



Why the Kushner-Russia Affair Is Much Ado About Nothing

It certainly makes for good news stories and great anti-administration propaganda: Jared Kushner (shown facing camera), President Trump's son-in-law and close confidant, supposedly sought "back-channel" communications with Russia. Cue the dramatic music and start salivating over impeachment prospects. Yet even if the allegation is true, it's much ado about nothing. Moreover, it blows the whole Russia-stole-the-election story out of the water.



We can start with National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster's recent statement that the Kushner story troubled him not at all. As the *New York Post* [reports](#), "We have back-channel communications with a number of countries," McMaster said Saturday. "What that allows you to do is communicate in a discreet manner, so I'm not concerned."

"Kushner's plan — which never took effect — was meant to let the Trump transition team communicate privately with the Russian government on Syria and other issues, [The New York Times reported Saturday](#)," the paper continued. "He reportedly broached the plan with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in December."

That the leadership, of whatever nation, must have the ability to communicate privately and discreetly with the leadership of other nations is just common sense. This is, in fact, done even in the private sector. Corporations have private meetings as well as public ones because not everything can be for public consumption.

For example, if the United States and Russia were to cooperate in the battle against the Islamic State, they obviously wouldn't want to telegraph their moves to the terrorist enemy. This means they'd have to keep their plans out of the newspapers — which involves hiding their communications from the eyes of leakers.

Of course, none of this proves there wasn't malevolent intent behind the alleged overture to Moscow. It does prove there didn't have to be, however.

Yet what's most striking about the Kushner allegation is that it completely contradicts the media's narrative about how Trump supposedly colluded with Russia to "steal the election." After all, as others have already pointed out, if Kushner had to *seek* a private-communications channel with Russia, it would mean one did not previously exist. And no earlier secret channel means no prior collusion.

That the media would peddle contradictory stories is unsurprising. They deal in propaganda — in lies — and liars generally have trouble keeping their stories straight. In fact, it's known that one way to expose a deceiver is to note how he responds to the same question at different times. For the truth is always the same. Lies can change with the wind.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 5, 2017

Then there's a point here that concerns Trump himself. To the best of my knowledge, it's something no one has mentioned: While the president is no saint, he simply doesn't fit the profile of a lawbreaker.

I have a pretty good track record when it comes to reading people, and here's my take on Trump. He will absolutely use the law in every way possible to benefit himself, sometimes transgressing against morality in the process. A good example is his defense of using the principle of eminent domain to seize private property from citizens so that it can be acquired by commercial developers.

Trump is dead wrong on this issue. Eminent domain was designed to facilitate the construction of things such as bridges or strategic forts, not to pave the way for the paving over of Mr. Smith's farm so we can be blessed with another strip mall. It's also true that Trump was motivated by self-interest, as he himself has sought to use eminent domain to advance his business interests.

Like it or not, however (and I don't), Trump was advocating a *legal* use of the principle, one rubber-stamped by the extreme court we call the Supreme Court (*Kelo* decision). In no way was he violating the law.

The point? Trump is not at all moralistic, but he is *legalistic*. In fact, he strikes me as downright punctilious about the law, a man who crosses every t and dots every i with his attorneys. This is a wise business practice, too; as Bernie Madoff's and Martha Stewart's prison sentences evidence, private-sector criminality can land you in the pokey. And note that Trump has made it to 70 years of age without joining them.

Of course, none of this proves Trump didn't or wouldn't violate the law. But I get the sense he must be relatively clean if the entire establishment has feverishly sought his destruction for more than a year now and the best they've come up with is the Trump University case and some lewd talk with Billy Bush.

As for Jared Kushner, I don't know him personally, but I do write for the newspaper he owns, the *Observer*. And while he's a liberal Democrat and thus not exactly an ideological bosom companion of mine, the way he ran the *Observer* (he resigned as publisher upon taking his Trump administration position), spoke volumes. When former editor in chief Ken Kurson took me on, he emphasized that we writers did not have to be pro-Trump, that we had journalistic freedom. And, in fact, the *Observer* has published some scathing articles about the president. In other words, Kushner doesn't strike me as some dark, manipulative political operator.

Nonetheless, the media will continue playing the Russia story for all it's worth. But at the end of the day, it seems unlikely it will be worth very much.

Photo of Kushner and the president: [00280110170-0000000000000000](#)



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