



Institutionalizing Humanitarian Diplomacy as Statecraft: The Jordanian Model of Small-State Foreign Policy during the Gaza Humanitarian Crisis

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Abstract

Humanitarian diplomacy has emerged as an increasingly important instrument of foreign policy for small states seeking to enhance diplomatic influence while maintaining domestic and regional stability. This study examines Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis from October 2023 to June 2026, focusing on how humanitarian action was institutionalized as a component of foreign policy and statecraft. Employing an empirical qualitative single-case study and qualitative content analysis, the research examines official documents from Jordanian governmental institutions, humanitarian organizations, international institutions, and relevant international legal instruments, supported by academic literature on small-state diplomacy and humanitarian diplomacy. The findings demonstrate that field hospitals, humanitarian airdrops, medical evacuations, aid convoys, and diplomatic advocacy operated as interconnected instruments that combined civilian protection with diplomatic engagement and strategic balancing. Humanitarian diplomacy enabled Jordan to strengthen regional cooperation, maintain diplomatic flexibility among competing actors, respond to domestic political expectations, and enhance international legitimacy despite economic and geopolitical constraints. The study proposes a Jordanian Model of Humanitarian Diplomacy characterized by institutional integration, operational humanitarian engagement, multilateral coordination, and strategic balancing. The research contributes to Law and Political Authority scholarship by demonstrating how humanitarian action can operate as a legally grounded form of statecraft through which a resource-constrained small state generates diplomatic agency and political legitimacy.

Keywords: *Gaza, Humanitarian Diplomacy, Jordan, Small-State Diplomacy, Statecraft.*



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INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian crisis triggered by the Gaza war following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 has generated one of the gravest humanitarian emergencies of the twenty-first century, while simultaneously exposing the growing interdependence between humanitarian protection, international diplomacy, and the exercise of state authority in armed conflict. Successive humanitarian assessments have documented severe shortages of food, clean water, medical supplies, electricity, shelter, and essential public services, alongside extensive civilian displacement and the progressive deterioration of Gaza's health system (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023–2026). The international response has increasingly framed humanitarian access and civilian protection as matters requiring sustained political negotiation rather than solely operational relief, as reflected in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2712 and 2720 (United Nations Security Council, 2023). The persistence of these conditions has blurred conventional distinctions between humanitarian action and foreign policy because access to affected populations increasingly depends upon negotiations involving states, international organizations, humanitarian agencies, and other political actors. Contemporary scholarship consequently conceptualizes humanitarian diplomacy as a field in which humanitarian objectives intersect with diplomatic practices, political authority, and contested international environments (Bogatyreva, 2023). The Gaza crisis therefore provides a critical setting for examining how states can transform humanitarian engagement from an emergency response into an instrument through which political influence, legitimacy, and strategic interests are pursued. This development is particularly significant for small states whose limited coercive and material

capabilities encourage them to seek alternative mechanisms for maintaining agency within asymmetric regional and international structures.

Among neighboring states, Jordan has assumed a particularly distinctive role in responding to the humanitarian emergency, combining operational assistance with sustained diplomatic advocacy for Palestinian civilian protection and humanitarian access. Jordan has supported field hospitals, humanitarian aid deliveries, medical assistance, and other relief operations while simultaneously using bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels to press for humanitarian access and a political resolution to the conflict (Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, 2023–2026). Its response is inseparable from a geopolitical position in which developments in Palestine intersect directly with national security, domestic political stability, regional relations, and Jordan's historical responsibilities toward Palestinian refugees (Amalia et al., 2026). Jordan must preserve strategic relations with Western partners and its peace treaty with Israel while maintaining political legitimacy within Arab and Islamic regional environments strongly affected by the Gaza war. Recent scholarship suggests that Jordan's diplomatic agency cannot be adequately captured through conventional measures of material power because its influence also derives from mediation, political positioning, coalition-building, and niche forms of diplomatic engagement (Chaziza & Lutmar, 2026). The country's humanitarian engagement has acquired strategic significance precisely because it allows Jordan to respond to domestic and regional expectations without abandoning the diplomatic relationships upon which its economic and security resilience depends. This balancing process illustrates the central dilemma of contemporary small-state statecraft: influence must be constructed through instruments that compensate for structural limitations while minimizing the risks associated with dependence on more powerful actors. The Gaza humanitarian crisis thus provides an opportunity to investigate whether humanitarian action can operate as a systematic mechanism through which Jordan converts normative credibility and operational capacity into diplomatic agency.

Jordan's humanitarian engagement cannot be understood solely as an act of humanitarian solidarity because the country's assistance has become intertwined with broader practices of diplomatic positioning, regional mediation, and the management of political legitimacy. Scholarship on humanitarian diplomacy has historically emphasized the efforts of humanitarian organizations to negotiate access, protection, and assistance while maintaining principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence (Fiott, 2018). More recent research demonstrates that states increasingly participate in humanitarian diplomacy as strategic actors, particularly where humanitarian assistance becomes connected to international reputation, diplomatic influence, and regional positioning (Barakat, 2024). This expansion does not necessarily eliminate the distinction between humanitarian and political objectives, but instead creates a contested institutional space in which humanitarian imperatives and foreign policy calculations are continuously negotiated. Humanitarianism may also become incorporated into statecraft in ways that reshape the relationship between sovereign authority, political interests, and claims of humanity (Seven, 2025). Jordan's activities in Gaza reflect this broader transformation because humanitarian operations require coordination among governmental institutions, armed forces, charitable organizations, international agencies, and diplomatic actors. The operational dimension of Jordanian humanitarianism is therefore connected to a wider diplomatic architecture in which assistance, advocacy, medical evacuation, and international communication can reinforce one another as components of statecraft. Such a configuration raises a theoretically important question concerning when humanitarian diplomacy ceases to function merely as crisis management and becomes institutionalized as a durable foreign policy instrument.

