

THE IMPACT OF THE US ON THE ARMAMENT PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF SAUDI ARABIA'S SECURITY PERCEPTIONS IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD ¹

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ABSTRACT

In recent years Saudi Arabia has attracted attention with the increase in arms purchases. Alterations in the security perception of the Riyadh administration with regional developments in the Arab Spring and beyond. This is one of the reasons for this increase. The strategic relationship with the US is the most important factor shaping Saudi Arabia's armament process. Taking into account, factors such as the US shaping the balance of power in the Middle East, the security of Israel and the control of energy resources, the US gives priority to the armament of Saudi Arabia, which is its ally. The Obama administration's agreement with the Saudi administration in 2010, over a 60 billion dollar weapon agreement, strikingly demonstrated the extent of the defense-based strategic relationship between the two countries. After Obama, Trump also confirmed the strategic relationship between the two countries by signing the largest arms agreement in the US history in Riyadh. Factors such as changes in the regional equation, the Saudi Arabia-Iran competition, and threats from Iraq and Yemen affect the security concerns of Saudi decision-makers. The study analyzes the extent and nature of the US influence in Saudi Arabia's armament process.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, USA, Armament, Weapon Agreement, Security.

SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASI DÖNEMDE SUUDİ ARABİSTAN'IN GÜVENLİK ALGILAMALARI BAĞLAMINDA SİLAHLANMA SÜRECİNE ABD'NİN ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Suudi Arabistan son yıllarda silah alımlarındaki artışla dikkat çekmektedir. Arap Baharı ve sonrasında yaşanan bölgesel gelişmelerle beraber Riyad yönetimin güvenlik algısındaki değişim; bu artışın sebeplerinin başında gelmektedir. ABD ile kurduğu stratejik ilişki Suudi Arabistan'ın silahlanma sürecini şekillendiren en önemli unsurdur. ABD, Orta Doğu'daki güç dengesinin istediği biçimde şekillenmesi, İsrail'in güvenliği ve enerji kaynaklarının kontrolü gibi faktörleri hesaba katarak; ittifak ilişkisi içinde olduğu Suudi Arabistan'ın silahlandırılması konusuna öncelik vermektedir. Obama yönetiminin 2010 yılında Suudi yönetimiyle tek seferde imzaladığı 60 milyar dolar üzerindeki silah anlaşması, iki ülke arasındaki savunma temelli stratejik ilişkinin boyutunu çarpıcı bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır. Obama sonrasında Trump da, Riyad'da ABD tarihinin en büyük silah anlaşmasını imzalayarak iki ülke arasındaki stratejik ilişkiyi teyit etmiştir. Bölgesel denklemde meydana gelen değişimler, Suudi Arabistan-İran rekabeti, Irak ve Yemen kaynaklı tehditler gibi faktörler de Suudi karar alıcıların güvenlik kaygılarını etkilemektedir. Çalışmada, Suudi Arabistan'ın silahlanma sürecindeki ABD etkisinin boyutu ve niteliği analiz edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suudi Arabistan, ABD, Silahlanma, Silah Anlaşması, Güvenlik.

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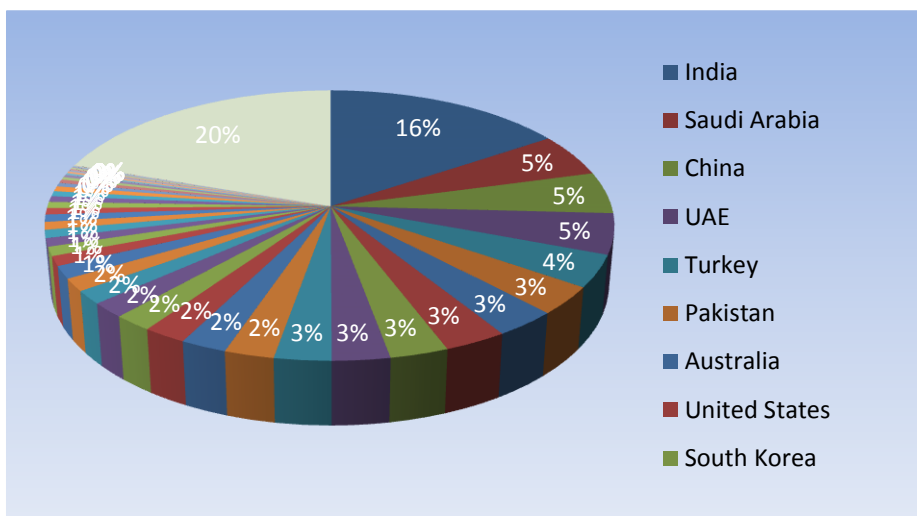
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INTRODUCTION

In the Cold War years, states have entered a race to acquire new weapons and modernize their weapon inventories. Middle Eastern countries participated in this arms race, and some of them are among the leading actors. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, founded in 1932, has attracted the attention of global powers as well as taking its place among the important actors of the region with the presence of oil in the territory since the 1930's. From the discovery of oil on its territory to the present, Saudi Arabia has become one of the most important countries of the Middle East as a rising oil-driven economy. Saudi Arabia, which has 16% of the world's proven oil reserves, is the largest oil exporter in the world and has the largest crude oil production capacity (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2014).

