Seven Black Swans in the Middle East

by Martin Kramer (/experts/martin-kramer)

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Events considered impossible tend to happen in the region with unusual frequency, so when will the next one appear?

The subject of strategic surprise is a large one, and it has inspired a fair amount of theoretical literature. The following catalogue isn’t intended as a contribution to theory. It is the evidence behind my personal observation that, for as long as I have studied the Middle East, all of the profoundly formative events have been “black swans,” imagined or predicted by almost no one. For an expert, that’s humbling (or should be)...

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