

## Iran's 2009 Voter Uprising

### Overview

Students will analyze the unprecedented protests surrounding the 2009 Iranian presidential elections and the role technology played in the dissemination of information and in planning the protests themselves. Through reading, a Power Point presentation, discussion, examination of various mediums such as political cartoons, photographs, and a graphic novel, students will gain an understanding of Iran's political history, its current governmental realities, and the historical significance of the 2009 protest movement.

### Grades

9 & 10

### North Carolina Essential Standards for World History

- WH.7.1 - Evaluate key turning points of the modern era in terms of their lasting impact (e.g., conflicts, documents, policies, movements, etc.).
- WH.8.2 - Explain how international crisis has impacted international politics (e.g., Berlin Blockade, Korean War, Hungarian Revolt, Cuban Missile Crisis, OPEC oil crisis, Iranian Revolt, "911", terrorism, etc.).
- WH.8.3 - Explain how liberal democracy, private enterprise and human rights movements have reshaped political, economic and social life in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States (e.g., U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, end of Cold War, apartheid, perestroika, glasnost, etc.).

### North Carolina Essential Standards for Civics and Economics

- CE.C&G.2.5 - Compare United States system of government within the framework of the federal and state structures as well as in how they relate with governmental systems of other nations (e.g. Republicanism, federalism.)
- CE.C&G.2.7 - Analyze contemporary issues and governmental responses at the local, state, and national levels in terms of how they promote the public interest and/or general welfare (e.g., taxes, immigration, naturalization, civil rights, economic development, annexation, redistricting, zoning, national security, health care, etc.)
- CE.C&G.4.1 - Compare citizenship in the American constitutional democracy to membership in other types of governments (e.g., right to privacy, civil rights, responsibilities, political rights, right to due process, equal protection under the law, participation, freedom, etc.)
- CE.C&G.4.4 - Analyze the obligations of citizens by determining when their personal desires, interests and involvement are subordinate to the good of the nation or state (e.g., Patriot Act, Homeland Security, sedition, civil rights, equal rights under the law, jury duty, Selective Services Act, rule of law, eminent domain, etc.)

### Essential Questions

- How do various governments grant and/or limit the freedoms of citizens?
- How is the government of Iran structured?
- What is the election process in Iran?
- Why did protests erupt once Iran's 2009 election results were announced?
- What were citizens risking by protesting against the Iranian government?
- What role did technology play in the 2009 Iranian protests?
- What lessons can America learn from the Iranian protestors?

## Materials

- Introduction to the 2009 Iranian Voter Uprising, handout attached
- Iran's 2009 Voter Uprising Power Point, available in Carolina K-12's Database of K-12 Resources
  - To view this PDF file as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
  - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)
- Klein Video: Interpreting Ahmadinejad and Mousavi  
[http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,26663232001\\_1905348,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,26663232001_1905348,00.html)
- Group activity:
  - Copies of the graphic novel (10 pages long): "Iran's Post-Election Uprising: Hopes and Fears Revealed", available at <http://www.spreadpersepolis.com/> and response questions, handout attached
  - Political Cartoons on Iranian Election and response questions, handout attached
    - Additional political cartoons available at <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/iran/ig/Iran-Cartoons/Stop-Or-I-Il-Tweet.htm>
  - Images from Iranian election protests and response questions, handout attached
- Iran's Protests, It's Not About Twitter, It's Not About Us, blog attached
- Optional: Internet access, a free blogging site, and directions for creating blogs (for example: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4804552\\_make-a-blog.html?ref=fuel&utm\\_source=yahoo&utm\\_medium=ssp&utm\\_campaign=yssp\\_art](http://www.ehow.com/how_4804552_make-a-blog.html?ref=fuel&utm_source=yahoo&utm_medium=ssp&utm_campaign=yssp_art))

## Duration

90+ minutes (can be split over two class periods; time can be shortened if activities noted as optional are omitted)

## Procedure

### Warm Up: First Amendment

1. As a warm-up, display the following assignment (see Slide 2 of the Iran's 2009 Voter Uprising Power Point):

Review the text of the First Amendment then respond to the question that follows in writing.

