

Jordan's Wartime Balancing Act

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Apr 15, 2026

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Brief Analysis

The economic, political, and diplomatic fallout of the Iran crisis is bending the kingdom in multiple directions, but Washington can do much to ease the domestic stress, avoid bilateral friction, and address Amman's growing rift with Israel.

Jordan has proven to be an invaluable U.S. strategic partner during the war, opening itself up to extensive Iranian attacks in the process. Even more challenging for the kingdom, however, has been the political and economic fallout of the conflagration. While Amman has taken some steps to mitigate this spillover, the crisis is accelerating the deterioration of its ties with Israel. Once the war is over, ongoing and intensive U.S. diplomacy will be required to shore up ties between these two key peace partners and insulate Jordan from residual Iranian threats.

Support for the United States in Wartime

During the reign of King Abdullah II, Jordan has dramatically enhanced its strategic relationship with Washington. At critical moments, he has taken a different path from his father, always choosing to prioritize ties with the United States. In 1991, for example, King Hussein opposed Operation Desert Storm and refused to join Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and other members of the large multinational coalition in the campaign to liberate Kuwait. In contrast, King Abdullah provided basing for U.S. aircraft involved in a much more controversial military effort, the 2003 invasion of Iraq. More recently, the kingdom played a pivotal role in intercepting Iranian projectiles overflying its airspace en route to Israel during major confrontations in 2024 and 2025.

Jordan has been even more helpful to Washington during the current war. Because U.S. bases in the Gulf states are closer to Iran and more vulnerable to missile and drone attacks, the kingdom has emerged as a critical node in the “Western Basing Strategy,” enabling the safer positioning of American assets. A [2021 defense cooperation agreement \(https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/21-317-Jordan-Defense-DCA-01.31.2021-with-Exchange-of-Notes.pdf\)](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/21-317-Jordan-Defense-DCA-01.31.2021-with-Exchange-of-Notes.pdf) provided U.S. forces with access to twelve facilities in Jordan, including five air bases. In the lead-up to the Iran crisis, Muwaffaq Salti Air Base served as a key logistical hub for U.S. C-17 airlifts, and some sixty U.S. combat aircraft were stationed there as of February. The United States has also placed a broad array of anti-missile interceptors in the kingdom, including Patriot missiles and Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems that help protect both Jordan and Israel from projectiles fired by Iran and its Iraqi proxies.

To be sure, Tehran was overtly hostile to Amman long before the war. In addition to receiving explicit military threats over the years, Jordan foiled multiple domestic terrorist plots linked to Iran, while Tehran’s proxy militias in Syria repeatedly attempted to smuggle weapons and drugs into and through the kingdom. During the current war, more than 200 drones and missiles have been launched at U.S. and local targets inside Jordan; authorities also interdicted an Iranian cyberattack against the state’s strategic wheat reserves in early March.

Like previous American leaders, President Trump recognizes Jordan’s strategic importance. Amman is one of the few governments to be spared from his administration’s draconian cuts to foreign assistance. This year, Jordan will receive \$425 million in Foreign Military Financing, \$845 million in direct budgetary support, and close to \$200 million in additional aid. This is equivalent to nearly 8 percent of the state’s total annual budget of \$18.4 billion—more than three times the proportion of Israel’s total budget supplied by U.S. military assistance.

Economic Impact

In both relative and actual terms, Jordan’s perennially anemic economy was performing reasonably well before the war. A [December 2025 IMF report \(https://www.imf.org/en/publications/cr/issues/2025/12/17/jordan-fourth-review-under-the-extended-arrangement-under-the-extended-fund-facility-572624\)](https://www.imf.org/en/publications/cr/issues/2025/12/17/jordan-fourth-review-under-the-extended-arrangement-under-the-extended-fund-facility-572624) praised the kingdom’s “sound economic policies and reforms,” which contributed to recovering growth, low inflation, and solid reserves. In the fourth quarter of 2025, Jordan charted an impressive 5.1 percent growth rate, the highest in memory, while inflation dropped to its lowest level in a year.

Yet the war has reversed this trajectory. Tourism, which accounts for nearly 15 percent of GDP, bottomed out, with 100 percent of bookings cancelled in March. Although official inflation statistics are not yet available for this period, local reports indicate prices have risen substantially on food staples. To soften the blow on consumers, the government continues to subsidize bread, but fuel costs have increased as well, prompting authorities to hike the price of gas by 11 percent this month. The biggest spike appears to be on liquefied natural gas. Prior to the war, Jordan imported 85 percent of its natural gas from Israel—a resource that accounts for almost 70 percent of electricity generation in the kingdom. Yet this supply was interrupted by the conflict, forcing Amman to compensate by importing LNG through its Aqaba regasification terminal at an extra cost of \$120 million per month.

