

STEVE BANNON

IMPACT: The former White House Chief Strategist and Chairman of *Breitbart News*, Steve Bannon has built a media platform and engineered a successful U.S. presidential campaign on white nationalism, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, and misogyny. An architect of President Donald Trump's Muslim Bans, Bannon has built connections with leading anti-Muslim conspiracy theorists, activists, and politicians in the U.S. and Europe.

- Born in 1953 in Norfolk, VA, Steve Bannon is a former investment banker at Goldman Sachs and Hollywood film producer who served seven years in the U.S. Navy. **From January to August 2017, Bannon served as Chief Strategist and Senior Counselor for President Donald Trump. His appointment was celebrated by the American Nazi Party and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Prior to joining the Administration, Bannon ran Trump's presidential campaign beginning in August 2016.**
- After exiting the Trump Administration, Bannon returned to his previously held position as executive chairman of *Breitbart News*. In January 2018, after disparaging remarks Bannon had made about President Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr. became public in Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury*, **Bannon was forced to step down from his position at Breitbart, reportedly at the behest of Rebekah Mercer. Mercer, who owns a stake at Breitbart News, had pushed for the initial promotion of Bannon to Trump's presidential campaign. Mercer's father, Robert Mercer, is a billionaire hedge-fund owner and long-time patron of Bannon.**
- According to reporting in *The Washington Post*, **between 2011 and 2016, the Mercers and Bannon have collaborated on at least five partnerships.** In addition to *Breitbart News* and a New York-based nonprofit watchdog group, Bannon co-founded a Florida-based non-profit to "investigate and expose" government corruption. Called the Government Accountability Institute (G.A.I.), the organization received \$4.7 million from the Mercer Family Foundation between 2013 and 2015. Rebekah Mercer is listed as the chairwoman of G.A.I.'s board of directors. **Bannon and the Mercers also partnered on a production company called Glittering Steel, and on the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, which harvested the raw data of at least 87 million Facebook profiles and consulted on the Trump 2016 presidential campaign.**
- **As the White House Chief Strategist, Bannon had a key role in writing the Muslim Ban Executive Order 13796 banning entry of immigrants and non-immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries.** EO13796 listed the attacks on September 11, 2001 as the historical backdrop for the Muslim Ban, and it vaguely referenced conspiracy theories about 'sharia law': "The United States cannot, and should not, admit those who do not support the Constitution, or those who would place violent ideologies over American law." In the E.O., **Bannon along with White House Senior Advisor Stephen Miller reportedly overruled then-Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary John Kelly's suggestion that green card holders be exempted from the Ban.**
- Bannon was the executive chairman of *Breitbart News* from March 2012 to August 2016, and again from August 2017 to January 2018. **Under Bannon's leadership, Breitbart became a white nationalist, "alt-right" website that featured racist, anti-Muslim, anti-immigration, misogynist content.** According to reporting in *MotherJones*, a Twitter analysis by The Investigative Fund found that **31% of key influencers on Twitter who use the white supremacist hashtag #WhiteGenocide follow Breitbart News, compared to "more traditional conservative outlets" (5% for National Review and 10% for the Daily Caller).** For users of the anti-Muslim hashtag #CounterJihad, **62% follow Breitbart News, 26% follow National Review, and 37% follow the Daily Caller.**
- **Under Bannon's leadership, Breitbart provided a platform to leading anti-Muslim conspiracy theorists and activists in the U.S., including Pamela Geller, Frank Gaffney, and Robert Spencer.** Bannon has stated that Geller, Spencer, and Gaffney are "probably the most renowned, or among the most renowned, of folks that are on the watchtower to make sure that we're fully aware of this threat, this existential war." Bannon also described Spencer's website, 'Jihad Watch,' as a "go-to site." In a 2015 interview with Geller, who writes for *Breitbart*, Bannon observed that Donald Trump's views on Islam closely resemble Geller's. **Bannon has also described Geller as "one of the top experts on radical Islam and Sharia law and Islamic supremacism."**
- In October 2017, *Buzzfeed News* published an exposé outlining the connections and working relationships among the Mercer family, who funds *Breitbart*, *Breitbart* Executive Chairman Bannon, *Breitbart* tech editor Milo Yiannopoulos, Yiannopoulos' ghost writer Allum Bokhari, and white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and racists to **"court" the "insurgent, racist right-wing movement that helped sweep Donald Trump to power."**

