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Factors Determining the State Behavior of Saudi Arabia as a Regional Power

Abstract

Classical approaches cannot produce conclusions that can be generalized in order to analyze the state behavior of regional power countries such as Saudi Arabia and to understand the real reason behind the alliance relations. The reasons that determine the position of regional powers in the system and originate from their local positions confront them with internal threats rather than external threats. In this case, internal threats take precedence over external threats. Since most of these countries have monarchical state structure, competing allegiances and rentier state economic features. Therefore, the security of the regime is more important than the security of the state and the people in these countries. This always causes an internal threat to the regime in Saudi Arabia. The local characteristics of regional powers necessitate them to deal with their internal threats before their external threats. Thus, a regional power like Saudi Arabia combats the threat, primarily by allying with the foreign power interrelated with its internal threat or by improving relations, it balances and sometimes suppresses the internal threat with an external threat and then it can focus on the real threat. To explain this form of balancing, the “omni-balancing” strategy has been used and the systemic and local characteristics of Saudi Arabia has been emphasized.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, regional power, state behavior, internal threat, omni-balancing

Bir Bölgesel Güç Olarak Suudi Arabistan’ın Devlet Davranışlarını Belirleyen Etkenler

Öz

Klasik yaklaşımlar, Suudi Arabistan gibi Bölgesel Güç olan ülkelerin devlet davranışlarını anlamlandırmak ve ittifak ilişkilerinin arka planındaki gerçek nedenin ne olduğuna odaklanmak için genelleme yapılabilecek varsayımlar üretmemektedir. Bölgesel güçler için onların sistem içindeki

konumlarını belirleyen ve yerel durumlarından kaynaklı nedenler onları dış tehditlerden daha çok iç tehditlerle yüzleştirmektedir. Bu durumda da iç tehditler dış tehditlerinden daha öncelikli olmaktadır. Çünkü bu ülkelerin büyük bir çoğunluğu monarşik devlet yapısına sahip, rakip bağılıkları olan ve rantiyer devlet ekonomi özellikleri gösteren ülkelerdir. Bu yüzden de bu ülkelerde rejimin güvenliği devletin ve halkın güvenliğinden daha öncelikli olmaktadır. Bu durum Suudi Arabistan'ın rejime karşı her zaman bir iç tehdidinin olmasına neden olmaktadır. Bölgesel güçlerin sahip olduğu yerel özellikler onlara dış tehditlerinden önce iç tehditleri ile mücadele etmesinin gerekliliğini doğurmaktadır. Bu yüzden de Suudi Arabistan gibi bir bölgesel güç tehditle mücadele noktasında öncelikle iç tehdidiyle ilişkili dış güçle ittifak kurarak ya da ilişkileri geliştirerek dış tehditle iç tehdidi dengelemekte bazen de bastırmaktadır. Ardından asıl tehdiye odaklanmak mümkün olmaktadır. Bu dengeleme biçimini açıklamak için "çift dengeleme" stratejisi kullanılacak ve Suudi Arabistan'ın sistemsal ve yerel özellikleri üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Suudi Arabistan, bölgesel güç, devlet davranışları, iç tehditler, çift-dengeleme*

Introduction

The main objective of this article is understanding the behavioral patterns of regional actors such as Saudi Arabia in the face of systemic local situations and conditions. The independent variable of the analysis in the study is the international system, which has an anarchic and unipolar structure and consists of great powers and regional powers¹ in addition to a single superpower. The dependent variable of the system is the alliance relations of regional powers and state behavior. Although it is not possible to make a general conclusion about whether the states want to establish an alliance to increase their power or to balance the threat, it is possible to say that the general aim for the states is to survive. The structure of the system is unipolar. The unipolar system produces different foreign policy preferences for primary and secondary states. The superpower has various policy options for its interests in alliance relations, but especially regional powers do not have different options. Regional powers have to closely monitor the regional policies of the superpower, its internal threats, and the intentions of the states in the region in their foreign policies and alliance relations.

Despite the advantages of allying with the superpower, the main reason behind the alignment instead of bandwagoning is the internal threats to the regional powers due to their local characteristics. While the superpower generally prioritizes its interests, the regional powers prioritize to suppress or appease internal threats for the continuation of their regimes.

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. See: (Akdoğan, 2018).

While the superpower may adopt revisionist or status quo policies, regional powers have no such option. When the superpower takes a restorative stance, the regional power has to act as a status quo because it needs to appease this process with the least loss. The priority of regional power is to focus on internal threats due to its local position. Due to the structural characteristics and security priorities of regional powers in general, balancing, suppressing, and pacifying their internal threats is more important than combating external threats. In the study, the security strategy has been discussed based on the systemic and local situation of a regional power through the example of Saudi Arabia.

1. Features of Saudi Arabia as a Regional Power

Among the characteristics of a state as a regional power, parameters such as military capacity, economic development, population, and geographical position among the countries in the region, technological development and political stability are counted (Waltz, 1979, s. 131). Before revealing the main components of the Saudi Arabian security strategy, it is necessary to explain whether Saudi Arabia is a regional power, considering the effects of power capacity and distribution in an anarchic international system on the policies of the country. In this context, Saudi Arabia was examined by considering its surface area and population density and its location in the region, and the features that economically distinguish it from the countries of the region were mentioned. Then, military capacity data and regional rankings were mentioned and the factors affecting political stability were examined.

Saudi Arabia, or officially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a Middle Eastern country with approximately 2,150,000 square kilometers (830,000 square miles) of land that makes up most of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is geographically the largest sovereign state in Western Asia, the second largest in the Arab World (after Algeria), the fifth largest in Asia, and the twelfth largest in the world. Saudi Arabia is surrounded by Jordan and Iraq to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to the east, Oman to the southeast, and Yemen to the south. In the northwest, it is separated from Sinai (Egypt) by the Gulf of Aqaba. Saudi Arabia is the only country with a coastline on both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. If we examine the geographical features of the Saudi Kingdom, it mostly consists of arid desert, there are also plains and mountains. Saudi Arabia's economy is listed as the largest in the Middle East and the 19th largest in the world (Statista, 2020; Konoema, 2020). Saudi Arabia is also one of the countries with the youngest population in the world, with approximately 67 percent of its 34.8 million population under the age of 35 (Wohldmeter, 2020; Gulf Business, 2020, 10 August).