Saudi Arabia, along with the richness brought by oil, has taken its place in the world rankings in the first place in the Middle East in the race for arms with the motivation of being a regional actor. According to the data of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Saudi Arabia was registered as the second largest buyer in the immediate aftermath of India with a purchase of approximately \$ 6 billion in the period between 2011-2014. Chart 1 shows that Saudi Arabia has made 5% of the global arms purchases between 2011-2014.

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of World Wide Weapon Purchase (2011-2014)



Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

Saudi Arabia's regional leadership effort, as well as its relationship with the US, triggers high levels of defense spending. Taking into account factors such as the shape of the balance of power in the Middle East and the security of the energy resources in the Middle East (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 65) the US gives priority to the armament of its ally Saudi Arabia. The Obama administration's agreement with the Riyadh administration in 2010, worth over \$ 60 billion (Entous, 2010) reveals the level of the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia. The most important feature of this agreement is that even during the Cold War years where the ideological polarization on global basis was at its highest level, the US did not sell such large amount of weapons. The US agreement with Saudi Arabia means the largest sale of arms in its history (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 62). The United States is also active in the historical armament

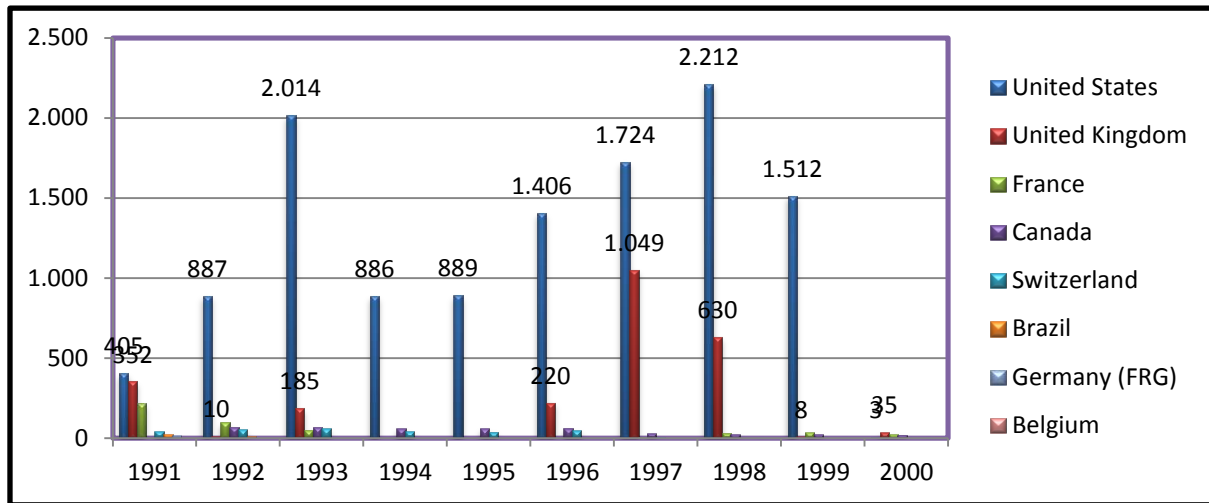
process of Saudi Arabia. “Oil reserves form the foundation of strategic relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States. In return for the continuity of oil exports, American governments have ensured the political stability and military security of Saudi Arabia since the 1940s”. (Efegil, 2013, pp. 108-109).

1. THE DYNAMICS OF SAUDI ARABIA IN THE 1990’S DETERMINING RELATIONS WITH THE US IN THE CONTEXT OF DEFENSE EXPENDİTURES

The most critical development for Saudi Arabia in the 1990s was the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. The Saudi Emirate sought refuge in Saudi Arabia after the occupation, causing Saudi Arabia to perceive a serious threat from Iraq. Saudi Arabia is among the top countries in this threat perception. (Pirinççi, Armament and War The Impact of the Armament Initiatives in the Middle East on Global and Regional Security (Cold War Period), 2010, p. 307) The threat from Iraq has had a direct impact on Saudi Arabia's defense spending. The US being uncomfortable with Iraq's occupying tendency paved the way for large arms agreements between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The contract for the purchase of F-15 combat aircraft worth of \$ 7 billion signed by the Saudi administration in 1993 is one of the best indicators. The total amount of arms agreements signed between the two countries between the years 1993-1997 is \$4 billion (Pollack, 2002, p. 84).

