

To Understand the Complexities of Saudi Arabia, a Quick Course in 'Riyadhology'

by [Simon Henderson \(/experts/simon-henderson\)](/experts/simon-henderson)

Jan 10, 2018

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Simon Henderson is the Baker fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute, specializing in energy matters and the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf.



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The crown prince's rise to the throne could be interrupted by any number of internal dynamics, but studying the nuances of royal relations can help Washington prepare for any nasty surprises.

Back in the days of the Soviet Union, foreign analysts used to pay great attention when, on big occasions, the communist leadership lined up on top of Lenin's tomb in Moscow. Who was there? And where were they positioned in relation to the party secretary-general? Such speculation was called "Kremlinology." For years, I have adopted a similar approach to trying to understand the Saudi royal family, studying the news reports and photographs published by the Saudi Press Agency for the names of who travels with the king, or who is in the receiving line to greet him or say farewell when he travels. I call it "Riyadhology" and, rather than being some esoteric academic specialization, I believe it is crucial to understanding what is going on in Saudi Arabia...

[Read the full article on the Hill website. \(http://thehill.com/opinion/international/368100-to-understand-the-complexities-of-saudi-arabia-a-quick-course-in\)](http://thehill.com/opinion/international/368100-to-understand-the-complexities-of-saudi-arabia-a-quick-course-in) ❖

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