Today's Saudi Arabia used to be comprised of four main regions. These were the Hejaz, Najd, and parts of Eastern Arabia (al-Ahsa) and Southern Arabia". The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 by Abdulaziz bin Saud (Ibn Saud). The four regions were united into a single state through a series of conquests, beginning with the capture of his family's ancestral home, the House of Saud, in 1902. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, has been governed by a totalitarian monarchy since this period and has adopted a dictatorial form of government that carries out an oppressive Islamist policy. While aiming to accelerate the global spread by using oil and gas revenues with ultra-conservative Wahhabi behaviors among Sunnis, it has a cultural structure that distinguishes many Muslims from themselves with its discourses. This has been described as the "dominant feature of Saudi culture". Saudi Arabia is known as the "Land of the Two Holy Mosques" because of "the two holiest places in Islam, Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca) and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (in Medina)" (Library of Congress, 2020, pp. 5-6). The oil was discovered on March 3, 1938, and several other discoveries in the eastern state followed. Saudi Arabia has become "the world's second largest oil producer (after the United States) and the world's largest oil exporter, controlling the world's second largest oil reserves and sixth largest gas reserves". The Kingdom has been classified by the World Bank as one of the high-income economies and has been recognized as the only Arab country to be part of the major economies of the G-20 (Library of Congress, 2020, p. 10-11). The kingdom spends 8% of its GDP on the army. From 2015 to 2019, all US arms exports to the Middle East belonged to Saudi Arabia.

Energy consumption in the world is increasing day by day in line with the requirements of that age. Brazil, China and India, which are rapidly developing countries, meet their energy needs from the Middle East; It also turns the raw material income from the region into a development tool for themselves by selling services such as infrastructure, technology and military equipment to the region. While this increases the competition among energy importing countries, exporting countries transform their revenues from natural gas, oil, and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) into various investments. The preferences of countries to use their natural resource incomes differ according to their development plans, security strategies and foreign policy priorities. For example, while Azerbaijan and Qatar use their revenues for investments and various projects, countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Russia use it to expand their regional and global discourses and to increase their power to ensure their security. In this context, investments made in countries that use energy revenues with a focus on power were made by institutions close to the government, ensuring that these institutions

become important actors in the regional and global arena (Ateş, 2014, p. 414). The share of Saudi Arabia in world reserves and the low cost of acquiring energy resources are the features that make it stand out in the region and even in the global arena.

Saudi Arabia, with its 298 billion barrels of oil reserves, is the country with the largest oil resources in the Middle East Region and has almost 18% of the world's oil reserves. It ranks third regionally in natural gas reserves with 8.5 trillion cubic meters and has 4% of the world's natural gas reserves (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, natural gas processing facilities are in al-Hawiyah and Ras Tanura. Natural gas is used in Juhail on the Persian Gulf coast and Yanbu on the Red Sea coast, new and large industrial centers. Liquid natural gas production is over 1 million barrels per day. While holding a large part of the world's energy resources and energy supply is not enough for Saudi Arabia to be a great power, its income from energy resources is very useful for being a regional power. Saudi Arabia allocates revenues from energy resources for defense expenditures or frequently uses it for various social aids to suppress internal rebellions. Sometimes it uses the internal threat to form an alliance with a interrelated external power.

Saudi Arabia stands out because of the ease of process of petroleum resources in the world and its ease of access to resources due to its proximity to the surface. Saudi Arabia's oil resources place it in a strategic position in terms of energy supply and demand security, as it is an important source for energy needs and easy access to oil resources at low cost. In the post-Cold War period, with the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia, the development and change process of Saudi Arabia started, and economic ties were established with the USA with the effect of globalization. After this first economic relationship, mutual and various relations have been strengthened, and in the period following this process, economic, military and security relations have become stronger. The economy of Saudi Arabia, which is dependent on oil resources, have been more affected by international markets and interstate economic relations and also foreign policy decisions (Derks, 2017, p. 3-4). While the Saudi family's income from oil was 25% of its total income in 1973 and it increased to 60% in 1974. By 1980s, Saudi family's income from oil increased two times as compared 1973. While allowing foreign investments is rarely included in the country's economic policy, "turnkey" contracts were preferred instead. While foreign companies took over the infrastructure and needs of the country, ownership and operating rights were transferred to Saudi Aramco (Ramady, 2018). Currently, OPEC meets approximately 40% of the world's oil demand and 80% of the world's proven oil reserves belong to OPEC. OPEC's oil exports represent approximately 60% of the total oil traded

internationally. OPEC (especially Saudi Arabia) has the upper hand in determining oil prices (Ganti, 2020).

Considering the military power distribution in the Middle East Region, Saudi Arabia is the country that spends the most on defense with 67.6 billion dollars, while it ranks fourth after Turkey, Egypt, and Iran in regional power parameters. Saudi Arabia, which ranks fourth in the region in terms of military personnel, ranks second after Egypt in the number of warplanes it owns. In recent years, it has made military investments mostly in warplanes. Saudi Arabia, which lags in the region in terms of the number of tanks (7th) and naval fleet (6th), does not own any submarines (The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation and Stockholm International Peace Research Enstitute, 2020). As can be seen from these data, Saudi Arabia spends mostly on air defense weapons. It means that it primarily prefers air defense forces in the fight against any threat.

When the defense expenditures of the powers in the Middle East Region are analyzed in the last five years, Saudi Arabia ranks first as the country that invests the most in defense. While there was an increasing trend in defense expenditures in Saudi Arabia between 2016-2018, a decreasing trend between 2019-2020 because of the pandemic period and global economic crises. Saudi Arabia, which has widened its gap even with its closest competitor (Egypt) in terms of defense expenditures, ranked fifth in 2019 in terms of world defense expenditures in the global arena, and ranked sixth in 2020 after the USA, China, India, Russia, and the United Kingdom (SIPRI, 2020).

Table 1. Position of Saudi Arabia in the Regional Power Distribution (2020)
Source: Global Firepower

	Ranking in the Region	Ranking in the World
Defense Expenditures	1	6
Military Personal	3	10
War plane	2	12
Battleship	6	51
War Tank	7	12
National Income	1	18
Oil Reserve	1	2

Natural Gas Reserve	4	5
Population	6	41
Geographical Area	1	13

In order to reveal whether Saudi Arabia is a regional power or not, in the table where the power parameters are included in the ranking of the region, Saudi Arabia ranks first in the region in terms of defense expenditure, national income, oil reserves and geographical area. While it ranks second in the region in terms of the number of warplanes, it ranks third in terms of military personnel, fourth in natural gas reserves, sixth in warships and population, and seventh in war tanks. The titles in which Saudi Arabia comes to the fore in terms of power capacity worldwide are its oil (2nd) and natural gas (5th) reserves and defense expenditures (6th). Within the scope of these data, based on numerical data in power parameters, it can be said that Saudi Arabia is a regional power.