In addition, Prime Minister Jafar Hasan announced an austerity plan on April 6 that limited the use of government vehicles, canceled most official travel abroad, and prohibited the use of air conditioners and heating units in government facilities. Amman also issued a \$1 billion stimulus package to support the tourism sector and increase bank liquidity, along with a tax break allowing individuals and businesses to defer payments during the crisis.

Political Balancing Act

On the eve of the war, Jordan was dealing with two significant political dynamics at home. First, after banning the Muslim Brotherhood in April 2025, authorities began a series of steps to weaken the Islamic Action Front, the

Brotherhood's legally registered party. A few days before the war, the government initiated measures to bring the IAF into strict compliance with the political parties law, in the process reshaping and weakening it.

Second, parliament was deliberating significant amendments to the social security law as part of an ongoing economic modernization process. Although these changes are sorely needed for the kingdom's overall fiscal health, they are unpopular due to the additional burdens they will impose on an already struggling public.

The war is affecting both dynamics. Feeling emboldened by the regional crisis, the IAF has been highlighting unpopular government policies such as hosting U.S. troops, intercepting Iranian missile and drone fire targeting Israel, and **generally maintaining the peace treaty (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-middle-east-societies-grapple-war>)** with Israel. In a show of force reminiscent of the early days of the Gaza war, opposition parties organized a large demonstration in downtown Amman on April 10. Consequently, Jordanian officials have found themselves on the defensive, partially due to the fact that many of them use similarly confrontational rhetoric toward Israel.

The IAF also spearheaded opposition to the social security law, which Amman recently withdrew amid parliamentary blowback and new economic uncertainties created by the war. This was not only a setback for reform, but also a stinging political defeat for the government.

Mixed Effect on Foreign Relations

Early in the war, Amman strongly condemned Iranian aggression against the Gulf Cooperation Council states, while King Abdullah paid visits to various GCC capitals. Gulf publics and officials are highly sensitive to the wartime positions adopted by other Arab states and have taken notice of Jordan's reaction. Unlike in 1991, when the kingdom emerged politically and financially isolated after the liberation of Kuwait, Amman is well-positioned this time to deepen its relations with GCC states.

Conversely, the war is exacerbating Jordan's political strains with Israel, despite serving as a reminder to both sides of the relationship's security value. The fact that their intense military cooperation has failed to ameliorate political tensions speaks to the depth of the bilateral impasse, which has **steadily worsened (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-pushing-arab-peace-partners-their-limits>)** due to a combination of Israeli policies in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, along with Jordanian rhetoric and diplomatic initiatives against Israel. Remarkably, for neighbors who have such closely intertwined security interests, there is virtually zero political engagement.

The war might also amplify some recent signs of political stress in Amman's deep relations with the United States. The kingdom's traditional supporters in Washington have been concerned by Jordanian moves such as leaning into harsh anti-Israel rhetoric during the Gaza war and hosting controversial figures Tucker Carlson and Francesca Albanese, who have been roundly criticized for their antisemitic tirades. At the same time, Amman is increasingly anxious about the Trump administration's policies on key Palestinian issues, particularly its willingness to tolerate Israeli settler violence in the West Bank and provocative moves by some Israeli political figures on the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif—a holy site where Jordan's special oversight role was enshrined in the 1994 peace treaty. Hence, while the U.S.-Jordan relationship remains strong, failure to address these issues could lead to future bilateral tensions and impede Washington's longer-term Arab-Israeli peace goals.

Policy Recommendations

To help one of its most reliable regional allies weather the current crisis, Washington should take steps that mitigate the wartime damage suffered by Jordan while also planning for the economic, security, and diplomatic challenges that will come to the fore after the crisis:

- Economically, the United States already provides generous bilateral support to Amman. Yet the kingdom would benefit from inclusion in postwar regional economic arrangements, including potential plans to diversify transportation routes (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-force-multiplier-tracking-wars-maritime-and-energy-effects>).
- In addition to enhancing bilateral military cooperation against ongoing Iranian threats, the United States should ensure that counterterrorism authorities in both countries are on alert and sharing intelligence about any moves that Tehran or its proxies might make to support subversion or violence against the kingdom. As part of this effort, any U.S. moves regarding Iraqi militias (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraq-another-crossroads-iran-backed-militias-and-washington>) should take Jordan's security into account.
- Amman's worsening relations with Israel are the most alarming challenge. Although the two governments have found a way to ensure quiet at sensitive Jerusalem sites during every Ramadan since the October 7 attacks—no small achievement—ties have deteriorated to the point that an unexpected incident could endanger the peace treaty. Washington should help de-escalate this tension. Beyond evergreen efforts to steer both sides away from provocative actions and statements, U.S. intervention would be especially helpful in avoiding brinkmanship over the renewal of their bilateral water agreement. Resolving this long-delayed issue soon is critical to keeping taps running in the kingdom throughout the summer—a high priority for Amman.

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