

“IS THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN STABLE?”
WITH MICHAEL RUBIN
SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR
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Michael Rubin is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. A former Pentagon official, he has lived in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY MICHAEL RUBIN

In a webinar organized by the pro-Israel ‘think tank’, the Middle East Forum that essentially focuses to inform American audiences on the subject of ‘global militant Islamic threat’ (everywhere including in continental United States) and the menace which the Islamic regime in Iran poses to US interests and that of its allies in the Middle East, Michael Rubin addressed the question of stability in the Islamic Republic.

On the basis that the death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, aged 82 looms in the short to medium term future, it was his view that already many potential successors are plotting their ascent. It was his assumption that their efforts, in an already charged atmosphere could potentially lead to possible disruptions and possible anarchy. He said that in his view the matter of succession would not be decided by the Council of Experts but by deal that are influenced by the IRGC and made behind closed doors

In what is usually a 15-minute introductory statement followed by another 15-minute ‘Q&A’ session, Rubin’s remarks were not particularly illuminating. He speculated about the fact that a nuclear deal and sanctions relief may provide some solace to the hardliners and their main allies in the IRGC.

Providing a brief history of dissent within the Islamic regime in the course of the past 43 years, Rubin said that according to many credible human rights organizations, the number of arrest by the security forces in the public demonstrations that have raged throughout the country since 2017 has been in the thousands. He said that facial recognition software purchased from the Chinese is now being effectively used to identify and arrest people far from the streets in which they may have protested and in their homes.

In terms of the succession and the jockeying that is going around at this time, he essentially discarded the credibility of any role that might be played by the external opposition.

He was of the view that amongst the exile community, the son of the late Shah might potentially have some kind of a small unifying or rallying role to play.

Rubin noted that at the time of his accession, Ali Khamenei was devoid of the right religious credential for succeeding the late Ayatollah Khomeini. He felt that credentials would most likely not have a huge role once Khamenei is gone given that neither of the current front-runners, Ebrahim Raisi or Mojtaba Khamenei exactly fit the bill.

Rubin was of the view that a potential for a military dictatorship to emerge in the post-Khamenei period was always there though no one could speculate at this time whether the possible future military rulers of Iran would be something like President Sisi in Egypt or officers with radical ideological tendencies.

In light of the various protests that were going on, he chastised the US government from not finding ways of supporting labour union in Iran that have in one way or another continuously challenged the regime in the past 2-3 years.

Personal Observation: There was nothing concrete or new in anything that was said which was nothing but general condemnation of the IRI in line with comments that are made from neo-con circles in the US.

