

SECURITY STRATEGIES OF SAUDI ARABIA AS A REGIONAL POWER IN A UNIPOLAR SYSTEM 2000-2010

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the security strategies of Saudi Arabia, based on the structure and characteristics of the international system, both the country's relations with the superpower in the unipolar system and the alliance relations that the country established as a regional power. In addition, the features that the State possessed due to its conditions and the effects of these features on security strategies were explained. In our study, in which we sought answers to questions such as “Were Saudi Arabia's alliances power or security centered?”, “Did internal or external threats determine Saudi Arabia's security strategy?”, “In which area did Saudi Arabia prioritize the struggle when faced with its internal and external threats at the same time?”, “What was Saudi Arabia's overall security strategy?” and the omnialignment tendencies of the country between 2000-2010 were examined due to its competing allegiances, non-inclusive legitimacy, rentier state economy and interrelated threats.

Keywords; Saudi Arabia, regional power, security strategy, Middle East, omnialignment

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the security strategies of Saudi Arabia as a "regional power"¹, based on systemic, regional and internal threats in the unipolar system. In the unipolar system, the deep or passive engagement strategy of the regional policies of the superpower was effective in determining the main threat in the region. However, the system alone was not sufficient to explain the state behavior of regional powers. Regional threats and internal threats to which regional powers were exposed also determined state behavior. Saudi Arabia always faced security threats to the regime due to factors such as the monarchical state structure, the competing allegiances of the people outside the state, and the rentier state economy. For Saudi Arabia, the security of the regime was more important than the security of Saudi Arabia and its people. For this reason, the system, region and internal threats-centered factors affected the security of Saudi Arabia were mentioned. Within the scope of the article, the factors that influenced Saudi Arabia's security policies between the years 2000-2010 were examined.

The influence of the international system's power distribution in shaping state behavior determines the main threat to regional powers. A system in which there is only one global power and no other

¹*In the literature, regional powers are defined as part of a region that can be defined by its own identity, have a strategic position in the region, have high military, economic, demographic and political capabilities, are integrated into the region and play a role in determining the security agenda of the region, and have the ability to form alliances and break alliances in the region.; İsmail Akdoğan, “Tek Kutuplu Sistemde Bölgesel Güçlerin Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejileri: Suudi Arabistan Örneği (1990-2015)” (PhD diss., Sakarya University, 2018), 191-2.*

great power is defined as a unipolar system.² Due to the nature of the unipolar system and the options to balance the superpower, especially regional powers have difficulty in determining balancing policies. The inability of states to come together and attempt to balance the superpower reveals an alternative strategy called “bandwagoning” for secondary states. However, between 2000-2010, it was seen that the regional powers, especially Saudi Arabia, instead of bandwagoning, formed various alliances and developed cooperations to balance the deep engagement strategy of USA. What was the real reason behind the alignment policy of the regional powers? Did Saudi Arabia establish an alliance based on threat or power? Did Saudi Arabia choose bandwagoning or alignment when the US was actively involved in the Middle East?

Saudi Arabia has had many internal threats and the State leader who often considered them more dangerous than external threats for the regime.³ In this context, considering the survival of the regime and the survival of the State as equal was not only the perception of the leader but also the objective reality of the State in Saudi Arabia. Because of the competing allegiances, controversial legitimacy, intense state power and rentier state that Saudi Arabia had, it was very important to focus on the internal threat as a variable that determined international behavior. When a different external threat emerged, the regime had to follow a alignment strategy to deal with multiple threats simultaneously. Thus, the Saudi leader fought both the security of the State in an anarchic international system and the intense internal threat. These threats were often closely linked to external rivals, who fueled internal opposition or aided internal revolts.

Given these effects, state control was highly desirable and often violence was used due to the lack of political and economic institutions dedicated to providing influence for non-state actors.⁴ For this reason, the concept of omnialignment⁵, cannot be explained by a local source for the international balance for Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, the interrelated nature of the threats to the regime's continuity made it necessary for Saudi leaders to be aware of the various challenges and to respond by assessing internal and external threats together. For Saudi Arabia, it was not always possible to balance the internal threat with an alliance with an interrelated external threat. Because internal threats offer many opportunities for external powers to pose a threat to a state. In this case, the Saudi regime sometimes suppressed internal threats and sometimes pacified them by using social aid, social reforms and military power. In this context, within the scope of omnialignment theory, the relationship between internal and external threats faced by Saudi Arabia between 2000-2010 and the steps taken by Saudi leaders to combat threats were evaluated.

In this study, which analyzed the Saudi Arabia case, it was tried to reveal the factors that determined the security equations. In particular, by going beyond traditional approaches, the level of analysis of Saudi Arabia's security strategies in the context of external-internal and interrelated threats were determined. In other words, the majority of Saudi Arabia's population was

²Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World,” *World Politics* 61, No.1 (2009): 86-120.

³Brian J. Grim, Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28.

⁴Richard J. Harknett, “Alignment theory and interrelated threats: Jordan and the Persian Gulf crisis,” *Security Studies* 6, No. 3 (1997): 112-153.

⁵It is a alignment strategy for countries with internal threats, in response to external, internal and interrelated threats. See. Steven R. David, “Explaining Third World Alignment,” *World Politics* 43, No. 2 (1991): 233-257.

systematically excluded from income sources, and a significant part of it faced certain privileges. The political implication of this was that highly centralized power made state control a highly desirable reward for the opposition, which continually threatened the monarchy. The final requirement of omnialignment was that the superpower's regional policies were viewed as the main threat when the US adopted deep engagement strategy. In parallel with this situation, alliances emerged that Saudi Arabia established in order to balance its internal and external threats in the region. As a result, these conditions forced Saudi Arabia to use suppression and appeasement in domestic and foreign policy, and omnialigning against internal and external threats. Strategically, Saudi Arabia occasionally increased its military power for the security of the regime, but this was not because it saw the source of security as an increase in power, but because it saw power as a tool for security. The main strategy was to ensure the security of the regime against internal and external threats.

