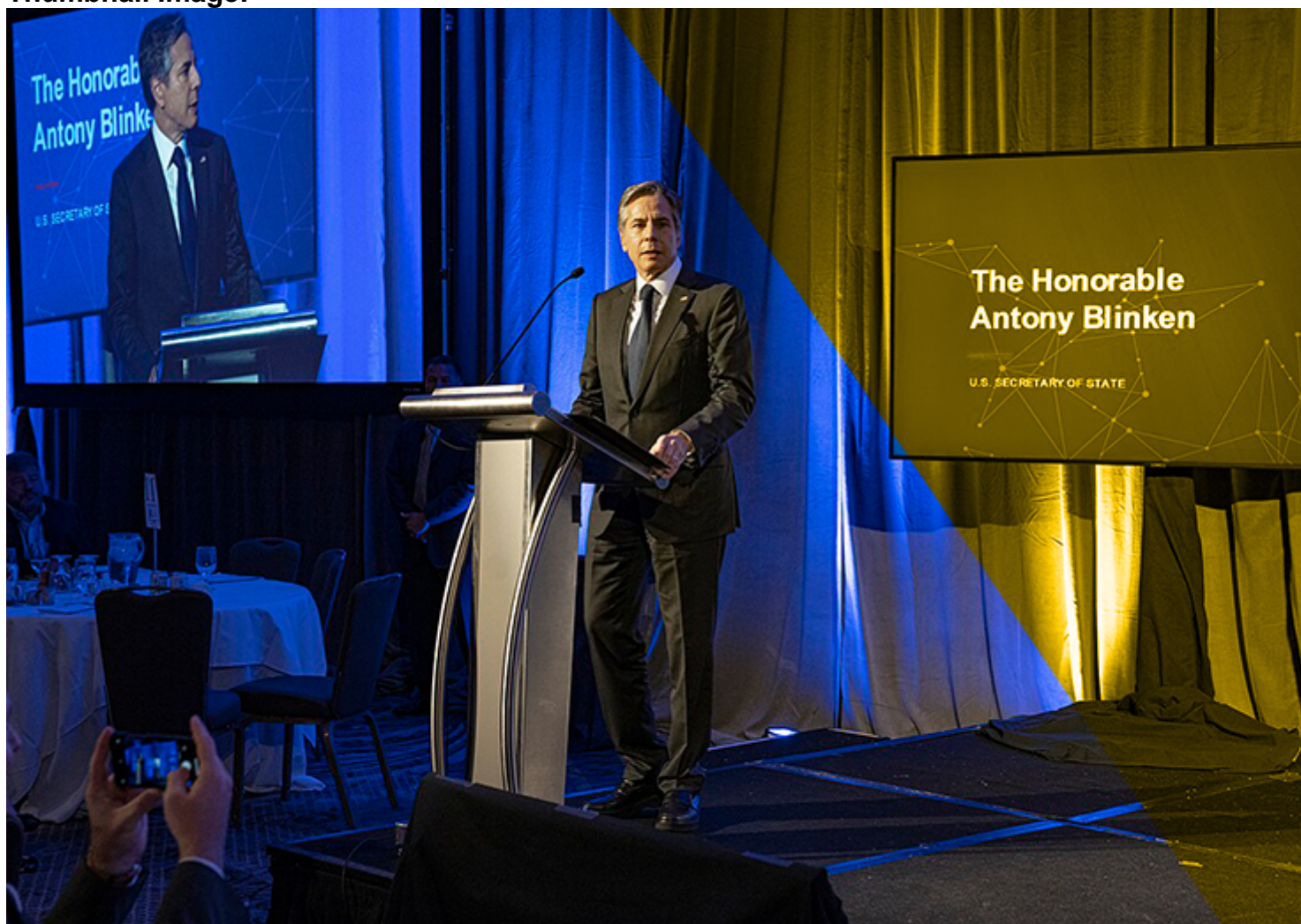


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May 13, 2024 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: America's High-Tech Diplomatic Strategy, President Xi Jinping in France, and Controversial "Orangutan Diplomacy" ^[1]

"Public Diplomacy in the News" is a CPD Blog series by Andrew Dubbins that spotlights noteworthy stories on public diplomacy topics such as cultural diplomacy, nation branding, exchange programs, international events and conferences, digital diplomacy, and strategic global communications.

