

## Improbable Diplomats

In 1971, Americans made two historic visits to China that would transform relations between the two countries. One was by US official Henry Kissinger; the other, earlier, visit was by the US table tennis team. Historians have mulled over the transcripts of Kissinger's negotiations with Chinese leaders. However, they have overlooked how, alongside these diplomatic talks, a rich program of travel and exchange had begun with ping-pong diplomacy. *Improbable Diplomats* reveals how a diverse cast of Chinese and Americans – athletes and physicists, performing artists and seismologists – played a critical, but to-date overlooked, role in remaking US-China relations. Based on new sources from more than a dozen archives in China and the United States, Pete Millwood argues that the significance of cultural and scientific exchanges went beyond reacquainting the Chinese and American people after two decades of minimal contact; exchanges also powerfully influenced Sino-American diplomatic relations and helped transform post-Mao China.

Pete Millwood is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at The University of Hong Kong. His writing has appeared in *History Today* and *The Washington Post*. This is his first book.

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# Improbable Diplomats

*How Ping-Pong Players, Musicians, and Scientists  
Remade US-China Relations*

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*The University of Hong Kong*



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These many sources of assistance notwithstanding, any remaining errors are of my making.

## Abbreviations

ACLS	American Council of Learned Societies
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CCAS	Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPIT	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPIFA	Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States of America
CSCPRC	Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China
FAS	Federation of American Scientists
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IPR	Institute of Pacific Relations
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NCUSCR	National Committee on United States-China Relations
NCUSCT	National Council for United States-China Trade
NSC	National Security Council
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
PRC	People's Republic of China

PRCLO	People's Republic of China Liaison Office
ROC	Republic of China
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
STAPRC	Scientific and Technical Association of the People's Republic of China
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USCPFA	US-China Peoples Friendship Association
USG	United States government
USLO	United States Liaison Office
USTTA	United States Table Tennis Association
ZGZYWXYJS	Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [CCP Central Committee Document Research Office]