The oil revenues being the backbone of the Saudi Arabian economy directly affect the government's expenditures. In Saudi Arabia, where most of the world's oil reserves are located, oil revenues account for 75 percent of total revenues. Thanks to oil revenues, Saudi Arabia can make huge defense spending and buy large amounts of military equipment (Efegil, 2013, p. 108). In the late 1990s, Saudi Arabia went on to cut defense spending. Due to the fall in oil prices, Saudi Arabia began to cut its defense budget and the number of arms deals with the US (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 63). In 1998-1999, the barrel price of crude oil declined to about \$ 10 (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2015). Between 1998 and 2001, the arms deals between the two countries amounted to only \$ 600 million. Along with the decline in oil prices, the focus of the Riyadh government's strategic plans on human resources within the framework of the Sixth Development Plan (1995-1999) was another reason for the decline in defense spending. While spending was spent around \$ 112 billion for developing sectors, the government spent about \$ 57 billion for human development (Alsharani & Alsadiq, 2014, p. 6).

Despite the fluctuating course of defense spending in the nineties, when Saudi Arabia's arms purchases were examined, it is seen that the purchase of guns from the US between the years of 1991-2000 was 76 percent. The amount of weapons received from the US was \$ 1.7 billion in 1997, compared to the \$ 2.2 billion purchase in 1998 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2015). Payments made by the Riyadh government, which followed a policy of reducing defense spending at that time, include data on deliveries made under previous arms agreements. The reason for this is the continuation of the relationship between the buyer and the seller country in the arms agreements, delivery in the following years, not in the immediate aftermath of the agreement and the maintenance of the weapons / spare parts (Pirinççi, USA-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, pp. 113-114).

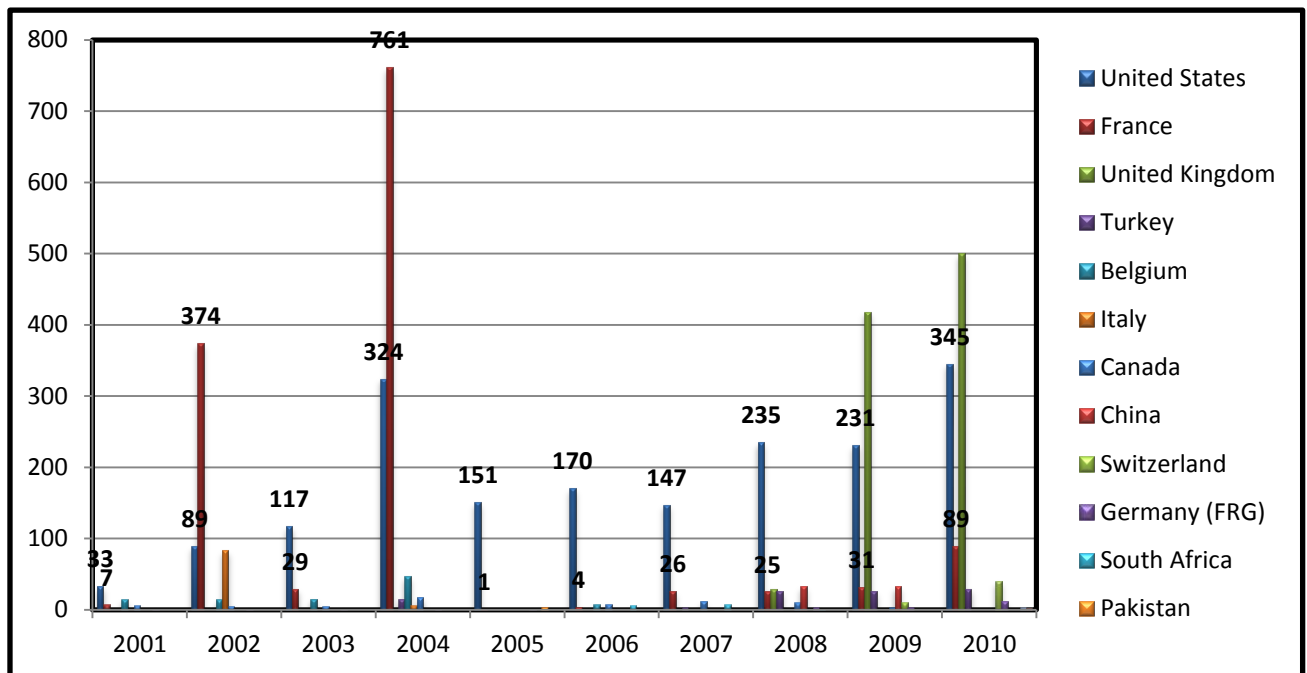
Chart 2: Saudi Arabia's Weapon Procurement (1991-2000) - Million Dollars

Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

2. THE INFLUENCE OF SEPTEMBER 11 IN US-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS IN THE POST-2000 PERIOD

In Saudi Arabia's close relations with the US on issues such as defining security policies, defense spending and arms purchases, serious breaks occurred in the early 2000s. The September 11 attacks can be considered the starting point of these breaks. The assertion of Saudi nationals in the offensive actions and the consequent pretension of Saudi Arabia in the American public against the terrorist groups led to problems in the relations of the two countries. The results of the attacks were the most serious problem area between the US and Saudi Arabia after the 1973 Oil Crisis. Although Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was expelled from Saudi citizenship in 1994 by Saudi authorities, his Saudi nationality stood at the head of the problem areas (Blanchard C., 2010, p. 6).

