|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| [**Jared Kushner's $3 billion conflict of interest**](https://substack.com/app-link/post?publication_id=1664&post_id=151577992&utm_source=post-email-title&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=false&r=g587&token=eyJ1c2VyX2lkIjo3NTMyNzEsInBvc3RfaWQiOjE1MTU3Nzk5MiwiaWF0IjoxNzMxNDk3NTQ4LCJleHAiOjE3MzQwODk1NDgsImlzcyI6InB1Yi0xNjY0Iiwic3ViIjoicG9zdC1yZWFjdGlvbiJ9.dLFe2h0hVdyPcYif_sB8OMoOeGoVPO5YnM3OQHTstDw)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| [Judd Legum](https://substack.com/%40popularinformation) and [Noel Sims](https://substack.com/%40noelsims) |

 |
|

|  |
| --- |
| Nov 13 |

 |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
|  |

 |

 |

 |
|   |
|  | A group of people clapping  Description automatically generated |  |

Vice President-Elect J.D. Vance, Ivanka Trump, and Jared Kushner watch Donald Trump speak on November 06, 2024, in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)During Donald Trump's first term, one of his most influential advisors was his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Now that Trump has won another term, Kushner seems poised to reprise this role. Except this time, instead of being an employee of the federal government, he will be on the payroll of Saudi Arabia and other foreign governments. The arrangement presents acute ethical and legal conflicts that neither Kushner nor Trump have acknowledged, much less addressed. After leaving the White House in 2021, Kushner, who had no experience in private equity, launched a new private equity firm, [Affinity Partners](https://substack.com/redirect/11f80eda-0e80-48b1-aa76-16661c495d26?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas). His reported goal was to secure $7 billion in investments. Before entering the White House, Kushner's most significant business experience was [nearly bankrupting his family real estate company](https://substack.com/redirect/6b31b1c4-13d5-4576-8ab2-f081978aac90?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) by purchasing an aging office building in New York for $1.8 billion.Kushner sought $2 billion from the government of Saudi Arabia through their Public Investment Fund (PIF). The PIF committee that screens investments [recommended rejecting Kushner's proposal](https://substack.com/redirect/e6ccd19e-7f45-4853-a8fd-3d6017f38471?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas), citing "the inexperience of the Affinity Fund management" and "excessive" fees. The committee's recommendation, however, was overruled by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), who heads PIF's Board of Directors. Kushner formed a close relationship with MBS during his time in the White House and the pair communicated regularly via WhatsApp. That didn't change after the [CIA concluded](https://substack.com/redirect/c462b078-519e-4530-acba-470f771dd9e0?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) that MBS ordered the brutal murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who wrote a column that was frequently critical of the Saudi government for the Washington Post. Khashoggi was assassinated at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. After his death, his body was [dismembered with a bone saw](https://substack.com/redirect/85fa9c56-62ba-43ff-b6a6-4f0d09879d03?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas). Kushner "offered the crown prince advice about how to weather the storm." In DC, Kushner "[became the prince’s most important defender inside the White House](https://substack.com/redirect/a2860382-944e-4fd7-b054-9c3cee2be997?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas)." In 2020, Kushner publicly dismissed the murder of Khashoggi as one of "a couple of missteps" by MBS, praising Saudi Arabia as "[a very good ally](https://substack.com/redirect/319840fa-f8ec-461f-9bab-d2fe3da7ca09?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas)."According to an investigation by the Senate Finance Committee, Affinity Partners ultimately secured about $3 billion in investments. Along with $2 billion from Saudi Arabia, Kushner secured additional funds "from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Taiwanese billionaire Terry Gou." There is a fifth foreign investor that Affinity Partners will not disclose. There are no U.S. investors. Saudi Arabia pays Kushner 1.25% of its investment annually as a management fee. The other investors pay even more — 2% of their investments annually. So far, Affinity Partners has "collected approximately $157.5 million in management fees from foreign investors," including $87 billion from Saudi Arabia alone. It is scheduled to bring in another $90 million through 2026. What kind of returns has Kushner generated for PIF and his other investors? Nothing. Through July 2024, Affinity Partners had only invested about $1.1 billion of the money it raised. Kushner is charging Saudi Arabia and other foreign governments tens of millions in fees to have their money sit in a bank account. According to the Senate Finance Committee, this arrangement [suggests](https://substack.com/redirect/e6ccd19e-7f45-4853-a8fd-3d6017f38471?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) "Affinity’s investors may not be motivated by commercial considerations, but rather the opportunity to funnel foreign government money to members of President Trump’s family." Kushner has attempted to defuse concerns about conflicts by claiming that he will not be returning to the White House in a second Trump administration. In practice, however, Kushner remains a key part of Trump's political and policy operation. Popular Information is an independent newsletter dedicated to accountability journalism since 2018. It is made possible by readers who upgrade to a paid subscription.[**Subscribed**](https://substack.com/redirect/2/eyJlIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly9wb3B1bGFyaW5mb3JtYXRpb24uc3Vic3RhY2suY29tL2FjY291bnQiLCJwIjoxNTE1Nzc5OTIsInMiOjE2NjQsImYiOmZhbHNlLCJ1Ijo3NTMyNzEsImlhdCI6MTczMTQ5NzU0OCwiZXhwIjoxNzM0MDg5NTQ4LCJpc3MiOiJwdWItMCIsInN1YiI6ImxpbmstcmVkaXJlY3QifQ.2SqeztidsW0gI5VV06nKAl69XkPPdfkRhgUoumdoM1Y)In a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, Kushner [admitted](https://substack.com/redirect/d2cfeb1f-eb59-4c7d-8986-d57a90a09e67?