The foreign policy dilemma confronting Jordan becomes particularly pronounced because domestic political expectations surrounding Palestine coexist with the state's need to preserve strategic partnerships, economic resilience, and regional security. Public and political pressures generated by the Gaza war have intensified the importance of Palestine within Jordanian political discourse, including through mobilization among Islamist and other domestic political constituencies (Ryan, 2025). Jordan's position illustrates the relational nature of smallness because its limited resources do not eliminate foreign policy agency but instead shape the repertoire of instruments through which that agency can be exercised. Contemporary small-state scholarship identifies niche diplomacy, multilateral engagement, strategic partnerships, and normative positioning as mechanisms through which structurally constrained states can generate influence without possessing the capabilities of great powers (Wivel, 2023). Jordan's humanitarian engagement can be situated within this broader logic because humanitarian action

provides a relatively low-coercion instrument for maintaining diplomatic visibility while responding to regional instability and domestic political demands. The country's constitutional and institutional framework also places foreign policy within a broader conception of state authority and national responsibility, creating an important domestic foundation for understanding how humanitarian initiatives may become connected to statecraft (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). The Jordanian case therefore complicates approaches that conceptualize small-state influence primarily through alliance dependence or traditional diplomatic mediation, since humanitarian operations may constitute an additional source of strategic agency. The central analytical problem is not simply whether Jordan provides humanitarian assistance, but how such assistance is coordinated, legitimized, and strategically connected to the state's broader foreign policy objectives.

Existing scholarship has extensively examined humanitarian diplomacy within international organizations, humanitarian agencies, and major donor states, while research on Jordan has more frequently concentrated on refugee governance, vulnerability, border security, regime stability, and regional security dynamics. Studies of humanitarian diplomatic practice demonstrate that negotiation and advocacy are fundamental to securing humanitarian access, whereas research on small states emphasizes adaptive diplomacy and institutional engagement as mechanisms for overcoming structural constraints (Turunen, 2020). Research on Jordan also shows that vulnerability and humanitarian governance are embedded within broader political and social structures, suggesting that humanitarian action cannot be separated from questions of authority, legitimacy, and state capacity (Turner, 2024). Yet these bodies of scholarship remain insufficiently integrated because humanitarian diplomacy is often analyzed as a practice of humanitarian actors, while small-state foreign policy is more commonly examined through alliances, mediation, multilateralism, or niche diplomacy. Recent research on humanitarian diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific similarly demonstrates that humanitarian negotiations operate across complex institutional and political environments, but it does not fully explain how a small state can institutionalize humanitarian action as an enduring component of foreign policy (Cook & Gong, 2021). Comparative studies of humanitarian and mediation strategies in other small and middle states indicate that humanitarian engagement can cultivate diplomatic niches, although these cases do not fully explain the particular mechanisms through which Jordan integrates humanitarian operations with its foreign policy architecture (Chaziza & Lutmar, 2025). This conceptual and empirical fragmentation leaves unresolved the mechanisms through which humanitarian operations, diplomatic advocacy, institutional coordination, and strategic foreign policy outcomes become mutually reinforcing. The gap is especially consequential in the Gaza context because Jordan's response represents a sustained and multidimensional state-led humanitarian engagement whose significance extends beyond the immediate provision of relief.

This study addresses that gap by examining Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis through an integrated framework combining Small State Theory and Humanitarian Diplomacy, with particular attention to the institutional processes through which humanitarian action becomes embedded within statecraft. The research positions Jordan not merely as a recipient or facilitator of international humanitarian norms but as an active small-state diplomatic actor that strategically mobilizes humanitarian capacity to navigate structural constraints, competing external relationships, and domestic political expectations. It develops the concept of the Jordanian Model of Humanitarian Diplomacy to explain how institutional integration, humanitarian operations, diplomatic engagement, and strategic foreign policy outcomes can operate as interconnected dimensions of a single statecraft process. The model is designed to clarify how humanitarian action may generate international legitimacy, reinforce domestic political legitimacy, preserve regional stability, and expand diplomatic agency without requiring the coercive capabilities normally associated with conventional power politics. Empirically, the study examines how governmental institutions, military actors, humanitarian organizations, and diplomatic channels interact in the Jordanian response to Gaza, thereby connecting operational humanitarian practices with the broader architecture of foreign policy. Methodologically, the research contributes by treating humanitarian diplomacy not simply as an observable set of relief activities but as a process that can be traced across institutions, diplomatic practices, and strategic outcomes. The study ultimately argues that Jordan's experience demonstrates how a structurally constrained state can institutionalize humanitarian diplomacy as a form of statecraft that converts humanitarian engagement into a source of diplomatic influence and strategic resilience. In theoretical terms, the research extends Small State Theory by incorporating humanitarian capacity and normative

legitimacy into the analysis of small-state agency, while simultaneously extending Humanitarian Diplomacy scholarship by demonstrating how humanitarian practice can become embedded within the institutional logic of state foreign policy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts an empirical qualitative research design, using a single-case study and qualitative content analysis to examine Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis from October 2023 to June 2026. The empirical data consist of official documents from the Royal Hashemite Court, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army, OCHA, UNRWA, WHO, WFP, and IFRC. Relevant international legal instruments are also examined to establish the normative framework concerning civilian protection, humanitarian assistance, and the conduct of parties during armed conflict (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949). Academic literature on small-state diplomacy, humanitarian diplomacy, and Middle Eastern foreign policy is used to contextualize the empirical evidence and establish the study's theoretical foundation (Wivel, 2023). Data are collected through purposive documentary sampling, selecting materials that directly address Jordan's humanitarian operations, diplomatic initiatives, institutional coordination, legal positions, and foreign policy objectives. Media reports are used only for chronological verification and are cross-checked against official and institutional sources to strengthen source reliability.