1. THREATS FACED BY SAUDI ARABIA 2000-2010

While examining the 2000-2010 security strategy of Saudi Arabia, it is necessary to explain the regional policies of the Super Power first. The regional policies of the superpower were as important as internal threats to the regional powers. Whether the superpower would follow an deep or passive engagement strategy in the region with its power parameters was the main factor shaping all its policies, and it also affected the security strategies of regional powers. The USA followed the deep engagement strategy in the Middle East between 2000-2010, Iraq was no longer called a threat or an ally, instead the USA was a threat to the region. Because 15/19 of those responsible for the 9/11 attacks were of Saudi origin, and Saudi Arabia's alleged support for al-Qaeda caused it to be seen as a country that supported terrorism in the international arena. Serious external pressure caused it to make constant attempts to disprove this situation. At every opportunity, it tried to show that it was cooperating with the USA in order to fight terrorism in the Middle East. The problem of the systematic distribution of power and threat in this process were not completely external, there were also various internal threats to Saudi Arabia. Considering the USA's being a superpower, the existence of active regional policies, and the image of being a supporter of terrorism on Saudi Arabia, it could be predicted that Saudi Arabia would implement the bandwagoning policy in this process. The coalition relations it established and the existence of potential allies alleviated the external pressure for bandwagoning felt by the regime as it saw the internal threats as the main problem.

Tablo 1. Factors Determining the Security Strategy of Regional Power in a Unipolar System (2000-2010)

Structure of the System	Unipolar
Regional Policies of the Superpower	Deep Engagement Strategy
Regional Power's Foreign Policy Options	Status Quoist-Soft Balancing
The Most Important Threat to Regional Power (Internal)	Shiites, Muslim Brotherhood, Sahwa, Groups interrelated with terrorist organizations

The Main Threat to Regional Power	USA
Alliance Options of Regional Power	Omnialignment - Various alliances established with states interrelated with their internal threats in the region

1.1. EXTERNAL THREATS TO SAUDI ARABIA

If a state is satisfied with its position and there are no attempts to threaten its interests in the balance of power, it has a tendency to maintain its position. If a state is not satisfied with its current situation and wants to revise the system in line with its own interests, it has to stop a potential hegemon by alignment. As such, an alliance with a state that is in line with the interests of the state is a priority. Because revisionist approaches can lead to serious power and financial loss. Alignment both aim to resolve the deterioration in the balance of power or threat through diplomacy, and also aim to minimize financial and military losses. At this point, the decision of the Super Power to exhibit revisionist (restorationist) or status quo policies becomes important. With the decision of the hegemonic power to pursue revisionist policies, the regional powers face the fact that the balance will be established in favor of the Super Power, in the balance that the regional powers will want to act for their own interests. In the region, in the presence of a potential hegemon power, there is harmony in the international system. Other units interacting in the system, namely the secondary states, form various alliances by interacting in line with the interests of the Super Power in the face of regional policies and the intentions of other states. When the Super Power pursues active policies, the secondary states seek the network of relations where they will suffer the least from the Super Power's regional policies.

In the US grand strategy for the Middle East in the Bush administration, the policies of actively participating in the region are defined as the "deep engagement strategy" during the war with Afghanistan in 2001 continued until the 2010s with the Iraq War. In addition, the USA did not only actively fight in the region, but also implemented grand strategy to the Middle East with diplomatic relations and alliances. With the aggressive rhetoric of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the US succeeded in isolating Tehran and persuading the UN Security Council to put the Iranian Nuclear Program on its agenda. Meanwhile, by making some small but important concessions, it also gained a degree of diplomatic credibility in the international community.⁶ Washington forced Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to make more competitive elections in Egypt than had seen before, and even ignited the "Cedar Revolution" with French leadership, demanding Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Likewise, the administration launched the "Middle East Partnership Initiative" program, designed to inject modest amounts of money into some regional states to help them move towards change. It did not hesitate to use "bigger carrots and bigger sticks" to take an active role in regional policies and to maintain the balance in the region.⁷

⁶ Ian Black, "Un approves new Iran sanctions", *The Guardian*, 9 June, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/09/iran-sanctions-united-nations-nuclear>.

⁷ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Grand Strategy: Why America Should Promote a New Liberal Order in the Middle East", Brookings, 22 July 2006.

While encouraging countries for further reforms, it also offered incentives to countries adopting progressive reforms and imposed penalties on countries rejecting reforms.⁸

In the deep engagement strategy, the USA, using its planning power, used serious ground combat power in order to conduct war policies in almost two areas (Iraq and Afghanistan), limited assurance to the allies and deterrence against aggressive policies, and increased expenditures on the Air Force and Navy. Within the scope of this strategy, the defense strategy was designed, the path to be followed in the Middle East with traditional and non-traditional high-level technological methods, accompanied by specialized forces, was explained with the National Security Strategy Document of the USA.⁹ Thus, with the deep engagement strategy, the USA created a safe environment for the allies thanks to its military capacity, and created a serious deterrent effect in regional threats.¹⁰ The war against al-Qaeda after the 9/11 attacks was turned into a global war, aiming to reduce the costs of the war against terrorism and to conduct a more effective fight through increased cooperation. The acts of terrorist organizations were seen as a threat in the global, regional and national arena, and Saudi Arabia was known as a country that supported global terrorist organizations, it caused it to be not only a regional but also a global target, and in this case, it faced a serious threat.

The terrorist organization perception formed as a result of the 9/11 attacks and the responsibility of al-Qaeda, which was supported by Saudi Arabia, had a negative impact on the position of Saudi Arabia in global politics, which brought it against the United States between 2000-2010. Saudi Arabia's reforms, sanctions, laws and intelligence sharing were not effective in destroying the perception of being associated with terrorism globally. Thus, the main foreign threat to Saudi Arabia between 2000-2010 was the USA. Saudi Arabia was concerned about the US, with its invasion of Iraq, disrupted the balance of power in the region and put the security of the regime in serious danger by supporting the democratization movements after its intervention in the region.

1.2. REGIONAL THREATS TO SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia was claiming leadership in the Islamic World, with the help of the religious advantages provided by Mecca and Medina, as a place where approximately 30 million people live with a Sunni majority in the Middle East. For reason, since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, the two states began to see each other as a regional threat. Within the scope of the "Twin Pillars" policy of the Nixon Doctrine, the paths of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two allies of the USA, were separated by the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and this ended the alliance of the USA and Iran. Even though Camp David Accords, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the Grand Mosque seizure, which took place in the same period, were other turning points, Saudi Arabia and Iran started to see each other as a threat after the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the "Grand Mosque seizure" led by Juheyman al-Utaybi. As a result of The Grand Mosque seizure, the Saudi regime

⁸Kenneth M. Pollack, "Grand Strategy"

⁹The National Security Strategy of The United States of America, September 2002, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>.

