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Sep 16, 2024 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: El Salvador's New Image, Iraq-Kuwait Soccer Matchup, & Fish Diplomacy Setback ^[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.

President Nayib Bukele touts El Salvador’s rebrand. Despite accusations of human rights abuses and authoritarianism, Bukele’s hardline policies and nation branding efforts have reshaped the country’s image and inspired leaders across Latin America to adopt similar

measures, according to a TIME feature story and [interview](#) with Bukele (pictured above). By aggressively cracking down on gang violence and implementing a state of emergency that suspends civil liberties, Bukele has garnered overwhelming public support with approval ratings over 90%. His government has jailed tens of thousands of suspected gang members and rebranded El Salvador as a destination for tourism and cryptocurrency investment, including adopting Bitcoin as legal tender.

[Vera Bergengruen and San Salvador / TIME](#)

Soccer diplomacy boosts Iraq-Kuwait relations after decades of tension. Iraq's World Cup Qualifier football match against Kuwait marks a significant step in the gradual warming of relations between the two countries, which have been strained since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 under Saddam Hussein. For the first time in decades, thousands of Iraqi fans were allowed to attend the World Cup qualifier in Kuwait, symbolizing Baghdad's efforts to use football diplomacy to foster regional integration and mend ties with its Gulf neighbors. Despite lingering challenges such as unresolved maritime border issues, the match is seen as a goodwill gesture by both nations, promoting a spirit of reconciliation through sport. [The game ended in a 0-0 tie.](#)

[Timour Azhari and Ahmed Hagagy / Reuters](#)

Fish diplomacy setback as Bangladesh halts hilsa exports to India. The recent shift in Bangladesh's policy regarding the export of hilsa fish to India marks a significant departure from former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "hilsa diplomacy," a gesture of goodwill that allowed fish exports during the Durga Puja festival. The new interim government has reinforced the ban on hilsa exports to ensure domestic availability, despite Bangladesh's longstanding strategic partnership with India. Public diplomacy through hilsa exports had been a tool to strengthen ties between the two nations, but the current government prioritizes domestic needs, asserting that goodwill gestures will take other forms without compromising local resources.

[Soutik Biswas and Ethirajan Anbarasan / BBC News](#)

Idris Elba calls for investment in Africa's creative industries. In an op-ed for the Financial Times, actor Idris Elba advocates for investing in Africa's creative industries, particularly the film sector, as a means to drive economic development and reshape the continent's global narrative. Elba emphasizes the power of storytelling to influence perceptions and create opportunities, drawing parallels with the success of Korean pop culture. He calls for cross-border collaboration among African filmmakers, improved distribution networks, and strategic government incentives to build a sustainable creative economy that can compete internationally, while celebrating Africa's rich cultural heritage.

[Idris Elba / Financial Times](#)

TIME lists the hundred most influential leaders in AI. The 2024 TIME100 AI list highlights the most influential leaders in the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence. Compiled through interviews and consultations by TIME's editors, this year's list includes a diverse group of figures, from corporate leaders like Google CEO Sundar Pichai to privacy advocates like Signal President Meredith Whittaker. The list reflects the growing influence of AI in various industries, as well as ongoing concerns over safety, particularly following the leadership

changes at OpenAI. With 91 new entries, the list underscores how quickly AI is transforming global business, technology, and policy landscapes.

TIME
