

The American Far-Right Origins of Pauline Hanson's Views on Islam

Investigating One Nation's thinking

One of One Nation's most striking claims is that Islam is not a religion. This claim is intended to deny constitutional protection for Australian Muslims' right to freedom of religion and belief. The origins of this claim highlight One Nation's political and intellectual debt to far-right groups in the United States. Although ostensibly an Australian nationalist party, One Nation is in large measure serving as a portal for the introduction of American and European policies and rhetoric into the Australian political landscape.

Report

Philip Dorling

January 2017

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE

The Australia Institute is an independent public policy think tank based in Canberra. It is funded by donations from philanthropic trusts and individuals and commissioned research. Since its launch in 1994, the Institute has carried out highly influential research on a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

As we begin the 21st century, new dilemmas confront our society and our planet. Unprecedented levels of consumption co-exist with extreme poverty. Through new technology we are more connected than we have ever been, yet civic engagement is declining. Environmental neglect continues despite heightened ecological awareness. A better balance is urgently needed.

The Australia Institute's directors, staff and supporters represent a broad range of views and priorities. What unites us is a belief that through a combination of research and creativity we can promote new solutions and ways of thinking.

OUR PURPOSE - 'RESEARCH THAT MATTERS'

The Institute aims to foster informed debate about our culture, our economy and our environment and bring greater accountability to the democratic process. Our goal is to gather, interpret and communicate evidence in order to both diagnose the problems we face and propose new solutions to tackle them.

The Institute is wholly independent and not affiliated with any other organisation. As an Approved Research Institute, donations to its Research Fund are tax deductible for the donor. Anyone wishing to donate can do so via the website at <https://www.tai.org.au> or by calling the Institute on 02 6130 0530. Our secure and user-friendly website allows donors to make either one-off or regular monthly donations and we encourage everyone who can to donate in this way as it assists our research in the most significant manner.

Level 5, 131 City Walk

Canberra, ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 61300530

Email: mail@tai.org.au

Website: www.tai.org.au

Summary

In the context of One Nation's presence in the Australian Senate, indications of increased voter support for the party and wider populist trends in the United States and Europe, Australians need to understand One Nation's world view – especially where the party's ideas come from. It is important to chart One Nation's ideological and political topography rather than to just narrowly fact check the details of its claims and policies.

One Nation has made numerous controversial statements on Islam that have attracted a measure of public support and considerable criticism. These were the centrepiece of the party's 2016 federal election campaign and remain at the heart of its political agenda. Perhaps none of these claims is more striking, indeed outrageous, than the claim that Islam is not a religion.

This is a radically new proposition within Australian public life --- a claim that one of the world's major faiths, practiced in Australia for more than 150 years, is not actually a religion. One Nation's signature policy on Islam is a call for "an inquiry or Royal Commission to determine if Islam is a religion or political ideology".

Australia's High Court has already established precedent for the meaning of 'religion' in a 1983 case regarding the tax treatment of Scientology. There is no doubt that Islam meets all of this case's requirements to be constituted as a religion. The idea that a Royal Commission could determine whether Islam is a religion is an obvious legal and political non-starter. However it is clear that One Nation will continue to press its claims that Islam is not a religion as a key part of a broader campaign to exclude Islam and Muslims from Australian politics, society and life.

Investigation of the origins of this claim highlights the One Nation party's intellectual debt to far-right groups in the United States and Europe. As early as June 2007, conservative American Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson said "we have to recognise that Islam is not a religion. It is a worldwide political movement meant on domination of the world."

The underlying purpose of these claims has been to deny the status of Islam is "protected" status under the First Amendment of the United States constitution. The claim helps the Christian far-right square their love of religious freedom with their desire to clamp down on another faith. Similarly One Nation seeks to deny Islam's status as a religion and thus deny Australian Muslims constitutional protection for their human rights of freedom of religion and belief. If left unchallenged this has the

potential to significantly undermine respect for freedom of religion and potentially give a green light to acts of overt discrimination and hostility towards Australian Muslims and other minorities.

