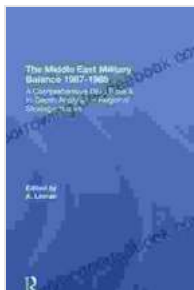


The Middle East Military Balance 1987-1988: Assessing the Shift in Regional Dynamics

The Middle East, a region characterized by complex geopolitical dynamics, has witnessed significant shifts in its military balance over the decades. This article focuses on the period between 1987 and 1988, a pivotal era that marked a significant recalibration of regional power dynamics. By examining the factors influencing this shift and its implications for strategic stability, we aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the evolving security landscape in the Middle East.



The Middle East Military Balance 1987-1988 by Aharon Levran

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Factors Shaping the Military Balance

Several key factors influenced the Middle East military balance during this period:

- **The Iran-Iraq War:** The ongoing war between Iran and Iraq had entered its eighth year, consuming vast resources and manpower on both sides. The conflict played a pivotal role in shaping regional alliances and military capabilities.

- **The Arms Buildup:** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, led by Saudi Arabia, embarked on a significant arms buildup in response to the perceived threat from Iran. This influx of advanced weaponry altered the balance of power in the region.
- **The Emergence of Egypt as a Regional Power:** Egypt's return to the Arab fold after the Camp David Accords signaled its renewed regional influence. Its military capabilities and diplomatic initiatives played a significant role in shaping the Middle East's security landscape.
- **The US Role:** The United States continued to play a significant role in the region, supporting Gulf states and providing military assistance. Its presence acted as a stabilizing force, shaping regional dynamics.

Shifting Power Dynamics

The convergence of these factors led to significant shifts in the military balance of the Middle East:

- **GCC States Ascendant:** The GCC states, backed by their newfound military capabilities and support from the US, emerged as the dominant force in the region. Their collective defense capabilities posed a significant challenge to Iran.
- **Iraq's Weakening Position:** The prolonged war with Iran had weakened Iraq's military capabilities and economic resources. Its regional influence diminished, and it faced pressure from both Iran and the GCC states.
- **Syria's Strategic Importance:** Syria maintained its military strength and strategic importance, playing a balancing role in the region. Its

alliance with Iran and support for Palestinian groups provided a counterweight to the GCC states' influence.

- **Iran's Resilience:** Despite the ongoing war, Iran demonstrated its resilience. Its military capabilities and ideological appeal remained significant, posing a continued challenge to regional stability.

Implications for Strategic Stability

The shift in the Middle East military balance had profound implications for strategic stability:

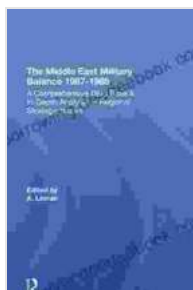
- **Reduced Risk of Regional Conflict:** The strengthening of the GCC states and the weakening of Iraq reduced the likelihood of a wider regional conflict. The GCC states' military capabilities acted as a deterrent to Iranian aggression, while Iraq's diminished power made it less assertive.
- **Increased Arms Control Initiatives:** The evolving balance of power prompted efforts towards arms control. Egypt and several GCC states signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, recognizing the dangers of weapons of mass destruction.
- **Continuing Tensions:** Despite the improved stability, tensions persisted. The Iran-Iraq War continued to cast a shadow over the region, and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained a source of regional instability.
- **Regional Instability and US Role:** The shift in the military balance did not wholly address the underlying causes of instability in the region. The US presence remained essential in maintaining stability, but its long-term role and objectives were subject to scrutiny.

The Middle East military balance from 1987 to 1988 underwent a significant transformation. The Iran-Iraq War, arms buildup, and the emergence of Egypt as a regional power were key factors shaping the shift in dynamics. The GCC states' ascendance, Iraq's weakened position, Syria's strategic importance, and Iran's resilience marked a recalibration of regional power relations. While the improved military balance reduced the risk of a wider conflict, tensions persisted, highlighting the need for continued diplomatic efforts and a comprehensive approach to regional stability. Understanding the Middle East military balance and its implications is crucial for assessing the region's current and future security challenges and for developing effective policies to promote peace and stability.

Image Alt Attributes:

- **Iran-Iraq War Map:** The Iran-Iraq War, a protracted conflict, had a significant impact on the regional military balance.
- **GCC States Military Expenditure Chart:** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states embarked on a significant arms buildup, altering the region's military dynamics.
- **Egypt's Strategic Influence:** Egypt's return to the Arab fold and its enhanced military capabilities strengthened its strategic influence in the Middle East.
- **US Aircraft Carrier Presence:** The presence of US aircraft carriers in the region demonstrated the United States' commitment to regional stability.
- **Middle East Arms Control Initiatives:** Efforts towards arms control, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, emerged in response to

the evolving military balance.



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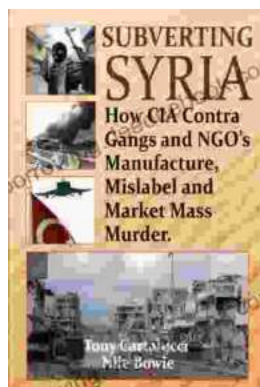
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