

Thumbnail Image:



May 27, 2025 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: Making China Cool, EU Diplomatic Downsizing, & LA's Hollyhock House ^[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.

China’s image makeover via livestream and tech dazzle. China’s global image is being reshaped not by official propaganda but by viral content from Western livestreamers like Darren Watkins Jr., known as “IShowSpeed,” whose enthusiastic tour of the country

showcased its hospitality, history, and cutting-edge tech to millions. His widely viewed antics—riding a flying taxi, meeting a Trump impersonator, and marveling at futuristic vehicles—have done more to make China appear dynamic and “cool” than years of state-led messaging, argues *The Economist*.

The Economist

EU diplomatic network faces strategic downsizing. The European Union’s diplomatic service is set to downsize around 10 foreign delegations and cut approximately 100 local staffers over the next two years, reflecting a shift in priorities and broader institutional budget cuts. While some missions will be stripped to bare-bones teams, others—especially in countries vital to EU strategic interests like sanctions enforcement—may see reinforcements, as the bloc pivots away from development aid toward defense and geopolitical influence.

Nicholas Vinocur / Politico

Hollyhock House faces UNESCO status loss amid L.A. budget cuts. Hollyhock House by Frank Lloyd Wright—the only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Los Angeles—is at risk of losing its designation and closing to the public due to proposed city budget cuts that would reduce staff below UNESCO’s minimum requirement. Despite decades of investment and restoration efforts, the plan to leave the site with just one full-time employee threatens not only public access but also the ongoing preservation of one of Wright’s most experimental and iconic works.

Iona Brannon / Travel and Leisure

Shadow over student diplomacy. At this year’s Yale Model United Nations Conference in Geneva, high school students from around the world gathered to role-play global diplomacy, but many found their efforts overshadowed by the influence of Donald Trump’s “America First” ideology. Delegates noted a shift in tone and strategy, with some peers mimicking Trump’s aggressive, self-interested style, which undermined the spirit of collaboration and left students questioning whether real diplomacy—or their place in it—still held meaning in a world increasingly shaped by brash nationalism.

Molly Castle / Fast Company

Trump sparks Middle East shift with Syria overture. In a stunning diplomatic development, President Trump met with interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa during a high-profile Middle East visit, vowing to lift U.S. sanctions on Syria and opening the door to possible normalization between Syria and Israel. While much remains speculative, including congressional approval and Israeli cooperation, the meeting signals a potential shift in regional alliances, with Syria expressing interest in joining the Abraham Accords and stabilizing ties after decades of hostility.

Scott Detrow and Hadeel Al-Shalchi / NPR