The exact origins of the claim that Islam is not a religion are somewhat obscure. Beyond the claims of some American Christian evangelists, proponents of this view include:

- Iranian-born Canadian ex-Muslim activist Ali Sina who argues Islam is not a religion but rather an unreformable, violent, militant political cult.
- Rebecca Bynum, publisher and managing editor of the British far-right *New English Review*, who claims “If it is a religion it is not a religion only. Islam is a total system of life ... [including] geo-political aspirations – the conquest and administration of territory.”
- An obscure American former professor of engineering Bill French, who writes under the *nom de guerre* of Bill Warner, who published ‘statistical analyses’ of the Koran and other Islamic texts to argue that Islam is “political, not *religious*. *Islam is a political ideology.*”

Although ostensibly an Australian nationalist party, Pauline Hanson's One Nation is in large measure serving as a political portal for the introduction of American and European far-right positions, policies and rhetoric into the Australian political landscape.

One Nation has conspicuously celebrated President-elect Donald Trump's victory in the United States. The idea that Islam is not actually a religion is now espoused by people who will occupy positions at the highest levels of the US Government. As further papers in this series will show many elements of One Nation's outlook and policies have their origins in American far-right thinking and activism. It can be confidently anticipated that One Nation will continue to draw inspiration and adopt ideas and policies from the US “alt-right” for some time to come.

Table of Contents

Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	4
One Nation’s view of Islam.....	8
American far-right views of Islam.....	11
Origins of far-right arguments about Islam.....	15
Behind One Nation’s thinking.....	19
One Nation: A political portal for the international far-right.....	22

Introduction

Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.

John Maynard Keynes¹

This famous quote from Keynes refers to debates around economic policy, but his suggestion that ideas from obscure writers and thinkers can gradually encroach on political life and society, often without widespread acknowledgement of where they come from, is very relevant to current Australian politics. While political parties often employ strong rhetoric that marks their place in the political spectrum, the origins of particular ideas and policy positions are often obscure. Tracing the source of political ideas, ideology and policy can reveal much about political parties, especially their capacity to generate their own ideas or else the extent of their dependence of the thinking of other people, some of whom may be on the other side of the world and operating in different political circumstances.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (One Nation) has made numerous controversial statements on Islam that have attracted a measure of public support and considerable criticism. Perhaps none of these claims is more striking, indeed outrageous, than the claim that Islam is not a religion. Despite being repeated many times and being a central plank of the party's 2016 federal election platform, including a for royal commission inquiry into Islam, this assertion has been subjected to surprisingly little investigation or analysis.

For many opponents of One Nation simply rejecting the party's views on Islam and immigration appears a sufficient response. Australian Greens Senators walked out on Pauline Hanson as she delivered her first Senate speech. Greens leader Richard Di Natale flatly declared that "racism had no place in parliament".² Some other critics have said that they struggle to take Senator Hanson and her One Nation party colleagues seriously due to their "completely baseless and bordering on delusional" statements.³

¹ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1936, https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/keynes/john_maynard/k44g/chapter24.html

² "Pauline Hanson calls for Muslim immigration ban in maiden speech to Senate", *ABC News*, 14 September 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-14/one-nation-senator-pauline-hanson-makes-first-speech-to-senate/7845150>

³ Sydney-based lawyer and anti-Islamophobia advocate Mariam Veiszadeh quoted in "Islam is a religion of hate': Meet Pauline's main man and likely NSW senator Brian Burston:", *Daily Mail Australia*, 5 July

At the same time, other Australian political and business figures increasingly appear prepared accept One Nation into the Australian political mainstream. Former Prime Minister John Howard set the tone for this approach when in September 2016 he told the ABC Lateline program: “There are a lot of people who voted for her. ... I don't believe in marginalising her. She was elected and she's entitled to be treated in a respectful fashion by the rest of the Parliament.”⁴