¹⁰F. G. Hoffman, "U.S. Defense Policy and Strategy", R.D. Hooker, Jr., Charting A Course: Strategic Choices for a New Administration 12 (December 2016): 42-3.

developed a more oppressive religious discourse in order to maintain internal balances and decided to fight the Iranian Islamic ideology.

With the intervention of the USA in Iraq in 2003, the Baath regime was overthrown and Iraq was no longer a threat to Saudi Arabia; it was replaced by Iran, which was developing its nuclear weapons and aiming to expand in the region. Although it was seen as a threat in the circumstances of the time, Iran was actually a general threat to Saudi Arabia due to its support of the Shiites in the region and their ambitions to form the Shia crescent. The identification of Iran as a threat to Saudi Arabia had military, ideological, economic and geopolitical dimensions. The main reason why Iran was seen as a threat to Saudi Arabia was its military power. In terms of military capacity, Iran had a superior capacity than Saudi Arabia, given the data. Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz, which is on the route of Saudi Arabia's oil transfer, was a threat not only for Saudi Arabia but also for the entire regional trade.¹¹

Iran, which Saudi Arabia saw as an ideological threat, also had ambitions to become a regional power like Saudi Arabia and to be seen as the leader of the Islamic World. The desire of two regional powers with the same ambitions to realize their goals at the same time caused them to define each other as a constant threat. In order to realize these ideological ambitions, Saudi Arabia was trying to spread the Saudi-Wahhabi tradition through various schools, publications and foundations, while Iran was trying to increase its influence on the Shiite population, especially around the Shia crescent. Another reason why Iran was seen as a threat for Saudi Arabia was that the Shiite population of Saudi Arabia in the Eastern provinces was constantly being provoked by Iran against the regime. In addition, the presence of large oil reserves in these regions were possessing a significant internal and interrelated external threat to the regime's security as well as to the economic security of Saudi Arabia. Geopolitically, the reason why Saudi Arabia defines Iran as an external threat is seen as Iran's expansionist targets.¹²

Although the threats in question made Iran a serious regional threat to Saudi Arabia, there was no serious threat perception between the two countries in the region between 2000-2010, on the contrary, the two countries acted together in many areas and made positive initiatives in their relations. The fact that there was a serious global threat in the region for the two regional powers brought the parties closer and enabled them to establish cooperation. The Iranian influence on the Shiites, which was seen as a serious internal threat to Saudi Arabia, and the existence of a global threat like the USA, which wanted to democratize the regimes in the region and took an active role for this purpose, brought it closer to Iran. It improved its relations with the external threat interrelated with the existing internal threat and followed the omnialignment strategy. Iran, on the other hand, tried to balance a global threat that emerged right next to it by developing regional relations.¹³ Therefore, in this period, for Saudi Arabia, Iran was not seen as a serious external

¹¹Bora Bayraktar, "Bölgesel Liderlik Arayışı ve Suudi Arabistan: Farklılaşan Tehditler ve Yeni Dış Politika", *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, (2020): 25-8.

¹²Bayraktar, "Bölgesel Liderlik Arayışı," 25-8.

¹³In the evaluation at the end of the article, the dimensions, conditions and forms of cooperation developed between countries were discussed in detail.

threat, instead as an interrelated external threat, but the two countries came together to combat the global threat.

1.3. INTERNAL THREATS TO SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi regime followed resolute policies in monitoring the activities of Islamic groups, which often directly criticized the Saudi Administration and the Royal Family, but did not carefully monitor the flow of money to organizations and groups outside the Kingdom until 9/11. It was quite late compared to the USA in taking precautions in 2001 and beyond. The Saudi regime also failed to track down the young Saudis involved in extremist movements.¹⁴ It continued to fund and support Wahhabi and other ultra-conservative movements and activities that promoted violence and extremism outside of Saudi Arabia, and did not properly differentiate between supporting legitimate Islamic organizations and charities and involvement in violent movements. The regime tolerated sermons, teaching, and textbooks that had a strong xenophobic character—sometimes attacking Christians, Jews, and other religions—as long as they did not attack specific political targets in Saudi Arabia or call for specific acts of violence. Relatively little effort was made to monitor the activities of "Islamic" groups in schools if they were not directly opposed to the Monarchy. In Saudi Arabia, senior leaders and wealthy businessmen supported Islamic groups with their zakat, as they did not have to pay taxes to the state and had to pay zakat according to Islamic rules, and the Saudi regime did not track the flow of money.¹⁵

Although the Saudi Government initially took some initiatives to strengthen Saudi security operations, the priority of Saudi internal security had radically changed after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Senior members of the Saudi Royal Family immediately expressed their sympathy for the United States after 9/11 and condemned the terrorist attacks.¹⁶ Saudi Arabia had to reiterate the Kingdom's stance condemning all forms of terrorism and its ongoing cooperation with the international community to combat terrorism, as it was seen as the responsible of the 9/11 attacks and primary target and that meant standing against the whole world, especially the Super Power. This situation posed a serious threat not only to the security of the regime, but also to Saudi Arabia.

What Saudi Arabia did not realize until a massive series of terrorist attacks took place on Saudi soil in May 2003 was that Saudi Arabia was indeed facing serious internal security challenges. Although as many as 70,000-100,000 young people from the Arab and Islamic World were trained in various training camps following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and between 15,000 and 25,000 Saudis were in various training camps and overseas over the years, in Saudi Arabia, the apparent sense of belonging and lack of organization caused the Kingdom to focus more on external threats than internal threats in the face of such actions.¹⁷ They were too late to realize that

¹⁴Christopher M. Blanchard, Alfred B. Prados, "Saudi Arabia: Terrorist Financing Issues", CRS Report for Congress, 14 (September 2007).

¹⁵Blanchard, Prados, "Saudi Arabia."

¹⁶Anthony H. Cordesman, "Saudi Official Statements on Terrorism After the September 11th Attacks", CSIS 7, (November 2001).

