

THE MIDDLE EAST MILITARY BALANCE



1994-1995

Ephraim Kam - Zeev Eytan

Edited by Ephraim Kam

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Preface

The Middle East Military Balance 1994-1995 covers the period from the middle of 1994 through the end of 1995.

We at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies mourn the untimely death of our colleague, Colonel (Res.) Dr. Zeev Eytan. Ever since the first edition of *The Middle East Military Balance*, Dr. Eytan has been a major contributor to it. It was he who would prepare the detailed update of information covering the defense forces and infrastructure of states in the region. He was also involved in many other activities at the JCSS. Zeev's passing, in December 1995, was, perhaps symbolically, only two days after he submitted his sections of this year's *Balance*. We all miss his experience, knowledge and friendship.

As with the previous edition of *Balance*, we open this edition as well with a review of the Arab-Israeli peace process. It is only natural to do so. Since 1993, the peace process has probably been the most important development in the region, with major implications for the parties directly involved in it, and to a lesser extent on the other Arab states. Accordingly, the opening chapter of *Balance* this year begins with a review by Mark Heller of progress made within the framework of the interim Israeli-Palestinian agreement, the implications of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, and developments in the Israeli-Syrian talks. Tragically, this chapter ends with the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Ephraim Kam then analyzes the main strategic ramifications of recent developments in the Arab arena.

The other chapters in Part I deal with more basic issues. Zeev Maoz examines the evolution of the military balance in the Middle East between 1980 and 1994, and Shmuel Gordon goes on to analyze the current balance of air power in the region. Amos Gilboa surveys the trends in the main armies of the region over recent years. Finally, Yiftah Shapir reviews the introduction of ballistic missiles into the Middle East.

In parts II and III, Zeev Eytan presents a detailed information update of the defense forces and infrastructure of states in the Middle East, and of the Palestinian organizations.

The authors are indebted to all members of the senior research staff of the JCSS for their critical review of the drafts of the various chapters. We at JCSS Publications also wish to express our gratitude to Martin Kett, Yossi Avner, Anat Henefeld and Alexandra Mattalon for their efforts in bringing this book to publication.

E. K.
May 1996

PART I

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. The Peace Process*

Mark A. Heller

The most noteworthy feature of the peace process during 1994-1995 was its sheer resilience. Despite missed target-dates, deep suspicion, disappointments, frustrations, and sharp fluctuations in domestic support on all sides, the process itself was not abandoned by any of the participants. Of course, the pace of development along the various tracks was highly uneven. The least problematic and least ambiguous progression took place on the Israeli-Jordanian track, where the 1993 Common Agenda was transformed within a year into a Treaty of Peace, itself a prelude to the ongoing negotiation and implementation of about twenty agreements to normalize relations between the two countries. By contrast, Syrian-Israeli negotiations were marked by some diplomatic motion but no discernible movement. Between these extremes of contractual peace and virtual stagnation lay all the other issues on the Arab-Israeli agenda, including the state of multilateral relations, Israel's emerging bilateral ties with other Arab countries and, most critically of all, the troubled but steady implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (DOP).

The Israeli-Jordanian Treaty of Peace

A convergence of basic interests has always underpinned relations between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Israel has traditionally viewed the survival of the Hashemite regime in an independent Jordan as an essential component of its strategic depth, while Jordan's location and vulnerabilities led the regime to see in well-managed ties with Israel an important component of its own national security. These factors prompted both sides to maintain a process of ongoing dialogue and consultation over the years.

* This survey covers the period between two major implementation agreements of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles: the Gaza - Jericho Agreement of May 1994 and the Interim Agreement of September 1995. Significant developments which took place after the signing of the latter agreement but, before the publication of this volume, including the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the elections for the Palestinian Council, will be analysed in the 1995/1996 edition of *The Middle East Military Balance*.

Furthermore, the political culture of Jordan ensured that this link was sustained by an atmosphere of civility generally absent from Israel's relations with other Arab parties; even in periods of tension and active conflict, Jordan was generally perceived in Israel as a reluctant adversary rather than a real enemy.

Nevertheless, Jordan and Israel were unable to convert this *modus vivendi* into a definitive peace until the constraints on Jordanian freedom of maneuver were minimized and the incentives to "go public" were raised. One of these conditions was partially fulfilled by the decline in Syrian influence over Jordanian policy. Although the Ba'ath regime in Damascus still ascribed to itself the leading role in Arab politics and discouraged independent initiatives by any other Arab actor, the fact that Syria had participated in the Madrid Conference and publicly committed itself to the objective of a peace agreement with Israel undermined whatever principled objections Syria might have to an accommodation between Jordan and Israel. More importantly, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of Syria's relative power in the regional subsystem limited the potency of a potential Syrian threat to Jordan. Hence, by the early 1990s, Syria was no longer a decisive factor in Jordanian calculations.

The Palestinian factor, however, continued to be critical, largely because of domestic political and demographic considerations, but dramatic changes on the Israeli-Palestinian track in 1994-95 eliminated this obstacle to a public rapprochement between Jordan and Israel.

