



Sample Exam  
Public Management  
Prof. Reto Steiner

**Read the following newspaper article**

(Source: The Guardian, 5 April 2020)

*Jared Kushner and his shadow corona unit: what is Trump's son-in-law up to?*

The twist of fate that has cast Jared Kushner as a would-be savior in the greatest public health crisis to confront the United States in a century is a dramatic one.

The moment of national peril has been compared to September 11. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, said coronavirus was her country's greatest challenge since the second world war.

As the leader of the federal government effort to distribute emergency equipment to the states, Kushner, the president's son-in-law, has mostly shied from the public stage, but he now is working in history's spotlight.

His vast responsibilities include weighing requests from governors for aid and coordinating with private companies to obtain medical equipment, work he carries out from a special post created for him inside the Federal Emergency Management Agency, where his team is called "the Slim Suit crowd" for their distinctive tailoring, the New York Times has reported.

Kushner's team was credited with coordinating a planeload of medical supplies that arrived in the US from China last week.

But some of those familiar with Kushner's record at the White House and in his prior professional life question why the government's response to the coronavirus threat is being run by the president's 39-year-old son-in-law.

"It scares the hell out of me," said David Pepper, the chair of the Ohio Democratic party, who offered bipartisan words of praise for the crisis response of his state's Republican governor, Mike DeWine.

"Kushner has terrible judgment, and I don't remember a decision he's been involved with that hasn't just been bad – they've been horrible. And the idea that everything has to go through the very flawed judgment of Jared Kushner is downright scary, and I believe at this point is costing American lives."

Early this year, Kushner reportedly advised Donald Trump that the coronavirus was not that dangerous – more a threat to public confidence, and the markets, than to public health. Trump stuck with that message for six tragic weeks, between the confirmation of the first US case and a belated federal decision to speed the development of test kits.

(...)

Pepper expressed concern that when a governor calls the White House, she has to talk to Kushner, who then decides, apparently unilaterally, what the state really needs.

In a rare appearance in the White House briefing room Thursday, Kushner said some governors did not have precise knowledge of their state's inventory of ventilators and delivered a lecture on the art of management.

"The way the federal government is trying to allocate is, they're trying to make sure you have your data right," Kushner said. "Don't ask us for things when you don't know what you have in your own state, just because you're scared."

"What a lot of the voters are seeing now is that when you elect somebody to be a mayor or governor or president, you're trying to think about who will be a competent manager during the time of crisis," he continued. "This is a time of crisis and you're seeing certain people are better managers than others."

Walter Shaub, a former director of the Office of Government Ethics under Barack Obama, reacted strongly on Twitter, calling Kushner a "feckless nepotist who presumes to criticize governors striving to fill the void left by this previously unimaginable federal failure!"

Trump has placed top experts in public health and disaster response on his coronavirus taskforce, including Dr Anthony Fauci, the country's foremost infectious disease expert, and Dr Deborah Birx, the former head of global health at the state department.

But the adviser with the most influence over what Trump says and does appears to be Kushner, the son of a billionaire New Jersey developer, who just two months ago asserted his expertise on the Middle East conflict by saying: "I've read 25 books on it."

The precise dimensions of Kushner's emergency response role are difficult to pin down because his authority, which stems from his marriage, exists outside the mapped structure of government agencies. He seems to be inventing his role on the fly, and to have the power to do so.

Asked on Thursday to reply to reports that he runs a "shadow taskforce" on the coronavirus, Kushner smiled and said Mike Pence had asked him to help out.

"I can assure that you I'm speaking with Dr Birx, Dr Fauci, the vice-president and the president multiple times a day, to make sure that I'm accomplishing and focusing on the objectives that the vice-president deems a priority," he said.

(...)

"The short version is that Jared Kushner is incurious, not inclined to defer to experts, and surrounds himself with yes men, so he is unaccustomed to being told that his decision-making is bad," Spiers wrote. "He believes his capabilities far exceed what they are, and his assessment is reinforced by the people around him who are paid to tell him that. In this sense, he is not unlike his father-in-law."

Kushner grew up in New Jersey and matriculated at Harvard after his father, Charles Kushner, gave the school \$2.5m. He took over the family's real estate business when his father went to prison for tax evasion and witness tampering. He married Ivanka Trump in 2009.

He has an infamously broad portfolio in the White House. In addition to being in charge of bringing peace to the Middle East, Kushner is or was in charge of Trump's impeachment strategy; the Trump 2020 campaign budget; diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and Beijing, which both have targeted him as an asset, according to US intelligence assessments; solving the opioid crisis; developing internet infrastructure; running an "Office of American Innovation" building a border wall, and more.

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The problem with Kushner is ultimately a problem with Trump, Pepper said.

“It’s a case study for the problem with nepotism,” he said. “When [Ohio governor] DeWine is standing up there, even though his own kids are involved in politics – they’re not the ones standing next to him. Who’s leading the Ohio response? Amy Acton, the state health director, who has studied and taught this her whole life.

“The biggest difference between DeWine and Trump is, one is relying on experts who have prepared for this for years.

“And the other is relying on Jared Kushner.”

## **Assignment**

Write an essay on the following topic:

*Fighting Covid-19 from a Public Management Perspective*

Your essay must include thoughts on the following subjects:

- The role of bureaucracy in public administration
- The interaction between citizens, politicians, and public administration
- Effectiveness and efficiency – how to measure it?
- Organizational design of public administration to fight Covid-19 (horizontal subsidiarity, vertical subsidiarity, and internal structures and processes)

Refer to the newspaper article in your essay.