The collected materials are analyzed through qualitative thematic content analysis, supported by Small State Theory and Humanitarian Diplomacy as the principal interpretive frameworks. The analysis proceeds by systematically organizing the documents and coding evidence into seven themes: humanitarian assistance, diplomatic engagement, regional cooperation, international legitimacy, domestic political legitimacy, strategic balancing, and national security. A complementary doctrinal analysis examines relevant international legal provisions concerning civilian protection, humanitarian access, and obligations toward protected persons under international humanitarian law (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1977). The coded evidence is then interpreted to identify how humanitarian operations generate diplomatic agency and become connected to Jordan's broader foreign policy objectives (Turunen, 2020). Research validity is strengthened through source triangulation by comparing governmental documents, international humanitarian reports, academic literature, and independent policy assessments. This analytical procedure enables the study to move beyond descriptive accounts of humanitarian assistance by identifying the institutional, legal, and diplomatic mechanisms through which humanitarian action becomes an instrument of statecraft and provides the foundation for the proposed Jordanian Model of Humanitarian Diplomacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal and Institutional Foundations of Jordan's Humanitarian Diplomacy

Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis rests upon a constitutional allocation of executive authority that enables foreign relations, national security, and international commitments to be coordinated through state institutions rather than treated as isolated humanitarian functions. Article 24(1) of the Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan establishes the nation as the source of powers, while Article 26 vests executive power in the King to be exercised through Ministers in accordance with the Constitution, establishing the constitutional basis for governmental action in external affairs (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). Article 45(1) further assigns the Council of Ministers responsibility for administering the internal and external affairs of the state, creating an institutional connection between constitutional executive authority and the implementation of foreign-policy measures involving humanitarian assistance. Read systematically, these provisions establish that humanitarian diplomacy may constitute a legitimate exercise of public authority when humanitarian operations are connected to the Kingdom's external relations, national interests, and international commitments. This constitutional configuration is particularly relevant because Jordan's humanitarian response to Gaza involves diplomatic institutions, military authorities, humanitarian organizations, and executive decision-making operating within an integrated policy environment. Humanitarian diplomacy can therefore be interpreted as an exercise of statecraft grounded in constitutional authority rather than merely as an auxiliary activity undertaken by charitable or humanitarian organizations.

The constitutional allocation of authority becomes more specific when Jordan's treaty-making and military powers are considered alongside its international humanitarian commitments. Article 32 designates the King as Supreme Commander of the Land, Naval, and Air Forces, while Article 33(1) grants authority to declare war, conclude peace, and ratify treaties and agreements, establishing a constitutional connection between executive authority, military institutions, and international legal commitments (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). Article 33(2), however, requires National Assembly approval for treaties and agreements involving financial commitments to the Treasury or affecting the public or private rights of Jordanians, indicating that external action remains subject to constitutional differentiation according to its legal consequences. A grammatical and systematic interpretation of Articles 26, 32, 33, and 45 distinguishes ordinary executive foreign-policy operations from international agreements possessing specific constitutional consequences. This distinction is important because humanitarian operations may employ military assets, public resources, and international cooperation without necessarily constituting treaties subject to the procedure under Article 33(2). The framework consequently permits coordinated humanitarian diplomacy while maintaining constitutional limits and institutional accountability, consistent with the capacity of small states to transform institutional and diplomatic resources into practical international agency (Wivel, 2023).

The external legal dimension of Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy is principally defined by international humanitarian law governing civilian protection and humanitarian conduct during armed conflict. The Fourth Geneva Convention establishes a comprehensive framework for protecting civilians in wartime and requires humane treatment of persons who are not taking part in hostilities (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949). Additional Protocol I reinforces this protective framework through provisions concerning civilian populations and victims of international armed conflicts, providing an important normative reference for assessing medical assistance and humanitarian relief (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1977). The principal relationship between these international norms and Jordanian state practice can be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Legal and Institutional Framework of Jordan's Humanitarian Diplomacy during the Gaza Crisis

Legal Instrument	Normative Dimension	Jordanian Institutional Relevance	Gaza-Related Function
Constitution of Jordan, Art. 26	Executive authority	King and Ministers	Foreign-policy coordination
Constitution of Jordan, Art. 32	Supreme military command	Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army	Humanitarian military operations
Constitution of Jordan, Art. 33	Treaties and agreements	Executive and National Assembly	International commitments
Constitution of Jordan, Art. 45(1)	Administration of external affairs	Council of Ministers	Policy implementation
Fourth Geneva Convention 1949	Civilian protection	State and humanitarian institutions	Protection and relief
Additional Protocol I 1977	Protection in armed conflict	Military and humanitarian actors	Medical and humanitarian operations

As Table 1 demonstrates, Jordan's constitutional authority and international humanitarian obligations operate at distinct but interconnected normative levels, requiring humanitarian diplomacy to satisfy both institutional competence and protective legal principles. The legal framework therefore prevents humanitarian diplomacy from being reduced either to discretionary foreign aid or to an exclusively political strategy.