The reflection of the September 11 attacks on the Saudis, which caused a trauma for the Americans, was seen in arms deals without delay. No arms agreement was signed between the two countries during the 2001-2005 period; however, until 2008, Saudi Arabia was cautious about buying basic weapon systems from the US; It has shown that the Riyadh government can enter the way out of the US orbit on security policies (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Weapon Agreement, 2011, p. 65). The most important indicator of this is that in the period 2005-2009, the UK was more proportionately involved in the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia than the US. While the ratio of the US has fallen to 40% the proportion of the UK has increased to 42% (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 68). According to a report on arms sales prepared by Congressional Research Service (CRS) which has been working for the US Congress, between 2004 and 2007 Saudi Arabia signed a \$ 23 billion weapon agreement with the US. Along with these agreements European major suppliers sold \$ 16.9 billion to Saudi Arabia while the US sold \$ 5.2 billion (Grimmett, Conventional Arms Transfers, Developed Nations, 2000-2007, 2008, p. 42). Chart 2, which shows the countries where Saudi Arabia acquired arms during the years 1991-2000, had a significant superiority of the US, while the negative developments in the relations between the two countries reduced the US influence in the mid-2000s. As can be seen in Figure 3, the rise of France and England among the arms suppliers of Saudi Arabia is remarkable.

Chart 3: Saudi Arabia's Weapon Procurement (2001-2010) - Million Dollars

Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

In connection with the Al Qaeda problematic, Saudi authorities have begun to increase defense spending in the context of rising oil prices, perceived regional threats and the fight against terrorism, even though there are problems in supplying defense-based needs between Riyadh and Washington. The government of Riyadh felt the need to revise its defense / security needs and procurement plans in the light of recent developments (Blanchard C., 2010, p. 17). The search for alternatives outside the US can also be considered in this context. In this process, Saudi authorities have announced that they plan a budget allocation of \$ 50-60 billion on modernization of existing weapons systems, development of the Saudi Armed Forces and training of military personnel. From 2005 to 2009, the Bush Administration and Congress approved over \$ 16.7 billion of potential military sales by the United States to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, in the period 2005-2008, the two countries agreed on an external military sales agreement worth \$ 11.2 billion and the US handed over US \$ 4.4 billion of military goods and services to Saudi Arabia (Blanchard C., 2010, p. 17). In spite of the problematic areas in the relations between the two countries, the US administration did not remain indifferent to Saudi Arabia's desire to purchase military goods and services. The agreements made in this process laid the milestones of the road to the giant arms agreement to be made in 2010 for \$ 60 billion .

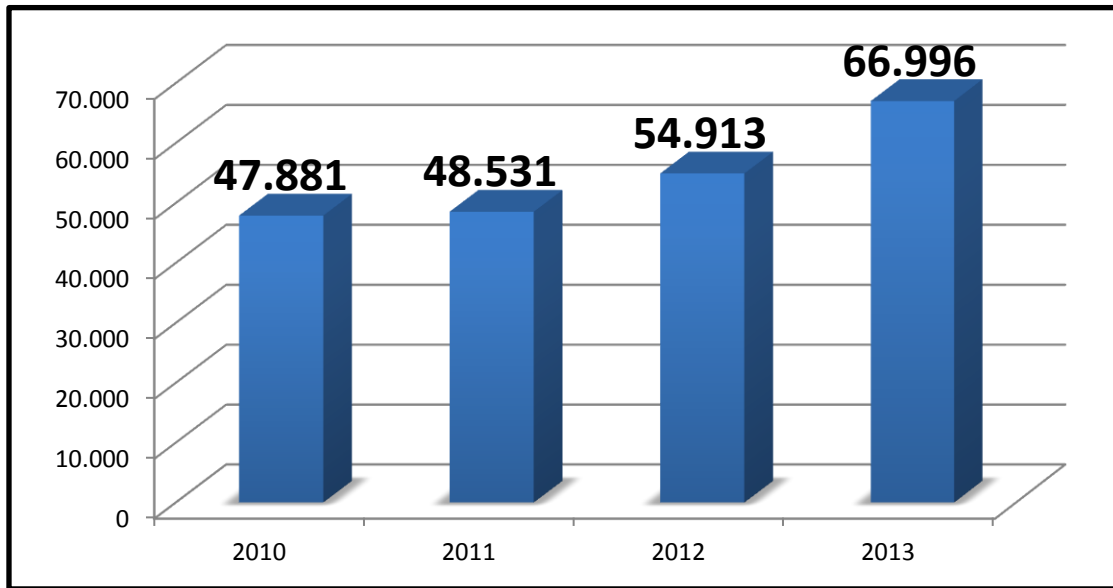
As a weapon supplier outside the United States, Russia has been one of the search for alternatives. The agreement on co-operation in the military area, signed between the two parties in 2007 gave hope to Russia finding a new and larger client. In 2009, the parties started talks on whether Saudi Arabia would buy military technology worth of \$ 2 billion from Russia. 150 T-90 S tanks, 150 Mi-35 helicopters and Mi-17 helicopters, 250 units of BMP-3 military personnel carrying vehicles, S-400 Triumph's missile radar systems were on the agenda. Since Saudi Arabia only imported weapons from the US and Europe, and since it increased its military spending in 2010, Russia attached great importance to developing

