human rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights. 2. Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses. 3. Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
Labor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; 5. the effective abolition of child labour 6. the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; 8. undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and 9. Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
Anti-Corruption	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

Source: based on data from <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>

strategies, policies and procedures, and establishing a culture of integrity, companies are not only upholding their basic responsibilities to people and planet, but also setting the stage for long-term success.

(c) OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises⁷⁾

The Guidelines are recommended by participating governments and suggest certain behavior patterns to be followed by MNEs. The characteristics of OECD guidelines are as follows. Firstly, MNEs respect certain norms of behavior, since their activities exert much influence over the development of the global economy. Secondly, MNEs are expected to adopt the guidelines voluntarily. Thirdly, in order to promote acceptance of the Guidelines, each government is expected to establish a National Contact Point in its own country. In 2000, the Guidelines were revised to focus on sustainable development. They use local practice rather than internationally-agreed standards as a norm. For example, they encourage companies to observe the right to unionize and adopt terms and conditions of work which are “not less favorable than those observed by comparable employers in the host country”. Hence, if workers’ rights are not upheld in an OECD country, the company seeking to adopt the Guidelines would not necessarily need to bring practice up to internationally accepted standards, as more recent codes would recommend. Like the Global Compact, the OECD Guidelines seek to promote development by fostering local capacity, enhancing development through training and other forms of human capital expansion.

Surrounded by these above CSR international guidelines and standards in the global market, MNEs have to respond to these norms and develop their original social and environmental strategies. Companies that get international standard recognition and commit to CSR activities can be regarded as qualified to compete in the global market. Though it is voluntary for MNEs to acquire international standards, it is factual that many MNEs choose to follow the international guidelines and standards and commit themselves to environment protection and philanthropy activities.

4. A Case Study: Canon (Japanese MNE)

4.1. Canon’s profile⁸⁾

As a representative global company of Japan, Canon Inc. was founded in 1937 and its ranking in FORTUNE Global 500, a registered trademark of Time Inc. in the United States, was 292nd in 2014. Although the digital camera is the most well-known product to consumers in the world, Canon also produces devices for office and industry use. Canon is planning to invest more in medical image recording equipment and ophthalmic devices. Canon’s regional headquarters are established on every continent and, together with related companies, they form the Canon Group. Canon has a global network of more than 200 companies and employs more than 190,000 people worldwide. It is dedicated to advancements in technology and commits approximately 10% of its total revenue each year to Research & Development. Canon is consistently one of the top few companies to be granted the most number of patents over the last 20 years. In the year 2014 Canon Group’s net sales were estimated at \$30,804 million and net income 2,160 million.

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4.2. Canon's CSR policies and reporting

Canon invests a great deal of effort into its CSR reporting. It publishes a separate sustainability report. Apart from that, a lot of information regarding its compliance with different standards and its positive role in society (fund raising and other activities) can be found on its webpage. As mentioned previously that Canon introduced a CSR strategy based on the Kyosei philosophy in 1988. At that time this philosophy was not yet widely used, but in recent years the philosophy has come to be commonly used in Japan, in business, politics and in daily life. It is used to imply a range of concepts and meanings. Canon refers to kyosei defined as 'living and working together for the common good.'

Currently, Canon has a CSR policy and a CSR mission statement⁹⁾. It has Canon's Global Code of Conduct. Canon follows the GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines 2006 and its CSR report is examined by an external auditor. Canon is listed in different sustainability indexes, such as the Morningstar Socially Responsible Investment Index (Japan) and the Ethibel Sustainability Index Global (Belgium). On Canon's website information is included about its attempt to reduce CO2 emissions, setting up a consultation process with stakeholders and conducting environmentally-friendly manufacturing. The Canon Group Environmental Charter addresses the theme of maximizing resource efficiency from the dual approaches of environmental assurance and economic activities. It considers overall product lifecycles and sets environmental assurance activities for the entire group. The company is also active in recycling. A 'Cradle-to-Cradle' philosophy was used to design the newest generation Energy Star-compliant Canon devices which consume significantly less energy in their manufacture, transportation and use. The result of this is a smaller total carbon footprint.

Referring to Canon's homepage, Canon adopted Kyosei as its corporate philosophy in 1988, the 51st year since Canon's founding. This philosophy clarifies Canon's stance on partnerships formed with stakeholders around the world. Kyosei means aspiring to a society in which all people, regardless of race, religion, or culture harmoniously live and work together for the common good into the future. Canon is pursuing the realization of a sustainable global society based on the principle of *Kyosei*.

