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Apr 07, 2025 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: U.S. Public Diplomacy Cuts, China's Special Envoy Program, Digital Learning & More ^[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.

NPR on Trump’s public diplomacy cuts. The Trump administration’s budget cuts have targeted U.S. “soft power” programs, such as Radio Free Europe and cultural exchange initiatives, that have long played a vital role in shaping global opinion and diplomacy,

according to an NPR report. Since World War II, the U.S. invested in international radio broadcasts and academic institutions to counter authoritarian regimes and promote democratic values, efforts credited with influencing the fall of the Soviet bloc and fostering pro-American sentiment abroad. Critics of the cuts, including former diplomats and historians, argue that dismantling these programs could erode U.S. influence, reduce global goodwill, and weaken America's understanding of international affairs.

Emily Feng / NPR

China expands special envoy strategy to reshape global diplomacy. China's growing use of special envoys marks a strategic shift in its global diplomacy, emphasizing flexible, government-to-government engagement over traditional, institutionalized Western approaches. These envoys play key roles in advancing economic cooperation, mediating conflicts, and reinforcing China's presence in regions like Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative. Unlike Western diplomats, Chinese envoys avoid controversial issues like human rights and instead focus on pragmatic, quiet diplomacy aligned with Beijing's non-interference policy. However, the system faces internal challenges such as bureaucratic overlap and external skepticism from nations concerned about debt sustainability. As China expands its envoy network to counter Western influence, especially in the Global South, their success will be critical in determining whether Beijing can effectively shape the evolving global order.

Hao Nan / East Asia Forum

Trump eyes Greenland as climate geopolitics intensify. President Trump's renewed interest in Greenland highlights a deeper geopolitical concern over Arctic security and the accelerating effects of climate change, even as his administration downplays or dismantles climate programs, according to a dispatch in *The Atlantic*. As melting polar ice opens new shipping routes and exposes untapped natural resources, U.S. military and intelligence agencies—despite official rhetoric—continue to view climate change as a strategic threat. While agencies under Biden emphasized climate preparedness, Trump's administration has dismissed such efforts, even as military cooperation and scientific research persist behind the scenes. Some scientists and defense experts now argue that extreme measures like geoengineering may soon be necessary, though such interventions carry significant risks and require global coordination. Ultimately, Trump's actions, whether openly climate-focused or not, reflect an acknowledgment that climate change is reshaping global power dynamics—especially in the Arctic.

Brett Simpson / The Atlantic

Digital learning drives equity in low-resource communities. On the 2025 International Day for Digital Learning, UNESCO highlighted how digital technologies can promote educational equity in low-resource settings by showcasing innovative strategies from around the world. Despite persistent global disparities in internet access and school connectivity, local solutions in countries like Namibia, Kenya, and Malawi demonstrate how communities creatively use limited resources to enhance learning. Initiatives such as AI competency frameworks, SMS-based education, and teacher training programs aim to empower educators and students alike. Emphasizing that digital learning is not one-size-fits-all, UNESCO calls for inclusive global collaboration to ensure that technology becomes a bridge to opportunity rather than a barrier to access.

UNESCO

LA City Council revamps 2028 Olympic venues to boost revenue, cut risk. The Los Angeles City Council has approved updates to the venue plan for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, aiming to boost revenue and reduce financial risk. Key changes include relocating basketball to Inglewood's Intuit Dome, gymnastics to Crypto.com Arena, and swimming to SoFi Stadium. Additionally, flag football will debut and lacrosse will return to the Olympic program. The plan is projected to generate \$162 million in extra revenue and savings, and city officials emphasized the need for a financially responsible approach, referencing the successful 1984 Games. The final plan awaits confirmation by the International Olympic Committee on April 9.

Benjamin Papp / NBC LA
