

Twitter Free Iran

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What is Twitter?



Value Proposition

- Founded in 2006, CEO Biz Stone
- ‘Microblogging’ platform
- 140 character short messages: ‘real-time comment’ & hashtags

Venture Capital Valuation

- Feb. 2009: \$US35 million
- Sep. 2009: \$US1 billion



dipnote

+ Follow

Lists



Secretary Clinton and President Obama are in [#Beijing](#), [#China](#) today meeting with senior Chinese leaders. [#hillarytravel](#)

about 18 hours ago from TweetDeck

Name DipNote

Location Washington, DC

Web <http://blogs.stat..>

Bio Welcome to the official U.S. Department of State Twitter! Currently on duty: Daniel

6,867 **9,497** **364**
following followers listed

Tweets 2,280

Favorites

Actions

[block dipnote](#)
[report for spam](#)

Following



Dipnote: US State Department's Twitter Page

Launched February 2009 and praised by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in June 2009

The Twitter Effect: Real-Time 'Chatter'





#IranElection: 12^h June – 5th August 2009

#IranElection Events: June 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Research Questions

- Did Twitter benefit from Iran's 2009 election?
- What role did Twitter's users play and how effective was it?
- Why did the US State Department intervene with Twitter?

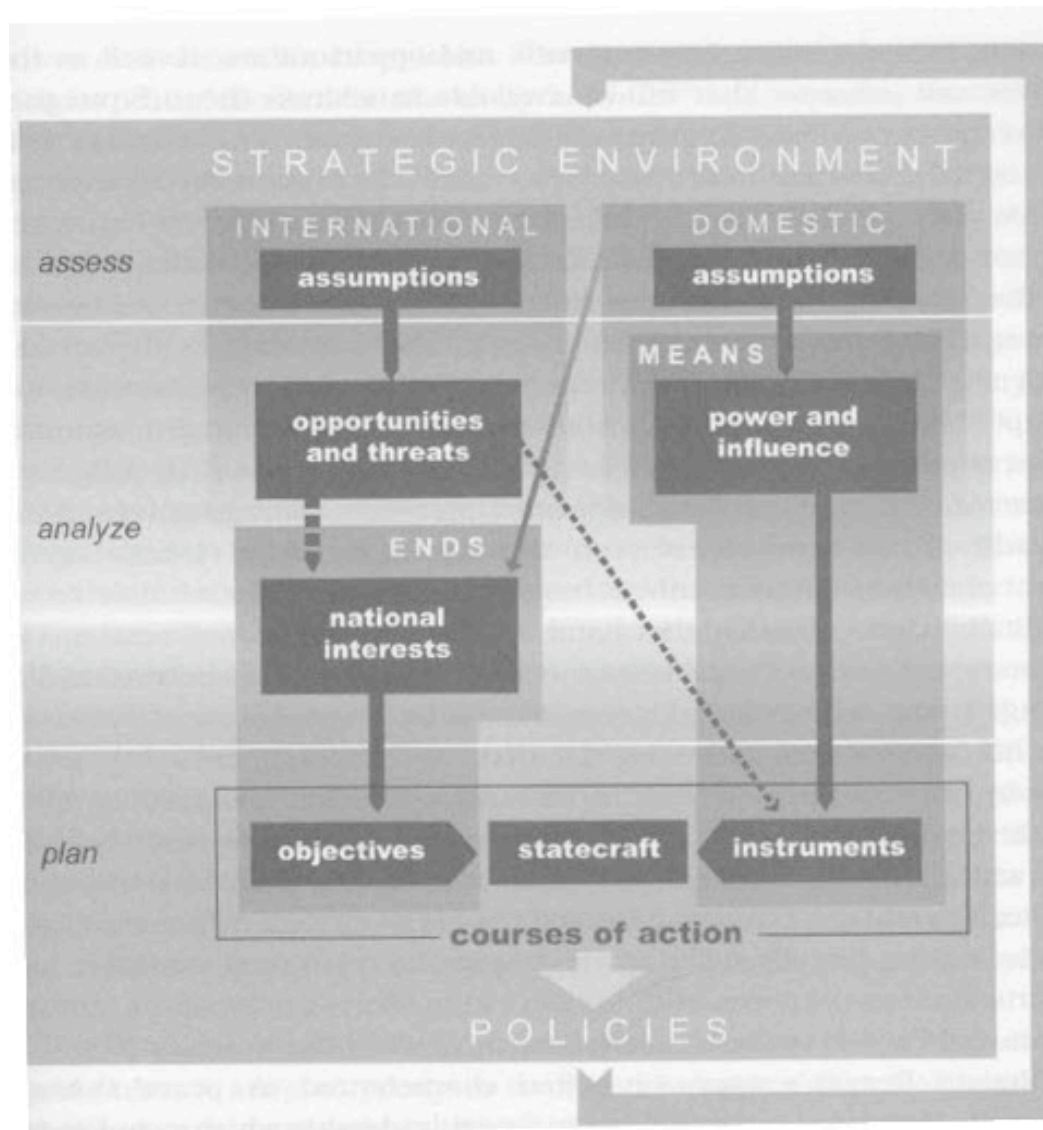
Conceptual Theorists

Theorist	Level of Analysis
Graham Allison	Perspectives
Terry Deibel	Foreign Policy, Policy Instruments
Joseph S. Nye, Jr.	Soft Power
Charles Tilly	Regimes, Collective Violence

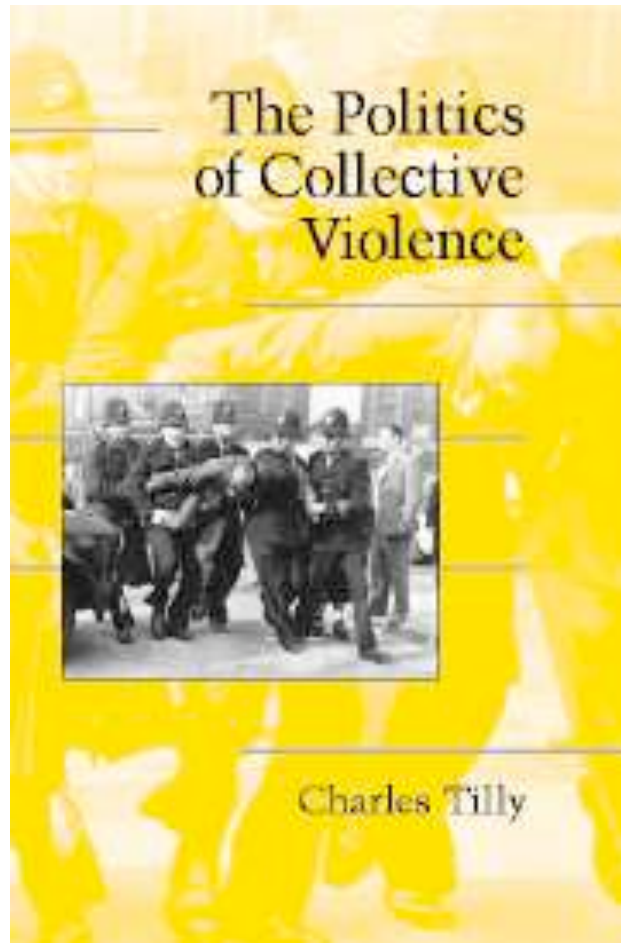
Study Frameworks

- ‘**Perspectivism**’ (Allison): competing explanatory and conceptual frameworks to explain the same events:
 - Twitter and hedge fund traders on oil/commodities markets
 - Global activist campaigns
 - Iranian protestors versus Iranian Basij paramilitary forces
 - US State Department versus Neoconservatives, and other agencies
- ‘**Event Studies**’ coding (Tilly) of election events
- **Foreign Policy** levers (Deibel) and **Soft Power** (Nye)

