



## **Flynn is gone, but there are still a lot of other Islamophobes in this administration**

*That includes the president of the United States*

Justin Salhani *and* Adrienne Mahsa Varkiani

February 15, 2017

Michael Flynn stepped down as National Security Adviser on Monday over lingering questions about his conversations with the Russian ambassador to the United States before Trump's inauguration.

A noted Islamophobe, Flynn has said that fear of Muslims is rational and has taken pride in being “at war with Islam”—so his departure is a breath of fresh air. Still, it doesn't change the fact that there are a lot of people with strong anti-Islam views shaping policy in the Trump administration.

Here are a few of the most prominent:

Stephen Bannon

President Trump's Chief Strategist Steve Bannon has stated explicitly a belief that the West is at war with Islam. In 2010, Bannon told a right wing radio program: “Islam is not a religion of peace. Islam is a religion of submission. Islam means submission.” He's also thought to be, with aide Stephen Miller, the mastermind behind the botched roll-out of Trump's Muslim ban.

Bannon views a religion of 1.6 billion diverse worshipers as quite monotone, as revealed by comments from people who have discussed Islam with him.

“What disturbed me the most in our conversation was Bannon's apparent belief that violence and war can have a cleansing effect, that we may need to tear down things and rebuild them from scratch. He made it clear he had lost faith in Europe as secularism and arriving Muslim immigrants had eroded traditional Christian values as the founding pillar of our civilization,” Flemming Rose, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and the man who published the infamous cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, wrote in the Huffington Post. “Losing the Christian faith, in his view, has weakened Europe—it's neither willing nor able to confront Islam's rising power and some European Muslims' insistence on privileged treatment of their religion.

“Bannon is of the belief that, if Europe is to be saved, there is no way to avoid armed conflict,” Rose said. “In short, Bannon told me in no uncertain terms that the West is at war with Islam.”

Bannon’s anti-Muslim sentiment extends well-beyond private conversations and obscure radio appearances, though. It’s long been a central point in his ideology, as evident during his days as a screenwriter. In 2007, Bannon wrote a screenplay for a movie called “Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Facism [sic] in America,” where he effectively warns of an Islamist takeover of the United States.

“There is a major war brewing, a war that’s already global,” he said during a 2014 speech at the Vatican. “Every day that we refuse to look at this as what it is, and the scale of it, and really the viciousness of it, will be a day where you will rue that we didn’t act.”

Bannon also keeps regular Islamophobic company. He interviewed noted Islamophobe Frank Gaffney 34 times on his radio program. Gaffney runs the anti-Muslim Center for Security Policy, whose flawed polling laid the groundwork for Trump’s early Muslim-ban calls. Bannon has also interviewed anti-Muslim activists Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer.

Stephen Miller

The White Nationalist wunderkind was a staffer of then-Senator (and now Attorney General) Jeff Sessions and is thought to be, in collusion with Bannon, the ideological card-holder behind the Muslim ban.

During his collegiate days, Miller started a “Terrorism Awareness Project” to make “students aware of the Islamic jihad and the terrorist threat and to mobilize support for the defense of America and the civilization of the West,” according to Mother Jones, where the group advocated for “Islamofascism Awareness Week” and placed ads in college newspapers reading “What Americans Need to Know About Jihad.”

Mother Jones also unveiled Miller’s connections to so-called identitarian and Pepe the frog enthusiast (read: fellow white nationalist) Richard Spencer. The two were friendly at Duke and invited controversial, White-nationalist speakers to appear at the Conservative Union.

Kellyanne Conway

During the campaign, Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway claimed that Trump had a “five point plan to defeat Islam.” She later said it was a slip of the tongue, but the comment was still frightening coming from the Trump campaign—and it may have spoken to Conway’s own history working with an organization that spouts anti-Islam views.

Conway previously worked with the Center for Security Policy (CSP), a conservative organization led by the Islamophobic conspiracy theorist Frank Gaffney. CSP was responsible for a faulty and unscientific poll that Trump cited in his initial call in December 2015 for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the U.S.” In the poll, CSP claimed to have found that “25 percent of [American Muslims] polled agreed that violence against Americans here in the United States is justified as a part of the global jihad” and 51 percent “agreed that Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to Shariah.”

As the president of the Polling Company, Conway herself conducted faulty polls that concluded things like 1 in 5 Muslim-Americans support violence for religious reasons. None of these points are true.

## Jeff Sessions

Sessions is more noted for his racism than his blatant anti-Muslim sentiment. But the new Attorney General does his best to maintain positive relationships with some of the leaders of the anti-Muslim community.

“Sessions is also an ally of anti-Muslim organizations which have showered him with accolades. In 2014, the senator received the ‘Daring the Odds: The Annie Taylor Award’ from the David Horowitz Freedom Center, run by anti-Muslim extremist David Horowitz,” the Southern Poverty Law Center reported. “In his acceptance speech, Sessions said, ‘I’ve seen some great people receive this.’ Past recipients include Pamela Geller, one of the most rabidly anti-Muslim activists in America today.”

Another trophy on Sessions’ mantelpiece of hatred is the “Keeper of the Flame” award presented by Gaffney’s CSP. Sessions is also a vocal supporter of Trump’s Muslim ban, and has argued that religious tests for immigrants to the United States should be allowed.

## The President of the United States

Banning Muslims from the United States was a central focus of Trump’s campaign—and a week after being inaugurated as president, Trump followed through and banned nearly 200 million Muslims from the country. He is still fighting for the ban, despite the multitude of legal challenges.

During the campaign, Trump said that “Islam hates us”—and after being asked to confirm whether he was referring to the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, he said, “I mean a lot of them.” After being confirmed as the Republican nominee a few months later, Trump told supporters at a rally that “the hateful ideology of radical Islam [must not be] allowed to reside or spread within our own communities,” a dog whistle to racists and Islamophobes. He has called for registering all Muslims living in the country in a federal database, and failed to clarify how such a registry would be different from Jews being forced to register under Nazi Germany. He has called for surveilling or shutting down all mosques in the country and has repeatedly blamed Muslims for failing to report attacks before they happen.

Trump has also appointed or nominated all of the people on this list to serve in his administration.

Even aside from the names listed above, it’s clear that anti-Islam views pervade Trump’s administration.

Ben Carson, the nominee for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, has argued that no Muslim should be president of the United States and that American Muslims must be “schizophrenic” for embracing both Islam and democracy. Sebastian Gorka, a deputy national security adviser, thinks racial profiling of Muslims is “common sense,” generally holds hard line views on Islam, and was previously national security editor for Breitbart News, an outlet

which embraces white supremacy. His wife, Katharine Gorka, who now works at the Department of Homeland Security, holds similar anti-Islam views and has written for Breitbart. Tera Dahl, a National Security Council official, is a former aide to Rep. Michele Bachmann (MN-R), a prominent Islamophobe who has previously called sharia “a doctrine of demons.”