2. Local Factors Influencing Saudi Arabia's Security Strategy

In the international system, states are categorized according to their power capacities, considering various parameters. This categorization provides some information about the state's power capacities, spheres of influence and state strategies in international relations. When a state is one of the superpowers and great powers, it is possible to obtain some general strategies regarding state behavior. However, it is not possible to generalize for regional powers with the same assumptions and approaches. While a general assumption can be made about the security strategies of the superpower and great powers based on their grand strategies, a general opinion about the security strategies of the regional powers cannot be reached. Because the strategies of the regional powers depend more on the grand strategies of the superpower and great powers and the internal threats to the regional powers rather than their own foreign policies. In fact, local characteristics of regional powers such as monarchical state structure, rentier state practices, and the existence of competing allegiances often make internal threats more important and prioritized for them than external threats. After Saudi Arabia's characteristics of being a regional power, it is necessary to mention the features that make its internal threats more than external threats.

2.1. Competing Local Allegiances

Most of the regional powers appear as a structure that is identified with an ethnic, religious, or regional group rather than a state identity. This is a factor that prevents the formation of national consciousness in these societies. The state structure in Saudi Arabia, on

the other hand, is formed by the combination of factors such as Wahhabism, “nation-state” requirements and integration with international political-economic structures. The most important dynamic of the Saudi/Wahhabi state is the need to incorporate this “nation” state into the international system by using the Saudi/Wahhabi identity in order to create and maintain a Saudi “nation” state. Even after the establishment of the state, the most important challenges for the survival of the Saudi state are closely related to whether the state manages these dynamics well. Wahhabism has had a twofold impact on domestic and foreign policy, providing a fundamental unifying function in domestic politics, “nation-building” initiatives, and providing political legitimacy to the regime in foreign policy. Over time, the state structure built from the Salafi/Wahhabi elements abroad with oil revenues has led Saudi Arabia to become an international actor not only in the Islamic World, but also at the global level. Saudi Arabia has used this capacity to be effective in many issues such as fighting communism and Arab nationalism, promoting Islamic societies according to its own interests and the interests of its allies, and has made religion a tool of its domestic and foreign policies (Yungui, 2011). The domestic legitimacy of the Ibn Saud Regime is ensured by Wahhabi religious nationalism and a dispersed Saudi society. Tribal relations related to family blood ties are more important than national identities in the country, and the stratification and the chain of relations formed in the society are carried out with the tribes affiliated to blood ties in the context of both economic and power gain. In this context, individuals in the society feel loyalty to the tribes formed by their own blood ties, not to the sovereignty of the state and the rulers who rule it (Efegil, 2013, p. 106-107). The economic and social relationship between the state and society in Saudi Arabia first begins with the communication with the tribal sheikhs. Tribal members are reached through tribal sheiks. In this context, the order of the structure and the economic and social order of the state are based on the rent-based tribalism system and do not contain the characteristics of any institutional system. Relationships depending on tribe and blood ties, which are on a very slippery ground, do not provide an identity and belonging to the country, and prevent the formation of an idea of a nation. This is sometimes an advantage and often a disadvantage for the security of the Saudi Regime. For this reason, Saudi leaders try to control the segregated internal conditions and structure within the society and to ensure the stability of the regime by using various channels (Gause, 2014, p. 5-9). Although this made it easier for the state to control the social structure of the people, it became a factor that prevented the state from understanding the people.

Sociologically, in order to create a citizenship myth, the Saudis appealed to history, cultural and religious sources, and used Wahhabism as the main unifier in transforming the Bedouin tribes and forming the “Saudi society”. Thanks to the Wahhabi ideology, the Bedouins were settled in villages and towns, and the Bedouin people were transformed into a society that obeyed the central authority with the feature of being “Saudi citizens”. Thus, the disobedient individuals of the desert became the docile members of Saudi society, and through Wahhabism, they saw themselves as the saviors of the “Doctrine of Tawhid” and positioned themselves as members of a society that was different and “superior” from other Muslims and especially from the Arab World. They declared other Muslims as infidels, even if they were Arabs, and defined themselves as representatives of True Islam (Bodur, 2003, p. 9-10). For this reason, Saudi Arabia has isolated itself from the Middle Eastern societies by determining the basic propositions of the Wahhabi belief as a source for itself. This created an advantage for Saudi Arabia to become a nation-state, isolating it both from Arab nationalism and the influence of communism, and facilitated the overcoming of the cultural effects of the Ottoman Empire. However, this situation has deepened the gap between the Shiites, who are 15% of the population living in oil production centers, and the people with Sunni/Wahhabi tradition. This brought the Shiites against the regime as an internal threat to Saudi Arabia as it received support from foreign powers at every opportunity.

After the 1960s, Saudi Arabia determined regional and global special policies, and efforts to increase the spread of Wahhabism among other Muslims intensified, and it was probably supported by the USA as it overlapped with the global policies of the USA. The claim that Saudi Arabia intensified efforts to spread Wahhabism among other Muslims after the 1960s, possibly supported by the USA due to overlapping global policies, is based on historical and geopolitical analyses. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the USA has been a subject of scholarly research, with a focus on the spread of Wahhabism and its potential alignment with US global policies (“Spreading Wahhabism, Supporting Extremism”, n.d.). The oil boom in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s is noted to have promoted the spread of Salafism, a fundamentalist form of Islam closely related to Wahhabism, in Indonesia, indicating the global reach of Saudi Arabia's religious influence (Febriansyah & El-Alami, 2021). Additionally, the historical context of Saudi Arabia's engagement in solving regional issues, such as the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia in the early 1960s, highlights the country's active role in regional affairs, which could have implications for its religious influence (Hussin et al., 2018). Furthermore, the impact of Saudi Arabia's religious policies on other countries, such as the spread of Wahhabism in Indonesia, has been studied in the context of ideological competition

within Islam, shedding light on the global dimensions of Saudi Arabia's religious influence (Febriansyah & El-Alami, 2021). The association between the spread of Wahhabism and the support of extremism has also been a subject of analysis, emphasizing the potential geopolitical implications of Saudi Arabia's religious policies. Saudi Arabia intensified efforts to spread Wahhabism among other Muslims after the 1960s, possibly with support from the USA, is supported by historical, geopolitical, and religious analyses that highlight the global reach of Saudi Arabia's religious influence and its potential alignment with US global policies.