¹⁷Anthony H. Cordesman, "Saudi Internal Security: A Risk Assessment", CSIS 4, (May 2004).

the security forces had to play a more serious role in the fight against terrorism, both within the Kingdom's borders and abroad. The direct involvement of so many young Saudis in "9/11" and the overall membership of Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda reflected the fact that Saudi security efforts had major weaknesses. The kingdom was not successful in dealing with the monetary aspects of intelligence and homeland security, which facilitated the flow of money to individuals funding Saudi charities, religious organizations and extremist groups, strengthening internal threats.¹⁸ The lack of control of financial transactions facilitated large amounts of money laundering, smuggling, tolerating the drug trade and providing support to extremist groups in the country.¹⁹

Saudi Arabia faced with Muslims and a growing number of local takfiri who rejected Saudi leadership as it was un-Islamic from their perspective. Their predecessors were the Sahwa Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Sahwa and the Muslim Brotherhood were seen as the most serious threats, organized and popular activist groups among Saudi Arabia's obvious internal threats. In the ideology of the Sahwa Movement, non-recognition of the state was the main target, the reason for the reaction to the regime was both opposition to domestic policy reforms that were interpreted as Westernizing or un-Islamic, and foreign policies that were seen as antithetical. (Including the alliance with the USA and the decision to allow the deployment of US troops in Saudi Arabia). Taking into account the pressure exerted on al-Qaeda and militant activists with the start of the Iraq War after 2002, Sahwa also became an internal threat to the regime.²⁰ During this period, Saudi security forces were unprepared and weak compared to the operational capability of the local al-Qaeda network.²¹ Nasser al-Fahd, one of the leading scholars of the Shuaybi School²² issued a fatwa stating that visas could no longer guarantee the safety of Western visitors, and issued documents confirming the targeting of the West as well as Saudi security forces in violent attacks.²³

Concern by Saudi authorities about terrorist activities increased not after the 9/11 attacks in the United States, but after May 12, 2003, multiple suicide bombings in Riyadh on various residential areas where non-Saudi contractors and their families lived. In total, 34 people were killed and 200 injured. The purpose of the attacks was to liberate the Arabian Peninsula from the US presence.²⁴ From that moment on, for Saudi Arabia, its internal threats became more important than external threats. Large stocks of weapons and explosives stored in various cities of Saudi Arabia were found and had to fight many terrorist acts. Extremists were protesting Saudi Arabia-US relations, US presence in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Over the next few years, attacks continued across the country. By mid-2005, more than 91 civilians and 118 militants had been killed and about 800

¹⁸The U.S. Government Printing Office, *"Money Laundering and Terror Financing Issues In The Middle East"*, (July 13, 2005).

¹⁹The U.S. Government Printing Office, *"Money Laundering."*

²⁰Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 143-7.

²¹Thomas Hegghammer, *"Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia,"* International Affairs. 84, No. 4 (2008): 709.

²²It was a school where jihadist Salafists were educated and received serious financial support.

²³Hegghammer, *"Jihad in Saudi Arabia,"* 153.

²⁴Hegghammer, *"Jihad in Saudi Arabia,"*105.

injured.²⁵ In response, the regime first launched a nationwide crackdown on suspected militants, questioning thousands and arresting at least 800 of them on suspicion of terrorist activity, and then a rehabilitation and retraining program was launched.²⁶

Another internal threat to Saudi Arabia was the Shiites. Shiites were passive for most of the country's history, but they became a threat in 1979 with the support of Iran. Since then, it created a perception that directly challenged the regime and led young people to religious and social oppression and to mass civil disobedience. Although this phase lasted less than a decade, the events and the regime's harsh reaction remained in the collective memories and the Shiites became a constant internal threat to the Saudis. At a meeting in 1993, King Fahd promised Shiite leaders to loosen political restrictions in exchange for ending active opposition backed by foreign countries.²⁷ For Saudi Arabia, the agreement provided a period of relative silence, but the terror campaign within the Kingdom in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula required the government to focus on the most militant forms of religious extremism. Riyadh promoted rapprochement between nonviolent Islamists and liberals, Sunnis and Shiites, who faced the threat of Sunni militancy and joined the call for political and religious reform. The war in Iraq did not affect this initiative very positively. Encouraged by the example of Iraqi co-religionists, some Saudi Shiites believed that they should exert more pressure, while the presence of Shiite dominance in a neighboring country fueled the courage of the Shiites.²⁸ As a result, the possibility of Shiites posing an internal threat to the regime and being supported by external threats had increased considerably.

Instead of fueling sectarian conflict for the security of the regime, steps had to be taken to prevent a potential crisis. As King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz became Crown Prince, he signaled his support for greater Shia rights, most importantly by promoting inclusive national dialogues and bringing together key members of the Sunni clergy. This would require a long-term commitment to political and social cohesion and combating internal hate speech. These include: (1) The presence of Shiites in government institutions, especially in national and local councils, including the Majlis-i Shura and Regional Councils, (2) lifting remaining restrictions on Shia religious rituals and practices, in particular by allowing the construction of mosques and community centers (Husayniyyas) and the production, printing and circulation of religious materials within their communities, (3) the government's decision to allow the Ashura celebration in 2004, (4) promoting tolerance, eliminating anti-Shiite opposition in mosques and schools, and preventing statements fueling anti-Shia violence were seen as important steps.²⁹

²⁵John Bradley, "Kingdom of Peace Transformed into al-Qa'eda's Latest War Zone" Telegraph, August 1 2005).

²⁶Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, "Initiatives and Actions Taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Combat Terrorism," (DC, December, 2006), http://www.saudiembassy.net/files/PDF/KSA_WOT_Report_Dec06.pdf.

²⁷Graham E. Fuller ve Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999): 190.

²⁸International Crisis Group, "The Shiite Question In Saudi Arabia", *Middle East Report 45*, No. 19, (September 2005), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/saudi-arabia/shiite-question-saudi-arabia>.

²⁹International Crisis Group, "The Shiite Question In Saudi Arabia."

The internal threats to Saudi Arabia between 2000 and 2010 were generally the terrorist attacks that occurred in the country with the support of the Sahwa Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, Shiites and al-Qaeda. In this process, the Saudi regime developed positive relations with interrelated external threats that supported or might support internal threats at various times and through joint initiatives. As such, it omnialigned its internal threats with its interrelated external threats through various initiatives. In cases where omnialignment was insufficient, it suppressed internal threats with social assistance and social reforms. These initiatives suppressed the existing internal threats until the USA withdrew from the region.