The Coalition Government, Labor Opposition, other minor parties and independents in the Senate have all negotiated with One Nation on legislation and parliamentary processes, effectively bringing One Nation into the transactional heart of the political process. Some conservative political figures have urged that the Coalition embrace One Nation policy positions. South Australian Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi has called for the Coalition to adopt “delicate” and “nuanced” versions of One Nation policies.⁵ Queensland Liberal National MP George Christensen has praised Senator Hanson and described himself as “an MP who was advocating the same sort of views espoused by One Nation.”⁶ Other public figures have indicated they feel able to pick and choose which elements of the One Nation agenda they can embrace or reject. Prominent businessman Dick Smith declared he agreed strongly with Senator Hanson on the need to radically wind back Australia's migrant intake while adding that he did not agree with her views on Muslim immigration.⁷ Outright condemnation of One Nation from the Coalition has been relatively rare and muted, with the notable exception of Liberal MP Russell Broadbent who in November 2016 attacked Coalition colleagues such as

2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3674434/Islam-religion-hate-caliphate-coming-Likely-One-Nation-senator-Brian-Burston-says-party-stand-Muslims-Australia-danger-falling-Sharia-Law.html#ixzz4Vafa8fLa>

⁴ Prime Minister John Howard interview on *ABC Lateline*, 14 September 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2016/s4538972.htm>

⁵ “Cory Bernardi urges government to adopt 'delicate, nuanced' versions of One Nation policy”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 September 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/cory-berardi-urges-government-to-adopt-delicate-nuanced-versions-of-one-nation-policy-20160927-grpv5m.html>

⁶ “Please don't challenge, George Christensen asks Hanson”, *The Australian*, 17 September 2016, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/please-dont-challenge-george-christensen-asks-hanson/news-story/978523602df6918ebf17c747e40842de>

⁷ “Dick Smith backs Pauline Hanson's plan for One Nation state election blitz”, *news.com.au*, 6 December 2016, <http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/dick-smith-backs-pauline-hansons-plan-for-one-nation-state-election-blitz/news-story/3a6f5c4f24cb2d37e282e26b74a6f9c0> Mr Smith subsequently indicated that he did not intend to support One Nation financially. “I'll never stand for Hanson's party: Smith”, *Skynews.com.au*, 6 December 2016, <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/politics/federal/2016/12/06/dick-smith-will-not-financially-back-hanson.html>

Christensen for engaging in “diatribe about the rise of Islam in this country” and “cuddling up to Hansonite rhetoric”.⁸

Given the prominent place of anti-Islamic, anti-Muslim policies in Pauline Hanson’s political platform and her party’s growing influence within Australian public life, it would seem prudent to subject these views to close investigation. Media organisations have undertaken some fact checking of One Nation policies and statements, including, for example, a thorough critique by the ABC’s Fact Check unit of unsubstantiated claims that halal certification arrangements in Australia fund terrorist activity.⁹ A more wide-ranging fact checking effort was undertaken during the 2016 federal election campaign by a group led by Sydney based lawyer Mariam Veiszadeh, but this effort appears to have faltered.¹⁰ Although these exercises revealed numerous factual errors and arguably wilful misunderstandings in One Nation policies and pronouncements, their immediate political impact appears to have been quite limited. One observer of One Nation supporters in NSW’s Hunter Valley may have been close to the mark in expressing the view that “no amount of forensically fact-checking ... is going to stop the feeling for many that [Hanson] isn’t the status quo and that she speaks thrillingly, for them.”¹¹

Close examination of One Nation statements and policies remains important, however, to inform the public, the media, and other political parties and public figures who deal with One Nation in the Federal Parliament. Amidst the hurly-burly of parliamentary politics and a 24-hour media cycle, it is important not to lose sight of what Pauline Hanson and One Nation apparently believe in and stand for, and where they draw their ideas and policies from.

