THE ORIGIN OF PING-PONG DIPLOMACY

THE FORGOTTEN ARCHITECT OF SINO-U.S. RAPPROCHEMENT

MAYUMI ITOH
Also by Mayumi Itoh

The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

The Forgotten Architect of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement

Mayumi Itoh
In memory of Goō Kōji, Marius B. Jansen, and Chalmers A. Johnson, who contributed to the understanding of China and Japan
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Source: All photographs are courtesy of Gotō Yoshiki
NOTE ON THE TEXT

This book uses the modern pinyin system of romanization for Chinese words, with the exception of historical names and direct quotations, as well as terms concerning the Republic of China and Taiwan, which are given in the Wade-Giles system—for example, Chiang Kai-shek and Kuomintang (KMT). This work uses the Hepburn system for Japanese, with macron; however, macrons are not used for words known in English without macrons, as in Kobe, Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo. The Revised Romanization of Korean spellings is used for Korean words, with the exception of historical words, which are given in the McCune-Reischauer system. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given with the surname first, except for those who use the reversed order in English. Honorific prefixes, such as doctor, mister, and so on, are not used in the text. Titles for individuals are as of the time in which the event is described in the particular passage of the text, rather than the current ones, unless specified otherwise. All translations were made by the author, in the form of paraphrases, not as direct translations. Citation numbers for sources of information are normally given at the end of each paragraph, instead of at the end of each sentence, in order to enhance smooth reading of the text and also to limit the number of citations.
Among the many people who encouraged me in writing this manuscript, I would like to thank Gotô Atushi, Gotô Haruko, Gotô Yoshiki, Gotô Yasuyuki, and Kubo Yasuo for valuable information. I thank Tsuneo Akaha, Kent E. and Toshiko Calder, Steve Clemons, Gerald L. Curtis, Joshua A. Fogel, Ronald J. Hrebenar, Stephen J. Roddy, and Donald S. Zagoria for their insightful comments on the manuscript and for continuous encouragement. I also thank Daniel Dalet and Gotô Yoshiki, for the loan of the rare map and photographs. I would like to extend my appreciation to Farideh Koohi-Kamali and Robyn Curtis, as well as Gregory Rewoldt, Megumi A. Itoh, and Itô Shigeru who kept sending newspaper clippings even after suffering from a stroke, for their generous support.
**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>Aichi Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTF</td>
<td>African Table Tennis Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATTU</td>
<td>Asian Table Tennis Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCPIT</td>
<td>China Council for the Promotion of International Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPAFFC</td>
<td>Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTTA</td>
<td>China Table Tennis Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>Democratic Party of Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP</td>
<td>Democratic Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETTA</td>
<td>English Table Tennis Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHQ</td>
<td>General Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>House of Councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJA</td>
<td>Imperial Japanese Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOC</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITTF</td>
<td>International Table Tennis Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTTA</td>
<td>Japan Table Tennis Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP</td>
<td>Japanese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNR</td>
<td>Japan National Railways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRCS</td>
<td>Japan Red Cross Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP</td>
<td>Japan Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs (China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MITI</td>
<td>Ministry of International Trade and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)</td>
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xvi

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAP</td>
<td>Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTFA</td>
<td>Table Tennis Federation of Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNF</td>
<td>United Nations Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USLO</td>
<td>United States Liaison Office in Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USTTA</td>
<td>United States Table Tennis Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USTTF</td>
<td>United States Table Tennis Foundation</td>
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Map of East Asia Related to Ping-Pong Diplomacy, 1971

Photograph 1  Gotō Takasaburō, Founder of Meiden School.

Photograph 2  Gotō Kōji, First President of Meiden High School and the Aichi Institute of Technology.

Photograph 4  Outline of Meeting on Sino-Japanese Table Tennis Friendship Exchanges, February 1971 (in Chinese).
日本卓球協会
日本中国文化交流協会
中華人民共和国卓球協会
中国人民对外友好協会

日本卓球協会会長兼内閣官房長官
日本中国文化交流協会副会長兼内閣官房長官
中華人民共和国卓球協会会長兼文化委員会主任
中国人民对外友好協会副会長兼文化部部長

Photograph 5 Outline of Meeting on Sino-Japanese Table Tennis Friendship Exchanges, February 1971 (in Japanese).

Photograph 6 Thirty-First World Table Tennis Championships, Nagoya, Japan, March–April 1971.
Photograph 7  Gotō Kōji (right) with Chinese Team Head Zhao Zhenghong at the Sino-Japanese Table Tennis Friendship Tournaments, Nagoya, April 1971.

Photograph 8  Gotō Kōji and His Wife Suzuko at Home, Nagoya, January 1972.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A tiny ball turned the big globe upside down.
—China Table Tennis Association
acting president Song Zhong

Daughter: “Father, I read in the newspaper that Ping-Pong
Diplomacy originated in Nagoya. Why did it take place in
Nagoya?”

Father: “Because of Meiden High School.”

Daughter: “Meiden High School is strong in baseball, and it is the
alma mater of ‘Ichiro’ Suzuki of the Seattle Mariners. What does
Meiden High School have to do with Ping-Pong Diplomacy?”

Father: “Meiden High School was famous for ping-pong.”

Daughter: “Why?”

Father: “Because of Gotō Kōji.”

Daughter: “Who was Gotō Kōji?”

Father: “Gotō Kōji was president of Meiden High School.”

Dialogue between a father and a daughter in Japan

* * *

Ping-pong, formally table tennis, has been a popular indoor sport in
the world. It currently has over 300 million active members of gov-
erning associations worldwide. Table tennis originated in England in
the 1800s. The Table Tennis Association was first founded in England
in 1921 in order to oversee competitive tournaments. Subsequently,
the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) was founded in
January 1926, and the first world table tennis championships were held in London in December of that year. After that, the world table tennis championships took place annually until 1957, and then biennially since 1959. The ITTF has governed all the national and regional table tennis associations in the world, to the present.¹

One of the characteristics of the ITTF is that, unlike the Olympic games, it does not use national flags and national anthems. This is so because its members do not necessarily represent countries, but they can also represent “regions,” such as Hong Kong, Macao, and Singapore (before its independence from Malaysia in 1965). In the case of the United Kingdom, there are four separate associations representing England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, which compete in the world championships as independent teams.²

**Brief History of World Table Tennis Championships**

In the early days, Czechoslovakia and Hungary dominated the world table tennis championships. Then, Japan emerged as a force to reckon with in the 1950s, but was replaced by the People’s Republic of China (PRC; “China,” hereafter) in the early 1960s. The popularity of table tennis surged when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) admitted it as an Olympic sport in 1987 and introduced it in the Summer Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. Recently, in Japan for instance, a female student at Waseda University in Tokyo, Sugimoto Ai, became a national idol and was diminutively referred to as “Ai-chan.” Sugimoto and her team players energetically competed against their Chinese opponents in the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008; however, China won the gold in all the table tennis tournaments there. The Chinese dominance has continued from the mid-1980s to this day.³

A little known fact among the younger generations is that this “tiny” sport played a significant diplomatic role in world history four decades ago. More precisely, the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, in March–April 1971 (“Nagoya World’s,” as the ITTF refers to it, and hereafter), became the catalyst for the historic breakthrough in Sino-U.S. relations in 1972, which had been disrupted for more than two decades since the establishment of the communist regime in Beijing (formerly spelled Peking) in 1949. The series of events that took place at the Nagoya World’s facilitated the Sino-U.S. rapprochement of 1972. A mostly forgotten fact is that without this tiny sport, U.S. president Richard Nixon would not have visited China in
1972. Without this tiny sport, China and the United States would not have ended the “ice age” in their relations, opening the “bamboo curtain” and ushering in the détente in East Asia. Table tennis made this epoch-making diplomatic breakthrough possible, which was referred to as “Ping-Pong Diplomacy.”

**What is Ping-Pong Diplomacy?**

What is Ping-Pong Diplomacy precisely? A narrow definition of the original Ping-Pong Diplomacy is “the use of international table tennis tournaments as a diplomatic vehicle during the Nagoya World’s in 1971, which paved the way for the Sino-U.S. rapprochement in 1972.” A wider definition is “the employment of international table tennis tournaments as a diplomatic tool to break the stalemate in relations among nations where the official diplomatic channels are absent or stalled.” An example of the wider definition was employed to create a venue for Iran and Iraq to talk during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) at one of the meetings of the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU). It was also applicable when North Korea and South Korea participated in the ninth Asian Championships of the ATTU in Niigata, Japan, in 1988.4

In the original Ping-Pong Diplomacy, the Chinese table tennis team members treated their U.S. counterparts with a “friendship first, competition second” spirit at the Nagoya World’s and astonished the world by inviting the latter on the last day of the championships to visit China before returning home. This diplomatic overture created momentum to thaw the frozen Sino-U.S. relations, the opportunity that had been sought by President Nixon for some time, without success. It prompted his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing in July 1971, which culminated in Nixon’s historic visit to China in February 1972 (see appendix 1). The Chinese team officials went so far as to state, “A ping-pong ball is light, but friendship (forged through it) is heavy.”5

Until that time in April 1971, it was inconceivable for the U.S. table tennis team to visit China. For that matter, it was unprecedented for the Chinese and the U.S. table tennis team members to exchange greetings as they did at the Nagoya World’s. In fact, the Chinese government had forbidden its team members to make contact with the Americans at the Nagoya World’s. The U.S. government had not recognized the communist regime in Beijing as a legitimate government of China. It had instead recognized the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC; “Taiwan,”
The “two Chinas” issue had spilled over to international sports circles to the extent that China withdrew from the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA)—the official name of the subordinate regional group of the ITTF representing Asia, in order to distinguish it from the African Table Tennis Federation (ATTF)—in 1953 when it admitted Taiwan as a new member. China meanwhile remained as a member of the ITTF and participated in the world championships. China hosted the Beijing World’s in 1961 and won three world titles in 1961 and 1963. China then won five gold medals in 1965 (see appendix 2). China, however, did not participate in the world championships in 1967 and 1969 due to the Cultural Revolution that had put the nation into turmoil, shutting itself off from the outside world.6

Then, why did China participate in the Nagoya World’s in 1971 when the country was still in the middle of the Cultural Revolution? How was this participation made possible?

**Missing Link in the Picture**

China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s was attributable to a Japanese, Gotô Kōji (1906–1972), then president of the TTFA and of the Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA). Gotô was the chair of the organizing committee for the Nagoya World’s. Gotô believed that the world table tennis championships without China, the three-time champion from 1961 to 1965, would not be real world championships. Japan took many world titles in 1967 and 1969 only because China did not participate in them. Gotô wanted to make the Nagoya World’s true to its name (see chapter two).

For this nonpolitical reason, Gotô decided to invite the Chinese team to the Nagoya World’s. Nevertheless, it was a “mission impossible.” Gotô met with strong opposition both at home and abroad. The Japanese government had not recognized the communist regime in Beijing. Japan had not even concluded a peace treaty with the latter to end the second Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945. Japan concluded a peace treaty only with Taiwan, ruled by Chiang Kai-shek, in 1952. When Gotô made the decision, the Satô cabinet (November 1964–July 1972) was taking a strong anti-China policy stance, and right-wing groups threatened Gotô and his family. Even the sports organizations...
in Japan remained cool to his initiative. Gotō was isolated in Japan. Overseas, Taiwan and its allies vehemently opposed his decision. In order to break the impasse, Gotō decided to visit Beijing in January 1971 to negotiate the terms of the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World’s with the Chinese government officials in person. He did so, risking his own life (see chapter five).

Gotō’s negotiations with Chinese officials in Beijing turned out to be extremely difficult, as could have been expected, and they stumbled. In the end, however, Gotō managed to have Premier Zhou Enlai on his side and succeeded in settling the terms of China’s participation. The rest is history. China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s brought about the unprecedented invitation by China to the U.S. team to visit China, sending shock waves throughout the world. The U.S. team’s visit to China in April 1971 in turn expedited Kissinger’s visit to Beijing in July of that year, followed by President Nixon’s visit to China in February 1972. All of these diplomatic breakthroughs began with Gotō’s visit to Beijing in January 1971. Gotō overcame the enormous impediments and realized China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s, creating the momentum for direct dialogues between China and the United States. It is no exaggeration to state that the Sino-U.S. rapprochement would not have happened in 1972 were it not for Gotō’s initiative. Gotō made it all possible.

Gotō died in January 1972, less than a month before President Nixon’s visit to China, due to overexertion from the series of negotiations concerning the “two Chinas” issue in the world table tennis circles and their turbulent aftermath. Premier Zhou had invited Gotō to be in Beijing during Nixon’s visit there. Gotō was looking forward to being present at the historic moment (see chapters eight and nine).

**Oblivion in History**

Notwithstanding the significance of the contribution Gotō made to the historic Sino-U.S. rapprochement, Gotō is unknown in the English-speaking world, with the exception of those who are versed in the history of the world table tennis circles in the early 1970s. Few Americans have heard of Gotō’s name, except for senior members of the U.S. table tennis community who were actively involved in the world championships in the early 1970s.

For that matter, Gotō is forgotten even in Japan. The mass media hailed him as the “father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy” in 1971. Four
decades later, however, Gotô is completely forgotten. Gotô’s name quickly fell into oblivion, all the more so because he died earlier than expected. The Japanese younger generations are clueless as to what Ping-Pong Diplomacy was, let alone who Gotô was. They even do not know that the “two Chinas” issue existed. Mori Takeshi, a longtime official of the JTTA, who accompanied Gotô to China in 1971 and later taught at Waseda University in Tokyo, wrote in 2000 that none of his students, including the table tennis players at the university, knew of Gotô and Ping-Pong Diplomacy. The only exceptions were a few students majoring in modern history, who chose Ping-Pong Diplomacy as the theme of their senior theses.

Only in China do people still remember Gotô. They revere him as the person who made it possible for China to rejoin the international community in 1971. Premier Zhou referred to Gotô as a “well-digger,” the phrase the Chinese apply to those who contribute to their country. This comes from the Chinese saying, “When one drinks water, he should not forget those who have dug the well.” After Gotô’s sudden and untimely death in January 1972, Chinese people continue to respect Gotô as a “well-digger” for China. Whenever high-ranking Chinese officials visited Japan afterward, they made sure to stop by Nagoya, Gotô’s hometown, to pay tribute to his family. Gotô’s family members have received the Chinese delegations more than three hundred times in the past, including Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping during his state visit to Japan in October 1978 (see chapter nine). This suggests how instrumental Gotô was to China’s international comeback, and also shows the Chinese code of conduct, offering a clue to understanding the cultural and historical factors behind China’s current and future motivations and behavior.

Literature Review

Literature in Chinese

Abundant literature is available on Ping-Pong Diplomacy. As for the literature in Chinese, Chinese People’s Daily reporter Qian Jiang (1954—) transcribed his interviews with China Table Tennis Association’s (CTTA) acting president Song Zhong—who participated in the negotiations with Gotô in Beijing in 1971 and at the Nagoya World’s—on the decision-making process of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Qian expanded the interview transcripts into a book-length manuscript, which was translated into Japanese by a Japanese expert on Chinese studies, Kanzaki.
Isao, and was published in 1988. This work is one of the best records of how the Chinese officials responded to Gotō’s initiative and conducted Ping-Pong Diplomacy afterward; however, it does not fully account for why and how Gotō made the decision. In addition, Qian’s book does not provide sufficient references—it has only twenty-six reference entries for the entire book. Out of the total of twenty-six references, no source in Japanese was cited. Qian mentions in the preface that he obtained information from two Japanese—Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyūbei and Kyodo News Agency reporter Nakajima Hiroshi; however, it is impossible to ascertain which part of the text is based on the information provided by these two Japanese, because Qian cites neither of the two Japanese in the references.10

Literature in English

Reviewing the literature on Ping-Pong Diplomacy in English, no book in the disciplines of world history or politics mentions Gotō to the knowledge of this author—there are a couple of references to Gotō in the U.S. table tennis literature (examined below). President Nixon’s book, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), also has no reference to Gotō despite the fact that Nixon owed his diplomatic triumph with China in no small part to Gotō. “On April 6 a breakthrough occurred in a totally unexpected way: we received word from the American Embassy in Tokyo that an American table tennis team competing in the world championships in Japan had been invited to visit the P.R.C. in order to play several exhibition matches.”11

This is the single reference to the Nagoya World’s in Nixon’s memoirs. It mentions neither Gotō nor even Nagoya, whereas this diplomatic breakthrough was originally referred to as the “Nagoya Ping-Pong Diplomacy,” as Ding Min, one of the Chinese officials who was directly involved in this process, stated. As the center of the stage of this diplomacy shifted to Beijing and then also to Washington, D.C., the name Nagoya was dropped and came to simply be known as Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Nixon’s statement also suggests that both President Nixon and his staffers at the White House were caught off guard by the Nagoya Ping-Pong Diplomacy and were stunned. President Nixon in his memoirs meanwhile keeps on stating how difficult the secret negotiations to open the door to China had been, through the “Pakistani channel” and the “Romanian channel,” indicating the critical importance of Gotō’s initiative (see chapter two).12
The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

In turn, Kissinger’s memoir, *The White House Years* (1979), describes the Nagoya World’s in the section on Ping-Pong Diplomacy; however, it does not mention Gōto’s name. Kissinger was aware of the positive signs between China and Japan, as reported in the State Department memorandum dated April 1, 1971, that Beijing “has also sent its table tennis team to Japan to participate in an international tournament, the first such sports activity in several years.” Nevertheless, his memoir does not account for the significance—why and how this Chinese participation was made possible after several years of absence during the Cultural Revolution. Kissinger then writes, “Five days later we all grasped the significance of this sentence.” Noting the persisting difficulty with breaking the stalemate in the Nixon administration’s secret negotiations with China, Kissinger also mentions that the State Department’s report on journalist Edgar Snow’s prognosis that “there was no immediate prospect of improving Sino-US relations” because of the war in Indochina. Chairman Mao “did not expect progress in US-Chinese relations before 1972.”

These statements also attest the pivotal importance of the impetus brought by Gōto in breaking the impasse. Nonetheless, Kissinger’s memoir does not mention Gōto. In summary, neither of the top two American decision makers who were most directly involved in Ping-Pong Diplomacy refers to Gōto in their memoirs. They do not mention the opposition and obstacles to China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. They do not explain how these were overcome. They took China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s for granted.

Regarding scholarly journals in English, an article written by two Chinese scholars living in the United States examines Ping-Pong Diplomacy (2000). Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun analyze the “butterfly effect”—the role of ordinary people who could change the direction of foreign relations, just like the spontaneous actions of small butterflies that can generate unexpected climate changes—in the case of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. The article refers to Gōto, by stating, “It seems that it was Koji Goto, president of the Japanese Table Tennis Association, who generated the first ‘butterfly effect.’” Nevertheless, while seemingly acknowledging Gōto as the generator of the first butterfly effect, the article neither tries to find out if this was indeed true, nor elaborates on it. Although there are important sources in Japanese on this subject, as well as detailed newspaper coverage, the article cites no Japanese sources.

Other than that, the literature on Ping-Pong Diplomacy can be found only in the records of international table tennis community.
Most notably, U.S. Table Tennis Association (USTTA) vice president Tim Boggan (1930–), who participated in the Nagoya World’s as U.S. World Team’s first delegate, mentions Gotô. Boggan taught at Long Island University in New York City and has written prolifically about table tennis events as the USTTA resident historian. He was elected USTTA president three times and was inducted into the USA Table Tennis Hall of Fame in 1985. Gotô’s name appears in the section on the Nagoya World’s in volume 5 of the History of U.S. Table Tennis (1999). Referring to Gotô as “King of Nagoya,” Boggan writes, Gotô, as head of the JTTA, “had gone to Peking and come back with the players of the People’s Republic in hand,” and, as head of the TTFA, “had come back determined to oust not himself, as actually happened, but the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the Asian Federation.”15

Boggan also writes, “[H]is [Gotô’s] world tournament finally at an end and he resigned and soon to die, who’d known much before then, with Logic absolute, that in our time no sport could possibly be as pure and bubbly as the champagne that last night in Nagoya, with which his cup runneth over.” Then, in volume 6 of the History of U.S. Table Tennis (2006), Boggan briefly mentions Gotô, stating that “Goto, head of the JTTA and the so-called King of Nagoya, went to China to personally invite the Chinese team to the ’71 World’s . . . without the Japanese Government’s permission[.]”16

Elsewhere, the record on Ping-Pong Diplomacy in English can be found in the mass-media coverage. The American correspondents reported the U.S. team’s participation in the Nagoya World’s and their subsequent historic visit to China; however, most of these articles began with the famous encounter between the young American player, Glenn Cowan, and the Chinese star player, Zhuang Zedong (Chuang Tsetung). They do not fully examine the background circumstances that made it possible for China to participate in the Nagoya World’s, which in turn made possible the extraordinary “conversation” between the two players (see chapter seven).

**Literature in Japanese**

Regarding the literature in Japanese, Gotô did not write an autobiography because he died suddenly of a ruptured aortic aneurysm in January 1972, at the age of sixty-five. At the third anniversary of his death in 1975, Gotô’s family members and friends compiled Gotô’s official biography, with the cooperation of those who knew Gotô closely, including JTTA officials and other influentials in various circles—businessmen,
educators, engineers, and politicians—in Nagoya and elsewhere. This volume includes countless “insider stories” revealing the details of Ping-Pong Diplomacy, as well as many other accomplishments Gotō had made in his lifetime, as a school administrator and civic leader. Then, Mori Takeshi, a longtime official of the JTTA and a professor at Waseda University, wrote an important article on Ping-Pong Diplomacy and the Nagoya World’s in 1989.17

In addition, the JTTA issued a special edition of its journal, featuring Gotō and the Nagoya World’s in 2000, in memory of Gotō. Then, in 2002, the Aichi Institute of Technology Meiden High School, of which Gotō was president, published its official history at the ninety-year anniversary of the school’s founding (see chapter three). This school history also describes Gotō’s accomplishments in physical education, including table tennis, as well as in engineering education. Further, a Chinese resident in Japan, Zheng Yueqing, who had been a member of China’s national table tennis team, wrote an excellent article on Ping-Pong Diplomacy in 2007. There are also countless archival documents on this subject in Japanese newspapers.18

Scope of this Book

This book focuses on the aspects of Ping-Dong Diplomacy that have not been documented in English—how and why Gotō made the unthinkable decision and carried it out. This work does not go into detail on the process of Sino–U.S. rapprochement that has been written already in English, most notably through the memoirs of the policy makers involved: Nixon and Kissinger. The main subject of this book is the initial stage of Ping-Pong Diplomacy, which preceded and culminated in the Sino–U.S. rapprochement. This book analyzes the behind-the-scenes negotiations between Japanese and Chinese officials concerning the Nagoya World’s and reveals how Gotō broke the “taboo” and succeeded in having the Chinese table tennis team participate in the championships, opening the “bamboo curtain.”

The conversation between daughter and father at the beginning of this chapter took place in the summer of 2008, and the daughter was this author, who wanted to know the connection between Ping-Pong Diplomacy and Nagoya. The father as in the past had the right answers to her questions. This author contacted Meiden High School and found out that Gotō Yoshiki, the son of Gotō’s second-eldest daughter, Gotō Haruko—who still retains Gotō’s name after marriage (meaning that
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her husband adopted Gotô’s name), along with her late elder sister, Gotô Kazuko, who also retained Gotô’s name after marriage—was vice principal of the school.

This book is the outcome of research to trace the origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy and its forgotten architect through the available literature and interviews with Gotô’s family members and those who worked for them. This work thereby provides the critical missing link between China’s isolation from the world scene and its reentry in the world community through the participation in the Nagoya World’s that has never been written about in English. In so doing, this book supplements accounts by Nixon and Kissinger and sets the record straight for the whole process of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. It thereby fills the void in the history of Ping-Pong Diplomacy in the English literature.

* * *

In summary, JTTA President Gotô, the forgotten architect of Sino-U.S. rapprochement, should be given due credit four decades later. Although President Nixon had expressed his desire to open the door to China and had engaged in secret negotiations, they had met with a number of difficulties—the situations in Indochina and Taiwan, just to name two. To put it mildly, President Nixon’s “China initiative” had not been progressing as he had hoped. A real break came from the unexpected venue. It took place at the Nagoya World’s. There, the U.S. table tennis team members met their counterparts from China. In the words of Zheng Yueqing, their chance meetings “built a friendly atmosphere and created confidence between the two countries.” This resulted in the sudden invitation to the U.S. team to visit China, astounding the world. The U.S. team’s visit in turn paved the way for the historic Nixon visit to China less than a year later—“their non-governmental exchanges broke the ice age in Sino-U.S. relations, and their relations proceeded toward rapprochement as fast as speed drives in table tennis.”

The most important point is that the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World’s was not possible without Gotô’s initiative. Gotô invited China to participate in the Nagoya World’s against strong opposition and obstacles—domestic and foreign. He visited Beijing in January 1971, in the most adverse situation, and negotiated the terms of China’s participation in the world championships. Gotô’s initiative thus served as the critical catalyst for President Nixon’s open-door policy toward China.
In short, the exchanges of this small sport between China and the United States at the Nagoya World’s facilitated the Sino-U.S. rapprochement and the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Here lies the historic significance of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. In China, this is referred to as, “A tiny ball turned the big globe upside down.” Ping-Pong Diplomacy also demonstrated that sports could transcend politics. It symbolized the possibility of a larger reconciliation through sports when international politics are deadlocked. All this began with Gotō’s decision to invite China to the Nagoya World’s. Gotō’s son-in-law, Gotō Atsushi (Gotō Kazuko’s husband), who had succeeded to Gotō’s multitude of “unfinished business,” stated that in retrospect the agreement between Gotō and Premier Zhou regarding China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s became the “origin for China’s reentry into the international community.”

Why and how this “unthinkable” was made possible is the main subject of this book. In order to understand this, it is important first to examine the international political background of the subject.
CHAPTER TWO

International Political Background

Japanese Table Tennis Association (JTTA) president Gotō Kōji went to Beijing in January 1971 at a time when Japan had no diplomatic relations with mainland China. Japan did not recognize the People’s Republic of China (PRC; “China,” hereafter) as the legitimate government of China when the communist regime was established in Beijing in 1949. Japan instead restored diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC; “Taiwan,” hereafter) led by Chiang Kai-shek of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang; KMT) in 1952, through a Sino-Japanese peace treaty, when Japan regained its sovereignty. It was not until September 1972 that Japan normalized its diplomatic relations with China. Why did this “anomaly” continue for more than two decades?

Historical Background:
International Relations in East Asia

The United States severed its relations with mainland China when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Mao Zedong, established the communist regime in Beijing after the long civil war with the KMT. Generalissimo Chiang fled to Taiwan and reestablished his power on the island in 1949. The U.S. government and its allies acknowledged Chiang’s regime in Taipei as the legitimate government of China. The cold war reached its coolest point in East Asia with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The hostility between China and the United States grew, since China supported North Korea, whereas the United States backed South Korea, as part of the United Nations Force (UNF).
Then, the tension between China and the United States escalated during the first Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954–1955 and the second Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958. In addition, the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, which took the form of a proxy war between China/the Soviet Union and the United States, worsened the Sino-U.S. relations. Moreover, the issue of China’s representation at the United Nations (UN) further strained Sino-U.S. relations. The Republic of China under Generalissimo Chiang was one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council since its inception in 1945. With the establishment of the communist rule on mainland China in 1949, however, the new regime claimed that it was the sole legitimate government of China, seeking for its admission to the UN. The United States and its allies continued to block China’s admission to the UN, and the “two Chinas” issue became one of the most divisive issues at the international forum. Meanwhile, many nonpolitical international organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Red Cross (IRC), adopted the compromise “dual representation” formula, in which they accepted both China and Taiwan as representing China. Nevertheless, China protested this formula, claiming that it was the sole legitimate government of China, and the “two Chinas” issue also haunted these nonpolitical international institutions.2

Sino-Soviet Split

Meanwhile, China and the Soviet Union had been diverging ideologically since 1956 and “crevices” emerged in what had been perceived as the “monolithic” relations between the two communist countries. The first sign of the rift between the two emerged in February 1956 when Nikita Khrushchev launched the anti-Stalin campaign; however, the Sino-Soviet split did not surface in the outside world until the 1960s. In 1961, China formally denounced the Soviet Union as a “revisionist traitor.” Chinese and Soviet communist party officials met in July 1963, in order to work out their differences, but the talks failed. Then, in October 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Moscow and held a summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev; however, they could not resolve their differences. The Sino-Soviet split became unmistakably evident in the spring of 1968 when China denounced the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, calling the Soviet Union a “Soviet socialist imperialist.” Then, the Sino-Soviet split became pronounced in March 1969 when the two countries’ armies clashed on their borders at Damansky.
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(Zhenbao) Island on the Ussuri River in northeastern China. A Soviet nuclear attack on China was a realistic option then.\(^3\)

**Triangular Relations among China, the Soviet Union, and the United States**

Richard Nixon was elected president in November 1968 on the premise of saving the country from the quagmire of the Vietnam War. He also began groping for a way to open the “bamboo curtain” and improve relations with China. The Nixon administration saw in the “schism” between China and the Soviet Union a new dynamics emerging in the balance of power in East Asia. Perceiving the Soviet Union as a worse threat than China, the U.S. government tried to position China as a counterweight vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the triangular relations and also tried to use the new dynamics as leverage to end the impasse in the Vietnam War. Also, being faced with the declining support rate of his administration at home, Nixon launched his “peace offensive” toward China.\(^4\)

In turn, China also began groping for a change in its foreign policy toward the United States. China was encircled by the two superpowers in the north and south. China had tension at the northeastern and northwestern borders with the Soviet Union. In the south, China was confronted by the U.S. forces in the Indochina peninsula. Among the triangular relations, the enmity between China and Russia, both ideologically and territorially, was more immediate and volatile than the differences between either of them and the United States. In this quandary, China opted for the lesser evil. China had another rival in East Asia to consider—the growing economic power of Japan. With the powerful rivals at its doorsteps, China could no longer afford the isolation of the late 1960s. Also, as events were building toward an international conference to settle the Indochinese War, China might have wanted to be in the proceedings. Another reason was internal. The worst phase in the Cultural Revolution was over, and production was on the upswing.\(^5\)

**Nixon Administration’s Foreign Policy toward China**

The U.S. foreign policy toward China began to show a sign of change when Nixon took the office of president in January 1969. In fact, during his presidential campaign in August 1968, Nixon had stated that he would visit China if it issued a visa to him. He also stated that the U.S.
government would begin dialogues with China within eight years. In his own account, the first time Nixon raised the idea of the importance of relations between the United States and communist China was in his article in *Foreign Affairs* in October 1967, “Asia After Viet Nam,” which foreshadowed the opening to China. Then, in his inaugural address Nixon referred indirectly to it when he said, “We seek an open world...a world in which no people, great or small, will live in angry isolation.” On February 1, 1969, less than two weeks after the inauguration, Nixon wrote a memorandum to his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (his official title was the assistant to the president for national security affairs), “urging that we give every encouragement to the attitude that the administration was exploring possibilities of rapprochement with the Chinese.” Nixon instructed Kissinger that this should be done secretly, keeping it from the mass media, lest the conservatives in the Republican Party should spoil his China initiative.6

Nevertheless, it was a “mission impossible.” The U.S. government had maintained an alliance relation with Taiwan through the Sino-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954, whereas China considered Taiwan its renegade province. The U.S. government did not acknowledge the communist regime on mainland China as the legitimate government of China, and had repeatedly blocked China’s admission into the UN. The U.S. government had no official channels to contact China directly. The largest obstacle to setting up normal diplomatic relations remained the U.S. support of the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan. Further, the Nixon administration expanded the U.S. military involvement in Indochina, escalating tension with China.7

“Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw”

Meanwhile, the U.S. government had maintained dialogues with China via a third party, though marginal and ineffectual. The “Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw,” in which the U.S. ambassador to Poland and his Chinese counterpart met and talked in Warsaw, began in 1955. They had had 134 meetings since then until Nixon became president; however, these talks had borne no fruit. Nixon wanted to resume the Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw. Soon after Nixon’s world trip in the summer of 1969, U.S. ambassador to Poland Walter John Stoessel, Jr. returned home temporarily. While Stoessel was waiting for President Nixon at the White House, Kissinger sat next to Stoessel and whispered to him. He told Stoessel to convey a message to his Chinese counterpart in Poland that the Nixon administration
was ready for serious talks with China. Upon returning to Warsaw, Stoessel tried various measures to approach the Chinese diplomats. Nevertheless, they avoided him. Each time he tried to talk to them at social functions, they ran away from him.\textsuperscript{8}

As a corollary to the anti-China policy on the part of the U.S. government since the establishment of communist China, Chinese diplomats had avoided having contacts with their U.S. counterparts even at social gatherings. In addition, with the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, those in the diplomatic circles were afraid of being labeled as “ultrarightist” back home. They were especially wary of having contacts with American diplomats. Besides, Chinese ambassadors in Europe had already been recalled home in order to participate in the Cultural Revolution. Those lower-ranking officials who had remained in Europe, in acting status, had to be all the more careful in terms of their relationship with their home government.\textsuperscript{9}

A break for the Nixon administration came on December 3, 1969. Stoessel had a chance meeting with the Chinese ambassador (chargé d’affaires) Lei Yang at a Yugoslavian fashion show held at the Warsaw Culture Palace. As Stoessel was approaching Lei, he ran away from Stoessel and was leaving the palace. Stoessel ran after him and shouted at Lei while he was getting into his car, “There is a message from the U.S. ambassador to the Chinese ambassador!” Lei certainly heard it. Eight days later, on December 11, Stoessel received an invitation from the Chinese embassy. There, he conveyed the message of the U.S. State Department that it would like to resume the Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks.\textsuperscript{10}

\textit{Cambodian Operation: U.S. Invasion of Cambodia}

China agreed to resume the Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw, and the 135th and 136th talks were held on January 20 and February 20, 1970. Nevertheless, the Nixon administration deployed the U.S. ground forces into Cambodia on May 1, 1970, assisting the South Vietnamese army that had already invaded Cambodia in April (the “Cambodian operation,” May–June 1970), spreading the Vietnam War to other parts of the Indochina peninsula. In response, Chairman Mao denounced the United States for the invasion, and the Chinese government cancelled the 137th Warsaw Talk that was scheduled for May 20, 1970. Thus, the only “official” contact, if marginal and ineffectual, that had existed between the two countries was disrupted again.\textsuperscript{11}
Nixon Makes Gestures to China

Kissinger meanwhile became fretful. He realized that one of the punish-ishments for the disruption of diplomatic relations with China for two decades was the lack of know-how for how to approach Chinese leaders on the part of the U.S. administration. Accordingly, the Nixon administration made a series of gestures toward China. It relaxed the restrictions on U.S. trade and visits to China partially in July 1969. It also reduced the U.S. Seventh Fleet’s patrols of the Taiwan Strait in December 1969. In addition, the U.S. Congress eliminated the phrase “opposition to China’s admission to the United Nations” from the bill concerning U.S. overseas aid on June 4, 1970.12

Establishment of the “Pakistani Channel”

In the summer of 1969, Nixon and Kissinger toured the world in order to establish secret routes to China through third parties. At an early stop on the trip on July 25, Nixon declared that the U.S. government shall abstain from direct military involvement in Asia in the future: The Guam Doctrine. The Nixon doctrine foresaw a stable Asia depending on the balancing of interests among four major powers—China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Then, Nixon met Pakistani president Yahya Khan (1969–1971; 1917–1980) in Islamabad in July 1969. There, he handed to Khan a message for China. With this groundwork, Nixon invited Khan to the White House on October 25, 1970, when the latter visited the United States in order to attend the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the foundation of the UN. Khan told Nixon that he was going to visit Beijing in the near future. Nixon asked for Khan’s help. Nixon asked Khan to convey to the Chinese leaders that the U.S. government had already decided to normalize its relations with China, that it would not participate in any measures to isolate China, and that it was ready to send a high-ranking official secretly to China. Khan was gladly obliged. Nixon thus succeeded in establishing the “Pakistani channel,” or what he called the “Yahya channel.”13

Establishment of the “Romanian Channel”

During his world tour in the summer of 1969, Nixon also met Romanian president Nicolae Ceaușescu (1974–1989; 1918–1989) in Bucharest and signaled to China that the U.S. government would deal
International Political Background

with communist countries on the basis of their foreign policy and not their internal politics. Nixon then invited Ceaușescu to the White House during his state visit to Washington, D.C., on October 26, 1970, and requested the same thing from Ceaușescu as he had from Pakistani president Khan. There, Nixon, for the first time for an American president, referred to communist China by its official name, the People’s Republic of China. Ceaușescu agreed to pass Nixon’s words along to Beijing. Nixon thus established the “Romanian channel,” and thereby the U.S. government extended its hand to China that it had withdrawn two decades earlier.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Activating the “Pakistani Channel” and “Romanian Channel”}

Pakistani president Khan conveyed Nixon’s message, in which he proposed to send a U.S. special envoy to China, to Premier Zhou in Beijing in November 1970. Zhou replied that he had to refer it to Chairman Mao because this was an important matter. On December 8, Pakistani ambassador to the United States Agha Hilaly conveyed to Nixon, Premier Zhou’s reply to President Khan, that the Chinese government in principle agreed with the U.S. proposal made in Nixon’s message. Zhou stressed that the Chinese reply did not come from him alone, but had been approved by Chairman Mao and Vice Chairman Lin Biao (1907–1971), who was no. 2 in the hierarchy of the CCP. Zhou also noted that China had received messages from the U.S. government through various channels in the past, but that this was the first time that an American president had sent a message to the Chinese supreme leader through a president of a third country. Consequently, both sides agreed to work out the details of a visit by a high-ranking U.S. official to Beijing.\textsuperscript{15}

The Romanian channel also became active, early in 1971. Romanian ambassador to the United States Corneliu Bogdan called on Kissinger in January with the news that President Ceaușescu had sent Vice Premier Gheorghe Radulescu to Beijing, and that Premier Zhou had given him a message for Nixon. Noting that the “U.S. occupation of Taiwan” was the only outstanding issue between China and the United States, the message stated that if the U.S. government had a desire to settle the issue and a proposal for its solution, the Chinese government would be prepared to receive a U.S. envoy in Beijing. Zhou did not forget to add that Chairman Mao and Vice Chairman Lin had reviewed this message.\textsuperscript{16}
Nixon and Kissinger took the positive tone, as well as the absence of any references to Vietnam, in Premier Zhou's response as an indication that Beijing would not consider the Vietnam War as an insurmountable obstacle to Sino-U.S. rapprochement. Nevertheless, their prognosis proved to be optimistic. On February 8, 1971, backed by the U.S. air force, the South Vietnamese army launched the “Lam Son 719” operation with 16,000 soldiers, invading the southeastern part of Laos and cutting the Hoh Chi Min Trail. Nixon in a press conference on February 17 stressed that the U.S. intervention in Laos should not be interpreted as any threat to China. The People’s Daily, however, vehemently denounced the U.S. action as “a grave menace to China,” using strong anti-U.S.–imperialism rhetoric. Consequently, China cut off both the “Pakistani channel” and the “Romanian channel.” Thus, the “budding relationship” with China that Nixon had longed for so much withered before it bloomed, just as the Cambodian operation a year earlier had threatened to do.17

Thus, all the channels that the Nixon administration had sought to establish in order to approach China had failed. The Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw ended when the South Vietnamese and U.S. ground forces invaded Cambodia in April–July 1970. Then the secret contacts with China via a third party—the Pakistani channel and the Romanian channel—were cut off when the South Vietnamese army, backed by the U.S. forces, invaded Laos in February 1971.

With the disruption of the Pakistani channel and the Romanian channel, the Nixon administration made a series of concessions to China in order to salvage whatever burgeoning relationship it had cultivated with China. President Nixon in his State of the World message on February 25, 1971 used China’s official name, the PPC, for the first time publicly, rather than the old style communist China, and declared that “we are prepared to establish a dialogue” with China, regretting that China continued “to call us in the devil’s role.” Nixon also submitted to the U.S. Congress his second Foreign Policy Report, which “canvassed the possibilities for an expanded relationship between our
nations and reflected the eventuality of Peking’s admission to the UN.” Then, on March 15, the State Department announced the termination of all restrictions on the use of American passports for travel to mainland China. Nevertheless, nobody in the administration could have predicted the subsequent series of events that took place in Nagoya, Japan. They were totally unexpected.18

China’s Foreign Policy toward the United States

In turn, the People’s Daily reporter Qian Jiang argues that China had consistently sought to break the deadlock in its relations with the United States. For instance, during the Geneva Conference in 1954, Premier Zhou approached the U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles and tried to shake hands with him; however, Dulles refused it. Qian also mentions that Zhou made an address at the first Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 (also known as the “Bandung Conference”), stating that the Chinese and the American people were friendly people, that the Chinese people did not wish for war with the United States, and that the Chinese government hoped to negotiate with the U.S. government on the relaxation of tension in the Far East in general and the relaxation of the urgent situation in the Taiwan region in particular. Nevertheless, Qian writes, the U.S. government did not recognize China, imposed an embargo on it, and banned mutual exchanges between the people of the two countries.19

Then, China launched one of the most brutal ideological campaigns in world history in May 1966, liquidating millions of its own people and turning the nation upside down. While the worst phase of the Cultural Revolution in terms of mass executions and mass murder of the people on the streets was over for the most part, the power struggle in the inner circles of the CCP reached its climax with the anti-Mao coup d’état allegedly planned by Vice Chairman Lin in September 1971. The self-inflicted violent class conflict and liquidation campaign weakened the country, economically and politically. In addition, externally, China was confronted with the Soviet Union at its borders. In this predicament, Chinese leaders opted to approach the United States in the triangular relations. Thus, the national interests of China and the United States converged in containing the “hegemonic power” in East Asia: the Soviet Union.20
The Chinese government actually sent a cryptic signal to the Nixon administration on October 1, 1970, the National Foundation Day of the communist regime. It was five months after the cancellation of the Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw that had been scheduled for May 20. Premier Zhou escorted the American journalist Edgar Snow (1905–1972) and his wife to the Tiananmen Tower and had them observe the October Day parade, right next to China’s supreme leader, Chairman Mao. Snow talked with Mao and also took pictures with him. This was unprecedented, but Kissinger did not realize then that “nothing China’s leaders do publicly is without purpose.” When Kissinger saw the picture of Snow and Mao in the People’s Daily, he “missed the point when it mattered. Excessive subtlety had produced a failure of communication.”

Edgar Snow’s Conversation with Chairman Mao

Then, on December 18, 1970, Chairman Mao invited Snow and talked with him for five hours. Snow writes, “The chairman criticized the ritualism of the Mao ‘personality cult,’ explained why it had been a necessary nuisance during the Cultural Revolution and forecast its gradual modification.” Mao told Snow that the Chinese Foreign Ministry was studying the matter of admitting a broad spectrum of American political and press opinion from the right, the middle, and the left. Mao also spoke in favor of opening conversations with American officials at the highest level. Snow asked, “Should rightists like Nixon, who represented the monopoly capitalists, be permitted to come?” Mao replied that Nixon should be welcome because the problems between China and the United States would have to be solved with him. “Mao would be happy to talk with him either as a tourist or as President.” Mao also expressed admiration for American achievements in production, science, technology, and universal education, and stated that he held high hopes for the American people as a potential force for good in the world.

It should be noted that Snow did not disclose the full content of his interview with Mao until April 1971. Mao’s message contained such highly sensitive information that could change Sino-U.S. relations dramatically at a volatile time that Snow kept it to himself, and he did not convey this message to Nixon. By the time Nixon and Kissinger read Snow’s Life magazine article that came out on April 26, 1971 (the
publication date was April 30), China had already deployed Ping-Pong Diplomacy in Nagoya. Snow noted in April 1971 that

foreign diplomats in Peking were aware last year that messages were being delivered from Washington to the Chinese government by certain go-betweens. The purport of such communications was to assure Chinese leaders of Mr. Nixon’s “new outlook” on Asia. Nixon was firmly determined, it was said, to withdraw from Vietnam as speedily as possible, to seek a negotiated international guarantee of the independence of Southeast Asia, to end the impasse in Sino-American relations by clearing up the Taiwan question, which, Mao stated, was created by [President] Truman and [Secretary of State Dean] Acheson, and to bring the People’s Republic into the United Nations and into diplomatic relations with the United States.

Snow further writes,

Two important Frenchmen were in China in 1970. The first was André Bettencourt, the minister of planning, and the second was Maurice Couve de Murville, premier under De Gaulle’s regime. M. Couve de Murville completed arrangements for a visit to China by General de Gaulle, which was to have occurred this year. It was to General de Gaulle, I was authoritatively informed that Mr. Nixon had first confided his intention to seek a genuine détente with China. Some people had anticipated that De Gaulle, during his visit, would play a key role in promoting serious Sino-American conversations. Death ruled otherwise.

In the words of Snow,

Meanwhile, other diplomats had been active. The head of one European mission in Peking, who had already made one trip to see President Nixon, returned to Washington last December. He bypassed the State Department to confer at the White House, and was back in China in January. From another and unimpeachable diplomatic source I learned, not long before my departure from Peking in February, that the White House had once more conveyed a message asking how a personal representative of the President would be received in the Chinese capital for conversations with
the highest Chinese leaders. About the same time, I was enigmatically told by a senior Chinese diplomat who had formerly maintained quite the opposite, “Nixon is getting out of Vietnam.”

Snow adds, “[T]he chairman recalled to me once again that it was the Japanese militarists who had taught revolution to the Chinese people. Thanks to their invasion, they had provoked the Chinese people to fight and had helped bring Chinese socialism to power.”

On Snow’s conversation with Mao, Kissinger writes, the memorandum of the State Department, dated April 1, 1971, included a report of Snow’s impressions from his recent talks with Mao and Zhou; however, the department “could not have had the full text of the interview, for it ignored the important element of the invitation to Nixon; it reported instead that Snow had come away from his meetings with the impression that ‘there was no immediate prospect of improving Sino-US relations because of the war in Indochina.’” It reported that Mao did not expect progress in Sino-U.S. relations before 1972.

As if to endorse Snow’s reservations, the South Vietnamese army and the U.S. air force launched the “Lam Son 719” operation on February 8, 1971, expanding the war into the entire Indochina peninsula. Tension between China and the United States escalated again.

