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Public Diplomacy in the News: King Charles' Soft Power, X's Legal Clash, & Papal Diplomacy ^[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.

King Charles wields soft power amid global unrest and personal trials. King Charles III, despite his ongoing battle with cancer, has emerged as a subtle yet effective practitioner of soft power, using his role to reinforce Britain’s foreign policy and uphold the Commonwealth’s

values amid global turbulence, asserts Clive Irving of *Vanity Fair*. From forging a personal connection with Ukrainian President Zelensky to affirming support for Ukraine in speeches before the German Bundestag and French Senate, King Charles has embraced a diplomatic presence that contrasts sharply with Donald Trump's bombastic style. While Trump plans militaristic displays and controversial proposals—like annexing Canada—King Charles offers symbolic counterweights, such as his dignified speech in Ottawa affirming Canadian sovereignty. Though the monarchy remains silent on Charles's medical condition, his measured international engagements and quiet defiance of populist theatrics have solidified his legacy as a modern statesman, writes Irving.

Clive Irving / Vanity Fair

Musk's X sues New York over hate speech transparency law. Elon Musk's X Corp has filed a lawsuit against New York State, claiming that the newly enacted Stop Hiding Hate Act—requiring social media platforms to disclose how they handle hate speech and harmful content—violates the First Amendment. The law mandates transparency from major platforms like X, compelling them to publish content moderation policies and report on actions taken against disinformation, extremism, and foreign influence, with steep fines for noncompliance. X argues that the law forces disclosure of sensitive information and infringes on free expression, while lawmakers contend the suit is a bad-faith attempt to dodge accountability. This legal clash mirrors X's previous battle against a similar California law and highlights growing tensions over online speech, regulation, and Musk's controversial approach to platform governance.

Nick Robins-Early / The Guardian

Papal diplomacy and the politics of gift exchange. The private audience between Pope Leo XIV and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on May 19, 2025, offered a striking example of how diplomatic gift exchange functions as both symbolic ritual and ethical act. Albanese presented the pope with *Raukkan*, a painting by Ngarrindjeri artist Amanda Westley, whose meaning as a "meeting place" spoke to hopes for cultural respect and reciprocity—despite the artist being unaware of its selection. The event underscores how state gifts, especially those by Indigenous artists, carry layers of spiritual and political meaning tied to land, identity, and colonial histories. While the Vatican has long preserved gifts in its museums—including its ethnographic Anima Mundi collection, which holds Australian Indigenous artefacts—the lack of public transparency around how gifts are selected, stored, or interpreted raises broader questions about accountability and representation in cultural diplomacy.

Katherine Aigner and Kylie Message / ABC

Judge halts State Department overhaul tied to Trump layoff order. A federal judge in California has temporarily blocked the U.S. State Department from moving forward with a sweeping reorganization plan involving nearly 2,000 layoffs, ruling that the initiative falls under a broader freeze on federal downsizing linked to a directive from President Trump. Judge Susan Illston, citing documents that tied the department's actions to Trump's February executive order, rejected the State Department's claim that its plan was independent of the White House's broader agenda. The lawsuit, brought by unions, nonprofits, and municipalities, argues that the executive branch lacks authority to restructure agencies without congressional approval. Despite assurances that the plan was crafted internally by Secretary of State Marco

Rubio and his team, Illston insisted any related actions remain suspended pending further legal clarification.

Daniel Wiessner / Reuters

Sarajevo conference calls for urgent action on women, peace, and security. More than 100 participants from over 20 countries gathered in Sarajevo for the international conference, “From Gender Justice to Sustainable Peace,” marking 25 years since UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 30 years since the Beijing Declaration. The event highlighted the central role of women in peacebuilding, emphasizing survivor-centered justice, gender equality, and the need for institutionalized leadership in conflict resolution. Key speakers—including UN officials and survivors of wartime sexual violence—stressed that sustainable peace depends on women's full participation and accountability for past harms. The conference concluded with the Sarajevo Pledge, a call to immediate action and commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, while a parallel cultural program—“Women Lead. Peace Follows.”—gave voice to survivors through art and storytelling.

UN Women