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*

Imagine that the First Amendment were repealed. How might our society and government change? What actions might our government be able to take that it is currently prohibited from doing based on this amendment?

2. Once students have had a few moments to write, ask them to share their thoughts with the class. (Some students may note examples of First Amendment rights being abused by the government, which should be an aspect of the discussion as well.) Further discuss:
  - What moments throughout history can you think of when groups of people exercised their First Amendment rights?
  - What recent examples can you think of when Americans have exercised their First Amendment rights?
  - Why is it important to have rights such as freedom of speech and protest, freedom of the press, etc.? Are there any downsides to these rights? Explain. (Students might mention how if freedom of speech is a right, then all groups are afforded this right, even if their message is one that is disagreeable – i.e. hate groups such as the KKK; freedom of the press perhaps has contributed to "sound bite politics" or a media that many feel is focused on the negative aspects of society; etc.)
  - Why do you think some governments do not recognize the right of citizens to speak freely, protest and assemble, etc.?

- Can you identify any points (historically or recently) when citizens of other countries have tried to exercise freedom of speech, protest, press, etc., even when their government does not recognize such a right? What were the people involved in these moments or movements risking by speaking out?

### The 2009 Iranian Voter Uprising

3. Tell students that in today's lesson, they will be learning about the 2009 elections in Iran and how thousands of citizens risked their lives to protest what they felt were fraudulent election results. Give students an introduction to the 2009 Iranian elections by passing out the attached handout, which can be read individually or in partners. Upon reading, instruct students to either answer the questions at the bottom of the handout individually or to discuss and answer with their partner. Finally, discuss the students' thoughts as a class.
4. Using the "Introduction to the 2009 Iranian Voter Uprising Power Point" (available in the Database of Civic Resources), take students through the details of the Iranian voter controversy and uprising. While students can be instructed to take notes in Cornell or another preferred format, the PPT should be predominantly used to facilitate discussion concerning the events surrounding the 2009 Iranian election.
  - **Optional:** Upon completion of the PPT, show the 7 minute video of TIME Columnist Joe Klein discussing his 10-day trip to Iran to cover the 2009 election. The video is available for streaming at: [http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,26663232001\\_1905348,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,26663232001_1905348,00.html). After viewing, discuss:
    - Klein notes that there are many misconceptions about the Iranian people. How does he describe them?
    - What differences does Klein note between Ahmadinejad and Moussavi?
    - Klein believes that it would have been likely, had the government allowed an official revote, that Ahmadinejad would have still won the election. What does he feel tilted the election in Ahmadinejad's favor?
    - Why does Klein believe the Supreme Leader preferred that Ahmadinejad be President?
    - According to Klein, why is it important that the US negotiate with Iran? What is the alternative to negotiations?
    - Klein ends by saying that "communications is making it very difficult to run a repressive regime." What does he mean and how does Iran exemplify this statement?

### Further Examination through Varying Mediums

5. Next, tell students they are going to further examine Iran's 2009 election through various mediums: a graphic novel, political cartoons, and photographs. Divide students into small groups (3-4 students per group) and give each group the responsibility of examining either the graphic novel ("Iran's Post-Election Uprising: Hopes and Fears Revealed", available at <http://www.spreadpersepolis.com/>), the attached political cartoons, or the attached photographs. Also provide each group with the corresponding handout of questions (attached). (More than one group will work on each medium.) Students should use what they have already learned to interpret and learn additional information from these various sources. Go over the instructions for each medium and tell students that they will be responsible for summarizing the medium and sharing the information they learned from it with other groups who have examined different mediums.
6. Once students understand the assignment, review expectations for respectful group work, and give the students approximately 15-20 minutes to explore and discuss the medium assigned to them.
7. Upon completion, go over each medium as a class, using the following format:
  - Graphic Novel:
    - Discuss with students: What is a graphic novel?