Jordan's institutional architecture further demonstrates that humanitarian diplomacy depends upon coordination among bodies exercising different forms of public authority. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates performs the diplomatic function, the Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army provides operational and logistical capabilities, and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization coordinates humanitarian assistance and external partnerships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

Expatriates of Jordan, 2023–2026). The JHCO is particularly significant because its humanitarian logistics connect governmental policy with international organizations, donors, and relief actors, thereby translating diplomatic commitments into operational programmes (Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, 2023–2026). The Armed Forces occupy a distinctive constitutional position under Article 32, yet their humanitarian operations demonstrate that military capabilities may support civilian protection without being confined to conventional coercive functions. This institutional differentiation reflects the contemporary understanding of humanitarian diplomacy as a practice requiring negotiation, coordination, and engagement among multiple actors rather than unilateral humanitarian action (Bogatyreva, 2023). The resulting configuration indicates that Jordanian humanitarian diplomacy possesses an institutional character in which constitutional authority, administrative capacity, military resources, and humanitarian expertise operate within a coordinated foreign-policy framework.

The legal significance of this institutional arrangement becomes clearer when humanitarian operations are examined through the protective purposes of international humanitarian law. Additional Protocol I provides a normative basis for understanding humanitarian operations through principles directed toward the protection of civilians and victims of armed conflict, while humanitarian diplomacy connects those principles with negotiation, access, and diplomatic engagement (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1977; Turunen, 2020). A teleological interpretation places emphasis on the protective purpose of humanitarian norms, requiring humanitarian activities to be assessed according to their contribution to preserving human life and civilian dignity rather than solely according to their political visibility. Jordan's medical assistance, relief operations, and diplomatic advocacy consequently acquire legal significance insofar as they operationalize protective principles while remaining within the competence of state institutions. The coexistence of humanitarian and foreign-policy objectives does not automatically constitute unlawful instrumentalization because humanitarian diplomacy operates precisely at the intersection of normative obligations and political realities. The decisive legal consideration is whether the exercise of state authority remains consistent with applicable humanitarian principles, constitutional competence, and the protective purpose of the relevant norms.

The overall structure demonstrates that Jordanian humanitarian diplomacy constitutes an exercise of public authority constrained and enabled by interconnected domestic and international legal frameworks. Constitutional provisions determine the distribution of executive, military, and treaty-related authority, while international humanitarian law establishes substantive standards governing civilian protection and humanitarian conduct. The empirical practice shows that these normative orders can operate simultaneously when humanitarian institutions, diplomatic authorities, and military bodies coordinate assistance within an established governmental framework. Humanitarian action may therefore serve the protective objectives of international humanitarian law while also supporting diplomatic engagement, regional credibility, and strategic autonomy. This dual functionality should not be understood as inherently contradictory because the legitimacy of humanitarian statecraft depends upon the compatibility between strategic objectives, institutional competence, and applicable legal obligations. The Jordanian framework consequently provides a legal-institutional basis for examining how humanitarian operations are transformed into diplomatic instruments through which a small state can exercise international agency despite material constraints.

Empirical Implementation of Humanitarian Diplomacy: From Relief Operations to Statecraft

Jordan's humanitarian response to the Gaza crisis demonstrates how legal authority and institutional capacity were translated into coordinated medical, logistical, and diplomatic practices. Official records document field hospitals, medical assistance and evacuations, aid deliveries, and humanitarian airdrops as major components of Jordan's response to civilian needs (Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army, 2023–2026). These operations possess legal significance because the protection of civilians, wounded persons, and medical personnel constitutes a central concern of international humanitarian law (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949). The empirical pattern indicates that Jordan's engagement extended beyond financial assistance into direct operational action conducted through state institutions. Field hospitals and medical missions converted political commitments into sustained humanitarian presence while providing practical support for Jordan's diplomatic advocacy concerning civilian protection and humanitarian access. Humanitarian action therefore operated simultaneously as a protective practice and as an instrument through which Jordan could reinforce its normative and diplomatic position.

Jordan's field hospitals represent a particularly significant form of humanitarian diplomacy because they combine medical expertise, military logistics, and governmental policy within an integrated operation. Official military records demonstrate the continuing involvement of the Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army in medical and humanitarian missions in Gaza (Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army, 2023–2026). The legal relevance of these activities derives from the protection afforded to medical personnel and medical functions under international humanitarian law (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1977). Humanitarian airdrops similarly transformed emergency relief into visible diplomatic engagement because their implementation required military capabilities, logistical planning, and coordination with external partners. Such cooperation enabled Jordan to work with states possessing substantially greater material capabilities while maintaining an identifiable humanitarian role, reflecting the use of cooperation and niche diplomacy by small states to overcome structural constraints (Pedi & Wivel, 2020). These operations consequently demonstrate that humanitarian diplomacy gains greater strategic significance when normative commitments are supported by institutional capabilities capable of producing observable humanitarian outcomes.

Land-based humanitarian assistance further reveals the institutional complexity of Jordanian humanitarian diplomacy because aid convoys require coordination among governmental authorities, humanitarian organizations, foreign partners, and actors controlling access to Gaza. The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization has served as a principal institutional mechanism for organizing humanitarian shipments, medical supplies, food assistance, and emergency relief while connecting governmental policy with external humanitarian cooperation (Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, 2023–2026). From a socio-legal perspective, this institutional function demonstrates that humanitarian norms require administrative mechanisms capable of translating legal and diplomatic commitments into operational practices. The coordination of humanitarian access also reflects humanitarian diplomacy as a process of negotiation and persuasion among actors whose cooperation is necessary to protect vulnerable populations (Turunen, 2020). The institutional pattern can be summarized as follows.