This paper, the first of a series of investigations into One Nation, takes a somewhat different approach from fact checking. Recalling Keynes’s observation about the sometimes obscure influences on political figures, it explores the origins of a key part of One Nation’s anti-Islamic campaign – namely Pauline Hanson’s claim that Islam is not actually a religion.

⁸ “Liberal MP Russell Broadbent calls out George Christensen for anti-Islam remarks”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/liberal-mp-russell-broadbent-calls-out-george-christensen-for-antiislam-remarks-20161107-gsk1vo.html>

⁹ “Fact check: Does halal certification fund terrorism?”, *ABC News*, 21 April 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-14/fact-check-does-halal-certification-fund-terrorism/638323>

¹⁰ See <http://www.factcheckonenation.com.au/> and “Aussie Muslims Are Fact Checking Pauline Hanson and One Nation’s Policies”, *Huffington Post*, 18 July 2016, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/07/17/aussie-muslims-are-fact-checking-pauline-hanson-and-one-nations/>

¹¹ “Donald Trump won, now Pauline Hanson speaks for many in the Hunter”, *Newcastle Herald*, <http://www.theherald.com.au/story/4285279/pauline-speaks-for-us/>

This is a radically new proposition within Australian public life – a claim that one of the world's major faiths is not actually a religion. Investigation of the origins of this claim highlights the One Nation party's intellectual debt to far-right right-wing groups in the United States and Europe. Although ostensibly an Australian nationalist party, Pauline Hanson's One Nation is in large measure serving as a political portal for the introduction of American and European far-right rhetoric, positions and policies into the Australian political landscape.

One Nation's view of Islam

Pauline Hanson's One Nation's signature policy on Islam is a call for “an inquiry or Royal Commission to determine if Islam is a religion or political ideology”.¹²

Senator Hanson also wants a “stop [on] further Muslim Immigration and the intake of Muslim refugees; surveillance cameras to be installed in all mosques and schools; and no more mosques to be built until the inquiry is held.”

One Nation's 2016 federal election policy statement on Islam asserts that

*Islam sees itself as a theocracy, not a democracy. Islam does not believe in democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of the press or freedom of assembly. It does not separate religion and politics. Many believe that it is solely a religion, but the reality is that it is much more, for it has a political agenda that goes far outside the realm of religion. Islam regulates the Muslim's social and domestic life, their legal system and politics - their total life. Its religious aspect is fraud; it is rather a totalitarian political system, including legal, economic, social and military components, masquerading as a religion. (emphasis added)*¹³

Immediately following the July election, then Senator-elect Hanson again described Islam as “a political ideology.” When it was suggested by journalists that Australian Muslims would say Islam is a religion, she replied: “I know. And they say it's a religion of peace. We know that's not true either.”¹⁴

In her first speech to the Senate on 15 September 2016, Senator Hanson claimed that Australia is being “swamped” by Muslim immigration and further observed that Islam is only “partly a religion, but it is much more than that. It has a political agenda that goes far outside the realm of religion. ... As long as Islam is considered a religion, sharia conflicts with our secular state.”¹⁵

In a media interview in December 2016 Senator Hanson reiterated that she wished to ban “Muslims from very heavily dominated practising countries who have no regard for Christianity and our culture and our way of life. ... I don't believe [they] will ever

¹² One Nation policy on Islam, <http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/islam>

¹³ One Nation policy on Islam, <http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/islam>

¹⁴ “Pauline Hanson to push for ban on new mosques, royal commission into Islam”, *Herald Sun*, 5 July 2016, <http://www.news.com.au/national/federal-election/pauline-hanson-to-push-for-ban-on-new-mosques-royal-commission-into-islam/news-story/1fde2f7903942cad6387d93fc210d0dd>

¹⁵ “Pauline Hanson's 2016 maiden speech to the senate: Full transcript”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/pauline-hansons-2016-maiden-speech-to-the-senate-full-transcript-20160914-grgitm.html>

assimilate into our society or respect our culture and Christianity.”¹⁶ She subsequently used media claims of polygamy by Muslims to take advantage of Centrelink spousal benefits to again call for a Royal Commission into Islam, saying that Muslims “will keep going on and abusing us, our generosity and our culture.”¹⁷

Of all of Senator Hanson's statements, perhaps the most striking are her claims that Islam is not a religion; that “its religious aspect is fraud”, and that it is “a political ideology ... masquerading as a religion.”