- Of the groups working on the graphic novel, have someone volunteer to summarize the graphic novel for the remainder of the class. While this student summarizes, pass examples of the graphic novel around so that students who did not work on this medium can review it.
- Have the groups that worked on the graphic novel then share their answers to the questions that were provided to them on the handout.
- Further discuss: What additional information did you glean regarding the Iranian election from the graphic novel? Why do you think someone chose to express their opinion using this medium in particular?
- Political Cartoons:
  - Discuss with students: What is a political cartoon? How does a political cartoon differ from a regular cartoon?
  - Project each political cartoon example so that all students can review it (these are attached and also available at the end of the “Iran’s 2009 Voter Uprising” Power Point. Have a student who reviewed the political cartoons share his/her group’s answers to the questions regarding the cartoon. (A different student should summarize each of the four cartoons.)
- Photographs:
  - Project each image so that all students can review it (these are attached and available the end of the “Iran’s 2009 Voter Uprising” Power Point.) Have a student who reviewed the images share his/her group’s answers to the questions regarding the cartoon. (A different student should summarize each of the three sets of images.)
  - Further discuss: How can primary sources, such as photographs, teach us about particular events? In what ways might actual photos help us interpret an event more accurately? Can photos be misleading? Explain.

8. Once all three types of mediums have been summarized, further discuss:

- How might all of these mediums influence the way people view(ed) the 2009 Iranian election?
- What are other ways people shared information and opinions regarding the 2009 elections? (protests, spreading videos and images, YouTube, Twitter, FaceBook, blogging, journalism, etc.)
- In your opinion, what is the most influential medium a person can use to make their voice be heard and why?

#### **Optional: Create Your Own Blog**

9. Remind students of the clever way protestors used technology to stage protests and spread information regarding what was occurring, particularly as the government worked to subvert any information leaving the country. As a culminating project, tell students that they will be experimenting with technology as a means of expressing their own opinions by creating a “blog.”

10. Begin by asking students to share what they already know about blogs/blogging and shape responses into a definition. (For example, a blog is a type of online journaling that allows writers/bloggers to share ideas, opinions, commentaries, etc. on whatever the writer is interested in.) Ask students if there are any blogs that they commonly read or follow; if so, have them summarize the blog for the class. Finally, provide students with an example of a blog regarding the Iranian elections (see the attached “It’s not about Twitter; it’s not about us” ). After reading individually or as a class, discuss:

- What message is the author trying to convey by titling this blog entry, “It’s not about Twitter; it’s not about us”?
- According to the blogger, what is ironic about Americans paying so much attention to Iran’s protests?
- The blogger asks a question of our country: “Are we truly committed to democracy?” What is your opinion?
- The author says that we can learn a lot from the Iranian people. What is it that she feels we can learn? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- Overall, what message is this blog trying to convey?
- What is the purpose of blogging in this way?

11. As a culminating assignment (in class or for homework) instruct students to be thinking about what message they would like to send out to an audience of readers regarding a current or historical event or situation, locally or nationally. Teachers can assign a particular blog topic, give students a list of general themes to choose between and thus guide their writing (i.e. democracy, protest, freedom, rights, etc.) or provide students choices of specific current events to blog on. Ideally, students will be allowed to write about an issue, event, or theme that interests them and that they have an opinion regarding.
12. Once students are ready to create their blog, teachers can use various free sites for creating and posting the class' work, such as:
  - [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4804552\\_make-a-blog.html?ref=fuel&utm\\_source=yahoo&utm\\_medium=ssp&utm\\_campaign=yssp\\_art](http://www.ehow.com/how_4804552_make-a-blog.html?ref=fuel&utm_source=yahoo&utm_medium=ssp&utm_campaign=yssp_art)
  - <https://www.blogger.com/start>

### **Additional Activities**

- Watch Obama's address directly to Iran: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7954211.stm>

### **Resources/Additional Reading**

(If any of the below links are no longer active, try searching the article's title via the Internet.)

