

The Biden Administration Should Use Social Media to Advance Their Foreign Policy Agenda
By Fathema Siddiqua

As a teenager, I received an authentic perspective on the Biden Administration's use of social media and pop culture as a tool to promote their political strategy to their American constituents. I believe that the same could be done to connect with international audiences as a medium for cultural diplomacy, and as a means to promote the United States' international agenda.

The administration's approach to tackling COVID-19 has reached a broad horizon of Americans from many demographics. The youth particularly has been impacted, with the President's meetings with popular celebrities being shared on social media. Most famously was Biden's collaboration with the rising pop artist, Olivia Rodrigo in 2021. In this gathering, Biden gained access to the American youth community, including Rodrigo's fanbase. On July 14, 2021, the @whitehouse Instagram account posted a video of Olivia Rodrigo, where she tells us that she was at the White House with Joe Biden and Anthony Fauci. In this video, she addresses the importance of young people getting the COVID-19 vaccine. She states, "It doesn't matter if you're young and healthy, getting the vaccine is about protecting yourself, your friends, and your family." This strategy was the perfect way to tap into the minds of Generation Z, who make up 40% of the American population to ensure that they get vaccinated because it's "Good 4 U".

The Administration's modern-day tactic of using social media has proven to be successful. I'm 17 and already double-boosted on the COVID vaccine, and I would be lying if I said that social media did not play a major role in influencing my decisions regarding vaccines. In fact, [As reported by Pew Research Center](#), 50% of American adults receive their news from social media platforms. So much for social media rotting our brains, right?

Social media as a tool for public relations, particularly in Biden's case, provides a multitude of benefits. For example, through platforms such as Instagram, Biden can promote diversity by shouting out cultural holidays and encouraging conversations about different backgrounds. On March 20 this year, @whitehouse posted a string of pictures honoring the Persian New Year, Nowruz. The pictures consisted of a traditional *haft seen* table displayed at the White House, where President Biden has invited many guests to a Nowruz reception. The post had over 3,000 likes over the span of two hours, and was able to easily connect with many Central Asian communities with a click of a button. Not only does this strategy help promote the celebrations of different cultures, but it also educates Americans about the different traditions that weave the fabric of diversity in the United States.

This strategy also has international implications. The Biden Administration used social media to raise awareness of the cultures that celebrate Nowruz. Uzbekistan is a well-known American ally, and Nowruz is a highly commemorated holiday there. This method of cultural awareness contributes to the strengthening of ties between the United States and its ally, Uzbekistan. Using social media to celebrate and teach constituents about Central Asian culture can help promote the United States' understanding of Uzbekistan's beloved holiday, Nowruz, to a global audience, overall strengthening the horizon of appreciation between the United States and Uzbekistan.

As you can see, social media is a valuable tool that can potentially support the United States foreign policy agenda. According to [Constance Duncombe](#), an international relations theorist at Monash University, social media reflects and frames state identity in terms of how a

state wishes to be recognized on the international stage, and “shifts in representational patterns communicated through social media during high-level negotiations [therefore] allow realizations of political possibilities for change.” Additionally, it serves as an inventory of information regarding foreign policy agendas throughout the world, as constituents from many demographics can share pieces of information that they know. Therefore, the optimal approach for the Biden Administration is to make the most out of social media’s broad audience to promote its foreign policy agenda in a rigorous manner, which can be achieved by several ways.

Social media can be used as a tool to promote American advancements in art and humanities. If @potus and @whitehouse featured more projects and research being produced by the U.S Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs or the National Endowment for the Arts, Americans and international constituents can be informed of the ECA and NEA’s impact on cultural diplomacy. Additionally, diverse feedback on social media can lead to a more nuanced approach to promoting U.S. culture and the opinions of U.S. constituents can be used to understand what methods will appeal most to people when encouraging culture as a form of diplomacy.

As a member of the teenage population, I can attest that we often have very strong opinions. With [97% of the adolescent population in the United States on the internet](#), we hold a cornucopia of feedback that is often overlooked. And since most of us are brutally honest, we will not hold back on our thoughts in the comment section, overall providing the Administration an honest perspective on how to improve efforts to promote advancements in arts and humanities in the United States.

Using social media for cultural diplomacy is not a novel idea, however. Many countries did not hold back when it came to utilizing these platforms to gain visibility and recognition among a global audience. [A significant example is the employment of Twitter by Iran in 2015](#), at the time of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Through Twitter, representatives from the nation were able to carefully construct assertions and discussions at a time when the relationship between the United States and Iran were crippling. Pursuant to [Duncombe](#), “Twitter use by Iranian state representatives allowed for recognition framed through positive representations of both Iran and the United States, a significant shift from previous Iranian representation–recognition dynamics. This shift indicates that political possibilities for change were evident before the deal was implemented and despite recurrent tensions during the negotiations.”

All said and done, the Biden Administration should truly utilize social media as a tool for cultural diplomacy. It works incredibly when promoting their national aims, so why not try it on a macro scale? The international audience that social media provides is like no other, and constituents can even join in, to practice public diplomacy. Other nations can learn more about the United States’ efforts to maintain strong international ties and can be encouraged to work more keenly with us. So again, I urge the Administration to strongly consider the application of social media platforms to publicize American advancements in the arts and humanities, and to connect with the cultural interests of other nations, as a means of cultural diplomacy. Social media has completely transformed the landscape of international audiences and can allow the Administration to tap into communities from a vast range of demographics, spreading the values of the United States expediently. It’s literally diplomacy on steroids.