STEVE BANNON

- As *USA Today* reported, Bannon “has entertained claims that a **‘fifth column’** of Islamist sympathizers had infiltrated the US government and news media.” Under Bannon’s leadership, *Breitbart* published falsified claims about Muslims—like the debunked myth of **“no-go zones.”** It also gave voice to the anti-Muslim conspiracy theory that **Muslim organizations in the U.S. and Democratic politicians are connected to the Muslim Brotherhood.** Also under Bannon, *Breitbart* amplified the voices of those who want the government to label the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. The Trump administration reportedly considered issuing an executive order on this matter in January 2017 and April 2019.
- Bannon has said that “Islam” today is “something much darker” than Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. He has also stated, “If you’re Sharia-compliant . . . we don’t want you here,” and has accused U.S. newspapers of being “Sharia-compliant.” He has also stated, “The elites in Europe . . . are allowing an Islamic invasion to take place.” In April 2016, Bannon said that Muslims who are immigrating to Europe “are not people with thousands of years of democracy in their DNA coming up here.” On numerous occasions, Bannon has cited the “breathhtakingly racist” 1973 novel *The Camp of the Saints*, written by French author Jean Raspail. According to Cécile Alduy, professor of French at Stanford University, the novel “describes the takeover of Europe by waves of immigrants that wash ashore like the plague,” and it “reframes everything as the fight to death between races.”
- Bannon sees an “existential war” and “clash of civilizations” between the “Judeo-Christian West” and “radical Islam.” In 2014, Bannon gave a talk at a Catholic think tank in Rome, saying, “We’re now, I believe, at the beginning stages of a global war against Islamic fascism.” There he also said, “I believe you should take a very, very, very aggressive stance against radical Islam,” and praised how “our forefathers” kept Islam “out” of the “Judeo-Christian West.” In 2018, Bannon opined that a “new axis” of China, “Persia,” and Turkey is “confronting the Christian West and also a big part of Islam that is tied to the West.” Bannon has referred to Muslims as the “sworn existential enemy of the United States of America.”
- Bannon has directed numerous political films, including one titled “Jihad: The War Against the West.” According to a screenwriter that Bannon worked with in Hollywood, Bannon once said that he wanted to be “the Leni Riefenstahl of the GOP,” referring to the Nazi propagandist filmmaker who directed “Triumph of the Will.” In fact, the opening scenes of the 2012 anti-Obama film by Bannon called “The Hope & the Change” imitated the opening of “Triumph of the Will.”
- In 2007, Bannon drafted an outline of a three-part movie titled, “Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Facism [sic] in America.” Its plot line entailed “the rise of a global holy war — financed by the cash flow of oil — to attack and destroy western civilization,” and the threat posed by “radical Muslims” and their “enablers among us” in the U.S. The outline lists potential “on-air experts” to include Walid Phares and Robert Spencer, respectively, described in the Center for American Progress’ Fear Inc. report as “misinformation experts” and “validators” of the “Islamophobia Network.”
- After being forced to step down as Executive Chairman of Breitbart News in January 2018, Bannon began reaching out to various far-right European political parties, including France’s National Rally, Alternative for Germany, Sweden Democrats, the United Kingdom’s UKIP, Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, Italy’s Northern League, and Hungary’s Fidesz Party, among others. In a March 2018 interview with *The New York Times*, Bannon described how he wanted to become “the infrastructure, globally, for the global populist movement.”
- In March 2018, Bannon gave a speech at a conference hosted by France’s far-right National Rally (formerly known as “National Front”). National Rally and its leader, Marine le Pen, rely in part on anti-Muslim rhetoric to rally their base. At the speech, Bannon told the audience, “Let them call you racists. Let them call you xenophobes. Let them call you nativists. Wear it as a badge of honor.”
- Bannon has praised Italy’s far-right Northern League party and its leader, Matteo Salvini, saying, “Italy is the beating heart of modern politics.” During his election campaign in 2018, Salvini promised to close mosques and bar new ones from opening. He also said that Islam is a “threat” and incompatible with the Italian constitution, and praised the decision of Austria’s then-Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to close seven mosques in June 2018. Salvini also campaigning to prevent rescue boats carrying migrants from docking in Italian ports.
- In July 2018, Bannon announced his plans to establish a foundation called the “The Movement” in Brussels, Belgium—the headquarters of EU institutions. The purpose of “The Movement” is to provide polling, advice on messaging, data targeting, policy proposals, and research to far-right populist parties. The immediate goal of this project was to support political parties of the “populist/nationalist sovereignty movement” in the May 2019 European Parliament elections in order to form a “supergroup” or “critical mass that can start to block things” in the European Parliament. While some parties have been

STEVE BANNON

receptive to his help, **only four of the 13 countries on his Bannon's list—Italy, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands—allow foreign organizations to contribute to political parties**, according to [an analysis](#) in *The Guardian*.

- **The Movement is a small team comprised of Bannon, former head of Breitbart London Raheem Kassam, and Mischaël Modrikamen, a far-right Belgian politician who registered the foundation in January 2017 at his mansion in the suburbs of Brussels. **Bannon's efforts to "drive a stake through the heart of the Brussels vampire" are reported to have been largely unsuccessful.****
- In June 2019, **Bannon became an honorary co-chair of the Republican Hindu Coalition**, an organization that drew [criticism](#) in 2016 for the "Islamophobic and xenophobic undertones" at their "Humanity United Against Terror" charity fundraiser.

Bridge Initiative Factsheet