cooperation with the Riyadh administration. However, Saudi Arabia has abandoned the signing of these agreements, which foresee the purchase of said weapons. Saudi Arabia has used its negotiations with Russia as a trump card in the negotiations with Russia to reduce the price of military technologies it received from the United States and has achieved its objectives in this direction. As a matter of fact, as Russia has not only implemented a two billion dollar contract, it will not be easy for Moscow to develop cooperation in the military field with the US's ally in the region (Kemaloğlu, 2013, pp. 68-69).

3. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN SAUDI ARABIA'S ARMAMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE OBAMA PERIOD AND THE ARAB SPRING

Undoubtedly, the Arab Spring developments have changed the balances in the Middle East and caused radical changes in the security policies of the countries of the region. Saudi Arabia's defense spending and armament policy in the recent period are also seen traces of the Arab Spring effect. However, it is not possible to analyze by considering only one factor in an environment where regional relations are quite complex. After 2010, the Arab Spring, as well as many factors shaping Saudi Arabia's security policies can be mentioned. With the intervention in 2003, Iraq's short and medium term regional power equation, and the possibility of Iraq in the future of Iran's influence, was a major handicap for Saudi Arabia. In addition, Iran's efforts to increase its influence by using nuclear activities and Shiite groups in the region have added a serious dimension to Saudi Arabia's perceived threat from Iran. Another reason for Saudi Arabia to pursue an immediate and comprehensive armament policy in relation to Iran is related to Yemen (Pirinçi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 70). Many considerations such as the Arab Spring effect, the Iranian threat, the Iraqi border problems, and the threat perceived by Iran-based Yemen can be considered as the reasons for the rise in Saudi Arabia's defense spending after 2010.

Saudi Arabia's defense spending has entered an upward trend after 2007, and this trend has continued to increase, especially after 2010. In this period, the government of Riyadh's defense spending reached unprecedented figures in its history. In 2007, Saudi Arabia's defense spending amounted to \$ 45 billion, as can be seen in Graph 4, this figure approached \$ 48 billion in 2010, and after the rapid climb in 2013, it began to push the level of \$ 70 billion by 2013 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)). In 2014, Saudi Arabia, which filled its high oil prices and its treasury, took its place in the world rankings with its \$ 80 billion defense spending. 2014 defense expenditure figure accounted for more than 10 percent of Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product (Kottasova, 2015). The increase in defense spending by the Government of Riyadh by 17 percent in 2014 led to the highest increase in defense spending among 15 countries (Deutsche Welle, 2015).

Graph 4: Saudi Arabia's Defense Spending (2010-2013) - Million Dollars

Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

Saudi Arabia's rapid increase in defense spending has been developing due to many factors. One of the starting points for this rapid climb is the Saudi-US arms deal, which came to the fore in 2010 and has a total value of nearly \$ 60 billion. The arms procurement negotiations between the United States and Saudi Arabia, which have been in progress since 2007, were first brought to the public's attention by the American administration on September 12, 2010. The process was officially initiated by the US Department of Defense on October 20, 2010, informing the Congress about the sale of weapons. The declaration made by Congress included the sales of 84 F-15SA type fighter aircraft, as well as radar systems, combat cannons (Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2010), helicopters with different specifications (Apache, Blachawck, Light Attack, Light Turbine, Longbow), night vision systems, missiles, missile warning systems (Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2010). The weapon package included the modernization of 70 F-15S fighter jets used by the Saudi Air Force (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 62).

The importance of the weapon package for Saudi Arabia can be handled in two dimensions. The first of these is the need for armament depending on the state of the Riyadh administration's existing weapon inventories. The second is the fact that Saudi Arabia made its choice for the US in the arms deal. Saudi Arabia, which is in need of armament, is able to procure weapons from Russia or China, especially in the European market, but has made a comprehensive arms agreement with the United States. In this context, even this sales is an important indicator of the fact that arms trade is not an ordinary commercial action. (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 69) While the Riyadh administration modernizes its old weapons against the threats from the turmoil in the Middle East, The United States has taken this step to increase the motivation of securing Saudi Arabia's security.