Japan’s Foreign Policy toward China

Meanwhile, Japanese economic and political circles had been unofficially eager to normalize relations with China, because it was a giant neighbor, and the economic, military, and political stakes for Japan were extremely high. It was not only the politicians in the left-leaning parties but also those in the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who personally wanted to improve Sino-Japanese relations. Foreign Minister Fujiyama Aiichirō (in the reshuffled first Kishi cabinet and through the reshuffled second Kishi cabinet, July 1957–July 1960; 1897–1985), who became president of the Federation of Japanese Parliamentarians to Promote Restoration of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations, was a House of Representatives (HR) member in the ruling LDP. Takasaki Tatsunosuke (1885–1964) and Matsumura Kenzō (1883–1971), who built the foundation of the LT trade agreement (memorandum concerning Sino-Japanese long-term comprehensive trade), were also HR members in the LDP. They were only three examples among the many LDP politicians who wanted to promote relations with China.
International Political Background

Nevertheless, the fact remains that most of the early postwar Japanese administrations—the Yoshida cabinet, the Kishi cabinet, the Satō cabinet—took an anti-China policy stance, at least officially, in line with the U.S. administrations. They refrained from undertaking initiatives toward China in order not to antagonize the U.S. administrations that had scrutinized whatever marginal and unofficial economic relations existed between China and Japan. The only exceptions were the Hatoyama cabinet, the short-lived Ishibashi cabinet, and the Ikeda cabinet (examined below).30

Japan’s “Subordinate Independence”

The major obstacle to normalization of Sino-Japanese relations was its alliance with the United States through the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. After the U.S. occupation of Japan, following Japan’s defeat in the Asia-Pacific War, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (May 1946–May 1947 and October 1948–December 1954; 1878–1967) built strong relations with the United States. Japan regained its sovereignty through the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951. Japan concurrently signed the Security Treaty with the United States, placing Japan under the protection of the U.S. military power. In this framework, Japan had little choice but to follow the U.S. lead; the stance referred to as “subordinate independence.” Yoshida established this foundation for postwar Japanese foreign policy. Then, Japan signed a peace treaty with Taiwan in 1952 on the day when the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into effect. In this framework of “dependent independence,” Japan could not normalize diplomatic relations with China unless and until its protector did so first. Japan thus had to wait for a diplomatic breakthrough between China and the United States for its normalization with China to take place.31

“Separation of Politics from Economics (Business)” Principle

Subsequently, Japanese policy makers devised a nonlinkage policy called the “separation of politics from economics (business)” principle. Through this measure of political expediency, Japan proceeded with semiofficial trade relations with China in the absence of official diplomatic relations between the two countries. In fact, the first and second Sino-Japanese private-sector trade agreements were signed in 1952 and 1953 during the Yoshida administration. The fourth Sino-Japanese
private-sector trade agreement was signed in 1958 during the Kishi administration that took a strong anti-China position.32

**Yoshida Cabinet**

Prime Minister Yoshida, while publicly denouncing China, had condoned trade relations with China. In May–June 1952, three Japanese parliamentarians—Kōra Tomi of the Ryokufū-kai, a moderate group of Independents in the House of Councillors (HC); Miyakoshi Kisuke, an HR member from the Progressive Party; and Hoashi Kei, then a former HC member from the Japan Socialist Party (JSP)—visited China via Moscow and signed the first Sino-Japanese private-sector trade agreement. Then, in October 1953, the Yoshida cabinet sanctioned a nonpartisan parliamentary economic mission to China, consisting of thirteen parliamentarians and twelve businessmen, led by the delegation head Ikeda Masanosuke (an HR member from Yoshida’s Liberal Party) and deputy head Hoashi, which resulted in the second Sino-Japanese private-sector trade agreement.33

**Hatoyama Cabinet**

Then, Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō (December 1954–December 1956; 1883–1959), who had lost his chance to become prime minister to Yoshida in 1946 due to the sweeping “Purge from Public Offices” enforced by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) general Douglas MacArthur, took power from Yoshida in 1954. The purge dismissed any Japanese politicians and bureaucrats who either were known to have had or were merely thought to have had any involvement with the wartime regime. Hatoyama had actually opposed the war and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, had left the Imperial Japanese Parliament controlled by the military in protest, and had lived in exile in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, until the end of the war. While considering strong relations with the United States essential to Japan, Hatoyama sought to reduce Japan’s economic and political dependence on the United States, as a sovereign nation. Built on the solid relations with the United States, he tried to conclude a peace treaty with the Soviet Union and resumed diplomatic relations with the Soviets. Among many issues with the Soviet Union, the repatriation of 760,000 Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) who had been detained in Siberia since 1945 and Japan’s admission to the UN that had been blocked by the Soviet veto in the UN Security Council were
urgent matters for Japan at that time. Hatoyama’s initiative, however, displeased the Eisenhower administration and cost his political life. He resigned shortly after signing the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration in 1956, but he accomplished what he believed were the right things to do.34

Hatoyama also allowed a parliamentary economic mission to China in May 1955 to sign the third Sino-Japanese private-sector trade agreement. In addition, the Hatoyama cabinet’s Economic Affairs Council’s (the prototype of the Economic Planning Agency that was created in July 1955) director-general Takasaki Tatsunosuke and education minister Matsumura Kenzō became the principal architects for establishing the Sino-Japanese semiofficial trade relations. They laid the foundations for the so-called LT—an acronym for Liao Chengzhi (1908–1983), China’s State Council Foreign Affairs Office vice minister, and Takasaki—trade agreement, or the “memorandum concerning Sino-Japanese long-term comprehensive trade,” signed in November 1962. Subsequently, the China-Japan Memorandum Trade Office, commonly referred to as the Liao Chengzhi Memorandum Trade Office, was created in Beijing and Tokyo. As a result, Sino-Japanese economic relations that thus far had been handled primarily by trading companies on the Japanese side became semiofficial and took off in earnest.35

Ishibashi Cabinet
Prime Minister Ishibashi Tanzan (December 1956–February 1957; 1884–1973), who succeeded Hatoyama, tried to work out the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations and promote Sino-Japanese economic relations; however, he was obliged to give up his new post in a few months when he suffered a mild stroke and pneumonia due to a strenuous campaign tour in cold weather—it turned out that the stroke was not fatal.36

Kishi Cabinet
In contrast, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke (February 1957–July 1960; 1896–1987) took a strong anti-China position and became in June 1957 the first postwar Japanese leader to visit Taiwan. Nevertheless, the Kishi cabinet also sanctioned the signing of the fourth Sino-Japanese private-sector trade agreement in March 1958. Their economic relations, however, deteriorated soon. In May 1958, a right-leaning Japanese dragged down a Chinese national flag at a Chinese stamp and paper/brocade
artwork exhibition in a department store in Nagasaki, which was sponsored by the Japan-China Friendship Association. The police arrested the man but released him as the flag was not damaged. The Chinese government protested to the Kishi cabinet about releasing the man. In turn, the Taiwanese government protested to the Japanese government about the fact that the Chinese (PRC) national flag was displayed at the exhibition. This incident escalated the tension between China and Japan, and became known as the “Nagasaki Chinese National Flag Incident,” putting an end to the positive relations, albeit limited, that had been built up unofficially between the two countries thus far.37

Ikeda Cabinet

Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato (July 1960–November 1964; 1899–1965), who succeeded Kishi after his resignation over the controversial renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, placed the highest priority on Japanese economic recovery and growth through the ambitious “income-doubling plans.” Along this line, the Ikeda cabinet agreed to resume Sino-Japanese trade relations in December 1960; however, the Chinese government this time only permitted transactions with “friendly trading firms”—designated by the Chinese government as such—and most of the large corporations were excluded from the designation. To counter the Chinese measure, Japanese trading companies that were excluded created dummy companies to do business with China. As a result, their economic activities were conducted in a restricted and shady fashion afterward. Moreover, although the LT trade agreement started off the semiofficial trade relations between the two countries in 1963, these relations were far from smooth. China imposed a linkage policy of politics and economics (business), whereas Japan wanted to adopt a nonlinkage policy of separation of politics from economics (business).38

Satō Cabinet

Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (November 1964–July 1972; 1901–1975), the birth brother of Prime Minister Kishi, was one of the protégés of Prime Minister Yoshida. Satō also took in the latter half of his administration as strong an anti-China position as his elder brother because his ultimate goal was the “reversion of Okinawa” from the United States. Satō needed the utmost cooperation of the U.S. government to this end in exchange for Japan’s commitment to the security of South
Korea and Taiwan. He approved a $150 million loan to Taiwan in 1965 and also visited Taiwan in 1967. In the words of the U.S. ambassador to Japan Armin H. Meyer (July 1969–March 1972; 1914–2006), “Sato’s big dream was getting Okinawa back, his whole career was staked on that. To get that back, he really worked hard and that’s why he came to see Nixon. He also realized that Nixon had this textile problem.”

Thus, most of the Japanese policy makers basically played the obedient little brother to their big brother, the United States. They acted according to the Japanese axiom, “a large tree provides larger shade” or “a nail that sticks out will be hammered down,” and succumbed to the force majeure (foreign pressure) of its protector. Japanese foreign policy toward China did not change until Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (July 1972–December 1974; 1918–1993) visited China in September 1972, after President Nixon’s visit to China in February of that year (see chapter nine).

**Creation of Japan-China Friendship Association**

The Japan-China Friendship Association was meanwhile founded in Tokyo in 1950, in order to promote exchanges with China in the absence of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. However, it was supported by the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and was deeply entangled in the ideological controversies between the CCP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as the JCP. When the CCP launched the ultraleftist Cultural Revolution, the JCP severed its relations with the CCP in favor of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the association split into two groups in 1966—one that praised the Cultural Revolution and another that had severed relations with the CCP and was still supported by the JCP.

**Creation of Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association**

In addition, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association was established in Tokyo in 1956. This group was supported by a less dogmatic political party, the JSP, and tried to maintain a more neutral standing, promoting nonpolitical and cultural projects with China. Former prime minister Katayama Tetsu (May 1947–March 1948; 1887–1978), who was also JSP chairman, became the first president of the association. The first director-general Nakajima Kenzō (1903–1976) was a scholar of French literature, whose father Taizō was a student of the philosopher/psychologist William James (elder brother of novelist
Henry James) at Harvard University. Nevertheless, the raison d’être of the association obliged this group to be pro-China, rather than be pro-Taiwan, when it came to the choice between the two.  

According to Deputy Secretary-General Muraoka Kyūbei (1934–), who had worked at the association since its inception in 1956, the association grew out of Katayama’s visit to China in November 1955, as a Japanese delegation head. Muraoka accompanied Katayama, as his unofficial secretary. Given the difficulty with normalizing the bilateral relations officially, Katayama met Premier Zhou and signed an agreement with the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) to promote cultural and sports exchanges between the two countries. Upon returning home, Katayama created the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association in 1956.  

The first major event that the association undertook was the twenty-third World Table Tennis Championships in Tokyo in April 1956 (“Tokyo World’s,” hereafter). The JTTA then was afraid of inviting China to the tournaments because the Japanese right-wing groups considered the CCP their nemesis. However, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association officials argued that China was a member of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) and therefore was qualified to participate in the Tokyo World’s, whereas Taiwan was not a member of the ITTF and was unqualified to participate (examined below). Their argument won in the end, and China participated in the Tokyo World’s. This became the very first Chinese participation in an international sports event held in a foreign territory after its establishment in 1949.  

Director-General Nakajima states that, given the “unnatural” relations between China and Japan at that time, he had noticed from the onset that sports exchanges offered effective means for normalizing Sino-Japanese relations. When the official diplomatic channel was disrupted, the association played a key role in having China participate in the Tokyo World’s, on behalf of the JTTA. He states,  

The association took a strong stand for China’s participation because the Japanese government was pursuing an anti-China policy. It was highly unconventional for a nonpolitical association to take a position that countered the government policy… The association had to take a strong stand because the Japanese government was incapable of grasping the fact that Japan had lost the war [Japan was the aggressor in the second Sino-Japanese War], let alone understanding the importance of normalizing its relations
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with China. It would be difficult for the younger generations that do not know the political situation back then to understand how strong intervention was necessary to have China participate in the Tokyo World’s in 1956.45

“Two Chinas” Issue and International Sports Circles

No sooner did China seek for international recognition as the sole legitimate government of China, replacing Taiwan, than the “two Chinas” issue spilled over into international sports circles, and it became a contentious issue. Many international sports organizations adopted the compromise “dual representation” formula, in which they accepted both China and Taiwan as representing China. Nevertheless, China kept on protesting this formula, claiming that it was the sole legitimate government of China, and that Taiwan was an integral part of China (PRC). When the IOC president Avery Brundage (1952–1972) adopted the “dual representation” formula, China withdrew from the IOC in protest in August 1958. China also withdrew from fifteen international sports organizations one after another during June–August 1958, including the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the International Association of Athletics Federation, and the International Swimming Federation. Then, China withdrew from the International Volleyball Federation in 1970 when the latter acknowledged Taiwan as China (ROC). China’s withdrawals from the International Tennis Federation and the International Archery Federation followed in that year. Nevertheless, the situation at the ITTF was different.46

“Two Chinas” Issue and International Table Tennis Circles

In table tennis circles, the ITTF admitted China as “PRC, China” in 1952. ITTF president Ivor Montagu (from England, 1904–1984; first ITTF president, 1926–1967)—a philosopher and literary critic—accepted China because he was a progressive and a member of the left-leaning World Peace Council. Then, China also joined the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) at its foundation in 1952. Nevertheless, when the first Asian Table Tennis Championships were held in Singapore in November 1952, Singapore—then part of Malaysia—boycotted China’s entry there. The pretext was communist riots in Malaysia (Singapore would be separated from Malaysia
and become an independent sovereign state in 1965). Then, the TTFA admitted Taiwan, as “ROC, China,” and Taiwan participated in the second Asian Table Tennis Championships in Tokyo in September 1953. In protest, China withdrew from the TTFA in 1953. China meanwhile remained in the ITTF.47

Subsequently in 1957, Taiwan applied for admission to the ITTF, as “ROC, China.” Both China and Taiwan claimed that they alone represented the legitimate China Table Tennis Association (CTTA). China, however, had applied first and had been a member since 1952. Taiwan’s application therefore was rejected. Taiwan made applications repeatedly afterward, but they were rejected each time. The ITTF was willing to admit Taiwan as Taiwan, but not as “ROC, China.” Thus, an anomalous situation arose in the international table tennis circles regarding China: On the one hand, China was a member of the ITTF, but not the TTFA. On the other hand, Taiwan was a member of the TTFA, but not the ITTF. Therefore, Taiwan continued to participate in Asian championships, whereas China continued to participate in world championships. This anomaly lasted for nearly two decades until 1968 when the ITTF added a provision to its constitution, stipulating that only members of the ITTF can join its subordinate regional table tennis federations and participate in respective regional championships.48

China and Table Tennis

Table tennis has been the new China’s “national sport.” It is said that some Chinese leaders, including Mao Zedong, were avid players of table tennis. When Mao and Zhou Enlai took shelter in a cave to avoid enemy bombing during the civil war, they carried a table tennis table into the cave, and passed the time by playing against each other. Mao used a “shake-hand” conventional grip, while Zhou used a “pen-holder” grip. The leaders of the new China wanted to develop a national sport to demonstrate its solidarity and unity to the world and promote a sport that could be played anywhere, at any time, and by anybody in the vast country of almost a billion people. They chose table tennis because the Chinese physique was equipped to excel in it. This deliberate, political decision was followed by the task of selecting the youth at the grassroots who displayed aptitude and training them to become competitive players at the international level. Premier Zhou had another reason to promote table tennis. He wanted to encourage
women’s sports in order to strengthen the frail bodies of the Chinese women, who had been subjected to the practice of “foot-binding,” an object of disgust and ridicule for Western observers.49

In addition, the Chinese leaders were inspired when Japan, a newcomer to international table tennis competitions, took three world titles in the Wembley World’s, northwest London, in 1954—in men’s single’s (Ogimura Ichirō, see chapter four), men’s team, and women’s team. This unexpected and unprecedented victory helped the Japanese to regain their pride after the humiliating defeat in World War II. The Chinese leaders felt that China could also become a world champion in table tennis, since the Chinese and the Japanese had similar body structures. Consequently, Premier Zhou in 1961 asked Ogimura to help train Chinese players at a time when Japan had no diplomatic relations with China. Ogimura accepted. His countrymen criticized Ogimura for fraternizing with their sports enemies; however, he had already been transformed from a mere national icon to a world figure—he held eleven world titles in total between 1954 and 1961.50

After joining the ITTF in 1952, China quickly rose to the world level in sports in which agility and speed are decisive factors. Japan had been the reigning champion in world table tennis in the 1950s. Japan was the four-time-consecutive world champion in men’s singles from the Wembley World’s in 1954 to the Stockholm World’s in 1957 (the championships became biannual events afterward). Japan was also the five-time-consecutive champion in men’s team from the Wembley World’s in 1954 to the Dortmund World’s in 1959. However, China defeated Japan in men’s singles (Rong Guotuan) in 1959. Then China for the first time defeated Japan in men’s team, as well as in men’s singles (Zhuang Zedong) and in women’s singles (Qiu Zhonghui), winning a total of three world titles in 1961 when China hosted the Beijing World’s. China won again in both men’s singles (Zhuang) and men’s team, winning three world titles in total at the Prague World’s in 1963, and then won five world titles, including men’s singles (Zhuang), women’s team and men’s team, at the Ljubljana World’s in 1965 (see appendix 2).51

China’s winning streak, however, was soon disrupted by its internal politics, rather than by the level of its players. China launched the Cultural Revolution in May 1966, putting the country into chaos. The CCP disbanded all the sports teams at every school, considering them bourgeois activities. China also shut down outside interactions in order to eradicate foreign influences. China’s national table tennis
team became the first “scapegoat” because it was the world champion. World-class players, such as the 1959 world champion in men’s singles Rong Guotuan, as well as Fu Qifang and Jiang Yongning, were persecuted to death. Well-known trainers were imprisoned. In this catastrophe, China missed the world championships in 1967 and 1969. The surviving Chinese table tennis players did not have a place to practice and lost their chances to win world titles in 1967 and 1969. In China’s absence, Japan won six world titles at the Stockholm World’s in 1967 and four world titles at the Munich World’s in 1969. In addition, the annual friendship tournaments between the CTTA and the JTTA that had begun in 1962 were canceled in 1967. Nevertheless, China had remained in the ITTF during the Cultural Revolution, because table tennis was its top sport, after all, and the ITTF had acknowledged China as the sole legitimate government of China.52

**Gotō Becomes TTFA President**

Gotō was elected as president of the TTFA in August 1967 during this turbulent time, in which the anomaly regarding “two Chinas” was the norm—Taiwan was a member of the TTFA whereas China was not. In turn, China was a member of the ITTF, but Taiwan was not. Gotō inherited this anomaly when he became the TTFA president. It was natural for Gotō to lean toward Taiwan on the “two Chinas” issue, because Taiwan was a member of the TTFA, but China was not. The Japanese government had acknowledged Taiwan as the legitimate government of China, but it had not recognized China as such. Accordingly, when the general meeting of the TTFA was held in Nagoya in March 1968, Gotō approved its decision to recommend Taiwan’s admission to the ITTF. China vehemently criticized the TTFA’s decision. China’s state-run Xinhua News Agency stated in the following month that the TTFA was being infiltrated by American imperialism and its agent, the Satō government. China accused the TTFA of embarking on a conspiracy to create “two Chinas” policies in international sport circles.53

The ITTF in 1968 turned down the TTFA’s recommendation to admit Taiwan, as “ROC, China.” The ITTF simultaneously added a provision to its constitution, stipulating that only members of the ITTF could also become members of its subordinate regional federations, such as the TTFA, and participate in respective regional championships, such as Asian championships. This new rule put the presence of Taiwan in the TTFA on questionable ground. Nevertheless, because
Taiwan had already been a member of the TTFA, Gotō followed the custom that had been practiced for nearly two decades and invited Taiwan to the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya in April 1970. China denounced Gotō’s decision.\(^{34}\)

\* \* \*

In retrospect, two seemingly unrelated forces involving China were in play concurrently in 1970. President Nixon was groping a way to break the ice in Sino-U.S. relations and embarked on his China initiative, while simultaneously expanding the Indochinese War and escalating tension with China. Gotō meanwhile was searching for a way to have China participate in the Nagoya World’s of March–April 1971 in the midst of the controversy over the “two Chinas” issue. Their motivations were different. Their objectives were different. Yet, neither Nixon nor Gotō was aware that the two threads would soon be tied together to weave out the historic diplomatic event. Premier Zhou would tie the two forces together.\(^{55}\)

In this volatile international political context, Gotō, as president of both the JTTA and the TTFA, was confronted with the difficult decision of whether to invite China to the Nagoya World’s. It was under these circumstances that Gotō went to Beijing for direct negotiations with the Chinese officials at a time when neither Japan nor its protector, the United States, recognized communist China as a legitimate government of China. He did so risking his life and jeopardizing the safety of his family. Although the international political environment concerning China was changing deep underneath the surface, few, including those in the Nixon administration, perceived the change as quickly and acted upon it as Gotō did. No one dared to take the China initiative in the way Gotō did at that time. Why and how did Gotō make such a “reckless” decision and follow through with it against strong opposition from various circles, both at home and abroad?
CHAPTER THREE

Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

It is a little known fact that a private school, called the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT) Meiden High School (“Meiden” is a Japanese acronym for “Nagoya electricity”) in Nagoya, Aichi prefecture, in central Japan, is the cradle of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. The school is famous in Japan not only for its education in electrical engineering but also for its strength in sports, such as baseball, fencing, and table tennis. The school alumni include “Ichiro” Suzuki of the Seattle Mariners (1973–), who keeps rewriting his Major League Baseball records, and the 1967 world table tennis champion in men’s singles, Hasegawa Nobuhiko (1947–2005, see chapter four). The prototype of this school, the Nagoya Institute of Electricity, was founded in July 1912 by Gotō Takasaburō (1866–1925).1

Gotō Takasaburō was born as the third son of Yagi Akira, a samurai retainer of Owari province (current Nagoya), which was established by the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate government, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), in 1610. Gotō was then adopted into the Gotō family. It was a common practice for an heirless family to adopt a promising boy in Japan then. Gotō studied English and German at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages (current Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), took several jobs, and returned to Nagoya. Then he worked at a major construction company, Tamura-gumi, and was expected to become its general manager. However, Gotō gave up this promised future for his dream.2

Foundation of Meiden School

Gotō perceived the need to create a school to train middle-echelon electrical engineers at the time Japan began to use electricity in earnest.
Japan surprised the world by winning in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 and was eagerly promoting industrialization and modernization. In Nagoya, Nagoya Electric Light (current Chūbu Electric Power) commenced its operations in 1890. Then, Mikawa Electric Power began to supply power to households in the city in 1904. The Nagoya Electric Railways (current Meitetsu) operated the city electric streetcars in 1898, which was only the second such operation in Japan, after Kyoto. Then, commemorating the 300-year anniversary of the founding of Nagoya (Owari), the city upgraded its infrastructure in 1902, installing electric streetlights and expanding the operation of the city electric streetcars. There was definitely a growing demand for middle-tier electrical engineers. However, there were only two public schools for higher education in Nagoya in 1912—the Eighth National High School (current Nagoya University) and the Nagoya High School of Technology (current Nagoya Institute of Technology).3

Nevertheless, foreseeing the potential for a training school for electrical engineers and actually creating it were quite different matters. Gotō had neither the financial resources nor the space for a school facility. While industrialists in the region agreed with Gotō in principle, they hesitated to assist Gotō to create a brand new school from scratch. In this predicament, Gotō first created the Nagoya School of English and German Languages in 1911, as a pilot school, as he had taught these languages at Meiji University in Tokyo. This became a pioneering school for foreign language education in Nagoya. Meanwhile, Gotō convinced the influentials in the region, such as executives at Nagoya Electric Light and Nagoya Electric Railways, obtained their financial support, and succeeded in establishing the Nagoya Institute of Electricity. Since he did not have enough funds to build a new classroom building, he rented a space in Iwaichi-chō, in downtown Naka ward. To his surprise, Gotō received more than 200 applicants, and he immediately rented a larger space in Yaba-chō. The age of the students ranged from sixteen to fifty. The class began as a one-year-program night school in September 1912, with an impressive list of instructors who were administrators at Nagoya Electric Light and Nagoya Electric Railways, with degrees in engineering. That was how the prototype of Meiden High School took off, as “the only electrical engineering school in the Chūbu region.”4

Nagoya Institute of Electricity was chartered as Nagoya School of Electricity (“Meiden School,” hereafter) in December 1912 and upgraded to a three-year-course day school in April 1913. The school was accredited as a Class-B vocational school (similar to a community
Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

college), rather than a Class-A high school (a high school and a four-year college combined). Because of this lower status, the students had to master in three years the subjects that regular high school students learn in five years. This status would also adversely affect the school in the postwar era. Gotō emphasized “practical education” with the goal of promoting “education for a socially viable work force,” as well as discipline, teaching moral education classes himself. He also created the school banner, with the design of an Ohm’s law triangle, one of the fundamental laws of electricity. The triangle was made up of V (voltage), I (current), and R (resistance)—V on the top of the triangle, I on the bottom left, and R on the bottom right of the triangle. Fulfilling the school motto “Sincerity and Diligence” to the maximum, the school helped to satisfy the growing need for electrical engineers in the Chūbu region, which was known for its creativity and entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurs in the region included Toyoda Sakichi (1867–1930), the founder of Toyota Industries Corporation (later Toyota Motors), and Morita Akio (1921–1999), cofounder of Sony. Thus, the region, with its capital Nagoya being founded in 1610 by Tokugawa Ieyasu, has embraced tradition and innovation; a coexistence of seemingly contradictory elements.5

In this context, Meiden School became an integral part of the growth of industry in the hub of Japan’s technological creativity. Meiden School has been owned and managed by the Gotō family from its inception to the present day. The reputation of this school is primarily owed to the school founder, Gotō Takasaburō’s second son, Gotō Kōji (November 1906–January 1972). Gotō Kōji’s elder brother died in infancy. He had an elder sister and a younger sister. Gotō would succeed to Meiden School from his father much earlier than was anticipated and expand it into a comprehensive academy, encompassing the education system from kindergarten to graduate school.6

Early Life of Gotō Kōji

Master of Kendo

Gotō was destined to become a leader. Since his childhood, he was physically fit and strong. He attended Meirin Middle School (combined with high-school-level education under the old education system), which traces its lineage to the school for samurai’s children founded by the Owari-province lord Tokugawa Munekatsu (1705–1761) in 1749.
The school’s compulsory subjects included judō (wrestling) and kendō (bamboo-sword fencing), two major forms of Japanese martial arts. Gotō excelled in sports and engaged in training for baseball and kendō. The school was also academically demanding, and many students did not advance to the next grade even if they satisfied the required GPA for all the courses. The school also frequently issued suspensions. According to one of his classmates, Tanabe Mikio, Gotō was held back from the next grade once or twice, while Tanabe was held back once—those who were held back for a year were embarrassingly referred to as wansu (“once”). Gotō meanwhile defeated his seniors in kendō and was given the first level (sho-dan) in 1922. He soon defeated his teachers and obtained the second level (ni-dan) in 1923, which was an unprecedented feat for a sixteen-year-old student. He became the captain of the kendō club and brought victories to the school several times.7

Upon graduating from Meirin Middle School, Gotō enrolled in the newly created Hamamatsu High School of Technology (current Shizuoka University School of Technology) in the neighboring Shizuoka prefecture, in April 1926, at the age of nineteen. He took up table tennis as a school extracurricular activity and also continued his training in kendō. Gotō obtained the third level (san-dan) in kendō in 1927, moved up to the fifth level (go-dan), and obtained the title of an instructor while he was a college student. Gotō mastered the way of kendō to the extent that even teachers on campus looked up to him. His style was not the conventional “offensive-only” type. It was instead the “be still and catch the timing” style, in which the player does not attack the opponent indiscriminately, but keeps an optimal distance from the opponent and waits for the best moment to attack or defend. It was a remarkable combination of stillness and quick movement. His shinai (bamboo sword) moved flexibly as if it were part of his arms and fingertips. Gotō was given the title of “master of kendō,” the highest level, by the national kendō school, Dainihon-butokukai, in 1934, at the age of twenty-seven.8

**Determining Two Goals for Life**

According to his classmates, including Suzuki Kan, Gotō already had identified two goals for his life during his college years—to create a university of technology and to build world peace through international sports exchanges of youth. As the only surviving son, Gotō was expected to succeed to his father’s school. He wanted to expand
the school to a university-level institution. Unlike the United States
where major universities, such as the Ivy Leagues, are private insti-
tutions, education has remained in the public domain in Japan, with
Tokyo Imperial University as its pinnacle, and the development of pri-
vate universities lagged behind with a few exceptions, such as Keio
University and Waseda University in Tokyo. In this education culture,
Gotô was determined to build a comprehensive academy for engineer-
ing education in Nagoya. Regarding the second goal, Suzuki states
that Gotô nurtured the idea of using table tennis for building world
peace through moral education classes of the first and second year at
Hamamatsu High School of Technology. Their English teacher, Horie
Kôzô, was also in charge of the moral education classes and lectured
on the philosophy of Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), the founder of
the modern Olympic games. Coubertin’s work and his enthusiasm for
world peace inspired Gotô. Suzuki states that Gotô literally lived for
these two goals throughout his life.9

Succeeding to Meiden School

The chance to achieve his life dreams came unexpectedly soon for
Gotô. His father, Takasaburô, died of sickness in January 1925 when
Gotô was a senior at Meirin Middle School. Takasaburô had assumed
a large financial debt after the school relocation and expansion in 1916
and 1922. The corporate contributions had been cut off, and the tuition
became the only revenue source. Takasaburô overcame the financial
crises by steadily increasing the student enrollment and through the
alumni’s fund-raising efforts. However, just when things began to look
promising, Takasaburô was worn out and fell ill. The twenty-second
commencement in September 1924 became the last commencement
ceremony Takasaburô presided over. His son Kôji thus became owner
and president of Meiden School in January 1925 at the age of eighteen.
He graduated from Meirin Middle School in March 1925 and appointed
his father’s birth brother, Yagi Hanshirô, as school principal the follow-
ning month. Then he enrolled himself in Hamamatsu High School of
Technology in Shizuoka prefecture in April 1926. Upon Yagi’s death,
Gotô welcomed a pioneer in electrical engineering, Tsukino Shôgorô,
as the school principal in September 1928. As the school management
took up too much time in Nagoya, Gotô gave up his schooling in
Hamamatsu in December 1928. Then, he married Hayashi Suzuko in
September 1931.10
Gotō valued diligence and efficiency and expected the same from his employees and students. He was at his office just after 7:00 a.m. every morning. He maintained this reputation for over forty years as a school president (and also principal at times) no matter how busy he was with other engagements and projects, of which he had plenty. One of the school staff, Takahara Takeo, states that Gotō never forgot his most fundamental duty—the management of Meiden School. He came to his office every morning, inspected the school, and went through the papers to be signed until the day he died. Takahara observed this different aspect of Gotō that many people did not know and stated that no ordinary person could do that. In order to fulfill all these tasks, Gotō lived every second of his life to the fullest, not wasting a moment. Another school staff member, Secretary-General Hayashi Hideo, tried to beat Gotō and went to the school early in the morning every day, but Gotō was always already in his office, doing some paperwork. Hayashi could never beat Gotō until the day he passed away.

Gotō was also known for being first at the place of an appointment before anyone else. He was never late for appointments. Whenever Gotō had an appointment, he made sure to be at the appointment place at least fifteen or twenty minutes before the scheduled time. One of the school-teachers, Andō Rōichi, writes that Gotō went to Nagoya station forty to sixty minutes before the departure time of the train, allowing extra time for traffic jams and other unexpected contingencies. Once when Andō accompanied Gotō on a business trip, Gotō told Andō to come pick him up at his house at 7:00 a.m. Andō went to his house at 6:30 a.m. to be on the safe side; however, Gotō had already put on his shoes and was waiting for Andō at the entrance, asking him, “What took you so long?”

Another teachers, Satō Nobuo, who was on night duty at the school (it was customary then for schoolteachers to take turns to do night duty), woke up due to a distant siren of a fire engine. Satō had spent five years over a span of eight years at the warfront and had become sensitive to the slightest unusual sound. He immediately went to check the school buildings and the neighborhood with a flashlight and confirmed that the fire was far away, and that the school was safe. Then, he noticed someone at the school entrance gate. He thought that it was a burglar, but it turned out to be Gotō. Gotō also heard the siren and came to inspect the school. Satō was new to the school at that time and was impressed with Gotō’s dedication to the school. Secretary-General Hayashi tells another episode. Gotō regularly inspected school facilities
early in the morning before classes began and at midnight, dragging a metal cane (also for self-defense) in his right hand and a flashlight in his left hand. When Hayashi followed Gotō on one of these morning checkups, they found the men’s room of the old school building flooded with water. One of the toilets was clogged. While Hayashi was thinking that he should first go look for a stick to fix it, Gotō went ahead, jumped into the smelly “reservoir,” put his arm into the filthy water to locate the leak, and fixed it in front of Hayashi’s eyes. Hayashi was in awe of Gotō’s quick action.13

Observing Gotō’s commitment to the school, the school staff felt that they would do anything for Gotō and for the school. In fact, Gotō mobilized his staff and students to build facilities, such as the track-and-field exercise space and the bicycle parking lot. Gotō also enforced strict rules on his students. Dormitory students woke up every morning to Gotō’s personal wake-up call (Gotō used to live on the school premises in the early years). He himself occasionally gave students lectures on moral education. Students were assigned to cleaning school facilities and doing other chores of the school on Sunday mornings. Only Sunday afternoons were free time for students.14

Benevolent Side of Gotō

Gotō was not only a spartan educator but also a generous administrator. While he imposed strict discipline on his students, he believed in his students and gave them second chances. Gotō expelled none of his students, because expelling students meant giving up on them. He told students to shave their heads, instead, according to the custom of samurai retainers of the feudal era; they shaved their heads, like Buddhist monks, as an act of repentance when they disgraced the honor of their family or master. Gotō was also generous to his staff. Gotō reciprocated the staff's dedication to the school by organizing holiday events, with entertainment and food, and by taking them at his expense on faculty/staff family trips to onsen (hot spring) resorts, which were favorite Japanese vacation destinations. His school staff and students, as well as his classmates and friends, all noted that, while he was domineering and dynamic in decision making and demanding and meticulous in execution, he also had a mischievous streak and a sense of humor, and also was benevolent and generous toward people. He took care of his staff, students, and teachers, and helped those who were in need of help for the rest of their lives.15

Gotō enjoyed entertaining people, but he made it a rule to treat people out of his own pocket. He declined to be treated by others,
and strictly kept his rule of not drinking at another’s expense. Even his closest friends could not break this iron rule of Gotō’s. Gotō did not drink sake because he had a sensitive stomach and only had red wine. Chūbu-region Bicycle Race Association director Yamada Akira, who first met Gotō during military service in Nagoya in 1942, states that Gotō advised him not to drink on another’s account when Yamada was promoted to section head of the Nagoya Trade and Industry Bureau in the government in 1964. Gotō was as pleased as if it were his own promotion and held a party to celebrate the occasion. There, Gotō told Yamada, “Many government officials get in trouble drinking on another’s account (they often get involved in money bribery scandals on such occasions). Never accept ‘a free drink.’ I will treat you to a drink whenever you want.” True to his words, Gotō invited Yamada to a party a couple of times a month ever after, even if the occasion had nothing to do with Yamada.16

* * *

Owing to the school motto, “Sincerity and Diligence,” Meiden School had made steady progress, and the total number of graduates reached 1,085 in 1926. More than 20 percent of them passed the national qualifying exam for principal electrical engineer. It was said that wherever there was an electric power line in the Chūbu region (central Japan), there was a graduate of Meiden School. Japan, however, was hit by a serious financial crisis in 1927, and then by the Great Depression in 1929. The graduates of the school could not find suitable jobs. For instance, in March 1930, despite Gotō’s utmost efforts and his networking, only a dozen out of a total of more than 130 graduates found employment in electrical engineering. In this dismal atmosphere, Gotō created a table tennis club at the school, in order to elevate the morale of the students (for Gotō and table tennis, see chapter four).17

**Prewar Expansion of Meiden School**

Meiden School was located in Tōshin-chō (also known as Shinsakae-machi), the busy downtown in Naka ward, when Gotō succeeded his father, and the classroom building was small and old. There was no gym or exercise space—either indoors or outdoors. Gotō decided to relocate the school to a larger space, keeping the old site for the night school. For this, one of his classmates at Meirin Middle School,
Sugiyama Bunzō, writes that Gotō did something nobody else would, which was indicative of his quick and bold decision making. Once he found a 0.54-acre piece of land for sale in Wakamizu-cho in Chikusa ward in May 1933, he ran into his bank just before closing and withdrew all of his personal savings, and bought the lot on the spot. He built exercise facilities first, then classroom buildings, and a swimming pool. The school has expanded to various locations since then, but its headquarters stands in this location to this day.  

Kuriyama Yoshio, an executive of Tōhō Power Company who taught at Meiden School and later became a member of the House of Councillors (HC, the upper house of the Japanese parliament, an equivalent of the House of Lords in England), states that the relocation of the school was an extremely difficult task for anyone, let alone a young school president like Gotō, to carry out when Japan plunged into the reckless war with China—the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the second Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945. Nevertheless, nothing could stop Gotō once he had made up his mind. Kuriyama states that Gotō’s extraordinary commitment and enthusiasm for higher education made an impossible task a reality.

Then, war disrupted the steady progress of Gotō’s life work.

Second Sino-Japanese War and Asia-Pacific War

As Japan launched its modernization and militarization drive in full swing since the establishment of the Bismarckian government, modeled after Prussia, under Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji) in 1868, Japan vied for spheres of influence in the Asian continent. Japan fought with China in 1894–1895 (the first Sino-Japanese War), and then with Russia in 1904–1905, and annexed Korea in 1910. The Kwantung Army stationed in Manchuria, current Northeast China, created a colony there called Manchukuo in 1932. Japan waged total war with China again in July 1937, triggered by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, in which the Chinese National Revolutionary Army and the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) clashed in the suburbs of Beijing (the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War).  

Gotō’s Military Service

The military took over political power in Japan, and Gotō enlisted in the IJA Third Division in December 1929, as a candidate officer. He was discharged the next November. Then, Gotō was again conscripted into
the IJA in August 1937, at the rank of corporal. He was appointed as the squad leader of the transportation unit of the independent field operations telecommunication tenth platoon, with a formation of horses. Although he was a noncommissioned officer, his mission required the leadership command equivalent of a platoon leader. In fact, he looked like a majestic warrior, riding on horseback and carrying a Japanese sword.

Gotō’s unit departed from the Kobe port for China on September 4, 1937. As soon as he arrived at the Taigu port (southeast of Tianjin) in Hebei province on September 12, he was ordered to report to Tianjin immediately. Since his unit had a formation of horses, they could not use the railroad. They had to cross the marshland on foot. Soon, they were stuck in the mud and could not move any further. The area was actually called Sidaojing, which literally means “death-road-border” (in terms of the severity of the procession, it would be similar to crossing Death Valley in the United States on foot). The level of exhaustion of the soldiers and the horses was beyond description. Gotō suggested removing the wagons with full loads of equipment from the horses and moving the horses to a dry area before their horseshoes loosened and fell off. He also suggested that the soldiers carry the equipment and pull the emptied wagons. Gotō commanded the team efficiently and succeeded in crossing the “death-road-border.”

Due to the delay in passing the marshland, his squad was late for the operation it was supposed to participate in and was instead ordered to move forward to the southwest to Shijiazhuang, the provincial capital of Hebei province. The unit then moved further west to Taiyuan, the provincial capital of Shanxi province, and then north to Datong (see map). There, Gotō was ordered to station the unit at Chunxian and guard the telecommunication lines between Taiyuan and Datong, as well as to train soldiers and horses, from early December 1938. His unit ended up staying there for over a year until late December 1939. One of the vexing problems for a commander when his unit was stationed at one place for a long period of time was how to maintain the morale of his men and use the off-duty time. Gotō’s solution was table tennis. Gotō had his wife send for table tennis equipment from Japan and built the table tennis table in the courtyard in his camp. He thus strengthened the morale and physical condition of his men during the leisure time. Owing to Gotō’s instruction, his unit members became advanced-level players. He even accepted local Chinese people and trained them in person. Soon, some Chinese became stronger than the Japanese, so that Gotō organized Sino-Japanese friendship tournaments.
on September 12, 1939, the second anniversary of his unit’s landing at the Taigu port. He had his accounting officer provide many prizes for the tournaments.23

few Japanese military personnel would dare to let the Chinese (enemy nationals) participate in the table tennis training and hold friendship tournaments with them on the warfront in China. Gotō also taught kendō to his senior men as part of officer training. Gotō longed for peace. Reminiscing about the war years, Itō Seiji and six other surviving men who were in Gotō’s squad state that Gotō unequivocally opposed the war from the onset. Gotō told them as early as 1937, at a time when it was taboo to criticize Japanese militarism even in the mildest manner, that the Marco Polo Bridge Incident was a conspiracy of the IJA officers. Gotō argued that the higher echelon of the IJA launched the war with China for the sake of achieving their own glory and promotions at the cost of the rest of the Japanese (and the Chinese). There was no merit for Japan in fighting against China. He expressed this personal opinion of his not only to his subordinates but also to his superiors. Gotō often told his men, “Japan should make peace with China as soon as possible. I shall return to Japan alive because I have work to do for the sake of world peace.”24

National Mobilization Law

Gotō was discharged from duty as the replacement unit personnel arrived in December 1939, and he returned home in February 1940, after two and a half years’ service in China. Meanwhile, in April 1938, the first Konoe cabinet, which was formed by the civilian Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945, a descendant of the ancient nobility and de facto rulers, the Fujiwara family, related to the Imperial family. He committed suicide at home on the day of his incarceration in Sugamo Prison), but was controlled by the military, enacted the National Mobilization Law. The law authorized the government to mobilize the nation’s human and material resources for total war, including control over all civilian organizations, nationalization of strategic industries, price controls, rationing of basic commodities and food, and censorship of the mass media. The government drafted civilians to work in military industries through the National Service Draft Ordinance. Students from the middle school and above were mobilized into the workforce through the Outline of Establishing Wartime Student Mobilization System of June 1943 and the Student Workforce Ordinance of August 1944. Meiden School students, as
well as the administrative staffers, worked at military factories, such as Chikusa Armory and Nagoya Armory.  

Notwithstanding the austerity measures imposed by the military regime, however, Gotō built more classroom buildings on the Wakamizu campus as soon as he returned home in February 1940, and then erected a bronze bust statue of his father on the campus in November that year. The alumni had begun fund-raising for the statue in November 1937 to commemorate the twenty-fifth-year anniversary of the school’s founding. Gotō’s return also reinvigorated club activities, such as basketball, kendō, sumō wrestling, table tennis, and tennis. After the government legislated the Essential Commodities Control Law in March 1941, however, even building new wooden classrooms was banned. Gotō donated his father’s bronze bust statue to the government, when the requisition drive of metals to manufacture weapons intensified. The government even collected beer-bottle caps and gold teeth.

Third Military Service

Then, Gotō was called to duty again in 1943. This time the appointment was not abroad, but to what was called “at home service.” He was appointed as a supervisor of the engineering division of the IJA Aviation Headquarters Nagoya Supervising Division, which oversaw the production of airplanes in the region. Nagoya had many heavy industry manufacturers, such as Japan Aircraft and Mitsubishi Generator (a prototype of the Nagoya factory of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries), which were turned into military-manufacturing machines. During this military service, Gotō also taught kendō and table tennis to his colleagues before and after work and during the lunch break, joking that playing with only his left hand would be enough to defeat them. The training continued even in the cold mornings during the winter and the hot evenings during the summer. Through such sportsmanship and volunteerism, he earned respect from his colleagues.

Mitsubishi Automobile Sales Company president Nishino Shimbei, who was head of the management section of the IJA Aviation Headquarters Nagoya Supervising Division during the war, states that Gotō not only exhibited outstanding command of knowledge and technology in aviation but also exercised exceptional leadership during his service. The personnel section ranked Gotō at the top out of a total of 600 personnel in the division in their performance assessment. Nishino writes that Gotō had such an attractive personality that his colleagues
Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

and superiors liked him, whereas his subordinates revered him even if he was strict and demanding toward them. Nishino made an unusual and unprecedented decision to discharge Gotō from this line of duty in 1944, earlier than expected. Nishino believed that Gotō could serve Japan better if he devoted himself to education, training young engineers, instead of supervising the production of airplanes. Gotō was too valuable a school administrator to serve in the military. Reflecting on the wartime more than three decades ago, Nishino states that he had made the right decision at that time.28

Massive Nagoya Air Raids and Tragedy of the War

The Asia-Pacific War took a heavy toll not only of servicemen but also of civilians. As the region surrounding Nagoya was an industrial hub with major manufacturers, the whole city turned into a military industry complex. Consequently, the city sustained heavy air strikes by U.S. B-29s, and was burned down. In fact, the concentration of military factories was such that, when the Japanese Home Ministry decided to enforce “evacuation of civilians and buildings” in January 1944, Tokyo and Nagoya were chosen to be the first cities to execute the order. The “evacuation of civilians” referred to that of schoolchildren from the third grade to the sixth grade to the countryside, which was intended not only to protect them from air raids in major cities but also to preserve next-generation soldiers in order to complete the war objectives. In turn, the “evacuation of buildings” was actually a euphemism for forcible relocation of houses in cities. This policy was designed to create buffer zones to preempt air-raid-borne fire from spreading to strategically important facilities, such as armories and other military facilities. Residents of the designated area received a very short notice from the government to vacate their premises. After the military destroyed these “buildings,” residents and students were mobilized to clean up the debris.29

The U.S. B-29s flew from Saipan, in the Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and launched air strikes on Japan in November 1944 in earnest, including Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. Nagoya then sustained heavy air raids on December 13, which continued until July 1945, totaling seventy air strikes. One of the heaviest attacks occurred on the night of March 12, 1945, known as the “Massive Nagoya Air Raid.” It literally flattened the whole city. During this air strike, Gotō’s night school in Tōshin-chō was burned down. This massive air raid also brought a personal tragedy to Gotō. He lost his eldest and only
son, Kunimasa, at the age of two years and nine months. Kunimasa had diphtheria and had been hospitalized at the Nagoya University Hospital. When the hospital was hit by the air raid, a nurse ran out of the hospital with him and evacuated to the Tsurumai Park. However, the temperature outside the towering inferno plummeted quickly after the bombings, and Kunimasa’s condition worsened. He died on March 14. Gotō stated, “I slept holding Kunimasa’s tiny coffin in my arms for several days, taking advantage of the fact that the crematory was full. I could not bear the thought of cremating my son. I finally cremated him on March 18. That night, Nagoya was hit by another air raid and my house in Tōshin-chō was burned down. When I reached a safe area, it was already dawn. There, I prayed for peace.”

Gotō, however, could not mourn his son’s death for long. Nagoya was hit by yet another air raid on March 24. Meiden School was located next to Chikusa Armory and Nagoya Machine Manufacturing (part of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries), which were among the targets of this air strike. Anticipating such an attack, Gotō was at the school with the teacher on the night duty and the dormitory students who took turns as vigilante corps for the school. They heard the rumbling sounds of the B-29s over their heads, but the airplanes were hovering in the midair without bombing. Then, the sky turned bright as if it were midday. Gotō realized that they were going to drop flare bombs and told the students to go into the bunker. That night, the U.S. B-29s dropped incendiary bombs for the first time in Nagoya. Two incendiary bombs hit the school and the classroom buildings became a sea of fire. Gotō and his staff dashed to the scene of the fire and immediately began to put out the fire. He was determined to save the school. Gotō was like the captain of a sinking ship who tried to save his ship desperately. When the bombings were over, they realized that they had saved the school from total destruction. Although countless windows and roof tiles were blown out, and pillars were burned here and there, the school buildings still stood. All the surrounding area was completely burned down. Massive U.S. air strikes on Nagoya continued, burning the new six-story Nagoya station on March 19 and completely burning down the graceful 336-year-old Nagoya castle on May 14, 1945.

When Satō Nobuo came to teach at Meiden Middle School after the war in March 1946, he was shocked to find that the whole city of Nagoya was still in ruins, with the evidence of high explosive bombs and incendiary bombs everywhere. Then, he was astonished to find that the school stood in the middle of the ruins of the armory, where destroyed tanks and machine guns were left piled up. Gotō showed
Gotō around the school buildings, and he saw the burn marks of incendiary bombs in a classroom and in a corridor on the second floor. Gotō told him that it was fortunate that the classroom buildings did not burn down; otherwise, he could not have reopened the school after the war. Satō then realized that Gotō had put all of his resources and soul into the management of the school ever since he succeeded to it from his father, and even saved it from the massive U.S. air raid on Nagoya.32

Postwar Era

U.S. Occupation of Japan

The peace that Gotō had longed for finally came with Japan’s defeat in the Asia-Pacific War in August 1945. The U.S. occupation forces, led by Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) general Douglas MacArthur, enforced demilitarization and democratization of Japan, along with a sweeping reform of the Japanese national structure, including economic, financial, and political systems. In fact, the SCAP staff was dominated by the “New Dealers” of the Roosevelt administration and embarked on the ambitious task of “reinventing Japan” during the initial postwar years. They broke up the zaibatsu—the financial cliques that owned big business conglomerates—such as Mitsubishi and Mitsui. They also carried out a massive dismissal of Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, referred to as the “Purge from Public Offices.” This drastic undertaking went too far, to the extent that it not only dismissed those in the high echelon of the national government who were thought to have had any involvement with the wartime regime—based on mere rumors without evidence or proof—but also involved those at the bottom of the bureaucratic pyramid in the local administrations, who had nothing to do with the decision making of the wartime regime, even including the smallest village firefighters’ squad head. The SCAP officers overlooked the fact that every Japanese had no choice but to cooperate with the war, lest they be labeled as a traitor, imprisoned, and tortured under the National Security Maintenance Law. This sweeping purge rendered the Japanese system dysfunctional and gave rise to communism in Japan.33

Education System Reforms and Creation of Meiden High School

Gotō wasted no time in resuming work on his life goals. Gotō, however, first had to deal with a complete reorganization of the education system, as part of the SCAP “reinventing Japan” project. First,
the SCAP eradicated the fundamental philosophy of Japanese education, by separating religion from state (Japanese fought the war in the name of Emperor Hirohito who was considered a deity according to Shintoism), dismissing teachers, and banning teaching of Japanese geography and history and moral education. Then, the new Japanese government enacted two laws of Education in March 1947. These laws most importantly simplified the complex double-track prewar education system into a straightforward 6-3-3-4 system—made up of 6-year elementary school, 3-year middle school, 3-year high school, and 4-year college education. Accordingly, the first to third grades of the prewar middle schools were reorganized as the new middle schools; the fourth and fifth grades of the old middle schools became parts of the new high schools; and the old high schools were incorporated into the new universities.

Following the sweeping reforms of the education system, Gotō tried to reorganize Meiden School into a middle school and a high school. The Aichi-prefecture governor accepted the establishment of Meiden Middle School on the condition that the school immediately acquire nonprofit organization status. Under the new education system, an individual could not establish a private school. Thus, Gotō managed to open Meiden Middle School in April 1947, with 150 students, just in time for the introduction of the new middle school system. He appointed his elder brother-in-law, Wada Shinji, as the first principal. Thus, the old Meiden School and the new Meiden Middle School coexisted on the Wakamizu campus. Gotō immediately built a new classroom building in November and applied for the creation of Meiden High School in February 1948 in time for the introduction of the new high school system in April 1948; however, the governor turned this down. A major reason was that Meiden School was a Class-B three-year vocational school, rather than a Class-A five-year high school. The new high school system began in April 1948, and Gotō was confronted with his students of high school age, who had thought that they could automatically transfer from the old Meiden School to the new Meiden High School. The desperate students embarked on collective bargaining with Gotō.