A new tech-centered U.S. diplomatic strategy. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke at the RSA Conference in San Francisco, a major annual event focused on technology and the politics of cybersecurity. During the speech, Blinken discussed the pivotal role of emerging technologies in shaping U.S. foreign policy and global diplomacy under President Biden's administration. He highlighted the critical impact of AI and other “foundational technologies” on national security, economic prosperity, and democratic governance. Blinken emphasized the importance of international cooperation and governance in managing technology's global implications, particularly in setting standards that promote security and human rights. The speech underscored the U.S.'s strategic efforts to maintain technological leadership and foster global partnerships to navigate the challenges posed by digital and physical security threats.

U.S. Department of State

“Cognac Diplomacy” on display in President Xi Jinping's Visit to France. French President Emmanuel Macron attempted to enhance diplomatic relations with China by adding a personal touch during President Xi Jinping's visit to France. Despite challenging weather conditions with dense fog and snow flurries, Macron showcased his childhood haunts to Xi, hoping to strengthen their bond. They met at a local restaurant, L'Étape du Berger, where Macron presented Xi with a yellow jersey signed by the Tour de France winner and enjoyed a traditional meal that left a positive impression on Xi. In their formal exchange of gifts, Macron presented Xi with two premium bottles of Cognac, Hennessy X.O. and Louis XIII by Remy Martin—in what some are calling “cognac diplomacy”—along with rare books and a sculpted glass vase, symbolizing a soft diplomatic approach to resolving the disputes. However, the effectiveness of these personal gestures in achieving substantial diplomatic outcomes, such as influencing China's stance on the Ukraine conflict, remains unclear. Despite Macron's efforts and the informal atmosphere, Xi provided limited responses to European concerns during the talks.

Roger Cohen / New York Times

Malaysia's “Orangutan Diplomacy” Faces Swift Backlash. Malaysia's controversial proposal to engage in “orangutan diplomacy” by gifting orangutans to countries that purchase its palm oil has come under heavy criticism. This initiative, announced by Malaysia's minister for plantations and commodities at a biodiversity summit, aims to emulate China's panda diplomacy to strengthen foreign relations and trading partnerships. However, conservationists and environmental groups have vehemently criticized the plan, highlighting the irony and hypocrisy of using endangered orangutans, whose populations have been drastically affected by deforestation for palm oil production, as diplomatic gifts. Critics argue that the move contradicts conservation efforts and have urged Malaysia to focus on reversing deforestation and improving sustainable practices in palm oil production. The plan has been met with backlash for not adequately addressing or supporting real conservation efforts, which are essential for protecting remaining orangutan habitats from further destruction.

Heather Chen / CNN

Agility and endurance needed in modern diplomacy. Jon Alterman, senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, joined CBS News to explore the evolution of American diplomacy, emphasizing the increasing need for agility, endurance, and adaptability in modern diplomacy. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's extensive and

demanding travel schedule underscores the necessity of direct diplomatic engagements in managing global issues such as climate change, misinformation, and geopolitical tensions. Participation in significant forums like the G7 and the World Economic Forum illustrates the multifaceted nature of U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, the adaptation to the "CNN effect" and the influence of social media highlight the transformation of diplomatic operations, where diplomats must navigate a constant stream of information while maintaining strategic objectives amid a fast-paced global news cycle.

CBS News

SXSW and its cultural programming expand to London. The South by Southwest (SXSW) festival, originally launched in Austin, Texas, is set to expand to London in June 2025. This expansion follows a successful launch in Sydney, Australia, and will continue to showcase SXSW's signature blend of cultural films, music, entertainment, and technology, along with discussions on pressing global issues such as AI, climate change, politics, and society. The event will take place over a week, utilizing various venues in Shoreditch, a hub known for its creativity, technological innovation, and vibrant culture. London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, and Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer both expressed enthusiasm about the festival's potential to reinforce London's status as a cultural and technological capital.

Mike Fleming Jr. / Deadline
