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Public Diplomacy in the News: China's Expanding Global Influence, New World Heritage Sites, & LA Olympics Schedule

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“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 expands global influence as US Retreats from aid and diplomacy. China has expanded its global diplomatic and development footprint as the Trump administration slashed U.S. foreign aid and State Department staff, according to a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations

Committee report summarized by *Reuters*. The report details how Chinese initiatives — including rice donations to Uganda, HIV/AIDS support in Zambia, railway and energy projects in Southeast Asia, and a \$9 billion credit line for Latin America — have filled the vacuum left by U.S. retrenchment. While the Trump administration defends the cuts as aligning with its “America First” agenda and reducing waste, critics warn they erode U.S. influence and could lead to millions of preventable deaths globally by 2030.

Patricia Zengerle / Reuters

UNESCO adds Neuschwanstein and global landmarks to heritage list. UNESCO has added 26 new sites to its World Heritage List, bringing global recognition to landmarks of cultural, natural, and mixed significance, including Germany’s Neuschwanstein Castle (pictured above), which inspired Disney’s *Sleeping Beauty*. The new entries span continents, from France’s Neolithic Carnac megaliths and Greece’s Minoan palatial centers to sacred landscapes in Mexico and marine ecosystems in Guinea-Bissau. The list now features 1,248 sites worldwide, enhancing their international profile, boosting tourism, and making them eligible for global conservation funding. German officials hailed the inclusion of King Ludwig II’s Bavarian palaces as a tribute to their romantic artistry and cultural legacy.

Giulia Carbonaro / Newsweek

Adm. McRaven warns cuts to diplomacy and aid threaten U.S. security. In an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, Retired Admiral William H. McRaven argues that slashing the State Department and USAID budgets gravely endangers U.S. national security by undermining the soft power essential to preventing conflict and stabilizing volatile regions. While military might serves to deter and defeat adversaries, McRaven emphasizes that diplomacy, foreign aid, and development work are equally vital, warning that dismissing them as less critical than “hard power” is a dangerous misconception.

William H. McRaven / The Washington Post

LA 2028 Olympics reveal schedule. The Los Angeles 2028 Olympics organizing committee unveiled the preliminary competition schedule, highlighting key changes such as track and field events opening the Games instead of swimming, which will close the schedule on July 30 after the dual-venue opening ceremony at the Coliseum and SoFi Stadium. Flag football will make its Olympic debut during the first week, strategically scheduled to avoid NFL training camps, while cricket returns for the first time since 1900 with qualifiers beginning even before the opening ceremony. Marquee sports like swimming, gymnastics, and track and field are positioned for prime-time U.S. audiences, aiming to rebuild viewership ahead of the first Summer Games on American soil in 32 years. Organizers also celebrated milestones like 1 million youth enrolled in PlayLA, signed sponsorships with Uber, and promised more details on ticketing and volunteer opportunities in the coming months.

Thuc Nhi Nguyen / LA Times

Australia strengthens China ties through panda diplomacy. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese concluded a landmark state visit to China with a symbolic stop at a panda breeding center, underscoring a thaw in bilateral relations and a shared interest in defending global free trade as U.S. tariffs strain the system. The visit, unusually long by Australian standards, marked the normalization of ties after years of tension over COVID-19, security

laws, and trade bans, most of which China has since lifted. Albanese and Chinese President Xi Jinping both emphasized mutual respect and cooperation, while analysts noted the growing distance between Australia and the United States rather than a full alignment with China. Critics at home have questioned Albanese's repeated meetings with Xi before meeting President Trump, though he expressed hope for constructive engagement with the U.S. later this year.

Ken Moritsugu and Rod McGuirk / AP