The extent to which Jordan's policy *vis-à-vis* Israel was hostage to the Palestinian issue was symbolized by the Israeli-Jordanian Common Agenda, which was formulated in most essentials by November 1992, but could not be officially approved until September 14, 1993, one day after the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles was signed in Washington. But even after that hurdle of publicity had been crossed, Jordan's ability to put meat on the bones of these agreements, i.e., to negotiate and agree on the content of a comprehensive Treaty of Peace, was still linked to further developments on the Palestinian track, which were slow in coming. Furthermore, Jordan had expected that peace with Israel would resolve some of its problems with the United States, which had been caused by its support for Iraq during the Second Gulf War, and this outcome had not yet been assured.

As a result, negotiations continued, but there was no immediate breakthrough. Despite high-level meetings, including a

secret summit between King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin, and a meeting in early November 1993 between Hussein and Foreign Minister Peres, at which virtually all the major issues on the bilateral agenda were settled in principle, Jordan held off consummating the process because Israeli-PLO negotiations were stalled; the killing of Muslim worshippers in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron in February 1994 froze those talks completely. Moreover, the United States was still inspecting maritime traffic to Aqaba as part of the economic embargo on Iraq. In early February 1994, King Hussein told his Parliament that signing a peace treaty at that point would be tantamount to surrender, and in late March he made Jordan's agreement to resume negotiations conditional on the easing of American inspection procedures.

The context for Jordanian-Israeli peace again became supportive only at the end of the month, when the PLO put the Cave of the Patriarchs killings behind it and resumed negotiations with Israel about implementation of the first stage – Gaza-Jericho – of the DOP. That decision provided both the pretext and the inducement for Jordan to move quickly, lest the momentum of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations eliminate the possibility of protecting some of Jordan's remaining interests in the West Bank, and perhaps even lead to an Israeli-Palestinian partnership from which Jordan would be excluded. The United States partly resolved Hussein's other problem by agreeing at the end of April to enforce the embargo on Iraq through land searches rather than through on-board inspections of Aqaba-bound shipping.

From then on, events moved at a rapid, even dizzying, pace. The day after Israel completed its redeployment from Gaza in May 1994, Hussein and Rabin met secretly in London, and negotiators made further progress in early June on major outstanding bilateral issues – border demarcation, water allocation, economic relations, and the preservation of some role for Jordan with respect to the financial affairs of the West Bank and the Muslim shrines in Jerusalem. By July, developments had progressed sufficiently for public negotiations to take place, for the first time, in the region itself. There, and in intensive discussions in Washington, the major issues were ironed out in time for a Hussein-Rabin summit at the end of the month. Although American intermediaries were not involved in this process, the interests of both parties required American support, financial and otherwise. Consequently, the signing ceremony for the "Washington Declaration," which ended the state of belligerency between Israel and

Jordan, was hosted by President Clinton, and after Hussein and Rabin appeared before a joint session of the Congress, the United States formally agreed to cancel a portion of Jordan's \$1 billion debt. Assumptions in Israel about continuing Jordanian sensitivity to Syrian objections proved unfounded, and the momentum generated by these events continued through the summer, as Jordanian and Israeli negotiators worked out the details of the remaining outstanding issues. These efforts culminated in a full-fledged treaty, signed in a festive ceremony in the Arava Valley at the end of October.

The peace treaty with Jordan did not substantially alter Israel's strategic position. Despite the formal state of war that had existed between the two countries, Jordan had long since ceased to pose a conventional military threat, either alone or as part of a credible Arab coalition. While the treaty formally obligated Jordan not to join a military alliance hostile to Israel, or to permit the forces of hostile third parties to enter, encamp or pass through its territory, this commitment basically reaffirmed Jordan's practice since 1971, based on its understanding of what Israel deemed a *casus belli*. Nor had Jordan provided any kind of asylum or area of active operations for terrorist organizations.

By the same token, the broader political benefits of the peace agreement were also limited. Peace with Jordan was undoubtedly a diplomatic milestone, but it did not resurrect the old "Jordanian option," in the sense of providing a valid alternative to the PLO with whom Israel could settle the future of the West Bank. Nor was it enough to legitimate, for other Arab states, formal ties of their own with Israel. The most important consequence was a sense of psychological gratification for Israelis: in the Hashemite Kingdom, Israel seemed, at last, to have found an Arab partner interested, not only in a contractual settlement, but also in a warm peace.

The treaty signing was followed by the active negotiation and completion of a variety of agreements on economic ties and other forms of cooperation, including even limited military relations. Enthusiasm in Jordan for normalization was not universal, especially among Palestinians, who were prominent in the Islamist movements and professional associations. The former consistently opposed normalization and most of the latter maintained the longstanding boycott of Israel, going so far as to expel members who violated the ban on contacts. Criticism was frequently expressed in the press and occasionally in public demonstrations. At times, the Jordanian establishment itself voiced some reservations, although these had more