- 5 Reasons to Suspect Iran's Election Results:  
<http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1904645,00.html>
- Iran Protests: Twitter, the Medium of the Movement:  
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html>
- Which State Security Branch Rules Tehran's Streets?:  
<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1907548,00.html>
- Empty Seats, Silence Speaks for Protestors:  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/08/05/iran.analysis/index.html>
- Iran Militia Members Exposed:  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/08/05/pleitgen.iran.germany.blogger/index.html>
- Unfair Elections: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/22/AR2005062201996\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/22/AR2005062201996_pf.html)
- Political cartoons: <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/iran/ig/Iran-Cartoons/Stop-Or-I-ll-Tweet.htm>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction to the 2009 Iranian Voter Uprising



On June 12th, 2009, Iran held its 10th presidential election. However, when the results came in, many Iranians believed election fraud had occurred and took to the streets in protest.

The choice of thousands of citizens to respond in protest is monumental, particularly because since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Iranians have dealt with an increasingly repressive regime. The Iranian government has been known to go to extremes in its control and censorship of the media, suppressing any coverage of incidents it does not want reported on. The government is also known to charge and punish journalists with crimes ranging from propaganda against the state to imprisonment for simply providing interviews to foreign media outlets. People who speak out are routinely threatened or jailed for publishing ideas and images that in some way criticize the Iranian government.

To ensure its control of the people and their voice, the government in Iran has made many efforts to curb access to the Internet, wanting to stop the spread of reformist ideas and Western media among the general population. At times the Iranian government has blocked Google and YouTube, and forbidden service providers to offer the high-speed connections that make photo and video blogging easier.

Attempts for greater social and political freedoms from Iranian people have resulted in brutal crackdowns by the hard-line government. The ensuing apathy and significant boycott of the 2005 presidential elections led to the election of the ultraconservative mayor of Tehran, **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**.

Four years later Iran has become increasingly alienated and its people more polarized than ever before. The 2009 campaign of former Prime Minister **Mir Hussein Moussavi** excited and reenergized voters hoping for change in 2009, especially among the youth – two thirds of Iran’s population is younger than 32.

However, on June 12th, after 85% of eligible voters cast their ballots, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was again declared the winner of the election. Iran was then forever changed when citizens spoke out against what they felt was an unfair election, taking to the streets to protest in large numbers.

As protests grew, the Iranian government reacted to the public outrage by placing a news blackout on foreign media outlets and clamped down further on its own mass media. Public protests took place day after day with increasing size and intensity. The Iranian government and its surrogates reacted with brutal, but seemingly constrained force, possibly trying to avoid another Tiananmen Square massacre.

Throughout the period “citizen journalists” using the “new media” sent pictures and videos out of Iran to an anxious and alarmed world. The Iranian government tried to block all cell phone and Internet use, but wasn’t technologically sophisticated enough to completely block out communication from cell phones and computers through portals like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

Sources: [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org); [www.time.com](http://www.time.com); [www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com); [www.spreadpersepolis.com](http://www.spreadpersepolis.com)

### Discuss/Answer:

1. Reconsidering our First Amendment rights in America, how would you compare these to freedoms provided in Iran?
2. How does the absence of freedom of speech and the press affect Iranian citizens? How does it affect the Iranian government?
3. What were Iranian citizens risking by protesting what they believed to be a fraudulent election?
4. If you were an Iranian citizen and you believed your vote had not been counted, how would you feel? How would you respond to your feelings?

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

**Response to Graphic Novel: Persepolis 2.0 - Iran's Post-Election Uprising: Hopes & Fears Revealed**

<http://www.spreadpersepolis.com/>

As a group, read and discuss the graphic novel then answer the questions below.