From this period onwards, Wahhabi scholars began to use a more acceptable language to facilitate the acceptance and spread of Wahhabi beliefs by other Muslims. By the 1970s, these dissemination goals led to the emergence of two different opinions among scholars, “conservative” and “innovative” (Armstrong, 2014). From this point of view, it can be said that Saudi Arabia tried to gain its legitimacy by trying to exist among the dynamic conditions of the international system, as well as its legitimacy effect on Saudi politics and the structure of society.

Another factor that provides the social structure of Saudi Arabia and the political legitimacy of the regime is Wahhabism, which is the official ideology adopted by the country. When Saudi Arabia was founded, it was planned that Ibn Saud and his descendants would control the political structure, and Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab and his descendants would control the religious structure. Thanks to the absolute obedience to the ruler Sheikh? of Wahhabism, the family of Ibn Saud gained serious legitimacy in the state administration. Because in the religious doctrine of Wahhabism, loyalty to the rulers (Bradley, 2015, p.10-11) is evaluated within a religious framework, and the political power of the family is supported by a religious legitimacy. In Wahhabism, it is forbidden to oppose the authority of the ruler, and loyalty to him is blessed (Rasheed, 2015). This was used in terms of the legitimacy and security of the Saudi Regime and gave the Ibn Saud Family quite extensive authority and rights. The security of the Ibn Saud Family, who ruled Saudi Arabia, has been the main factor that shaped the country's foreign policy and security policies. All kinds of threats to the security of the regime and the seriousness of these threats have been seen as priority over the policy and interests of the country, and various methods have been developed to keep the regime safe. The security of the regime includes the legitimacy of the Ibn Saud Family, the territorial integrity of the state and its security within the region, and the security of the royal family is often seen as more important than the security of the country (Ryan, 2009, pp.12-27). Factors such as the geographical location of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East Region, the country's inability to

combine its religious and ethnic identities in the idea of a nation, the administration of the country by people belonging to a certain region (Najd) and origin (Ibn Saud and al-Sheikh families) affect the territorial integrity of the country. In this context, it threatens the security of the regime (Metz, 1993, pp. 154-155). The Hejaz Region has always been seen as a threat to the Saudi Regime. Since the establishment of Saudi Arabia, the commercial and religious power of the Hejaz Region has been tried to be taken away from it. The economic power has been limited by the Saudi Regime, by shifting the commercial power of the region from the Hejaz Region to the Nejd Region. Even though the Hijaz Region has not adopted Wahhabism, the region has always been kept under pressure by being governed according to Wahhabi belief and practices, and the religious power of the region has been tried to be weakened. This tension between the Ibn Saud Administration and the Hejaz Region led to revolts against the administration in the region (Bradley, 2005, pp. 56-66). One of the internal factors threatening the Saudi Regime is the presence of Shiites, especially in cities such as Katif, Sihat and Tarut Island, where oil is produced. Saudi Arabia restricts Shiites in both social and economic fields because they have different religious practices and behave differently in the society in terms of religion. Shiites want to establish an independent state, especially in the east, where they are the majority. For this reason, Shiites have rebelled and demonstrated many times, and this has always existed in society as a factor threatening the Ibn Saud Regime (Bradley, 2005, p.78; Steinberg, 2014, p.11). The “al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (Muslim Brotherhood)”, which was founded in 1928 and became a community-based political movement, has generally been influential on the educated Egyptian people and has created an effective base. With the discovery of oil resources in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and the Saudi Regime’s need for educated and skilled people was met by engineers, managers, and academics from the Egyptian Brotherhood. After a very short time in Saudi Arabia, all senior executives and academics were members of the Egyptian Brotherhood Movement, Saudi citizens met the ideas of the Movement in a short time and it became a serious threat to Saudi Arabia by creating the most oppositional structure for the regime (Alghamdy, 2011, pp. 98-99). The Ikhwan movement, rooted in Wahhabism, exhibits distinct differences from traditional Wahhabism. Stemmann and Tyson (2011) argue that contemporary Islamic militant movements are heavily influenced by Wahhabism and Salafism, suggesting a close association between these movements. Additionally, Alawni (2023) highlights the correlation between Wahhabism and Salafism, indicating that the Ikhwan movement in Egypt followed the Salafi approach. Moreover, Scoville (1989) emphasizes that the Ikhwan movement did not fully align with the original puritanical intentions of Wahhabism, as it failed to transcend tribal loyalties and redirect the

rural populace to an urban environment. The Ikhwan movement, founded in Saudi Arabia, represents one of the earliest Islamic movements based on Wahhabism (Iliev, 2022). This historical context underscores the unique characteristics of the Ikhwan movement within the broader framework of Wahhabism. Furthermore, the Ikhwan al-Muslimin movement has expanded its activities clandestinely in various countries, indicating a distinct operational strategy compared to traditional Wahhabism. The differences between the Ikhwan movement and traditional Wahhabism are also evident in their historical and political implications. Additionally, Commins (2008) illustrates the clash between Ibn Saud and the Ikhwan, emphasizing their differing perspectives on diplomatic relations, further underscoring the divergence between the two entities. The Ikhwan Movement, which has grown rapidly and has a wide range of influence with the opportunities such as high income and position in Saudi Arabia, has become a constant threat to Saudi Arabia with an alternative interpretation of Islam against Wahhabism (Menoret, 2015, pp. 2-5). Besides those who defend the constitutional monarchy and the Salafists, another opposition is the religious minorities. In Saudi Arabia, Islamic religious minorities face discrimination in employment and religious freedom, while non-Islamic minorities face death threats due to heresy. Shiites make up about 15% of the Saudi population and are not recruited into high-status jobs such as ministries. Shiites also must attend the education that Sunnis do in schools. All other minorities - Jews, Christians, atheists, etc. - are not recognized by the state. These minorities are prohibited from expressing their beliefs and are even threatened with death penalty. This situation can be attributed to the securitization of religion in Saudi Arabia, where the state has institutionalized sectarianism, particularly emphasizing Sunni Islam while marginalizing other religious groups (Neo, 2020). The governance structure in Saudi Arabia has been closely intertwined with religion, leading to a system where religious principles heavily influence state policies and practices (Al-Atawneh, 2009). As a result, the state's strict adherence to Sunni Islam has led to the exclusion and marginalization of religious minorities, denying them official recognition and the freedom to openly practice their faiths. Given this high degree of religious repression, it is not surprising that Shiites went on strike in 1953, 1956, 1970, 1979 and 2011. Grim and Finke's research shows that there may be an increase in inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict due to state-sponsored religious oppression (Grim & Finke, 2010, p. 28). Although Saudi Arabia can alleviate the discontent to some extent with its rentier state structure, voices are frequently raised in the society in general, against the administrative system and order. For example, a Sunni patronage system was established that encouraged loyalty to the regime through the

distribution of oil revenues, but religious minorities were excluded from this system. This limited what the state could do before the conflict broke out against the minorities within the state, and the measures taken before the uprising against the minorities were never successful (France 24, 2010, 14 September).