Senator Hanson is not absolutely consistent on this point. She has also referred to Islam as a “theocracy” and “partly a religion”; and at least one of her colleagues, NSW Senator Brian Burston, appears to consider Islam a religion – albeit “a religion of hate”.¹⁸ However the One Nation party platform on Islam and Senator Hanson’s statements leave little doubt that she disputes Islam's status as a religion and her call for a Royal Commission inquiry is intended to settle this point by establishing its nature as a political ideology.

One Nation's specific objective is to challenge Islam’s status within the terms of Section 116 of the Australian Constitution which provides that “The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.”¹⁹ One Nation’s policy paper on Islam explicitly complains that Islam is “a constitutionally protected religion, as stated in Section 116 of the Australian Constitution. This means that Mosques, Islamic Schools and other Islamic institutions are void from paying tax. Being defined as ‘a religion’ it is considered ‘discriminatory’ for Islam to be questioned and this is shutting down any debate that we, as

¹⁶ “Pauline Hanson criticises Waleed Aly while pushing for a ban on Muslim immigration”, *news.com.au*, 7 December 2016, <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/current-affairs/pauline-hanson-criticises-waleed-aly-while-pushing-for-a-ban-on-muslim-immigration/news-story/ca74208505a33ea3fc5285d106e3bb53>

¹⁷ “Pauline Hanson on Centrelink’s polygamy pay: ‘We’ve been taken for fools’, *news.com.au*, 13 December 2016, <http://www.news.com.au/national/politics/pauline-hanson-on-centrelinks-polygamy-pay-weve-been-taken-for-fools/news-story/15ecdb893936c97ac885e42622470311>

¹⁸ “Pauline Hanson's 2016 maiden speech to the senate: Full transcript”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/pauline-hansons-2016-maiden-speech-to-the-senate-full-transcript-20160914-grgitm.html> and “Islam is a religion of hate’: Meet Pauline's main man and likely NSW senator Brian Burston:”, *Daily Mail Australia*, 5 July 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3674434/Islam-religion-hate-caliphate-coming-Likely-One-Nation-senator-Brian-Burston-says-party-stand-Muslims-Australia-danger-falling-Sharia-Law.html#ixzz4Vafa8fLa>

¹⁹ *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*, Section 116, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/coaca430/s116.html

Australians, would like to have.”²⁰ Conversely One Nation’s denial of One Nation’s status as a religion is intended to open the way for the party’s advocacy of discriminatory policies while maintaining a claim to support religious freedom.

The High Court has already established precedent for the meaning of ‘religion’ for taxation purposes in the 1983 case, *The Church of the New Faith v Commissioner for Pay-roll Tax (Vic)* (the Scientology case). That decision outlined the following elements in what constitutes a religion:

- Belief in a supernatural Being, Thing or Principle;
- The acceptance of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief;
- Adherents are required or encouraged to observe particular standards or codes of conduct or to participate in specific practices having supernatural significance.
- Adherents constitute an identifiable group or identifiable groups.
- Adherents themselves see the collection of ideas and/or practices as constituting a religion.²¹

There is no doubt that Islam meets all of the above factors to be constituted as a religion subject to the protections of the Australian Constitution.

The idea that a Royal Commission could determine whether Islam is a religion is an obvious legal and political non-starter. An expensive Royal Commission inquiry into such a divisive subject seems most unlikely to be endorsed by the Coalition Government under its present or future leadership. There have been no expressions of support for the proposal from Coalition political figures.²² However there appears to be little doubt that One Nation will continue to press its claims that Islam is not a religion and should be subject to an inquiry as a key part of a broader campaign to exclude Islam and Muslims from Australian politics, society and life.