The threat perceived by Saudi Arabia from Iran is one of the most important reasons for the huge arms agreement with the United States and the rapid rise in post-2010 defense spending. One of the biggest threats to Saudi Arabia is Iran. Iran is the most serious rival of

Saudi Arabia in military, political, economic terms and in the region's Shiite-Sunni equation with the structure it built after the revolution in 1979 (Chun, 2010, pp. 28-29). Iran's nuclear weapons development initiatives and developments in ballistic missile technology threaten not only Israel, but other Middle Eastern countries. In spite of the embargoes against Iran, Iran also makes huge arms purchases. While Iran's military capacity dominates the Persian Gulf, it poses a threat not only for Saudi Arabia but also for other Gulf countries regarding the safety of oil (Chun, 2010, p. 29).

Anthony Cordesman expressed the following facts when he put forward the relationship of the arms agreement with the Iranian factor and other elements. With the growing threat from Iran, Iraq needs at least 10 years to balance this threat. The Afghanistan operation of the United States under the global struggle against terrorism requires a further 10-15 years. The instability in countries such as Yemen and Somalia will have a negative impact on the region. The US's dependence on oil will continue. (Pirinççi, US-Saudi Arabia Arms Agreement, 2011, p. 68). Yemen is one of the leading threat perceptions for Saudi Arabia. Yemen is one of the main threats for Saudi Arabia. The Houthi forces and Al Qaeda's territory against Saudi Arabia are among the disputed regions between Yemen and Saudi Arabia for years. The fact that the people living in the former Yemen territory were Shiite having sectarian problems with the Saudi regime caused problems in Riyadh-Sanaa relations. Saudi Arabia has always intervened in Yemen's internal affairs in order to eliminate the threats that may be directed to it from Yemen, which is on the other side of the border, for different reasons. (Ayhan, Yemen-Saudi Arabia Relations: Riyadh's Yemen Policy)

The Iranian-backed Huti's progress in Yemen has threatened Saudi Arabia's security. The clashes between the Yemeni government and the Houthis in 2004 led to Saudi Arabia's involvement in the conflict. Saudi Military Forces organized operations targeting Huti groups in 2009. This time, the Saudi forces, which led the coalition of Arab countries on 25 March 2015, hit the Iranian-backed Huti, which had conquered Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, with airstrikes. The air force, which the Riyadh government has developed in recent years, has helped to achieve effective results in operations. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Saudi Arabia has a regional air force with a total of 36,000 military personnel, including 20,000 in the air force and 16,000 in the air defense. 81 F-15C / D and 180 F-15S type fighter planes are the most important elements of this power (International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 2015).

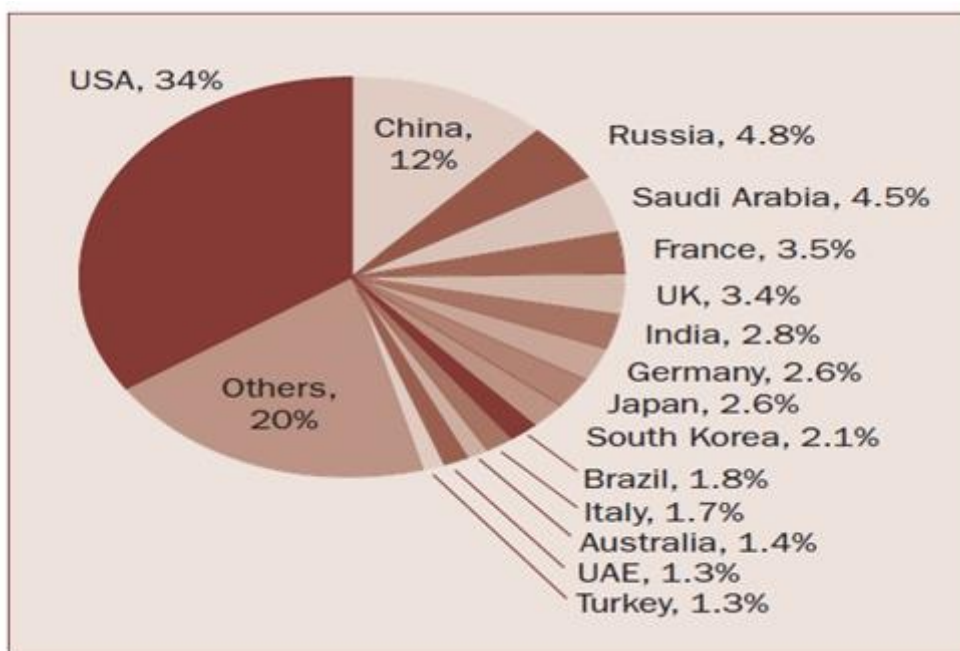
The Riyadh administration has long increased its defense spending and has modernized its weapon systems and created a vision of becoming a regional power. The intervention in Yemen can be considered as a manifestation of this view. The importance of US weapons systems for Saudi Arabia has emerged. According to the CRS report, between October 2010 and October 2014, arms agreements between Washington and Riyadh increased to more than \$ 90 billion. Sales range from warplanes to armored vehicles to powerful missiles and bombs. The Apache and Black Hawk type helicopters, which were included in the agreements, were preferred considering the perceived threat from Yemen (Lamothe, 2015). F15SA type warplanes are among the most prominent Saudi weapons in March 2015 attacks. Saudi aircraft have neutralized military bases and anti-aircraft systems in the capital city Sana'a. Apache-type helicopters have been one of the effective weapons in the operation. Helicopters, which were used in the Yemen attacks in 2009, gave the Saudis a big advantage in this operation. The existence of Saudi forces armed with the best American weapons in the face of the Huti fighting the guerrilla techniques turned the war in favor of the Riyadh administration. Again guided missiles are the effective American weapons used by the Saudis and used against the Houthis (Pillalamarri, 2015). In 2014, Saudi Arabia signed a sales