Table 2. Humanitarian Operations and Diplomatic Functions of Jordan during the Gaza Crisis

Humanitarian Operation	Principal Institution	Humanitarian Function	Diplomatic Function
Field hospitals	Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army	Medical and civilian protection	Demonstration of humanitarian commitment
Humanitarian airdrops	Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army	Emergency relief delivery	International operational coordination
Aid convoys	JHCO and government institutions	Humanitarian assistance and access	Coordination with external actors
Medical assistance and evacuation	Military and health institutions	Protection of wounded persons	Humanitarian advocacy
International coordination	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JHCO, and partners	Facilitation of humanitarian response	Multilateral cooperation

Table 2 demonstrates that Jordanian humanitarian operations perform differentiated humanitarian functions while collectively generating diplomatic value. The institutional differentiation confirms that humanitarian diplomacy emerges through coordination among public authorities rather than through a single administrative institution.

The diplomatic significance of these operations becomes clearer through Jordan's cooperation with international organizations and external governments on humanitarian access, civilian protection, and relief delivery. Official diplomatic communications demonstrate that humanitarian concerns were consistently incorporated into Jordan's external engagement during the Gaza crisis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, 2023–2026). Such cooperation provides a relatively functional arena for diplomatic interaction despite disagreements concerning the broader political conflict. Research on Qatar demonstrates how small states can use humanitarian engagement to establish diplomatic positionality within wider protection ecosystems (Barakat, 2024). Jordan's experience similarly indicates that humanitarian cooperation can generate diplomatic opportunities unavailable through

conventional political negotiation, particularly for states with limited coercive capabilities. The broader pattern is consistent with Jordan's contemporary niche-diplomacy strategy, in which humanitarian engagement supports relationships with Arab partners, Western states, and international organizations while expanding the Kingdom's regional agency (Chaziza & Lutmar, 2026). Humanitarian operations therefore function not merely as relief mechanisms but as institutional platforms for maintaining diplomatic communication and constructing international credibility.

The institutionalization of humanitarian diplomacy is also evident in the interaction between the JHCO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armed Forces, and external humanitarian partners. The JHCO provides an organizational mechanism through which domestic resources, international donations, governmental direction, and humanitarian operations can be consolidated into a coordinated response (Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, 2023–2026). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supplies the diplomatic dimension, while the Armed Forces contribute specialized medical, logistical, and operational capabilities, producing a division of institutional functions within a common policy framework. This configuration corresponds with the understanding of humanitarian diplomacy as a multidimensional practice involving states, humanitarian institutions, and diplomatic actors whose functions frequently overlap (Cook & Gong, 2021). It also demonstrates that humanitarian statecraft depends upon administrative continuity rather than isolated political decisions. The distinction between humanitarian policy and foreign policy consequently becomes less rigid when both are implemented through interconnected state institutions. Institutional integration provides the mechanism through which humanitarian commitments can be converted into sustained diplomatic practice.

The cumulative evidence indicates that Jordan's humanitarian operations generated effects extending beyond immediate relief by contributing to diplomatic credibility, institutional legitimacy, and political agency. Field hospitals, airdrops, convoys, medical assistance, and diplomatic advocacy formed an integrated pattern of state action rather than disconnected humanitarian initiatives (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2023–2026). This pattern is significant because humanitarianism can function as statecraft when humanitarian practices become connected to political authority, strategic positioning, and broader foreign-policy objectives (Seven, 2025). Jordan's experience does not eliminate the distinction between humanitarian objectives and strategic interests, but it demonstrates that these dimensions can coexist when state action remains oriented toward civilian protection and humanitarian assistance. The empirical findings support a conception of humanitarian diplomacy in which legal norms establish the normative framework, institutional structures provide implementation capacity, and diplomatic engagement converts operational practices into international influence. This institutional mechanism helps explain how Jordan exercises diplomatic agency despite the material limitations associated with small-state status. The significance of the Jordanian case therefore lies in how humanitarian action becomes embedded within foreign-policy practice and develops into a sustained instrument of statecraft.

Humanitarian Diplomacy as Strategic Balancing and Small-State Statecraft

Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis functioned as a strategic mechanism for managing competing legal, political, and security interests within a highly polarized regional environment. The Kingdom's geographical proximity to Palestine, formal peace relationship with Israel, strategic partnership with the United States, and close relations with Arab states created overlapping foreign-policy pressures that restricted the range of available policy choices (Amalia et al., 2026). Within this environment, humanitarian diplomacy provided a policy instrument through which Jordan could demonstrate support for Palestinian civilians while avoiding direct military escalation that could threaten national security and regional stability. Articles 26 and 45(1) of the Jordanian Constitution establish the institutional basis for executive administration of external affairs, while Article 32 places the armed forces under the supreme command of the King (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). The constitutional arrangement therefore enables humanitarian operations to be incorporated into foreign-policy practice through established public institutions rather than being treated as an autonomous charitable function. From the perspective of small-state diplomacy, this institutional flexibility enables a state with constrained material capabilities to preserve diplomatic agency through specialized forms of cooperation, credibility, and normative positioning (Wivel, 2023).

The relationship with Israel demonstrates the legal and diplomatic complexity of Jordan's balancing strategy because the Kingdom has maintained formal bilateral relations while simultaneously

expressing strong opposition to the humanitarian consequences of the Gaza conflict. Jordanian humanitarian activities therefore required a distinction between political disagreement concerning military conduct and the continuing necessity of facilitating medical assistance, humanitarian relief, and civilian protection. The Fourth Geneva Convention establishes the relevant normative framework by protecting civilians affected by armed conflict and providing standards concerning humane treatment and humanitarian protection (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949). Read systematically, these provisions indicate that humanitarian assistance possesses an independent protective rationale and cannot be reduced solely to an instrument of bilateral political accommodation. Jordan's advocacy for humanitarian access consequently provided a legally grounded means of maintaining engagement with relevant actors while preserving its opposition to practices considered inconsistent with civilian protection. The resulting approach demonstrates how humanitarian diplomacy can create functional channels of cooperation despite severe political disagreement. Jordan's position illustrates that small-state diplomacy may preserve strategic flexibility by separating humanitarian imperatives from broader political disputes without abandoning established foreign-policy relationships.