Religious oppression in Saudi Arabia is an important part of politics. For example, in April 2014, Saudi Arabia passed a new law that considers situations “involving any form of atheistic thought or questioning the foundations of the religion of Islam” as an act of terrorism. The political side of this is that almost any criticism of Saudi Arabia can be interpreted as terrorism because all laws in Saudi Arabia are based on the Islamic faith. In other words, there is no difference between criticizing Islam and criticizing the authority of the state (Grim & Finke, 2010, p. 28). The state structure of Saudi Arabia based on the doctrine of Wahhabism causes it to have some competing allegiencies.

In summary, these competing allegiencies are primarily “Shiites” and “Muslim Brothers” as a minority, demanding “reformists” as developments and innovations in the world raise demands and awareness, ulamas who do not accept the Wahhabi religious tradition, those with a strong commercial background and “Hijaz Region” that resists adopting Saudi traditions. These communities with competing allegiencies are seen as a threat to the security of the regime. These competing allegiencies are constantly supported by both regional and global rivals and become more dangerous for the security of the regime. In this case, the state leader forms an alliance with external powers that can balance the internal threat in the presence of internal threats and interrelated external power. As such, it balances the internal threat and the interrelated external threat and can focus on its main target in combating a strong external threat. Thus, it carries out its struggle with the least cost. This problem may not always be solved with the same alliance relations. In such cases, Saudi Arabia tries to placate domestic threats with some social assistance, reforms, and privileges it provides to domestic threats by using its oil revenues.

2.2. State Structure

The ideal bureaucracy management’s jurisdiction, authority and hierarchy relationship, specialization, the management’s being based on written documents, impersonality, system of rules, career structure, separation of public, and private life do not apply to Saudi Arabia, which is based on traditional bureaucracy (Özer et al., 2015, pp. 151-153). There are four principles that the public bureaucracy should base on in international standards. These are efficiency and productivity, transparency, governance, and accountability (Eryılmaz, 2013, p.184), and they are also the facilitating factors that ensure the legitimacy of the administrator and administration

in the eyes of the public in terms of their characteristics. For Saudi Arabia, an administrative bureaucracy that does not have these features is not accepted as legitimate by the people, and therefore the rulers are at risk of constantly encountering uprisings and objections from the people.

In particular, the socio-political structure of Saudi Arabia, the underdevelopment of civil society, the fact that the stratification of the society belongs only to a certain lineage, this lineage decides on social reforms and change, has further opened the gap between policy makers and the society, and they have become two separate structures. In the type of Saudi authority, which is also defined as patrimonial authority, as defined by Weber, the country as a whole, including the people living on it, is considered as the property of the leader. In this context, the bureaucracy is not formed because of the organization of the individuals in the society to carry out their joint activities but is used as the personal efforts of the leader and as a management tool (Heper, 1997, p.36). In this context, the existence of independent economic and social power disturbs the leader and keeps the legislature, executive and judiciary in his own monopoly (Weber, 1978). In this case, arbitrariness prevails in the administration, law, and system, and since there is no structure or system to protect the citizen, any attempt to change or interfere with the structure is suppressed and brought under control. This type, which Weber defines as patrimonialism, has no equivalent and example in the world, like other ideal bureaucracy types, but there are countries with similar characteristics. Most of the regional powers can be considered in this category because of the identical characteristics of the state structures.

In 1991, a group of researchers asked King Fahd bin Abdulaziz to establish an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council was established in 1993 because of the 1991 demands (Wehrey, 2015). Some members of the political opposition planned a coup. Arab Nationalist Ideology influenced many military personnel and ruling family members in the 50s and 60s. Arab Nationalists have attempted many military coups, and although most such actions have failed, it has exposed the fragility among authoritarian regimes in the region. In 1955, some tribes in southwestern Saudi Arabia, supported by at least 12 officers, demanded more religious rights, but the Saudi Arabian Air Force then sent its planes to quell the riots.

In 1962, four Saudi aircraft crews fled to Egypt. In 1969, the National Liberation Front of Saudi Arabia and the Federation of Democratic Forces in the Kingdom attempted another failed coup. In 1977, another coup was carried out by the Saudi authorities in the city of Tabuk in the northwest of Saudi Arabia (Kechichian, 2011). In late 1979, an extremist Islamic group

led by Juhayman al-Otaybi forcibly entered Al-Masjid al-Haram for three weeks to establish an Islamic caliphate. In response, Saudi Arabia reduced the number of immigrant teachers and academics from Egypt to minimize the influence of Arab nationalism. Additionally, as a strategy to compete with Arab nationalism, Saudi Arabia established the Muslim World League in 1962 to mitigate the threat from Arab nationalists. Saudi Arabia has also weakened the military forces corresponding to the National Guard to reduce the threat of a coup. However, the Gulf Wars in 1991 and 2003, the Arab Spring and the threats that started in Yemen in 2009 forced Saudi Arabia to spend a lot for the development of its military capabilities (Kechichian, 2011).

Saudi Arabia has eliminated the possibility of self-criticism by the people, not only by maintaining its control over the people with the financial appropriations it has given, but also by monopolizing all kinds of news sources that the public can access. In order to control the media, the state selects the owners of satellite channels, newspapers and televisions from dynastic members of the Kingdom and people close to them. In Saudi Arabia, the Saudi public and foreign investors can obtain loans or capital from Saudi financial markets and foreign sources. In Saudi Arabia, financial markets are controlled and managed by the central bank “The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency” (SAMA). Commercial banks can provide loans and project financing locally, and loans can be obtained from these banks in accordance with market conditions (Kechichian, 2011).

In Saudi Arabia, where Sharia laws are accepted as the constitution of the country, the administration consists of a monarchy system that provides its legitimacy in an order based on absolutism. The king appoints his own council of ministers and chairs the council he has determined. The King, who has the right to veto every decision taken by the cabinet, has both executive and legislative power. Members of the Royal Family dominate important positions in Saudi Arabia. For example, the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are headed by princes. Also, Saudi Arabia is divided into 13 administrative regions. The governor of each district is from the Royal family. These sensitive positions cause the Ibn Saud Family to share the power of Saudi Arabia among themselves, which leads to control over the King’s decisions (Goetz, 2003). According to the studies on the political economy of rentier states, authoritarian regimes that benefit from economic and political relations with non-authoritarian regimes are generally not in favor of reforms (Chaudhry, 1989, p. 103).