Gotō promised the students that he would open Meiden High School the next academic year (April 1949). Yet, students persisted and asked what he would do if he failed. Gotō told them, “I will cut my belly (harakiri).” That quieted the agitated students. Gotō was determined to obtain approval for the new high school. In order to improve school facilities, he immediately expanded the electrical substation,
added more laboratory rooms, and collected electrical equipment from alumni. He then sold all of his assets and founded a nonprofit organization, Gotō Academy, consisting of the old Meiden School and the new Meiden Middle School in February 1949. Then, he applied for approval for the new high school again in February 1949, which was granted by the governor in March. Thus, Meiden High School opened in April 1949, as Gotō had promised. The old Meiden School was officially closed in December of that year.36

Expansion of Meiden High School

Gotō immediately expanded the campus for the new Meiden High School, by buying the former IJA Armory adjacent to the school and other neighboring land. He built new classroom buildings and track and field exercise space. He then added a night school to the high school for those who worked. He also restored the founder Takasaburō’s bust statue (the original was donated to the government metal requisition), made of porcelain, in June 1949. He then changed the name of Gotō Academy to Meiden Academy and reorganized it in March 1951 in order to correspond to the wave of democracy. The Ministry of Education designated Meiden High School as one of the industrial-education research schools in 1953, following the Law to Promote Industrial Education. The school took up the research subject of the “rationalization of electricity use by middle- and small-size business” and conducted a study of 400 businesses in Nagoya. Gotō then added the Department of Electrical Communications to both the day and night courses of the high school in April 1956, as well as the Department of Mechanical Engineering in April 1959. Meiden High School thereby contributed to the postwar industrial growth of the Chūbu region.37

Creation of Aichi Institute of Technology

Having dealt with the reorganization of Meiden School in accordance with the Japanese education system reforms, and with the newly established high school prospering, Gotō embarked on his life goal—creation of a university of technology. However, requirements for establishing a university were much higher than those for establishing a high school. Gotō thus decided to create a junior college first. He sold the last of his private property, built a new school building, with classrooms, laboratory rooms, a library, and other facilities, on the Wakamizu campus.
He hired the former dean of Hokkaido Imperial University School of Technology, Shimizu Yoshikazu, and recruited a strong faculty, consisting of teachers from Nagoya University, Nagoya Institute of Technology, and Shizuoka University. However, the principal inspector of the Ministry of Education was not satisfied with the progress in the construction of the school facilities. Gotō and his staff visited the ministry in Tokyo repeatedly and promised that the construction would be finished in time. The ministry approved a new junior college in February 1954, with several conditions. Gotō overcame the challenges, one after another, and opened the Nagoya Junior College of Electricity in April 1954.38

Then Gotō built an innovative four-story, reinforced concrete building for laboratory classes in April 1957, by borrowing money from a bank. He told the Mainichi-shimbun reporter, Nishikawa Haruichi, “I make it a rule to borrow money from the bank, as much as I can. Few people may be as indebted to the bank as I am.” A reinforced concrete school building was rare then, and the tall, slim, modern building with an antenna for wireless telecommunication on top caught the eyes of the citizens. Gotō then demolished old school buildings and turned them all into reinforced concrete buildings. The school was chartered as a university in April 1959 and became the Nagoya University of Electricity. The Junior College was turned into the night school and satisfied the growing demand of the working youths who wanted to obtain an advanced degree in electrical engineering at a time when Japan was taking off economically.39

Ise-Bay Typhoon Hits Nagoya

Then, in September 1959, Nagoya was directly hit by a massive typhoon, called Typhoon No. 15, more commonly known as the “Ise-Bay Typhoon.” Roof tiles were blown off, and the ceiling leaked in countless houses in Nagoya. The death toll reached 3,168, with 92 people missing, and 60,000 people injured. As many as 23,334 houses were completely destroyed, 3,194 houses were moved away, and 150,000 houses were half destroyed and flooded above the floor level (even if the floor level of Japanese houses was two feet above the ground level). It was, and still is, the worst damage on record caused by a natural disaster in Aichi prefecture.40

University secretary-general Hase Keitarō went to the school the morning after on a clear autumn Sunday, to check the aftermath.
There, he found Gotō. As with the case of the Massive Nagoya Air Raid, Gotō was at school during the night when the typhoon was passing through the region. He mobilized the teacher on night duty and the dormitory students, guarded the school buildings, and limited the damage to be minimal. The typhoon pushed the old wooden administration building to the south by ten feet. Hase realized Gotō’s wisdom in having turned all the classroom buildings into reinforced concrete. The typhoon, however, did not spare the students’ households. Out of “371” students’ households that sustained damage, 23 houses were completely destroyed, 96 houses were half destroyed, 8 houses were moved away, and 204 houses were flooded above the floor level. Gotō gave a three-month tuition waiver for those students and had other students help them. As Aichi prefecture issued a disaster assistance act, Gotō mobilized his students into restoration activities and contributed a total of 2,800 man-days to repair work of the flooded river, goods delivery to the flooded area, and disinfection work.41

Another setback of the typhoon was that Gotō’s request to buy the vacant land of the former armory was turned down. Gotō had kept expanding the school campus by buying adjacent pieces of land one after another. However, due to the typhoon, the Nagoya-city authorities decided to build temporary housing for the victims on the vacant land. The economic reporter, Waki Yasumitsu, speculates that had Gotō been able to acquire the land then and build new buildings for the high school and the university there, Gotō would not have bought the land in Yagusa, in a suburb of Nagoya, in 1964 (examined below). The exceptionally large piece of land in Yagusa enabled the university to grow and prosper beyond anyone’s imagination as it has to the present. In this sense, the setback in 1959 became serendipity for the school in the long run, as in the Chinese proverb, “Life is full of paradoxical reversals of fortune.”42

Gotō did not stop going forward even after accomplishing his life goal of establishing a university of engineering. He renewed his resolve by restoring a bronze bust of the school founder in January 1960, replacing the porcelain one made in 1949. He then prepared a four-inch-thick application document and added to the university the Department of Electronics Engineering and the Department of Applied Chemistry in April 1960. Accordingly, he changed the name of the university to Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT). He further added the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Department of Management Engineering in April 1962. He then celebrated the
fifty-year anniversary of the foundation of Meiden School at the Kanayama Gymnasium in June that year. Afterward, he added the Department of Civil Engineering in April 1965 and established the AIT Graduate School in March 1966. Finally, he created the Aiwa Academy and the Aiwa Kindergarten in April 1966. Thus, before the age of sixty, Goto had created a comprehensive academy, encompassing kindergarten to the graduate level.43

Meanwhile, Meiden High School continued to grow. Goto added a general-course program to the school in April 1962, which was not designed to educate future engineers but “general” students who advanced to liberal arts and other universities. The school then became coeducational in April 1969. The school kept up with its renovations with reinforced concrete buildings and modern designs for classrooms, laboratory rooms, and gymnasiums. Instead of preaching esoteric education philosophy, Goto valued the practical aspects of education and turned a small vocational school into Aichi Institute of Technology and has achieved one of his life goals in building a comprehensive academy of technology education.44

Expansion of AIT Campus

Japan experienced rapid economic growth, referred to as the “economic miracle,” in the 1960s. The Japanese economy was booming with preparations for the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games in 1964. Innovative infrastructure was built, including the “bullet train” (running from Tokyo to Osaka in three hours) and the Meishin Highway (connecting Nagoya to Kobe)—the first modern highway in Japan. Corresponding with the times, the Wakamizu campus that encompassed AIT, its Junior College, Meiden High School, and the Junior High School became almost saturated. Foreseeing the age when corporations and universities would leave congested urban areas for spacious suburbs, Goto purchased a large 151-acre area of uncultivated land in Yagusa in Sanage, the eastern suburb of Nagoya, in December 1964, for the relocation of the university campus. The size was astoundingly huge, as compared to the 0.54-acre Wakamizu campus Goto had bought in 1933. The area was located in the Sanage mountain range, where large wild boars still roamed. It was later incorporated into Toyota city, where the headquarters of Toyota is located.45

Shimizu Construction Nagoya branch manager, Sekoda Kunitaka, states that as soon as the company’s local feasibility team reported to Goto that the site was environmentally suitable to build a campus, he
Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

immediately decided to buy the land, despite the fact that there was no power or water line there. Gotō told Sekoda to leave it up to him. The water line became the hardest problem, and Gotō negotiated with the city officials. However, all the city water options failed, and the negotiations were deadlocked. Other people would have given up at this point. Nevertheless, Gotō was determined to build a campus there and kept negotiating. Inspired by Gotō’s determination, the survey team eventually found an underground water source a mile away from the site. The relocation of the school buildings to the Yagusa campus began one by one. The Sanage Green Road, connecting to National Highway 155, was built, and access to the campus became easier. The whole relocation of the university was completed in 1974, after Gotō’s death in 1972, and AIT prospered beyond Gotō’s expectations. Sekoda initially felt that the plan to build a campus on the uncultivated land was reckless; however, he was soon awed by Gotō’s foresight and fortitude.46

Another episode indicative of Gotō’s management style was that he put one of his junior classmates at Hamamatsu High School of Technology, Yoshida Kōichi, on the list of faculty members of AIT without his consent. Yoshida, who worked at Chūbu Electric Power, states that when he attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the auditorium on the new AIT campus, the president of his company, Yokoyama, was also there. Yoshida’s boss told him, “I just saw your name on the faculty list.” That was how Yoshida found out that he was a lecturer at AIT. Gotō, who was next to Yokoyama, “explained” to Yoshida, “I went ahead to put you on the list, because you might turn me down if I formally asked you.” President Yokoyama encouraged Yoshida to accept it, because it would be a great social service. Since then Yoshida has given lectures at the school every year, even after he himself became president of Chūbu Electric Power. When Gotō built a golf course, the Union Country Club, in Sanage in 1964 (renamed the Sanage Golf Course in 1967), even before Yoshida knew of the existence of the club, he received a special membership card, courtesy of Gotō.47

Meanwhile, AIT continued to grow. As of September 2010, it had ten departments, as well as masters and doctoral degree programs. The university had a student enrollment of 6,229 (in an age of declining youth population in Japan) and 179 faculty members. The school carries on Gotō’s mission, with the motto, “Creativity and Humanity,” under the leadership of Gotō’s grandson-in-law, Gotō Yasuyuki (son-in-law of Gotō Atsushi). The school is currently part of the Nagoya Eastern Hills Research Zone. Since its inception in 1959, approximately 50,000...
students have graduated from AIT, who have constituted the core of the technological innovation in the central region of Japan (the school song of Meiden Academy and a mission statement of AIT, in which the essence of Gotô’s education philosophy presents itself, are given in the appendices). 48

* * *

In summary, Gotô overcame countless obstacles and accomplished one of his two life goals—to establish a university of technology—with the spirit of “where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Then, how did Gotô embark on his second life goal of achieving international friendship and peace through table tennis interactions of youth?
Meiden School president Gotō Kōji created a table tennis club in April 1930, in order to elevate the morale of the students, when Japan was hit by a serious financial crisis in 1927 and then by the Great Depression in 1929. Gotō chose table tennis as the official school sport because it was suited for Japan’s geography (small land area) and climate (rainy weather). It did not take much space and did not cost much. It was an easily accessible sport for everyone. This small table tennis club would produce world-class players in the postwar period and become the “cradle of Ping-Pong Diplomacy” four decades later.

**Promoting Physical Education**

As a young school administrator, Gotō encouraged physical education. He believed that sports not only helped build the physical strength but also the mental strength of students, nurturing rich humanity in the young body and mind. He believed that sports taught students discipline and a code of conduct to become responsible citizens in the society. As soon as he had designated table tennis as an official school sport, he hired a coach and began intensive training. He set specific goals to motivate students, and the first goal was to take the title from Aomori Commerce School that had reigned in the National Middle School Table Tennis Championships for nine consecutive years since the inception of the tournaments in 1928. Aomori Commerce School was located in the northern part of Japan, which was snowbound during winter. Gotō engaged in administrative tasks all day from early in the morning and then oversaw the table tennis training in the evening.
Gotō was a spartan teacher. He trained students seven days a week. Their week was made up of Monday (instead of Sunday)—Monday—Tuesday—Wednesday—Thursday—Friday—and Friday (instead of Saturday). One of the formative-era students and a national champion, Itō Hirohide, who enrolled in the Meiden School in 1937, states that the training began in the late afternoon after regular classes and went on to 11:00 P.M. or even after midnight when students were not focused. There was not a single day off in their training even during the New Year’s three-day national holidays. Gotō did not condone any lack of discipline and respect toward teachers on the part of his students. He beat students who were slacking with a bamboo sword (used for kendō), a practice used in Zen–Buddhist meditation training. Corporal punishment was not illegal and was a common practice in Japan then. Usually, his towering figure with a bamboo sword and his piercing eyes as sharp as a hawk’s were enough to intimidate students. Itō joined the table tennis club with about fifty other freshmen; however, when he became a junior, only two other juniors remained in the club. In retrospect, Itō thinks that one of the most important lessons Gotō had taught his students was to have a strong will to achieve the objectives once they were set.

While the training was severe, the students knew that Gotō truly cared for them. Gotō was always with the students until the end of the training sessions even if the coach was present. After long hours’ training, Gotō treated them to a sweet bun. Students did their best, anticipating this reward. Gotō occasionally gave them his pocket money and told them to buy some snacks. It was his “carrot and stick.” The living standards of the Japanese were low at that time, and their diet was poor, consisting mainly of rice and vegetables. At midnight, students went back to the school dormitory. Then, the students attended regular morning classes. Gotō paid all the expenses of students for participations in tournaments, summer training camps at beaches, and winter camps at ski resorts. During the school breaks, Gotō and his wife took care of the students as if they were their own family members, treating them to dinners and playing games with them.

Meiden School Wins National Table Tennis Championships

Before long, Meiden School became a force to reckon with in the table tennis community. First, the school won the local championships in October 1932. Feeling confident about the prospects for table tennis
Gotō and Table Tennis

at the school, Gotō invested all of his personal assets to purchase a lot in Wakamizu-chō and built the training facilities there in May 1933. He hired another coach in April 1934 and invited famous professional players from all over Japan to train his students. Finally, Meiden School defeated the nine-consecutive-time national champion Aomori Commerce School in January 1937 and obtained the “Tōgō Flag,” handwritten by Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (1848–1934)—“Nelson of the East.” That was an unprecedented feat. It took seven years after Gotō created the table tennis club. His determination made it possible.

Gotō’s Leadership in Local Table Tennis Circles

Meanwhile, Gotō climbed up the pyramid of the Japanese table tennis circles, one by one. Gotō became one of the directors of the Nagoya Table Tennis Association when he created the table tennis club at Meiden School in April 1930. He then consolidated two other table tennis associations that existed in the region into the Nagoya Table Tennis Association and became its director-general in April 1932. Subsequently, he became director-general of the Aichi-prefecture Table Tennis Association in April 1936, at the age of twenty-nine, and then became one of the directors of the Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) in October 1937. During these formative years of the table tennis club at Meiden School, Gotō built the foundation for the post-war reputation of Meiden High School and the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT) as the “cradle of Japan’s table tennis.” Nevertheless, the war disrupted the steady progress in Gotō’s life work (see chapter three).

Wartime Table Tennis Training

As mentioned in chapter three, during the war years, Gotō taught table tennis to his unit members and even to local Chinese villagers at the warfront in China, while serving in the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA). Gotō continued to teach table tennis during his third military service at the IJA Aviation Headquarters Nagoya Supervising Division, before and after work and during lunch hours, as a volunteer instructor. The military regime enacted the National Mobilization Law, and disbanded all the existing civilian organizations of any sorts, in order to direct all available workforce and resources into war efforts. The Imperial Rule Assistance Association declared sports activities as unpatriotic to the
extent that it banned all sports tournaments in the fall of 1940. Table tennis was denounced as girl’s play. In this predicament, local table tennis club members solicited Gotô to find a way to continue tournaments despite the government ban. Gotô agreed and held tournaments in secret in the cafeteria of the Nagoya University Medical School throughout the war years, without interruption.6

Gotô’s Leadership in Amateur Sports Circles in Postwar Years

In the postwar years, Gotô exercised increasingly important leadership in sports in general and in table tennis in particular in Japan. As soon as the war ended, Gotô tried to resume table tennis officially. First he became one of the founding members of the new Aichi-prefecture Sports Association and became one of its directors in 1946. Then, in April 1946, Gotô founded the new Aichi-prefecture Table Tennis Association and became its president. He then became the vice president of the new Nagoya Sports Association in 1947. He also created the fencing club at Meiden High School in 1952—the very first fencing club in Aichi prefecture. Then, he created the brass band club at the school in May 1955, which won regional competitions repeatedly, held charity concerts, including annual visits to the Nagoya Prison, and toured to California in August 1962, playing with the Los Angeles Junior Philharmonic Orchestra.7

Within less than two decades after the end of the war, Gotô held numerous leadership positions in local and regional sports organizations, and the list goes on almost endlessly. Gotô was also elected vice president of the JTTA in April 1954 and again in April 1965, and eventually became its president in April 1968. He simultaneously promoted other sports, including sumô wrestling and swimming. He held leadership positions in many national sports associations, such as in badminton, fencing, kendô, and naginata (long-sword fencing, one of the Japanese martial arts), and also played a major role in the Japan National Sports Festival, the most prestigious annual sports event in Japan, for many years.8

Gotô as Civic Leader

The Mainichi-shimbun reporter, Nishikawa Haruichi, met Gotô in the winter of 1960 when he was a student at Nagoya University. Nishikawa
went to see Gotō as he became the secretary-general of the Tōkai-region Student Table Tennis Federation. He was aware of Gotō’s reputation and was scared that he might be scolded by Gotō when they met, because he had done nothing for the federation yet. However, Gotō was kind and told him, “Table tennis is a social service. Engage in the work of the federation in that spirit.” His words hit the chords of the impressionable heart of Nishikawa. After that, Nishikawa devoted himself to the volunteer work of the federation, at the cost to his class work, and Gotō helped Nishikawa in every way. For instance, when Nishikawa mentioned to Gotō that the prefectural gymnasium limited the use of its facilities by the student federation, Gotō immediately went to the prefectural government and protested against this, to the astonishment of Nishikawa. On another occasion, Gotō even asked the holder of ten world titles thus far, including in men’s singles in 1954 and 1956, Ogimura Ichirō (1932–1994; see below), to coach the student federation for special intensive training.

Observing his work for all these years as a reporter, Nishikawa realized that all of Gotō’s work had an aspect of social service. Through the promotion of table tennis in the community, Gotō became a civic leader. Nishikawa writes, “Gotō had taught me the importance of action; the knowledge without action is meaningless—the knowledge becomes real only when it is accompanied by action.”

**Gotō and Japan National Sports Festival**

In the fall of 1967, the prominent sports reporter, Aoyama Yasunobu, visited Meiden High School to observe the training for tournaments in the Japan National Sports Festival, to be held in October of that year. Gotō was already the vice president of the JTFA and had become president of the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) in that summer. The intensity of the training was more than Aoyama had expected. The session went on until midnight. Gotō was there all the time, watching the players in silence with sharp eyes as piercing as a hawk’s. Only when the sound of the last ping-pong ball faded away in the gym, did Gotō turn toward Aoyama and talk to him. Aoyama had never known any other leader of any other Japanese national sports association who stayed up with the players for the whole training session until midnight, before or after Gotō. He was struck with Gotō’s enthusiasm and felt that this was what a true leader was like.

During the 1967 National Sports Festival in Saitama prefecture, north of Tokyo, Gotō had the honor to sit next to Emperor Hirohito and Empress
Nagako to explain the tournaments to them. Aoyama’s coverage, with the photograph of the emperor, empress, and Gotō, appeared on the front page of the newspaper. With all the glorious moments that Gotō had experienced in his life, Aoyama thinks, the moment with the emperor must have been the proudest moment for Gotō. Japanese who grew up during the pre–World War II era were taught that Emperor Hirohito was a deity, and they fought the war for the sake of the emperor.11

AIT and World Fencing Championships

Meanwhile, the fencing club that Gotō had created at Meiden High School and AIT blossomed, as well. The players, such as the AIT junior, Wakasugi Kazuhiko, won the Japanese championships in 1966, participated in the World Fencing Championships in Montreal, Canada, in July 1967, and won the “Universiade”—also known as the World University Games, organized by the International University Sports Federation—in Tokyo in 1967. Japan defeated the European powers that had a long history of fencing, including England, France, Switzerland, and the first seed, Italy.12

Meiden High School and Baseball

In addition, Meiden High School made steady progress in baseball. High school baseball championships are the equivalent of the American collegiate football games in terms of the nationwide attention and enthusiasm they generate for local fans cheering for local teams. Meiden High School debuted in the national high school baseball tournaments in 1968. The team advanced to one of the Best Eight but lost in the quarterfinals to the powerful Onomichi Commerce High School, which was in the western part of Japan. Since then, Meiden High School has become a force to reckon with in baseball, as well as in table tennis and fencing. The school has been one of the Big Four of baseball among the private high schools in Aichi prefecture, and produced “Ichiro” Suzuki (1973–) of the Seattle Mariners.13

Japan and International Table Tennis Circles

Japan was in ruins at the end of World War II, with heavy U.S. air strikes on major cities throughout the country, including the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese, who had been
indoctrinated into believing that they were winning the war, were physically devastated and morally crushed. The Japanese struggled to recover from the total destruction of the country. They suffered from a serious food shortage, even worse than during the wartime, and many starved to death. Japan lost sovereignty and was controlled by the U.S. occupation forces, representing the Allied Powers, until 1952. Japan regained sovereignty in 1952 when the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force. It therefore took time for Japan, one of the former axis powers, to make a comeback in international organizations. The Japan Red Cross Society (JRCS), for instance, was allowed to send its representative to the meeting of the International Red Cross (IRC) for the first time in the postwar period in 1950. Then, the JRCS was reorganized in 1952 by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers General Headquarters (SCAP-GHQ) that had occupied Japan since 1945. Moreover, Japan was not admitted to the United Nations until 1956.¹⁴

_Japan’s Rise in World Table Tennis Championships_  

In the international table tennis community, Japan was readmitted to the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) in 1949—first postwar readmission to international sports federations among all the Japanese national sports associations. Then, Japan entered the world championships for the first time in 1952 when it participated in the nineteenth World Table Tennis Championships in Bombay, India (current Mumbai; “Bombay World’s,” hereafter). Japan took four world titles out of a total of seven categories competed in at the championships—men’s singles (Hiroji Satoh), both the men’s and the women’s doubles, and women’s team—at the Bombay World’s. This feat of a first timer in the world championships startled the world. Japan thus made an impressive debut in international table tennis community in 1952.¹⁵

_Wembley World’s in 1954_  

In December 1953, the JTTA’s leadership was split into two camps regarding whether Japan should participate in the 1954 World Championships at Wembley, northwest London (“Wembley World’s”). The JTTA was in a poor financial situation—Japan as a whole was struggling to recover from the defeat in the war—and could not afford to send its team to England. It had managed to send the team to Bombay...
in 1952, because Bombay was much closer to Japan. Japan did not par-
ticipate in the Bucharest World’s in 1953, because Bucharest was far
away and traveling to Bucharest was expensive. It was also diplomati-
cally difficult to make travel arrangements with Romania that was part
of the communist bloc at that time.16

Moreover, Japan did not fare well in the second Asian Championships
held in Tokyo in September 1953. Japan lost to Vietnam. The holder
of eleven world titles in total during 1954–1961, Ogimura Ichirō,
states that the veteran players, such as the 1952 world champion Satoh,
were on the decline, while the younger players, including Ogimura,
were still on the rise and had not reached their full potential yet. Under these
circumstances, some JTTA officials argued that it should not send the
team to the Wembley World’s, which would cost ¥800,000 ($2,222)
per person, when there was little chance for Japan to win—the average
Japanese annual income in 1952 was only ¥60,787 ($169). In contrast,
those in favor argued that Japan should try a first expedition to Europe
after missing a chance in Bucharest in 1953. Gotō, then president of the
Aichi-prefecture Table Tennis Association, was a leading advocate for
the latter.17

Ignoring the opposition, Gotō went ahead with selecting players—six
men and six women, all of whom were younger “postwar-generation”
players—and began intensive training. For the players, including
Ogimura, it was a matter of life and death whether they could participate
in the Wembley World’s. They had dedicated all of their adolescent lives
to table tennis for many years. They did not want to miss this chance.
Japan Youth Table Tennis Association members began a fund-raising
drive for Ogimura, standing at the railroad stations during the winter
for three months, and managed to collect ¥300,000. Nihon University,
where he was enrolled, raised the remaining ¥500,000 for him. The
three-month intensive training was extremely hard, but Ogimura was
encouraged by the enthusiasm of Gotō who single-handedly opened
the way for Japan’s participation in the Wembley World’s amidst all
sorts of opposition and obstruction, including those from the JTTA
leadership itself.18

Gotō succeeded in organizing the Japan World Team to Wembley.
The delegation traveled to England in March 1954, led by the team
head Gotō and the team captain Hasegawa Kiyotarō. The trip took
fifty-five hours, and the players were exhausted. Gotō cheered them up
by telling them that Japan would win. Ogimura states that Gotō was
a superb and unique leader. Gotō had faith in the motto “friendship
and peace through sports.” Gotō had confidence in the players. His
Gotō and Table Tennis

Teaching was holistic. He not only taught the players how to excel in table tennis technically, but also taught how they should be exemplary human beings. He even taught them European manners, including dress codes and table manners. He also reminded them of the negative feelings English people still held toward the Japanese from the war and warned them to behave themselves and not to forget to smile. English people displayed a visceral dislike for Japanese people, to the extent that even the Japanese crown prince Akihito’s visit to Buckingham Palace for the coronation of Elizabeth II in June 1953, representing Japan, was “fair game for abuse and ridicule.” In this environment, the Japanese table tennis team competing at Wembley, against English opposition, was as if “confronting the lion in his den.” Against all odds, however, Ogimura won the men’s singles. He caused a sensation and became the epitome of Japan’s dominance with technological development and physical training. Japan also took the world title both in men’s and women’s team. It was an extraordinary feat for the Asian newcomer in the world championships to accomplish in Europe.19

Upon returning home, the JTTA leadership declared, at the reception to celebrate Japan’s victory, that it would disband the World Team immediately. Then, someone shouted, “Wait a minute!” It was Gotō. He said, “I had promised the players to reimburse ¥300,000 of the travel expenses per person. I will not disband the World Team until the JTTA gives the money back to all the players. I am the team head.” Ogimura still vividly recalls Gotō’s loud voice at the reception after more than twenty years. Ogimura states that, as with the case of the Wembley World’s, Gotō continued to exercise a strong leadership in the Japanese table tennis circles. Whenever the JTTA faced a critical turning point afterward and had to make a difficult decision, Gotō was always behind it. Ogimura—who was one of the executive vice presidents of the ITTF, became the third president of the ITTF in 1987, as the first non-Caucasian elected to this position defeating the incumbent H. Roy Evans, and served the position until his untimely death (1987–1994)—attests that he himself can vouch for the greatness of Gotō as a leader on at least three occasions.20

Tokyo World’s in 1956

With the extraordinary accomplishment in the Wembley World’s, Gotō was elected vice president of the JTTA in April 1954 and then became its executive advisor (komon) in April 1956. Meanwhile, Japan had dominated the international table tennis community since the
victories in 1954. Japan hosted the twenty-third World Championships in Tokyo in 1956 and won four world titles out of a total of seven categories. Then, Japan took five world titles in the twenty-fourth World Championships in Stockholm in 1957. Further, Japan took six world titles in the twenty-fifth World Championships in Dortmund, Germany, in 1959.21

In 1961, Japan shared victories with China—each winning three titles—when China hosted the twenty-sixth World Championships in Beijing. Then, Japan won four world titles, and China took three titles in the twenty-seventh World Championships in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1963. Subsequently, China took five titles at the twenty-eighth World Championships in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 1965, whereas Japan won only two titles. China's rise seemed unstoppable. Then came a turning point. The Chinese table tennis community was directly hit by the Cultural Revolution. China banned all sports activities as bourgeois and forbade players to compete in international tournaments. Accordingly, China did not participate in the world table tennis championships in 1967 and 1969. This turned the fortunes again in favor of Japan (see appendix 2).22

Stockholm World's in 1967

In March 1967, Gotō went to Stockholm as the head of the Japan World Team to the twenty-ninth World Championships. Japan won six world titles out of a total of seven categories—men's singles (Hasegawa Nobuhiko), women's singles (Morisawa Sachiko), women's doubles, and mixed doubles, as well as both men's and women's team. Hasegawa (1947–2005) not only took the title in men's singles but also contributed to the victories in men's team and mixed doubles. Recalling this men's singles tournament, Hasegawa states that he had reached the peak of exhaustion both physically and mentally during the second set of finals against the North Korean national champion, Park Shin-il. Then he heard someone shouting, “Nobu!” “Gambare [Fight], Nobukiho!” It was Gotō. Gotō's strong voice that reverberated in the whole stadium perked him up, renewed his spirits, and he won the championships.23

Hasegawa was personally trained by Gotō at Meiden High School and AIT. Hasegawa won the national high school championships in 1964 when he was a senior at Meiden High School. He then enrolled in AIT. He debuted in the national table tennis championships in 1965 when he was a freshman and became the youngest champion in men's singles at the age of eighteen. Afterward, he kept rewriting the records.
Gotō and Table Tennis

Gotō assumed a leadership role in the Japanese table tennis community, including winning the national title six times and the Asian championships four times. He also won a total of five gold medals in world championships (1967 and 1969). Hasegawa states that he owed all these victories to Gotō. Gotō taught him, among many other things, the essence of being a sportsman—the importance of humility and respect for opponents and teachers. A player can exert power to the fullest only with a calm state of mind, which is attained by a sense of humility and respect toward the opponent (this is similar to the ambiguous advice the world champion and renowned coach Ogimura Ichirō later gave to an American player Olga Soltesz (see chapter eight), “You must overcome yourself before you can overcome your opponents”). Therefore, Gotō was extremely strict in making students observe the code of conduct, including proper manners of greeting and speaking. Gotō also taught Hasegawa the importance of strengthening the spirit through daily practice. When the techniques of players are equal, the one who has the stronger spirit wins. A tough spirit is nurtured by daily practice; therefore, those who practice more ultimately win. Hasegawa was grateful that he had a strict teacher like Gotō. When Hasegawa brought the Emperor’s Cup—the trophy of the 1965 national championships—to Gotō’s office the day after the tournaments, he was hoping that Gotō would excuse him from training that day. On the contrary, Gotō told him to begin practice right way. After saying “well done,” with a smile, Gotō’s face returned to its usual stern look, and he stated, “Don’t be complacent with winning the title. The real challenge is how to maintain it and go beyond.” Gotō had world titles for Hasegawa already in mind when he won the Japanese title.

Gotō Assumes Asian Table Tennis Leadership Role

Gotō meanwhile became an executive counselor (sōdanyaku) of the JTTA in April 1963, and then was elected vice president in April 1965 again. According to Gotō’s biography, Gotō then visited China in “August” 1966, for the first time in the postwar period, as the Japanese team head to the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments. The tournaments began in 1962 based on the agreement between the China Table Tennis Association (CTTA) and the JTTA in 1961 when Japan participated in the Beijing World’s—it would be canceled in 1967. According to one of the early graduates of Meiden School, Katō Yūkichi, the Cultural Revolution broke out two days after Gotō’s departure (the Cultural Revolution began in May 1966). Gotō’s wife, Suzuko, secretly
flew to Hong Kong alone and begged Gotō in tears not to enter China, in fear of him endangering his life. Nevertheless, Gotō told Suzuko that he must go, and he did, leading more than twenty team members. He had already made up his mind to dedicate his life to promoting sports exchanges between China and Japan. This visit made Gotō realize firsthand the power of China, both in table tennis and as a nation.26

Following the unprecedented feat in the Stockholm World’s in 1967, Gotō was elected president of the TTFA at its general meeting held in Singapore in August 1967. Gotō was visiting Singapore at that time as the head of the Japanese team to the eighth Asian Table Tennis Championships. JTTA deputy director-general Nomura Takashi states that Gotō reminded people of a medieval samurai warrior, and he was referred to as “General Gotō” or “Shogun Gotō” among the table tennis officials in Japan and in the world. Nomura got to know Gotō well when he accompanied Gotō to Singapore in 1967, as deputy team head, and they spent a whole month together. Nomura was impressed with Gotō’s discipline and punctuality. The Japanese team members were supposed to meet in the hotel lobby at 7:30 a.m. every morning. When Nomura went down to the lobby at 7:15 a.m. on the first day, Gotō was already there. Nomura went down to the lobby at 7:00 a.m. on the second day, and Gotō was again already there. Nomura went down to the lobby before 7:00 a.m. on the third day, and then he arrived at the same time as Gotō. Nomura tipped his hat to Gotō in awe. Young officers were afraid of Gotō, but he was actually kind and warm and took care of them as if he were a benevolent father.27

With these international accomplishments, Gotō was elected president of the JTTA in April 1968. It is interesting that his presidency of the TTFA preceded that of the JTTA, indicating complex internal rivalries within the JTTA and the seclusionist (sakoku) mentality of Japanese society at large. As is often the case for Japanese with international stature in various fields, international recognition must come first before being recognized duly in the Japanese society. Just to mention one example, the internationally renowned conductor, Seiji Ozawa, was boycotted by the NHK Symphony Orchestra, one of the most prestigious orchestra groups in Japan, in 1962, and he did not conduct the orchestra until 1995. Nomura stated in 1975, at the third anniversary of Gotō’s death, “Even if the JTTA leadership does not acknowledge Gotō’s contributions to table tennis in the world, the fact that the Chinese and the international table tennis communities recognize and praise them tells the truth.”28
Gotō held a general meeting of the TTFA in Nagoya in February 1968 and went to Indonesia in September 1968 as the head of the Japanese team to the ninth Asian Table Tennis Championships. Then, in August 1969, Gotō visited Munich as the Japanese team head to the thirtieth World Championships. Japan won four titles out of a total of seven categories—both men’s singles (Shigeo Itoh) and women’s singles (Toshiko Kowada), and mixed doubles, as well as men’s team. JTTA deputy director-general Nomura, who accompanied Gotō to the Munich World’s, states that the final decision to bring the next world championship to Japan (Nagoya) in 1971 stumbled at the ITTF general meeting. The ITTF officials debated whether all the ITTF member teams would be allowed to enter Japan. It was a political issue beyond the realm of the authority of the JTTA. Nevertheless, Gotō gave his word at the general meeting that it would be done, and brought about the final decision successfully. Nomura states that Gotō’s enthusiasm and the actual accomplishments he had made in the table tennis community were second to none.29

Gotō also hosted the executive board meeting of the TTFA at the Yagusa campus of AIT in 1969. Then, Gotō led the AIT table tennis team to five nations in Southeast Asia for friendship tournaments in January 1970. Finally, Gotō became the host of the tenth Asian Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya in April 1970 and held the general meeting of the TTFA at the AIT Yagusa campus.30

By the end of 1970, Gotō had made enormous contributions to the Japanese sports circles in general and to the table tennis community in particular. Since Gotō created the table tennis club at the old Meiden School in 1930, he had become a local and a regional leader of table tennis. He reached the pinnacle of the Japanese table tennis circles in 1968, and also brought victories to the Japanese team in three world championships in 1954, 1967, and 1969. He was also elected to a top position in Asian table tennis community in 1967. Gotō’s leadership in table tennis reached beyond Japan, and his reputation was firmly established in the international table tennis circles.

Thus far, Gotō had overcome countless obstacles and accomplished the “mission impossible” many times, with the extraordinary determination and unsurpassed devotion. However, his hardest challenge...
was yet to come. The year 1971 became the most trying and turbulent year to test his abilities as a leader of international table tennis circles. As JTTA president and the organizing committee chair for the Nagoya World’s, Gotô did something nobody else dared to do at that time—to invite China that had shut itself off from the outside world during the Cultural Revolution to the championships. China accepted, and the Chinese national team came to Nagoya. Why and how did Gotô make this decision? How did Gotô overcome political impediments and succeed in having China participate in the Nagoya World’s?
Gotō Kōji was elected as president of the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) at a turbulent time in 1967 when China was waging the brutal Cultural Revolution and the “two Chinas” issue jeopardized the smooth operations of international organizations, both political and nonpolitical in nature. China had withdrawn from the TTFA in 1953 in protest when the TTFA had admitted Taiwan. China meanwhile had remained in the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), won three world titles at the Beijing World’s in 1961, and continued to win at the Prague World’s in 1963 and the Ljubljana World’s in 1965. Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution alienated China from the outside world and kept it from participating in the world championships in 1967 and 1969. In turn, Taiwan remained in the TTFA and continued to participate in the Asian championships.¹

Gotō inherited this anomalous situation when he became TTFA president. One of the first major tasks that Gotō undertook as TTFA president was to host the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya, scheduled for April 1970, and he invited Taiwan to the championships. It was “natural” for Gotō to invite Taiwan to the Asian championships because Taiwan was a member of the TTFA since 1953, whereas China withdrew from it in that year. He simply followed the precedent that had been practiced since that time. The anomaly, in which China was a member of the ITTF but was not a member of the TTFA, whereas Taiwan was not a member of the ITTF but was a member of the TTFA, was the “norm” then. In this context, Taiwan had participated in the Asian regional championships in the past. Nevertheless, the Xinhua
News Agency condemned Gotô as “reactionary” when he invited Taiwan to the tenth Asian Championships. In addition, Gotô called a general meeting of the TTFA in Nagoya in February 1968. There, he approved the resolution of the TTFA to recommend that Taiwan become a member of the ITTF as the Republic of China (ROC). Again, Gotô’s decision was in accordance with the precedents of the TTFA in the past, and he simply followed them—Taiwan had repeatedly requested that the TTFA recommend its admission to the ITTF as the ROC, whereas the ITTF had rejected it each time. Nevertheless, China strongly denounced Gotô’s action as having Japan join the conspiracy to create “two Chinas.” It was not until later in 1968 that the ITTF advisory committee added a new provision to its constitution, stipulating that only a member of the ITTF could join a subordinate regional table tennis federation and participate in the tournaments organized by the regional federation.

Preparation for Nagoya World’s

The ITTF advisory committee also decided in 1968 to convene the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya in 1971. The committee’s decision was approved by its general meeting held at the Munich World’s in 1969. Gotô, who by then was president of both the TTFA and the Japan Table Tennis Association (JTFA), became the organizing committee chair for the Nagoya World’s. However, preparation for the Nagoya World’s was quite another matter from that for the Asian championships in Nagoya in 1970. It presented enormous challenges to Gotô. He faced the difficult issues concerning the “two Chinas” and the “two Koreas,” as well as the two regimes of Cambodia—the Khmer Republic led by General Lon Nol in its capital, Phnom Penh, and the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in exile in Beijing—all entangled with the international politics involving the cold war.

Delicate Situation in 1970

As noted earlier, China had not participated in the world championships since 1965 due to the Cultural Revolution and had missed the tournaments in 1967 and 1969. However, the situation began to change in the spring of 1970. As the initial brutal phase of the Cultural Revolution took a heavy toll on its domestic front as well as on its
external relations, the Chinese leaders began to reevaluate the impacts of the ideological conflict.

According to the People’s Daily reporter Qian Jiang, as early as October 1969, Premier Zhou Enlai contemplated the reentry of China’s table tennis to the world scene and instructed table tennis players to resume training. China decided to send its table tennis team to Kathmandu, Nepal, in June 1970, for tournaments to commemorate Nepal’s king’s fiftieth birthday—the Chinese team’s first foreign tour since the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. China also decided to participate in the Scandinavia Tournaments to be held in November 1970. Thus, China’s preparations for a comeback in world table tennis took off in earnest.5

In this context, ITTF president H. Roy Evans (1909–1998; son of the first general-secretary of the Table Tennis Association of Wales, United Kingdom; second ITTF president, 1967–1987; he was the driving force behind table tennis becoming an Olympic sport, after the first ITTF president Ivor Montagu had resisted this concept for some thirty years, but could not go to the Seoul Olympics as the ITTF president in 1988, because he lost the presidential election to Ogimura Ichirō in 1987) and Gotō entrusted a message for Chinese National Sports General Assembly to ITTF executive vice president Ogimura Ichirō (1932–1994; ITTF third president, 1987–1994; see chapter four), when he visited China in April 1970 to attend the Guangzhou Trade Convention. The message expressed their hope that China would participate in the Nagoya World’s. The logic behind the message was the fact that China was a member of the ITTF and was qualified to participate in the World’s and that it was a world champion before it had stopped participating in the championships in 1967. They felt that the Nagoya World’s would not be real world championships without the participation of China, the no. 1 in substance. Ogimura, however, brought back the negative report that China was still extremely bitter about the TTFA’s decision to recommend Taiwan’s admission to the ITTF. China would not participate in the Nagoya World’s unless the JTTA unequivocally took the position of “one China”—the People’s Republic of China (PRC) being the sole legitimate government of China. Thus, China, while being interested in participating in the Nagoya World’s, put forth its demand for its one-China policy as the prerequisite for the participation. This placed Gotō, as president of both the TTFA (where Taiwan was a member) and the JTTA, as well as the organizing committee chair of the Nagoya World’s, in a bind.6
Meanwhile, officials in the Japanese sports circles intensified their call to have China participate in the Nagoya World’s. For instance, the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) executive member, Tabata Seiji (JOC president, 1973–1977), stated at its general meeting in July 1970 that the Nagoya World’s would not be real world championships without China’s participation. It was high time that China makes a return to the international sports community. This issue (the Chinese participation) would seriously affect other sports circles. Tabata argued that the JOC should request the JTTA to make its best and most earnest efforts to realize China’s participation. In addition, a renowned sport critic, Kawamoto Nobumasa, states that the participation of China with its 800 million population was overdue. It would not only become a success as a sports event, but also accomplish a triumph in Japan’s sports diplomacy. In turn, Gotō, being caught in the “two Chinas” issue, had stopped short of making a definitive commitment to China’s participation.7

Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association Approaches Gotō Kōji

China had a reliable ally in Japan. The Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association, established in Tokyo in 1956, promoted China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. It was not a “front organization” of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and had no official affiliation with leftist political parties in Japan, such as the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP); however, the association’s first president, Katayama Tetsu, was Japan’s former prime minister and JSP chairman (see chapter two). While maintaining neutral standing, the association engaged in nonpolitical exchanges between China and Japan. Therefore, it had vested interests in facilitating China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s.8

Saionji Kinkazu (1906–1993, grandson of Prime Minister Saionji Kinmochi, 1849–1940) had lived in Beijing for nearly fourteen years until the summer of 1970, acting as an “unofficial ambassador” of Japan in the absence of official diplomatic relations between China and Japan. Saionji sent a “bomb letter” on the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World’s from Beijing. In June 1970, he wrote to Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association director-general Nakajima Kenzo (see chapter two), arguing, “The JTTA is promoting Taiwan’s admission to the ITTF. This move is undermining China’s participation in the
GOTÔ MAKES THE DECISION

Nagoya World’s. If the JTTA wants China’s participation, President Gotô should clarify his position.”

Then, on August 25, 1970, the association’s deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyûbei went to Nakano Gymnasium in Tokyo to see Gotô. Gotô was there to preside over the first Japan National Middle School Table Tennis Championships. According to Muraoka, before Muraoka finished greeting him, Gotô told him off, saying, “It’s no use trying to persuade me on China.” That was how the conversation between Gotô and Muraoka began. Despite this shaky start, Muraoka writes, the “Gotô-Muraoka team” was born from this initial encounter. In contrast, according to Qian, when Muraoka asked if Gotô was planning to invite China to the Nagoya World’s, Gotô replied that he had not decided yet, stating that the Xinhua News Agency had condemned him as “reactionary” when he had invited Taiwan to the 1970 Asian Championships. Then, Muraoka told Gotô, “That’s not a big deal. If only you contact China, all the problems will be gone.” Gotô just smiled back at Muraoka.

Between the two accounts, Muraoka’s account seems more likely—they were Muraoka’s own words, published in 1975, whereas Qian’s account was published in 1988 and was based on his correspondence with Muraoka that took place sometime after August 1985 when the two met for the first time in Xi’an. Muraoka’s description also portrays Gotô’s character well. Moreover, things were not as simple as Muraoka suggested. Gotô had not made a final decision to invite China to the Nagoya World’s. It was politically a suicidal thing to do. There was so much opposition to fend off. There were so many obstacles to overcome. The foremost and most formidable obstacle was the “two Chinas” issue. In fact, it would cost Gotô his presidency of the TTFA.

China’s Position

China linked its participation in the Nagoya World’s to the “two Chinas” issue. China’s position on this issue was clear and irrevocable. The Chinese government declared that it would not participate in the Nagoya World’s unless the JTTA, the official host of the championships, acknowledged that China (the PRC) was the sole legitimate government of China. That was its absolute prerequisite. There was no room for the Chinese government to compromise on this condition. As far as China was concerned, there could not be “two Chinas” in the international table tennis circles. Strangely enough, China insisted
on this condition despite the fact that Taiwan was not invited to the Nagoya World’s. Taiwan was not a member of the ITTF and thus was not qualified to participate in the world championships to begin with. Therefore, China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s should not concern the “two Chinas” issue. Nevertheless, the Chinese government insisted that Gotō must “abandon” Taiwan in order for China to participate in the Nagoya World’s. This meant that he must expel Taiwan from the TTFA.12

**ITTF’s Position**

ITTF president Evans recommended that the TTFA follow the new ITTF rule adopted in its constitution in 1968—only a member of the ITTF could join a subordinate regional organization and participate in its championships. ITTF honorary general-secretary A. K. Vint (from India) also recommended that the TTFA expel Taiwan, as it constituted a violation of the ITTF Constitution. However, removing Taiwan from the TTFA was not an easy task. A majority of the TTFA members were pro-Taiwan, including Japan and Singapore. To forcibly expel Taiwan from the TTFA would cause a furor among the members. This meant that Gotō would have to resign the post of president. The conventional principle of “separation of politics from sports” that had been employed by many international athletic organizations could no longer offer a solution to this problem. Gotō, as president of both the JTTA and the TTFA, must make a difficult decision, based on his vision beyond the table tennis circles and insight into international politics.13

According to Mori Takeshi, deputy head of the JTTA’s Sino-Japanese Exchange Section during the 1960s, who had visited Beijing as captain of the Japanese team to the first Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments in 1962, Gotō was known to be a bold, decisive person, but he was also prudent and meticulous. Confronted with the most difficult decision he had yet to make, Gotō consulted on the Taiwan issue with many officials. He asked for the cooperation of ITTF president Evans and ITTF executive vice president Ogimura. Along with Evans and Vint, Ogimura was in favor of inviting China to the Nagoya World’s. In his own account, Ogimura visited Gotō’s home twice in Nagoya in April 1970 at a time when Taiwan was participating in the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya. Gotō agreed to see Ogimura on his second visit. Ogimura tried to talk Gotō into inviting China. After listening to
Ogimura, Gotō told him, “I understand. You can tell them (ITTF top officials) that I am also hoping for China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s.” According to Ogimura, that morning was the moment that Gotō made up his mind.14

Gotō also consulted with Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association officials, including Muraoka Kyūbei and Saionji Kinkazu who became one of the permanent directors (jōmu-rijī) of the association upon returning to Tokyo. Saionji had met Gotō in Beijing in the summer of 1966 when Gotō visited Beijing for the first time in the postwar period as the head of the Japanese team to the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments. When Saionji returned home in the summer of 1970, he brought with him an important message from the Chinese officials to Gotō. China wanted to participate in the Nagoya World’s, but on the condition that the JTTA accepts China’s position on the “two Chinas” issue—“China would not be present where there was a Taiwan presence.” Saionji writes, he talked the matter over with Gotō repeatedly, but Gotō did not give him a definite answer. Gotō was deliberating the issue prudently and working out feasible plans for realization. There were too many issues to be solved—not only political but also procedural (he did not have enough money to convene an ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA in order to expel Taiwan, just to mention one)—before Gotō could make a final decision. It was not until toward the end of December that Gotō told his decision to Saionji. Gotō called up Saionji to have a drink during his visit to Tokyo. Gotō then told Saionji, “You showed me your gyotaku (a traditional Japanese art of fish printing) at your house in Beijing. The fish was huge. We cannot have world championships without China. Let’s invite China.”15

Gotō Makes the Decision

Having consulted with many officials concerned, Gotō formed his own judgment and made up his mind. Gotō felt that world championships without the participation of China would not be real world championships. China had won world titles three-consecutive times from 1961 to 1965, along with Japan; however, it missed the world championships in 1967 and 1969 due to the Cultural Revolution. Gotō hoped to make the Nagoya World’s genuine world championships in substance, not in name only. Gotō also hoped to resume the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments that were canceled in 1967. It would also be beneficial for the players to learn techniques from each other. For these nonpolitical
reasons, Gotō decided to invite China to the Nagoya World’s notwithstanding the enormous difficulties to actually carry it out. Thus, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association’s interest to promote sports exchanges with China and Gotō’s interest to make the Nagoya World’s true world championships converged.16

In retrospect, Gotō’s decision seems logical and reasonable because China was a member of the ITTF and was therefore qualified to participate in world championships. In turn, Taiwan was not a member of the ITTF and was not qualified to participate in world championships. Taiwan’s membership in the TTFA was—and should be—a separate matter from China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. Nevertheless, China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s was entangled with the “two Chinas” issue. The Chinese insistence on removing Taiwan from the TTFA as its prerequisite for its participation put Gotō in a bind. The complex political situation at that time had made Gotō’s decision nearly inconceivable or at least politically incorrect. The enormity of the difficulty Gotō faced is almost beyond comprehension, measured against the present standing of China and Taiwan.17

Gotō Makes the Official Decision

By the end of August 1970, through exchanges of letters with the China Table Tennis Association (CTTA), Gotō was convinced that things could be worked out if he engaged in the negotiations with China in a state of tabula rasa. Gotō stated at the JTTA meeting in August 1970, “China has been touring in Nepal and Europe [referring to the Scandinavia Tournaments held in Sweden] since June 1970 in the middle of the Cultural Revolution. It would not be unreasonable for the Chinese team to compete with the Japanese team. I am willing to visit China and request China’s participation in person, if China agrees.”18

Subsequently, in late September 1970, a delegation of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, including Director-General Nakajima and Deputy Secretary-General Muraoka, as well as ITTF executive vice president Ogimura, visited Beijing for China’s Foundation Day celebration, at China’s invitation, and met Premier Zhou Enlai. There, they conveyed to Premier Zhou Gotō’s willingness to remove Taiwan from the TTFA and his wish to visit China. Following this, Gotō made his decision official in December 1970. He sent a letter to the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, indicating that he would abide
by the ITTF Constitution. This meant that he would expel Taiwan from the TTFA.19

Even more important politically, this also meant that Gotō accepted the “three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations” stipulated by China. They consisted of (1) not to make a policy that would be adversarial toward China; (2) not to join a conspiracy to create two Chinas; and (3) not to obstruct normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Premier Zhou had laid out these “three political principles” originally in July 1958 to the JSP delegation in Beijing. Since then, they had become the fundamental prerequisites on the part of China for normalizing Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. This time, China made them a condition for its participation in the Nagoya World’s, and Gotō finally decided to accept them. Subsequently, the JTTA endorsed Gotō’s proposal to promote friendship exchanges between China and Japan based on the “three political principles.”20

Gotō Makes the Decision Public

Gotō then made his decision public. He told reporters on December 19, 1970, that “I personally hope that China will participate in the Nagoya World’s. I have been impressed with the vitality of the Chinese people when I visited China in 1966. It has made a quantum leap from the time I was stationed in China during the war. I believe that restoration [normalization] of diplomatic relations between Japan and China—that has a vast land area, rich natural resources, and a quarter of the world population—is necessary in addition to resumption of exchanges in table tennis between the two countries. I will work with officials at the Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association in order to realize China’s participation. I am prepared to resign the presidency of the TTFA, as well as that of the JTTA, at any time, so long as the Nagoya World’s succeed.”21

Gotō really meant it. He was willing to sacrifice his positions for the sake of Chinese participation, as he actually did in February 1971. Gotō chose the larger cause (China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s) over his personal interests (his position). Gotō also stated to the reporters, “I would be happy to become a sacrifice (suteishi) if my visit to China would contribute in anyway to cultural and sports exchanges between China and Japan, and eventually even in the slightest way to restoration of Sino-Japanese relations.” The Mainichi newspaper summed it up by reporting that the JTTA president Gotō, who had hesitated to clarify his attitude on the issue of inviting China to the
Nagoya World’s in consideration for Taiwan that was a member of the TTFA, had made up his mind. Gotō decided to expel Taiwan from the TTFA, in accordance with the ITTF Constitution, and invite China to the Nagoya World’s. Gotō would seek cooperation from Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association director-general Nakajima Kenzō and other officials for China’s participation in the championships. Thus, Gotō opened a way for China, which was no. 1 in reality, to participate in the world championships after six years of absence.22

Repercussions of Gotō’s Decision

With Gotō’s acceptance of the “three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations,” the JTTA’s invitation to China for the Nagoya World’s was no longer a mere matter in sports circles, but became a highly political issue. It was no longer possible to take a neutral stand on the “two Chinas” issue. There were only two options: either pro-China or pro-Taiwan. This meant that the JTTA would face vehement opposition from Taiwan and its allies regarding its membership in the TTFA. Consequently, Gotō’s decision met with strong opposition from various groups, not only in sports but also in nonsports circles.23

Opposition from the Japanese Government

The Satō cabinet (November 1964–July 1972) was cold at best. As noted in chapter two, Prime Minister Satō Eisaku took in the latter half of his administration a strong anti-China position because his ultimate goal was the “reversion of Okinawa” from the United States. Satō, therefore, made the utmost effort in supporting U.S. policy toward Taiwan. Satō also repeatedly refused the entry of Chinese officials to Japan. In this context, some officials in the Satō government, such as those in the Ministry of Education whose jurisdiction included overseeing all the amateur sports organizations in Japan, expressed opposition to Gotō’s decision, stating that it was inappropriate for the host country to seek the participation of a specific country: invitations to the Nagoya World’s should be made equally to all ITTF members and through the ITTF. They also mentioned that it was inappropriate for a sports organization (the JTTA) to negotiate with China through a politically minded organization (the Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association).
Gotō Makes the Decision

Association): this would be misconstrued as violating the principle of “separation of politics from sports.”