Jordan's relationship with the United States provides another illustration of humanitarian diplomacy as a balancing mechanism because Amman continued strategic engagement with Washington while emphasizing civilian protection and humanitarian access in relation to Gaza. Official diplomatic communications demonstrate continued Jordanian advocacy concerning humanitarian conditions and the need for international action to address civilian suffering (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, 2023–2026). Joint humanitarian operations also created practical areas of cooperation in which shared humanitarian objectives could be pursued despite differences concerning wider political questions. Such cooperation reflects the logic of niche diplomacy, through which small states concentrate diplomatic resources in specialized areas where they can exercise influence disproportionate to their material capabilities (Pedi & Wivel, 2020). The legal dimension remains relevant because Jordan's international engagement operates through constitutional executive authority and must remain compatible with the Kingdom's international obligations concerning humanitarian protection. Humanitarian operations therefore became an intermediary mechanism connecting strategic partnership, international cooperation, and normative advocacy. This practice demonstrates how Jordan could maintain relations with a major external power while simultaneously sustaining an independent humanitarian position concerning the Gaza crisis.

Relations with Arab states constituted another important dimension of Jordan's humanitarian balancing strategy because regional cooperation strengthened both operational capacity and diplomatic legitimacy. Humanitarian assistance required coordination involving logistics, financing, medical support, border access, and communication with humanitarian institutions, making cooperation with Egypt and other Arab partners essential to sustained relief operations. The JHCO served as an important institutional mechanism for coordinating humanitarian shipments and partnerships, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided diplomatic channels for regional and international engagement (Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, 2023–2026; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, 2023–2026). This institutional pattern corresponds with the understanding of humanitarian diplomacy as a process involving negotiation, persuasion, coordination, and humanitarian access among actors with different political interests (Turunen, 2020). Jordan's regional engagement allowed the Kingdom to respond to strong Arab expectations concerning Palestine while maintaining its broader diplomatic relationships with Western and international actors. The strategic importance of this approach is particularly evident from a small-state perspective because regional cooperation distributes operational burdens while simultaneously increasing the number of channels through which Jordan can exercise diplomatic influence. Humanitarian coordination therefore operated as a form of niche diplomacy that strengthened Jordan's regional relevance without requiring the material capabilities associated with major-power statecraft.

Table 3. Strategic and Legal Dimensions of Jordan's Humanitarian Diplomacy

Strategic Dimension	Relevant Legal or Normative Basis	Humanitarian Instrument	Diplomatic Function
Palestine	Fourth Geneva Convention 1949; Additional Protocol I 1977	Field hospitals, medical assistance, aid delivery	Civilian protection and Palestinian advocacy
Israel	International humanitarian law; constitutional executive authority	Humanitarian access and medical evacuation	Maintaining functional engagement amid political tension
United States	Constitutional authority over external affairs; humanitarian norms	Joint humanitarian operations and coordination	Preserving strategic partnership while advancing humanitarian concerns
Arab States	Constitutional framework; international humanitarian law	Aid coordination and logistical cooperation	Strengthening regional diplomatic coordination
International Organizations	Geneva Convention framework; humanitarian principles	Relief coordination and civilian-protection advocacy	Enhancing international legitimacy
Domestic Constituency	Constitution, Arts. 26 and 45(1)	Humanitarian assistance and diplomatic advocacy	Supporting governmental legitimacy
Small-State Diplomacy	Small State Theory and Humanitarian Diplomacy	Niche humanitarian engagement	Expanding diplomatic agency despite material constraints

Table 3 demonstrates that Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy operated across several interconnected strategic relationships rather than being directed toward a single diplomatic constituency. The legal and normative bases identified in the table provide different forms of authority, while humanitarian instruments translate those norms into concrete practices that generate diplomatic functions. The Palestine dimension primarily reinforces civilian protection and humanitarian advocacy, whereas engagement with Israel emphasizes functional communication under conditions of political tension. Cooperation with the United States and Arab states illustrates how humanitarian activities can preserve strategic partnerships while simultaneously responding to competing regional expectations. The domestic dimension further demonstrates that humanitarian diplomacy possesses an internal political function because visible state action can connect foreign-policy conduct with public expectations concerning Palestine. The pattern supports the argument that humanitarian action can become a specialized form of statecraft when operational assistance, legal legitimacy, and diplomatic objectives are integrated through institutional mechanisms (Barakat, 2024). The table therefore provides empirical support for interpreting Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy as a balancing strategy rather than as a collection of isolated relief activities.

The cumulative evidence indicates that Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy generated diplomatic agency by connecting humanitarian operations with legal legitimacy, institutional capacity, and strategic positioning. Field hospitals, humanitarian airdrops, medical assistance, and aid coordination provided the operational foundation, while diplomatic advocacy transformed these activities into broader claims concerning civilian protection, humanitarian access, and regional responsibility (Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army, 2023–2026). Humanitarian diplomacy is particularly relevant to this pattern because it explains how humanitarian objectives can be pursued through negotiation and political engagement while remaining connected to broader diplomatic purposes (Bogatyreva, 2023). The Jordanian case also demonstrates the statecraft potential of humanitarianism when humanitarian practices become embedded within political authority, strategic positioning, and foreign-policy objectives without eliminating their protective function (Seven, 2025). The proposed Jordanian Model consequently rests upon the interaction of institutional integration, operational humanitarian engagement, multilateral cooperation, and strategic balancing, allowing Jordan to exercise diplomatic

influence despite structural limitations in material power. This model does not reduce humanitarian principles to strategic interests but identifies how humanitarian legitimacy can itself become a source of diplomatic influence when state conduct remains anchored in civilian protection and international humanitarian law. Jordan's experience therefore contributes to the broader understanding of small-state diplomacy by demonstrating how humanitarian engagement can simultaneously function as a normative commitment, a diplomatic resource, and an instrument of statecraft.