agreement worth of \$ 750 million with the US government for 14,000 TOW 2 missiles (Balle, 2015).

Iran's Houthis assisted by the initiative in Yemen and the threat to Saudi Arabia became visible. In recent years, the increase in defense expenditures of the Riyadh administration is justified. The enormous increase in Saudi Arabia's defense spending can be seen as a reflection of the ongoing conflicts and imbalances around it. Oil revenues until 2014 also provided the opportunity to continue this defense policy. The decline in oil prices towards the end of 2014 may affect the high spending capacity of Saudi Arabia, but it is clear that this effect will not occur in the short term (Freeman, Fleurant, Wezeman, & Wezeman, 2015, pp. 2-3). As a matter of fact, the ongoing increase in defense spending in 2015 confirmed this fact.

Saudi Arabia seems to be one of the most prominent in this context, based on other large arms recipients and high-level defense spending countries. According to 2013 data, six countries account for 60 percent of the total expenditure among the 50 countries with the highest defense expenditure. Along with the USA, China, Russia, Japan and France, Saudi Arabia has taken its place among these six countries. The US occupies 35 percent of the 60 percent while the other five countries, including Saudi Arabia, covered 25 percent (Deloitte, 2014, p. 5). According to 2013 data, Saudi Arabia climbed from seventh to fourth among the countries with the highest expenditure. As a result of this rapid climb, the share of defense expenditures in Gross National Product was 9.3 percent (Freeman & Solmirano, Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2013, 2013, p. 2). Graph 4 shows the highest share of defense spending in 2014. After the unquestionable superiority of the US by 34 percent, China took the second place with 12 percent share, while Russia ranked third with a rate of 4.8 percent. After the three big powers, Saudi Arabia's share in this assessment was 4.5 percent.

Graph 4: Share of 15 Countries with Maximum Defense Spending in World Defense Expenditures – 2014



Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

Saudi Arabia's modernization of the increase in defense spending / weapons and the strong support of the US in this process are quite remarkable. First of all, considering the historical process, the Arab-Israeli wars following the establishment of the State of Israel and the perception of Israel in the Islamic world should be a serious threat for Israel. However, it is seen that the situation did not happen as it was foreseen. From the large arms agreements between the United States and Saudi Arabia, there is a feeling that Israel does not feel any discomfort.

Israel does not directly support the arming of Saudi Arabia. However, if Saudi Arabia did not receive weapons from the United States, there was a possibility of turning to different sources. At this point, the European arms producer countries, Russia or China do not pursue a policy of Israeli supremacy in arms sales to the Middle East, and thus do not impose restrictions on the weapon systems they sell. The sale of American weapons to Saudi Arabia led to the elimination of Israel's concern. Moreover, Israel does not regard the Riyadh administration as a country in which it shares only common concerns about Iran. In terms of Israel, Saudi Arabia is also seen as a buffering country and a strategic buffer country against Iran. Under the influence of all these reasons, Israel supported the increase of Saudi Arabia's military capacity in a controlled manner. (Pirinçi, US-Saudi Arabia Weapon Agreement, 2011, p. 78) This analysis, which includes an Israeli evaluation of the US-Saudi-American arms deal of \$ 60 billion in 2010, also sheds light on Israel's general approach in this regard.

Israel and Saudi Arabia's views on Iran are similar. Iran's danger of being a nuclear power threatens both countries in the same way. Israel's Jordan and the EU's former ambassador, Oded Eran, pointed out this point in his article on the P5 + 1 negotiations conducted by Iran and Western countries. Eran emphasized that Israel and Saudi Arabia share the same concerns about these talks, and they perceive Iran as a threat to be a nuclear power. Israel and Saudi Arabia stand at the same point regarding the threat of Iran despite different political cultures and different political approaches (Guzansky & Eran, 2015).

