

# The complex relationships of power

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KSA Ministry of Foreign Affairs Emblem

Carilyn Pointer - Prompted by the United States, Saudi Arabia seeks to improve their relationship with Israel. To do this they have appointed [Nayef Al-Sudairi](#) to serve as an ambassador to Jordan and Israel in an effort to establish formal relations between the two countries. This interaction highlights how power can be found in your allies and may motivate countries to develop secure relations with other powerful countries.

**Relational power** defines a country's power through its ability to develop ties with other countries, either friendly or unfriendly, as a web of third party relations. The interactions between those trying to gain power and are known as power relations. Saudi Arabia's recent decision to enact formal ties with Israel, illustrates their power relation with United States. Previously, Saudi Arabia was resistant to a relationship with Israel, because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and wanted the Palestinians to be granted better autonomy. By withholding formal ties, Saudi Arabia hoped to convince Israel that the power of their allyship was worth making concessions in the conflict. That has not been successful and with the promise of more support from the United States, they have changed their tactic and are now trying to forge a relationship with Israel and then convince them to grant the Palestinians more autonomy.

By promising "greater military support and help for a civil nuclear program," the United States has influenced Saudi Arabia to change their approach, because of their relative power and the promise of material power. The **material power** in this case is the funding that may be provided to their nuclear program. Many motives are at play, but the important thing to remember is that it is power relations that define a country's influence in the world, and not just material things.

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