Opposition from Japanese Right-Wing Groups

In addition, Japanese right-wing organizations and other various ideologically oriented groups strongly opposed Gotō’s decision. These groups had a history of violence. In October 1960, a seventeen-year-old right-wing sympathizer stabbed to death JSP chairman Asanuma Inejirō (1898–1960) in Tokyo during a public debate by the heads of three political parties—the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the JSP, and the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)—for the forthcoming general elections of the House of Representatives (HR). Also, in September 1971, another right-wing sympathizer stabbed Komeitō (Clean Government Party) chairman Takeiri Yoshikatsu (1926–), causing him a three-month convalescence. These sporadic bouts of violence stirred up public fear of the far right, which deeply etched into the national psyche. The activists’ loud rallies, slanders, intimidating phone calls, and veiled threats of violence scared citizens at large, causing them to shun associating with those on the left, even the moderate ones (reminiscent of the “Red Scare” or McCarthyism in the United States).

This time their target was Gotō. They bombarded Gotō with threatening phone calls and mail at his home and his offices—at Meiden High School and at the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT). They said that Gotō’s life would be lost if he did something they did not like. They threw stones at his house. The Aichi-prefecture police took the matter seriously and provided a plainclothes police officer for Gotō as his bodyguard. His frail wife, Suzuko, became sick and was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. His grandchildren were scared of going outside. Nevertheless, Gotō did not yield to these intimidations and threats. Once he had made up his mind, nothing could stop him. He was determined to make the Nagoya World’s a genuine world championships.

Opposition from Sports Associations

Some officials of Japanese sports associations expressed their support of Gotō’s decision, stating that it was welcome for China—Japan’s giant neighbor with a quarter of the world population—to participate in the Nagoya World’s. An official even expressed his envy toward the
JTTA for this feat. A couple of officials at the Japan Sports Association that represented all the amateur sports circles in Japan stated that Japan should promote sports exchanges with China more actively. For instance, a world-record swimmer and a JOC executive member, Furuhashi Hironoshin (JOC president, 1990–1999; 1928–2009), stated that it was natural for Japan to promote sports exchanges with China regardless of the political situation, and that it would also be beneficial to learn techniques from the Chinese. Nevertheless, they were in the minority. Others, including some officials at the Japan Sports Association, expressed reservations, citing the same reasons as those of the government.27

The Asahi-shimbun reporter, Watanabe Akio, states that officials at the sports circles who should have been supporting Gotō were actually sabotaging his efforts. Moreover, the threats from right-wing groups got onto the nerves of his wife and family. Gotō was at a loss when the situation involved his family, jeopardizing their well-being, to the extent that he asked Watanabe not to write articles that would unnecessarily stir up the right-wing groups too much. However, Watanabe could not do that for the sake of accurate reporting. On the contrary, as the China issue escalated, the newspapers rushed to print articles that further fueled the opposition of the right-wing groups, tormenting Gotō and his family.28

In fact, there was even opposition from within. Some members of the JTTA opposed Gotō’s decision. Gotō was known to be a “one-man” type leader. He was not a consensus builder, which was the typical decision-making style for Japanese organizations, reflecting the “groupism” or the conformist code of conduct of the Japanese society at large. Instead, Gotō was a decider. His strong leadership sometimes met with criticisms from officials at the JTTA. A group of six younger coaches, led by Kimura Kōji, which Gotō himself had organized for intensive training of Japanese players for the Nagoya World’s, actually ended up resigning in December 1970. According to Kimura, Gotō had initially told him that the JTTA leadership would not intervene in what these coaches would do; however, Gotō did not give them a free hand in the selection of players for the Nagoya World’s. They were upset and resigned.29

Opinion from Abroad

In addition, not surprisingly, Taiwan strongly opposed Gotō’s decision. South Korea that feared the admission of North Korea into the TTFA
followed suit. Even some officials at the ITTF opposed it, stating that China’s nonparticipation in the Nagoya World’s should not affect the championships. Thus, Gotō faced opposition both from within and without the JTTA, as well as at home and abroad. He was confronted with thick walls of impediments and obstructions. Nevertheless, nothing would deter him once he made up his mind. He was determined to carry his decision through. It should be noted that Gotō was not swayed by and did not succumb to the pressures of China and the Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association, as might have appeared. On the contrary, Gotō was not the type of person who could be pressured into doing something against one’s will—he would prove this during his negotiations with the Chinese in Beijing (see chapter six).³⁰

Of all the difficult decisions he had made throughout his career, he had always acted based on his beliefs and convictions. This time, he decided to invite China because he truly came to believe that it was the right thing to do despite all the odds that suggested otherwise. Gotō was not a politician or diplomat. However, as a leader of table tennis in Japan—having successfully led the Japanese team to three world championships—and as a leader of Asian table tennis circles, he came to realize that it was high time for China to rejoin the world championships. Gotō’s concern was something else. He was not completely certain that China would invite him to visit Beijing. He (and no one for that matter) did not have the accurate information about China that was still in the middle of the Cultural Revolution and was shrouded in secrecy.³¹

**Preparing for Trip to Beijing**

Toward the end of December 1970, Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka obtained the information that China was considering participation in the Nagoya World’s, hoping to talk with Gotō. Muraoka immediately went to Nagoya on December 29, 1970, to inform Gotō of this news in person. There, Muraoka urged Gotō to visit Beijing and negotiate directly with the Chinese officials. Gotō agreed and asked Muraoka to accompany him to Beijing. From this time onward, the Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association acted as the liaison between China and Gotō, in the absence of official contacts between China and Japan, and made all the necessary arrangements for his visit to Beijing. Then, Gotō and Muraoka wrote a draft for the agreement between the CTTA and the
JTIA that would be on the table for the meeting in Beijing. Gotō was ready to leave for Beijing as soon as the association received a telegram from China to invite him.32

China Delays Invitation

Despite the fact that Gotō made public his willingness to go to Beijing to discuss the terms for China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s in person with the Chinese officials, China had remained silent. Meanwhile, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association secretary-general Shirato Agao met Gotō for the first time in Kanda, Tokyo, on January 9, 1971. They formally agreed that the association would act as a liaison between Gotō and China, and that Gotō would immediately leave as soon as the association received a telegram from China to invite Gotō. Shirato states that this was the day when the Japanese delegation to Beijing was officially formed, marking the beginning of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Shirato and his staffers were busy contacting various organizations concerned for the next several days. Nevertheless, the telegram from China to invite Gotō had not arrived as of in the morning of January 15, 1971. Because of the absence of diplomatic relations with China, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) would not allow any Japanese to visit China without a formal invitation from the Chinese government.33

Gotō became frustrated with the delay in the Chinese invitation. The deadline for the members’ entry applications for the Nagoya World’s was February 5. The opening was March 28. On the critical day of January 15, Shirato and Muraoka visited Nagoya in order to convince Gotō to go to Beijing. They suggested that Gotō assume that the telegram from China had arrived and go ahead with making the actual arrangements for the trip. However, Gotō told them that he would not unless he received the telegram. Gotō questioned if his intention was correctly conveyed to China. Gotō asked, “How could I go without the telegram? I was willing to go to China despite my leg problem [he suffered from osteoarthritis due to overuse of his joints as an athlete and could not walk without a cane]. What kind of communications have you been making with China?” Muraoka replied, “We have been communicating with China promptly without delay. The Chinese side must be considering various matters.” Gotō, however, insisted that the telegram must come first. Shirato and Muraoka returned to Tokyo empty-handed.34
Here, the story differs depending on the source. According to the People’s Daily reporter Qian, upon arriving at Tokyo station that night of January 15, Muraoka called the association office. Assistant Secretary-General Satō Junko answered the phone and told him that the telegram from China had arrived that afternoon. Liao Chengzhi Memorandum Trade Office in Tokyo (see chapter two) had received it and called Satō. The telegram stated that the Chinese government would like to invite Gotō at the end of January. It stated that Premier Zhou hoped that he would spend the Chinese New Year (January 27) with Gotō in Beijing. Muraoka immediately called Gotō on the spot. Gotō visited Tokyo the next day. Thus, on January 16, Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association director-general Nakajima handed the telegram over to Gotō.35

On the other hand, according to Shirato’s account, Muraoka and Shirato visited Gotō at the president office of AIT on January 15 and urged him to come to Tokyo to discuss the matter with Director-General Nakajima. Gotō, however, told them that he would not meet Nakajima unless the telegram from China arrived. Shirato insisted that Gotō go to Tokyo immediately. They exchanged some sparks of confrontation. In the end, Gotō agreed to meet Nakajima the next day. Greatly relieved, Shirato and Muraoka took the bullet train back to Tokyo. While on the train, Assistant Secretary-General Satō contacted them through the train phone and informed them that she had received the telegram that afternoon. Therefore, after all, it turned out that Gotō went to Tokyo after the telegram arrived, just as he had wanted—although he did not know of the arrival of the telegram yet. Gotō met Nakajima and Saionji on January 16 and their discussion went smoothly.36

Comparing the two accounts of this episode, Shirato’s version seems to be more accurate and plausible than Qian’s version. Shirato’s version is a firsthand account that Shirato himself wrote in 1974 (published in 1975). Shirato also stated that he could never forget the series of events that happened in January 1971. In contrast, Qian’s account was based on his correspondence with Muraoka after they met in 1985.37

In fact, there is a third account of this episode written by Director-General Nakajima in 1974. Nakajima states that he was not directly involved in the issue until January 16, 1971, when the official meeting between the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association (represented by Nakajima) and the JTTA (Gotō) took place in Tokyo. Nakajima met Gotō at the Hilton Hotel. According to Nakajima, Gotō did not know yet that the telegram from China had arrived a day earlier. Since
the association had just received the telegram the previous afternoon, Nakajima decided to hand it over to Gotō in person at their official meeting. During the meeting, Gotō appeared to still have doubts as to whether China would really invite him to visit Beijing. As soon as he began to express his concerns, Nakajima gave the telegram to Gotō, saying in a matter-of-fact manner, “We received this yesterday.” Nakajima writes, “The moment I handed the telegram to Gotō, I felt a spark of confrontation between him and myself. However, all the doubts and reservations Gotō might have held dissolved instantly.”

This account of Nakajima fits well with Shirato’s and also with Gotō’s character. Thus, the first meeting between Gotō and Nakajima ended successfully.

* * *

As soon as the MOFA’s permission to visit China came through, Gotō left Nagoya with his secretary Oda Yūji, in the morning of January 24, to join Muraoka and JTTA official Mori Takeshi in Tokyo. Then, Gotō, accompanied by Muraoka, Mori, and Oda, headed to Haneda airport in the afternoon. There, Gotō told JTTA secretary-general Yotoe Ikuji, who came to the airport to see them off, to contact Singapore (where the secretariat of the TTFA was located) and call for an ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA. That was how Gotō embarked on the arduous journey for one of the toughest negotiations he had ever engaged in during his life, among all the tough decisions he had made in his life.

* * *

In summary, Gotō made a highly risky decision to invite China to the Nagoya World’s. This decision has changed the course of international politics forever. However, to make a decision is one thing, and to carry it through is quite another. In fact, the negotiations with the Chinese officials in Beijing turned out to be extremely difficult and deadlocked. Gotō was faced with yet another unreasonable Chinese demand in Beijing. How did he reach an agreement with the Chinese officials? This is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX
Gotō Goes to China

China was interested in participating in the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, March–April 1971 (the “Nagoya World’s”), in order to make a comeback in the international table tennis scene, after having waged the brutal and devastating Cultural Revolution for nearly five years. In turn, Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) president Gotō Kōji decided to invite China—the three-time-consecutive world champion from 1961 to 1965—to the Nagoya World’s despite the strong opposition from various circles both at home and abroad. Thus, the interests of both sides converged, and Gotō visited Beijing in January 1971 in order to work out the terms of China’s participation. Nevertheless, the negotiations between Gotō and the Chinese officials proved to be extremely difficult because of the “two Chinas” issue.

Situation in Chinese Table Tennis Circles

Gotō went to Beijing at a time when China was in the middle of the unprecedented, ideological liquidation campaign known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) not only banned all the sports teams at every school but also persecuted sports instructors and players, labeling them as bourgeois. It also banned players from competing internationally in order to eradicate foreign influences. The Beijing National Stadium became empty. The Cultural Revolution hit the table tennis circles hard because China was a world champion. China in 1959 defeated Japan in men’s singles—the four-time-consecutive world champion in that category since 1954
(the championships became biannual events in 1957). Then in 1961, China defeated Japan in men's team—the five-time consecutive world champion in that category since 1954. China won again in both men's singles and men's team in 1963, and then won five world titles in 1965. Nevertheless, China missed the chance to participate in the world championships in 1967 and 1969, due to the Cultural Revolution. World-class players were persecuted to death, while coaches were imprisoned (see appendix 2).

People's Daily reporter, Qian Jiang (1954–), who used to play table tennis at school until it was banned in 1966 and spent his banished life in a desert in the northwestern part of China from 1971 to 1977, states that only Premier Zhou Enlai had the power and will to salvage the disaster in the table tennis community in China. Upon realizing the tragedy inflicted upon the players, Premier Zhou decided to protect the first-class players and had them live in the National Sports Committee building until it became safe to return them home. Qian writes that Zhou was already looking into the future at a time when the ultraleftists were rampaging in the country. Zhou was already thinking of the day when China would rejoin the world sports community.

JTTA president Gotō decided to invite China to the Nagoya World's at that time when Premier Zhou was contemplating such plans. It was a godsend to Zhou.

**China Prepares for Gotō's Visit to Beijing**

As of January 27, 1971, China had not applied for its entry in the Nagoya World's. They had yet to work out the terms for its participation. That was the purpose of Gotō's visit. The deadline for the application for the Nagoya World's was February 5. The opening was March 28. They had only ten days left to apply. The longtime general-secretary of Chinese National Sports General Assembly, Song Zhong, was appointed as the acting president of the China Table Tennis Association (CTTA) in late January 1971 in order to prepare for the meeting with Gotō. Thus, Song was suddenly charged with a new task that he was not familiar with. The only consolation he had was that one of the directors of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), Wang Xiaoyun, was also charged with the task of negotiations with Gotō. Wang was a specialist on Japan—being deputy general-secretary of China-Japan Friendship Association and one-time head of the Liao Chengzhi
Gotō Goes to China

Memorandum Trade Office in Beijing (see chapter two)—and had many Japanese acquaintances. Song had known Wang since the wartime. They had fought in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) against the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA).\(^3\)

Gotō Leaves for Beijing

Meanwhile, on January 24, Gotō and his secretary, Oda Yūji, left Nagoya heading to Tokyo in the morning. Gotō wore a hunting cap, glasses, and a mask, to disguise himself, as he had been threatened by various right-wing groups. Gotō and Oda joined Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyūbei and Mori Takeshi, one of the permanent directors (jumu-riji) of the JTTA and captain of the women’s team, in Tokyo and went to Haneda airport. Thus, they embarked on the unprecedented trip to China in order to settle the terms for China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s.\(^4\)

Since there was no direct flight to Beijing at that time, the four flew to Hong Kong in the evening of January 24. They arrived at Hong Kong the next morning. Then they took the Kowloon Railway and crossed the border between Hong Kong (that was under British jurisdiction) and China. Officials of Chinese National Sports General Assembly, including Hong Lin, welcomed them at the border. Then, they switched to a high-class sedan, provided by the government, from Shenzhen to Guangzhou, and flew from Guangzhou to Beijing airport. They arrived at the airport late at night. It took more than two days from Tokyo to Beijing, whereas it currently takes only a three-hour flight. It was an arduous task, both physically and psychologically, for the sixty-five-year-old Gotō, who used a cane to walk.\(^5\)

Gotō Arrives at Beijing

CPAFFC permanent director Wu Xiaoda and CTTA acting president Song Zhong greeted the Japanese delegation at Beijing airport. Upon arriving at the Peking Hotel on the night of January 25, Gotō handed over to Song the Japanese draft of the “Outline of the Meeting concerning Friendship Exchanges of the Table Tennis Circles between China and Japan” (the “Outline,” hereafter). The Chinese side immediately translated the draft into Chinese. The draft of the Outline had four points: (1) the JTTA shall invite the Chinese national table tennis
team to the Nagoya World’s; (2) the JTTA shall promote exchanges between Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles in adherence to the “three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations”; (3) the Chinese team shall tour Japan after the Nagoya World’s, and the Japanese team shall tour China at a later time; and (4) the JTTA shall not admit Taiwan’s team to the Nagoya World’s and shall “straighten out” the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA)—meaning expelling the Taiwan Table Tennis Association from the TTFA. The “three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations” refer to the conditions laid out by Premier Zhou Enlai to Japan in July 1958. They consisted of (1) not to make a policy that would be adversarial toward China; (2) not to join any conspiracy to create two Chinas; and (3) not to obstruct normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations.

Meetings between CTTA and JTTA

First Meeting: January 27

The first meeting between the Chinese officials and the Japanese delegation took place at the Peking Hotel on January 27, 1971. The four Japanese—Gotô, Muraoka, Mori, and Oda—met six Chinese officials that included CTTA acting president Song Zhong and CPAFFC director Wang Xiaoyun. At the meeting, Gotô stated that when he became the president of the TTFA, the anomalous situation regarding Taiwan had existed for fourteen years—Taiwan had been a member of the TTFA since 1953. China then withdrew from the TTFA in that year. The TTFA, therefore, allowed Taiwan to participate in the Asian championships. It was not until 1968 that the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) added a new provision to its constitution, stipulating that only a member of the ITTF could join a subordinate regional federation and participate in its tournaments. Gotô stated that it was difficult for the JTTA to alter the longtime practice because the Japanese government had recognized Taiwan as the legitimate government of China. The JTTA received funding from the Japanese government, and it could not go against the government policy. Gotô then stated that China, however, should participate in the Nagoya World’s. In order to make this happen, he would do his best to correct the anomaly and “straighten out” the TTFA, meaning removing Taiwan from the TTFA and readmitting China to the TTFA.

In return, Wang thanked Gotô for visiting Beijing, risking his life. However, he stressed that the political issue must be overcome first, and
that the “three political principles” must be adhered to before China made a decision to participate in the Nagoya World’s. The first meeting appeared to have proceeded smoothly. Gotō already accepted the most critical condition for China in the Outline—to acknowledge the “three political principles.” Gotō also pledged that he would remove Taiwan from the TTFA. Nevertheless, their subsequent meetings stumbled. 8

_Second Meeting: January 28_

Given that both sides had agreed on the general principles, the purpose of the second meeting on January 28 was to work out the specific wording of their agreement. There, the Chinese officials made unreasonable demands on Gotō. They presented Gotō with their counter draft, which had the “three political principles” as the first paragraph of the Outline, instead of the second paragraph. The Chinese draft also had in the first paragraph the statements that Taiwan was an integral part of China, and that it was a province of China. 9

The Japanese draft of the Outline clearly stated the adherence to the “three political principles” in the second paragraph, which countered the Japanese government policy on China. Gotō had already made a bold and “politically incorrect” decision to go against the Japanese government and agreed to the Chinese demand. Gotō had visited Beijing at the risk of his life. Gotō had already made the utmost conciliatory gesture in order to facilitate China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. Gotō did something no other Japanese could have done at that time. Nevertheless, the Chinese officials insisted that the “three political principles” must be stated in the first paragraph of the Outline, and that the reference to Taiwan must be also added in the first paragraph. They were preoccupied with dogmatism and formality. Gotō saw the need neither for the “three political principles” to be placed in the first paragraph nor for the reference to Taiwan to be added in the Outline. Gotō believed that the politics should not become the forefront of the agreement. He wanted to tone down the political expressions in the Outline. After all, this was an agreement on a sports event, not on politics. Gotō was not a politician or a diplomat, representing the Japanese government. He came to China to discuss a table tennis event, not politics or diplomatic relations. Yet, the Chinese officials insisted on imposing their dogmatic principles. Gotō’s patience and tolerance with the Chinese officials reached a limit. Their negotiations were disrupted on a mere formality. 10
On the third day, January 29, Gotō called in sick, stayed in his hotel room, and refused to see the Chinese officials. Consequently, their negotiations had deadlocked. One of the Japanese delegation members, Mori, writes that he personally felt that the second paragraph of the Outline had already fully met the Chinese conditions. Mori also feared that if Gotō accepted all the unreasonable Chinese demands, he would be forced to resign his positions—both at the JTTA and the TTFA—after the trip; then, everything they had worked for thus far would be ruined. Therefore, in order to save Gotō from such a predicament, Mori volunteered to become a “hostage,” by remaining in Beijing alone after the Japanese delegation left, until Gotō expelled Taiwan from the TTFA. Mori suggested this idea to Muraoka, who conveyed this proposal to the Chinese side, through a Chinese interpreter.11

Premier Zhou Intervenes

In the afternoon on January 29, the Chinese officials in charge of negotiating with Gotō were summoned to the conference room of the State Council, China’s supreme executive branch of government. Premier Zhou had heard about the stalemate in the negotiations and called for a meeting. Zhou told the Chinese officials in charge that they must support Gotō because he was a true friend of China. They must put themselves in his shoes. Gotō had come to China at the age of sixty-five, endangering himself. Gotō promised that he would submit a motion to “straighten out” the TTFA to expel Taiwan from it. No ordinary person could do such things. Then, Zhou asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Asia Bureau director-general Liu Chun how many countries were in Asia. Liu answered that the Asia Bureau was in charge of twenty-two Asian countries, and that the West Asia Bureau was in charge of the rest of countries in Asia. Zhou said, “My question was how many countries were in Asia in total.” Liu could not answer that. Zhou was already thinking about establishing a new table tennis organization for Asia, to replace the TTFA. Zhou then stated that even if Gotō proposed to remove Taiwan from the TTFA at the ad hoc general meeting that he just had called, his motion would be rejected. Gotō, therefore, would have to establish a new table tennis organization for Asia. Counting his fingers, Zhou said, “Eighteen countries and regions would support establishing a new organization, whereas at most sixteen would oppose. Therefore, a new organization could be established.”12
Premier Zhou then said to the officials, “Gotō’s draft Outline is well written. I understand that he had been hoping to visit Beijing for a long time. Yet, you are imposing unreasonable conditions on him. Don’t be too ‘left’.” “You guys always want to be more ‘left’ than me.” Around 1971, Zhou used to tell MFA officials, “Don’t be too ‘left’.” Zhou was thinking of the time after the Satō cabinet (November 1964–July 1972) that took an anti-China position. Zhou had met many Japanese, and each time he met Japanese delegations to Beijing, he criticized Chinese officials at the MFA as being too left. Zhou was searching for a change in China’s foreign policy. He told the Chinese officials to look at the substance and drop the formality. He said, “Gotō is JTTA president. He is not a representative of the Japanese government. Don’t give him a hard time. The three political principles can remain in the second paragraph, as stipulated in the Japanese draft. There is no need to move them to the first paragraph.” He also stated, “Gotō had already put the three political principles in the Outline. He promised to straighten out the TTFA. He also declared that Taiwan did not represent China. That’s enough.”

Premier Zhou told the Chinese officials to go and talk with Gotō immediately. He also told them that he would meet Gotō that night, after they worked out the specific wording of the Outline with Gotō. Song and Wu went to the Peking Hotel and told Gotō’s secretary Oda that they brought good news. Then, Gotō came out of his room. They told Gotō through an interpreter that they would accept his draft. They also told Gotō that Premier Zhou would meet him at the Great Hall of the People that night, and that they would come to pick him up later. Thus, the meeting was resumed that afternoon and the wording of the Outline was resolved. With Premier Zhou’s intervention, the CTTA just made it by the deadline of February 5 for the entry application for the Nagoya World’s.

In retrospect, Gotō accomplished something no Japanese could have at that time. Most of the Japanese were either anti-China or pro-China. It was difficult for the Japanese to take a neutral stand on China. No other Japanese delegation to Beijing could have acted the way Gotō did. Other people would have easily caved into the Chinese demands and changed the draft Outline for the sake of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. Nevertheless, Gotō stood his ground firmly in the face of the Chinese officials because he believed that the Japanese draft
was fair and acceptable to the Chinese side. In fact, it was more than fair—it had already incorporated all the critical Chinese conditions. Gotō was a man of conviction. He did not abase himself to the Chinese authorities. Premier Zhou understood that Gotō had already made the maximum concessions to the Chinese demands, was impressed with Gotō’s fortitude and straightforwardness, and came to respect Gotō. Therefore, Zhou, who had also a grand design in mind, decided to go ahead with Gotō’s draft.

**Reasons for Chinese Insistence on Formality**

Why did the Chinese officials so vehemently insist on dogmatism and formality to the extent that Premier Zhou scolded them as being too left? This was so because they were afraid of being perceived as rightist at a time when things were unpredictable in the middle of the Cultural Revolution. Being perceived as pro-Japanese was considered synonymous with being rightist, and many “pro-Japanese” officials were purged during the Cultural Revolution, along with the rightists Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. State Council Foreign Affairs Office vice minister Liao Chengzhi (1908–1983), who was also president of the China-Japan Friendship Association from its inception in 1963 until his death, was one of them. Therefore, they might have “played it safe” and acted as being left more so than was necessary.15

**Meeting with Premier Zhou**

Gotō and three other members of the Japanese delegation were invited to the Great Hall of the People on the night of January 29 and met Premier Zhou. The renowned poet and writer, Guo Moruo (1892–1978), who had studied in Japan during 1914–1920 (or 1921, depending on the sources), and spent his exile era in Japan during 1928–1937, was also there. He became the honorary president of the China-Japan Friendship Association in 1963 at its inception. They talked for an hour and a half until 11:00 p.m. During their conversations, Premier Zhou thanked Gotō for his devotion to resuming the table tennis exchanges between China and Japan. He stated that the Chinese people supported his initiative at the TTFA. Gotō asked, “Does this mean that seven hundred million people support me?” Zhou replied, “Yes, they do.”16
Premier Zhou

If Gotō was a “friend of China,” Premier Zhou (1898–1976) was a “friend of Japan.” As Guo Moruo did, Zhou also studied in Japan during 1917–1919. Many young Chinese intellectuals and revolutionaries, including Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) and Liao Chengzhi, who was born in Tokyo, studied in Japan. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) is a prime example of the Chinese revolutionaries who learned about Japanese modernization. He lived in Japan for many years, including his exile during the 1910s. In fact, his given name “Yat-sen” is his pen name that he adopted in Japan—his birth name was Sun Wen. Upon returning to China, these Chinese revolutionaries fought against Japan during the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), either as members of the Kuomintang (KMT) or of the CCP. These Chinese leaders had deep knowledge and understanding of Japan. Although they were engaged in the anti-Japanese resistance campaign during the wartime, they personally had retained their favorable feelings toward the Japanese forged through their youth in Japan. Premier Zhou was no exception.17

Signing of the Outline

On February 1, 1971, Gotō (representing the JTTA), Muraoka (Japan-China Friendship Association), Song (the CTTA), and Wu (the CPAFFC) signed the Outline of the Meeting concerning Friendship Exchanges of the Table Tennis Circles between China and Japan. It stipulated: (1) The JTTA shall promote the development of international table tennis in adherence to the ITTF Constitution and straighten out the TTFA in accordance with the ITTF Constitution; (2) The JTTA shall promote friendship exchanges between the Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles based on the “three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations.” The CTTA expressed its respect and support for this; (3) The JTTA shall invite the Chinese national team to the Nagoya World’s to be held on March 28–April 7, 1971, in accordance with the principles stipulated above. The CTTA shall accept the invitation and send its team to Nagoya; (4) The Chinese team shall extend its stay in Japan after the Nagoya World’s and tour Japan to engage in friendship tournaments. The Japanese team shall reciprocate this by visiting China later this year; and (5) The CTTA and the CPAFFC thank the JTTA, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, and other Japanese friends of China for their efforts to
develop and promote friendship and solidarity between the Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles, as well as between the Chinese and the Japanese people.\textsuperscript{18}

**Aftermath**

The Japanese mass media responded immediately. Japanese TV stations repeatedly broadcasted this news on the night of February 1, 1971. Major TV stations also contacted the JTTA office in order to obtain the right to broadcast the Nagoya World’s. The association’s office staff members had to call Gotō in Beijing frequently for his instructions. The *Asahi* newspaper reported that the Japanese acceptance of the “three political principles” opened the way for Sino-Japanese table tennis exchanges. This “table tennis formula” would become a norm for opening other exchanges between China and Japan in various circles, not only in sports but also in culture, economics, and others. In this sense, the JTTA set the precedence for Sino-Japanese exchanges after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{19}

Zheng Yueqing, who was once a Chinese national table tennis team member, writes that Gotō recognized the “three political principles” as the foundation for promoting Sino-Japanese relations before the Japanese government did. Using the “unofficial serve,” Gotō won great “points” in achieving a quantum leap in Sino-Japanese relations as well as in Sino-U.S. relations.\textsuperscript{20}

* * *

In summary, completing the tough negotiations with China successfully and securing China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s as the way Gotō did was an accomplishment in itself. However, it was only the end of the beginning. Nobody, including Gotō himself, at that time could have predicted the ramifications of his visit to Beijing. Only time would reveal the impact that Gotō’s initiative had beyond the world table tennis circles and on world politics. What was clear at that time was that Gotō wanted to make the Nagoya World’s a genuine world championships, and that Gotō had succeeded in inviting China to the Nagoya World’s. For this, however, he would have to “straighten out the TTFA”—to expel Taiwan from the TTFA, and to readmit China into the TTFA. This was no easy task. Another arduous trip and negotiations—even more difficult ones—lay ahead for Gotō.\textsuperscript{21}
As soon as the Outline was signed on February 1, 1971, Gotō and his delegation directly headed for Singapore. While Gotō was in Beijing, he had the JTTA staff make arrangements to call the ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA in Singapore. It was scheduled for February 7. They flew to Guangzhou and arrived at Hong Kong by train on February 4. Anticipating that the TTFA general meeting would fall apart, Gotō wrote his letter of resignation in Hong Kong. There, Gotō was surrounded by various people who visited his hotel room frequently, acting suspiciously. The bodyguard service provided by a Chinese travel agency relieved the uneasiness of his delegation somewhat. Gotō was also surrounded by reporters. He told the reporters, “I have accomplished all the objectives of my visit to China. I will submit a resolution that Taiwan does not represent the government of China at the TTFA, in accordance with the ITTF Constitution. The anomaly of the current situation at the TTFA has to be corrected. I would resign the presidency of the TTFA immediately if my motion were rejected.”

**TTFA Ad Hoc General Meeting**

Upon arrival at Singapore, Gotō was surrounded by more suspicious people who claimed to be reporters, visiting his hotel room. The Japanese delegation members felt the danger to the extent that they changed their hotel in secret at 3:00 a.m. Muraoka, Mori, and Oda guarded Gotō’s room, taking turns; however, Gotō did not get much rest. The ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA was convened in Singapore on February 7, 1971. Out of the twenty-three members of the TTFA, eleven members were absent. Those that were absent were India, Ceylon (current Sri Lanka), Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma (current Myanmar), Syria, Israel, Australia, Hong Kong, and Macao. In turn, twelve members were present. They were Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Cambodia (the Lon Nol regime that was supported by the United States), Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, and South Vietnam.

Taiwan had a great stake in this meeting. The issue not only concerned its status in the international table tennis community but also that in the United Nations (UN). China had also challenged Taiwan at the UN, claiming its seat as the sole legitimate government of China. The outcome of the TTFA general meeting could significantly
influence the vote on the China representation at the UN General Assembly in the fall of 1971. The world was therefore paying attention to the TTFA ad hoc general meeting. It was a matter of prestige and pride for Taiwan—the Republic of China (ROC)—that had been one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council since its inception. Under these circumstances, no sooner had Gotō’s meeting in China ended than Taiwan engaged in groundwork with other TTFA members in earnest. While Gotō was obliged to go to a sightseeing tour, Taiwanese officials met other delegates in the hotel adjacent to the hotel where the TTFA meeting was scheduled, and diligently prepared the strategies to defeat Gotō’s motion.24

According to reporter Ōno Seizō at the Japanese public broadcasting network, NHK (an equivalent to PBS in the United States), as soon as Gotō had submitted the “motion concerning the status of Taiwan,” pursuant to the ITTF’s recommendation, the conference room was in a furor with hooting and shouting. Most of the representatives, led by that of South Vietnam, vehemently opposed the motion. They accused Gotō of bringing politics into the sports world. Gotō instead argued that it was Taiwan that had brought politics to the TTFA by remaining in the organization in violation of the ITTF Constitution. Nevertheless, some delegates, such as Malaysia and Iran, even demanded that Gotō show the Outline of the Meeting between the CTTA and the JTTA. Gotō countered that the agreement between China and Japan on the Nagoya World’s had no direct relevance to the agenda before the TTFA general meeting. The shouting match between the pro-Taiwan representatives, including Lebanon and South Korea, and Gotō was so loud that the press corps in the next room could hear it. Most of the attacks were directed toward Gotō personally. Nobody listened to his reasoning. Gotō was isolated.25

Gotō Resigns

After three hours of this shouting match, Gotō’s motion went to a vote. It failed. Only Japan voted in favor, whereas ten were opposed and one (Singapore) abstained. Then Gotō stood up and stated, “Now that my motion has been rejected, I will not be responsible for the consequences.” He then handed over his letter of resignation from the post of TTFA president to the secretary-general of the Singapore Table Tennis Association (TTFA’s secretariat) and walked out of the conference room. All of these actions were expected. After Gotō had left the
The conference room, the ad hoc general meeting elected the representative of South Vietnam as the new president of the TTFA. Then, the meeting adopted an urgent motion to recommend the admission of Taiwan, as China (the ROC), to the ITTF, despite the fact that there was no possibility for the ITTF to approve it—it had repeatedly and consistently rejected Taiwan’s admission as China in the past, whereas it was willing to admit it as “Taiwan.” In fact, on the result of the TTFA ad hoc general meeting, ITTF president H. Roy Evans stated, “Taiwan cannot join the ITTF under the name of China because it does not represent the whole area of China. Taiwan is violating the ITTF Constitution. It is regrettable that the TTFA passed the resolution that ignored our recommendation.”

The Asahi newspaper reported that, aside from the anticommunist countries, such as South Korea, whose position was obvious, other TTFA members were put in a delicate position by having to choose between China and Taiwan. In the end, however, the enthusiastic groundwork on the part of Taiwan and South Korea, which strongly argued for maintaining the past ties between the members and Taiwan, worked in its favor. Consequently, the TTFA alienated one of the powers in the table tennis world, Japan. Nevertheless, it would be almost impossible for the ITTF to admit Taiwan as ROC, because China had been its member, and it had repeatedly rejected Taiwan’s admission as such. On the other hand, if JTTA president Goto promotes a creation of a new table tennis association for Asia, as is anticipated, he would face insurmountable difficulties as hard as the ones he went through during this general meeting. He should expect considerable opposition to it, including Japan Sports Association president and some of the officials of the JTTA itself, who fear that a creation of a new association would jeopardize Japan’s relations with South Korea and Taiwan.

In turn, the Xinhua News Agency expressed the Chinese support for JTTA president Goto’s effort to remove Taiwan from the TTFA, stating that his actions were the right ones in accordance with the ITTF Constitution. The reporter Ōno meanwhile states that, being confronted with the difficult choice between China and Taiwan, Goto chose China. That was the first pivotal step to change the course of history. After walking out of the conference room, Goto told Ōno in a shaken voice that he had never received such a ruthless grilling before. One would be hard pressed to imagine the difficulties of a Japanese representative (and president of the organization) who was being attacked by the rest of the representatives and was isolated in an international conference, where he did not speak English. Having failed to remove
Taiwan from the TTFA, it appeared that Gotō had lost in the battle over the “two Chinas” issue. Nevertheless, history proved otherwise. Ōno states that Gotō’s decision and determination sowed the seeds of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s, which bore the fruit of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement and the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Gotō had won the battle in the end.28

Gotō Returns Home

Upon returning to Japan on February 9, 1971, Gotō received a loud “welcome” from right-wing groups at Haneda airport, which was under heavy guard by the police. Reporters flocked to the airport. Gotō stated at a press conference there, “The TTFA meeting was not on sports, but was on politics. Representatives of member associations brought their government officials along and had them speak at the conference. The Lebanese delegation suddenly and unexpectedly came via Taiwan. Malaysian and South Korean government officials read out loud already printed manuscripts.” Regarding the meeting in Beijing, Gotō noted the fact that influential politicians in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), such as Fujiyama Aiichirō and Miki Takeo, and those engaged in the Sino-Japanese trade relations, had already accepted the “three political principles.” Gotō stated, “I accepted the three political principles because I realized that it would be impossible to promote sports exchanges between China and Japan without accepting them.” “I argued that it was a meeting on a sports event, not on politics. I was ready to go home when they insisted on including the reference to Taiwan in the Outline. I stood my ground as firmly as I could and succeeded in keeping the reference to Taiwan from the Outline. This was the utmost limit I could defend in the face of the dogmatic Chinese officials in the negotiations.” Gotō further stated, “If the outcome of the meeting were unsatisfactory, I would resign the presidency of the JTTA; however, I am confident that the Nagoya World’s will be the best championships you have ever seen.”29

Intensifying Threats to Gotō

Ever since he returned from China, Gotō was bombarded with more threats, and plainclothes police officers accompanied him on a 24/7 basis. It was highly unusual for the Japanese police to provide such protection to a civilian who was neither a politician nor a diplomat.
Gotō Goes to China

Nevertheless, Gotō kept receiving intimidating mail at home and at the schools. Right-wing groups surrounded his house and schools, and shouted in front of the premises. Mori Takeshi, one of the three Japanese who accompanied Gotō to Beijing, states that the police even called Mori and warned him not to let his children go outside after dark.30

**Isolation of Gotō**

Nevertheless, it was not only the right-wing groups that gave Gotō a hard time. Mori at the JTTA states that, upon returning from China (and Singapore), he held briefing sessions with reporters in Tokyo on many occasions on behalf of Gotō, because Gotō lived in Nagoya. Mori explained the outline of the agreement between the JTTA and the CTTA to reporters and officials at many organizations, including the Ministry of Education that had jurisdiction over all the amateur sports organizations in Japan and the Japan Sports Association. The attitude of most of them was cool at best, reflecting the Japanese government’s anti-China stance at that time. Mori wrote in 1989, “Those who are currently preaching Sino-Japanese friendship acted back then as if they were completely different people.” Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka, who also accompanied Gotō to China, adds that the Japan Sports Association was the harshest. The officials ganged up on Gotō and accused him of having appeased the Chinese government by accepting the “three political principles.”31

**Gotō’s Determination**

Meanwhile, Gotō had only one and a half months to prepare for the March 28 opening of the Nagoya World’s. Despite the intimidating threats and cold treatment from various circles, Gotō was determined to make the Nagoya World’s a success. Gotō told his staff not to worry because the Taiwan issue at the TTFA would not affect the Nagoya World’s. The urgent task for the organizing committee of the Nagoya World’s was fund raising. The budget for the games was estimated to be ¥120 million ($333,000) for the operation costs alone, excluding other expenses such as various facility fees. Yet, the Japanese government gave Gotō only ¥10 million for this major international sports event. It was extremely difficult for a single sports association (the JTTA) to
cover the expenses. However, Gotō was confident because the Chinese team was coming—he knew that a big ping-pong boom would come. He withdrew all of his disposable assets, including his wife’s personal savings and their savings for the wedding of his youngest daughter, Yoshiko (Japanese weddings cost an enormous amount of money, and families saved money in preparation for their daughters’ weddings in the future). Gotō confided to one of the directors of the Aichi-prefecture Sports Association, Nakamura Kiyoshi, that “I feel sorry for my wife and family—the threats from the right-wing groups, such as intimidating phone calls and throwing stones at my house, are enough to scare my family off—but I must make the Nagoya World’s succeed.”

Gotō immediately engaged in a fund-raising drive for the Nagoya World’s. Nagoya, the metropolis of the central region of Japan, was full of entrepreneurship. The headquarters of Toyota was located near Nagoya, and there were hundreds of Toyota’s subcontractors in the area. The cofounder of Sony, Morita Akio, is from this region. It is also the home of the internationally renowned porcelain manufacturer, Noritake. Impressed with Gotō’s enthusiasm in the Nagoya World’s, these corporations and the newspaper Chūnichi shimbun based in Nagoya (which is circulated as the Tokyo shimbun in the eastern regions), with a reputation for high-quality news analysis, agreed to make financial contributions.

Thus, the preparation for the Nagoya World’s was underway in full swing in the host country. Nevertheless, things were not as promising across the Sea of Japan. China had second thoughts about the Nagoya World’s after having signed up for it. Also, tension in Indochina escalated again in February 1971.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Nagoya World Table Tennis Championships

Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) president Gotō Kōji visited Beijing and worked out the terms for China’s participation in the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, March 28–April 7, 1971 (the “Nagoya World’s”), and signed the Outline of the Meeting with the China Table Tennis Association (CTTA) officials on February 1, 1971. Then, Gotō went directly to Singapore and submitted a motion to remove Taiwan from the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) at the cost of his presidency of the federation. The Chinese delegation to the Nagoya World’s—China’s first overseas sports delegation since the Cultural Revolution—was scheduled to depart for Japan on March 17. Nevertheless, things were not yet settled for China. The Chinese delegation faced further “impediments” to its participation in the Nagoya World’s.

