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Public Diplomacy in the News: Yoga's Soft Power, Kansas City Chiefs' Global Fandom, & the AI Divide ^[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.

India’s global rise through the soft power of yoga. Writing for *Indian Express*, Prataprao Jadhav explores how India has transformed yoga from a traditional spiritual practice into a global movement, celebrated annually on International Day of Yoga. In a world dominated by military and economic power, says Jadhav, India

has elevated yoga into a strategic instrument of soft diplomacy, positioning it as a universal path to wellness and cultural connection. Embraced across continents and even in culturally distinct nations like Saudi Arabia, yoga is now seen as an inclusive, apolitical tool for peace, mental health, and ecological awareness. As it bridges personal well-being and planetary harmony, yoga also strengthens India's image as a normative power and cultural leader on the global stage.

Prataprao Jadhav / The Indian Express

Kansas City Chiefs chase global fandom through UK expansion. The Kansas City Chiefs are leveraging the NFL's global markets program to grow their fanbase in the United Kingdom by combining cultural outreach, influencer partnerships, and savvy marketing strategies. With a focus on younger audiences and local engagement, the team is employing both modern tools like TikTok and traditional methods like mascot appearances to embed themselves in the UK sports landscape. Their star power — from quarterback Patrick Mahomes to Travis Kelce's high-profile relationship with Taylor Swift — adds to their appeal. The Chiefs already have a strong international presence, particularly in Europe and Mexico, and are expanding into new markets like Brazil, where they'll open the NFL season. Ultimately, their goal is to become the "world's team" amid the NFL's broader push for international growth, including potential future Super Bowls outside the U.S.

Ken Maguire / ABC News & AP

The growing global divide in artificial intelligence power. A new digital divide is emerging as powerful nations race ahead in building AI data centers, leaving much of the world behind in access to critical computing infrastructure. In their in-depth report for *The New York Times*, Adam Satariano and Paul Mozur reveal how AI development is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few tech giants, mostly based in the United States and China, who dominate global compute power and shape the future of innovation, security, and economic influence. With only 32 countries hosting AI-specialized data centers, regions like Africa and South America struggle to participate in the AI revolution, facing barriers such as high costs, limited access to GPUs, and reliance on foreign tech. This imbalance fuels a geopolitical tug-of-war for technological sovereignty and has sparked urgent efforts from countries like India, Brazil, and Kenya to build local infrastructure. The global AI boom, once thought to level the playing field, now risks reinforcing inequality unless broader, more equitable access to computing power is achieved.

Adam Satariano and Paul Mozur / The New York Times

Russia expands university access for North Korean students amid rising tuition. Amid deepening political and cultural ties between Moscow and Pyongyang, Russia plans to expand university admissions for North Korean students, according to Yevgeny Primakov, head of the state-funded cultural diplomacy agency Rossotrudnichestvo. These students, praised for their motivation and tendency to return home after graduation, often pursue technical fields like computer science and materials science at Russian institutions. The move comes as Russian universities face rising tuition costs—up to 64% at some institutions—while the government pushes to align higher education with labor market needs. A parallel offer for Afghan students remains on hold, pending decisions from the Taliban leadership.

AI confusion fuels misinformation in Israel-Iran Conflict. As the Israel-Iran conflict intensified, millions turned to AI chatbots like Grok for clarity, only to receive contradictory or misleading answers, highlighting the dangers of relying on generative AI for real-time war information. Researchers from the Atlantic Council and other institutions observed how AI tools, while promising, often failed to authenticate images or videos, amplifying disinformation across platforms like X. Experts warn that the blending of hyperrealistic AI-generated media with uncertain chatbot analysis is deepening public confusion, enabling state-backed propaganda and undermining trust in real evidence. As synthetic media becomes more convincing, the “liar’s dividend” grows—making it easier for people to dismiss legitimate footage and harder for truth to surface during crises.

Huo Jingnan and Lisa Hagen / NPR