1. The beginning of the graphic novel refers to “an electrifying sense of hope.” How is this sense of hope impacted as the days pass?
2. Throughout the graphic novel, what examples of the restriction of rights are exhibited? What protections are granted by the US Constitution that would prohibit such a restriction of rights? Be specific. Do US citizens have any responsibility to ensure such rights are upheld? Explain.
3. Throughout the graphic novel, what examples of active citizenship are present?
4. What role did “social media” play in the 2009 Iranian election and response to the election outcomes?
5. What were citizens risking by participating in protests?
6. The final frame of the graphic novel says, “Don’t cry Neda. Your death will not be in vain...” How can Iranian citizens ensure that Neda’s death is not in vain?
7. What message is the artist trying to convey? What is the purpose of distributing this graphic novel?

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Political Cartoons

Cartoon 1

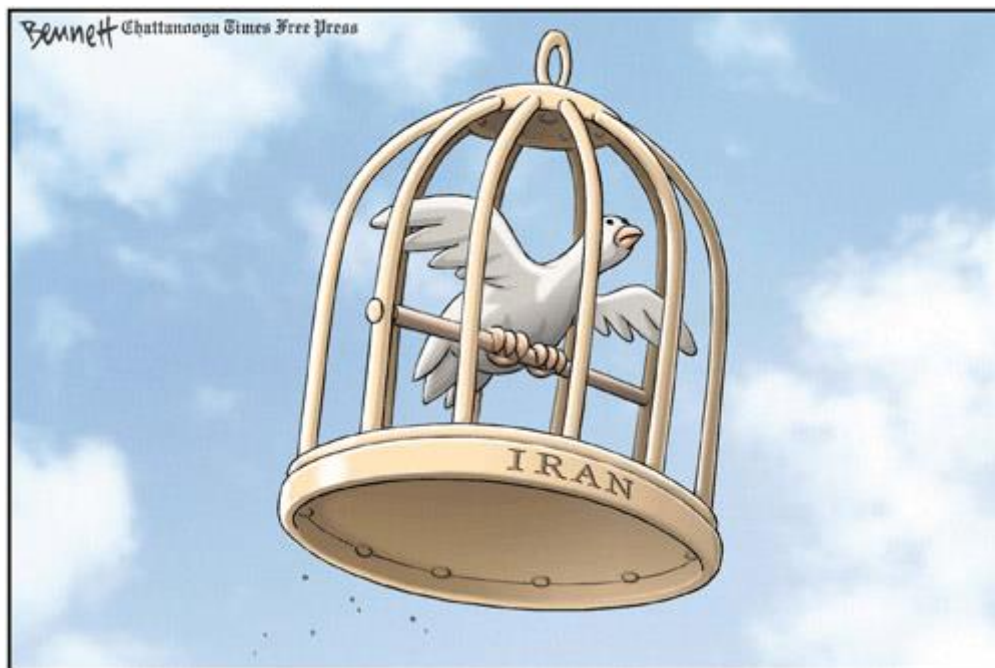


Cartoon 2





Cartoon 3



Cartoon 4

**IRAN**      **ILOST**



*Democracy  
is the best  
of all worlds*

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Response to Political Cartoons**

As a group, evaluate the political cartoons provided to you by discussing the questions below for each cartoon. Write your final interpretation for each cartoon as a last step.

To assist you in uncovering the message in each cartoon, discuss the following questions for each cartoon:

- What objects and people do you see in the cartoon?
- Are there any symbols in the cartoon? If so, what might the symbol mean?
- Are there any important clues that you can identify (words, places, numbers) in the cartoon?
- Describe any action that is happening in the cartoon.

#### ➤ **Cartoon 1**

1. What is the political or social issue presented in the cartoon?
2. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
3. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

#### ➤ **Cartoon 2**

4. What is the political or social issue presented in the cartoon?
5. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
6. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

#### ➤ **Cartoon 3**

7. What is the political or social issue presented in the cartoon?
8. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
9. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

#### ➤ **Cartoon 4**

10. What is the political or social issue presented in the cartoon?
11. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
12. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

Images from Iranian Election Protests

Image Set 1

A



B



A



B



A



B



Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Response to Images from Iranian Election Protests**

As a group, evaluate each of the three image sets provided to you by discussing the questions below. Write down your final three sets of answers on notebook paper.

