

Thumbnail Image:



May 27, 2024 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: Pope Francis on Global Indifference, Blinken’s Out-of-Tune Guitar Diplomacy, & the White House’s First Female Head Chefs ^[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.

Pope Francis on “the globalization of indifference.” In a *60 Minutes* interview, Pope Francis stressed the pressing global issues of war, the migrant crisis, and indifference, calling indifference a “very ugly disease.” He urged world leaders to negotiate peace and cease hostilities, particularly highlighting the suffering of children in conflict zones like Gaza and Ukraine. His message extended to addressing migration humanely, advocating for bridges rather than walls. Pope Francis also warned that climate change has reached a critical point, describing it as a “road to death,” and called for urgent action from wealthy, industrialized nations to mitigate its effects. He emphasized the need for radical decisions to protect the planet, highlighting the responsibility of current generations to safeguard the Earth for future ones.

Norah O'Donnell / CBS News

Blinken's guitar diplomacy in Kyiv sparks mixed reactions. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's surprise musical performance in Kyiv during his visit has sparked mixed reactions, with many Ukrainians criticizing it as ill-timed given their ongoing struggles against Russia and frustrations over delayed U.S. military aid. While Blinken intended to show solidarity and empathy through his guitar performance, some Ukrainians, including veterans and lawmakers, found it inappropriate and insensitive, believing Washington's slow response has cost lives. Conversely, others appreciated the gesture, emphasizing the importance of U.S. support and recognizing Blinken's efforts to connect culturally amid serious political discussions. The incident underscores the complexities of cultural diplomacy during a time of conflict.

Alexander Smith / NBC News

The female head chefs behind the White House’s “culinary diplomacy.” Cris Comerford and Susie Morrison, the first female executive chefs at the White House, have adeptly crafted menus for state dinners over the past decade, blending American cuisine with subtle nods to the guest countries. During a state dinner for Japan’s leader in April, their culinary diplomacy included dishes like smoked salmon inspired by California rolls and matcha-infused desserts. Their work supports U.S. foreign policy by showcasing regional American ingredients while aligning with the dietary preferences of dignitaries. For an upcoming state dinner, they will serve Kenya's president a three-course meal featuring chilled heirloom tomato soup, smoked beef short ribs, and butter-poached lobster, illustrating the ongoing role of culinary arts in international relations.

Darlene Superville / Associated Press

U.S.-China AI talks highlight tensions and mutual concerns. The recent U.S.-China dialogue on artificial intelligence highlighted mutual concerns and differing approaches to AI safety and risk management. The talks, prompted by a previous meeting between Presidents Biden and Xi, focused on the potential benefits and dangers of AI technology. U.S. officials emphasized the importance of creating secure and trustworthy AI systems and voiced concerns about China's alleged misuse of AI. In response, China criticized U.S. restrictions on its AI sector and advocated for the United Nations to lead global AI governance. Both sides acknowledged AI's opportunities and risks, with ongoing communication deemed crucial for managing competition responsibly. The dialogue underscores the broader geopolitical rivalry and the broad societal impacts of AI.

Jamey Keaten and Kelvin Chan / Associated Press

US-Kenya tech partnership highlights promises amid exploitation concerns. President Joe Biden's state visit with Kenyan President William Ruto heralded a new era of technological cooperation between the US and Kenya, focusing on semiconductors, clean energy, and artificial intelligence. This collaboration aims to showcase how developed and developing nations can partner in technology, contrasting with China's aggressive courting of African nations. However, the reality of globalization challenges this vision, as American tech companies already exploit Kenyan labor for AI and content moderation tasks under harsh conditions and minimal pay. Kenyan workers, who recently sued Meta Platforms for wrongful termination related to unionizing efforts, highlight the systemic abuse and exploitation by these companies. While the Biden administration plans to support Kenya's semiconductor industry with funding from the US Chips and Science Act, the \$1 million pledged is seen as a modest gesture.

Drake Bennett / Bloomberg News
