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## **Public Diplomacy in the News: Jimmy Carter's Diplomatic Legacy, AI Year in Review & Rugby Diplomacy** <sup>[1]</sup>

*“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.*

**Jimmy Carter's diplomatic legacy shapes U.S. foreign policy.** Jimmy Carter's presidency and diplomatic legacy offer a study in the transformative power of ethical foreign policy and diplomacy, writes David Skidmore for the *Missouri Independent*. Despite his one-term

presidency and low approval ratings upon leaving office, Carter's diplomatic initiatives significantly impacted global human rights and peacemaking. By championing human rights, Carter restored America's moral stance in the world post-Vietnam and Watergate, contributing to the global spread of democratic values. His strategic use of diplomacy effectively managed conflicts and fostered peace, exemplified by the SALT II treaty, Panama Canal treaties, diplomatic recognition of China, and the Camp David Accords. Although criticized for perceived weakness, Carter's focus on diplomacy over military strength has left a lasting influence on international relations, highlighting the enduring value of diplomacy in American foreign policy.

David Skidmore / Missouri Independent

**AI year in review.** 2024 marked a significant year in the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), setting the stage for potentially greater leaps in 2025 as the United States and its allies compete with China in the AI race. Jeffrey Brown, in a segment for PBS, traced the year's notable developments, including significant progress in self-driving technology by companies like Waymo and Tesla, and the introduction of advanced AI models capable of creating highly realistic videos and performing complex reasoning tasks. These technologies are evolving rapidly, but challenges such as high costs and technological limitations persist, hindering more widespread application. Looking ahead, experts predict major advancements in robotics and AI-driven scientific research, which could fundamentally alter our interaction with technology and lead to discoveries across various scientific fields. Despite these advancements, the full impact and trajectory of AI development remain uncertain, even among top researchers.

Jeffrey Brown / PBS

**Australia launches rugby diplomacy to counter China's influence in Indo-Pacific.**

Australia has launched an innovative 'rugby diplomacy' initiative to bolster its influence in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and counter China's growing sway in the Indo-Pacific region. By investing A\$600 million over ten years to establish a rugby league team in PNG, which will compete in the Australian league by 2028, Australia aims to solidify its ties through cultural and sporting links. This initiative is part of a broader strategy that includes a bilateral security pact ensuring Australia's role as PNG's main security provider. The deal, reflective of the Cold War-era "ping pong diplomacy" between the U.S. and China, emphasizes strategic trust, with stipulations to withdraw funding if PNG engages in counteracting security agreements with China. The strategy represents a blend of soft and hard power tactics, aiming to extend Australia's geopolitical influence while promoting rugby league's cultural and economic benefits to PNG.

Nic Fildes / Financial Times

**Olympic ban threatens hockey star's final shot at Winter Games.** As the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina approach, NHL players are set to return after a 12-year hiatus, but Russian star Alex Ovechkin may miss the opportunity to compete due to ongoing sanctions against Russia by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). These sanctions, a response to Russia's military actions in Ukraine and their claims over athletes from seized territories, may prevent Ovechkin from participating in what could be his last Olympics. Despite nearing Wayne Gretzky's NHL goal-scoring record, Ovechkin's Olympic aspirations are dimming as the IOC maintains its ban. The upcoming election of a new IOC president could potentially

soften or maintain the hardline stance, impacting Ovechkin's chances and the broader geopolitical tensions surrounding Olympic participation.

Les Carpenter / The Washington Post

**Poland's EU presidency balances security with creative freedom.** Under the leadership of Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his agenda themed "Security, Europe," Poland's presidency of the Council of the European Union heralds a fresh perspective on balancing regional security with creative freedom, writes Mark Sappenfield for *The Christian Science Monitor*. With a commitment to enhancing economic competitiveness and food production, supporting Ukraine, and addressing immigration and disinformation challenges, Poland integrates cultural initiatives into its security strategy. The inauguration at Warsaw's Teatr Wielki showcased this approach, featuring a new composition by Radzimir D?bski that blends classical music with modern genres. The six-month tenure will be marked by about one hundred cultural events across Europe, emphasizing artistic liberty and the transformative role of art in democracy, advocating for a nuanced understanding of security through cultural exchange and empathy.

Mark Sappenfield / The Christian Science Monitor

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