

TWO DATA POINTS ON JARED KUSHNER

I wanted to pull out two data points in this profile of Jared Kushner, completed in the wake of the WaPo story that Kushner attempted to set up a back channel with Russia.

First, as other stories have, this one blames Kushner for encouraging Trump to fire Jim Comey.

But in recent weeks, the Trump-Kushner relationship, the most stable partnership in an often unstable West Wing, is showing unmistakable signs of strain.

That relationship had already begun to fray a bit after Mr. Trump's dismissal of the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, which Mr. Kushner had strongly advocated, and because of his repeated attempts to oust Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump's chief strategist, as well as the president's overburdened communications team, especially Sean Spicer, the press secretary.

[snip]

Other times, he serves as a goad, as he did in urging Mr. Comey's ouster and assuring Mr. Trump that it would be a political "win" that would neutralize protesting Democrats because they had called for Mr. Comey's ouster over his handling of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server, according to six West Wing aides.

I've pointed out before how the investigation into Mike Flynn might, with his cooperation, put Kushner at risk. But I'm interested in the new detail that Kushner assured his father that Democrats would love the firing of Comey *because of Comey's handling of the Hillary*

investigation.

I can see how a dummie might believe that. But I'm at least as interested in how pitching that theory for Comey's firing implicated Rod Rosenstein, insofar as he wrote a letter providing the fig leaf Hillary-based justification for the firing, and thereby led to the naming of Robert Mueller. Rosenstein is still the Acting Attorney General for the Russia investigation now looking more closely at Kushner, and Kushner has effectively already compromised him.

Amid its larger narrative that Kushner and Trump actually haven't been that close all that long, the NYT also reminds that Kushner got a lot of credit from his father-in-law for reviving the digital aspect of the campaign.

Mr. Kushner's reported feeler to the Russians even as President Barack Obama remained in charge of American foreign policy was a trademark move by someone with a deep confidence in his abilities that critics say borders on conceit, people close to him said. And it echoes his history of sailing forth into unknown territory, including buying a newspaper at age 25 and developing a data-analytics program that he has said helped deliver the presidency to his father-in-law.

[snip]

Despite the perception that he is the one untouchable adviser in the president's inner circle, Mr. Kushner was not especially close to his father-in-law before the 2016 campaign. The two bonded when Mr. Kushner helped to take over the campaign's faltering digital operation and to sell a reluctant Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of Fox News's parent company, on the viability of his father-in-law's candidacy by showing him videos of Mr. Trump's rally during a

lunch at Fox headquarters in mid-2015.

There lots of reasons to look askance at Trump's data program, even before you consider that it was so central in a year where Trump's opponent got hacked. So I find it notable (which is where I'll leave it, for now) that Kushner's role in the digital side of the campaign was so central to his perceived closeness to Trump.

Ultimately, I keep noting that Kushner hasn't really been part of the Trump family for that long – just eight years. While I certainly believe Trump looks on the father of his grandchildren as part of the family, I'm not sure how much real vetting they've done of him (and with this crowd, everyone is corrupt in any case).

It will be interesting to see, going forward, what bases for mutual loyalty – such as it exists between these two men – there are.