The reasons such as the people’s feeling of not belonging to a nation, the lack of an institutionalized structure of the state, the non-democratic administration of the country, the fact that the state decisions are not based on the people’s expectations but the security of the

regime, and the regime's use of force against the people often causes the country to be evaluated in a regional power class with internal threats. For most of the regional powers, the security of the regime is of primary importance and the interests of the state are of secondary importance. Therefore, in states with this feature, the desire of the regime leaders to protect their positions is so dominant that even if it does not comply with the interests of the state. There is almost no concession that the rulers can make for the continuity of their power (Jackson, 2007, p. 166; Ryan, 2009, pp. 12-14).

The institutional capacity of the state, which is another issue that makes the state strong, is that being a strong state has not reached sufficient levels, considering the serious unjust provisions in the administrative organs of Saudi Arabia such as the legislative, executive and judiciary, and the failure to meet the demands of the people. In terms of the institutional capacity of the state, which is another element in which the power of the state is defined, Saudi Arabia is defined as a rentier state due to its dependence on oil, which is the only source of underground wealth, because it does not take any industrial and technological initiatives. In this case, the positive features of the state, such as its Sunni population, geographical location, and underground wealth, constitute a disadvantage for the country rather than an advantage in terms of power and security in the Middle East. Countries that do not derive the power of the state from its physical base, institutional structure, and national existence, such as the Middle East countries in particular, are defined as "weak states" (Buzan, 1991, pp. 97-102). Among the ever-present threats of these states, their internal threats are more dominant and prioritized.

2.3.Rentier State Feature

If countries like Saudi Arabia derive their income from natural resources and the state does not need the taxes paid by the citizens and does not demand taxes from the citizens, the political administration of this state is called the rentier state model. These states generally use their revenues from the export of resources for the continuation and stability of the regime and share it with the people on unequal terms (Ross, 2001, p. 329). In this case, for Saudi Arabia, where the security of the regime depends on the revenues from oil, ensuring the security of energy supply and demand makes it very important. In rentier states, just like in Saudi Arabia, the income earned from oil is in a more dominant position than the other income sources of the country. The revenue generated from oil resources primarily benefits a small fraction of the population, as only a limited number of individuals are employed in positions that allow them to capitalize on these resources. In Saudi Arabia, 3% of the population is involved in oil production and distribution, while the Saudi Royal Family decides how the revenues is used

(Beblawi, 1990, pp. 89). It is a kind of rentier state practice that the State has heavy dominance in order to obtain any rent from abroad and that the State invests outside the country with the revenues it receives from oil and earns income from there. In this context, the fact that the country's incomes depend on a single source makes the state extremely sensitive to external price shocks, and in this case, the country's economy is deeply affected as market fluctuations suspend the economic development, reconstruction and industrialization projects carried out by the country (Kral, 1999, p. 32). Rentier states focus on external rather than internal resources to generate income. This situation makes it difficult to carry out efficient economic activities in providing domestic income sources, and the state does not collect taxes from its citizens because the rent income from outside is sufficient for the state's public expenditures. The fact that the economic activities are not diversified in the country causes the citizens to need government services and subsidies to maintain their lives, and in this case, the total productivity of the population is negatively affected. In Saudi Arabia, rent income is collected in the hands of the state and distributed to the citizens. Thus, the state becomes a political authority with political and economic power. The bureaucracy is centralized, and the powers and responsibilities of state leaders expand. Resource control, which is dependent on foreign revenues, keeps the citizens away from the responsibility of paying taxes, in this case, it reduces the pressure of the citizens in terms of democratic representation (Altunışık, 2014).

Since the state holds both oil resources and revenues, it also offers job opportunities to much of the population, and the tendency to democratic movements of citizens decreases. This cross-helical economic relationship between the state and the citizen is affected by the state of international relations and sudden changes in oil prices and destabilizes it. Since the political authority in Saudi Arabia controls and manages the rent income, it becomes the main actor in shaping both economic and commercial policies. In this context, the economic policies planned and carried out are implemented by the state leader and financed by the income of the state. In this case, state leaders take decisions that will increase their power in both domestic and foreign policy and balance their rivals. For this purpose, state leaders use social and economic groups within the country against each other for their own security, and sometimes try to gain their trust. Therefore, every group and person who wants to earn money and live in the country must show their loyalty and support to the regime. Private initiatives, which are one of the dynamics of economic development, are not possible because Saudi Arabia's economy is under the monopoly of the state. Since most of the economic activities require government permission and support, it is very difficult for the private sector to exist and survive in the market (Noreng, 2014, p. 11).

Since 1948, when Saudi Arabia started to export oil, the country has entered a very serious process of change and transformation in both economic, political, and social fields. Again, from this date on, annual revenues increased rapidly, from 14-16 million dollars in 1946 to 100 million dollars in 1950. After this process, the State has started to build its institutions (Niblock, 2006, p. 88). Since oil revenues are directly in the hands of the state, the royal family decides how these revenues are distributed and where they are used. In this case, the country mostly focused on the shaping and centralization of the bureaucracy between the years 1950-1970. Especially during the reigns of King Saud bin Abdulaziz (1953-1964) and King Faisal bin Abdulaziz (1964-1975), State institutions were shaped to increase and centralize the power of the Royal Family. The Saudi Kings considered sectarian affiliation, regional ties and familial relations while systematically distributing oil revenues. By distributing oil revenues in a way that strengthens the ruling groups and close-minded groups, the country has ensured both the Saudi Royal Family to become the central authority and its own security (Metz, 1993, pp. 154-155).

Saudi Arabia did not subject its citizens to taxation thanks to the income it obtained from oil revenues, and Saudi citizens did not demand democratization in return. The purpose of the Saudi Regime in not taxing its citizens was both to ensure the satisfaction of its citizens from the regime and the regime's unwillingness to increase its financial autonomy in domestic politics. Because in this way, it kept the citizens and merchants of Hejaz, who had the potential to control the authority and power of the King, under its control and expanded the field of action of its own regime. As a matter of fact, until the 1960s, that is, until the oil revenues came under the control of the Saudi Regime, various taxes such as customs duty and trade tax were applied to the traders from the Hejaz. In the face of this situation, the merchants of the Hejaz resisted the hegemonic rule of the Ibn Saud Family and demanded to take responsibility in political representation (Chaudry, 1989, p. 121).