Deibel's Foreign Policy Feedback Loops

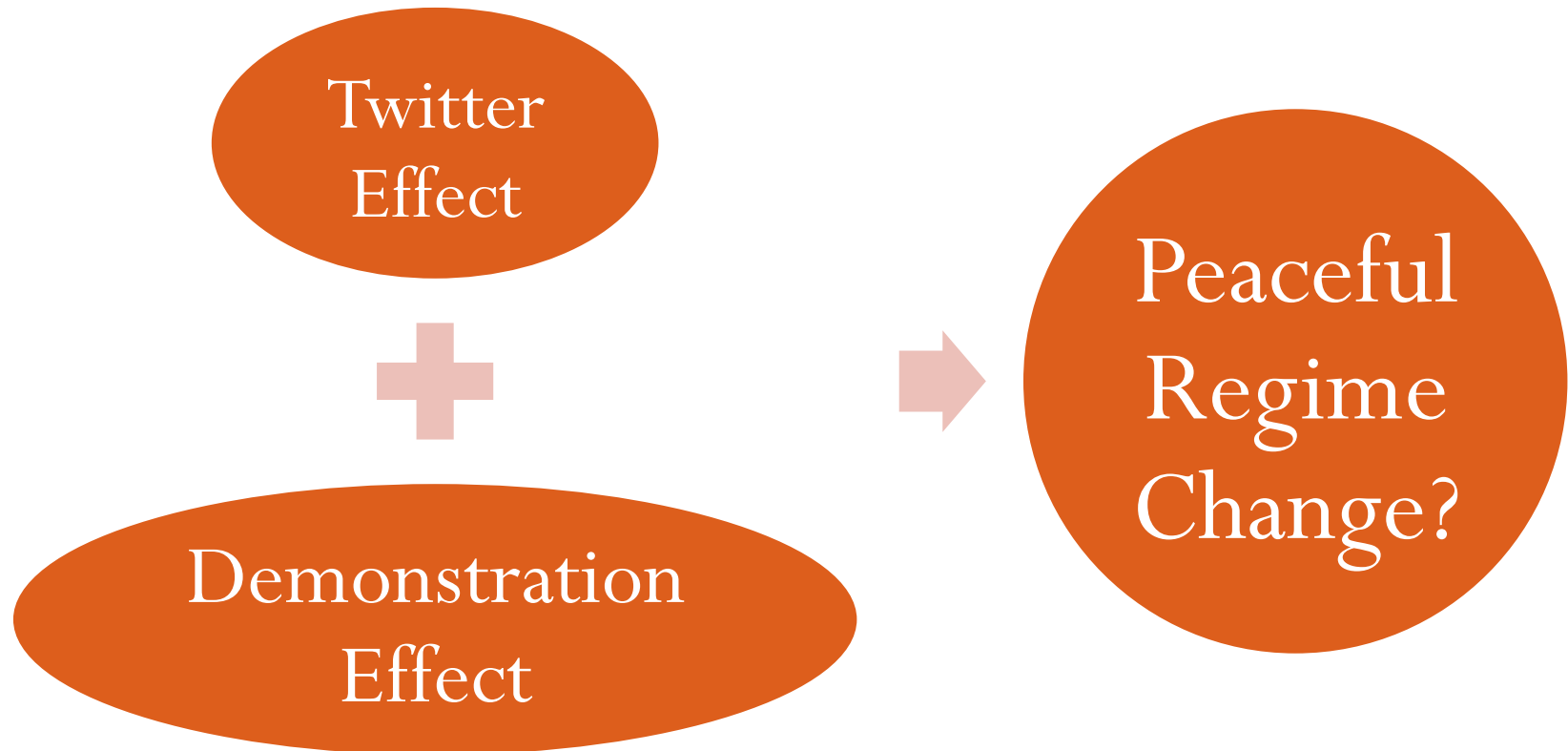


Charles Tilly's Coding



- Columbia University historian and political scientist and sociologist
- Coding framework for comparative analysis and events
- Actors use violence as a strategic means to pursue goals
- Reveals the interactive dynamics and complexity of #IranElection protests, and the pivotal role of Iran's Basij paramilitary forces

Neoconservative Worldview



Tilly Coding for #IranElection Events

Date	Event	Tilly Category
13 th -15 th June 2009	Tehran street protests	Violent Ritual
17 th June 2009	Iranian football team wears green	Opportunism; Non-Violent Protest
18 th June 2009	Central Tehran protests	Non-Violent Protests, Brawls, Scattered Attacks
20 th June 2009	IRINN report of death near Khomeini's mausoleum	Opportunism, Scattered Attacks
20 th June 2009	Basij shoot Neda Soltan	Individual Aggression, Opportunism

Arik Fraimovich's Help Iran Election



What I need to do

Show support for the people who fight for democracy at Iran, and change your Twitter avatar to have green overlay or green ribbon (green is the official color of the movement).