Situation in China in Early February 1971

With the signing of the Outline of the Meeting between the CTTA and the JTTA, Premier Zhou Enlai contemplated how to throw an “offensive serve” into the world. To use an analogy from drama, he was writing a draft of the scenario for a stage production called Ping-Pong Diplomacy. In fact, Zhou gave an enigmatic message to former Japanese foreign minister Fujiyama Aiichirō (July 1957–July 1960, a member of the House of Representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party, 1897–1985) during his visit to Beijing in February–March 1971 by stating that a sudden dramatic improvement in Sino-U.S. relations was possible at some point. Fujiyama was known to be pro-China—he was
a businessman, with more than 200 leadership positions in economic circles, including the presidency of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry—and formed in December 1970 the Federation of Japanese Parliamentarians to Promote Restoration of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations, a nonpartisan volunteer group at the Japanese parliament. Nevertheless, even Zhou himself did not know how the drama would actually be played out.¹

The Chinese table tennis players were elated when they heard of the public announcement of the decision to participate in the Nagoya World’s. Premier Zhou instructed them to begin intensive training immediately. Senior players who had participated in the Ljubljana World’s in Slovenia in 1965 were already around thirty years old. This would be their last chance to compete in world championships. Younger players who had been chosen for the national team for the first time around 1965 had missed the chance to compete in world championships for several years at the peak of their strength. Their chance had finally come. Nevertheless, the situation in Indochina shadowed their excitement.²

February 8: South Vietnam Invades Laos—“Lam Son 719” Operation

On February 8, 1971, the South Vietnamese army, backed by the U.S. air force, launched the “Lam Son 719” operation with 16,000 soldiers, invading Laos and cutting the Ho Chi Min Trail—the operation lasted until its defeat on March 25, 1971. Tension between China and the United States escalated again. Gravely concerned with the expansion of the Vietnam War into the entire Indochina peninsula, Premier Zhou on March 8 flew to Hanoi, accompanying top military and diplomatic officials, and discussed the situation with the North Vietnamese leaders. Zhou issued a warning that should the invasion continue, China would support the Vietnamese People’s Army and the Liberation Army of South Vietnam at the cost of maximum sacrifice by China’s own people.³

March 10: Cambodia Issue

Two days later, Premier Zhou visited the National Sports Stadium to observe the intensive training of the table tennis players. There,
Deputy Foreign Minister Han Nianlong and CTTA acting president Song Zhong told Premier Zhou that the deposed government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk (1922–) in exile in Beijing, had expressed concerns about China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. General Lon Nol (1913–1985) had ousted Prince Sihanouk in a coup d’état in March 1970, while he was out of country, and established the Khmer Republic in Cambodia in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh (1970–1975). Prince Sihanouk fled to Beijing and established the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea. This Cambodian government in exile in Beijing questioned whether China would send its team to the Nagoya World’s despite the fact that the Lon Nol regime was sending its team to the championships.4

China did not recognize the Lon Nol regime that was backed by the United States. In fact, China’s support for the Sihanouk group in exile in Beijing had become a symbol of China’s support of the struggle in Indochina against the United States. Premier Zhou stated that there would be no problem as long as the Chinese team players abstained from playing against the Lon Nol team players, if they were scheduled to compete with each other (the schedule was decided by lottery). Song told Zhou that the Chinese team was not scheduled to compete with the Lon Nol team in the group tournaments; however, one of China’s star players, Zhuang Zedong—three-time world champion in men’s singles from 1961 to 1965—was scheduled to compete against a Lon Nol team player in the second match in men’s singles. Zhou then told Song to have all the Chinese players, regardless of the categories of the tournaments, abstain from competing with the Lon Nol team, even if this meant losing the tournaments. No Chinese players shall compete against the Lon Nol team. Premier Zhou made this crystal clear.5

March 11: Premier Zhou Takes the Initiative

Thus, although Premier Zhou had decided to participate in the Nagoya World’s, and the Chinese national table tennis team was scheduled to depart for the Nagoya World’s on March 17, the complex situation in East Asia obliged the Chinese officials to reevaluate their decision. Also, according to two Chinese scholars living in the United States, Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun, “[T]he Chinese team’s proposed visit to Japan that Zhou was personally orchestrating had not received Mao Zedong’s final approval.” Mao had “kept the proposal [submitted by Zhou] in his office without either endorsing or rejecting it, contrary
to customary procedures.” Zhou called for a meeting at the State Council with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the National Sports Committee on March 11. He stated that Cambodia (the Prince Sihanouk group) had raised a question on China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. In turn, North Korea was weighing its participation carefully. Zhou stated that China must unite with North Korea, Vietnam (North Vietnam), the South Vietnam Temporary Revolutionary regime, Laos, and Cambodia (the Prince Sihanouk group). China must also reconsider its participation carefully. Zhou then instructed the officials concerned to draw up a measure to deal with all the possible situations that could arise at the Nagoya World’s. He also decided to talk with Prince Sihanouk the next day. In addition, he instructed Deputy Foreign Minister Han to send for North Korean representatives to visit Beijing to discuss North Korea’s participation in the championships.6

Having said that, Premier Zhou also stated that the Chinese team was going to Nagoya, representing China—it would interact with the U.S. team there. The Chinese team should always interact with the U.S. team. The Chinese team could invite the U.S. team to Beijing. Then, the U.S. team shall reciprocate its visit to the Chinese team. The Chinese delegation had gone to West Germany—referring to the Dortmund World’s in 1959. It had also gone to Japan despite the fact that China did not have diplomatic relations with Japan—referring to the Tokyo World’s in 1956. Zhou realized that a political victory in the Nagoya World’s would outweigh victory in the actual championships. Zhou told the officials to think about this issue from a worldwide perspective. Although the officials felt that Zhou’s statement contained highly delicate political implications, they did not realize that he was contemplating a Sino-U.S. rapprochement. They had no idea that Zhou had been groping for such an opportunity. Zhou’s enigmatic statement was a precursor to the dramatic move played out in April.7

March 12–15: The Chinese Team
Debates and Premier Zhou Intervenes

Premier Zhou met Prince Sihanouk on March 12. He promised Sihanouk that China would submit a motion to remove the Lon Nol regime from the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) at its general meeting, which was scheduled during the Nagoya World’s,
Nagoya World Table Tennis Championships

and that the Chinese team would abstain from competing against the Lon Nol team even though abstention meant losing the particular tournaments concerned. On March 14, the North Korean delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Kim Yong-tek, arrived at Beijing. Premier Zhou called for a meeting with the Chinese officials concerned, including Deputy Foreign Minister Han, Asia Bureau director-general Liu Chun, and CTTA acting president Song, at the Great Hall of the People that night. Zhou asked whether China should participate in the Nagoya World’s, and whether the participation would constitute the “protrusion of politics.” They could not answer on the spot. They decided to consult about the matter with the team coaches and players.8

The three-time world champion, Zhuang Zedong, who had been to North Korea in 1970, stated that China should act in unison with North Korea (that had reservations about its participation in the Nagoya World’s). He argued that China should cancel the participation from a political standpoint. The majority of them agreed with Zhuang. Several of them, however, were in favor of participating. The assistant captain for the men’s team, Lu Mingrong, argued that sports must be separated from politics. CTTA acting president Song then stated that China’s participation was already a done deal. The CTTA had already signed the Outline of the Meeting with the JTTA. Song was one of the signers of the Outline. The CTTA had already informed the JTTA and the ITTF of its participation. Song said, “How could I tell them that we are not going? I would lose trust with them if I did. China as a nation could not do such a thing, either.” Deputy Foreign Minister Han agreed. The majority was in favor of cancelling, but they could not reach a consensus opinion. When they left the National Sports Stadium, it was past 3:00 a.m.9

Soon afterward, Premier Zhou called Asia Bureau director-general Liu and asked for the result of the discussion. Han, Liu, Song, and other officials went back to the Great Hall of the People at 5:00 a.m. Zhou also had been staying up all night. After hearing the report that the majority was in favor of cancelling, Zhou kept silence. He then stated, “How can we not go?” “If we cancel, all the agreements with JTTA President Gotô would be meaningless. It would disgrace Gotô and ITTF President Evans. If we cancel now, this would jeopardize our participation in world championships in the future.” Zhou also stated that Gotô had kept his word—he submitted the resolution to expel Taiwan from the TTFA at the cost of his own position—and that China must reciprocate his trust. Zhou then declared, “China will keep its promise
and participate in the Nagoya World’s.” He said, “Now, I am going to write a report to Chairman Mao and ask for his instructions. Then I am going to meet the North Korean delegation.” It was past 7:00 a.m. This kind of work schedule was routine for the seventy-three-year-old premier—he was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1972, but he kept up a hard work schedule until toward the end in January 1976.10

In summary, Chinese officials were still debating whether China should participate in the Nagoya World’s as late as March 15—only two days before the scheduled date for the departure of the Chinese delegation to the Nagoya World’s. This demonstrated how deeply the international sports event was politicized. In this case, while Premier Zhou had already decided to participate in the Nagoya World’s, realizing it was a great opportunity for China to reenter the international stage, he still allowed the Chinese team members to debate the issue. He then intervened against the majority decision not to participate and “enlightened” them. Only afterward did Zhou, known for his extreme prudence, seek for Mao’s approval. Thus, after all the twists and turns, China made the final decision to participate in the Nagoya World’s two days before the team’s departure. The politicization of sports events reached one of its highest levels.11

March 15: Zhou Seeks Mao’s Approval

In the morning of March 15, Chairman Mao approved Premier Zhou’s report “as is.” Mao then jotted down on the report his comments, “The Chinese team must go. First, don’t be afraid of hardships. Second, don’t be afraid of death. Some of the team members must be prepared to die. It would be even better if they don’t die.” Zhou always made sure that he obtained final approval from Mao so that the official decision was made by Mao. This tactic of putting himself below Mao saved his political career, as well as his life; however, he could not save his adopted daughter’s life from becoming a prey of the Cultural Revolution.12

At 8:00 p.m., Premier Zhou visited Prince Sihanouk and gave him an update. Then, at 10:00 p.m., Zhou met the North Korean delegation head, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Yong-tek. Zhou told Kim that North Korea and China should act in unison in principle. China had decided to participate in the Nagoya World’s, and North Korea should do the same. Zhou also stated that China had decided to abstain from competing against the Lon Nol regime; however, North Korea should not have to do the same. North Korea should allow
its star player, Park Shin-il, to compete against the Lon Nol regime should such an occasion arises. Given the smaller size of the North Korean team, boycotting such a match would greatly diminish the overall chances for North Korea to win. It would disappoint 600,000 “Korean residents in Japan” who anticipated that North Korea would win. In contrast, for China, even if Zhuang Zedong boycotted his men’s single’s match with the Lon Nol team and lost in the tournament, the other Chinese players could win in the other tournaments. Therefore, it would not cost China as much. Thus, Zhou helped to alleviate the concerns on the part of North Korea for its participation in the championships.13

Premier Zhou also suggested to Vice Foreign Minister Kim that the North Korean team could stay at the same hotel as the Chinese team in Nagoya. Kim declined the offer because their fellow “Korean residents in Japan” were taking care of their accommodations. Kanzaki Isao (1931–2008)—a specialist on Chinese studies who lived in Beijing during 1975–1980 when only a few dozens of Japanese lived there—states that this demonstrates Zhou’s efforts through Ping-Pong Diplomacy to salvage China’s relations with North Korea that had been severed by the Cultural Revolution. Such a gesture to invite the North Korean team to stay at the same hotel as the Chinese team in Nagoya, Kanzaki writes, was a display of the “first-class art of diplomacy” on the part of Zhou. In order to realize China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s, Zhou stayed up all nights for many days, attending to the details of each delicate diplomatic issue, such as those concerning Cambodia and North Korea.14

In retrospect, Premier Zhou orchestrated the decision making for China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. Officially, it was Chairman Mao who made the final decision; however, it was Zhou who induced Mao to make the decision. Zhou devoted himself to finding a way for China to open its door to the international community and saw an opportunity in the Nagoya World’s. Zhou persuaded the Chinese officials who had insisted on having the “three political principles” in the first paragraph of the Outline of the Meeting between the CTTA and the JTTA to abandon dogmatism. Zhou also convinced the Chinese table tennis team members to honor the agreement with Gotō and participate in the Nagoya World’s. Further, while Zhou decided that China should boycott matches with Cambodia and South Vietnam in consideration for the Prince Sihanouk group, he also showed understanding toward North Korea, so that the North Korean team would not have to do the same at the Nagoya World’s.
Guidelines for Nagoya World’s

When the Chinese players heard of Chairman Mao’s approval on March 15, they were elated. This was the first international sports competition since the Cultural Revolution in which China sent its delegation overseas. The Chinese officials then laid out guidelines for the Nagoya World’s. They stipulated that the Chinese team members shall not communicate with their U.S. counterparts, contrary to Premier Zhou’s earlier statement. Should they happen to meet the American officials, they shall neither greet them nor initiate conversations with them. Should the Chinese players happen to compete against the American players, they should only shake hands with them during their matches, and they should not exchange their pennants.\textsuperscript{15}

March 16–17: Chinese Delegation Departs for Nagoya World’s

On the night of March 16, Premier Zhou gave the team members final instructions. He told them not to be disturbed by the right-wing groups in Japan, which had already sent threatening mail to China. He also told them not to propagate political propaganda in Japan and suggested they not show the Little Treasured Book (known as the Little Red Book in the Western world)—the pocket-size anthology of quotations from Chairman Mao’s speeches and publications—in public upon arrival in Japan. It was customary then for Chinese people to carry the book along at all times and show it in public meetings as a proof of their allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party; the Red Guards would beat them if they were caught not carrying the book. The Chinese delegation left Beijing on March 17, heading to Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{16}

The Chinese delegation, consisting of more than sixty members, was led by the delegation head Zhao Zhenghong (Chinese National Sports General Assembly vice president), delegation deputy head Wang Xiaoyun (Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries director and China-Japan Friendship Association deputy general-secretary), and delegation general-secretary Song Zhong (CTTA acting president). The delegation left Hong Kong on March 21 for Haneda airport in Tokyo on two airplanes. Premier Zhou thought that it would be unsafe for all the members to be on the same airplane. Thus, the first sizable Chinese delegation overseas since the Cultural Revolution left for Nagoya. The “extra-large” delegation showed corresponding enthusiasm to promote friendship between the
Chinese people and the Japanese people on the part of the Chinese government.17

March 21: Chinese Delegation Arrives in Tokyo

The Chinese national table tennis team delegation arrived at Haneda airport in Tokyo on March 21. To the surprise of the Japanese reporters, the Chinese visitors did not show the Little Red Book upon arrival. In fact, none of the team members showed it in public during their stay in Japan. They felt uneasy about not showing it in public, as they were so accustomed to doing, but they kept to Premier Zhou’s instructions. The delegation spent a couple of days in Tokyo and headed westward to Nagoya in the central region of Japan. Upon the team’s arrival at Nagoya, a two-hour “bullet train” ride away on the Japan National Railways (JNR), the Aichi-prefecture police escorted the Chinese delegation to the Fujihisa-kankō Hotel in Chikusa ward, not far from Meiden High School. The police assigned the delegation to this hotel exclusively so that they could provide full security for the Chinese delegation. The Aichi-prefecture police headquarters deployed heavy security around the Fujihisa-kankō Hotel in order to deal with obstruction from the right-wing groups. It even deployed additional police personnel from the neighboring prefectures. The National Police Agency in Tokyo also sent its riot force to Nagoya. It was the heaviest security deployment that the Aichi-prefecture police had ever engaged in since its inception.18

March 27: China Throws Diplomatic Serves at Nagoya World’s

No sooner had the Chinese delegation arrived in Nagoya than the team officials launched a “diplomatic peace offensive.” The Chinese team officials were instructed to report to the MFA Asia Bureau in Beijing three times a day, via international phone calls. On the eve of the Nagoya World’s on March 27, the Chinese players had a chance meeting with the U.S. players at the reception hosted by the ITTF. Not knowing who they were, the Chinese greeted the Americans. One of the American players said, “You are from China! Your ping-pong is great.” When the Chinese realized that they were Americans, through an interpreter, they immediately left without responding. A similar encounter happened again. The Chinese players reported these small encounters with the Americans to
the delegation deputy head Wang and delegation general-secretary Song. The next day, the delegation secretariat at the Fujihisa-kankō Hotel reported these “contacts” between the Chinese and the U.S. team members to Beijing, as positive signs. The Chinese delegation officials had the wisdom to “magnify” these signals from the U.S. team members.19

**March 30: ITTF General Meeting**

The Nagoya World’s began officially on March 28. The following day, the Chinese delegation made official invitations to several delegations, including Canada, Columbia, and England, to visit China after the championships, based on Premier Zhou’s instruction. Then, the biennial general meeting of the ITTF was held on March 30. There, as was instructed, delegation general-secretary Song strongly condemned “the puppet regime in Phnom Penh being backed by American imperialism” (referring to the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia) and stated that it had no right to participate in the championships. U.S. delegation head Graham B. Steenhoven struck the table in protest. Over a dozen representatives of other countries followed suit.20

During the coffee break, ITTF honorary general-secretary A. K. Vinto (from India) told Song that he wished Song had used softer expressions. Then, as Song happened to sit near where Steenhoven was sitting, they greeted each other. Steenhoven, an executive in charge of personnel at Chrysler, was president of the U.S. Table Tennis Association (USTTA) that had 3,000 members. Through an interpreter, Steenhoven complimented Chinese table tennis, as well as Chinese civilization. He then told Song that the U.S. Department of State had removed the ban on U.S. citizens’ entry into China just before the U.S. World Table Tennis Team left for Japan. On March 15, 1971, Charles W. Bray III (1933–2006), the press secretary for Secretary of State William P. Rogers, stated that the removal of the ban on entry into China with American passports coincided with President Nixon’s wish to improve U.S. relations with mainland China. Song was already aware of this and told Steenhoven that they could meet in Beijing some day. As they were going back to the general meeting session after the coffee break, Steenhoven suddenly asked Song, “You Chinese people are very calm people. How could you behave so violently [referring to his strong condemnation of the Lon Nol regime]?” Song burst into laughter. This was the first high-level “contact” between China and the U.S. sports officials since the 1960s.21
Then, at the general meeting, ITTF president H. Roy Evans (from Wales, UK) reported the minutes of the ITTF advisory committee and stated that it had decided to “shelve” Taiwan’s application to the ITTF. In response, the Malaysian representative submitted an urgent motion to support Taiwan’s admission to the ITTF. South Korea and South Vietnam voted in favor. In turn, China, North Korea, and Romania opposed it. Song again condemned the Lon Nol regime’s participation in the Nagoya World’s and demanded its removal from the tournaments. After a heated debate, President Evans worked out a consensus that the Taiwan admission issue would not be on the agenda of the next ITTF general meeting.22

After the general meeting, Steenhoven and the U.S. delegation deputy head, J. Rufford Harrison (born in England in 1930, Ph.D. in chemistry, worked at DuPont in Delaware; two-time USTTA president, 1958–1962; then USTTA international chair), caught up with Song. Steenhoven mentioned to Song that he had heard that China had invited the Yugoslavian team to China after the Nagoya World’s. Steenhoven then stated that the USTTA had planned to send its team to the Beijing World’s of April 1961, but that the U.S. government had banned it. Now that the government had removed the ban on U.S. citizens’ visits to China, the U.S. team could come to play in China. Steenhoven added that American players could learn a lot if they had a chance to compete in China, also expressing his wish that Chinese players could come to the United States. Harrison then stated that China should be elected to the council of the ITTF.23

That night, Song reported this encounter to other officials of the Chinese delegation. They debated whether this meeting was a coincidence or was a planned move on the part of the U.S. team. The seven officials, including Song, Wang, and Zhao, concluded that the U.S. team members were friendly, and that they were hoping to visit China. Song then called Beijing and reported, “The U.S. delegation head Steenhoven was friendly despite the fact that the Chinese delegation had condemned the U.S. government strongly at the ITTF general meeting. Steenhoven also contacted Song and expressed his team’s wish to visit China.” Afterward, Chairman Mao’s office instructed Song to call Beijing five times a day, instead of three.24

April 2: Excursion Trip to Ise-Shima National Park

April 2 was a day off for the players after the exhausting five-day team tournaments in which Japan won in women’s team, and then China
won in men’s team; they had yet to compete in the mixed doubles, doubles, and singles. JTTA president Gotô organized for the participants in the Nagoya World’s an excursion trip to the Ise-Shima National Park in Mie prefecture, where the Mikimoto Pearl Island—the residence-turned-museum of Mikimoto Kōkichi (1858–1954)—is located with live performances of female pearl divers. Most of the Chinese team members joined the tour, but the women’s team assistant captain and also player, Lin Huiqing, was too upset to go because of the loss in the women’s team tournament the day earlier. She was blaming China’s loss on her critical mistake in the final match.25

The Chinese team officials, Song and Wang, joined the tour, not to enjoy the breathtaking scenery but to make a potentially controversial announcement at a local resort hotel. They held a press conference there, declaring that Zhuang Zedong would abstain from the second match in men’s singles in which he was scheduled to compete with a Cambodian (Lon Nol regime) player. Lin Meiqun would also abstain from the first match in women’s singles in which she was scheduled to compete with a South Vietnamese player. This announcement did not surprise Gotô. He had expected this to happen. Strolling under the open sky and by the ocean, however, opened the minds of the players. Aboard a cruise boat in Ise Bay, an American male player talked to a Chinese male player, “I heard that our friends [referring to the Canadian and English teams] were invited to visit China. I wonder when our turn will come.” The Chinese player responded by saying, “The chance will come someday.” Overhearing their conversation, Wang whispered to Song, “I wonder why Beijing has not responded to our daily reports about these friendly contacts between the American team players and their Chinese counterparts, as well as the U.S. team officials’ stated wish to visit China.” Song whispered back to Wang, “It means that Beijing is considering it.”26

April 3–4: Premier Zhou Avoids Making the Final Decision

Meanwhile in Beijing, the officials in the MFA and the National Sports Committee were hotly debating the matter. The majority felt that it was premature to invite the U.S. team. They thought that they should first invite an influential journalist or politician from the United States, rather than a sports team. In turn, the minority felt that an invitation to the U.S. team might trigger friendship exchanges between the people
of China and of the United States. On April 3, they drew up a report based on the majority opinion and submitted it to Premier Zhou. Zhou added to the report new instructions to Nagoya: (1) to obtain the contact address of the U.S. team at home, and (2) to express the Chinese people’s strong objection to the conspiracy of “two Chinas” and “one China, one Taiwan” when contacting the U.S. representatives. Then, instead of approving or disapproving the report, Zhou jotted down on the report his personal comment, “I would be inclined to agree,” and delivered the report to Chairman Mao the following day. Zhou was cautious and prudent. He wanted Mao to make the final decision. Then, without waiting for Mao’s final decision, due to the time constraint (the Nagoya World’s would close on April 7), the MFA sent a directive to Nagoya on April 3, stating that it was premature to invite the U.S. team, along with Zhou’s new instructions.27

April 4–5: Glenn Cowan’s Encounters with Zhuang Zedong

All the remaining tournaments—mixed doubles, doubles, and singles began on April 4. That morning, the U.S. no. 3 men’s player, Glenn Cowan—a nineteen-year-old student at Santa Monica College near Los Angeles—had a chance meeting with the Chinese team players when he went to practice at one of the assigned training centers. The Chinese players were already there. Cowan asked one of them to practice together. A Chinese player obliged. After the practice, Cowan did not remember which microbus he was supposed to take to go to the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium, the venue of the Nagoya World’s. As he was walking, he saw a microbus with the sign, “World Table Tennis Championships.” He waved at it. The bus stopped, and he hopped in. It was a bus for the Chinese team heading to the gymnasium. All the passengers were Chinese, except for Cowan. Cowan was a self-proclaimed hippie. The Chinese players, who were not used to seeing a man with long hair and wearing bell-bottom jeans, began to giggle at his strange appearance. Cowan said through a Chinese interpreter that there were many people like him in the United States. He also told them that there was suppression in the United States also (just as in China), and that people like him were fighting against it—referring to anti–Vietnam War protests.28

Then, the star player, Zhuang Zedong, approached Cowan. Zhuang told Cowan that the Chinese and Americans used to have friendly
relations, and that they were glad to see him on their bus. Zhuang also said that he would like to give him a memento. Then, the delegation head Zhao reminded Zhuang that the Chinese team members were not supposed to have contact with the U.S. team members. Zhuang nevertheless took out from his bag a large piece of brocade of the famous Huangshan landscape and gave it to Cowan. Cowan had known the name of this three-time world champion since he began table tennis. He wanted to give Zhuang something in return, but he had nothing to give. Upon arriving at the gymnasium, photographers flocked to the microbus. The news, “Cowan got on the Chinese bus at the training center,” immediately reached the press center at the gymnasium.

Later that day, Cowan went to the underground shopping mall in downtown Nagoya to buy something symbolic of the United States for Zhuang. There, he saw a teenager wearing a tricolored T-shirt (in blue, red, and white) with a print, “Nature calls me.” He asked the boy to sell the T-shirt for six dollars. The boy did not know what to do. Then, the person he was with pulled his hand, and they disappeared in the crowd. Cowan soon found T-shirts with the same design at a nearby store. He bought two; one for Zhuang and another for himself. The next day, he saw Zhuang at the gymnasium. TV reporters caught the scene of Cowan giving the T-shirt to Zhuang. Cowan also took out the brocade, the present from Zhuang, from his bag and showed it to the reporters. The scene became the newspaper headline of the day.

April 5: Gotô Elected as ITTF Deputy President

On April 5, another session of the ITTF general meeting was held in Nagoya. It elected Gotô as deputy president, one of the four top positions of the ITTF. He defeated another candidate from Sweden, 94 to 32. This was the first time a non-Caucasian person was elected to this position. It also elected South Korea Table Tennis Association president Kim Chang-won as one of six executive vice presidents, representing Asia, and Song as one of the fifteen council members. The U.S. delegation deputy head Harrison was among those who congratulated Song first. The Chinese officials reported this to Beijing. However, Beijing remained silent. The decision of April 3 not to invite the U.S. team at this time remained unchanged.
April 6: Beijing Sends a Negative Directive

Song and Wang hardly had any time to sleep, making arrangements for the Asia-Africa-Latin America (AALA) friendship tournaments in Beijing to be held sometime in the latter half of 1971, which would actually take place in September 1973. They were also making preparations for the Canadian, Columbian, English, and Nigerian teams’ visits to China right after the Nagoya World’s. They had to work out the details of their schedule in a short period of time, including accommodating some unexpected requests. Among them, Canadian team captain Walden’s wife expressed her wish to take her American friend, Leah Neuberger-Thall—a world champion in mixed doubles at the Tokyo World’s in 1956—to Beijing with her. She had been a friend of Neuberger-Thall since 1938, and they came to see the Nagoya World’s together. In addition, the Nigerian team wanted to visit China after visiting Taiwan (the team coach was from Taiwan). The Ecuadorian team captain and a player also wanted to visit China, as part of the Columbian team that was already invited. The Chinese delegation requested Beijing its instruction.32

In the afternoon of April 6, the Chinese team secretariat in Nagoya received basically the same directive as on April 3 from Beijing, stating that it was premature for the U.S. team to visit China at this time. It repeated the same instructions: to obtain the contact address of the U.S. team at home, and to express the Chinese people’s strong objection to the conspiracy of “two Chinas” and “one China, one Taiwan” when contacting the U.S. representatives. It also stated that it was inappropriate for Neuberger-Thall to visit China, along with the Canadian team, because she was a U.S. citizen.33

April 7: Mao Makes the Decision

According to People’s Daily reporter Qian Jiang, as of April 6, Chairman Mao had not approved the report submitted by Premier Zhou on April 4. It was still sitting on his desk. Mao had been thinking. Zhou had neither approved nor disapproved the report, but had added his personal comment, “inclined to agree.” In hindsight, this was his subtle way to convey to Mao his reservations on the report that considered inviting the U.S. team premature. Zhou wanted Mao to make the final decision—the right one. Qian writes that the report led Mao to think. Mao realized that the opportunity to invite the U.S. team would be
lost if he approved the report. After much careful thought, he made the final decision. “China will invite the U.S. team immediately.” The date had already become April 7, the last day of the Nagoya World’s. Qian states that Zhou received a phone call from Mao’s office in the early morning of April 7. Zhou immediately instructed his staff to deliver the final decision to Nagoya and to make draft itineraries for the five teams—Canada, Columbia, England, Nigeria, and the United States. He then told them to give priority to the U.S. team among the five, because the political significance of the U.S. team’s visit outweighed that of the sports. He also told them to let the U.S. team play matches with the Chinese players in China if they wished and to let them see the new China. Zhou said that he would meet them personally.

Mao’s Chief Nurse Wu Xujin Speaks

On this, the Chinese scholars Hong and Sun present a different picture. They write, “As usual, Zhou did not want to be responsible for the final decision. Zhou admitted on many occasions that he was not as resolute as Mao was in terms of decision-making. Mao once again kept the report on his desk for 2 days until 6 April when he read it with approval and then returned it to the Foreign Affairs Ministry.” Then, they refer to an account of Chairman Mao’s chief nurse, Wu Xujin, and state that Mao habitually took sleeping pills before having dinner. Mao was reading about the encounter between Cowan and Zhuang on the evening of April 6. He asked Wu to read the news to him twice, and then commented that Zhuang was not only a good ping-pong player but also a diplomat. Then, after 11:40 p.m., Mao told Wu to call MFA Protocol Division head Wang Hairong (Mao’s grandniece) to instruct her to invite the U.S. team to China. Wu could not believe what she had just heard because Mao had already endorsed the decision to not invite the U.S. team. She also remembered Mao’s instruction that whatever he said after taking sleeping pills would not count. Therefore, Wu pretended that she did not hear Mao’s instruction; however, Mao repeated the same instruction and told Wu to hurry. That was how Mao made the critical decision, and his decision was delivered to the MFA.

Hong and Sun stress that Mao made the final decision and played down Zhou’s role in it, stating, “Ironically, Zhou Enlai, who was supposed to be the voice of reason in dealing with foreign affairs, turned but [sic] to be the one behind the idea of not extending an invitation to the American team. It demonstrated the fact that an individual, like a
butterfly, may not always be consistent in his/her behaviors. After all, Zhou was only human.” Hong and Sun also argue, “Some American scholars and politicians had mistakenly attributed the initiative to invite the American delegation to Zhou Enlai” and cite a book by John H. Holdridge and another by Marshall Green, John H. Holdridge, and William N. Stokes. They were three of the handful of officials at the State Department who were involved in Nixon’s China initiative. In the passages in question, Holdridge writes, “There can be little doubt that the invitation came from Zhou Enlai personally, albeit with appropriate clearances from others in the Chinese hierarchy. It was an inspired and theatrical piece of diplomacy that had all the attributes of Zhou Enlai’s sophistication, wisdom, and sense of tactical and strategic planning.” “Zhou Enlai took advantage of an international ping-pong match in Nagoya, Japan, April 1971, to put China out ahead in the publicity contest for credits in arranging improvement in Sino-US relations.”

Holdridge’s assessment is basically in line with that of Henry Kissinger (see chapter eight). In addition, Qian’s book, which is primarily based on his interviews with the Chinese delegation general-secretary Song and other Chinese officials who were directly involved in the process, does not mention Mao’s initial approval on April 6 of the MFA’s report proposing not to invite the U.S. team. Qian instead suggests that Zhou tactfully induced Mao to make the final decision (to invite the U.S. team) by not unconditionally endorsing the MFA’s report. This ambiguous action of Zhou led Mao to think further and assess the situation carefully. Then, Mao made the final decision.

China’s Asia Bureau Japan Section
Deputy Head Ding Min Speaks

China’s MFA Asia Bureau Japan Section deputy head Ding Min also remembers that moment in time vividly. He had participated in all the meetings between Gotō and Zhou in January-February 1971 because the Japan Section head was sick and absent at that time. According to Ding, Gotō met Zhou several times at the Great Hall of the People, either at the Xinjiang Room or the Fujian Room on the north side of the hall. Afterward, Ding was charged with the task of the day-to-day operations of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. During the Nagoya World’s, Ding acted as a liaison between Beijing and Nagoya, sending Zhou’s directives to Chinese officials in Nagoya and delivering their reports from Nagoya to Zhou.
According to Ding, after midnight, in the very early hours of April 7, while he was asleep at home, he received an order from a senior official at the MFA to call Nagoya. Ding rode a bicycle in the dark to the MFA (he did not own a car) and made an international phone call to Nagoya, dictating the directive to a secretary of the Chinese delegation deputy head Wang—Nagoya is one hour ahead of Beijing due to a time-zone difference. The directive was “to invite the U.S. team.” Ding states that the rest was history. On April 7, the headline “Nagoya Ping-Pong Diplomacy” spread around the world. Ding stresses that although Chairman Mao made the final decision, it was Premier Zhou who created the foundation of Nagoya Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Through the meetings with Gotō, Zhou conceived the idea to use the Nagoya World’s as the initial exchange between the Chinese and the American people. It resulted in Sino-U.S. rapprochement and in normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. The Chinese officials, therefore, referred to this as “a tiny ball turned the big globe upside down.”

In a similar vein, the Kyodo News Agency (Japanese equivalent to the Associated Press or Reuters) reporter, Nakajima Hiroshi (1934–), notes that it was Premier Zhou who orchestrated the decision to invite the U.S. team. As in the case of the decision to participate in the Nagoya World’s, it was Chairman Mao who made the final, official decision; however, it was Zhou, the astute diplomat, who led Mao to make these decisions. In addition, Nakajima states that the fact that Zhou instructed the Chinese team members not to wave the Little Red Book upon arrival at Tokyo indicated that Zhou’s actual power had already surpassed that of Vice Chairman Lin Biao (who was no. 2 in the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] hierarchy) six months before Lin’s death in the mysterious airplane crash in Mongolia in September 1971. Lin had allegedly plotted a coup d’état against Mao. It was Lin’s idea to compile the Little Red Book and use it as the demonstration of allegiance to the CCP. It became a mandatory ritual for the Chinese people. Therefore, the reporters and those who came to welcome the Chinese delegation at the Haneda airport were surprised not to see such a patriotic exhibition.

**April 7: China Invites U.S. Team**

According to Qian, the Chinese officials in Nagoya received a call from Beijing at around 10:00 a.m. on April 7, while they were hosting a farewell garden party under the cherry blossoms at the
Nagoya World Table Tennis Championships

Fujihisa-kankō Hotel where they were staying (the party began at 9:30 a.m.). The attendees included coaches and players of Japan, Nepal, United Arab Republic (Egypt), Mauritius, Nigeria, Ghana, Columbia, Ecuador, Brazil, and Uruguay. All of them were invited to the AALA friendship tournaments that China planned to organize. As the Chinese delegation deputy head Wang was giving a speech, the delegation head Zhao disappeared from the scene. Then, the delegation general-secretary Song left. After the speech, Wang also left the party. 41

The Chinese team officials gathered at Zhao’s room. Zhao conveyed the phone message from Beijing to the others. It stated that Beijing agreed to invite the U.S. team, considering that the U.S. officials had repeatedly expressed their wish to visit China, and that their attitude was friendly. They should enter China via Hong Kong. Beijing was willing to provide the travel expenses if they do not have enough money (because this visit was unscheduled). Song could not believe his eyes when he read the message himself. It further stated that Beijing agreed with the visit at Beijing’s expense of the Nigerian team that was visiting Taiwan after the Nagoya World’s. Beijing also agreed with the visit of the Ecuadorian team captain and player, considering them as part of the Columbian team. Beijing further agreed that Neuberger-Thall could come along with the Canadian team. 42

Zhao then told Song to go look for the U.S. team officials immediately. They were going home the next day. Song found out that the U.S. team was staying at the Miyako Hotel. He found the U.S. team deputy head Harrison there around 10:30 a.m. The U.S. team head Steenhoven had already left the hotel. USTTA vice president Tim Boggan, who was attending the Nagoya World’s as U.S. World Team first delegate, thinks that Song might have approached Harrison for a reason. Harrison had supported the 1961 Beijing World’s back in 1959. At the ITTF biennial general meeting in Dortmund, West Germany, in 1959, Harrison had voted for China as the host of the 1961 World Championships. Beijing had already secured the vote before Harrison’s turn to vote came. Harrison then felt that he was “a citizen of the world” even if the U.S. government would not allow the U.S. team to participate in the Beijing World’s. He voted in favor also because he felt that “for somewhere down the line it might bring the U.S. team some goodwill.” With this background, Boggan writes, Song approached Harrison and asked him if the U.S. team would like to come to China in the next few days, for a week or so, with all expenses paid. Thus was born Ping-Pong Diplomacy. The reciprocal visit of the Chinese to
Harrison could not believe his ears when Song informed him of Beijing’s invitation. Harrison then mentioned to Song that the U.S. government had just removed the ban on visits to China with U.S. passports on March 15. Song assured him that team officials, as well as players, were invited. Harrison thanked him for the invitation, but told Song that he must consult with Steenhoven and others first. He also told Song that there was a player on the U.S. team whose nationality was the Republic of Korea (South Korea)—Lee Dal-joon—and asked if he could also visit China. Song could not answer that on the spot and consulted with Beijing. Later that day, Premier Zhou said, “If American players can come, so can a South Korean player.” Meanwhile, the Chinese delegation head Zhao told Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyūbei, who was attending the garden party hosted by the Chinese delegation, “The Chinese team officially invited the U.S. team to visit China. We have just received the directive from Beijing and could not inform JTTA president Gotō of this earlier.” Muraoka immediately headed to the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium to see Gotō. His heart was pounding with the anticipation of something dramatic unfolding.44

Nakajima at Kyodo News Agency Hears the News

Meanwhile, the Kyodo News Agency reporter Nakajima was carefully monitoring the Nagoya World’s. He had majored in Chinese studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and could speak Chinese. He had reasons to believe that something dramatic would happen there. First, U.S. investment in Hong Kong had increased since 1969, which he interpreted as a preparation for opening U.S. trade to China. Second, President Nixon stated that his China policy would not be affected at all by the war situation in Laos—the “Lam Son 719” operation in February 1971. In fact, unlike the case of the Cambodian operation in May–June 1970, the Nixon administration did not deploy U.S. ground forces in Laos. Then, the Department of State removed the ban on visits to China with U.S. passports on March 15. These were unmistakable signs.45

Nakajima was attending the garden party hosted by the Chinese delegation at the Fujihisa-kankō Hotel, which began at 9:30 A.M. on April 7. When he approached delegation general-secretary Song to say
hello around 10:00 a.m., a Chinese secretary delivered a written message to Song, whispering “an important phone call.” Nakajima saw the message’s heading—“For the friendship of American and Chinese people”—but he could not read the text. After reading the message, Song left the party in a hurry but calmly. Nakajima could not detect anything unusual from Song’s behavior. Nakajima could not figure out the significance of the message at that time. He instead thought that the star player Zhuang’s “grandstanding” display of friendship with Cowan a few days earlier might have raised an issue for the Chinese officials in Beijing, and that the message must be their directive on it.46

The News Circles around the World

However, luck was with Nakajima. He had a lunch appointment with Saionji Kinkazu (one of the permanent directors of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association; see chapter five) and headed to the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium to meet Saionji there. It was just after Muraoka had arrived at the gymnasium and informed Gotō of the news. When Nakajima saw Saionji, he told Nakajima, “Let’s go to say hello to Gotō first.” The two found Gotō talking to Harrison. That was how Nakajima found out about the news. He then recalled the “important phone message” from Beijing to Nagoya at the garden party earlier that morning. Nakajima writes, “I felt dizzy [with astonishment and disbelief] when I heard the news. I was dumfounded by the Chinese invitation to the U.S. team because I had thought that a U.S. invitation to China would come first, given Nixon’s stated enthusiasm for improving Sino-U.S. relations.”47

Nakajima thought that the first thing to do was to confirm this with the Chinese officials. Saionji understood the urgency of the situation and agreed to cancel their lunch appointment. Nakajima immediately went back to the Fujihisa-kankō Hotel and confirmed the news with the Chinese officials. He also asked why China had invited the U.S. team at a time when the Nixon administration was escalating the war in Indochina. Then, one of the Chinese delegation secretaries, Jin Shu, stated, “We oppose the U.S. invasion; however, we have consistently sought to deepen our friendship with the American people [making a distinction between the American government and the American people]. The U.S. team members had repeatedly expressed their wish to visit China during the championships. We granted their wish.” There was nothing more to ask. Nakajima ran out of the hotel but could not
find a taxi there. The police had prohibited taxi drivers from parking in front of the hotel for security reasons. Nakajima ran to a nearby coffee shop and called the Kyodo News Agency’s Nagoya branch office. This was how the startling news circled around the globe, sending shock waves all over the world.48

* * *

There is a postscript to this episode. ITTF president Evans revealed just before his death in 1998 that he had met Premier Zhou before the Nagoya World’s and suggested to him to invite some of the participating teams in the championships to visit China afterward. Evans writes,

Shortly before my planned departure for Nagoya, I was asked by the Chinese Charge d’Affaires in London if I would be prepared to go to Peking en route for Japan. I readily agreed, as there were many items of importance in which I knew they would be deeply interested, and in any case I wished to renew acquaintance with the Association which had departed the scene in 1965 as the strongest in the world…I spent two or three days with the Chinese in deep discussions on the implications of various political attitudes, a subject which looms large in any International Organization, but which I do not propose to discuss here…My stay culminated in a conference with Prime Minister Chou En-lai, who reinforced arguments advanced by the Table Tennis officials. During the discussion Chou En-lai expressed great pleasure at China’s re-entry into World Table Tennis, and talked of further steps they could take to re-establish themselves quickly. I reminded him of the Peking Invitation Tournament they used to hold each August, and suggested its revival. I pointed out that all the strongest countries would be present in Nagoya, and that it would be a good opportunity to invite some teams, such as Canada and England, to China after the World Championships.49

Evans goes on to state,

The subsequent invitations extended to England and Canada were therefore no surprise to me, but that the United States, the unlikeliest guest of all, was invited was of course a great shock…I have been, all through the visit and its aftermath, critical of any
person claiming to have been the architect of any “breakthrough.” I am convinced that the Chinese did exactly what the Chinese had planned to do. That the breakthrough occurred in our game is accounted for by the fact that the International Table Tennis Federation is the only truly international sports organization to which the Chinese belong… What more natural than their use of our game as a vehicle upon which to ride out of the obscurity of the Cultural Revolution?50

Evans adds that as much as he disliked the name, ping-pong, in normal circumstances—those in the community prefer the term table tennis—he was happy to see the phrase “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” in the newspaper headings.51

Thus, it came clear that, with the suggestion of ITTF president Evans, Premier Zhou invited the several table tennis teams to China after the Nagoya World’s. However, it is uncertain whether Zhou had already been thinking of inviting these teams to China before meeting Evans, or whether Evans gave Zhou the whole idea. One thing for certain was that inviting the U.S. team was not in the mind of Evans, and he did not suggest this to Zhou. Evans, therefore, did not take credit for the events that unfolded at the Nagoya World’s. Overall, it seems fair to infer that his input played a role in Zhou’s decision making.

**Results of the Championships**

As for the tournaments themselves, which had been overshadowed by the political aspects of the Nagoya World’s, the Chinese team, wearing red uniforms, competed well. For instance, it turned out that the finals for both the women’s team and the men’s team tournaments on April 1 were between China and Japan, just as was the case in the Ljubljana World’s in Slovenia six years earlier. China won both in 1965. Afterward, Japan won both two consecutive times, when China did not participate. This time in Nagoya, China lost to Japan in the women’s team tournament, three to one, but defeated Japan in the men’s team tournament, five to two. In the end, China reclaimed the two world titles after six years of hiatus—men’s team and women’s doubles—as well as winning in women’s singles (Lin Huiqing) and mixed doubles (see appendix 2). Stellan Bengtsson won the men’s singles, becoming the first Swede to obtain the individual world title.52
During the championships, the Chinese officials stated that their players fought with the spirit of “friendship first, competition second,” as instructed by Premier Zhou. They also stated, “a ping-pong ball is light but friendship (forged through it) is heavy.” Nevertheless, in retrospect, such phrases seem incomplete and self-serving because the “friendship” meant essentially that with the United States, due to the importance of the potential political victory. China also put its “friendship” with Cambodia (the Sihanouk government in exile) and with North Korea before “competition” and abstained from competing against the Cambodian (Lon Nol regime) team and the South Korean team. Thus, this international sports event was characterized by politics from the onset to the end. Gotô was the one who knew best how this event was politicized even before it had started.53

* * *

At the news of China’s invitation to the U.S. team, reporters flocked to the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium. The mass media dubbed the Chinese diplomatic offensive “Nagoya Ping-Pong Diplomacy.” The surprise drive of a tiny ball shook the world, stunning not only those in the diplomatic and political circles but also the general public. China watchers began speculating on its implications for Sino-U.S. relations and for Sino-Japanese relations; however, no one could have predicted that it would lead to a historic diplomatic breakthrough as dramatic as actually happened. Then, the next question is how did the U.S. table tennis team and the U.S. government react to China’s initiative?
Sometime between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. on April 7, 1971, the last day of the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan (the “Nagoya World’s”), China Table Tennis Association (CTTA) acting president Song Zhong abruptly invited the U.S. World Team to visit China after the championships. It was totally unexpected and unprecedented. How did the U.S. team respond to this sudden invitation? How did the U.S. government react to the Chinese “diplomatic offensive serve”? What were the consequences?

U.S. Initial Reaction

Immediately after Song informed U.S. World Team deputy head J. Rufford Harrison of China’s invitation, Harrison called the U.S. embassy in Tokyo for advice. It was approximately 11:00 a.m. Ambassador Armin H. Meyer (July 1969–March 1972; 1914–2006) was not available. The embassy’s China specialist, William Cunningham, answered the phone. Harrison informed him of the invitation and asked if the U.S. team members should use their U.S. passports, which stipulated that the holder of the passport shall not visit communist China. At this critical juncture, Cunningham without hesitation recommended that the U.S. team accept the invitation and visit China. He made his own judgment, based only on the already publicly stated desire of President Richard Nixon to improve Sino-U.S. relations, without consulting Ambassador Meyer or Washington, D.C. In fact, Cunningham’s
response was so definite that it surprised Harrison and made him wonder whether this invitation had already been agreed upon by the two governments. Then, Harrison found U.S. team head Graham B. Steenhoven and informed him of the invitation. Steenhoven was also unsure of what to do and called the U.S. embassy himself.¹

Meanwhile, Cunningham reported the news to Ambassador Meyer and asked if there was anything that the U.S. embassy in Tokyo should do, since the U.S. Department of State had removed the ban on visits to China with U.S. passports three weeks earlier on March 15, 1971. Meyer sent a telegram to the State Department around noon, asking for its instructions. It was around 11:00 p.m. in Washington, D.C., on April 6 (Japan Standard Time was thirteen hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Daylight Time). Secretary of State William P. Rogers received the telegram and immediately relayed it to the White House. President Nixon was as surprised as he was pleased. Recalling that time twenty-eight years later in 1999, Cunningham wrote, contrary to the unequivocally definite answer he had given to Harrison in 1971, “I did not anticipate, nor even imagine, that Premier Zhou Enlai and other ranking officials would receive the team...I believed then, and I still do, that had we attempted to give this invitation any significance beyond its face value, its credibility and consequences would have been undermined. In other words, I was in this case a Daoist, even though Dr. Kissinger considered me a ‘daring young man on the flying trapeze.’”²

U.S. Team Debates

At 4:00 p.m. on April 7, Japan time, Harrison called for a meeting of the U.S. team and informed the members of the Chinese invitation. They debated whether to go or not. Young players were excited. For them, China was synonymous with mystery. The nineteen-year-old Glenn Cowan (see chapter seven) said that they should not miss this opportunity. The youngest player, fifteen-year-old Judy Bochenski, was also in favor. The U.S. World Team captain Jack Howard told them that minors should call their parents and obtain their consent, while married members should call their spouses and let them know. Bochenski called Eugene, Oregon. Her father agreed. She was elated. Seventeen-year-old Olga Soltesz called Orlando, Florida. She was unsure if her father would agree because her family had left Hungary in 1957 when she was three years old after the Soviet Union had invaded Hungary in 1956. When her father agreed, she jumped around with joy.³
Senior members were not as excited as the younger ones. They knew the U.S. propaganda against China too well. Wendy Hicks asked Howard if there was any guarantee that nothing dangerous would happen during their visit. World Team first delegate Tim Boggan was most nervous. He was then an assistant professor at Long Island University in New York City. He even talked about his will with his wife on the phone and asked her to keep his unpublished manuscripts and give them to their children should something happen to him. The South Korean player Lee Dal-joon decided not to go although Premier Zhou Enlai had indicated to Song that Lee was also welcome. Lee was afraid of going to a communist country. He would instead visit his mother in South Korea as planned. Wendy Hicks decided not to go either.4

April 7: Closing Ceremony

April 7 was the last day of the Nagoya World’s. When Song arrived at the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium in the afternoon to attend the closing ceremony, he took out a comb from his pocket and used it. The comb had an unusual shape, modeled after Mt. Fuji, with an elaborate design. A Japanese volunteer had given it to Song earlier. The volunteer was a medical student at a university in Nagoya. He told Song that he had volunteered to work for the Nagoya World’s because he sincerely wished for the promotion of friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese people. He assisted Song in every way possible wherever Song went. One day, Song’s hair was messy, and Song “combed” his hair with his hand in a taxi, while the student was sitting next to Song. The student bought the comb and gave it to Song the next day. Before going home, Song wanted to thank the student and give something in return; however, Song could not find him at the closing ceremony. Song did not know the name of the student. Song wondered if he had classes that day. Song never saw the student again. Song brought the comb back to China and thought of the student whenever he used it.5

At the gymnasium, Japan Table Tennis Association (JTAA) president Gotō Kōji held a press conference, congratulating the Chinese on the invitation to the U.S. team. He stated that history had brought this auspicious moment to the Nagoya World’s. Then, Steenhoven stated that the U.S. team accepted the Chinese invitation with great pleasure. In response, Song stated that all the members of the U.S. team to the Nagoya World’s were invited, including players and officials. Harrison then stated that the South Korean player Lee Dal-joon and Wendy
Hicks were not coming. In addition, Boggan suggested to Song to add the ten-time U.S. men’s singles champion, Dick Miles, who had come to Nagoya with the U.S. team. Miles was the editor of *Sports Illustrated* magazine in New York City at that time. Song accepted the suggestion. In the end, a total of fifteen Americans were to visit China.⁶

After settling the issue of who and how many were actually visiting China, Harrison told Song that the team members would be charged more than $170 per person on their airplane tickets unless they returned home by April 14. According to Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun, “Song Zhong, as the representative of one of the poorest countries in the world where the per-capita GNP was less than $170, was able to say to a delegate from the richest nation: ‘This is easy. Whatever difficulties you have, we will take care of all.’” Then they agreed that the U.S. team would fly to Hong Kong on April 9, stay in China for a week, then fly back to Tokyo via Hong Kong, and then go home. On the night of April 7, Song and Steenhoven held a joint press conference. Song stressed the point that the Chinese government did not impose any conditions on the U.S. team’s visit to China. Song then stated that this visit would promote friendship between the Chinese and the American people and help raise the level of table tennis mutually. Steenhoven concluded the press conference by joking that his visit might boost the sale of Chryslers in China.⁷

The fifteen Americans who decided to visit China included the U.S. Table Tennis Association (USTTA) World Team head Graham B. Steenhoven—fifty-nine, USTTA president, a personnel supervisor at Chrysler; World Team deputy head J. Rufford Harrison—forty, USTTA international chair, a chemist at DuPont; World Team first delegate Tim Boggan—forty, USTTA vice president, an assistant professor of English at Long Island University; World Team captain Jack Howard—thirty-six, an IBM programmer from California; World Team second delegate George Buben and his wife from Detroit; Glenn Cowan—nineteen, a student from Santa Monica, California; John Tannehill—nineteen, a psychology major at Cincinnati University; Errol Resek—twenty-nine, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic and his wife; George Brathwaite—thirty-six, a UN employee; Connie Sweeris—twenty, a housewife from Grand Rapids, Michigan; Olga Soltesz—seventeen, of Orlando, Florida; Judy Bochenski—fifteen, of Eugene, Oregon; and Dick Miles—ten-time U.S. table tennis champion and editor at *Sports*
Illustrated. They would soon become the “world’s most improbable political diplomats ever.”

The *New York Times* editorial dated April 10, 1971, describes the significance of Ping-Pong Diplomacy as: “Now Mao Tse-tung is demonstrating that table tennis can be used as a subtle and effective instrument of diplomacy... Peking’s invitation represents the much-awaited Chinese response to President Nixon’s ‘diplomacy of smiles,’ as one Soviet source has termed the White House effort to signal interest in improved Sino-American relations. In particular, the invitation is a first positive response by Peking to Mr. Nixon’s ending of all official restrictions on visits to the Chinese mainland by holders of American passports... The people of China and the United States, two of the world’s great nations, have been separated from each other much too long; renewed contacts will advance the cause of understanding between the two countries.”

**April 9: U.S. Team Goes to China**

The fifteen U.S. team members left Nagoya on April 9, and arrived at Shenzhen, Guangdong province on the southeastern coast of China, via Hong Kong, on April 10. Then they flew to Beijing that evening. Thus, only three days after the Chinese invitation, the U.S. team was in Beijing and was to meet Premier Zhou at the Great Hall of the People on April 14. Their tour was closely covered by the Western mass media—the Chinese government allowed three American journalists to accompany the team, which was unprecedented. The rest was history. In the words of Henry Kissinger, “The visit was an international sensation; it captured the world’s imagination, aided no little by Chou En-lai’s careful stage management. Peking Radio broadcasts gave pride of place to the team’s arrival in China even though several other national teams had also been invited.”

The U.S. team members were treated as if they were royalty from the moment they set foot in China, with eight-course meals and a choice of seats wherever they went. For instance, the *Life* magazine correspondent in Hong Kong, John Saar, who accompanied the U.S. team, wrote that only a month ago the very notion of American tourists on the Great Wall of China would have been fanciful. “For two decades mainland China was forbidden territory to virtually all U.S. citizens, while relations between the two countries have been frozen in aloof hostility. Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, trade, ideology—there
The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

seemed no end to the differences. Then came the week of the Ping Pong diplomats. Out of the blue, China invited the 13-member [sic] U.S. table-tennis team to take part in matches in Peking and Shanghai, and permitted U.S. journalists . . . to accompany them.”

Saar also reports, “Of course the invitation wasn’t really right out of the blue. Communist China’s sudden friendliness was partly in response to President Nixon’s recent initiative toward better relations. Nor are the differences between the countries any less serious. But China has been moving carefully in recent months to restore contact with the world it shunned in 1967, after the Cultural Revolution began. With table tennis China’s top sport, the choice of the U.S. players as unofficial go-betweens was anything but frivolous. Last week, in response to a return invitation, China agreed to send her players here.” Thus, in the words of Saar, “The 13 [sic] members and officials of the U.S. table-tennis team were cast by the Chinese invitation into the delicate role of pioneering the diplomatic détente. The Chinese rationale was sound: table tennis is their No. 1 sport, they have the world’s best players, and the International Table Tennis Federation is one of the few international bodies in which they have membership.”