In this context, since the 1960s, when oil revenues have been seized by the Saudi Regime, state institutions have become centralized, their powers and responsibilities have increased, and the State has entered a period in which many economic, social, and political transformations have been experienced. The management and distribution of oil revenues by the regime have also necessitated the regime to strengthen the bureaucracy and keep the control under its own monopoly. The regime has aimed to protect and strengthen the loyalty of the population to the regime in every policy it has adopted during this process. In this context, it is possible to say that oil revenues affect all kinds of political, economic, political, and commercial orientations

and decisions of the country (Niblock, 2006, p. 47). In order to ensure the security of its regime, the Saudi Royal Family has set policies towards its citizens to increase their welfare since the 1960s. With various economic policies such as frequent subsidies, direct payments to farmers, social security payments, food aids, it both prevented all kinds of resistance against the regime and kept the citizens' economies under their own monopoly (Nibloc & Malik, 2007, p. 69).

The Saudi Regime has taken the lead in the administration of its citizens, not only in terms of economy, but also by being the largest employer in the country, for its citizens to be loyal to their own administration and has appointed educated individuals in various positions of the bureaucracy. This attitude has not only strengthened the bureaucracy for the Saudi Regime but has also provided jobs to educated citizens and kept them under its control, preventing any criticism that may be made against itself (Nibloc & Malik, 2007, p. 67). In addition, the Saudi Regime has supported some groups both in the social and commercial fields due to their familial ties, sectarian beliefs, and regional positions, and granted them various privileges. The groups that direct the Saudi Arabian economy and find a place in its economy are either those who have shown their loyalty to the Saudi Regime in various ways or the elite of Najd, who have close sectarian, regional and familial ties to the Ibn Saud Family (Nibloc & Malik, 2007, p. 16). Thus, the Saudi administration has prevented the bourgeois section that would intend to take any democratization and political action independently. While this provided a strong bond between the private sector and the public, it also brought with it the extreme centralization of political power (Karl, 1999, p. 34).

In line with the conscious preferences of the Saudi Regime, over time, commercial relations and traders in the Hejaz Region have been abolished, and the merchants of the Najd Region have come to the fore. The settled Hejaz merchants have been taken under the control of the chambers of commerce under the control of the State (Chaudry, 1989, p. 124). While the unjust policies adopted by the Saudi Regime to guarantee the revenues obtained from oil in Saudi Arabia have caused discontent among the citizens, the citizens have begun to question the distribution of their income and the waste of resources (Okruhlik, 1999, p. 245). Projects have been submitted to support trade groups in Saudi Arabia and the work of businesspeople are not taken as reference, but family, sectarian and regional ties are considered. This has led to the lack of economic efficiency and quality, and the inability to use economic resources effectively (Bilgen, 2010, p. 35). Saudi Arabia ran a constant budget deficit throughout the 1980s-1990s, with oil prices falling sharply in the 1980s. The oil crises experienced, caused social, political, and economic instability, which increased the reactions against the regime and resulted in the suspension of industrial development projects.

As a result, although it is not claimed that all regional powers have these characteristics, there is no consensus in these countries when categorized in general. Most of them are countries that have been exploited by the great powers for years, their leaders are made up of a certain lineage and group. Considering the effects such as monarchical state structure, different competing allegiances of the people, and economic policies based on a single source cause the weak legitimacy of the regimes to be constantly at risk. This causes such states to be at constant risk of internal threat. These factors make most regional power leaders more vulnerable to overthrow than leaders elsewhere, particularly because of internal threats. Therefore, although all state leaders are concerned about threats, such concerns are assumed to be of higher priority among regional powers.

3. The Role of Local Factors in Determining Saudi Arabia's Security Strategies

States form alliances with various states under various conditions to ensure their own security or the security of their regimes. When examining alliance relations, the focus is on the causes of alliance relations rather than their consequences. Because it is important what the main motivation was to form an alliance. State behaviors are tried to be interpreted through criteria such as internal, external, and interrelated threats affecting the alliance decision-making processes, the position of the state in the international system, and the regional policies of global power. Foreign policy decisions are not decisions taken without any reason. The steps to be taken have a certain infrastructure. These are shaped by a perception of threat to the values of the state, a threat knowledge, and some existing facts. Especially for regional powers, security threats arise from internal threats rather than external threats, due to their local characteristics and security priorities. Therefore, it would be more appropriate for regional powers to make security assessments based on internal threats. Especially for states that are not seen as great powers, it is appropriate to analyze state behavior through regional policies and instantaneous threats in the region in line with the security strategies of superpowers and great powers. A different analysis plane is required for regional powers.

“Security of the regime” is seen as the most important value in determining the security strategies of Saudi Arabia, and everything that threatens the security of the regime stands out as the primary threat. These threats are tried to be balanced by using foreign policy instruments and appeasement policies. Because they threaten the security of the regime, internal threats such as coup attempts, popular uprisings, and various rebellions are more dangerous and prioritized than external threats. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, where the legitimacy of the regime is weak, with competing allegiances in the eyes of the people, and with the characteristics of a

rentier state economy, internal threats take precedence over external threats. Saudi Arabia's foreign policies, in addition to determining its foreign security strategies, are also shaped by the continuation of the regime and maintaining its power. Since the regime in Saudi Arabia is not established by constitutional and democratic methods such as elections, it often faces the problem of legitimacy and strong demands are often made against the regime. Since Saudi Arabia was founded on the intellectual foundations of Wahhabism, it tries to gain legitimacy in the eyes of its people with its state structure and to ensure the continuity of its regime, but this structure built on religious foundations often causes resistance against the State. Therefore, in order to balance the demands from its own people and the threats posed to the regime, the Saudi Regime allies in foreign policy with a foreign power interrelated with the internal threat, so that it can pacify both the domestic and interrelated power and focus on the main threat, the external threat (Metz, 1993).

There are different approaches on the relationship between the regime's security and the state's foreign policy. Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy try to explain the domestic economic and political preferences of the states that want to ensure the security of the regime and their stability in domestic politics through alliance relations. Barnett and Levy consider the term "alliance" as an official or unofficial security cooperation between two or more states and their coordinated behavior under certain conditions (Barnet & Levy, 1962). States form alliances to act as a deterrent to a potential attack, and to prepare for successful warfare when deterrence fails. As a result, this serves to increase the influence of the state or to provide a balance of power in the system (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 175). According to Barnett and Levy (1962, p. 371), alliances formed to ensure the security of the regime have three different dimensions. These are in summary; (1) the exchange policies of states in alliances, (2) the effects of local economic and political factors on the alliance formed, and (3) the value of alliances as military and economic resources and security guarantees.