1. What appears to be taking place in these photos?
2. If you were describing these photos to a stranger, what would you say was most significant about each of the images in this set?
3. Imagine and then describe the sights, sounds and smells the photographer might have experienced while taking each of these photos.
4. Who may have taken each of these two photographs and why? What evidence in each photo suggests this? (You may note a different answer for each of the two photos in this set, or your answer may be the same photographer for both.)
5. What can this image set teach us regarding the 2009 Iranian election?
6. Write a caption for these two photos:  
Image A caption:  
Image B caption:

## ***Iran Protests: It's not about Twitter, it's not about us***

by Sarah Jaffe, June 18, 2009 – 4:02 am

*Blog from <http://globalcomment.com/2009/iran-protests-its-not-about-twitter-its-not-about-us/>*

I'm not going to make any cute jokes about how "the revolution will be tweeted," mostly because they have already been made. Also, because the most inspiring thing about the protests in Iran isn't the Twitter part, but the sight of thousands of people crowding the streets, demanding basic democracy in their country.

The story is about Twitter only to the extent that it's about us, the rest of the world outside of Iran and especially here in the U.S. Yes, it's inspiring to see a field of green avatars on Twitter, or to see people normally uninvolved in politics even in their own country passing on information about a protest thousands of miles away, but when the comments are mostly about what Obama is doing about Iran, I have to remind myself that this isn't our protest.

We had a pretty questionable election ourselves not all that long ago, and we didn't take to the streets in any large numbers. Americans seem to have forgotten what large public protests are like. Sure, 2 million people showed up to Obama's inauguration—and that was a thrilling sight—but several people have pointed out the irony of Americans supporting Iranian protesters while ignoring our own.

I'm a big fan of the right of people to peacefully assemble—it's one of my favorite bits of the U.S. Constitution. I thrill to the sight of crowds of people united, love being part of it, but I also love small protests, the quixotic mission of five or ten determined people with signs. I love the people who participate in them, and since I was a teenager I've been one of those people.

As a new media geek I'm fascinated by the Twitter part of this popular uprising, I love watching information spread around the world at the speed of light, and thrill to the anarchistic nature of the peer-to-peer network, the trust in other people. I wish I was more tech-savvy so I could create proxy IP addresses for Iranian tweeters and bloggers. But the most inspiring part, to me, is seeing the scale of the protests. I've plastered my Tumblr page with photographs both professional and amateur of Iranian women standing in the streets, fists raised, and wide-angle shots of the crowds filling entire streets, stretching for miles.

Most of us in the States don't really know what the Iranian people are protesting about, though. And perhaps we don't have to know. Our willingness to support a public protest that would, without a doubt, be written off in this country as the work of "professional protesters," "troublemakers" or "fringe elements" without even knowing what it's about speaks volumes. Does it mean that we're truly committed to democracy? I'd like to think that's the case, but more likely it's that we've been fed propaganda over and over again about how despotic Ahmadinejad is, while on the other hand drinking the Kool-Aid over America's inherent goodness and more-democratic-than-thou nature.

It's easy for Americans to believe that an election could be stolen in Iran, but next to impossible for most of us to believe that it could be stolen in our own country. Iran has a much more recent history of revolution and overthrowing a leader by popular protest than we do, which may explain their willingness to take to the streets. Americans love to brag on our revolutionary heritage, but we do so from the safety of our couches most of the time.

We can learn a lot from the Iranian people, and I hope that when the protests have ended (and I know we're all hoping they end peacefully) the people who turned their profile pictures green do some thinking about solidarity and what it really means, and learn more about Iran and other countries around the world that haven't needed America's intrusion into their affairs to reaffirm their own right to choose their government. I hope, too, that America's government—and those who will be in charge in the future—take notice of the response to Iran's uprising, and think about supporting populist activists within a country instead of claiming that we can install democracy from without.

This revolution, after all, is not about us. It happened without our involvement, and though I would like to think that all the support around the world helped, the real movement is on the ground in Iran.