Americans in Beijing

While in Beijing, the American players, led by team captain Jack Howard, engaged in friendly competition with their Chinese opponents at Tsinghua University. It was all too clear to the American players that their Chinese counterparts were trying hard not to embarrass the Americans by lop-sided scores. The Chinese won with ease in the main table tennis contest at Peking Sports Stadium. It was an impressive display of courtesy and hospitality. In turn, the Chinese people at large made it very clear that they welcomed the “people of America” with tremendous interest and curiosity. China had succeeded in having these unlikely “diplomats” bring back home the message that “China is a united, rational society trying to open the doors to other parts of the world.”

China’s “friendship offensive” worked effectively so much so that John Tannehill, the nineteen-year-old no. 2 player on the U.S. team, tried to relate Mao’s thoughts to Chinese table tennis successes and eventually went home professing to be a theoretical Maoist. In turn, the nineteen-year-old no. 3 player Glenn Cowan’s long hair, colorful clothes, and breezy friendliness attracted most the Chinese, who treated him with amused fascination throughout the tour. During
matches Cowan wore a red headband, which particularly intrigued the crowds.14

April 14: U.S. Team Meets Premier Zhou

The highlight of the China tour was a reception hosted by Premier Zhou on April 14 for the five visiting table tennis teams from Canada, Colombia, England, Nigeria, and the United States. The seventy-three-year-old premier shook hands with each visitor. Zhou stated in front of the U.S. team members that “we have opened a new page in the relations between the American and the Chinese people. And I am confident that this renewing of our friendship will certainly meet with the approval and support of the great majority of our two peoples.” Steenhoven responded to Zhou by inviting the Chinese national team to a reciprocal visit to the United States. Zhou accepted it immediately. When Steenhoven stated that his team was overfed after so many banquets, Zhou roared with laughter. Zhou then turned to the Associate Press correspondent to Tokyo, John Roderick (1914–2008), who had lived in caves in Yan’an (Yenan) during 1945–1947 with the Chinese communist guerrilla leaders, including Mao Zedong and Zhou, stating that the door was open.15

Cowan Talks with Premier Zhou

The American players’ diplomatic adventure was not without worrisome moments. Steenhoven was hard pressed to hold his team together under the unusual stresses created by the visit. No sooner was the trip announced than all the team members turned amateur journalists. U.S. team officials were particularly concerned with Cowan’s frank manner. When Steenhoven heard that Cowan was planning to ask Premier Zhou what he thought of American hippies, he told Cowan not to ask this question. Cowan agreed; however, he could not resist asking this question when he actually met Zhou. In response to Cowan’s advocacy of hippie philosophy, Zhou stated that he did not know much about them. He also stated that it was understandable that young people would try many things as the Chinese young people had tried many things when he was growing up. A bouquet of red roses arrived at Zhou’s office two days later. Cowan’s mother in California heard about this conversation between her son and Zhou and sent the bouquet.16
A U.S. Table Tennis Foundation (USTTF) editorial writes of the significance of the U.S. team’s visit as follows: “Nothing had prepared the world for the startling spectacle that happened in Beijing. Chinese Premier Zhou greeted the first American delegation to set foot in the ancient Chinese capital since Mao Zedong took control of the land twenty-two years earlier. After nearly two decades of hostility toward the United States, fifteen American table tennis players and three journalists had made a breakthrough of historic proportions. Never before in world history, has a sport been used so effectively as a tool for international diplomacy.” Upon his return to the United States, Steenhoven was personally received by President Nixon at the White House on April 21.17


Then, how did the Nixon administration respond to China’s invitation to the U.S. team, and how did it affect U.S. policy toward China afterward? This section only examines the Nixon administration’s foreign policy toward China that is relevant to the Ping-Pong Diplomacy and does not go into the detail of the process of the secret negotiations between the Nixon administration and the Chinese government, because it has already been well documented.

**Nixon Administration’s Reaction**

*April 6: Debate at White House*

Upon receiving the telegram from U.S. ambassador Meyer in Tokyo in the late night of April 6 (U.S. eastern time), informing him of China’s invitation to the U.S. team, President Nixon sent for National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers (1913–2001) to come to the White House to discuss this unexpected turn of events. They concurred that Beijing’s invitation was a subtle indication of its intention toward the U.S. policy makers. Their consensus opinion was that it was not an isolated episode but was a beginning of the important diplomatic development that had long been awaited.18

*President Nixon’s Response*

President Nixon writes, “On April 6 a breakthrough occurred in a totally unexpected way: we receive word from the American Embassy
in Tokyo that an American table tennis team competing in the world championships in Japan had been invited to the P.R.C. in order to play several exhibition matches.” The Nixon administration was totally unprepared for this turn of events, as Nixon himself writes, “I had never expected that the China initiative would come to fruition in the form of a Ping-Pong team. We immediately approved the acceptance of the invitation, and the Chinese responded by granting visas to several Western newsmen to cover the team’s tour.”

This statement gives the impression that President Nixon’s initiative made the Chinese invitation to the U.S. team possible albeit unexpectedly. One thing was certain, at least, that the news came serendipitously to Nixon’s China initiative.

National Security Advisor Kissinger’s Response

President Nixon’s national security advisor Kissinger was also caught off guard by the news. Noting that China had sought in 1970 new ties with countries with which it had no diplomatic relations (this move was aimed at encouraging support of its admission to the United Nations; examined below), Kissinger writes, “The dramatic events that were about to burst upon us were foreshadowed by China’s systematic restoration of its global diplomacy after the self-inflicted paralysis of the Cultural Revolution.” Nevertheless, as of April 1, 1971, when the Chinese table tennis team won the world title in the men’s team tournament at the Nagoya World’s, defeating Japan, he was unaware that dramatic events were unfolding in Nagoya.

On April 1, Kissinger received a memorandum from the Department of State, reporting a meeting between Premier Zhou and former Japanese foreign minister Fujiyama Aiichirō in February–March 1971, in which Zhou gave Fujiyama a cryptic message that a sudden dramatic improvement in Sino-U.S. relations was possible at some point. Zhou also told the Japanese parliamentarian that he had read President Nixon’s Foreign Policy Report very carefully, taking specific note of the fact that an American president for the first time used the official name of communist China, the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The memorandum also refers to the American journalist Edgar Snow’s interview with Chairman Mao in December 1970, which predicted “no immediate prospect of improving Sino-US relations because of the war in Indochina”—Snow had deliberately left out Mao’s invitation to Nixon, considering the message too sensitive to disclose at that point in time (see chapter two). Kissinger was also misled by the reference
in the memorandum to “China’s ambiguous relations with Japan” (the two countries had their difficulties) and therefore missed the positive signs in China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s—“the first such sports activity in several years”—which was also reported in the same memorandum. Under these circumstances, Kissinger did not grasp the significance of this seemingly “trivial” news (of the sports event) until several days later.  

Kissinger also compliments the judgment on the part of William Cunningham when he recommended without hesitation to U.S. Team deputy head Harrison that the U.S. team accept China’s invitation. Confirming that Cunningham “knew nothing of our overtures to Peking except our general desire to improve relations,” Kissinger states, “Cunningham deserves much credit for his perception and initiative.” He then writes, “The Washington bureaucracy was less daring. On April 7 the State Department made sure that it would not be accused of recklessness by reporting to the White House: ‘Though we have as yet no way of being sure, the invitation may be intended at least in part as a gesture in response to recent US initiatives.’”  

Thus, contrary to the reservations on the part of the U.S. State Department, what Zhou hinted to Fujiyama came true. The accounts by Kissinger reflect the tension between the White House and the State Department regarding who was in charge of foreign policy toward China. As President Nixon took charge, exclusively delegating his China initiative to his national security advisor, the reservations and resentment toward the White House on the part of the State Department grew. Nixon was also wiretapping officials at the State Department. The press secretary under Secretary of State Rogers, Charles Bray III (1971–1973; 1933–2006), resigned the post in September 1973 when Rogers was replaced by Kissinger—primarily in reaction to the news about the Nixon administration’s wiretapping of three high-ranking foreign service officers.  

Regarding the tension between Kissinger and Rogers, Ambassador Meyer states, “[P]ractically everybody understood it, in all the embassies and in the State Department that there was a tension, and that Henry and Nixon were cloistered and would come up and do things and the State Department might hear about it or it might not.” When Meyer was appointed to the post in Tokyo, Kissinger asked Meyer to send him a personal observation about U.S. foreign policy toward Japan. When Meyer did just that, someone stole a copy of his letter and put it on Rogers’ desk. Rogers got very angry and decided to fire Meyer in July 1971, but political intervention by Nixon saved his post.
April 12: Taiwan’s “Ambassador” Bids Farewell

If the news of Nagoya was serendipitous for President Nixon, it was ominous for Taiwan. The Taiwanese “ambassador” to the United States, Chou Shu-kai, held a press conference soon after he heard of the exchanges between the Chinese team and the U.S. team in Nagoya on April 5. Chou stated that Nixon’s recent stance toward China was very unfortunate, and that the mass media was carried away by this matter. Chou nevertheless realized that he could not stop the tidal wave of history. On April 12, Cho visited the White House to say farewell to Nixon. Chou asked Nixon to be rational and not to have too many expectations from a certain diplomatic stance.25

April 14: Nixon Announces Five-Point Measure

The White House received the news of the meeting between Premier Zhou and the U.S. table tennis team in Beijing on April 14. It was dawn in Washington, D.C. President Nixon decided to issue a press release in response to Zhou’s statement welcoming the U.S. team. At noon that day, Nixon announced the five-point measure to improve Sino-U.S. relations, including a relaxation of the twenty-year-old embargo on trade between China and the United States, authorization of Chinese to use U.S. currency, easing of restrictions on shipping and aircraft that transport nonstrategic goods to China, and new steps to facilitate the travel of Chinese visitors to the United States. Nixon then stated on April 16 that the long-range goal of his administration was to normalize Sino-U.S. relations and to end the isolation of mainland China from the world community. The tidal wave of history became unstoppable.26

Kissinger writes in his memoir that the U.S. table tennis players were given a dazzling welcome in China, and that they were received by Premier Zhou himself, “[A]n achievement that was still an unfulfilled ambition of most of the Western diplomats stationed in Peking.” “The whole enterprise was vintage Chou En-lai. Like all Chinese moves, it had so many layers of meaning that the brilliantly painted surface was the least significant part. At its most obvious the invitation to the young Americans symbolized China’s commitment to improved relations with the United States; on a deeper level it reassured—more than any diplomatic communication through any channel—that the emissary who would now surely be invited would step on friendly soil. It was a signal to the White House that our initiative had been noted.”27
In addition, the USTTF’s editorial writes that, while China’s invitation to the American team came as a complete shock to the world, it gave the communist nation a good opportunity to take a major step under the guise of a sporting event that required no direct contact with Washington. China’s ping-pong ploy did offer the Nixon administration a bright future of opportunities. Immediately, it promised an easing of tensions in Asia and a prospect of profitable trade relations between the two countries. This move opened the door to dealings with the Soviet Union on crucial matters such as arms control in the Middle East. Only hours after Premier Zhou’s welcome of the table tennis players, President Nixon announced initiatives for trade and travel between the United States and China.28

April 18: Vice President Agnew Criticizes Nixon’s China Initiative

Then, on April 18, Vice President Spiro Agnew expressed misgivings about the U.S. team’s visit to China and the apparent thaw in relations between the two countries at the Republican Governors Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia. The New York Times correspondent, R. W. Apple, Jr., writes that Agnew did so at a closed luncheon with the stipulation that his remarks should not be published; however, some of the attending governors spread the news to the reporters there (The New York Times was not invited), because they were astonished that the vice president “would align himself in opposition to Mr. Nixon on an issue that they believe has generated considerable praise for the President across the country.” Agnew also criticized the American journalists who accompanied the U.S. team to China as helping China’s propaganda triumph by disseminating positive images of the new China.29

President Nixon comments on this episode in his memoirs by stating, “Agnew told them [the reporters] that the favorable media coverage of the table tennis team’s visit to Peking had helped the Communist Chinese government score a propaganda triumph.” Nixon acknowledges that Vice President Agnew had expressed his reservations about U.S. “trade and visa overtures to the Chinese Communists” at a NSC (National Security Council) meeting; however, Nixon was caught off guard by the vice president’s statement, as he “had never imagined that he would discuss his doubts with reporters.” Consequently, Nixon instructed his Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman to “get word to Agnew to stay off this topic.” Then, White House press secretary Ron Ziegler stated in a press release that the vice president completely supported President Nixon’s initiative toward China—there was no difference in
policy on this matter between the president and the vice president. This ended Agnew’s criticism.30

CIA’s Ill-Fated Plan

Meanwhile, according to the People’s Daily reporter Qian Jiang, as soon as it received the news of the Chinese invitation, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) decided to send one of its agents to Nagoya disguised as a member of the U.S. table tennis team. For this, the agency had to train their agents to play table tennis in a hurry. A truckload of table tennis equipments was transported to the CIA training center at Langley, Virginia. The CIA officials planned to send one of the trainees to Japan before the U.S. team left for China. However, this plan failed as it turned out that it was impossible to train table tennis players overnight.31

April 27: Message from “Pakistani Channel”

Then, the secret third-party contacts between the Chinese and the U.S. governments through Pakistan—the “Pakistani channel” (see chapter two)—was reactivated. On April 27, the Pakistani ambassador to the United States Agha Hilaly visited the White House and delivered another message from Premier Zhou, dated April 21, via Pakistani president Yahya Khan (the earlier message had come in December 1970). President Nixon writes, “After the ritual insistence that Taiwan was the principal and prerequisite problem, which had to be resolved before any relations could be restored,” the message stated that “the Chinese were now interested in direct discussions as a means of reaching that settlement.” The Chinese government also reaffirmed “its willingness to receive publicly in Peking a special envoy of the President of the U.S. (for instance, Mr. Kissinger) or the U.S. Secretary of State or even the President of the U.S. himself for a direct meeting and discussion.”32

President Nixon writes, “[T]his message raised as many problems as it solved.” Taiwan remained a central issue. Because of the sensitivity of the issue, Nixon felt that this initiative would have to be kept totally secret until the final arrangements for the presidential visit had been agreed upon, in order for it to have any chance of succeeding. “With advance warning conservative opposition might mobilize in Congress and scuttle the entire effort.” Then, after eliminating the U.S. envoy at the Paris peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam, David K. E. Bruce (1898–1977), and Secretary of State Rogers, as being
too highly visible figures to be his special envoy to Beijing, President Nixon decided to send Kissinger to Beijing for initial talks. At the same time, Nixon voluntarily released his intention to visit China to “clueless” reporters at the news conference on April 29. Nixon writes, “About the same time the issue of Life containing Edgar Snow’s December interview with Mao appeared on the newsstands. Now it was public that Mao would welcome me to Peking.”

**Publication of Snow’s “Conversation with Mao”**

The “Conversation with Mao” appeared on city streets on April 26 in Life magazine (the April 30 issue), featuring the U.S. team’s visit to China. According to the Kyodo News Agency reporter, Nakajima Hiroshi, after Ping-Pong Diplomacy was launched at the Nagoya World’s, the Chinese government informed Snow that he could release the content of his interview with Chairman Mao of December 1970, in which Mao indicated his willingness to meet President Nixon. In contrast, Snow states that he had voluntarily decided to withhold the content (see chapter two).

Even with the publication of Snow’s article, however, Nakajima writes, few China watchers thought that visits to China of a U.S. high-ranking policy maker or the president would follow as quickly as they actually did. China was at that time stressing exchanges between “the American and Chinese people,” rather than policy makers or leaders. In addition, China was still publicly denouncing the U.S. involvement in Indochina practically on a daily basis—Premier Zhou in October 1971 would tell Kissinger to observe Beijing’s actions, not its rhetoric—“the anti-American propaganda was ‘firing an empty cannon.’” Moreover, President Nixon kept his negotiations with China extremely discrete. Consequently, few could read between the lines of the Chinese phrases of “exchanges between the American and Chinese people.” Only a handful in the inner circles of the Nixon administration’s China initiative team, such as Winston Lord (1937–; U.S. ambassador to China, 1985–1989) whom Kissinger refers to as the “unsung hero of this trip” (Polo I, see below; Lord could not even tell his Chinese wife about the trip), knew that the Chinese rhetoric was actually their signal for opening the door between the two countries at the government level.

**July 9: “Polo I”**

With the selection of National Security Advisor Kissinger as President Nixon’s special envoy to China, the second phase of Nixon’s China
initiative began. In President Nixon’s words, “Messages and signals had been going back and forth for more than two years. We had proceeded carefully and cautiously through the Yahya and Romanian channels. Now Kissinger and I agreed that we had reached a point at which we had to take the chance of making a major proposal, or risk slipping back into another long round of tentative probing. I decided that the time had come to take the big step and propose a presidential visit.” Nixon thus instructed Kissinger to undertake a secret visit to Beijing in advance of his trip “in order to arrange an agenda and begin a preliminary exchange of views.” Kissinger’s secret trip was given the code-name, “Polo,” after Marco Polo (1254–1324) who made history by journeying to China. Thus, “The die was cast.”

Kissinger flew from Bangkok and arrived in Pakistan on July 8. Then, he secretly flew to Beijing and negotiated the terms of President Nixon’s visit to China during his “indisposition in Islamabad” or actually his “scheduled stomachache of July 9–11.” The trip to Beijing was successful, and Kissinger sent a cable to Nixon on his way to Teheran, “Eureka.” This secret mission was later dubbed “Kissinger’s ninja diplomacy” by the mass media.

July 15: “Nixon Statement”—The Announcement That Shook the World

On July 15, President Nixon officially made his intention to visit China public through a televised address by announcing “a major development in our effort to build a lasting peace in the world”—the “Nixon Statement.” It states that Premier Zhou during his talks with Nixon’s special envoy to China, Kissinger, extended an invitation to Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972, and that Nixon had accepted the invitation with pleasure. Nixon writes, behind this brief announcement lay more than two years of complex, subtle, and determined diplomatic signals and negotiations.

It is important to note that his two years of negotiations were not working and had been failing. The actual impetus for the realization of President Nixon’s visit to China came from China’s invitation to the U.S. table tennis team, which in turn was made possible by the initiative of JTTA president Gotō Kōji to invite China to participate in the Nagoya World’s. Nevertheless, Nixon does not mention Gotō in his memoirs, and does not give credit to the true architect of Ping-Pong Diplomacy.
October 20: “Polo II”

On October 20, 1971, Kissinger visited China again, publicly this time. The purposes of “Polo II” were to prepare the agenda for the meetings between Nixon and the Chinese leaders and to work out the basic language of the communiqué that would be issued at the end of Nixon’s trip. During the negotiations, Kissinger was taken aback when Premier Zhou found the U.S. draft communiqué unacceptable. Then, the Chinese counter draft took Kissinger’s breath away—a similar situation to what Gotō had encountered during his negotiations with the Chinese officials in January 1971. Zhou was also concerned whether the Nixon administration would be in power at the time of the U.S. bicentennial in 1976. Kissinger summed up the long and difficult negotiations by stating that in the end “the Chinese were willing to pursue their objectives by banking on the thrust of history rather than on the specific wording of a communiqué” (examined below). The Nixon administration also kept the actual date of Nixon’s trip from the press until November 29, when the White House announced the agreed date to be February 21, 1972.39

China-Representation Issue at the United Nations

Meanwhile, the China-representation issue at the United Nations (UN) reached its climax in October 1971. Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) was one of the founding members of the UN and a permanent member of its Security Council from its inception in 1945. However, when the PRC was established on mainland China, it claimed that it was the sole legitimate government of China. After that, the “two Chinas” issue became a vexing issue at the UN. The admission of newly independent countries of the third world into the UN during the 1960s gradually turned its General Assembly from being Western dominated to being dominated by countries sympathetic to Beijing. This tidal wave became irreversible in the fall of 1970 when the resolution submitted by Albania to seat China and expel Taiwan from the UN obtained a majority of fifty-one in favor to forty-nine opposed. Subsequently, seven more countries had recognized China in just six months by the beginning of April 1971, which was more than in the preceding seven years. On March 3, 1971, Premier Zhou also made it clear to the British chargé in Beijing that “the price of upgraded Anglo-Chinese relations would be a British switch on the issue of
Chinese admission to the UN and withdrawal of the British consulate in Taipei.\footnote{40}

**Japan's Position**

The Japanese government had consistently supported the U.S. position of blocking China's admission to the UN; however, since the Albanian resolution had obtained a majority of vote at the UN in the fall of 1970; support for the United States and the Japanese effort to reject China's admission was unmistakably ebbing. The desire of President Nixon to open China to counterbalance the Soviet Union diminished U.S. willingness to support Taiwan. Nixon's intended trip to China added to the further erosion of the campaign. In line with Nixon's China initiative, but without jeopardizing the continued U.S. commitment to Taiwan, the State Department worked out a dual-representation formula that advocated China's admission to the UN but opposed the expulsion of Taiwan. When Secretary of State Rogers formally announced this U.S. proposal to the UN on August 2, the State Department pressed Japan to collaborate in the efforts by becoming a cosponsor of the resolution and for the procedure of making the expulsion of Taiwan an "important question," which required a two-thirds majority at the UN General Assembly. Both resolutions were intended to endorse the "two Chinas" policy that countered China's position.\footnote{41}

Those in the Satō cabinet (November 1964–July 1972) and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), as well as the officials in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), were bitterly divided on this issue. Satō cabinet’s justice minister Maeo Shigesaburō and agriculture minister Akagi Munenori expressed their opposition to the U.S. proposal. Those within the MOFA who favored early normalization with China at that time were in the minority; however, notable exceptions were Consul General to Hong Kong Okada Akira and Asia Bureau China Section head Hashimoto Hiroshi. In addition, influential faction leaders within the LDP—such as Miki Takeo, Ōhira Masayoshi, and Nakasone Yasuhiro—opposed the idea of Japan supporting the dual-representation formula. Under these circumstances, Foreign Minister Fukuda Takeo in the reshuffled third Satō cabinet (July 1971–July 1972) stopped short of giving his commitment to Secretary Rogers during the Eighth U.S.-Japan Joint Trade and Economic Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, September 9–10. After the Satō cabinet and the LDP failed to reach a consensus on September 21, the issue was
left up to Prime Minister Satō. Satō announced the following day his decision to cosponsor the two resolutions with the United States.\(^{42}\)

**President Nixon’s View**

On this, President Nixon writes, his administration had publicly withdrawn its opposition to consideration of this issue, as early as August 1971, and indicated its support of the concept of the “two Chinas,” each to have membership in the UN—the dual-representation formula. Nixon states, it had not been easy for him to take a position that would be so disappointing to a loyal U.S. ally, Taiwan. He had, however, learned as early as that spring that the traditional voting bloc opposed to Beijing’s admission had irreparably broken up, and several erstwhile U.S. supporters had decided to support Beijing at the next vote. Nixon further states, he personally had never believed in bowing to the inevitable just because it is inevitable. Nevertheless, in this case, he felt that U.S. national security interests lay in developing its relations with China. He was, however, at the same time determined to honor the U.S. treaty obligations by continuing U.S. military and economic support for an independent Taiwan.\(^{43}\)

Subsequently, the UN General Assembly moved to vote on the question of admitting China as a member while Kissinger was in China on Polo II in October 1971. Nixon instructed Kissinger to stay away an extra day so that he would not have just arrived home when this controversial vote was taken. On October 25, the General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, with an overwhelming majority of seventy-six in favor to thirty-five opposed, with seventeen abstentions, to expel Taiwan and to admit China as the sole legitimate government representing China. China received support from two-thirds of the UN members at the General Assembly, including the Security Council members (excluding Taiwan). It bypassed the Security Council vote because the matter was considered an issue of credentials rather than one of membership. Consequently, the dual-representation resolution was not even voted on. The “important question” resolution on the expulsion of Taiwan was defeated by a vote of fifty-five in favor to fifty-nine opposed, with fifteen abstentions. Nixon writes, this went much further than his administration had expected. It had thought that its greatest problem would be in convincing Taiwan to stay after China had been admitted to equal status.\(^{44}\)
Regardless of the disappointment on the part of the Nixon administration, the China-representation issue at the UN was finally concluded, opening the “bamboo curtain” and officially ending the isolation of China from the world community.

**President Nixon Goes to China**

Then on February 21, 1972, as the finale of his China initiative, President Nixon embarked on a “voyage of philosophical discovery as uncertain, and in some respects as perilous, as the voyages of geographical discovery of a much earlier time” or what the French philosopher André Malraux called “one of the most important things of our century” that might “have a totally different outcome from whatever is anticipated.” After meeting with Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou at the Great Hall of the People, President Nixon was taken to a gymnastics and table tennis exhibition. Nixon writes, “[T]he superb Ping-Pong event left an impression that was not only lasting, but also foreboding.”

**Shanghai Communiqué**

Then, on February 28, President Nixon flew back to Shanghai at the end of his trip, where he delivered the Sino-U.S. joint statement, which came to be known as the Shanghai Communiqué. Nixon writes, based on the formula Kissinger had worked out during Polo II, the communiqué broke diplomatic ground by stating frankly the significant differences between the two countries on major issues, rather than smoothing them over. The wording of the U.S. section on Taiwan avoided a clash by stating simply: “The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan questions by the Chinese themselves.” The communiqué also referred to the United States ultimate objective of withdrawing its troops from Taiwan but did not put any final date on it. Finally, the communiqué provided that neither country should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, and that each is opposed to efforts by any other countries (insinuating the Soviet Union) to establish such hegemony.

Thus, the Nixon administration stopped short of unequivocally recognizing the Beijing government as the sole legitimate government of China and of regarding Taiwan as an integral part of China (the PRC).
The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

The administration instead only acknowledged that it would not object to China’s claim to Taiwan being part of China: a “one China, but not now” formula, prescribed by the special assistant in the office of the under secretary of state, Morton Abramowitz (1968–1971). This “constructive ambiguity” would obstruct the establishment of formal Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations until January 1979. At any rate, through this visit, President Nixon achieved the historic diplomatic breakthrough—Sino-U.S. rapprochement.47

Repercussions of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement

The Sino-U.S. rapprochement changed the international structure in East Asia by ending the cold war between China and the United States. It also resulted in the deepening of the Sino-Soviet split and the breakup of Sino-Vietnam relations (the Sino-Vietnamese War of February–March 1979). The historic diplomatic breakthrough most adversely affected U.S.-Taiwan relations. President Nixon writes, “The reaction abroad to our China initiative was generally favorable, but there were some understandable reservations. Our friends in Taiwan were terribly distressed. However, they were reassured that we did not withdraw our recognition of their government and did not renounce our mutual defense commitment. In turn, Kissinger wrote, “On Taiwan, we can hope for little more than damage limitation by reaffirming our diplomatic relations.”48

Because of the lingering Taiwan issue, Sino-U.S. relations were not smooth even after the epoch-making rapprochement. The Nixon administration in March 1973 established the U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) in Beijing, short of an embassy, and appointed David K. E. Bruce as its first chief (1973–1974), who was succeeded by George H. W. Bush (1974–1975). The two governments did not formally establish their diplomatic relations until January 1979, nearly seven years after the Shanghai Communiqué, when the U.S. government finally recognized China as the sole legitimate government of China and of Taiwan as an integral part of China. Simultaneously, however, the U.S. government under President Jimmy Carter renewed its commitment to Taiwan by legislating the Taiwan Relations Act and has maintained unofficial relations with Taiwan.49

The Sino-U.S. rapprochement also seriously affected U.S.-Japan relations. President Nixon wrote, “[T]he Japanese presented a particularly difficult problem. They resented the fact that they had not been
informed in advance, but we had no other choice. We could not have informed them without informing others, thus risking a leak that might have aborted the entire initiative.” More importantly, Kissinger wrote, “With Japan our task will be to make clear that we are not shifting our allegiance in Asia from her to China.”

Then, how did the Japanese government react to Ping-Pong Diplomacy and the Sino-U.S. rapprochement? What were the consequences?
CHAPTER NINE

Japan’s Response:
Prime Minister Tanaka Goes to China

Few things remained the same after the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, in March–April 1971 (the “Nagoya World’s”). The event not only restructured the international table tennis circles and other sports communities, but also changed the fundamental dynamics in international politics in East Asia, involving also the Soviet Union and the United States. This chapter examines the Japanese government’s response to Ping-Pong Diplomacy and its repercussions, as well as the impact of Ping-Pong Diplomacy on the international table tennis and other sports circles.

“Nixon Shocks”

The Japanese government was caught off guard by the revelation on July 15, 1971, of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to China and the announcement of President Richard Nixon’s intended visit to China—the “announcement that shook the world”—as was the rest of the world. However, Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (November 1964–July 1972; 1901–1975) and high-ranking officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) were not only stunned by the sensational nature of the news, but were also shocked by the fact that the Nixon administration ignored Satō by not informing him of its decision in advance; Japan was considered to be the most important ally of the United States in Asia at that time. The Japanese policy makers were taken aback by this news and referred to it as the “over-Japan’s-head
The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

diplomacy” on the part of the U.S. administration. The degree of the shock was such that it caused serious political trauma to the Japanese policy makers.\(^1\)

In retrospect, this news became the first of the two “Nixon shocks” to the Japanese. The second was “the emergency economic program that imposed wage-price controls at home (the United States) and trade and currency restrictions abroad” on August 15, 1971. The most serious impact of this measure on Japan was the departure from a fixed-rate system of foreign currency exchange based on the gold-exchange standard (U.S. dollar being pegged to gold) under the Breton Woods System to a floating-rate system (devaluation of the U.S. dollar). This measure was aimed at reducing the mounting U.S. trade deficits with Japan. Consequently, the Japanese yen was suddenly revalued by 16.88 percent from the fixed $1 = ¥360 to $1 = ¥308 in December 1971. Although the yen kept being revalued afterward, it did not help reduce the U.S. trade deficits. The second Nixon shock, or the “dollar shock,” gravely damaged the Japanese economy in general and the Japanese manufacturers of exported goods in particular, as well as the world economy. In addition, the Japanese suffered enormously from the “oil shock”—the first Oil Crisis of October 1973. All of these happened during the Nixon administration.\(^2\)

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Meyer’s Response

Nevertheless, it was not only the Japanese policy makers who were stunned by the Nixon Statement of July 15, 1971. In fact, even U.S. ambassador to Japan Armin H. Meyer (July 1969–March 1972; 1914–2006) was not informed of the decision. Meyer heard the Nixon Statement over the U.S. Armed Forces Radio, locally known as the Far Eastern Network (FEN), while getting a haircut. When Meyer heard that “President Nixon had sent Kissinger to Beijing…“ he first thought that it was a “slip of the tongue” on the part of Nixon—he thought that Nixon had meant to say “Vietnam.” Immediately grasping the gravity of the statement, Meyer then thought, “Oh, my god, I’ve got to run and warn the Japanese government.” When he called up the State Department in Washington, he was told, “No one is to make any comment whatsoever.” Meyer insisted, “We’ve got to tell them, they’ve been following us dutifully.” “Our political section and their political section would count every nose at the United Nations to find out how many votes there were to keep the Chinese out.” Also,
“[T]hey keep saying, ‘Please, if you change your policy, let us know.’” However, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird during his visit in Tokyo earlier in July told Japanese officials that there was “no change in our China policy.”

Meyer was angry at first but he reached the conclusion that Nixon and Kissinger “could not have handled it in an intrinsically different manner if its accomplishment was to be assured.” For one thing, the Japanese were leaking everything. For instance, when Meyer sent a message to Secretary of State William P. Rogers about his meeting with the Japanese foreign minister Aichi Kiichi (in the “second reshuffled second” Satō cabinet and the third Satō cabinet, November 1968–January 1970; 1907–1973) in Paris, the content of the message appeared in a major Japanese newspaper two days later. Meyer does not blame Aichi; in fact, he dedicated his book about his tenure in Tokyo to Aichi. Also, if Nixon and Kissinger told the Japanese they would have to tell others including Taiwan, or the British. Regarding the suggestion that Nixon did not inform Japan because he was feeling somewhat betrayed by Satō on the textile issue so that he was not inclined to tell Satō, Meyer states that he had not heard that.

However, it was common knowledge among the Japanese policy makers that the Nixon administration distrusted the Satō cabinet regarding the textile issue, to the extent that this might have even caused the “Nixon shocks.” On this, Japanese ambassador to the United States Ushiba Nobuhiko (July 1970–June 1973; 1909–1984) writes that this sudden change in the Nixon administration’s policy toward China put Prime Minister Satō in a bind, especially on the China-representation issue at the United Nations (UN) (examined below). Ushiba states, “Whenever I saw Secretary Rogers and Kissinger, I made it a point to complain about the U.S. over-Japan’s-head diplomacy; however, the atmosphere of the Nixon administration was cool because of the textile issue, and there was no intention on its part to do something special for Japan.” Ushiba warned Rogers that Nixon’s visit to China could be conceived as “kowtow diplomacy.” Rogers agreed with Ushiba; however, Ushiba had the impression that Rogers had not been consulted on Nixon’s China initiative.

In the final analysis, Meyer believes that Nixon and Kissinger should have sent somebody about a day before to let Satō know, because Satō was discreet. “If you were going through the regular foreign office bureaucracy, you could expect leakage, but Sato should have been informed first thing… As it was, they did try to reach Sato an hour or two beforehand, but they could not get through, and by the time they
were talking through the [MOFA] interpreter, Nixon was giving his speech.” Meyer states, Kissinger later concurred with him, as “Henry said that it was just a mistake, and that they should have thought of it and send someone one day before to brief him [Satō].”

Thus, before getting over his own astonishment with the Nixon Statement, Meyer faced the challenging task of damage control—easing the shock of Nixon’s diplomatic breakthrough to China on the part of the Japanese policy makers. That was one of the many assignments he engaged in during his tenure in Japan, along with complex issues, such as the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, the reversion of Okinawa, and trade issues, most notably the textile issue. In fact, Meyer was told by the Japanese ambassador to Iran, as Meyer was leaving his ambassadorial post in Teheran for Tokyo, that he “could not go to Japan at a worse time.” When Meyer talked with Prime Minister Satō on the Nixon Statement, he was impressed by Satō who took it in a “very serene” manner and said, “[L]ook, whenever you made relations with China, it would have been a shock to us[.]” Meyer states that he had “long felt that one quarter of the world’s population cannot be ignored… the Japanese themselves had been doing business over there in a big way, when we had not been doing business, so this is just a move forward. The bitter thing is that we didn’t tell them.”

In turn, Kissinger writes in his memoir, “The principal sour note came from Japan… It was particularly painful to embarrass a man who had done so much to cement the friendship between our two countries [referring to Satō].” “Armin Meyer… was one of the most embarrassed.” “Meyer’s initial reaction was bitterness at this insensitivity, a reaction that he says was shared by many other Americans and Japanese in Tokyo.” Kissinger concedes Meyer’s point and considers it “a serious error in manners,” stating that “we could have chosen a more sensitive method of informing the Japanese… It would have surely been more courteous and thoughtful, for example, to send one of my associates from the Peking trip to Tokyo to brief Sato a few hours before the official announcement.” Nevertheless, Kissinger maintains, “I do not know how the fundamental secrecy could have been avoided. The delicacy of the event and the uniqueness of the opportunity made it essential that the United States be in control of the context of its presentation.”

### Japanese Political Circles’ Response

As expected, the Satō cabinet members were filled with a sense of shock and insecurity. Japanese government officials were concerned
that China had launched its peace offensive toward the United States and Japan. Japanese policy makers were also concerned that the Chinese would approach the U.S. government, bypassing Japan, and that Sino-U.S. relations would supersede U.S.-Japanese relations. Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyūbei writes, the fact that the Nixon administration completely bypassed Japan in this historic announcement put the Satō cabinet upside down to the extent that they even summoned Muraoka to talk with Foreign Minister Aichi and other foreign policy makers, in order to help out with the situation—despite the fact that the Satō cabinet had been accusing the association of being China’s agent.  

In contrast, former Japanese ambassador to England and a House of Representatives (HR) member, Matsumoto Shun’ichi (1897–1987), expressed a different view. He stated, “That’s great news. The Japanese government is still preoccupied with the notion that improving Japan’s relations with China would upset the U.S. administration. The Japanese government should abandon such a stance. The Japan Table Tennis Association [JTTA] meanwhile took its own initiative, overcame many impediments, and succeeded in having China come to Nagoya [referring to the Nagoya World’s]. This created the conditions for the exchanges between China and the United States.” Matsumoto states, “I therefore respect JTTA President Gotō Kōji for his courage.”

Matsumoto’s comments sound as if they came from a politician of the Japanese leftist parties, but he actually belonged to the conservative and ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Matsumoto was one of the rare Japanese diplomats-turned-politicians who had a profound perspective on international politics. As a Japanese ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary for peace treaty negotiations with the Soviet Union of Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō, Matsumoto played an indispensable role in the extremely difficult negotiations in 1955–1956. The two governments in the end signed the Japan-Soviet Joint Statement in 1956—short of a peace treaty—and thereby restored their diplomatic relations. More than sixty-five years after the end of the war, they have not yet concluded a peace treaty to this day, with the territorial issue being the bottleneck. The situation actually worsened when Russian president Dmitry Medvedev visited Kunashiri Island in November 2010—as the first Russian/Soviet leader ever to do so. This island is part of Japan’s Northern Territories, which has been occupied by the Soviet Army since late August–September 1945 after Japan’s surrender on August 15.  

Japanese policy makers in 1971 were most concerned that Japan would be left alone in the new dynamics of power politics in East Asia. Thus
far Japan has not taken any initiatives in Asia, primarily because of its “subordinate independence” with the United States (see chapter two). This pattern of Japan’s foreign policy has continued in the twenty-first century. A recent case in point was Hatoyama Ichirō’s grandson, Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio (September 2009–June 2010; 1947–), who succumbed to U.S. pressure on the military-base issue on Okinawa Island. He had earlier pledged to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma outside Okinawa in order to reduce the burden on the Okinawans, only to abandon his pledge in May 2010, exasperating the Okinawans. Then, he abruptly resigned, taking the responsibility for causing confusion on the issue. Hatoyama was obviously under enormous pressure from the Obama administration that had stopped short of working out a new policy toward Okinawa with the new Japanese cabinet formed by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)—a more liberal party than the conservative LDP that had ruled Japan for most of the postwar era. In the end, Hatoyama chose to allay the misgivings of Japan’s big brother (the United States) over alleviating the suffering of the Okinawans.12

In hindsight, if Hatoyama would end up resigning over the controversy, he could have tried harder to honor his pledge and then have resigned, if he truly believed in what he had pledged. That was what his grandfather Hatoyama Ichirō did (see chapter two). JTTA president Gotō also knew that he had to resign the presidency of the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) when he decided to invite China to the Nagoya World’s and remove Taiwan from the organization. Yet Gotō followed through with it because he believed that was the right thing to do. However, it took enormous “guts” to do so (see chapter six).

**Reaction of Japanese Economic Circles**

After absorbing the initial shock, the Japanese economic circles were enlivened by the renewed prospects for trade and investment in China. As examined in chapter two, China and Japan had engaged in unofficial trade relations since the 1950s; however, China imposed a linkage policy of politics and economics (business), and Chinese allowed transactions only with “friendly trading firms” in Japan. Moreover, although the LT memorandum trade agreement (signed in November 1962) started off the semiofficial trade relations between the two countries in 1963, these relations were limited. In this context, the 1971
Nixon Statement revived the Japanese interest in trade and investment in China. The Japanese did not want to be left behind in catching the “China boom.”

**Fujiyama Aiichirō and the Federation of Japanese Parliamentarians to Promote Restoration of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations**

The Nixon Statement also invigorated the Federation of Japanese Parliamentarians to Promote Restoration of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations, a nonpartisan voluntary group of members of the Japanese legislature, formed in December 1970, which also included the pro-China members of the LDP. In fact, its president was former foreign minister Fujiyama Aiichirō (from the reshuffled first Kishi cabinet through the reshuffled second Kishi cabinet, July 1957–July 1960; 1897–1985). The Chinese government approved the following month a visit of a delegation of the federation led by Fujiyama.

The delegation visited China in February–March 1971 and talked to the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) high-ranking official / China-Japan Friendship Association vice president Wang Guoquan five times and Premier Zhou Enlai twice. It was during these meetings that Zhou hinted to Fujiyama about the possibility of a sudden dramatic improvement in Sino-U.S. relations. After the Nagoya World’s in April 1971, Fujiyama invited the Chinese team delegation head Zhao Zhenghong, deputy head Wang Xiaoyun, and other officials to a luncheon hosted by the federation. In early July, the Kōmeitō (the Clean Government Party)—a middle-of-the-road party backed by the Buddhist Sōka-gakkai—also sent its delegation to China and signed a joint statement with China that included the five conditions for restoration of Sino-Japanese relations.

Then, came the Nixon Statement of July 15. The federation in later July submitted a draft resolution for restoration of Sino-Japanese relations to the HR and to the House of Councillors (HC), which was supported not only by members of the leftist opposition parties, but also by the pro-China members of the LDP. Nevertheless, the LDP leadership blocked the resolution from the agendas of both houses of the Japanese parliament, and thus the resolution was aborted. Fujiyama and his delegation visited Beijing again in September–October 1971 and issued a joint statement with the China-Japan Friendship Association, declaring
that the Japan-Taiwan (ROC) Peace Treaty was not in effect. Upon returning home, a former HR member from the LDP, Kimura Kōhei, accused Fujiyama of violating the party line and requested that the Party Disciplinary Committee investigate Fujiyama. Later in October, the UN General Assembly approved China as the sole legitimate government of China, replacing Taiwan.\textsuperscript{16}

In January 1972, the LDP Disciplinary Committee notified Fujiyama of its decision to suspend his executive position in the party, with probation, for violation of party bylaws. In February, Fujiyama requested that Prime Minister Satō reexamine the committee decision. Then came President Nixon’s historic visit to China. In March-April, Fujiyama visited China alone and talked with Premier Zhou; on his departure from Tokyo to Beijing, a right-wing party member attempted to attack Fujiyama by spilling sulfuric acid on him at Haneda airport. Upon his returning home, the Disciplinary Committee in May determined that its decision was appropriate after reexamining the case. Thus, Fujiyama’s efforts to work out the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations met repeated obstruction from the Satō cabinet and the conservative members of the LDP. This continued until the resignation of Satō in July 1972.\textsuperscript{17}

Satō Cabinet’s Policy toward China

Despite President Nixon’s publicly stated enthusiasm for Sino-U.S. rapprochement and even after the Nixon Statement, the Satō cabinet—the loyal friend of the United States—“played it safe.” The Satō cabinet was unwilling to go ahead with Japan’s own normalization of relations with China unless and until President Nixon’s visit to China actually took place and the Sino-U.S. rapprochement became a reality. The Satō cabinet was the last to register the change in the U.S. policy toward China. The Satō cabinet was an exemplary practitioner of the “subordinate independence,” to the extent that it refused to change its position on China and continued to oppose China’s admission to the UN even after the Nixon administration changed its policy. Consequently, not only the opposition party members and the pro-China groups in the parliament but also various members of the ruling LDP, including Nakasone Yasuhiro (1918–) and other faction leaders, mounted their attack on the Satō cabinet. Before it had to change its China policy, however, the Satō cabinet resigned en masse in July 1972.\textsuperscript{18}
Japan’s Response

Prime Minister Satō’s “Lame Duck” Overtures to China

Nevertheless, this is a general notion of the Satō cabinet’s policy toward China. Toward the end of its term, the Satō cabinet secretly began groping for ways to normalize Sino-Japanese relations, as a reaction to the “Nixon shock.” A Japanese political scientist, Sadako Ogata, notes that the resentment toward the Nixon administration’s clandestine China initiative in general and its “over-Japan’s-head diplomacy” in particular on the part of the MOFA officials concerned was so deep that it motivated them to work for normalization in earnest. Even Satō himself began searching for intermediaries for contacts with China. Unlike the United States, there was no shortage of back channels for such contacts in Japan—the Memorandum Trade Office for the LT trade agreement, to name one. Satō also tried unsuccessfully to contact Wang Guoquan during a visit of a high-ranking Chinese delegation to Tokyo in August 1971 to attend the funeral services for one of the leading pro-China members of the LDP, Matsumura Kenzō.

In this context, Satō’s close aide and cabinet secretary-general, Hori Shigeru (November 1968–July 1971; 1901–1979), wrote a letter to Premier Zhou, requesting Hori’s visit to China in order to begin negotiations for normalization. However, Zhou turned this down on November 10, 1971, because the letter did not unequivocally state that China was the sole government representing China. Even if Hori’s move did not depart from the “two Chinas” policy nor produce any concrete result, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies professor Nakajima Mineo, who actually wrote the “Hori letter,” argues that it laid the groundwork for Sino-Japanese negotiations for normalization and, therefore, the time was ripe for Satō’s successor to accomplish the diplomatic breakthrough. In contrast, Ogata considers the significance of the unsuccessful Hori’s attempt as representing “a shift in the attitude of the Satō cabinet” and thinks that it is “perhaps not accurate to characterize Satō Eisaku simply as a hardline opponent to normalization.” Given the fact that the Satō cabinet blocked the resolutions submitted by the Federation of Japanese Parliamentarians to Promote Restoration of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations, however, Ogata argues that Satō himself did not think he could accomplish normalization with China in the seventh year of his administration and that “whatever steps he took should be understood as his attempt to prepare for the policy change his successor would have to undertake.” Satō had hoped that one of his foreign ministers, Fukuda Takeo in the reshuffled
Nakasone Yasuhiro (prime minister, November 1982–November 1987), who was director-general of Japan’s Defense Agency in the third Satō cabinet (January 1970–July 1971) and then became chairman of the LDP Executive Council, also notes that Satō was exploring many channels with China in secret. For instance, Satō sent a secret envoy by the name of Ezoe Mahiko to China via Hong Kong. Ezoe delivered Satō’s letter to Premier Zhou in September 1971, which stated Satō’s wish to visit China in order to exchange views on normalization. Zhou rejected the letter because it did not clarify Japan’s position on Taiwan. Satō entrusted Ezoe with another letter to Zhou, this time clarifying Japan’s support of China’s position on Taiwan; however, this letter apparently did not reach Zhou until April 1972. Ezoe showed Zhou’s reply to Satō in June, but Satō resigned in July and his effort for normalization died before it was born.

Meanwhile, Satō made a conciliatory gesture toward the Nixon administration by becoming the cosponsor of the two resolutions concerning the China-representation issue at the UN (see chapter eight)—because of this, Japanese ambassador Ushiba thinks that Satō felt that he had returned his debt toward the Nixon administration. In turn, Nakasone was in favor of promoting normalization with China and opposed the dual-representation formula for Chinese representation at the UN cosponsored by the Satō cabinet; however, simultaneously he observed Satō groping for normalization with China in secret amidst the escalating criticism of his “absence of a China policy” by the opposition parties and the mass media. Nakasone states that he witnessed a different side of Satō in his move toward normalization with China, because he was usually ridiculed for his passive stance, as “Satō, the man who waits.” Nakasone, therefore, thinks that Satō must have regretted it deeply when he was forced to resign. “Satō pretty much prepared the groundwork for normalization with China. Consequently, it did not take much time for his successor to actually realize it.”

Nakasone (and Nakajima) might have given too much credit to Satō’s overture to China. Japanese consul general to Hong Kong Okada Akira, who was charged with the task of developing the “Hong Kong channel” personally by Satō, as his secret envoy, states that the prime minister’s initiative was too little and too late. Okada was one of the few in the MOFA who argued for early normalization with China. He even requested that his minority view be recorded officially in a minute in the face of the majority opinion. Okada contacted various
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influential Chinese officials and tried all possible ways; however, Satō failed to establish the “Hong Kong channel.” The fact remains that the Chinese government did not trust Satō, and his letter was rejected by Zhou. In this sense, Satō’s overture was “lame duck” diplomacy, as Okada’s memoir was aptly entitled Mizutori gaikō hiwa (The Secret Story of Waterfowl Diplomacy), suggesting the desperate waddling of a little duck.23

LDP Presidential Election: Fukuda versus Tanaka

No sooner had Prime Minister Satō announced his intention to resign in June 1972 than four major contenders in the LDP presidential election—Fukuda Takeo, Miki Takeo, Ōhira Masayoshi, and Tanaka Kakuei—rose to the occasion and fought intensely to succeed Satō (the president of the ruling LDP became prime minister of Japan in the parliamentary-cabinet system). Foreign Minister Fukuda Takeo (1905–1995) in the reshuffled third Satō cabinet was close to Satō, and he wanted Fukuda to succeed him. In turn, opposing Satō’s anti-China policy, Miki, Ōhira, and Tanaka worked out their policy platform agreement that they would promote the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Ōhira had actually met secretly with CPAFFC director Wang Xiaoyun during the Nagoya World’s in April 1971—Wang was also China-Japan Friendship Association deputy general-secretary and visited Nagoya as deputy head of the Chinese delegation to the championships. Miki also had met with Wang and with Wang Guoquan, who visited Japan to attend Matsumura Kenzō’s funeral services in August 1971. In fact, China’s move to set up informal channels with Japan, by sending its top “Japan hands” to Japan on nonpolitical occasions and engaging them in meetings with anti-Satō faction leaders within the LDP and leaders of opposition parties, as well as economic leaders, was so dramatic that they were referred to as the “first Wang whirlwind” (of Wang Xiaoyun in March-April 1971) and the “second Wang whirlwind” (of Wang Guoquan in August 1971).24

On this, Nakasone notes that Tanaka was not initially enthusiastic about normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, as is generally thought. Nakasone, as chairman of the LDP Executive Council, felt on the one hand that normalization with China would be difficult if Fukuda won the party presidential election because he was a protégé of Kishi Nobusuke who was pro-Taiwan. Nakasone on the other hand thought that Tanaka would proceed with normalization if the conditions were
met. Given the importance of normalization with China, Nakasone decided with other party officials to support Tanaka. Nakasone then told Tanaka that he would not run in the presidential election himself and would support Tanaka on the condition that Tanaka, Miki, and Ōhira cooperate on normalization with China. According to Nakasone, Tanaka reluctantly accepted his offer. In turn, the Fukuda faction severely criticized Nakasone for rescinding his candidacy as having been co-opted by Tanaka.\textsuperscript{25}

Nakasone also states that Tanaka suddenly changed and showed interest toward normalization with China only after pro-China LDP members of the HR, such as Furui Yoshimi (minister of health and welfare in the second Ikeda cabinet, February 1960–July 1961; 1903–1995) and Tagawa Seiichi (minister of home affairs in the second Nakasone cabinet, December 1983–November 1984; 1918–2009), as well as Komeito (Clean Government Party) chairman Takeiri Yoshikatsu (1926–) had visited China (Takeiri’s visit took place in May 1972) and obtained a definite commitment from Premier Zhou for the normalization. Zhou’s commitment made Tanaka make up his mind. Consequently, the LDP presidential election boiled down to Fukuda versus Tanaka, as Miki and Ōhira had decided to rescind their candidacies and support Tanaka on the premise that he would honor their campaign agreement on the normalization. Tanaka won the election and succeeded Satō in July 1972.\textsuperscript{26}

**Prime Minister Tanaka Goes to China: Sino-Japanese Joint Statement**

Prime Minister Tanaka (July 1972–December 1974; 1918–1993) wasted no time. Riding on the historic occasion, Tanaka immediately engaged his cabinet in negotiations for normalization of diplomatic relations with China. Tanaka met President Nixon in Honolulu in August–September in order to make necessary adjustments of views between the two countries concerning normalization with China. While Tanaka reaffirmed to Nixon that Japan would pursue normalization with China on the assumption that the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty would be “faithfully and fully” implemented, Tanaka also made it clear that Japan was pursuing normalization with China for reasons of its own national interest. Tanaka thus tried to reconcile the two incompatible factors that had divided Japanese postwar policies for more than two decades—the maintenance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the normalization of
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diplomatic relations with China. Subsequently, a little over two months after assuming the position, Tanaka visited China in September 1972 and normalized Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations through signing the Sino-Japanese Joint Statement, short of a peace treaty. Tanaka visited Beijing only seven months after Nixon’s visit there. It took only a year and two months for Japan to normalize Sino-Japanese relations after the Nixon Statement. Ogata writes that Tanaka’s great rush to achieve this diplomatic breakthrough within three months after he came into office was a “political triumph of the Tanaka cabinet.”