All you need to do is [click here to add green overlay](#) or to [click here to add a green ribbon](#) and your avatar will be updated and a support Tweet will posted on your behalf ("Show support for #iranelection add green overlay to your Twitter avatar with 1-click - <http://helpiranelection.com/>").

Iran: The Whole World is Watching

JON LEBKOWSKY, 19 JUN 09



By Hamed Sabet

I just turned my Twitter avatar green in a show of support for Iranian democracy, using a [simple tool](#) created by Arik Fraimovich of [Topify.com](#), and this made me think of the 1996 [campaign to turn web pages black](#) to protest the passage and signing of the [Communications Decency Act](#) as

Iran's Basij Paramilitaries

On the first day of the unrest, the 24-year-old volunteer member of Iran's paramilitary Basij force mounted his motorcycle and chased reformist protesters through the streets, shouting out the names of Shiite saints as he revved his engine.

On the fourth day, he picked up a thick wooden stick issued by his Basij neighborhood task force and beat demonstrators who refused to disperse.



[View Full Image](#)

Getty Images

Members of Iran's Basij paramilitary force, on motorcycle, police a demonstration in Tehran on Thursday.

By the eighth day, demonstrators alleging that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had rigged his re-election were out by the hundreds of thousands. Mr. Moradani says he mobilized in a 12-man motorcycle crew, scouting out restive neighborhoods across Tehran. He battled protesters with a baton and tear gas. The demonstrators fought back with rocks, bricks and bottles. Mr. Moradani says he handcuffed scores of demonstrators and dragged them away as they kicked and screamed.

Neda Soltan



- Neda Soltan shot opportunistically by Basij on 20th June 2009
- Shooting filmed on camera-phone, uploaded to YouTube
- Soltan became an emotive symbol for Iranian protestors

US State Department Role

- Asked Twitter to delay server upgrade on 16th June 2009: reported in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Time*
- Twitter's CEO Biz Stone distances himself from the request
- Possible 'deeper' motivations for US State Department request:
 - History of Radio Free broadcasts in Cold War Europe and Iran
 - Aware of diaspora satellite broadcasts and Iran's 1999 student riots
 - Interested in social media platforms for public diplomacy
 - Open up opportunities for Iranian dissent during a time-window
 - Respond to neoconservative critics who contend it has little experience
 - Potential quasi-experimental test of rumour vectors and propaganda

Evaluating Twitter

- **Twitter**
 - Benefited indirectly from the election events: VC valuation increase
- **Twitter Users – Global Activists**
 - Mobilised to support Iran's protestors, shared communitarian ideals
- **Twitter Users – Basij paramilitary forces**
 - Used Twitter to identify, hunt down, and in some cases kill protestors
- **US State Department**
 - May have monitored Twitter's 'chatter' during election crisis

Conclusion

- Soft Power and social media are limited to effect outcomes such as ‘peaceful’ regime change
- Twitter may be prone to rumour and social contagion effects
- US policymakers were ‘unable to understand Iran on its own terms’ (RAND intelligence expert Gregory Treverton)
- Different actors will use new technologies for their own ends: understanding and anticipating such different uses is critical
- Those who championed Twitter’s use in Iran’s 2009 election may not have considered this – some paid for their enthusiastic adoption of Twitter with their lives

Dow Jones Islamic Market Oil & Gas Index [Watch this index](#)

3,541.75

+69.06 (1.99%)

Nov 17 - Close

INDEXDJX real-time data - [Disclaimer](#)

Range 3,472.66 - 3,563.74

52 week 2,182.52 - 3,620.42

Open 3,472.66

Vol / Avg. 437.37M/573.70M

Compare:

Zoom: [1d](#) [5d](#) [1m](#) [3m](#) [6m](#) [YTD](#) [1y](#) [5y](#) [10y](#) [Max](#)

May 18, 2009 - Nov 16, 2009 +661.98 (22.84%)



Thank You!

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