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Public Diplomacy in the News: Disneyland Abu Dhabi, U.S. Historian Layoffs, & 1940 World Expo Ticket ^[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.

Disneyland Abu Dhabi advances UAE soft power strategy. Disneyland Abu Dhabi, the Walt Disney Company’s first theme park in the Middle East, will open on Yas Island in partnership with Abu Dhabi-based Miral, symbolizing a strategic blend of entertainment and

Emirati soft power. Designed to be both “authentically Disney and distinctly Emirati,” the park aligns with the UAE’s broader effort to rebrand its global image through cultural influence, rather than military force, while also deepening ties with the United States. As part of the country’s Soft Power Strategy launched in 2017, the project supports national goals of economic diversification, tourism growth, and international legitimacy. Alongside landmarks like the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the upcoming Guggenheim, Disneyland further cements the UAE’s ambition to become a global cultural hub beyond its oil legacy.

Amit Yarom / Atlantic Council

Trump fires historians overseeing U.S. foreign policy records. President Trump has dismissed the entire advisory committee responsible for overseeing the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), a longstanding historical record of U.S. foreign policy dating back to Abraham Lincoln’s administration. FRUS, comprising over 450 volumes, documents both public diplomacy and covert actions, and has historically relied on a bipartisan panel of historians to ensure transparency and accuracy. Critics view the mass firing as a politically motivated move that threatens the integrity of U.S. historical documentation, raising alarms about potential efforts to obscure or manipulate the public record of American foreign policy.

Petula Dvorak / The Washington Post

Vintage ticket grants entry to Expo 85 years later. Eighty-five years after Japan’s 1940 World Expo was canceled due to war, a man named Fumiya Takenawa gained entry to Expo 2025 in Osaka using a ticket from that bygone event. Originally bought online as a collector’s item, the vintage ticket was accepted by organizers as a symbolic gesture, allowing Takenawa to fulfill a historical legacy. He described the experience as meaningful and visited several international pavilions, noting that the original ticketholder’s long-delayed wish had finally been realized. The 1940 “phantom Expo” had previously granted holders admission to later expos in Japan, and this year’s event continues that tradition.

Julia Zhong / NBC News

U.S. Freezes student visas amid social media screening plans. The U.S. State Department has halted new student and exchange visa appointments as it prepares to implement stricter social media screening protocols, reflecting the Trump administration’s intensified scrutiny of antisemitism on university campuses. An internal cable directed consular offices to freeze additional visa slots and remove unclaimed appointments pending further guidance. Critics and immigration advocates view the move as part of a broader crackdown on academic institutions, raising concerns about free expression, surveillance, and the chilling effect on international students seeking education in the United States.

Anumita Kaur and Adam Taylor / The Washington Post

Cultural exchange promoted as path to global peace. NATO delegates gathered in Dayton to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, emphasizing the role of cultural exchange—particularly through art, dance, and food—in promoting peace and unity in global conflict zones. Panelists, including Bosnian artist Edina Seleskovic and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company director Debbie Blunden-Diggs, highlighted the power of culture to bridge divides and foster empathy. The sessions reinforced the belief that people-to-people connections are essential to sustaining peace, a message echoed by NATO

representatives and former U.S. Ambassador Tom McDonald, who reflected on the horrors of the Balkan War and the enduring legacy of the accords.

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