2. ANALYSIS OF SAUDI ARABIA'S ALLIANCE AND BALANCING POLICIES AGAINST THREATS (2000-2010)

Right after the 9/11 attacks, Saudi Arabia conveyed its condolences, expressed that it stands by the USA at every opportunity in the fight against terrorism³⁰, and allowed the USA to carry out the Afghanistan attack (Operation Enduring Freedom) from the Prince Sultan Air Base. However, none of these were enough for Saudi Arabia and the USA to act together.³¹ Because the only problem was not that the USA posed a threat to Saudi Arabia. The existence of serious internal threats against the regime in this period also affected Saudi Arabia's alliance relations and thus the state's behavior. The effects of the regime's structure on the slippery ground and the properties of being a rentier state on the people caused the society to constantly have competing allegiances outside the state, which showed that internal threats would always exist for Saudi Arabia. In this process, the existing internal threats were seen as the primary problem for the state leader, and some actions were taken to suppress. Foremost among these were radical Islamists who did not want the partnership with the United States. Although it was challenging for Saudi Arabia in foreign policy, the necessity of appeasement of domestic politics was of higher priority. For this reason, Crown Prince Abdullah had to make a speech on a critical date, October 2001, in which he said that the national interests of Saudi Arabia and America no longer coincided and that the relations between the two countries reached a turning point.³²

On the US front, there were serious reactions against Saudi Arabia. The rapid spread of news that Saudi Arabia provided financial support to terrorist organizations caused a serious public opinion against Saudi Arabia in the USA. In this context, the American Congress quickly presented the "Saudi Arabia Accountability Act", which envisages various embargoes and sanctions against Saudi Arabia.³³ The Saudi Arabian regime, on the other hand, made some attempts to balance the external threat in the face of the situation posing an external threat with serious economic sanctions and military intervention. The Supreme Board of Supervision of Foundations (2002) and the Financial Intelligence Unit (2005), which oversaw the foundation system allegedly facilitating the

³⁰James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia (New York: Fact on File, 2010)*, 275-7.

³¹James Wynbrandt, "A Brief History," 275-7.

³²James M. Dorsey, "Saudi Leader Warns U.S. Mideast Policy May Force Kingdom Review Relationship", *The Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2001.

³³Khalide Dawoud, "Squeezing Saudi Arabia", *Al Ahram Weely*, December 18-24, 2003.

transfer of money to terrorist groups, were established. As part of the measures taken, many foundations were closed and those who provided financial support were sentenced to prison in 2003.³⁴ Riyadh Administration allowed the unit established by the USA under the name of "Joint Task Force", which was an attempt to violate national sovereignty, to examine the official documents of the country. The Board was made up of members from America's National Security Council, the FBI, the Finance and the State Department, and the Riyadh regime allowed its documents to be reviewed to reduce external pressure.³⁵ Additionally, the Saudi regime also took action for some reforms.

The most serious threat that Saudi Arabia faced between 2000-2010 was that it was seen as one of those responsible for the 9-11 attacks. This caused Saudi Arabia to be one of the target countries in the regional policies of the USA. Considering these reasons, Saudi Arabia constantly tried to show the USA that it was with the USA in the fight against terrorism, took actions to fulfill the USA's demands for political and social reforms, and adopted policies to calm down the internal uprisings and demands that pose a threat to its regime. In this context, a National Dialogue Meeting was held in 2003 with the participation of various religious groups,³⁶ and the King Abdulaziz National Dialogue Center was established, where different ideas would be voiced, the ideas of radical groups would be fought, tolerance would be shown against different groups, and demands would be conveyed.³⁷

In October 2003, more than 300 men and women intellectuals in Saudi Arabia signed a petition calling for change for Saudi Arabia, and a month later an unprecedented crowd called for political reform in central Riyadh. This crowd consisted of intellectuals and Shiites who were expecting reforms in various fields from Saudi Arabia. These uprisings were very important when there was an external threat like the USA, as Saudi Arabia saw the instability to be experienced in the Eastern Region, where the Shiites lived the most, as a serious threat to the security of the regime. Therefore, the crowd calling for reform in the center of Riyadh was dispersed in a short time with the harsh intervention of the police. But for Saudi Arabia, this meant only a short delay. Therefore, it was necessary to carry out this process in a more controlled manner with different alignments. Because, in case of an external threat interrelated to an internal threat, the security of the regime would be faced with a serious problem within the country. As a matter of fact, in November 2003, the Saudi King gave broader powers to the Advisory Council, such as proposing legislation without his consent.³⁸

The Saudi regime, which had to constantly balance the intense global pressures and the USA's declaration of the country as a supporter of terrorism, hosted the Counter-Terrorism International

³⁴James Wynbrandt, "A Brief History," 282.

³⁵Alfred B. Prados and Christopher M. Blanchard, Saudi Arabia: Terrorism, US Relations and Oil, ed. Nina P. Tollitz (New York: Nova Science Publisher, 2005), 45.

³⁶Rachel Bronson, "Rethinking Religion: The Legacy of the U.S.-Saudi Relationship," Washington Quarterly 28, No.4, (August 2005):125.

³⁷Iris Glosemeyer, Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society and Foreign Affairs, ed. Paul Arts and Gerd Nonneman (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 226.

³⁸"Saudi Arabia Profile-Timeline", BBC, (October 4, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703523>.

Conference on February 5-8, 2005. UN, ICO, GCC, Interpol, African Union, EU representatives and 51 countries attended the conference. The aim was to show that Saudi Arabia stands with the USA in the fight against terrorism. Crown Prince Abdullah, who made the opening speech, stated that he was willing to cooperate with the USA and other countries in the fight against terrorism.³⁹ At the end of the conference, the “Riyadh Declaration” was published and underlined the need for establishing a common strategy in the fight against terrorism, strengthening non-governmental organizations and supporting political participation. In addition, the necessity of making social and political reforms in order to fight terrorism was emphasized.⁴⁰ As a result, although this attempt of the Riyadh regime did not seem parallel to the monarchical state structure, it actually resulted from the implementation of a strategy of balancing the external threat to the security of the regime. These attempts of Saudi Arabia reduced but did not eliminate the pressure exerted by the USA which was the main threat to Saudi Arabia.

