when serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in early 2020, I was asked by a group of analysts what were my “black swans” for the region—events that seemed unlikely but that could be highly consequential. The one that sprung immediately to mind was the prospect, then a dim one, that Mustafa al-Kadhimi, a Western-oriented dual national of the United Kingdom, could fight his way past the opposition of Iranian-backed Shiite militias to become the prime minister of Iraq. I felt then that it could be a game-changer for Iraq and the region. Since then, Kadhimi has indeed proven to be perhaps the best Iraqi prime minister since the 1958 coup...
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Henry "Trey" Obering III,
Samantha Ravich,
David Pollock

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May 6, 2021

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