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) that he continued to advise Trump and his campaign. Should Trump return to office, “does that add complications?” he asked. “Maybe. There’s probably going to be more scrutiny on me today than there was a year ago.”He also isn’t distancing himself from the presidential campaign.From his Miami office, the Atlantic Ocean in view behind him, Kushner plays an informal advisory role. He says he is “there to fully help and advise” Trump and his team.He also takes calls from senators and congressmen on both sides of the aisle, he said, all looking for his input on a range of matters, from the Middle East to navigating Trump world at home.In May, Reuters [reported](https://substack.com/redirect/6e290007-8e4d-4525-b5e8-d588e7c8b469?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) that Kushner was soliciting donations for Trump's campaign, "making calls to encourage donors to attend a Trump fundraiser in New York." A spokesperson for Kushner said, "Jared supports his father-in-law and is happy to connect the many people who get in touch with him looking to help the campaign."Last week, the Financial Times [reported](https://substack.com/redirect/2c389f7c-1cef-4c07-80ee-6b1d90395557?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) that Kushner is expected to "play an advisory role on the next administration’s Middle East policy." According to the report, Kushner may also be helping the Trump transition team make selections for key posts involving Middle East policy. On Sunday, [Kushner met with Ron Dermer](https://substack.com/redirect/325c4830-5e58-4b38-960d-aef488115e84?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas), an adviser for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at Mar-a-Lago. Dermer, who also met with Trump, then traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with Biden administration officials. The upshot is that a key adviser to the president-elect is on the payroll of Saudi Arabia and other foreign governments. Kushner is incentivized to keep these governments happy. They are able to withdraw their money from his fund beginning in 2026. **What the law says about Jared Kushner**In addition to the ethical issues, the Senate Finance Committee suggested that Kushner's behavior may also be illegal. In a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland, the Committee said it had uncovered "significant evidence that Mr. Kushner acted as an unregistered foreign agent of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) requires anyone acting as an agent of a foreign government in the United States to register with the federal government. The purpose of FARA is "to ensure that the American public and lawmakers are made aware of foreign efforts to influence U.S. public opinion, political activities, and lobbying through the use of agents in the United States."While Kushner purports to running a private equity fund, he admitted at a conference in Miami Beach that he attracts investors by stressing his ability to "[do things on the geopolitical side, on the connections side, on the problem-solving side](https://substack.com/redirect/d2cfeb1f-eb59-4c7d-8986-d57a90a09e67?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas)." That appears to be exactly the role he is playing for Saudi Arabia. Kushner has not generated any profits for the country but, [according to Reuters](https://substack.com/redirect/37b82b01-ca63-43a7-a8d4-794af3b619c2?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas), he "has discussed U.S.-Saudi diplomatic negotiations involving Israel with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman multiple times since leaving the Trump White House." Kushner has similarly assisted another investor, the government of Qatar. According to [Axios](https://substack.com/redirect/0c26b27c-5561-4e70-97e8-8b310e566512?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas), Kushner "organized meetings in New York with Qatari prime minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani" and "prominent U.S. businessmen and political donors." The Committee noted that "DOJ has prosecuted individuals for engaging in political consulting on behalf of a foreign principal without registering under FARA" and urged Garland to appoint a Special Counsel to investigate the matter. **How Kushner is investing his money****The money that Affinity Partners has invested entangles Kushner with two other foreign governments: Albania and Serbia.** Affinity Partners has committed more than $1 billion to two international real estate ventures. The Serbian and Albanian governments have full control over the permitting, licensing, and taxation necessary to complete the developments. The survival of Kushner's private equity fund now depends on Kushner keeping these governments happy.In Albania, the government has [granted Kushner development rights](https://substack.com/redirect/6a931e07-1bda-429f-b85b-27af31f1c151?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) to a stretch of Mediterranean coast which an Albanian family says they have been farming for generations. The family says the land was unjustly taken from them by the government after the fall of the Soviet Union. Kushner also plans to develop an island controlled by the Albanian government that was used to store military equipment during the Cold War. In Serbia, Affinity Partners secured a deal with the government to build a $1 billion development featuring a luxury hotel and residential units. The development will be on the site of the former headquarters of the Yugoslav Army in Belgrade, which was destroyed by NATO in 1999 during an aerial bombing campaign. NATO's military strikes successfully ended the Yugoslav Army's ethnic cleansing campaign in Kosovo, which had [killed 10,000 people](https://substack.com/redirect/8714c213-d816-4d50-b5e9-52dc7a7ee424?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) and [displaced over 850,000 others](https://substack.com/redirect/19346391-358f-482e-a58d-5fa20575b270?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas).Americans have taken issue with a requirement that the development include a monument to “victims of NATO aggression.” (According to [Human Rights Watch](https://substack.com/redirect/dae30dd5-dbc3-443f-bb2b-977fdf2732f8?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas), while NATO made extensive efforts to limit civilian casualties, about 500 civilians were killed during the campaign.)The Senate Finance Committee [wrote](https://substack.com/redirect/e6ccd19e-7f45-4853-a8fd-3d6017f38471?j=eyJ1IjoiZzU4NyJ9.-Rxh9_A0VmSwcnzTLCR7IYGA6eS45sSFqeXw73fgmas) that it "is wholly inappropriate for any foreign government to require an American firm to participate in that kind of anti-American historical revisionism, an act that whitewashes ethnic cleansing and genocide and falsely recasts NATO as an antagonist, and it is egregious that a firm founded and owned by family of a former and potential future President of the United States would agree to it."  |