To appease the Washington Administration and prevent the US from building a regime in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia continued to make reforms and held its first local elections in 2005. Although women did not have the right to vote in the elections, this was seen as a very serious step towards the democratization of the system.⁴¹ In addition, the number of members in the Shura Council was increased from 120 in 2001 to 150 in 2005. For Saudi Arabia, this meant concession to different opinions, where the country's problems were discussed and conveyed to the administration. For Saudi Arabia, these reform and democratization movements were seen as a strategic move. It could be defined as appeasement of a greater threat. In addition, it had to be tried whether the method of appeasement of this threat was effective on both internal and external threats at the same time. In this period, there was no serious internal uprising⁴² in Saudi Arabia and US President Bush said in his speech that he saw Saudi Arabia as the financial source of terrorist acts four years ago, but it came a long way. In addition, President Bush drew attention to Saudi Arabia's support for the fight against terrorism showed that its attempts in this period had been successful.⁴³

Until 2001, Iraq was seen as the primary threat to Saudi Arabia. However, with the US occupation of Iraq with an deep engagement strategy and some initiatives in the region, Iraq ceased to be the primary threat to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia did not want any US presence in the region because this would both upset the balance in the region and endanger the security of the Regime. That's why, in the face of the problem with the weapons of mass destruction that the USA had with Iraq, it thought that the problem could be solved through diplomacy and various agreements, and struggled for this on every platform. In 2002, during the visit of US Vice President Dick Cheney to Saudi Arabia, the Riyadh Administration declared that they would not support the US

³⁹The Military Balance, *“The Middle East and North Africa”* 105, No. 1, (2005):179.

⁴⁰Riyadh Declaration, *Conter-Terrorism International Conference, (February 5-8, 2005)*.

⁴¹BBC, *“Saudi Arabia Profile-Timeline”*, 2019.

⁴²BBC, *“Saudi Arabia Profile”*, 2019.

⁴³*“Presedent Bush’s Acceptance Speech to Republican National Convention,”* The Washington Post *September 2, 2004*.

intervention in Iraq.⁴⁴ They argued that problems could be resolved through diplomacy. They also persuaded Iraq to carry out the necessary investigations of the team that will come for the control of weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁵ The US intervention in Iraq was among the important issues at the Arab League Summit in 2002, where the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity and the Israel-Palestine problem were discussed in Beirut. Even though it was considered as a very serious threat to Saudi Arabia, at the end of the summit, Saudi Arabia warned that if the US intervened in Iraq, it would close US bases in its country.⁴⁶ At the summit, where it was decided that no intervention in Iraq would be accepted, a very important step was taken in terms of security in the region, with the recognition of the territorial integrity of Iraq and Kuwait in order to ensure regional peace.⁴⁷

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah went to the United States in 2003 to evaluate the US invasion of Iraq and regional stability, and told President Bush that the invasion of Iraq would cause serious regional instability.⁴⁸ However, President Bush's determination about the invasion of Iraq and the signals that a military intervention would begin, triggered the Arab League Summit, and the union stated that after this meeting, no country would take any initiative to disrupt the territorial integrity of Iraq. In particular, Saudi Arabia reiterated at the end of the summit that it would not support the US invasion of Iraq, even if it would harm its relations with the US.⁴⁹ But none of the attempts of the Middle Eastern countries prevented the USA from invading Iraq in March 2003.

In this period, although Saudi Arabia tried to prevent the US invasion of Iraq through diplomacy and cooperation, it could not prevent it and even fulfilled some of the demands of the Washington Administration.⁵⁰ Some US Air Bases were used in Saudi Arabia. However, Prince Sultan Air Base was closed just after the Iraq Invasion. Immediately after its closure, the USA moved its 10,000 soldiers and nearly 200 warplanes to Qatar.⁵¹ The alliance, which started in the 1990s, was interrupted by the US invasion of Iraq. For Saudi Arabia, the deep engagement strategy of the USA in the region was quite dangerous as it would both disrupt the balance of power in the region and create political instability. For this reason, Saudi Arabia took a stand in favor of the diplomatic and alliance dissolution of this process. As a matter of fact, their predictions came true, and with

⁴⁴Michael R. Gordon, "Saudis Warn against Attack on Iraq by United States", The New York Times, March 17, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/17/world/saudis-warn-against-attack-on-iraq-by-the-united-states.html>,

⁴⁵"Iraq. A Chronology of UN Inspections", Arms Control Association, October 1, 2002, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-10/features/iraq-chronology-un-inspections>,

⁴⁶Jacop English, "Middle East", Ed. Edvard A. Kolodziej and Roger A. Konet, From Super Power to Besieged Global Power, (Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 230.

⁴⁷"Arab Summit Rejects any Attack on Iraq", CNN World, March 28, 2002, <https://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/03/28/summit.iraq/index.html>,

⁴⁸BBC News, "Saudis Warn US on Iraq War", February 17, 2003.

⁴⁹"Drama at Arab League Summit", Arab News, March 2, 2003, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/228751>; "Public Spat Mars Arab Summit", BBC News, March 1, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2811403.stm,

⁵⁰F. Gregory Gause, "Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf", Security Studies 13, No. 2, (2003): 304.

⁵¹Don Van Natta, "The Struggle for Iraq: Last American Combat Troops Quit Saudi Arabia", The New York Times, September 22, 2003.

the withdrawal of the USA from the region, the Shiites came to power in Iraq, and the country was dragged into a civil war. Thus, the Shia crescent threat to Saudi Arabia and the instability in the region began during the US's regime-building process in Iraq.⁵²

The process, which started in October 2001 when Bush expressed his support for Israel, reached its peak in 2004 with the letter Bush sent to the Israeli Prime Minister. The letter stated that Israel could claim the Palestinian territories it deemed strategically important and refused the return of Palestinians to their land.⁵³ Despite these, Saudi Arabia made many attempts to carry out this process with more peaceful methods and to intervene in the process by the USA. Because the states that actively pursued aggressive policies in the region were threatening regional stability and the security of the Regime. In April 2002, Saudi Arabia visited the United States to discuss the Israel-Palestine issue. During the visit, Crown Prince Abdullah focused on Israel's conflict with Palestine, while Bush focused on the steps that Saudi Arabia should take in the fight against terrorism. This showed that the two countries could no longer unite in a common interest, and that their priorities and targets differed.⁵⁴

In the next period, Saudi Arabia made many attempts to solve the Israel-Palestine problem, but these attempts were not successful. Realizing that it could not solve the Israel-Palestine problem by alignment with the USA, the Riyadh regime started to pursue a policy of rapprochement with al-Fatah and Hamas by making a more strategic initiative. In fact, Saudi Arabia, which thought that al-Fatah and Hamas should act together on Palestine, preferred to manage the process by mediating between the two. Saudi Arabia, which took an initiative to end the conflicts between the two sides, ensured the signing of the Mecca Agreement.⁵⁵ However, in response to this attempt, the USA said that Riyadh should make its choice, stating that it could not both fight al-Qaeda and support Hamas.⁵⁶ Saudi Arabia's struggle over Palestine seemed to prevent Israel from standing out as a rival in the region and to defend the rights of Palestine. However, the most important aim was to suppress Radical Islamist groups, which were internal threats in this process, by appearing as defenders of the rights of Muslims.