The alliance relationship, which is seen as the way to provide security, enables states to unite against external threats, increases the power that can be used against the threat, and both creates a deterrent and increases the possibility of success in combating the threat. In addition to Barnett and Levy's claims that the formed alliance relations provide security against external threats, alliances that are thought to have been formed to provide external security, constitute an important alternative for internal security. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, where the security of the regime is a priority, the existence of internal threats and the necessity of combating these internal threats with various sources lead state leaders and regimes to seek alliances. In addition, the emergence of external threats, the use of limited internal resources

against external threats leads to a decrease in the internal resources of the state, which causes unrest in the society and jeopardizes the security of the regime. Therefore, states often prefer to form alliances in foreign policy in order to protect their existing resources against internal threats to ensure the security of the regime (Barnett & Levy, 1962, pp. 372-376). Although there is a trade-off effect for security policies such as the joint use of military resources and balance of power in the relationship formed between the alliances, a balancing policy is aimed by forming an alliance with an external power against the enemy, which has been seen as an internal threat for a long time (Harknett, 1997). In the case of Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood is seen as an internal threat to the security of the regime, and its alliance with Egypt to balance and suppress them can be evaluated in this context. In addition, it was able to balance and even appease the Shiites, who posed a serious internal threat between 2000 and 2010, with his joint relationship with Iran. Between 2010 and 2020, it tried to balance the reformists, who had serious reform demands and economic expectations, with the economic and political relations it established with the USA and was able to suppress the internal threats. By adopting these policies, Saudi Arabia used a policy of balancing an external threat interrelated with the existing internal threat, suppressing the internal and external threat, and postponing the internal threats from becoming a problem for itself. As a method of appeasement, it is not always possible to ally with an external threat associated with an internal threat. In such cases, Saudi Arabia uses the method of suppressing internal threats with various social aids and reforms.

According to Curtis R. Ryan, state leaders can make alliances in foreign policy to ensure the security of their regimes and maintain their survival. In this context, leaders can form alliances and break alliances for short term interests, and the main interest is the security of the regime rather than the security of the state. Thus, the leader tends towards foreign alliances because he can act more limitedly in domestic politics to create a safe environment that will ensure the survival of the regime (Ryan, 2009, pp. 12-17). In societies where the continuity of the regime is a priority, fending off internal threats takes priority over external threats. In this case, when an alliance cannot be established with a related external threat that will fend off internal threats, it is preferred to ally with a strong external power that may pose a threat in the long run. Saudi Arabia's search for an alliance with an interrelated power abroad whenever it perceives a threat to the security of the regime at home, and to form an alliance with other states through various diplomatic relations when there is no interrelated threat can be evaluated within

this scope. The relationship that Saudi Arabia has established with the EU and the USA since its establishment, and recently with Israel, can be evaluated in this context.

In states such as Saudi Arabia, where the security of the regime is built on fragile foundations and where there are social demands, uprisings, dynastic struggles such as who the leader will be, it is difficult to balance any external threat. A societal legitimacy needs to be gained for the internal resources used to counter the external threat. Thus, since internal balancing would be very costly for the country, countries generally prefer to form an external alliance. Therefore, the political leader may adopt policies to appease the opposition to the regime, to attract them to his side, and to eliminate them (Schweller, 2006). As a matter of fact, it can be seen from this perspective that Saudi Arabia has provided social assistance to pacify the Sunni and Shiite uprisings and to attract them to its side, that it has formed an alliance with the Houthis in Yemen, and that it has made Bahrain its own satellite with various interventions in Bahrain. In this context, Saudi leaders use internal resources to ensure the security of the regime, which is very costly. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, generally seeks alliances to reduce these costs, but these alliances, such as the USA, Egypt, and Bahrain, cost it a lot.

According to Steven R. David's balancing theory, regime leaders "omni-balancing" primary internal threats against secondary external threats, by mitigating secondary threats among internal and external threats that threaten the continuity of the regime. Because, according to David, state leaders who want to ensure the security of the regime have a fear of survival. In addition, in states where the security of the regime is at the forefront, internal threats are more than external threats. Therefore, state leaders suppress other states, which they see as less serious threats, with various policies to combat the threats closest and primary to them. Thus, the main goal is to disable the partners with whom domestic threats can form international alliances, and to use their power against their rivals, whom they see as the most dangerous in their foreign policies. According to David, although what is understood here is bandwagoning the states that pose a secondary threat in order to combat the primary threats, what is emphasized is the policy of balancing and maintaining its power against the enemy, which is the most important and primary threat (David, 1991, pp. 235-239). When evaluated in the context of Saudi Arabia, for the "security of the regime", Saudi leaders balance the internal threats those would pose a threat to the regime with uprisings, rebellions and coup attempts by allying with the interrelated external threat, thus suppressing the internal and interrelated external threat and facilitate focusing on the main threats. Thus, it "omni-balances" the Shiites, who are an internal threat, the members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the reformists and their demands, with its foreign policies in countries such as Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Bahrain.

Conclusion

It is much debated whether states shape alliance relations for power or security, against internal, external or both internal and external threats. The general opinion in our study is that states' alliance relations are not a willful choice, and the main purpose is to ensure security, and they form alliance relations against internal, external and interrelated threats. In this case, we can say that; for Saudi Arabia, which is a regional power, alliance relations emerge with the existence of both external and internal security threats that strengthen each other. According to classical approaches, states make their decision to adopt bandwagoning or balancing policy by evaluating external threats. However, while this generalization is possible for superpower and great powers, it is not possible to make such generalizations due to the local characteristics of regional powers. There are always internal threats that regional powers face due to the monarchical state structure, the existence of competing allegiances of its people, and the characteristics of being a rentier state.

For Saudi Arabia, there is a distinction at the heart of the balance of power theory between the anarchy of the international system and the order of domestic politics. The lack of a central government in Saudi Arabia with the authority to use its power to resolve conflicts leaves such states vulnerable in the emerging struggle for power. In such an environment, balancing plays an important role in ensuring the survival of states against aggressive attempts by other states. In addition to internal threats for Saudi Arabia, there are also external threats at the regional and global level. The existence of internal threats endangers the continuity of the state regime. In this case, the internal threat to the state leader becomes more important and prioritized than any external threat, as it threatens the survival of the regime. In this case, Saudi Arabia prefers to form an alliance with an external power that supports its internal threats. Thus, it balances the internal threat with the interrelated external threat, suppressing the internal threat while postponing the external threat. Thus, we can say; omni-balancing in the international system is an appropriate response to both internal and external threats for Saudi Arabia as a regional power.

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