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Aug 26, 2024 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: Honoring Aid Workers, the Sports Diplomacy Decade, & AI-Powered Disinformation ^[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.

Honoring brave aid workers on World Humanitarian Day. For last week’s World Humanitarian Day (August 19), in honor of fallen aid workers and frontline staff, the United Nations rounded up reflections from aid workers across the globe on the daily risks they encounter in conflict zones like Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine. These professionals, such as

Louise Wateridge in Gaza, work amid bombings and displacement, yet remain steadfast in their dedication to their communities. In Sudan, Leni Kinzli emphasized the resilience required in such a hostile environment, while in Ukraine, health workers confront life-threatening attacks. Despite these dangers, aid workers persist in their mission to save lives and provide relief to the most vulnerable.

Daniel Johnson / UN News

America's decade of sports diplomacy and global unity. The upcoming decade of sports in America presents an opportunity for sports diplomacy to foster global unity, economic growth, and social progress, according to an editorial in *The Hill* by Stuart Holliday, former United States ambassador for special political affairs at the United Nations. Pointing to the Paris Olympics and other international sporting events, Holliday asserts that the globalization of sports has led to increased cultural exchange and collaboration. With programs like the U.S. State Department's Sports Envoy Program and the rising popularity of women's sports, the impact of sports as a diplomatic tool continues to grow. As the U.S. prepares to host major sporting events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, there is a chance to showcase sports' ability to inspire positive change, much like past Olympic moments of unity and friendship.

Amb. Stuart Holliday / The Hill

Foreign AI-powered disinformation campaigns target American democracy. Foreign actors, particularly Iran and Russia, are leveraging advanced AI technologies to intensify disinformation campaigns aimed at influencing American voters and destabilizing U.S. democracy, writes the Editorial Board of *The Washington Post*. Russia's influence operations have reached new levels of sophistication, using AI-generated bots like "Sue Williamson" to spread false narratives on social media. Iran has also been implicated in similar campaigns, which were disrupted by OpenAI and other agencies. These efforts reflect a growing threat from authoritarian regimes using AI to sow discord and confusion, highlighting the need for better regulation and stronger efforts from governments and social media platforms to counteract these attacks.

Editorial Board / The Washington Post

Tim Walz's China ties spark admiration and political scrutiny. Tim Walz, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate, has a long-standing connection with China, stemming from his time as an English teacher in the 1989-1990 school year. His experience teaching at Foshan No. 1 Middle School left a lasting impact on both students and colleagues, showcasing his dedication to fostering cultural exchange and understanding. Walz's extensive engagement with China, including approximately 30 trips, has drawn attention, both positive and negative, in light of his political career. While some view his experience as an asset for U.S.-China relations, others raise concerns about potential pro-China bias, prompting scrutiny from Republican critics.

John Ruwitch / NPR

Pittsburgh Symphony's European tour showcases "baton diplomacy." The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's 2024 European tour not only showcases their musical excellence but also serves as a form of "baton diplomacy," fostering international business and cultural ties. In addition to performing in prestigious venues, including Salzburg and Vienna, the orchestra

is accompanied by Pittsburgh business and community leaders aiming to establish partnerships with European companies. Touring is seen as essential for attracting top musical talent, reinforcing the orchestra's international reputation, and promoting Pittsburgh's image globally. This year's tour, supported by donations and state assistance, emphasizes the unique role of cultural institutions in strengthening diplomatic and economic relationships.

Jeremy Reynolds / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