For Saudi Arabia, the existence of a Super Power in the region in 2000-2010 and its attempts to democratize the regimes were very dangerous threats to the security of the regime. It also did not want to encounter an internal threat that would pose a security threat to the regime. Therefore, it was necessary to form alliances with external threats and neutralize the internal threats. As a matter of fact, Saudi Arabia aimed to overcome the process with the least damage by establishing various alliances and cooperation in the whole region. At the same time, the aim was to focus on the main threat, the United States, by eliminating internal and interrelated external threats. It even included

⁵²Richard N. Haas, "The New Middle East", *Foreign Affairs* 85, No.6, (November/December 2006): 2-11.

⁵³"Letter from President Bush to Prime Minister Sharon", The White House, April 14, 2004, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html>,

⁵⁴Elaine Sciolino ve Patrick Tyler, "Saudi Charge Bush with Failure to Broker Mideast Peace", *The New York Times*, November 9, 2002.

⁵⁵Mamoun Fandy, "The Mecca Factor", *The Guardian*, March 27, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/mar/27/mamounfandy>,; Rene Rieger, *Saudi Arabian Foreign Relations: Diplomacy and Mediation in Conflict Resolution* (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), 155.

⁵⁶Gawdat Bahgat, "Saudi Arabia and the War on Terrorism", *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26, No. 1, (2004): 58.

Iran in the process of improving these relations with a very strategic decision as the Shiites stood out as a very important internal and interrelated external threat for Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the first step of this process took place in 2001. Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed on the exchange of military attachés with a security cooperation pact, but Prince Sultan said, "Military cooperation between the two countries that have not had ties for years is not easy.". Later, other Saudi officials made it clear that the agreement was more a matter of internal security measure and agreeing not to mutually interfere in the other state's internal affairs, rather than security. The actual signing of the agreement took place in April 2001.⁵⁷ On April 18, Saudi Interior Minister Prince Naif and his Iranian counterpart, Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari, signed an agreement on internal security cooperation in Tehran. The agreement aimed to combat organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking. "This agreement promises peace and friendship, and Iran has always been friendly to its neighbors," Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari said at the press conference after the signing.⁵⁸ This step was seen as the first and an important step in the development of good relations and acting together against threats.

The second step taken to improve relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran was the 2005 Gulf Dialogue. Intensified insurgency in Iraq due to the elections scheduled for January 2005, the crisis between Tehran, London, Paris and Berlin regarding Iran's nuclear program, which was temporarily suspended by an agreement reached in late November, the death of Yasser Arafat, the prospect of elections for a new Palestinian leader, the prevalence of threats to Gulf security in Saudi Arabia, as well as terrorist attacks were discussed. Most of the diplomatic, military, and intelligence practitioners whose decisions were directly related to these issues, and a large number of leaders who help governments formulate policies for them, gathered in Bahrain.⁵⁹ The GCC's main regional priority in the short term was to define its relations with Iraq and Iran. The recent Kuwait-Iraq agreement provided a model for how the GCC could engage with Baghdad as a whole. Meanwhile, it was emphasized that Iran should establish more active relations with the campaign against terrorism on the basis of its policy of non-intervention in the region.⁶⁰

Prince Saud al-Faisal also argued that Iran had the right to security and that Israel's advanced nuclear capabilities were of particular concern in this context. Speaking on behalf of Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alireza Moayeri said, "I hope that the Gulf Dialogue will contribute to the promotion of peace and security through open exchange of ideas.". He developed a plan for "Persian Gulf Collective Security Framework", defining the Gulf as an object of great-power rivalry whose interventions undermine regional security. All states in the region would agree to it, and none would form new alliances with non-members. A "Regional Security Council" was to be established where pacts and agreements would be negotiated while avoiding interference in the internal affairs of member states. It would define the objectives of regional interaction and its mandate would include developing policies to combat

⁵⁷Anthony H. Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia and Iran", CSIS, (June 2001).

⁵⁸Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia"

⁵⁹"A Decade of The IISS Manama Dialogue: Premier Regional Security Summit in the Gulf," IISS (December 5-7, 2014).

⁶⁰IISS, "A Decade of The IISS Manama Dialogue"

terrorism and its causes, and maintaining a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.⁶¹ The Gulf Dialogue held in Manama was another positive step that showed that Iran and Saudi Arabia would act together in the context of regional security and the fight against terrorism. It was also an important step in showing that multipolar regional powers could act together against a global threat during this period.

The Islamic Summit held in 2005 was a multi-faceted initiative that showed the positive relations of Saudi Arabia and Iran and aimed to act together against the common threat for the whole region. These areas included the intellectual, political, economic and social areas. Intellectual decisions taken at the Summit; In general, multilateralism, in line with the principles of Islam. It was emphasized to ensure an equal and tolerant environment of trust. The fight against every extremist attitude was mentioned.⁶² When the decisions taken at the Summit were analyzed, besides strengthening the cooperation against the common threat for the states of the region, they also acted as a response to the reform and innovation calls of the USA with the reforms made. The Islamic Summit (2005), the most comprehensive summit in its history, encouraged many cooperations in the economic and social fields. These collaborations also required joint action, and actually prevented internal threats in the region, because the parties came together not only for their own security, but also for the security of all their partners. There was a unity and common relationship in the region like never before. The Summit, which was also on the agenda in the international press, was seen as an important cooperation with its versatility and decisions covering the security and welfare of all member states.⁶³

Resolutions taken at the GCC Summit held in Doha in 2007 reaffirmed the UAE's right to regain sovereignty over the three Iranian-occupied islands and expressed regret at the failure to achieve positive results with the neighboring Islamic Republic. The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council urged Iran to "respond positively to the UAE's efforts to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or by appealing to the International Court of Justice.". In the final statement of the 28th GCC Summit, the Council urged Iran to engage in dialogue with the international community to reach a peaceful solution to its controversial nuclear program. The Council also welcomed Iran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It also reiterated its demand to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, including the Gulf Region, while recognizing the right of countries in the region to have nuclear expertise and nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.⁶⁴ The Council praised the high efficiency of the security services in Saudi Arabia in keeping a close eye on terrorist cells and foiling attempts to destabilize security in the region, and its support for the kingdom's procedures in this regard. Pointing out that

⁶¹IISS, "A Decade of The IISS".