Humanitarian Diplomacy, Legitimacy, and the Jordanian Model of Statecraft

Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy generated political significance not only through the delivery of humanitarian assistance but also through the construction of domestic legitimacy and international normative credibility. The constitutional framework provides the institutional foundation for this relationship because Article 24(1) recognizes the nation as the source of powers, while Articles 26 and 45(1) allocate executive authority and responsibility for the external affairs of the state through constitutionally established institutions (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). Humanitarian action undertaken through the Royal Hashemite Court, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army, and JHCO can therefore be interpreted as institutional exercises of public authority rather than merely voluntary acts of charity. The empirical record of Jordanian humanitarian operations indicates that medical assistance, field hospitals, humanitarian airdrops, and relief coordination were accompanied by sustained diplomatic advocacy concerning civilian protection and humanitarian access (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, 2023–2026). Such institutional consistency strengthens the legal and political credibility of Jordan's external position because governmental claims concerning humanitarian protection are supported by corresponding administrative and operational conduct. The relationship between humanitarian practice and public authority provides the first structural element of a state-led humanitarian diplomacy model in which legitimacy derives from the interaction of constitutional competence, humanitarian performance, and diplomatic representation.

International humanitarian law provides a second normative foundation for evaluating Jordan's humanitarian statecraft because the legitimacy of humanitarian action depends upon its consistency with principles protecting civilians and other persons affected by armed conflict. The Fourth Geneva Convention establishes protections for civilians in time of war, while Additional Protocol I develops rules concerning civilian populations, medical protection, and humanitarian conduct during international armed conflict (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949, 1977). United Nations Security Council Resolution 2712 and Resolution 2720 further demonstrate the international institutional recognition of humanitarian access and the need for expanded humanitarian assistance in the Gaza context (United Nations Security Council, 2023). Jordan's repeated diplomatic emphasis on civilian protection and humanitarian access therefore operates within a wider international normative structure rather than constituting an exclusively national policy preference. A teleological interpretation of these instruments places the protection of human life and civilian dignity at the center of humanitarian action, while a systematic interpretation connects those objectives with international mechanisms for humanitarian access and assistance. Jordan's operational activities acquire greater normative significance when they correspond with these protective objectives, particularly where medical and relief operations are conducted through recognized governmental and humanitarian institutions. The resulting legal framework permits humanitarian diplomacy to function as statecraft without requiring humanitarian principles to be displaced by strategic considerations.

The relationship between humanitarian action and legitimacy is also evident in Jordan's position as a small state seeking diplomatic influence through specialized areas of international engagement. Small-state diplomacy generally requires the concentration of limited resources in policy areas capable of producing reputational and institutional advantages beyond what material capabilities alone would permit (Wivel, 2023). Jordan's humanitarian engagement demonstrates this mechanism because its operational contribution created opportunities for cooperation with international organizations, Western partners, Arab states, and humanitarian institutions while maintaining a distinctive national diplomatic position. The approach corresponds with the concept of niche diplomacy, in which a state develops influence through specialized expertise, institutional reliability, and issue-specific engagement rather than comprehensive material power (Barakat, 2024). Jordan's humanitarian role also resembles broader patterns of state-led humanitarian diplomacy in which assistance can

become connected to political representation, diplomatic access, and international positioning (Bogatyreva, 2023). The empirical evidence consequently indicates that humanitarian capacity became a diplomatic resource capable of increasing Jordan's relevance within international responses to the Gaza crisis. Such relevance is particularly important for a state whose foreign-policy effectiveness depends upon maintaining relationships across competing regional and international alignments.

Table 4. Normative and Institutional Components of the Jordanian Model of Humanitarian Diplomacy

Component	Legal or Normative Foundation	Empirical Institutional Practice	Statecraft Function
Constitutional Authority	Constitution, Arts. 26, 32, 33, 45(1)	Executive, diplomatic, and military coordination	Authorizing state-led humanitarian action
Civilian Protection	Fourth Geneva Convention 1949	Medical assistance and field hospitals	Reinforcing humanitarian legitimacy
Humanitarian Operations	Additional Protocol I 1977	Airdrops, relief deliveries, medical evacuation	Translating legal principles into practice
International Coordination	UNSC Resolutions 2712 and 2720	Cooperation with UN and humanitarian actors	Expanding diplomatic access
Institutional Integration	Constitutional executive structure	Ministry, JHCO, Armed Forces, Royal institutions	Coordinating humanitarian statecraft
Niche Diplomacy	Small State Theory	Specialized humanitarian engagement	Compensating for material constraints
Normative Credibility	International humanitarian principles	Advocacy for civilian protection and access	Strengthening international legitimacy

Table 4 indicates that the Jordanian model is composed of mutually reinforcing legal, institutional, operational, and diplomatic dimensions rather than a single policy instrument. Constitutional provisions establish the authority through which state institutions participate in humanitarian diplomacy, while international humanitarian law establishes substantive standards against which humanitarian conduct can be evaluated. The operational dimension translates these norms into field hospitals, medical assistance, relief deliveries, and other forms of civilian-oriented action. International coordination then extends the effect of these activities by connecting Jordanian institutions with international organizations and external states, thereby increasing the diplomatic reach of humanitarian initiatives. The final statecraft function emerges when these elements collectively generate legitimacy, diplomatic access, and policy influence that exceed the immediate humanitarian purpose of individual operations. This configuration corresponds with the argument that humanitarian action may become an instrument of statecraft when humanitarian practices are integrated with sovereign authority and broader strategic objectives (Seven, 2025). The Jordanian model consequently demonstrates that state-led humanitarian diplomacy can retain a normative foundation while simultaneously producing strategic diplomatic value.

