

Yamani's tone grows bolder as she says that the inclusion of these groups is no longer a matter of choice, but has become essential for the long term survival of the whole political system. Yet including them has proved difficult because the royal family is divided on the issue of reform.

Family division on this issue was described in rather stark terms by Michael Scott Doran in his article «The Saudi Paradox», published in the January/February edition of *Foreign Affairs*³.

Doran claims that the «Saudi state is a fragmented entity, divided between the fiefdoms of the royal family. Among the four or five most powerful princes, two stand out: Crown Prince Abdullah and his half brother Prince Nayef (Naif), the interior minister. Relations between the two leaders are visibly tense».

Doran, an assistant professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University and adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that the two princes have taken opposite sides in the debate of reform: Abdullah tilts towards the liberals, whereas Naif sides with the clerics.

He explains the dispute between the two camps in religious terms. Abdullah's camp, which represents the left end of the Saudi political spectrum, believes in the Islamic doctrine of Taqarub (rapprochement). This principle calls for peaceful coexistence with nonbelievers, and seeks to expand the political community by including the groups that the Wahhabis consider

non-Muslim (Shia, secularists, feminists...etc).

Naif's camp, on the other hand, is at the right end of the Saudi spectrum, which takes its stand on the principle of Tawhid (monotheism), as defined by Mohammed ibn Adb al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism. In their view, many people who claim to be monotheists (i.e. Christian, Jews, Shia, and even insufficiently devout Sunnis) are actually polytheists and idolaters. These groups are involved in a grand conspiracy to destroy true Islam – a conspiracy that should be faced with a holy war.

Lack of rational mechanism

Be that as it may, the division within the royal family is compounded by a fierce sense of competitiveness. Joseph A. Kechichian described this problem in his book «Succession in Saudi Arabia».⁴ Based on extensive interviews with members of the Saudi family, government officials, intellectuals, and foreign diplomats, the book is a first hand document that meticulously describes the different clans and competing factions of the Saudi Dynasty.

Kechichian argues that the question of succession in the kingdom has never been resolved because of the lack of a rational mechanism that could set the criteria for who should be the next king. As a result, the family has been torn by political disputes, with each eligible prince attempting to strengthen his position through alliances with different factions of the ruling establishment. How does this issue affect the Kingdom's future political stability? Rather badly as Kechichian warns.

¹ The book was published in English and Arabic: Yamani, Mai, *Changed Identities: the Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia*, London: the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000; in Arabic, Beirut: Dar Riad El Rayyes Books, 2001.

² Yamani, Mai, *Die Saudis: Herrschaft alter Männer*, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 30.06.2003.

³ Doran, Michael Scot, *The Saudi Paradox*, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2004.

⁴ The book was published in English and Arabic: Kechichian, A. Joseph, *Succession in Saudi Arabia*, New York: Palgrave, 2001; or Kechichian, A. Joseph, *Succession in Saudi Arabia*, in Arabic, London: Dar Al Saqi, 2002.

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In the field of media development, CIMERA (civic development media support research & analysis) implements regional media programs to support the access to and raise the quality of public information and debate through the media. After the collapse of the Soviet-Union, journalism has witnessed radical change due to political changes and technological innovations, requiring the development of a new consciousness about the role and professional standards of the profession. To address this need, CIMERA proposes differentiated training programmes based on the needs of the local journalistic and media community; this can be in the form of on-site trainings within editorial offices in Central Asian newspapers, seminars for Central Asian media experts on media monitoring and content analysis, or vocational training for journalists, which we offer through the Yerevan based Caucasus Media Institute. CIMERA completes its training programs with the organization of regional conferences in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, bringing together experts, policy makers, and journalists from the post-Soviet countries to address current issues at stake. These conferences serve to upgrade the knowledge base of the participants, to encourage informal debates between governmental representatives, experts and media representatives and to create networks and cross-border cooperation. For example, CIMERA has organized in April 2002 a conference on «Islam and Society in Central Asia» (Dushanbe, Tajikistan) published in both English and Russian in our Conference Proceedings

series. In the field of education, we conduct programs to strengthen education systems to deal with conflict and social change. In Central Asia, this includes a multi-lingual education programme which started in Kyrgyzstan in the year 2000, and is currently enlarged to neighbouring Tajikistan. The innovative programme introduces interactive methodologies of language education in kindergartens and primary schools of the two countries in order to preserve the knowledge of their respective national language, minority languages and Russian. The programme also raises the awareness of the decision-making bodies in both countries about the necessity to overcome existing language barriers and the resulting socio-economic inequalities and supports policy change through the organisation of conferences on multi-lingual education, the cooperation with the respective ministries of education and the capacity building of local NGO's promoting multi-lingual education in Central Asia

In Tajikistan, CIMERA has also initiated a political dialogue about the role of regions in the process of state building. The project gave a group of top and mid level Tajik officials, parliament members and opinion makers engaged in the formation of the country's internal national policy the opportunity to discuss in depth the questions related to the relationship between the central government and the regions.

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