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Jul 06, 2026 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

## **Public Diplomacy in the News: America 250, World Cup Diplomacy, Benjamin Franklin, & More** <sup>[1]</sup>

*“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.*

**Global celebrations of America’s 250th anniversary.** America’s semiquincentennial is

becoming an international celebration, with allies around the world marking the nation's 250th birthday through symbolic gifts and commemorative events that highlight enduring diplomatic and cultural ties. Scotland created an American-themed tartan, the United Kingdom and Spain minted commemorative coins honoring shared history, Japan donated 250 cherry blossom trees to reinforce its longstanding friendship with the United States, France is conducting anniversary flyovers with its aerobatic team, and Italy's tall ship *Amerigo Vespucci* is joining an international flotilla in New York Harbor, reflecting how the anniversary has become an occasion to celebrate historic partnerships and people-to-people diplomacy.

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**World Cup diplomacy beyond the pitch.** Journalist Anushe Engineer argues that despite Iran's World Cup exit and the political and logistical challenges created by the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, the tournament fostered an unexpected display of people-to-people diplomacy through the warm reception the Iranian team received in Tijuana, Mexico. Forced to relocate its base camp from Arizona because of visa concerns, Iran's national team developed close ties with local residents through fan interactions, autograph sessions, and expressions of mutual support, prompting Iranian officials and supporters to publicly thank Mexico's hospitality and highlighting how cultural exchange and shared humanity can transcend geopolitical tensions.

Anushe Engineer / Aljazeera

**Benjamin Franklin's diplomatic blueprint.** Writing for the American Foreign Service Association, Tom Selinger argues that Benjamin Franklin not only secured American independence abroad but also invented many of the principles that continue to define U.S. diplomacy today. Drawing on oral histories from the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Selinger pairs Franklin's achievements—projecting confidence despite limited power, advancing American commerce, forging strategic alliances, and negotiating durable peace—with modern examples from diplomats including Ronald McMullen, Lauri Fitz-Pegado, Thomas Pickering, and Miriam Sapiro, demonstrating how Franklin's pragmatic, relationship-driven approach remains central to advancing U.S. interests and maintaining the nation's credibility on the world stage.

Tom Selinger / AFSA

**Russian soft power through children's media.** A cross-party group of more than 50 British MPs is urging the UK government to examine whether the Russian animated series *Masha and the Bear* should continue to be available on platforms including Netflix and ITVX, arguing that it subtly promotes Soviet military imagery and functions as an instrument of Russian soft power aimed at children. Citing concerns raised by Ukrainian and Estonian officials, the lawmakers contend that the show's use of Soviet iconography normalizes militaristic themes, while the studio, Animaccord, strongly denies any political intent, insisting the series is an apolitical, privately funded children's program centered on friendship and imagination. The British government has so far declined to intervene, noting that broadcasters are responsible for ensuring content complies with media regulations.

Michael Savage / The Guardian

**Tall ships as floating diplomats.** *USA Today's* Karissa Waddick argues that the Sail 250 celebrations are demonstrating the enduring power of people-to-people diplomacy by bringing tall ships and military training vessels from more than 20 countries to U.S. ports during a period of strained international relations. As visitors tour foreign ships and cadets exchange challenge coins, cultural traditions, and personal stories, the event fosters mutual understanding that transcends geopolitical tensions, illustrating how maritime exchanges can strengthen international goodwill even amid conflicts involving Iran, frayed alliances with Europe, and instability elsewhere.

Karissa Waddick / USA Today

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