Domestic legitimacy constitutes another dimension of the model because Jordan's humanitarian policy operates within a political environment characterized by strong public concern regarding Palestine and the Gaza crisis. Governmental humanitarian operations provided visible manifestations of state responsiveness while avoiding direct military intervention that could generate substantial security and geopolitical consequences (Ryan, 2025). The constitutional allocation of executive authority allows such measures to be implemented through established state institutions, thereby connecting governmental responsiveness with formal public authority (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952). Humanitarian diplomacy consequently functions as an intermediary between domestic political expectations and external strategic constraints, allowing Jordan to express support for Palestinian civilians while preserving its broader security relationships. The concept of soft power is relevant to this process because legitimacy, credibility, and normative attraction can generate influence without reliance upon coercive capabilities (Nye, 2004). Jordan's humanitarian engagement illustrates this form of influence insofar as operational assistance strengthens the credibility of its diplomatic advocacy and

contributes to the perception of Jordan as a constructive regional actor. Domestic legitimacy and international reputation therefore operate as interconnected consequences of humanitarian statecraft rather than as separate policy outcomes.

The proposed Jordanian Model can ultimately be understood as an institutionalized process in which constitutional authority provides legal competence, humanitarian law establishes normative parameters, operational institutions implement protective measures, and diplomatic engagement converts humanitarian activity into international influence. Its distinctive character lies in the integration of these elements within a small-state foreign-policy environment where material capabilities are comparatively limited but institutional and diplomatic resources remain significant. Jordan's experience demonstrates that humanitarian diplomacy can simultaneously address civilian protection, sustain international cooperation, reinforce domestic legitimacy, and preserve strategic flexibility. The model also reflects the broader evolution of humanitarian diplomacy from a practice traditionally associated with humanitarian organizations toward a form of statecraft involving sovereign institutions and foreign-policy authorities (Turunen, 2020). Its legal significance rests upon maintaining the distinction between legitimate humanitarian assistance and the instrumentalization of humanitarian action in ways that would undermine impartial protection or applicable international law. The empirical evidence indicates that Jordan's humanitarian activities acquired strategic significance precisely because humanitarian operations were embedded within formal institutions and accompanied by sustained diplomatic advocacy. The Jordanian Model therefore contributes to the study of Law and Political Authority by demonstrating how public authority can employ humanitarian action as a legally constrained but strategically consequential form of small-state diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Jordan's humanitarian diplomacy during the Gaza humanitarian crisis transformed humanitarian assistance from an emergency response into an integrated instrument of foreign policy and statecraft. The empirical findings demonstrate that field hospitals, humanitarian airdrops, medical evacuations, aid convoys, and JHCO-coordinated relief operations functioned simultaneously as mechanisms of civilian assistance, diplomatic engagement, and strategic positioning. These practices demonstrate how Jordan compensated for limited material capabilities by utilizing humanitarian credibility, institutional coordination, and diplomatic cooperation as alternative sources of international influence. Humanitarian diplomacy also enabled Jordan to maintain diplomatic flexibility across relationships with Palestine, Israel, the United States, Arab states, and international organizations while continuing to emphasize civilian protection and humanitarian access. At the domestic level, visible humanitarian engagement responded to public expectations concerning Palestine while allowing the government to avoid direct military escalation, thereby connecting humanitarian action with political legitimacy and national-security considerations. The study consequently demonstrates that sovereign states can institutionalize humanitarian action as an integral component of foreign-policy strategy while maintaining its humanitarian and protective dimensions. The proposed Jordanian Model of Humanitarian Diplomacy identifies institutional integration, operational humanitarian engagement, multilateral coordination, and strategic balancing as interconnected mechanisms through which a small state converts humanitarian practice into diplomatic agency.

The findings also generate practical implications for states and humanitarian institutions operating in conflict-affected regions where humanitarian needs intersect with geopolitical competition. Jordan's experience indicates that effective humanitarian diplomacy requires sustained institutional capacity, including diplomatic coordination, humanitarian logistics, medical preparedness, and mechanisms connecting domestic institutions with international partners. For small and middle-sized states, humanitarian engagement can provide a specialized diplomatic avenue for strengthening international legitimacy and maintaining strategic relationships without relying primarily on coercive capabilities. Humanitarian institutions may likewise benefit from structured cooperation with state authorities, provided that such cooperation preserves humanitarian principles and does not compromise civilian protection, neutrality, impartiality, or humanitarian access. The study remains limited by its single-case design and reliance principally on official documents, institutional reports, and secondary academic sources, which restricts the generalizability of its findings across different political and legal systems. Future comparative research could examine whether similar patterns emerge in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Egypt, or other states that employ humanitarian engagement as a

component of diplomatic strategy, while also examining its relationship with soft power, mediation, and international legitimacy. More broadly, the Jordanian case demonstrates that humanitarian diplomacy represents an increasingly significant form of contemporary statecraft through which humanitarian protection, legal responsibility, diplomatic influence, and national interests can operate within a structured framework of small-state foreign policy.

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