



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 12, 2017

Did Ivanka Trump Convince President to Strike Syria?

A memorable moment in the 1980 presidential debate between Jimmy Carter and his challenger, Ronald Reagan, came when Carter answered the question posed as to what was the most important issue of the campaign. To the bewilderment of many viewers, and the consternation of some of his advisors, who had cautioned him not to use the dubious illustration, President Carter said that he had recently been told by his daughter Amy that “nuclear proliferation” was the critical issue of the day.



Since the pig-tailed and freckled Amy was only 12 years old, this opened Carter up to much ridicule, with some jokers referring to the girl as Carter’s “new national security advisor.”

Of course no one took Amy Carter’s comment very seriously; however, a grown-up presidential daughter is now clearly wielding increasing clout in the White House: President Trump’s 35-year-old daughter Ivanka (shown).

During the presidential campaign, Trump challenged the tendency of recent presidents to intervene in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations, particularly decrying the “regime change” agendas of Presidents Bush (both of them), Clinton, and Obama. Yet, according to Eric Trump, the president’s son, it was his sister Ivanka who swung Trump over to launching a bombing raid in Syria, in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons by the government led by Bashar al-Assad.

The chemical weapons use reportedly killed 89 people, including women and children.

Insisting that he is “sure” Ivanka played a key role in the decision, Eric Trump explained why: “Ivanka is the mother of three kids and she has influence. I’m sure she said, ‘Listen, this is horrible stuff.’”

Admitting that his father was opposed to taking any action in Syria before entering the White House, Eric said, “Then a leader gasses his own people, women and children. At some point America is the *global leader* and the world’s superpower has to come forward and act and they did with a lot of support from our allies and I think that’s a great thing.” (Emphasis added.)

The president’s son said it “was horrible,” calling the Syrian government “savages” and asserting, “I’m glad he responded the way he responded. I stay out of politics and I stay out of the administration but you can tell he was deeply affected by those images of the children.”

But Ivanka Trump does not stay out of either politics or the administration, and Eric calls that “a beautiful thing.” In fact, she has her own office inside the White House itself, and is said to have great influence with her father — on a wide range of issues. Her husband, Jared Kushner, whose background is in real estate development in New York City, is deeply involved in foreign policy, working on peace talks with Israel and the Palestinians, as well as on diplomatic efforts involving Mexico and China. Kushner is even working on criminal justice reform. It is like having a son-in-law who can serve as secretary of state and attorney general at the same time.



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Trump waved off concerns that his son-in-law's involvement in his administration smacks of nepotism, arguing that this "is the way the world works."

Neither Ivanka nor her husband can actually be appointed to any position in the government that requires Senate approval, such as secretary of state or attorney general, because of anti-nepotism laws enacted in the 1960s after President John Kennedy selected his brother, Robert, as attorney general. It was generally conceded that Robert was his brother's closest advisor.

Eric Trump offered another positive result of the bombing of Syria, arguing that it provided proof that his father and his associates did not work in concert with Russia to hurt the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign last year. "If there was anything that [the strike on] Syria did, it was to validate the fact that there is no Russia tie," Trump's son noted.

Bombing Syria seems to be a pretty strong way to make the point.

Many of Trump's strongest backers during the campaign and in the early weeks of his administration have expressed disappointment at his decision to use a military strike without any authorization from Congress. Conservative pundit Ann Coulter, for example, even declared, "We may have just as well had Jeb [Bush]," adding, "No president's meddling in the Middle East has ever turned out well. Have we learned nothing from Iraq?"

Pat Buchanan, among the chief paleo-conservative non-interventionists heroes, was blunt: "Trump's missile attack was unconstitutional."

On the other hand, leading neo-conservatives such as Bill Kristol and John McCain applauded the Trump action.

Is this an aberration, or does Ivanka's influence go beyond urging her father to bomb other countries? And will this influence move her father in a direction more pleasing to conservatives, or can we expect other daughterly tugs to the Left?