On this, Ding Min, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Asia Bureau Japan Section deputy head, stated that the Chinese government was ready for Tanaka’s visit. The Chinese government had mobilized a huge number of staff members in preparation for President Nixon’s visit to China, including protocol matters. Among them were a couple of the MFA officials in charge of Japan. They were secretly made part of the “U.S. team,” so that they could learn the preparation process and apply their experience to a Japanese leader’s visit to Japan, which they anticipated would take place in the near future. Therefore, they were well prepared for Tanaka’s visit in September 1972.

Legacies of Prime Minister Tanaka

Prime Minister Tanaka took a proactive stance toward China by unequivocally recognizing China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government of China and Taiwan as an integral part of it. Simultaneously, Tanaka’s foreign minister Ōhira Masayoshi abrogated the Japan-Taiwan (ROC) Peace Treaty, and thereby ended the diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In contrast, the Nixon administration only acknowledged in the Shanghai Communiqué that it would not object to China’s claim to be the sole legitimate government of China and to Taiwan being part of it: a “one China, but not now” formula. Unlike Satō, Tanaka did not “play it safe” and went ahead with recognizing China as the sole legitimate government of China even before the Nixon administration did. This angered the latter. A Japanese political scientist, Kataoka Tetsuya, argues that the Nixon administration took Tanaka’s commitment to China as a de facto Sino-Japanese nonaggression pact, making Nixon and Kissinger deeply distrust Tanaka. Thus, Kataoka contends, Premier Zhou succeeded in driving a wedge into the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. U.S.-Japan relations in fact subsequently deteriorated. Tanaka, who was nicknamed the “bulldozer with the brain of a computer,” also
promised sizable economic aid to China, in effect as war reparations to China, ushering in the practice of Japan’s massive official development aid (ODA) to China.²⁹

In retrospect, Tanaka tried to rebuild Sino-Japanese relations in haste at the cost of antagonizing the U.S. administration. He promoted Sino-Japanese economic relations in exchange for unlimited economic aid to China and at the cost of confiscation of Japanese corporate assets in Taiwan by the ROC government. Tanaka also switched Japan’s pro-Israel stance to a pro-Arab stance in the wake of the first Oil Crisis—a move to improve relations with the oil-producing countries in the Middle East, as well as with the Soviet Union, in order to secure energy resources directly from these countries—infuriating the Nixon administration and the international oil cartel. Meanwhile, the publication of articles disclosing the bribery and money scandals involving Tanaka became a national sensation in Japan, and he was obliged to resign in December 1974. Tanaka was then indicted in the Lockheed bribery scandals and was arrested in July 1976, becoming the second—and one of the only two thus far—former Japanese prime minister to be arrested.³⁰

This scandal is shrouded in mystery. Many Japanese think that it was a conspiracy by the U.S. administration that distrusted Tanaka and the pro-U.S. group in the Japanese MOFA that resented Tanaka for damaging U.S.-Japan relations. For instance, Nakasone, who was international trade and industry minister for all the four cabinets in the Tanaka administration, states that the origin of the Lockheed scandals was Tanaka’s oil policy. He also states that Kissinger, who continued to serve as secretary of state in the Ford administration, knew more about it than you would think. Tanaka had abruptly dismissed Japanese ambassador to the United States Ushiba Nobuhiko in June 1973, because he was considered as being close to Fukuda, who was one of the Satō cabinet’s foreign ministers and Tanaka’s archrival in the LDP. Ushiba was deeply upset with this sudden dismissal. Regardless of the conspiracy theories, Tanaka paid a price for his foreign policy and money politics. In turn, the Chinese have continued to revere Tanaka, and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping visited Tanaka’s residence (the Mejiro palace) in Tokyo during his state visit to Japan in October 1978 (examined below).³¹

On this, Ushiba writes that he suddenly received a telex from Permanent Vice Foreign Minister Hōgen Shinsaku in Tokyo in early May 1973, notifying him of his recall to Tokyo—such a notice would normally come by mail. Ushiba begged Hōgen to delay the recall because an important joint U.S.-Japan committee meeting was
scheduled in July. Hōgen, however, told him that the order was irrevocable. Ushiba’s tenure in Washington, D.C., ended officially on June 15. Upon returning, Foreign Minister Ōhira told Ushiba that the Prime Minister’s Office had insisted on his dismissal, whereas Tanaka did not give Ushiba any such indication when he talked with Tanaka. The majority of the people Ushiba talked with told him that it was Foreign Minister Ōhira’s idea. At any rate, Ushiba thinks that those who thought he was part of the Fukuda faction must have disliked him.

In turn, Murata Ryōhei (ambassador to the United States, October 1989–March 1992; 1929–2010), who was counselor at the Japanese embassy in Washington, D.C., when Ushiba was dismissed, states, “The early recall of Ambassador Ushiba was expected because both the Tanaka faction and the Ōhira faction considered him part of the Fukuda faction. Therefore, it was nothing to become indignant about. The discourteous way the officials in the home ministry in Tokyo handled his recall without due process of communication and explanation might have caused Ushiba such indignation.”

Twenty years after his first visit to China, in August 1992, the Chinese government invited Tanaka and his daughter Makiko to visit China. Makiko succeeded to her father’s district and won a seat in the HR in July 1993, five months before his death. Although Makiko became the first foreign minister of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō in April 2001, she did not get along with the MOFA officials and was dismissed by Koizumi in January 2002. Makiko left the LDP in 2003 and transferred to the DPJ in 2008, where Ozawa Ichirō—who was Tanaka’s favorite protégé—had moved in 2002. Ozawa left the LDP in 1993, created three new parties (the Renewal Party, the New Frontier Party, and the Liberal Party), and then transferred to the DPJ, seeking a better chance to lead the nation; however, he lost the DPJ presidential election to the incumbent Kan Naoto in September 2010. This appears to have ended his chances of becoming prime minister for the foreseeable future. Like his mentor, after this unsuccessful bid, Ozawa was being indicted for a political contribution money scandal. Thus, history repeats itself.

Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty

the challenging task of concluding a peace treaty with China; Japan had concluded a peace treaty only with Taiwan in 1952. In terms of international law, China and Japan had not yet ended the second Sino-Japanese War. The negotiations for a peace treaty stumbled over China’s insistence on the inclusion in the treaty of the “hegemonic clause,” which was primarily intended to preempt aggressive moves by the Soviet Union toward China. After six-year-long negotiations, the two governments signed the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty in Beijing in August 1978. Foreign Minister Sonoda Sunao in the Fukuda cabinet flew to Beijing for the signing. Two months later, Vice Premier Deng visited Japan for the exchanges with Prime Minister Fukuda of the treaty that had been ratified by the legislatures of the two governments.34

Aftermath of Nagoya World’s in Table Tennis Circles

Meanwhile, when the Nagoya World’s ended successfully, JTTA president Gotō told the reporters, “My task is finally over. This was supposed to be a sports event, not a political event. Before anyone realized it, however, it had become a stage for politics.” He also stated, “China’s participation in the championships became a ‘political bridge’ between China and Japan, as well as between China and the United States. The Japanese government was a mere bystander for the dramatic event that was unfolding right in front of its eyes. The Japanese government just stood there, like the net on the ping-pong table, and was watching the ping-pong ball going back and forth over the net, thawing Sino-U.S. relations.” Gotō further stated, “As Premier Zhou welcomed the U.S. team players in person, I wish that Prime Minister Satō had greeted the Chinese players in person (which would have helped melt the ice between China and Japan). This might be how politics really works [meaning that a nonpolitical event or a personal exchange could bring about a political breakthrough].”35

Preparatory Meeting for Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing

On the contrary, Gotō’s task was far from over. With the success in the Nagoya World’s both in terms of sports and politics, Gotō had become one of the “best friends of China.” When Gotō visited China
again in June 1971 to attend the preparatory meeting for the Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments, the Chinese government also invited Gotô’s family. There, Premier Zhou met Gotô and his family alone, separately from the rest of the delegations of the other countries. This was highly unprecedented, indicating how deeply Zhou appreciated what Gotô had done for China. Zhou, among other things, told Gotô that he wanted to eat zaru-soba (cold buckwheat noodles), a popular lunch menu in Japan. Gotô also met again China-Japan Friendship Association honorary president Guo Moruo, who had lived in Japan, as Zhou had. Thus, Gotô rekindled friendship with the Chinese leaders. Upon returning home, Gotô told the reporters that his wife, Suzuko, was treated as if she were a Japanese empress.36

**Sino-Japanese Friendship Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing**

During the same visit, the Sino-Japanese Friendship Table Tennis Tournaments were held in Beijing, based on the agreement made during his previous visit in January-February 1971. Suzuki Mitsuru, the president of Tôkai TV station, based in Nagoya, wanted to send its crew members to Beijing in order to broadcast the tournaments. However, the Chinese government rejected his request. The reason was that Tôkai TV was one of the affiliates of Fuji TV, a major TV network based in Tokyo. The problem for the Chinese was that Fuji TV’s parent corporation, Fuji-Sankei Group, also owned the *Sankei shimbun*, a conservative national daily in Japan. The newspaper wrote critically of China. In this predicament, Suzuki asked for Gotô’s help. However, the Chinese officials still insisted that they could not allow Tôkai TV to visit China. Gotô explained to them that Tôkai TV had nothing to do with the Sankei newspaper nor was it a subsidiary of Fuji TV. Tôkai TV was an independent affiliate of Fuji TV. Tôkai TV merely received Fuji TV’s programs through the broadcast syndication. They were separate corporations. He made these points forcefully and managed to obtain the permission in the end. Suzuki states that only a person like Gotô could have succeeded in tough negotiations with the Chinese officials.37

**First Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing**

Then, in November 1971, Gotô went to China again, this time as the delegation head of the Japanese team to the first Afro-Asian Friendship
Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments. In total, Gotō visited China three times in 1971. It should be noted that there were no nonstop flights between Tokyo and Beijing at that time. China was still a politically distant nation, if not geographically. Trips to Beijing had to take a route through Hong Kong. It was a strenuous task for Gotō, not only physically but also psychologically. Gotō did not just come to Beijing for the Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments. He had another, and much more difficult, task to engage in; to work on the creation of a new regional table tennis association for Asia that would replace the TTFA. The negotiations and preparations involved every imaginable complex and delicate issue of international politics in Asia. This daunting task would become Gotō’s last major contribution to the international table tennis community.

Creation of Asian Table Tennis Union

Gotō had resigned the presidency of the TTFA in February 1971, when he unsuccessfully proposed removing Taiwan from the organization. Nevertheless, the JTTA still remained in the TTFA afterward. Gotō stated during his visit to Beijing in November 1971 that he would like to avoid seeing the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) split on account of the Taiwan issue. He would first try to straighten out the situation at the TTFA, which also had issues concerning South Vietnam and Cambodia—China did not acknowledge both governments. Then, a week later, Gotō declared that the JTTA would leave the TTFA and create a new table tennis organization for Asia, provisionally called the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU), by next spring in cooperation with China. In addition, eleven Asian countries that were participating in the Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing decided that they would not participate in the Asian Tournaments of the TTFA that were scheduled in India in February 1972. The ATTU was expected to become a large organization, including new members such as North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cambodia (the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea led by Prince Sihanouk in exile in Beijing), as well as many of the current members of the TTFA. Gotō stated that he would write a constitution for the ATTU, seek approval of it from the ITTF, and then officially invite Asian countries and regions to join the new organization.

As in the cases of the negotiations for bringing the 1971 world championships to Nagoya (the Nagoya World’s) at the ITTF general meeting
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at the Munich World’s in 1969 and those at the ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA, this was a formidable engagement for a Japanese who did not speak any foreign languages. No ordinary Japanese could engage in such tough negotiations deeply entangled with international politics. Gotō was neither a career diplomat nor a politician. In the end, however, a total of sixteen table tennis associations—Cambodia, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, North Vietnam, Pakistan, Palestine, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Syria—decided to join in the ATTU. This would leave only a total of seven associations remaining in the TTFA. The Asahi newspaper reported that the JTTA had become the first Japanese sports organization that acknowledged the “three political principles” concerning Sino-Japanese relations. This time it embarked on the creation of a new table tennis association for Asia, which encompassed countries that the Japanese government had not acknowledged, such as North Korea and North Vietnam. This decision would significantly affect not only sports circles but also other circles, including economic and political ones.40

Representatives of the sixteen table tennis associations in Asia gathered in Beijing on May 4–7, 1972 for the preparatory/inaugural meeting of the ATTU, as Gotō had promised. Nevertheless, Gotō was not present there. The arduous trip and the audacious negotiations had taken a toll. He died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm on January 22, 1972. Gotō’s son-in-law, Gotō Atsushi (Gotō’s eldest daughter Kazuko’s husband), attended the meeting, instead. Premier Zhou also invited Gotō’s widow, Suzuko, and other family members to China. Zhou met Gotō’s family alone, separately from the other delegations to the ATTU. Gotō Atsushi states that Zhou said hello to him in Japanese and shook hands. His hand was warm. Zhou told him that the Chinese people would never forget Gotō, referring to the proverb, “When one drinks water, he should not forget the person who dug the well.” Atsushi was touched by Zhou’s heartfelt condolences toward Gotō’s family. When Atsushi heard of the death of Zhou in January 1976, he vividly recalled the warmth of Zhou’s hand that he shook in 1972.41

In compliance with the strong desire of the representatives, the preparatory meeting turned into the inaugural meeting of the ATTU on May 7. Premier Zhou declared in front of all the delegates in the Great Hall of the People that the creation of the ATTU was a great accomplishment and an embodiment of Asian unity, representing the solidarity of the Asian people. He also stated that Gotō had contributed
to the Asian table tennis circles and to the friendship and solidarity of the Asian people, mentioning Gotō’s name more than two dozen times during his speech. Then, he expressed condolences to his family and bowed to Gotō’s widow, Suzuko, with tears in his eyes. The inaugural general meeting elected Gotō Atsushi, who was vice president of the JTTA, as its first president.\textsuperscript{42}

\section*{Sudden Death of Gotō}

By the end of 1971, Gotō was exhausted—after the trip to China and Singapore (the ad hoc TTFA general meeting) in January-February, hosting Nagoya World’s in April, participating in the Sino-Japanese Friendship Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing in May, participat-
ing in the Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing in November, and the negotiations for the creation of the ATTU—among many other tasks he had engaged in. On January 17, 1972, Gotō was heading to the Nagoya Kokusai Hotel to attend a ceremony to celebrate the official government approval for a new civil engineering surveying training school. He had been asked by the civil engineering surveying community in Nagoya to create a training school for them and had worked with the officials of the Ministry of Construction and other government agencies concerned in Tokyo, as hard as possible, as usual. Gotō decided to establish this school on the Wakamizu campus in Chikusa ward, vacated by the relocation of the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT) to the Yagusa campus in the sub-
urb. Upon arriving at the Nagoya Kokusai Hotel, Gotō suffered from myocardial infarction and aortic aneurysm. He was hospitalized imme-
diately; however, five days later, he died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm on January 22, 1972.\textsuperscript{43

Gotō was schedule to meet President Nixon in Beijing at a historic moment in a month. The news of his untimely death caused a sensa-
tion in China as well as in Japan. The evening newspapers immedi-
ately carried his obituaries that day. The \textit{Asahi-shimbun} article wrote that, although he was not a politician, Gotō had correctly perceived the changing dynamics in international politics at play in East Asia and grabbed the momentum for change. When the world heard about the “thaw” between China and the United States, Gotō was suddenly inundated with interview requests by the Chinese and the American reporters to the extent that he had no time to attend the tournaments that he was in charge of. He was the “incarnation of table tennis.”\textsuperscript{44}
On this, one of AIT faculty members, Ōno Yoshio, writes that he was attending a conference in the United States during the Nagoya World’s. When he returned to his hotel after a meeting, a front-desk staff member asked him if he was from Nagoya. When he answered, “yes,” several Americans surrounded him and asked if he knew Gotō. Ōno replied that Gotō was president of the university where he taught. Then, he was invited to dinner on the spot. They told him, “Mr. Gotō is a president that built a bridge between China, Japan, and the United States. Even the U.S. president could not build that bridge.” Ōno felt very proud and gladly accepted the invitation. The next morning, Ōno saw a newspaper article featuring Gotō.

Gotō’s funeral was scheduled for February 2, with Aichi-prefecture governor Kuwahara Mikine (1895–1991) presiding at the funeral services. Telegrams of condolences poured into his house and schools. People flocked to his house to express their sympathy to the family. For instance, Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association secretary-general Shirato Agao received a phone call, informing him of Gotō’s death, on the bullet train during a business trip from Tokyo to Osaka on January 22, just before the train arrived at Shin-Osaka station. Being aware that Gotō had been hospitalized on January 17, Shirato was actually planning to visit Nagoya after his business in Osaka on his way back to Tokyo (Nagoya is located in between Tokyo and Osaka, see map). Hearing the news, he immediately got off the train at Shin-Osaka station and headed back to Nagoya, without attending to his business in Osaka.

In September 1972, Shirato was charged with the task of anchoring the satellite broadcasting of Prime Minister Tanaka’s visit to China on the Japanese public network NHK for five-consecutive days—the sensation of this broadcasting to the Japanese was equivalent to that of the Americans watching the Apollo 11 Moon Landing with Walter Cronkite anchoring on CBS. While following the images transmitted from Beijing, Shirato suddenly saw an image of Gotō on the screen. Shirato definitely saw his face and almost called his name out loud. Shirato writes, the thought that he wanted to share this historic moment with Gotō might have caused this illusion.

Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association director-general Nakajima Kenzō meanwhile writes that real chemistry existed between Gotō and himself. Nakajima states, “I am a lone-wolf type of person and neither like to beg people nor like to boss people around. I met Gotō for the first time on that critical day of January 16, 1971 (see chapter five). Although we exchanged sparks of confrontation, we got along...
well, and thus our friendship began.” Nakajima states that the Nagoya World’s was a historic event in that the tournaments were fought under the banner of a “friendship first, competition second” spirit, which was unheard of in sports circles. This spirit of friendship bore the fruit of Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Nakajima adds, “1971 was also the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, and Gotô went out of his way to host a reception to celebrate the occasion at the Nagoya World’s. There, Chinese delegation head Zhao Zhenghong also gave a speech. Now, I lost a friend with whom I could exchange sparks of confrontation, before I had a chance to return my debt to him.”

Referring to the three trips to China that Gotô had made in 1971, Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyûbei states that they were grueling trips for Gotô because all the negotiations with the Chinese officials involved complex and sensitive political issues. Gotô had stressful days all year. Although Gotô seemed bold and brave on the surface, he was actually suffering deeply, being surrounded by opposition and being isolated. When Muraoka heard of Gotô’s death, he could not help but feel guilty; he had driven Gotô to the edge for the sake of building friendship between China and Japan. Although Muraoka had assisted Gotô in every way he could, the ultimate responsibilities fell on Gotô’s shoulders. All the strenuous work and stress to achieve the “mission impossible” shortened his life. Muraoka, however, declares that Gotô’s accomplishments will live forever. Gotô was a man of decisions and actions. He overcame the opposition from various circles at home and abroad and endured the cold treatment of the Satô cabinet and the Japanese sports community. His conviction and determination blossomed in Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Gotô was one of the first Japanese who actually built friendship between China and Japan, contributing to the development of peace in Asia.

One of Gotô’s roommates at the Hamamatsu High School of Technology, Mashiko Shô, saw Gotô for the last time at the alumni meeting held after the Nagoya World’s. Mashiko writes that Gotô was a courageous and decisive leader, and yet he was a decent and down-to-earth person. Gotô was a towering figure in education and table tennis. Yet, he did not brag about the accomplishments at the Nagoya World’s and was just pleased with the outcomes that led to the breakthrough in world diplomacy. Mashiko mourns the death of his five-decades-long friend by stating that he left this world in a hurry as quickly as he had carried out his missions, leaving his friends behind.
Aftermath of Gotō’s Death and ATTU

With the death of Gotō, the process of the creation of the ATTU, which had been expected as early as March 1972, stumbled. No sooner had Gotō died than the pro-Taiwan group in the TTFA mobilized for its drive to undermine the establishment of the ATTU. The new leadership in the TTFA that had ousted Gotō declared, “Now that Gotō died, the negotiations for the creation of the ATTU has become null and void.” Then, strangely, in March 1972, the TTFA abruptly decided to follow the ITTF Constitution and expelled Taiwan. It also launched an “open door” policy, inviting communist members of the ITTF—China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia—as well as Japan, to join/rejoin. These moves indicate the desperate and unsuccessful attempts to preempt the creation of the ATTU on the part of the TTFA.51

When the ATTU held its first Asian Championships in Beijing in September 1972, as many as thirty-one countries and regions participated in the tournaments, including India, the Philippines, and Thailand, which had been the major force of the pro-Taiwan group in the TTFA. In contrast, only five members—Cambodia (the Lon Nol regime), Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea, and South Vietnam—remained in the TTFA. The number of official members in the ATTU meanwhile increased from the original sixteen to twenty-five by April 1973. Then, the ITTF executive meeting held at the Sarajevo World’s in April 1973 decided to expel the TTFA, de facto acknowledging the ATTU as its subordinate organization representing Asia. The ITTF made this decision official at its biennial general meeting held at the Calcutta World’s in April 1975. Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka states that Gotō had longed for this to happen, but he was gone before that. The turbulent aftermath concerning the creation of the ATTU after Gotō’s death demonstrates that Gotō was an embodiment of mobilizing forces for bold initiatives in general, and that he was the essential centripetal force as a leader of the Asian table tennis community in particular. The ATTU has held the Asian championships biennially since its inception and has prospered to this day.52

Meanwhile, following the precedent of the JTFA, the Japan Skating Federation decided to actively promote exchanges with China and invite the Chinese team to Japan in March 1972. In addition, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) decided to readmit China in April 1973, and other international sports organizations followed suit. Finally, after much controversy and debate on
the “two Chinas” issue, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) reinstated China in October 1979, this time as the sole government of China. Specifically, the IOC executive board meeting held in Nagoya passed a resolution on the China-representation issue, confirming the Chinese Olympic Committee as the representative of the Olympic movement in the whole of China, using the national flag and national anthem of the PRC. The resolution in turn designated the Olympic Committee in Taiwan as one of China’s local organizations, which could only use the name “Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee,” with a new flag and anthem different from the original ones, with the IOC’s approval. The resolution was passed by the IOC members with a vote of sixty-two in favor, seventeen against, and two abstentions.53

**Eulogies for Gotó**

*Eulogies from Japanese Political Circles*

At the death of Gotó, a number of politicians in Japan’s national parliament sent eulogies to his family. An HR member from a district in Nagoya, Niwa Kyūshō—in the ruling LDP—states, Gotó told him at the end of 1970, “There is no border in sports. There is no ideology in players. I will invite China to the Nagoya World’s.” Gotó also told him that politicians must have more courage. Niwa felt that if Gotó were a politician, he would have achieved great things for Japan. “Gotó’s belief and courage created the foundations for the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations and Sino-Japanese relations. Gotó showed us what true leader should be. There are many people I respect, but there are few people that I respect and also like as friends. He was one of those rare people. He was truly one in a million.”54

Another HR member, Yokoyama Toshiaki—in the opposition Japan Socialist Party (JSP)—states that Gotó accomplished something that no Japanese politicians and MOFA officials could have. While the JSP had unsuccessfully tried for many years to normalize Sino-Japanese relations, Gotó, who was neither a politician nor a diplomat, created the momentum to end the hiatus. His initiative even changed world history. Gotó adhered to his principles and built trust relations with China and other nations. No ordinary person could have done this. Yokoyama had known Gotó for a long time since the prewar era when Yokoyama worked at the Japan National Railways (JNR), where Yokoyama became its union leader. His junior colleagues took night classes at Gotó’s school to master the skill of electrical engineering, while his
senior colleagues taught there as lecturers. Although the school was small and shabby then, the classrooms were full of energy and spirit owing to Gotō’s enthusiastic management. There was another similar private school in Nagoya, but Gotō’s was better and more famous. The difference, in Yokoyama’s opinion, was that Gotō was always thinking of the school from a larger perspective—how the school could contribute to the society and the nation—whereas the other school president “personalized” the school. Yokoyama states, “One cannot imagine how much Gotō’s school helped and motivated the young workers at the JNR back then. His indefatigable spirit and devotion led to all of his life achievements.”

In addition, an HR member from Aichi prefecture, Kasuga Ikkō (1910–1989), in the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)—an offshoot of the JSP created by its moderate members in January 1960—writes that, as soon as he became chairman of the party (April 1971–November 1977), he embarked on preparations for normalization with China. Then, China-Japan Friendship Association vice president Wang Guoquan happened to visit Japan in August 1971 (to attend Matsumura Kenzō’s funeral services). Kasuga asked Gotō to introduce him. Despite the fact that Gotō was not previously acquainted with Kasuga, Gotō readily agreed, saying, “It would be of special significance for the head of the DSP that is opposed to communism to talk with officials of a communist regime.” Owing to Gotō, Kasuga had a chance to meet Wang, who in turn agreed to accept a DSP delegation’s visit to China. This resulted in Kasuga’s visit to China in April 1972 and his drawing up of a draft Sino-Japanese Joint Statement that became the groundwork for the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in September of that year. Kasuga thought that Gotō would continue to watch over him until the completion of the Sino-Japanese peace treaty (which would not take place until August 1978). The world lost a great leader.

_Eulogies from Other Circles_

Representing business circles in the Chūbu region (central Japan), Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry president/Tōkai Bank president Miyake Shigemitsu states that Gotō was the personification of his belief that sports not only builds physical strength of the body but also helps to strengthen mental capacity and perfect the totality of human development. Gotō had guts and a strong will, as well as a broad capacity to embrace people and passion for his work. All these attributes were
distinctively eminent in him, and yet they all retained a balance among themselves. He attained greatness as a person through strengthening his body and mind. His “sports life” culminated in Ping-Pong Diplomacy. This was a true embodiment of the ideal of a sportsman. Although he burned himself up too quickly, he lived in his ideals throughout his life. In this sense he lived a happy, even an enviable, life.57

The journalist-turned-publisher, Nishida Torio, who knew Gotō for over four decades, writes, when Gotō was confronted with the strong opposition and threats regarding his decision to go to Beijing in order to invite China to the Nagoya World’s, he used to say, “There should be no borders for sports. It is natural for Japan to be friends with its neighbor. If I don’t go to China, who would?” Nishida states that Gotō firmly believed in his decision, adhered to it, and achieved the impossible. What was remarkable about Gotō was that he did not even yield to the Chinese authorities. Those who were on friendly terms with the Chinese government, including Japanese politicians, were intimidated by the high-handed Chinese behavior and gave in to their demands. Gotō was different. He stood his ground during the tough negotiations and succeeded in signing the agreement on his terms. This is what distinguished Gotō from others. This unyielding attitude based on his beliefs and principles earned him respect from Premier Zhou. Nishida writes, on the surface Gotō appeared domineering and stubborn, and yet, deep down, he was sensitive and meticulous, paying attention to the details in execution. He was quick to perceive the situation and dealt with it efficiently, and also took care of his family and friends with the same attentiveness.58

One of the directors of the Japan Sports Association, Aoki Hanji (Japanese Olympic Committee president, 1969–1973; 1916–2010), writes, Gotō risked his own life, went to China and Singapore, and succeeded in having China participate in the Nagoya World’s and opening the “bamboo curtain.” Owing to Gotō’s initiative, other sports associations in Japan, including basketball, field and track, swimming, and volleyball, began exchanges with China. In addition, the “curtain” not only opened in Sino-Japanese relations but also began a new stage in world politics, producing the by-product of President Nixon’s visit to China. No other Japanese could have accomplished this feat. Gotō’s unique charisma and vitality made all this possible. He was a man of sincerity and tenacity.59

The chiropractor, Hachiyama Hiromichi, who had treated Gotō’s osteoarthritis since 1966, accompanied Gotō to the Munich World’s in 1969 as the Japanese team doctor, despite the fact that closing his practice for a
month and half was a matter of life-and-death for him. Yet, Hachiya did so because he knew how much Gotō was devoted to the Japanese team players to compete on the world scene. At the ITTF general meeting at the Munich World’s, Hachiya witnessed how strongly Gotō argued for bringing the 1971 world championships to Japan (the Nagoya World’s). It was not an easy thing to do for a Japanese who was disadvantaged with language problems. Yet, Gotō never budged and enthusiastically negotiated with the ITTF officials and delegates on equal standing. Hachiya felt that no other Japanese could have accomplished this success. Hachiya states that the same enthusiasm of Gotō made China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s possible. As a doctor, Hachiya knew how difficult it was for Gotō to go to China, dragging his left leg. However, his will was stronger than his physical pains, and he succeeded in the negotiations with the Chinese officials. When Gotō died, Hachiya felt the same deep sorrows as he had felt when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Gotō left a great footprint in world peace. Hachiya believes that Gotō’s accomplishments deserved a Nobel Peace Prize.

Saionji Kinkazu (see chapter five) states that Gotō was a man of action and determination. Once he made up his mind, he followed through with his decision; but he was also prudent. For inviting China to the Nagoya World’s, Gotō made up his mind after much deliberation. It took enormous courage to make that decision in the complex political situation both at home and abroad. Yet, once he made up his mind, he was determined to follow through with it and actually succeeded in realizing it. Many people questioned his decision and criticized his “one-man” style. However, it took his determination and character for the Nagoya World’s to accomplish what it did accomplish. Saionji calls Gotō the “father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy” because his initiative spawned Ping-Pong Diplomacy and realized the Sino-U.S. rapprochement that shook the world. He was the driving force for changing the tidal wave in international relations and also opened a new page in Sino-Japanese relations. Saionji wrote in September 1974, “I think of Gotō again, as I will be flying to Beijing tomorrow on the very first nonstop flight from Tokyo to Beijing. I wish I could fly with Gotō.”

The inaugural nonstop flight took off on September 29, 1974, on the second anniversary of the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Although Gotō was not on the flight, animals—including a pair of pumas and a pair of crowned pigeons—from Higashiyama Zoo in Nagoya were on that flight, as gifts from Nagoya to Beijing Zoo.
Eulogies from Overseas

Gotô’s family in Nagoya also received a number of eulogies from overseas. They are indicative of Goto’s leadership exercised in the world table tennis community. ITTF honorary general-secretary A. K. Vint wrote that Gotô “was unique in the table tennis world. Blessed with boundless energy he was a human dynamo who did not tolerate inefficiency and extracted from all connected with him full co-operation in all his activities. It was a great experience to see him at work in the organization of the 31st World Table Tennis Championships. His daily conference with the organizers, impatient with shortcomings, always producing sound answers to almost insoluble problems, full of generous actions, hospitable to the extreme and never flagging in his own personal enthusiasm were the key to the outstanding success of the 1971 World Championships.”

Referring to Gotô’s tenure of office as deputy president of the ITTF as “tragically short,” ITTF president H. Roy Evans wrote, “We knew him first as the newly emerging influence within the Japan Table Tennis Federation [Association], and it soon became clear that here was a man whose enthusiasm and power allowed no obstacles to interfere with his plans. Upon his shoulders fell all the problems of the 31st World Championships in Nagoya in 1971, and the fact that those Championships were so successful was a tribute to his own enthusiasm and the industry he generated in those around him…Within the World governing body we were…aware of his determination to lead Japanese and indeed Asian table tennis to the top in organization and playing skills. It was no surprise when he was so overwhelmingly elected as my Deputy and we expected that he would bring wise counsel and constant energy to the Office…It was a moving experience to be present at his funeral, and to witness the sincerity with which so many mourners paid tribute to this extra-ordinary man. To have known him was an experience, an experience which makes memory all the richer.”

* * *

From these eulogies loom large the character of a person who turned the impossible into reality many times throughout his life. Gotô’s hard work shortened his life; however, he realized larger-than-life achievements in his sixty-five years many more times than anyone could have expected in one life. He made immeasurable contributions to engineering education and world friendship through table tennis.
“A tiny ball turned the big globe upside down.” A small ping-pong ball played a big role in world politics four decades ago. A historic event occurred at the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, in March–April 1971 (the “Nagoya World’s”). Ping-Pong Diplomacy launched at the Nagoya World’s broke the ice between China and the United States and became the catalyst for opening the “bamboo curtain” and for Sino-U.S. rapprochement. It brought détente to East Asia and ushered in a new era in international politics. It also paved the way for normalization of Sino-Japanese relations.1

China’s national table tennis team and its U.S. counterpart met at the Nagoya World’s and made unprecedented exchanges of verbal communication. On the last day of the championships, the Chinese team abruptly invited the U.S. team to visit China before going home in April 1971. The inner circles in the Nixon administration, which had been engaged in its secret China initiative, correctly perceived this invitation as China’s signal for its readiness to receive an official U.S. envoy to China. President Richard Nixon, who had sought to find a way to approach China through third-country channels unsuccessfully for two years, jumped on this opportunity and, on the very day he received the news about Nagoya, decided to visit China himself sometime in the near future. Three months later, Nixon’s national security advisor Henry Kissinger secretly visited China, as his special envoy (Polo I), which resulted in Nixon’s announcement on July 15 of his intention to visit China—the “announcement that shook the world.” Kissinger’s second visit to China in October 1971 (Polo II) was followed by Nixon’s visit to China in February 1972 (see chapter eight).
This diplomatic breakthrough is referred to as Ping-Pong Diplomacy because China used ping-pong, or more formally table tennis, as its diplomatic vehicle for forging a political thaw between China and the United States and making a dramatic comeback in the international community after its self-imposed isolation during the Cultural Revolution. It is generally thought that Premier Zhou Enlai conceived the idea of Ping-Pong Diplomacy by using the Nagoya World’s as a stage to deploy this foreign-policy overture. There was, however, a Japanese who played an indispensable role in this process. He was Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) president Gotō Kōji. Gotō dared to visit Beijing in order to settle the terms of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s amidst stormy opposition, both domestic and foreign. Without Gotō’s China initiative, China could not have participated in the Nagoya World’s and Zhou could not have launched Ping-Pong Diplomacy there. As a corollary, without Gotō’s decision, Kissinger could not have visited Beijing in 1971 and Nixon could not have visited China in 1972. It was Gotō’s action that made the unthinkable diplomatic breakthrough possible. For this reason, Gotō is referred to as the “father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy.” Nevertheless, this fact is virtually unknown outside China and Japan, except for those who are familiar with international table tennis history. It is also almost forgotten in Japan. It is high time to set the record straight and give Gotō due credit for this pivotal role, if belatedly four decades later.

It should be noted that International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) president H. Roy Evans also played a role for Ping-Pong Diplomacy. He stopped over in Beijing on his way to Nagoya, at the Chinese government’s request, and suggested to Premier Zhou that China invite some of the participating teams in the Nagoya World’s to ad hoc invitation tournaments in Beijing, as a quick measure for China’s reentry into the world scene. Evans himself, however, wrote in 1999 that he was surprised to find out that this invitation was extended to the U.S. team (see chapter seven). ITTF president Evans’ input, albeit of importance, does not change the fact that when it came to Ping-Pong Diplomacy, nothing would have happened were it not for Gotō’s initiative to invite China to the Nagoya World’s in the most adverse situation. Through his courageous decision and action, Gotō inadvertently became a messenger of peace between China and the United States.

Other factors also played a role in Ping-Pong Diplomacy, such as Premier Zhou’s intervention in favor of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s after the Chinese officials and team members had second thoughts about the participation due to the Cambodia issue (the
Sihanouk group’s concern over China’s participation), Chairman Mao’s last-minute change in his decision in favor of inviting the U.S. World Team to China, and the Nixon administration’s removal of the ban on entry into China with the U.S. passports. All these fortuitous moves added up and resulted in the U.S. team’s visit to China in April 1971, culminating in Sino-U.S. rapprochement. Nevertheless, this whole process began with and originated in Gotō’s decision to visit China and settle the terms of the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World’s. Without his visit to China in January 1971, there would have been no such thing as Ping-Pong Diplomacy in world history. Here lies the cardinal importance of Gotō’s initiative. This book has focused on Gotō’s initiative also because his efforts have been almost overlooked in the English literature, with a few exceptions noted in chapter two.

Significance of Gotō’s China Initiative

It is interesting to note that this historic diplomatic breakthrough was made possible by a Japanese who was neither a politician nor a diplomat. Gotō was an educator, school owner, and civic leader of numerous sports associations. Although Gotō was not a foreign policy maker, he foresaw the changing political dynamics in East Asia and made an inconceivable—and a politically incorrect—decision at that time. In other words, the real impetus for Sino-U.S. rapprochement came unexpectedly from a nonpolitical source. During 1969–1970, two seemingly unrelated initiatives toward China were under way. President Nixon had been groping for a means to improve relations with China through third-country channels unsuccessfully since his inauguration in 1969. Premier Zhou too was contemplating a way to approach the United States in the web of triangular relations among China, the Soviet Union, and the United States in East Asia. The expansion of the Vietnam War into the Indochina peninsula—Cambodia and Laos specifically—as well as the Taiwan issue, however, kept China from responding positively to Nixon’s China initiative.

JTTA president Gotō meanwhile decided to invite China—the past world champion from 1961 to 1965—to the Nagoya World’s in order to make the championships true to its name. Nevertheless, China’s participation stumbled on a political issue—the “two Chinas” issue. China would not participate unless the JTTA acknowledged that China was the sole legitimate government of China. In order to break the impasse, Gotō decided to go to Beijing to negotiate the terms of
China’s participation directly with the Chinese officials. Thus, the
two initiatives toward China—one by Nixon and the other by Gotō,
with different motivations and purposes—were in progress simultane-
ously. Nevertheless they had a common thread beneath the surface; to
open China. Zhou, who had been contemplating China’s reentry into
the international community and was searching for a face-saving way
for China to approach the United States, saw the opportunity in the
Nagoya World’s and grabbed it. The event offered a perfect venue for
China because it was a nonpolitical event and did not have to directly
involve U.S. official policy makers. Thus, the two seemingly unrelated
initiatives converged at the Nagoya World’s and culminated in Sino-
U.S. rapprochement.

Some might argue that Sino-U.S. rapprochement was bound to hap-
pen regardless of Gotō’s initiative. Skeptics might argue that the inter-
national environment was in his favor—both the United States and the
Chinese governments were groping for a way to approach each other
according to their own national interest. Sino-U.S. rapprochement
was therefore simply a matter of time. Were it not for Gotō, someone
else would have broken the ice in Sino-U.S. relations sooner or later.
Nevertheless, it is important to note that nobody was able to make it
happen until Gotō did—the situation concerning the lingering issues
among major powers in East Asia had not changed yet. The United
Nations (UN) General Assembly had not accepted China as the sole
legitimate government of China yet. The bottom line is that the Nixon
administration’s China initiative was not working. Gotō’s initiative
created the momentum for the diplomatic breakthrough.

Others might argue that being a private citizen gave Gotō an advan-
tage because he was not subject to restrictions government officials
might face in dealing with the Chinese officials. This, however, did
not diminish the enormity of difficulties that Gotō faced in negotiating
with the Chinese. For Chinese officials, it did not make a difference
if the negotiator were a private citizen or a government official. The
Chinese officials imposed the same conditions and demands: the “three
political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations.” Moreover,
Gotō had to deal with the Chinese officials without any support from
the Japanese government. Despite the disadvantage, Gotō succeeded in
arranging for the right venue at the right time and at the right place
for China to launch Ping-Pong Diplomacy. There was no better place
for China than the Nagoya World’s to conduct “people’s diplomacy.”
Sino-U.S. rapprochement would have happened eventually without
Gotō’s initiative, but later, certainly not as early as 1972. To use an
analogy by Zheng Yueqing, Gotō, as the supreme commanding officer of the Nagoya World’s, single-handedly constructed the stage for a grand play, called Ping-Pong Diplomacy, in the most adverse conditions, which Premier Zhou directed.2

Or, to quote a Japanese saying, “watari ni fune” (a boat at the river crossing—good luck in a predicament), the Nagoya World’s was the boat at the river crossing, and Gotō was the boatman to navigate the rapids. Premier Zhou and President Nixon got on the boat and reached the shore of an open China.

**Significance of Ping-Pong Diplomacy**

As the U.S. Table Tennis Foundation (USTTF) editorial writes, the significance of Ping-Pong Diplomacy lies in the fact that it gave China a good opportunity to launch an unprecedented foreign policy overture under the guise of a sports event, which required no direct and formal contact with the U.S. government (“people’s diplomacy”), in order to achieve the goal of reentering the international community after having gone through the devastating Cultural Revolution and isolated the country from the outside world. In turn, Ping-Pong Diplomacy offered the Nixon administration a fortuitous momentum to its China initiative that President Nixon had been secretly seeking for two years. It brought Nixon a major diplomatic victory, which paved a way for Sino-U.S. rapprochement and contributed to the relaxation of tension in East Asia.3

Gotō, a Japanese private citizen, accomplished what the Nixon administration had attempted unsuccessfully for two years. What were the real reasons for his China initiative?

**Reasons for Gotō’s China Initiative**

During his college years, Gotō set his two goals for his life—advance ment of electrical engineering education through the creation of a university and promotion of international friendship through sports exchanges of youth. His first goal was a natural extension of his father’s mission to strengthen electrical engineering education in the Chūbu (central) region. Gotō indeed succeeded in it beyond his father’s wildest dreams by turning the small vocational school that he had inherited from his father into the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT) and also creating the comprehensive Meiden Academy that encompassed the
education system from the kindergarten level to the graduate level, thereby contributing to the technological industry in the central region of Japan.

Gotō’s second goal was inspired by Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937) who revived the Olympic games in modern times. Gotō longed for international friendship and world peace. His believed that there were no borders in sports and no ideologies among players. He had witnessed the atrocities of war firsthand through his service in the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) during the second Sino-Japanese War; he was not directly involved in the actual killing because he was a logistics officer in charge of the transportation of communication equipment. Gotō was personally opposed to the war and did not even hesitate to tell his subordinates and superiors that the war with China was a mistake. He dared to invite the local Chinese, the enemy nationals, to the table tennis tournaments he organized for his men at the warfront. No ordinary person would have done such a thing. Back home, he secretly organized table tennis tournaments at the Nagoya University Medical School in violation of the National Mobilization Law imposed by the totalitarian regime. The Imperial Rule Assistance Association banned such activities as unpatriotic.

Gotō then lost his infant son during the massive U.S. air raids on Nagoya in March 1945. This became the most tragic personal loss in Gotō’s life. He did not have any other son to pass along his life’s work—he had four daughters. Through these experiences, he genuinely wished for peace between China and Japan. Gotō wrote about his impressions of China after he visited Beijing for the first time in the postwar period, in 1966, as the head of the Japanese table tennis team to the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments: “People in Beijing are kind and personable. They are generous to us as if they have forgotten the atrocities inflicted by the IJA. It is time for the Japanese to repay the debt toward the Chinese people.” Then, after the trip to negotiate the terms of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s in January–February 1971, Gotō stated to the reporters, “I personally wish for normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations to come soon. I wish that I could become a bridge between China and Japan albeit in a smallest way.” His strong wish for international friendship and world peace propelled him to invite China to the Nagoya World’s.

Backed by this belief, Gotō made enormous contributions to the international table tennis community—organizing the Japan team to the Wembley World’s in 1954 against the JTTA leadership, and the team winning three world titles; heading the Japan team to the Stockholm
World’s in 1967, and the team winning six world titles; heading the Japan team to the Munich World’s in 1969, and the team winning four world titles; and finally hosting the Nagoya World’s in 1971. Gotō also took the Japan team to the eighth Asian Championships in Singapore in 1967 and the ninth in Indonesia in 1968, and then hosted the tenth Asian Championships himself in Nagoya in 1970 (see appendix 2). Gotō meanwhile became Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) president in 1967 and deputy president of the ITTF in 1971, the pinnacle of the world table tennis governing body.

In order to achieve these two life goals, Gotō challenged the impossible many times, overcame obstacles many times, and accomplished the “mission impossible” many times. In fact, his life was a constant repetition of facing challenges and overcoming obstacles. What personal attributes distinguish Gotō from others and made him achieve the “mission impossible”?

**Personal Attributes of Gotō Kōji**

**Man of Vision and Conviction**

Several distinctive characteristics loom large from the accounts of those who knew Gotō well. First, Gotō was a man of vision. He had a keen foresight, insight, and intuition. He turned his vision into his life goals. Gotō was also a man of conviction. Gotō’s decision to invite China to the Nagoya World’s was a prime example of his foresight and pioneering spirit. Many Japanese in the political and economic circles had long realized the need to normalize Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, but few took an initiative because of the frozen Sino-U.S. relations. For those few who did take the initiative, the results were not as impressive. In contrast, Gotō took the initiative, followed it through, and almost miraculously achieved a breakthrough, which even a first-rate politician or high-ranking official could not have made. 5

**Man of Quick Decision and Quick Action**

Gotō was also a man of quick decision and quick action. Gotō was a decider, rather than a consensus builder, which is the typical decision-making style in Japan, stemming from the conformist code of conduct in the Japanese society. This did not mean, however, that he did not listen to other’s opinions. On the contrary, he was deliberate and
prudent. He consulted with many people before making his own decision. Once he had made up his mind, however, he immediately put his decision into action, mobilizing his own faculties and those of his staff, and pursued his goal regardless of how difficult the task might be. The Yagusa campus of AIT in a suburb of Nagoya, which is huge even by current standards, demonstrates Gotô’s quick decisions and actions, as well as his grand vision.

Efficient and Meticulous Executer

Gotô was also an effective implementer of the decisions he made. While he was bold in decision making, he was meticulous in the execution of his decisions. His bold actions and proud behavior were reflections of his meticulous preparations. For example, to create a university was an almost impossible task for an individual to accomplish, and people thought that it was a reckless venture; however, through painstaking preparation for every requirement of establishing a new university, Gotô in the end obtained government approval. People attributed the success of AIT to Gotô’s vision, diligence, and intelligence. Gotô valued efficiency and had little patience with procrastination. He had a reputation of being in his office around 7:00 a.m. every morning for more than forty years as a school administrator. After finishing the day’s work, he oversaw the training of student players until midnight. This routine continued after he became a leader of various national sports associations.

Aichi-prefecture governor Nakaya Yoshiaki (1975–1983; 1925–1988), who was president of the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium when the Nagoya World’s were held, states that, Gotô was a decisive and dynamic leader, but he was also meticulous and paid attention to every detail in the actual management of the championships. Nakaya was utterly in awe of the dignified manner in which Gotô dealt with foreign delegation heads, whereas other people were nervous in dealing with guests, especially those from communist countries. Gotô simultaneously paid attention to the smallest details of the day-to-day operation of the championships and to security matters, because of the protests from the right-wing groups against China’s participation. Nakaya states that he did not know any other sports events that were entangled with politics so deeply before. Nakaya committed suicide after the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games, taking the responsibility for the unsuccessful bid to have the games in Nagoya.
Devotion and Strong Will

Gotō devoted himself to his work with a strong will and an indefatigable spirit. He was passionate about his missions and pursued his goals enthusiastically. In fact, he lived by the motto, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” and proved this many times. Gotō miraculously saved the school from the aerial incendiary bomb attacks when Nagoya was hit by the massive U.S. air raids. He jumped into the middle of the fire and fought the fire. He was literally a towering figure in the towering inferno. The armories and all other military facilities adjacent to the school were burned down. Through extraordinary commitment and devotion, Gotō turned a small vocational school with a few hundred students into a university with 8,000 enrollments.9

In many ways, Gotō was an embodiment of his belief that sports built physical strength as well as enhanced discipline and character building of the youth. The small table tennis club Gotō had created in order to elevate the morale of the students produced a national champion, Itō Hirohide, and a world champion, Hasegawa Nobuhiko. Gotō’s passion for sports education also produced the Major League Baseball player, “Ichiro” Suzuki. The economic reporter, Waki Yasumitsu, states that Ichiro’s success with the Seattle Mariners derives from diligence, creative thinking, and a strong will that was nurtured at Meiden High School.10 Gotō’s determination and enthusiasm made the impossible possible. He proved this many times throughout his career and in the end paved the way for a breakthrough that the Nixon administration had been seeking unsuccessfully.