4. TWO COUNTRY RELATIONS IN THE TRUMP PERIOD: THE LARGEST WEAPON AGREEMENT IN THE US HISTORY

In December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced its attempt to establish an Islamic Army under the Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC). Chiefs of Staff from Islamic countries met in Riyadh in March 2016, and affirmed "their determination to intensify efforts in fighting terrorism through joint work according to their capabilities, based on the desire of each member country to participate in operations or programs within the IMCTC framework as per its policies and procedures, and without compromising the sovereignty of the Coalition member countries." (The Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition- IMCTC-). In the new period, the Riyadh administration has adopted the use of rigid power elements, including military intervention. In this way, the regime intervened for the first time in its history with its own military elements and the ongoing crises beyond its national borders and tried to show that it could oppose the threats of regime security outside its own borders and resist the threats with their own means. The Saudis, of course, expect a decisive stance on US support.

Donald Trump made his first visit to Riyadh after taking the chair. This is a sign that the US administration will cooperate closely with Saudi Arabia on many issues. Economic agreements with Riyadh during Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia also reveal the self-interest of US foreign policy. On the other hand, it can be seen that Trump and King Selman governments have common concerns as the statements made during the summit show. Iran is one of the main concerns. Considering that US President Donald Trump can meet his

expectations in the Middle East policy, King Selmán's administration has shown that Trump will be pleased with the United States by taking serious economic obligations during his trip.

The most critical point of the visit of Trump to Saudi Arabia is the massive arms agreement signed between the two countries. The agreement signed between Trump and King Salman of Saudi Arabia covers a weapon sales worth \$ 110 billion. This agreement contains the following details;

- “A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for four Littoral Combat Ships.
- A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for 115 M1A2S tanks made by General Dynamics Corp., as well as munitions and heavy equipment recovery systems.
- A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for PAC-3 Patriot missiles.
- A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for UH-60 Helicopters.
- A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for CH-47 Chinook Helicopters.
- A memorandum of intent for an \$18 billion program to upgrade Saudi Arabia's military command-and-control and defense communications infrastructure.
- A memorandum of intent for a potential sale of the THAAD Anti-Missile System.
- A proposed FMS sale to further improve the training and capacity of the Royal Saudi Air Force to include enhanced training on precision targeting capabilities, processes, and Law of Armed Conflict.

The formal notification of Congress of three proposed direct commercial sales of precision guided munitions technology.” (Blanchard C. M., 2018, s. 21-22).

After Donald Trump came to power, the sales of arms in the region has been an important factor in the new administration's approach to the region, which realized that the US began to be challenged in the region's arms supply leadership. Donald Trump's first visit to Saudi Arabia after he took office, and during this visit between Saudi Arabia and the United States to make a pre-agreement for a package of weapons over \$ 110 billion has to be evaluated in this context. (Pirinççi, Dynamics Affecting the Arming in the Middle East: Buyers and Suppliers in the Arab Spring, 2018, p. 304).

Table 1: Arms Exports to Saudi Arabia, 2010-2017-Million Dollars

COUNTRY	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Austria	2					4	4		9
Belgium		7	21	21	10				59
Bulgaria						8	1		9
Canada		33	40	34	45	111	15	2	281
China						8		20	28
Finland			4	4	7	7			22
France	89	84	25	54	184	174	91	27	727
Georgia							7	7	14
Germany (FRG)	12	73	79	80	63	2	14	105	426
Italy			1			89	89	48	227
Netherlands		13	25	25	25	25			113
Serbia						4	11	2	17
Slovakia				1	0	3	3		6
South Africa		4			1	5	4	6	20
Spain		98	196		98	208	24	22	646
Sweden	3	3			160		1		167
Switzerland	40	40			83	142	44		350
Turkey	29	33	33	44	39	52	39	13	281
United Kingdom	550	438	216	746	615	751	843	436	4.594
United States	358	397	394	607	1.411	1.759	1.796	3.425	10.147
Total	1.083	1.222	1.033	1.615	2.741	3.352	2.986	4.111	18.143

Source: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

CONCLUSION

The post-Cold War developments have led to deepening of crises and conflicts in the Middle East. The conflict that started with the Gulf Crisis continued with the US invading Afghanistan and then invading Iraq. With the Arab Spring, it is seen that the conflicts and civil wars deepened in the Middle East. In this period, the threats perceived by Iran for Saudi Arabia, the turmoil in Yemen, the problems in the Iraqi border have been developments that increased security concerns. Saudi Arabia and the United States are at the center of relations with the Saudi oil resources. Since 1933, the US has been active in Saudi Arabia's oil industry. Another issue that keeps the relations of the two countries dynamic is the security concerns. Saudi Arabia has tried to strengthen its military relations with the United States in order to eliminate security concerns. The United States needs Saudi Arabia's presence in order to gain the upper hand in the balance of regional power. In the historical process, the increasing influence of Iran in the regional equation led to the rapprochement of US-Saudi Arabia relations. The disagreements between Washington and Riyadh related to regional crises in the period did not affect the arms trade between the two countries very much. In fact, developments in recent years confirm this. Between two countries; The \$ 60 billion arms deal in the Obama period and the \$ 110 billion arms deal in the Trump era reveal a strategic ally relationship. Although the governments change, the security-based relationship between Washington and Riyadh remains unshaken.

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