Canon keeps a corporate culture dedicated to contributing to society through its business operations. Through diversification and globalization, Canon tends to excel in the areas of advanced technologies, global business deployment, and diverse specialized human resources. Capitalizing on these strengths with the aim of contributing to the betterment of society as a good corporate citizen, Canon established the Canon Group CSR Activity Policy in January 2012. As part of this policy, Canon defines five areas of priority, or "key activities," for the Canon Group to address. Canon's five CSR key activities are as follows¹⁰⁾.

1. Contribute to cultural improvement, support the arts, science, sports, etc.
2. Provide humanitarian support to people and regions facing harsh conditions due to disasters, etc.
3. Contribute to the promotion of both enriched lifestyle and the global environment.
4. Contribute to society through business activities.
5. Contribute to the realization of a sound and fair society.

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Following the CSR Activity Policy ensures that Canon Group shares a core set of values while pursuing CSR activities specifically tailored to individual countries and regions. Canon's goal is to create a corporate group that grows together with society based on the *Kyosei* philosophy. The case of Canon and its *Kyosei* philosophy and its CSR strategies presents Canon's CSR reporting based on an active approach. It should be encouraged that MNEs to go even further as CSR is the management approach that brings prosperity to both business and society.

5. Conclusion and Limitation

This article presented a case study regarding the *Kyosei* philosophy and CSR policy of Canon. Canon introduced the corporate philosophy of *kyosei* in 1988 as part of its global business plan. In Canon, the concept of *kyosei* means living and working together for the common good enabling cooperation and mutual prosperity to coexist with healthy and fair competition. Like Canon, a Japanese representative MNE, all the other MNEs in the global economy are required to have their own corporate philosophy and CSR policy toward their stakeholders.

MNEs nowadays are being evaluated by triple bottom line which means they are judged according to their economic, social and environmental performances. Many research institutions and NGOs have been judging MNEs' performances not only by financial results, but also by their environmental and social records. At the same time, many customers and investors are purchasing or investing referring to companies' CSR activities. Such kind of environmentally conscious consumption and socially responsible investment movements encourage MNEs to commit to implement corporate social responsibility.

In this article, the author explored the *Kyosei* philosophy and CSR strategies within MNEs by examining the Japanese MNE, Canon. It is indicated that CSR activities have become very essential management parts to multinational corporations' core strategies and those companies that own their specific corporate philosophy and promote CSR practices proactively will earn trust and benefit in this global evaluation business system. As H. Tahakashi (2013) mentioned that business resources consist of both tangible and intangible parts and respectful corporate philosophy should be considered as intangible valuable assets.

While the strategic meanings of CSR and corporate philosophy value in MNEs were examined through the case of study of Canon, a couple of limitations of this article should be noted. First, the focus in this study was limited to the implications in a Japanese MNE, Canon Incorporation. Future research regarding European and American MNEs may want to consider. Second, the scope of this study was limited to showing that a successful MNE has specific corporate philosophy to support its CSR policies and practices but did not dig deeply to find the root of its corporate philosophy. It would be also interesting to better understand what drives MNEs to select and decide their specific corporate philosophy.

Though much work remains, this article provides important implications regarding CSR interpretation and practices in MNEs. Specially, by exploring the *Kyosei* philosophy, the author gave a Japanese perspective regarding corporate social responsibility in MNEs.

[Notes]

- 1) Referring to 'Social and Cultural Support Activities, The Philosophy', Canon's homepage, <http://www.canon.com/scsa/philosophy/index.html> Canon, (last visited August 24, 2015).
- 2) A. B. Carroll (1991), The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders, *Business Horizons*, Vol.34, No. 4, pp.39-48.
- 3) The questionnaire survey was conducted from Mar. 30 to Apr. 23, 2007. Our study group, Top Management's Business Ethics Study Group of Japan Society for Business Ethics Study, sent questionnaires to 99 company members of Business Ethics Research Center by mail and 50 companies answered the questionnaires for us. The persons replied to the questionnaires were in charge of business ethics and CSR issues in their companies.
- 4) Refer to S. Hayama (2010), "Corporate Social Responsibility: An Approach toward the integration of Business and Society", *Social Welfare Research Bulletin*, special issue, pp.15-27.
- 5) Referring to <http://www.cauxroundtable.org/> (last visited August 12, 2015)
- 6) Referring to <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/> (last visited August 20, 2015)
- 7) Referring to <http://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/> (last visited September 3, 2015); Council for Better Corporate Citizenship Report (2003), "International Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Standards and Norm: Present Situation, Future Challenges", pp.4-6
- 8) <http://www.canon.com/corporate/result/summary.html> (last visited September 3, 2015)
- 9) <http://www.canon.com/csr/report/index.html>; The Canon Sustainability Report 2015 (last visited August 30, 2015)
- 10) Ibid.

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