Thus far, her influence does not appear likely to make Trump another Barry Goldwater, or Robert Taft. On the contrary, while Trump has been a consistent skeptic of the alarmist position of former Vice President Al Gore on the issue of global warming, Ivanka is closer to Gore's position than that taken by her father. *Politico* has reported that she "wants to make climate change ... one of her signature issues."

All indications are that Trump has high regard for his daughter's political persona, even going so far as to have her introduce him at the Republican National Convention last July. In that speech, Ivanka made it clear that she was not a staunch conservative Republican. In fact, she was not even able to vote for her father in the New York GOP primary — because she was not a registered Republican.

In her RNC speech, she was clear: "Like many of my fellow millennials, I do not consider myself categorically Republican or Democrat. More than party affiliation, I vote based on what I believe is right, for my family and for my country. Sometimes it's a tough choice." Of course it's odd to hear someone say that whether to vote Republican or Democrat is a "tough choice" — at the *Republican* National Convention.

Certainly, one would agree that general conservatives would have a difficult time (and constitutionalist conservatives an almost impossible task) of deciding between the Democrat and Republican choices in most presidential contests. After all, with choices such as Bush (any of them) or Clinton, Dole or Clinton, McCain or Obama, and Romney or Obama, the voter who holds limited government and the



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Constitution in high regard will always face an unhappy decision.

But that is not the type of “tough choice” Ivanka means. Despite her lamentations about “tough choices,” she did find a candidate in 2007 worthy of support when she gave \$1,000 to Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. Then, in 2012, she endorsed Mitt Romney for president. The next year, she and her husband hosted a fundraiser for Democrat Cory Booker, a New Jersey Senate candidate, donating \$40,000 to his campaign coffers. One would think that a constitutional conservative would not find refraining from giving that kind of money to a liberal Democrat a tough choice; they just would not do it.

In her speech, Ivanka praised the “kindness and compassion that will enable [her father] to be the leader that this country needs.” Her choice of words could certainly make constitutional conservatives anxious, considering that George Herbert Walker Bush called for a “kinder and gentler America” during his 1988 campaign, when he was succeeding President Ronald Reagan, and then-Texas Governor George W. Bush campaigned on a “compassionate conservative” platform in the 2000 presidential race. Of course, some conservatives cast their vote for the younger Bush in 2000: he said he was for a “humbler foreign policy,” and was opposed to “nation-building,” and being the “policeman of the world.” That was hardly how he conducted his foreign policy, however.

One area in which Ivanka has reportedly attempted to influence her father is the issue of abortion. According to media reports, she has asked her father to tone down his “rhetoric” on abortion. It is not known if this means that she leans toward the pro-choice position, or if she simply thinks it would be better for her father to modify what he says on that hot-button issue for strategic political reasons. But it does mean that she is not passionate about speaking up for the unborn.

An issue on which she has clearly influenced her father is childcare for working mothers. She has declared, “As President, my father will change the labor laws that were put into place at a time when women were not a significant portion of the workforce.” Exactly what laws she is talking about generally is not clear, but she offered a hint: “And he will focus on making quality childcare affordable and accessible for all. As a mother myself of three young children, I know how hard it is to work while raising a family.”

Again, what exact role for government Ivanka sees in addressing this issue is not certain, but she did say that her father could not bear the “injustice” of “mothers who can’t afford the childcare required to return to work to better the lives of their families.”

Whatever Ivanka meant, it was a speech that could have been delivered, with only minor modifications, at the Democratic National Convention.

And Trump’s justifications for the intervention into Syria sounds ominously similar to the arguments used by the Bush administration for the invasion of Iraq.

It is to be hoped that the president will listen to constitutionally-minded conservatives such as Pat Buchanan, who supported him in the presidential race, rather than progressives and neoconservatives such as Bill Kristol who were more comfortable with Hillary Clinton.

Photo of Ivanka Trump: Sipa USA via AP



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