Soft Interior of Gotō

Gotō also had a gentle side. Those who knew Gotō closely note that, although he was generally considered to be bold and domineering, he was actually a sensitive person and was generous and kind to people. During his military service in China, for instance, a new recruit in the IJA, Miyakawa Kaneto, met Gotō in Chunxian in Shanxi province in November 1939. Gotō was already a famous sergeant there. When Gotō realized that Miyakawa was from Nagoya, Gotō grabbed a raw sardine stored in snow and told him to cook and eat it when Miyakawa’s immediate supervisor was not around. Gotō knew that new recruits like Miyakawa were having a hard time in northern China in the winter. Then, as soon as the U.S. occupation forces landed in Japan after the war, Miyakawa lost his job at the Aichi-prefecture
Police Headquarters’ Special Police Department on September 4, 1945. Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) general Douglas MacArthur enforced a sweeping “purge” of Japanese politicians and bureaucrats who had been thought to have any involvement with the wartime regime, referred to as the “Purge from Public Offices” (see chapter three).

After several years of unemployment, Miyakawa ended up working at a restaurant, called Suihōen, in April 1950. Years later, Miyakawa wanted to enroll his son at a college that taught practical skills so that his son could find a job straight out of college. Miyakawa contacted Gotō. Gotō immediately let Miyakawa’s son take an entrance exam and accepted him to the Mechanical Engineering Department of AIT. Gotō also used Suihōen to entertain his guests. Miyakawa spent one of his busiest times during the Nagoya World’s, hosting “Sergeant Gotō’s guests” from all over the world.

A simultaneous interpreter, Watanabe Takeo, who accompanied Gotō to the Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Table Tennis Tournaments in Beijing in November 1971, states that, when the team delegation was staying at the Golden Gate Hotel in Hong Kong on the way back home, one of the players did not eat the fried chicken, the menu for the entire delegation that evening. Nobody, including Watanabe, paid attention to that. At the end of the dinner, however, Gotō noticed the untouched plate of the player and scolded the JTTA official in charge of meals for not giving something else to the player. Gotō told him, “Give the player something else right away. How could you work for me if you do not realize that the player could not eat chicken?” Watanabe was impressed that Gotō, the delegation head, paid attention to such details about the team players and by how considerate Gotō was. Watanabe adds that Gotō had a certain aura that made people want to work for him. Watanabe usually received $100 per day at a conference, but he never asked for payment from Gotō (Gotō did pay him some money). He was happy just being of service to him and juggled his schedule to accompany Gotō’s overseas travels.

These are only two of the countless episodes that show how seriously Gotō took the relations with his colleagues—juniors and seniors. As one of Gotō’s students, Itō Hirohide, stated, Gotō took care of his students and staff for the rest of their lives without any strings attached. Gotō dedicated all of his passions and all of his personal assets to his school and sports. “Gotō was able to say anything he wanted. Gotō was able to do anything he wanted, because he was not motivated by
his personal gains. His goals were higher than augmenting his fame or fortune.14

Thus, two sets of traits of seemingly contradictory character coexisted in Gotô. Under the façade of a bold decision maker with quick actions, he was also meticulous in execution paying attention to details. Under the façade of a domineering figure with fierce dispositions, he was also gentle and caring.

*Personal Attributes for Leadership*

All these personal attributes of Gotô point toward the essential quality of a leader. Gotô was a born leader. He was physically fit and tall. He had a dignified look with razor sharp eyes like a hawk, reflecting his resolute character. Just his appearance was enough to silence other people. In addition, his words were authoritative and his deeds were bold. He was charismatic and dynamic. Yet, he was also gregarious and sociable. He had a certain aura that made people want to do anything for him. He expected perfection from his workers, but he was also generous and took good care of them. Thus, he had many loyal colleagues and followers.15

If the three essential attributes of leadership are vision, decisiveness, and execution, Gotô had them all. All of his classmates who knew Gotô closely noted his exceptional leadership abilities—such as organization and fund-raising skills, as well as a charismatic disposition with domineering and yet personable characters. Gotô was equipped for conceiving larger-than-life ideals and making the elaborate planning that was necessary to achieve grand goals. All these leadership attributes were utilized in the creation of AIT, in the growth of Japanese table tennis to a world-class level, in the success of the Nagoya World’s, and finally in the creation of the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU).

One of the faculty members of AIT, Shibayama Shigeo, states that no ordinary Japanese could become a leader of an international organization, as Gotô did at the ITTF, where numerous first-class candidates compete for the leadership positions amidst all the national interests and stakes, complicated by the organization’s internal power struggles. Such attributes as brightness and smartness, planning and organization capability, eloquent speech and persuasiveness, and respectable appearances are not enough to earn respect from officials of various national and regional table tennis associations in the world. Gotô was elected as deputy president of the ITTF also because he was frank and open (he had a sense of humor), warm and sociable, as
well as being quick to decide and act, commanding superb leadership skills, and being an energetic pragmatist. Shibayama also states that Gotō devoted all of his energy, faculties, passion, and resources to promoting international exchanges in table tennis, even losing time to eat and sleep. It is, therefore, not surprising to see that the table tennis circles all over the world were at a loss with the sudden departure of a huge, shining star.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Dedication of Family}

A number of Gotō’s colleagues, friends, and students mention how devoted his wife, Suzuko, and his daughters were to him. Suzuko took care of students, who lived in the school dormitory as if they were part of her own family, feeding them when food was scarce and taking them out. She made preparations for school holiday events and trips. She also took care of visitors, of which Gotō had many, as houseguests—Gotō could not afford to put them in a hotel. Gotō owed his success in no small part to Suzuko’s dedication and selfless work. One of his longtime friends, Mukaibara Kazuo, states that Gotō cried four times in his life: when he failed to advance to the next grade at the middle school (tears of embarrassment); when Suzuko found out about his extramarital affairs (tears of remorse—he entertained his guests at geisha houses, and he had associations with some of the geisha girls, which was a common practice of successful Japanese men at that time); when Suzuko pleaded with him in tears after he received his conscription order for the third time (tears of sympathy); and when his son died during the massive U.S. air raids on Nagoya (tears of sorrow).\textsuperscript{17}

Gotō had four daughters in addition to the son who died in infancy. The two elder daughters, Kazuko and Haruko, helped their father by doing administrative work, taking care of students, and sometime even teaching middle school classes. Haruko states that her father had a certain dignified manner about him to make people listen to him. When she was a child, he was a domineering figure, so much so that she hid when he came home. On rare occasions they watched TV together; then she jumped up with fear if he just sneezed (this was a typical relationship between children and fathers at that time in Japan, when fathers had almost absolute authority at home). Yet, she has no memory of being scolded by her father, and he was a most reliable person in case of need to his family and friends. Haruko and her sister did not even stop for a moment to ask why they were working so very hard to help
with their father's work, sacrificing themselves. It was part of a natural and expected family duty, and they were proud of it.

In summary, exercising his faculties to the fullest, along with the help of his family, staff, and supporters, Gotō achieved his two life goals. His life was challenge after challenge because he imposed larger-than-life goals upon himself. Once Gotō cleared a challenge, he found another challenge, and completed the missions one by one. All the leadership abilities and negotiation skills honed through creating Meiden Academy and AIT and presiding over numerous sports organizations then culminated in and were tested by the Nagoya World’s, and Gotō succeeded in it with flying colors. His belief in building international friendship and peace through sports materialized in Ping-Pong Diplomacy. It realized the return of China to the international community even before the United Nations recognized it as the sole legitimate government of China.

Overall, Gotō not only contributed to engineering education but also to world peace through table tennis. His commitment and devotion bore fruit in the Sino-U.S. rapprochement and the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Gotō facilitated a diplomatic breakthrough that the political leader of the most powerful country in the world or the most tactful diplomat could not. This was only possible with a man of stature, who was equipped for quick decisions and actions, as well as having fortitude to follow through with the decisions, backed by firm conviction and vision. With all the charismatic attributes and leadership skills, Gotō would have made a great politician; however, as the only living son of Gotō Takasaburō, he succeeded to the school his father founded. Therefore, he set his life goals—to build a university of technology and to promote table tennis for international friendship and peace—and he did just that. Gotō was an embodiment of far-reaching vision, strong determination, quick decisions, and efficient execution. He exercised outstanding leadership. Gotō was a quintessential pioneer and a civic leader. He demonstrated that sports can transcend differences in politics, economics, religion, and race, and can build true friendship among the peoples of the world.

**Aftermath of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement**

While the United States and Japan normalized their relations with China, establishing official diplomatic relations with the latter was another matter. Despite the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, Sino-U.S.
relations still suffered from China’s insistence on the “One China, Taiwan being part of China” stance and the continued U.S. commitment to Taiwan. The Nixon administration had only acknowledged in the Shanghai Communiqué in February 1972 that it would not object to such a claim on China’s part. Sino-Japanese peace treaty negotiations meanwhile stumbled on China’s insistence on the “hegemonic clause” to be included in the treaty. In the end, it took seven years after President Nixon’s visit to China in February 1972 for the U.S. government to establish formal diplomatic relations with China in January 1979. It took six years after Prime Minister Tanaka’s visit to China in September 1972 for the Japanese government to sign the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty in Beijing in August 1978, finally officially ending the second Sino-Japanese War.20

By the time Japan and the United States established official diplomatic relations with China, all the principal players in the negotiations were gone. JTTA president Gotō died on January 22, 1971, a month before President Nixon’s visit to China. As Premier Zhou had wondered whether Nixon would be in power at the time of the bicentennial of the United States, Nixon resigned in August 1974 before the bicentennial. Zhou himself died in January 1976 without seeing the U.S. celebration. Then, Chairman Mao Zedong followed him in September 1976. Foreign Minister Fukuda Takeo in the reshuffled third Satō cabinet (July 1971–July 1972) meanwhile had become prime minister (December 1976–December 1978) and exchanged the already ratified Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty with Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping in Tokyo in October 1978.21

Final Assessment

In retrospect, had Gotō not become president of the JTTA in 1968, the Sino-U.S. rapprochement would not have happened in 1972. No other Japanese would have taken the bold initiative the way Gotō did at a time when Japan had no diplomatic relations with China. No other Japanese would have gone to Beijing and negotiated the terms of China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s the way Gotō did. It took a man of courage and conviction of Gotō’s stature to take that initiative and to follow through it. Gotō was at the right time, at the right place, and with the right leadership attributes. As many studies on leadership have suggested, the timing also plays a role in making a great leader. Gotō was right there to offer China an optimal venue to
stage its reentry into the international community. And yet, despite the utmost conciliatory gesture on the part of Gotō, China still imposed unreasonable demands on him, and the negotiations deadlocked. Gotō stood his ground firmly and earned the respect of Premier Zhou, and they reached an agreement.

Gotō’s son-in-law, Atsushi states, Gotō’s decision to visit Beijing became the “origin” of China’s return to the international stage. To invite China, abandoning Taiwan, was an extremely risky decision to make in 1971—before the UN General Assembly’s decision to do so—but Gotō chose the harder path. It was almost like a bet, but Gotō believed in his mission. Premier Zhou correctly understood Gotō’s mission and accepted his terms after the negotiations had failed. Atsushi states that the “decision at Beijing” made by Gotō and Zhou bore fruit in the Sino-U.S. rapprochement and the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations.22

Gotō played a crucial role in making the Sino-U.S. rapprochement possible as fast as and as dramatically as actually happened. Were it not for Gotō, there is no telling when and how China could have played “people’s diplomacy” card that was comparable to Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Were it not for the Nagoya World’s—which also was made possible by Gotō—there is no telling when and how China could have made a comeback in the international community as fast as it did. In this sense, Gotō is the forgotten architect for this historic diplomatic breakthrough.

Some of Gotō’s acquaintances, including Hachiya Hiromichi, the Japan team doctor to the 1969 Munich World’s, and Hirose Shōgen, who worked at the IJA Aviation Headquarters Nagoya Supervising Division with Gotō during the wartime, think that Gotō should have been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for paving the way for Sino-U.S. rapprochement and détente in East Asia. He also built friendship between China and Japan, whose relations had been disrupted since the end of the war. Gotō was a champion of “people’s diplomacy.” Gotō accomplished what no political leader or foreign policy makers could, and this accomplishment deserved a Nobel Peace Prize.23

Reassessment of Prime Minister Satō’s Nobel Peace Prize

These opinions are worth consideration all the more because the 1974 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to former Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (1901–1975)—as the first Asian recipient of this prize and a coreipient with former Irish foreign minister and one of the founders of Amnesty
International, Seán MacBride (1904–1988)—is dubious and tainted. Sato received this prize primarily for the “three nonnuclear principles” of 1967—the Japanese policy of not to possess, not to manufacture, and not to introduce nuclear weapons—contributing to peace in East Asia. Nevertheless, along with the U.S.-Japan joint statement on the reversion of Okinawa in November 1969, Nixon and Sato had signed a secret agreement to allow the introduction of U.S. nuclear weapons on Okinawa in case of emergencies, despite that fact that the reversion of Okinawa was officially agreed upon under the premise—“no nuclear weapons and under the same conditions as the Japanese mainland.” A scholar of international politics, Wakaizumi Takashi (commonly known as Wakaizumi “Kei”; 1930–1996), who was Sato’s secret envoy for the negotiations for the Okinawa reversion with the Nixon administration, admitted the existence of the secret agreement in 1994 and then committed suicide. A copy of the secret agreement was found in former Sato’s residence in December 2009.

In addition, Nixon and Sato had another secret agreement on the reversion of Okinawa, in which Japan agreed to provide the $4 million compensation that the U.S. government was supposed to pay to the local landlords in Okinawa. In fact, other declassified documents revealed that the total amount of the Japanese provision to the U.S. government on the reversion of Okinawa was $187 million. The Mainichi-shimbun reporter Nishiyama Takichi obtained a copy of the secret agreement in 1971, but the Japanese government arrested Nishiyama in 1972 for leaking the document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Nevertheless, the government has continued to deny the existence of the secret agreement itself even after former MOFA Asia Bureau director-general Yoshino Bunroku admitted the existence of the secret agreement for the first time in February 2006; Yoshino had signed the agreement with U.S. deputy chief of mission for Okinawa reversion negotiations, Richard L. Sneider (1922–1986). Nishiyama meanwhile sued the government unsuccessfully. The issue surfaced again when the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took power in September 2009. Based on the Freedom of Information Act, Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya in the Hatoyama cabinet requested of the MOFA the disclosure of the documents concerning the secret agreements on the reversion of Okinawa. Yoshino then testified in court as a plaintiff’s (Nishiyama) witness in December 2009.

As of April 2010, the Japanese government maintained that it could not provide a document that did not exist, despite the fact that these secret agreements were declassified in the United States after
Conclusion

Twenty-five years and are available at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Only in July 2010 did the MOFA release to the public some of the secret documents concerning the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the reversion of Okinawa. The MOFA then released additional (but not all) documents concerning the reversion of Okinawa and the textile negotiations in November 2010. The revelation of the secret agreements concerning the reversion of Okinawa would seem to invalidate Satō’s Nobel Peace award. Moreover, the reversion of Okinawa was basically in name only. While the Nixon administration returned sovereignty of Okinawa to Japan, these islands have been effectively occupied by U.S. forces to this day, causing countless troubles to the residents, as exemplified by the recurrence of rape incidents of Japanese girls by U.S. marines, and the U.S. base relocation issue resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio as recently as June 2010. In addition, the Satō cabinet made large concessions in the textile trade issue with the Nixon administration for the reversion of Okinawa—it is referred to as “having traded textiles for a rope” (“nawa”) in Japan. Considering the legal and political pandemonium of the secret agreements that still haunt U.S.-Japan relations, the accomplishments of Gotō seem to deserve a Nobel Peace Prize more than those of Satō.26

Reassessment of Japanese Foreign Policy toward China

Looking back over the three decades since the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in September 1972, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asia Bureau Japan Section deputy head, Ding Min, who handled the day-to-day operations of Ping-Pong Diplomacy, stated in 2002, “Chinese leaders, such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, had dedicated their youth to the resistance movement against Japan. Therefore, they firmly believed that China and Japan should never fight with each other. This belief is the foundation of Sino-Japanese friendship. When Premier Zhou stated that Sino-Japanese friendship was not a temporary political scheme, it was not a mere diplomatic rhetoric. He really meant it. He believed that the Chinese people and the Japanese people should be friends for many generations to come.”27

Ding adds that some Japanese government officials and politicians have forgotten the significance of the friendship between the two countries and hopes that nongovernmental exchanges between the two
countries, as well as those at the governmental level, will flourish. Ding was referring to Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s (April 2001–September 2006) visits to the Yasukuni Shrine that honored the Japanese war criminals despite the protests from neighboring countries, including China and South Korea. Japan–China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka Kyūbei deplores Koizumi’s annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, considering them anachronistic and disrespectful to the Chinese sentiment concerning the war, jeopardizing Japan’s national interest and friendship with its neighbors in Asia.  

Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (September 2006–September 2007), a maternal grandson of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, was in turn disrespectful toward the former “comfort women” when he denied the responsibility of the Japanese government in creating the “comfort facilities” at the IJA’s overseas posts. Abe’s insensitivity and denial was such that the U.S. Congress (the House) and some parliaments in European countries, including the European Parliament, passed a resolution requesting the Japanese government to retract the denial and to apologize to the former “comfort women.” Abe abruptly resigned in September 2007 due to fatigue and stress–related illness.  

Then, Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo (September 2007–September 2008), the eldest son of Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo, tried to formulate more balanced relations with the Asian countries, following in the footsteps of his father who built stronger relations with Southeast Asian countries. Fukuda Yasuo also tried to placate China by declaring that he would not make an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and also by formally apologizing to the “Japanese orphans left behind in China,” who were the victims of the second Sino-Japanese War but had been ignored by the Japanese government for decades. However, his cabinet suffered from the “nejire (skewed)” parliament, in which the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) did not have a majority in the House of Councillors (HC)—the nominal upper house of the Japanese parliament, similar to the British House of Lords. The HC even passed a nonbinding motion to censure Fukuda (the HC’s equivalent of the House of Representatives [HR] non-confidence vote of the cabinet) in June 2008—the very first case in which such a motion against an incumbent prime minister was actually passed under the postwar Japanese constitution. Fukuda resigned unexpectedly in September, shy of one year in office.  

Prime Minister Asō Tarō (September 2008–September 2009), a maternal grandson of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, in turn stated in an interview with the former Economist editor, Bill Emmott, when he was foreign minister in the Abe cabinet, “Ah, I don’t know why you Westerners are so surprised by all this tension between China and Japan.
After all, China and Japan have hated each other for a thousand years—why should it be any different now?” Muraoka notes that Aso’s statement is not only incorrect but also insensitive. It is the worst statement a political leader or high-ranking foreign policy maker could possibly make on a neighboring country. Muraoka argues, it is important to consider Sino-Japanese relations from the long-term perspective of two thousand years in the future, not being swayed by immediate and short-term interests. The HC also passed the motion to censure Aso in July 2009. He resigned also shy of one year in office, in September 2009.31

These LDP prime ministers seemed to suffer from the “historical amnesia” syndrome, having forgotten what Japanese militarism inflicted upon the Chinese people and distorting the historical facts. They also seem not to have had long-term perspectives on Sino-Japanese relations. They became the “last of the conservative LDP prime ministers,” at least for now, when the DPJ won a landslide victory over the LDP in the HR general elections in August 2009. In turn, Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio (September 2009–June 2010), a grandson of Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō, showed understanding toward China and South Korea on the “history issues” with Japan—such as the Yasukuni Shrine visit issue, the “comfort women” issue, and the textbook issue in which the Japanese history textbooks whitewashed the IJA’s acts of aggression in Asia. Hatoyama also tried to balance Japanese foreign policy by reaching out to the East Asian countries by proposing a free-trade economic integration of East Asia. Hatoyama, however, resigned abruptly, taking responsibility for failing to keep his campaign promise to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps Air Base Futenma outside of Okinawa (see chapter nine).32

Recurrence of the Senkaku Islands Dispute
Prime Minister Kan Naoto (June 2010–) meanwhile has been confronted with the resurgence of the territorial dispute with China over the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands, in which the Japanese local police arrested the captain of a Chinese fishing vessel that clashed with two Japan Coast Guard patrol boats in September 2010. Both governments had claimed the islands as their own and disputed about the islands and the waters surrounding the islands. While Kan is a DPJ member and his cabinet is mostly made of DPJ members, he followed the LDP’s stance that the Senkaku Islands were inalienable territories of Japan and that Japan had no territorial issue in the East China Sea. The U.S. government has supported the Japanese government position that the islands are Japanese territories and interpreted that they are purview of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.33
In turn, the Chinese government was most upset with the denial of the existence of the territorial issue on the part of the Japanese government. According to the Tsinghua University professor Liu Jiangyong, it was the Japanese government after the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations that first suggested to the Chinese government to settle the Senkaku Islands issue. Nevertheless, Japan changed its position when Foreign Minister Ikeda Yukihiro in the first and second Hashimoto cabinets (January 1996–September 1997; 1937–2004), a son-in-law of Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato, stated that Japan had no territorial issues in the East China Sea. Liu also argues that the Sino-Japanese Fishery Agreement of 1997 stipulates that each government has the right to control only fishing boats sailing under its own national flags in the East China Sea. Therefore, the Japanese government cannot regulate Chinese vessels under Japanese domestic law as it has done in this case.

Although the local police released the captain of the trawler later in September, this incident was blown out of proportion. Large-scale demonstrations in several cities in China, including Chengdu and Xi’an, erupted, reminiscent of the massive anti-Japanese rallies mobilized in major cities in China in April 2005 against the Koizumi cabinet. Because of the lingering animosity toward Japan deriving from Japan’s acts of aggression during the second Sino-Japanese War, a recurrence of this dispute or any of the history issues triggered such explosions of anti-Japanese sentiment. This incident also resulted in the cancellation of high-level government meetings and economic and cultural exchange projects, including Japanese students’ trips to China to see the Shanghai Expo. A popular Chinese writer, Han Han, meanwhile stated on his blog on October 17, 2010 that the anti-Japanese demonstration was a “mass game” orchestrated by the Chinese government; anti-Japanese demonstrations by Chinese people who cannot organize demonstrations over domestic issues are meaningless. His statement was censored by the Chinese government that day.

One cannot help but wonder what a person like Gotō might think of this incident. Would he consider it to be like a childish quarrel over a possession of some prized toy? Would he think that it is an anachronistic dispute in the age of borderless societies? Would he propose “joint control” or a “condominium,” as a symbol of peace and friendship between the two countries, and share the natural resources in the sea? This would also serve as a model for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, if the two countries could share fishing grounds and exploit the resources, such as oil and natural gas deposits, together. This approach would also set precedent for other territorial disputes that Japan has, such as over the Northern Territories with Russia and over Takeshima Island with the two Koreas.
The concept of “condominium” in international law refers to a territory in which two or more sovereign powers share a territory equally and exercise their rights equally without defining the national borders in the territory. Several cases have existed. For instance, Japan and Russia shared Sakhalin Island through the Treaty of Shimoda of 1855, which did not define a clear border on the island. This lasted until 1875 when the two countries signed the Treaty of St. Petersburg in which Japan relinquished its claim to the island in exchange for acquiring sole jurisdiction over the entire Kuril Islands chain. It should be noted that the Northern Territories are located further south of the Kuril Islands chain that Japan had acquired through the Treaty of St. Petersburg and had been inalienable territories of Japan until the Soviet Army occupied them at the end of World War II. Nevertheless, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev visited Kunashiri Island, one of the islands that constituted Japan’s Northern Territories, in November 2010, astounding the Japanese. The reality is that power politics still rules, and the major powers in East Asia appear to be driven by their own national interests; it seems unlikely that they will embrace such a condominium idea.36

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ping-Pong Diplomacy opened the “bamboo curtain” and brought about the political thaw between China and the United States, changing the cold-war framework in East Asia. Ping-Pong Diplomacy symbolized the way in which sports could transcend politics. It demonstrated the possibility of a larger reconciliation through sports when politics among nations were deadlocked. It was an exemplary case of the success of “people’s diplomacy.”37

In retrospect, the ITTF was consistently in favor of China after the communist regime joined the organization in 1952. Gotō decided to adopt the ITTF’s position, instead of that of the TTFA, and chose China over Taiwan. Gotō took the initiative at the cost of his presidency of the TTFA. For this demonstration of strong leadership, Gotō was elected deputy president of the ITTF in March 1971. Gotō continued to work on establishing a new table tennis organization for Asia, the ATTU, thereby settling the “two Chinas” issue in international table tennis circles. Unfortunately, Gotō suddenly died in January 1972 without witnessing the inauguration of the ATTU that May. Had he lived longer, he might have become ITTF president (Ogimura Ichirō, who owed his first world title to Gotō’s strong leadership, did become ITTF president in 1987) and made further contributions to promoting
international friendship through table tennis. The ATTU meanwhile has become the mainstream regional organization for Asia and has prospered to this day.

Goto’s initiative made possible for China the dramatic comeback into the international community. It became a catalyst for China’s reentry in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that it had withdrawn from in 1958 in opposition to the IOC’s “two Chinas” policy. Goto’s decision also facilitated China’s admission to the UN, replacing Taiwan that had been one of the permanent members of the Security Council since its inception. Therefore, China had much for which to be grateful to Goto. Premier Zhou knew this the most and treated Goto and his family accordingly.

* * *

Nearly twenty-nine years after his death, a thirty-year memorial service for Goto was held in the Nagoya Castle Hotel on December 16, 2000, with dignitaries of both China and Japan. China Table Tennis Association president Xu Yinsheng stated that Goto had demonstrated that sports transcended politics and all the differences that divided the world. Xu stressed the need to remember and carry on Goto’s legacy in order to further promote friendship and understanding among people in the world through sports. In April 2011, the Sino-Japanese Table Tennis Friendship Tournaments to Commemorate the Ping-Pong Diplomacy Fortieth Anniversary were held at the Aichi-prefecture Gymnasium, sponsored by the Chinese Consulate-General in Nagoya and the Aichi-prefecture Japan-China Friendship Association. Seven players on the original Japanese team in the Nagoya World’s in 1971, including Shigeo Itoh, participated in this friendship competition. Itoh states that he can never forget the Nagoya World’s as long as he lives.

AIT Meiden High School will celebrate its centennial in 2012. The year 2012 is also the fortieth anniversary of President Nixon’s epoch-making trip to China. To commemorate the occasion, the Metropolitan Opera presented the New York City premier of John Adam’s contemporary opera, Nixon in China, in February 2011, to rave reviews. It is an opportune time to recollect Goto’s accomplishments not only as an educator and school administrator but also as a civic leader in the sports community, who contributed to a pivotal change in international relations in East Asia at a critical time in history. It is high time to learn from Goto’s initiatives in order to build more peaceful and stable international relations in East Asia.
Appendix 1: Chronology of Foreign Policy

Events Concerning Ping-Pong Diplomacy

Oct. 1949  CCP under Mao Zedong establishes PRC (China) in Beijing
          Chiang Kai-shek flees to Taiwan and reestablishes ROC (Taiwan)
Jun. 1950  Korean War breaks out
Oct. 1950  China's PLA fights against UNF
1954–1955  First Taiwan Strait Crisis
Feb. 1956  Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin results in ideological rift between China and
          Soviet Union
Aug. 1958  PLA shells Quemoy and Matsu Islands: Second Taiwan Strait Crisis
Jul. 1963  Sino-Soviet Communist Party Talks fail
Oct. 1964  Sino-Soviet Summit Talks between Brezhnev and Zhou in Moscow fail
Feb. 1965  U.S. forces air strikes on North Vietnam
May 1966  CCP launches Cultural Revolution
May 1968  Paris Peace Conference begins
Aug. 1968  Soviet Army invades Czechoslovakia
          China denounces Soviet Union as "Soviet socialist imperialism"
Jan. 1969  Richard Nixon becomes president
Mar. 1969  Chinese and Soviet armies clash at Damansky Island in Ussuri River
Jul. 1969  United States relaxes some restrictions on trade with and visits to China
          President Nixon declares "Guam Doctrine" and begins withdrawing U.S.
          troops from Vietnam
          President Nixon requests Pakistan and Romania to be intermediaries between
          China and United States
Dec. 1969  President Nixon further relaxes some restrictions on trade with China
          Nixon announces gradual reduction of Seventh Fleet patrol in Taiwan Strait
Jan. 1970  Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw resume
Mar. 1970  Lon Nol deposes Prince Sihanouk in coup d'état in Cambodia
          Sihanouk flees to China
Apr. 1970  South Vietnamese forces (April) and U.S. forces (May) invade Cambodia
          (Cambodian operation)
          Outbreak of civil war in Cambodia
May 1970  China cancels Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial Talks in Warsaw
Oct. 1970  President Nixon meets Pakistani president Khan at White House
Appendices

President Nixon meets Romanian president Ceaușescu and calls China “PRC” for the first time
Nov. 1970

Pakistani president Khan delivers President Nixon’s message to China, indicating his willingness to improve Sino-U.S. relations
Dec. 1970

President Nixon receives Premier Zhou’s message, indicating his willingness to invite U.S. special envoy to China
Jan. 1971

China indicates via Romania that Nixon could also visit China
Feb. 1971

Nixon calls China “PPC” for the first time publicly in his State of the World message

Former Foreign Minister Fujiyama visits China (through March); Premier Zhou hints to Fujiyama about the possibility of a sudden dramatic improvement in Sino-U.S. relations
Mar. 1971

Premier Zhou visits Hanoi and declares that China would retaliate
Apr. 1971

China invites U.S. World Team to China on the last day of Nagoya World’s U.S. World Team visits China

United States issues five-point measure toward China, such as allowing direct trade of nonstrategic items

Premier Zhou sends via Pakistan acceptance of visit by U.S. special envoy, secretary of state, or president

Jul. 1971

President Nixon declares that United States stops isolation of China

National Security Advisor Kissinger visits China secretly (Polo I)

President Nixon declares his intention to visit China (“Nixon Statement”)

Sep. 1971

Lin Biao fails in coup d’état and dies in airplane crash in Mongolia
Oct. 1971

Kissinger visits China publicly (Polo II)

UN General Assembly votes to replace Taiwan with China

Feb. 1972

U.S. president Nixon visits China

Sino-U.S. joint communiqué (“Shanghai Communiqué”)

Sep. 1972

Prime Minister Tanaka visits China and signs Sino-Japanese Joint Statement

Normalization of Sino-Japanese relations

Jan. 1973

Paris Peace Accords on Vietnam War

Aug. 1974

President Nixon resigns

Apr. 1975

Fall of South Vietnam and unification of Vietnam

Jan. 1976

Premier Zhou dies

Apr. 1976

First Tiananmen Incident: Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping loses power

Sep. 1976

Chairman Mao dies

Oct. 1976

Gang of Four Incident

Jul. 1978

China stops aiding Vietnam: Sino-Vietnamese War

Aug. 1978

Foreign Minister Sonoda Sunao visits China and signs Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty

Oct. 1978

Deng Xiaoping visits Tokyo; exchange of Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty

Dec. 1978

Deng Xiaoping solidifies power and launches modernization of China

Jan. 1979

China and United States establish diplomatic relations

Appendix 2: Chronology of Table Tennis
Events Concerning Ping-Pong Diplomacy

1926 ITTF was founded
First World Championships were held in London
1931 Japan Table Tennis Society (changes name to JTTA in 1937) was founded
1949 Japan rejoins ITTF
1952 China joins ITTF
Japan enters World Championships for the first time
Japan wins four world titles—men's singles (Hiroji Satoh), men's doubles, women's doubles, and women's team—at the nineteenth World's in Bombay
ITTF is established and China joins it as “PRC, China”
First Asian Championships in Singapore (Singapore rejects China’s entry)
1953 China enters World Championships for the first time
Romania wins women's singles (Angelica Roseanu) and women's team, Hungary wins men's singles (Ference Sidó), and England wins men's team at the twentieth World's in Bucharest, Romania
Japan did not participate due to financial difficulty
Taiwan joins TTFA and participates in the second Asian Championships in Tokyo
China withdraws from TTFA
1954 Japan wins three world titles—men's singles (Ichirō Ogimura), men's team, and women's team—at the twenty-first World's in Wembley, England
1955 Japan wins two world titles—men's singles (Toshio Tanaka) and men's team—at the twenty-second World's in Utrecht, Netherlands
1956 Japan wins four world titles—men's singles (Ogimura), women's singles (Tomie Okada-Ōkawa), men's doubles, and men's team at the twenty-third World's in Tokyo
Okada-Ōkawa becomes first Asian to win women's singles
1957 Japan wins five world titles—men's singles (Toshibō Tanaka), women's singles (Fujie Eguchi), mixed doubles, men's team, and women's team—at the twenty-fourth World's in Stockholm (world championships change to two-year cycle afterward)
ITTF rejects admission of Taiwan (ROC)
1958 China withdraws from IOC and other world sports organizations
1959 Japan wins six world titles—women's singles (Kimiyo Matsuzaki), men's doubles, women's doubles, mixed doubles, men's team, and women's team—at the twenty-fifth World's in Dortmund, Germany
China wins one world title—men's singles (Rong Guotuan)
1961 China wins three world titles—men's singles (Zhuang Zedong), women's singles (Qiu Zhonghui), and men's team—at the twenty-sixth World's in Beijing
Japan wins three world titles—men's doubles, mixed doubles, and women's team
1962 China and Japan begin friendship tournaments (held annually until 1966)
1963 Japan wins four world titles—women's singles (Matsuzaki), women's doubles, mixed doubles, and women's team—at the twenty-seventh World's in Prague
China wins three world titles—men's singles (Zhuang), men's doubles, and men's team
1965 China wins five world titles—men's singles (Zhuang), men's doubles, women's doubles, men's team, and women's team—at the twenty-eighth World's in Ljubljana, Slovenia
Japan wins two world titles—women's singles (Naoko Fukazu) and mixed doubles
Appendices

Mar. 1967  Japan wins six world titles—men’s singles (Nobuhiko Hasegawa), women’s singles (Sachiko Morisawa), women’s doubles, mixed doubles, men’s team, and women’s team—at the twenty-ninth World’s in Stockholm

China did not participate due to Cultural Revolution

Aug. 1967  Gotô was elected TTFA president

Eighth Asian Championships in Singapore

Apr. 1968  Gotô was elected JTTA president

Aug. 1968  ITTF adopts a provision that only ITTF members can join regional federations and participate in respective regional championships

Sep. 1968  Ninth Asian Championships in Indonesia

Aug. 1969  Japan wins four world titles—men’s singles (Shigeo Itoh), women’s singles (Toshiko Kowada), mixed doubles, and men’s team—at the thirtieth World’s in Munich

China did not participate due to Cultural Revolution

Oct. 1969  Premier Zhou instructs players to resume training

Apr. 1970  Taiwan participates in the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya, Japan

Jun. 1970  Chinese team visits Nepal

Nov. 1970  China participates in Scandinavia Championships

Premier Zhou meets Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association representatives, Nakajima Kenzô and Muraoka Kyûbei, as well as Ogimura, in Beijing

Dec. 1970  JTTA president Gotô makes public his decision to invite China to Nagoya World’s

Jan. 1971  JTTA president Gotô visits Beijing

CTTA accepts Gotô’s invitation to the Nagoya World’s

Feb. 1971  CTTA and JTTA sign Outline of Sino-Japanese Table Tennis Meeting

TTFA president Gotô proposes to remove Taiwan from TTFA at ad hoc general meeting in Singapore; the motion was rejected

TTFA president Gotô resigns

Mar. 1971  ITTF advisory committee rejects proposal to admit Taiwan

ITTF general meeting elects Gotô deputy president

Apr. 1971  China wins four world titles—women’s singles (Lin Huiqing), women’s doubles, mixed doubles, and men’s team—at the thirty-first World’s in Nagoya

Japan wins one title—women’s team

China invites U.S. team to visit Beijing

Canada, Columbia, England, Nigeria, and U.S. teams visit China

May 1971  Gotô visits Beijing for preparatory meeting for Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Tournaments

Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments in Beijing

Nov. 1971  Afro-Asian Friendship Invitation Tournaments in Beijing

Apr. 1972  Chinese team visits United States

May 1972  Creation of ATTU

Sep. 1972  First ATTU Asian Championships In Beijing

Apr. 1973  ITTF executive meeting decides to expel TTFA

China wins three world titles—men’s singles (Xi Enting), women’s singles (Hu Yulan), and mixed doubles—at the thirty-second World’s in Sarajevo

Sep. 1973  Asia-Africa-Latin America Tournaments in Beijing

Apr. 1975  ITTF general meeting officially acknowledges ATTU as its regional organization representing Asia

China wins two world titles—both men’s and women’s team—at the thirty-third World’s in Calcutta

Appendix 3: School Song of Meiden Academy

Lyrics written by Gotō Kōji (English translation by author)
Score composed by Watanabe Keijirō

In the west of the sacred Kakuō wood,
where the Buddha’s relics are honored,
stands a white tower on the green hill, shining in the sunlight.
This is our alma mater that enlightens the youth
This is our alma mater that enlightens the youth

The study of electricity is the foundation of the wealth of the nation
The school strove devotedly for over forty years
for the sake of building a new Japan,
having carried heavy responsibilities
having carried heavy responsibilities

Gazing upon the founder’s statue in the morning
Our school has thrived in a garden lush with green
May the students be blessed with happiness
May the students strive for glory
May the students strive for glory

Classmates studied for three years, extending helping hands,
loading the ship with the laws of the E, C and R* that they mastered
into the high seas in the turbulent waves,
They set sail with a high spirit
They set sail with a high spirit

*refers to E (electric field), C (electrical conductivity), and R (electrical resistance) of fundamental laws of electricity.


Appendix 4: Mission Statement of Aichi Institute of Technology (Composite from Two Sources)

Following in the footsteps of Meiden School, which strove to become a viable and useful institution for the sake of the modernization of Japan in the early twentieth century under the banner of “Sincerity and Diligence,” the Aichi Institute of Technology (AIT) designated “Creativity and Humanity” as its school motto.

Providing an “education for a socially viable workforce” has been a singular goal of AIT since its inception in 1959. AIT since then has pursued the development of a practical education for a new era, while seeking to educate a skilled workforce that will approach every hurdle with determination, in the spirit of challenge, by applying verified technology and expertise and developing well-rounded character.

The educational philosophy of AIT is not only to provide “practical science education” in order to train engineers excelling within their own fields of technological expertise, but also to educate compassionate and considerate engineers who care for humanity and serve the community in accordance with its school motto, “Creativity and Humanity.”
AIT has sought not only to contribute to the technological growth and innovation for Japan as a whole, but also to the revitalization of the central region of Japan, an industrial hub of Japan, which has been known for its creativity and entrepreneurship.

AIT continues to advance in its efforts to support a student body that embraces the spirit of challenge and to enable practical education for generations to come.

NOTES

One  Introduction

5. Author interview with Gotō Atsushi, August 3, 2010; Gotō Atsushi, “‘Pekin no ketsudan’: Shūonrai-shushō to chichi” (Decision at Beijing: Zhou Enlai and My Father), Tōkkyōjin, No. 5, November 30, 2000, 6.
7. Ibid., 35.
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18. “Tokushū: Shinobu · Gotō Köji” (Special Issue: In Memory of Gotō Köji), Tokkyūjin, No. 5, November 30, 2000; Waki Yasumitsu, Sōzō to ningensei: Nagoya-denki-gakuen 90-nen no ayumi (Creativity and Humanity: 90-Year History of Meiden Academy), Nagoya: Meiden Academy, 2002; Zheng, “‘Pinpon-gaikō’ to Gotō Köji,” 34–51.


Two International Political Background


9. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 50.


18. Ibid.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


42. Ibid.

43. Ibid. 

44. Ibid.

45. Nakajima Kenzō, “Hibana o chirashita kōsai” (Friendship that Exchanged Sparks of Confrontation), in Gotō Köji-sensei tsuisoroku kankō-inkai, ed., *Gotō Köji-sensei tsuisoroku*
54. Ibid., 37, 43; Mori, “Pinpon-gaiko,” (p. 216/646) states that the constitutional change was made in 1967; however, the year 1968 seems to fit the other facts better.

Three Gotō Kōji and Meiden School

5. Ibid., 69–77.
7. Sugiyama Bunzō, “Ken no tomo o shinobu” (Recollecting My Kendō Buddy), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-inkai, 19–20; Tanabe Mikio, “‘Wansu’ no sempai” (My Senior Classmate Who Also Got “Once”), In Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-inkai, 32–34; Matsui Tokuzō, “Chūgakusei-jidai no Gotō sempai” (Gotō in the Middle School Years), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-inkai, 42–44.
10. Waki, Sōza to ningensei, 78–89; “Chronology,” 536–537.
17. Waki, Sōza to ningensei, 89–92.
20. “Shōwa to sensō” (Showa [era] and War), Chūnichi shinbun, July 3, 2009.
23. Ibid., 6–7.
24. Ibid., 7–8.
25. “Shōwa to sensō.”
26. Waki, Sōza to ningensei, 119–120.
29. “Gakudō sokai” (Evacuation of Schoolchildren), Chūnichi shinbun, August 15, 2010; “Sengo 65-nen” (Sixty-Five Years after the War), Chūnichi shinbun, August 15, 2010.
34. Waki, Sōza to ningensei, 136–141.
35. Ibid., 141–143.
37. Waki, Sōza to ningensei, 146–148.
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40. Waki, Sōzō to ningensei, 170–176.
41. Ibid., 177–178. The numbers do not add up correctly.
42. Ibid., 179.
43. Aichi Institute of Technology, “History.”
44. Nagoya-denki-gakuen, “History.”
45. Aichi Institute of Technology, “History.”
48. Aichi Institute of Technology, “History.”

Four Gotō and Table Tennis

7. Ibid., 197–198; “Chronology,” 539–543.
11. Ibid., 201–202.
13. Ibid., 234–236.
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21. “Chronology,” 541; “A Comprehensive History of Table Tennis.”
22. “A Comprehensive History of Table Tennis.”
24. Ibid.
26. “Chronology,” 544–546; Katō Yūkichi, “Ichii kanshi” (Adhering to His Ideals and Principles Throughout), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-innai, 432; Waki, Sō to ningensei, 245. The month “August” recorded in “Chronology” (p. 545) appears to be a typo. It seems difficult to go to China in August 1966 after the Cultural Revolution had broken out in May 1966.

Five  Gotō Makes the Decision

214  Notes


15. SAIOnji Kinkazu, “Pinpon-gaikō no umi no oya” (Father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-iinkai, 99–100; “Gotō-kaichō ga hōchū ketsui” (President Gotō Decides to Visit China), *Asahi shimbun*, January 12, 1971.


17. SAIOnji, “Pinpon-gaikō no umi no oya,” 100.


27. “Sekai-takkyū: Sampi uzumaku Chūgoku sanka” (World Table Tennis Championships Embroiled with Support and Opposition), *Asahi shimbun*, February 1, 1971.


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33. Shirato Agao, “Ishun no chikara o iikki ni shūchū su” (To Concentrate on An Instantaneous Flash of Power), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōrooku kankō-ininkai, 112.
34. Qian, Beichā gaikō hiroku, 15.
35. Ibid., 15–16.
37. Ibid.; Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, iii–iv.

Six  Gotō Goes to China

2. Ibid., i–ii, 9–10.
7. Zheng, “‘Pinpon-gaikō’ to Gotō Kōji,” 40–41; Qian, Beichā gaikō hiroku, 17–19; “Nitchū-takkī-kaidan: Nagoya-taikai ni sanka yōsei” (ctta-jtta Meeting Requests That China Participate in Nagoya World’s), Asahi shinbun, evening edition, January 28, 1971. Mori’s article (p. 218/648) states that the first meeting took place on January 26, whereas Zheng’s article (p. 40) and the Asahi newspaper article state that it was on January 27 (Qian’s book does not specify the date). Zheng’s information is based on Mori’s journal of this trip (that Zheng obtained from Mori personally), which states that the meeting began on January 27.
9. Ibid., 42; Qian, Beichā gaikō hiroku, 20.
12. Qian, Beichā gaikō hiroku, 21–23.
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19. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 28–29; “Sekai-takkyū: Sampi uzumaku Chūgoku sanka” (World Table Tennis Championships Embroiled with Support and Opposition), Asahi shimbun, February 1, 1971.


21. Ibid., 43.


27. “Taiwan mondai deno kaichō jinin.”


Seven Nagoya World Table Tennis Championships


4. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 57–59.


7. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 61–62.


12. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 73; Hong and Sun, “The Butterfly Effect,” 433.

13. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 73–75.


15. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 75–76.

16. Ibid., 76–77.


19. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 83–84; Hong and Sun, “The Butterfly Effect,” 434, 436.


22. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 91–92.


24. Qian, Beichū gaikō hiroku, 93–94.


30. Qian, *Beichū gaikō hiroku*, 118–120; Hong and Sun, “The Butterfly Effect,” 436–437. Qian (p. 118) states that the print was “Nature calls me,” quoting its original English words, whereas Hong and Sun write that it was “Let it Be.” This appears to be an English translation by the authors from their Chinese source, in which a Chinese translation of the original “Nature calls me” was given.


32. Qian, *Beichū gaikō hiroku*, 122–123.

33. Ibid., 122; Hong and Sun, “The Butterfly Effect,” 436. Qian (pp. 123–124) identifies the female U.S. citizen who wanted to go to China with the Canadian team as “Leah Neuberger-Thall, a champion in mixed-doubles at the Tokyo World’s in 1956, who was a friend of Canadian team captain Walden’s wife since 1938 and came to the Nagoya World’s with her,” whereas Hong and Sun (p. 436) state that “… it would not be appropriate for the Canadian team leader’s American girl-friend to accompany him to China.”


39. Ibid.


41. Qian, *Beichū gaikō hiroku*, 126–127; Hong and Sun, “The Butterfly Effect,” 438. Both Qian and Nakajima state that the time was around 10:00 a.m., whereas Hong and Sun write that it was 9:15 a.m. The subsequent times referred to by the latter for this series of events correspond to those of Qian and Nakajima, which are for Japan Standard Time.


46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 198.

48. Ibid., 198–199.


50. Boggan, “Ping-Pong Oddity.”

51. Ibid.; Thomas, “Roy Evans.”
Eight  U.S. Response: President Nixon Goes to China


12. Ibid., 23, 33.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 709–710.


33. “Ping Pong Diplomacy 1971.”

34. Apple, “Agnew Voices Misgivings.”


### Nine Japan’s Response: Prime Minister Tanaka Goes to China


15. Ibid., 197–201, 308–309.


17. Ibid.


22. Ibid., 262–266; Ushiba, *Gaikō no shunkan*, 143–144.


25. Nakasone, Tenchi-Yūjō, 265–266.

26. Ibid., 266–269.

27. Ibid., 261–271; Ogata, Normalization with China, 47–55.


32. Ushiba, Gaikō no shunkan, 149–150; Murata, Murata Ryōhei kaikoroku, 233–234. Ushiba writes that the date of his dismissal was June 15, 1973 (p. 150), whereas Murata writes that it was July 1973 (p. 234).


35. “Pinpon-gaikō o unda Gotō Kōji” (Gotō Kōji, Father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy), Asahi shimbun, April 30, 1971.


41. Author interview with Gotō Atsushi, August 3, 2010; Gotō Atsushi, “‘Pekin no ketsudan’: Shūenrai to chichi” (“Decision at Beijing”: Zhou Enlai and My Father), Takkyūjín, No. 5, November 30, 2000, 6.
42. Author interview with Gotō Atsushi; Gotō Atsushi, “Pekin no ketsudan”; “A Brief History of ATTU”; “Shū-shushō, Gotō zen-Nittaku-kyōkaichō no shi itamu” (Premier Zhou Mourns Death of Former JTTA President Gotō), Asahi shimbun, May 9, 1972.
44. “Sekai-takkyū ni shūnen: Gōkai na warai ima wa nashi” (Dedicated to World Table Tennis: That Big Smile No More), Asahi shimbun, evening edition, January 22, 1972.
46. “Ko Gotō Kōji-shi no sōgi” (Funeral of the Late Mr. Gotō Kōji), Asahi shimbun, January 23, 1972; Shirato Agao, “Isshun no chikara o ikki ni shūchū su” (To Concentrate on an Instantaneous Flash of Power), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-ininkai, 113–114.
47. Shirato, “Isshun no chikara o ikki ni shūchū su,” 111–112.
50. Mashiko Shō, “Yonjū-nenrai no tomo toshite” (Friend of More Than Forty Years), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-ininkai, 39–42.
51. “Shin-Aja-takuren kessei wa hakushi ni” (Scrap the Creation of ATTU), Asahi shimbun, January 30, 1972; “Ajia-takuren Taiwan o jomei” (TTFA Expels Taiwan), Asahi shimbun, March 7, 1972; “Nitchū nado 5-kakoku e kamei yobikake” (TTFA Invites 5-Nations Including China and Japan), Asahi shimbun, March 7, 1972.
64. H. Roy Evans, “Wareware no hokori” (Our Pride), in Gotō Kōji-sensei tsuisōroku kankō-ininkai 372–373.
Ten Conclusion: Lessons of Ping-Pong Diplomacy


12. Ibid., 46–47.


34. “Seika-daigaku-kyōju ga kataru Chūgoku no tachiba” (Tsinghua University Professor Explains China’s Position), *Tokyo shimbun*, October 1, 2010.


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