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speaker (before BG Foley starts his introduction)>>>>>>>

Thank you, Sir, for your support!
Welcome everyone and thank you for joining us today for
our next CASO session.
My name is Mahir Ibrahim, mostly known as Dr. I.
I am director of US Army CGSC's Cultural and Area
Studies Office.
Trying to stay relevant, we continue our usual approach,
analyzing the operational environment and identifying
important topics for our National Security. Then, jointly
with our many partners, we invite the best talents in their
respective areas of expertise. No doubt, that today's topic
is very pertinent, and our guest speaker is one of the most
prominent scholars on the region.
CASO conducted its previous session on "U.S. - Iran
relations" in 2020, jointly with our another great partner,
the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The
panel was held right after the U.S. air strike killed Iran's
Gen. Qassim Soleimani and analyzed the possible
implications of the subsequent tension. The video of the

entire session is available on CASO website, for anyone, who desires to see it.

Today's panel is the logical continuation of the Iran related discussion, based on the recent developments in the country.

Several months of protests have wracked Iran.

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This map depicts the extent of the latest protests per regions of Iran, with big red color legend indicating 100 or more protesters, other colors indicating fewer numbers. As you can see the scale of the protests are not even close to the scale of the mass protests in Iran in 1978-79, which brought together Iranians across many different social groups, and had effectively overthrown the Government of **Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi**.

Today's session will draw upon the history of Iranian protests to explore government strategy, how protests might end, and examine how and why these protests differ from previous experiences.

While the protests have challenged the regime, they still lack a cohesive leadership, like the architect of the Islamic revolution in Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for in 1979 revolution. If leadership emerges, what might it look like?

The discussion will explore how protests might impact the succession struggle after the aging supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and what might come next in Iran for the changing nature of leadership, political trends, the future role and fate of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

No doubt, what lies ahead for Iran, a country of 85 million, will have significant consequences internally and externally.

Meanwhile, Iran's ties with Russia are growing, and it is the closest it has ever been to reaching nuclear bomb-making capability. Reportedly, *Iran's armaments industry was preparing a shipment of Fateh-110 and Zolfaghar missiles, two well-known Iranian short-range ballistic missiles, capable of striking targets at distances of 300 and 700 kilometers, which Russia might use in Ukraine.*

The US and Western officials identified specific Iranian drones, such as Shahed-136s and the Mohajer-6, that Tehran had supplied to Russia. Shahed-136s, designed and manufactured by Iranian Shahed Aviation Industries, sometimes called "kamikaze" drones because they are designed to crash into their targets, can deliver explosive payloads at distances of up to 1,500 miles. Iranian

technical advisers have visited Russian-controlled areas to provide instructions on operating the drones.

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This map is an example of Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, military and other targets using Iranian drones, often repainted and rebranded as Russian “Geran-2” drones. The main approach has been mostly under Gen. Sergey Sirovikin, the previous overall commander of Russian forces in Ukraine, to launch the wave of relatively cheap Iranian drones against Ukrainian targets and after Ukrainian Air Defense systems would be activated and disclose their locations, Russians then would use their own **Kh-101 cruise missiles, sea-based Kalibr cruise missiles, 9K720 Iskander, known in NATO as SS-26 Stone short-range ballistic missile system with a range up to 500km, etc. So, the Iranian drones have done some damage in Ukraine.**

These and other questions would be hopefully addressed during our session today, which is part of CASO’s series of events, to address the challenges, which the U.S. and its partners are facing in different regions of the world.

We are privileged to have our quest speaker, **Dr. Michael Rubin, a senior fellow with the American Enterprise Institute**, Washington, DC. He has previously worked as a lecturer in Iranian history at Yale University; Johns

Hopkins University in Washington, DC; and at three different universities in northern Iraq. He has lived and conducted research in Yemen, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and with the Taliban in Afghanistan pre-9/11. Rubin is an author of many publications. Dr. Rubin's complete bio can be accessed at CASO website.

The opinions and discussion points during the session are those of the speaker and the moderator, and do not represent the official position of the United States government.

Before I yield the floor to our distinguished guest speaker, on behalf of CASO and its team, I would like to express our appreciation to the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) and its Director Mr. Tom Wilhelm for the great partnership all these years in support of CASO mission, including Dr. Rubin's participation in today's session.

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With this I would like to yield the floor to Dr. Michael Rubin, who will speak for the rest of the first hour or so, followed by a questions/answers/comments' session for the remaining time.

Dr. Rubin, the floor is yours.