⁶²"The Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit", December 7-8, 2005, <https://ww1.oic-oci.org/ex-summit/english/fc-exsumm-en.htm>,

⁶³"The Third Extraordinary Session." December 7-8, 2005.

⁶⁴"Text of final communique of the 28th GCC Summit", Gulf News December 5, 2007, <https://gulfnews.com/uae/text-of-final-communique-of-the-28th-gcc-summit-1.217048>.

the elimination of terrorism would not be possible without the joint efforts and cooperation of the international community, the Council reiterated its condemnation of all forms of terrorism.

Although all the countries in the region tried to ensure the security of both themselves and the region with various alliances and associations, the countries did not make much progress in this process, since the USA had a very intense military intervention in the regional policies. But in an atmosphere of serious external threat, they suppressed their internal threats to ensure the security of their regimes. Internal threats did not arise due to the inclusive nature of the alignment for all ethnic and religious identity in the region, as well as the common enemy perception such as the fight against terrorism, the Palestinian conflict, the regional policies of the USA, and the sense of belonging provided by cooperation. All the countries in the region, especially Saudi Arabia, suppressed their internal threats and interrelated external threats with the cooperation, and had the opportunity to focus on the main external threat, the USA.

CONCLUSION

If only "Saudi Arabia" were the priority in Saudi Arabia's security strategy between 2000-2010, it would have bandwagoned the USA, acted with it and exhibited policies that would not protect regional stability but ensure its own stability. In addition, if the regime's strategy was determined by power rather than threat, it would have followed the strong one. In contrast, during the period in question, Saudi Arabia improved its relations with Iran, which it had been having problems with for years, because its aim was to attempt to balance its internal threats. Saudi Arabia aimed at balancing the threat during this period. Despite the deep engagement strategy of the superpower, the USA, Saudi Arabia made efforts to thwart the invasion of Iraq with the necessary diplomatic initiatives, various alliances and conferences. Saudi Arabia forced the US bases to leave and caused the base to be moved to Qatar. Despite the fact that the USA openly expressed its support for Israel in the Israel-Palestine conflict, it made many attempts to solve the problem. Existing internal threats compelled the Saudi regime to take these actions. Radical Islamists accused the Saudi regime of being on the side of the USA and of adopting an anti-Islamic attitude. Considering the reformists and Shiites of the period, the Saudi regime had more internal threats than external.

In the unipolar system, if the Super Power pursues revisionist (restorationist) deep engagement regional policies, the regional power has to follow a soft balancing policy with the status quo. As such, the main threat to the regional power was the USA. In addition, Saudi Arabia was seen as a state that supports terrorism in the international academic and political arena. In this case, Saudi Arabia had to follow a different alignment strategy. Saudi Arabia constantly stated that it stands with the USA in the fight against terrorism in order to balance the USA. It demonstrated this with various reforms, and expressed this on national and international platforms with conferences and summits. The aim was omni-alignment to prevent any attempt to undermine the security of the regime and to preserve regional stability. If this were a bandwagoning strategy, it would be Saudi Arabia that would have won, even if the United States had lost. However, although the USA was the winner, one of the countries that suffered the most was Saudi Arabia.

It was considered as the security and stability concern that accelerated the balancing alliance of Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia against the USA between 2000-2010 in the region. The main goal was to achieve stability with the balance of power, the protection of national rights and interests, the neutralization of power by an equivalent power, and ultimately survival. Although it was not seemed possible to balance the Super Power with regional powers, the alliance formed in this process was seen as the result of an attempt to balance threats. The expectations of balancing threats and the compelling effect of internal threats on the security of the regime also required Saudi Arabia to improve its relations with Iran, which it faced as an imminent threat. In the same period, the regional policies of the USA as a superpower made it the main external threat to Saudi Arabia. Because the USA was threatening the stability in the region with its deep engagement strategy. It attempted to disrupt the balance of power, and also wanted to redesign the regional monarchies with a democratic government.

Between 2000-2010, Saudi Arabia's efforts to survive did not require a focus on the systemic distribution of power and threat. Because the closest threat to Saudi Arabia was its own population. In this process, the option to balance the Saudi regime was also limited, considering the power parameters of the system in the international arena, it was seen as an easier and preferable option for Saudi Arabia to bandwagon the USA. Taking part in the deep engagement strategy of the USA and acting jointly with the USA and Israel in the region would enrage the population and put the monarchy in danger of being overthrown. Given the King's traditional ties to Washington and the potential benefits of his alliance with the Super Power, the Saudi regime should have sided with the United States and even supported the Invasion of Iraq, but the presence of internal threat prevented this option. Had Saudi Arabia sided with the United States, it would have threatened to tear the country apart, jeopardizing the security of the regime.

In this process, the positive relations with Iran and the policy of balancing the internal threat could have been received negatively by the USA. The fact that the Palestinian-Israeli problem was frequently mentioned by Saudi Arabia was not an initiative that the USA would ignore. However, the alliances in this period, the attempt to defend the rights of Palestine, the improved relations with Iran, and the Saudi Arabian stance against the US intervention in Iraq did not face serious reactions from the Washington. Because the Bush Administration was also aware of the internal threats to Saudi Arabia. Considering that the retaliation would undermine the long-term goal of retaining a valuable strategic friend in the Middle East, the Bush Administration disregarded the Saudi Arabia-Iran relations, its attempts to prevent intervention in Iraq, and to defend Palestinian rights. Despite the pressure on the Washington Administration to act more harshly against Saudi Arabia by the Congresses, the Bush Administration tried to carry out the process with more stable pressure and sanctions. Because it was necessary for the USA to ensure energy security, to compensate the costs of deep engagement with revenues such as arms sales, and to have an alternative alliance for various interventions in the region. Considering its power capacity, Saudi Arabia could have bandwagoned the United States during this period, but this would have required

it to face its internal threats. An American approach that assumed that the King was motivated by a desire for greater power would be equally problematic. The Washington Administration acknowledged the interrelated nature of the threats to Saudi Arabia. Thus, Saudi Arabia was able to balance the active regional initiatives of the USA and the existing internal threats.

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