²⁰ One Nation policy on Islam, <http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/islam>

²¹ See *Church of the New Faith v Commissioner for Pay-roll Tax (Vic)*, [1983] High Court of Australia 40, 27 October 1983, <http://eresources.hcourt.gov.au/showbyHandle/1/233616>

²² The Coalition Government has initiated a Parliamentary inquiry into freedom of religion and belief both overseas and in Australia. According to the Chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Kevin Andrews MP the terms of reference provide that the subcommittee will examine “the status of the freedom of religion or belief (as recognised in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) around the world, *including in Australia*” (emphasis added). The Deputy Chair of the Subcommittee is Australia’s first female Muslim federal parliamentarian, Labor MP, Dr Anne Aly. No One Nation Senators are current members of the Joint Committee. See Media Release by Kevin Andrews MP, 12 December 2016, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Freedomofreligion/Media_Releases

American far-right views of Islam

The claim that Islam, a faith with some 1.7 billion adherents worldwide, is not a religion is a striking development in Australian politics.

The sheer novelty of this claim has been largely missed in Australian media coverage of One Nation. It is a proposition far outside mainstream Australian political, academic and theological debate on the place of Islam in Australia's multicultural society. There is no shortage of conservative critics of Islam (including for example Australian theologian Mark Durie) who argue that Islam is inherently militant and should not be regarded as a “religion of peace”.²³ It is possible that Senator Hanson may have consciously echoed some of this thinking when she observed that “... they say it’s a religion of peace. We know that’s not true either.” But it is a much bigger step to claim that Islam is not actually a religion; a novel proposition even within the far right-wing fringe of Australian politics.

This begs the question – where does this notion come from? In the absence of any obvious Australian origins, the short answer is that it is a political import, very largely if not exclusively drawn from far-right circles in the United States where there have been persistent attacks on Islam that extend to denial of its nature as a religion protected under the US Constitution.

Evangelical Christian conservatives in the United States have displayed sharply increased antipathy towards Islam and Muslims over the past two decades, with hostility increasing markedly following the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Attacks of Islam as “a satanic religion” bent on “world domination” have been closely tied to evangelical Christian visions and prophecies of a coming Apocalypse and the End of Days.²⁴ Opinion polls and surveys have shown that American evangelical Christians hold significantly more hostile views of Islam than the wider American population. A 2002 national survey of leaders of American evangelical organisations, ranging from churches and missionary associations to political groups, found that 70 % considered Islam to be “a religion of violence” while 66% thought Islam is “dedicated to world domination”. 79% of evangelical leaders disagreed that Muslims pray to the same God as Christians and some 72% considered Islam incompatible with democracy.²⁵ In contrast subsequent polling has shown that 46% of Americans believe Muslims and Christians worship the same God while evangelicals were much more likely to strongly reject the idea that Islam and Christianity shared any common ground.²⁶

²³ See Mark Durie's essays and articles on Islam at <http://markdurie.com/>

²⁴ See Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2007, pp. 182-207.

²⁵ “Evangelical Views of Islam”, EPPC-Beliefnet poll results released 7 April 2003, <http://www.beliefnet.com/news/politics/2003/04/evangelical-views-of-islam.aspx>

²⁶ “Christianity and Islam: Evangelicals and Americans Are Not on the Same Page About the “Same God”, *Christianity Today*, 22 December 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/december/christianity-and-islam-how-do-people->

Against this background it appears to have been a short step for American evangelical Christian leaders and political figures to dispute Islam's status as a religion. As early as June 2007 the conservative American Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson told his national radio audience that "we have to recognise that Islam is not a religion. It is a worldwide political movement meant on domination of the world."²⁷ Robertson has repeatedly described Islam as an aggressive, warring political ideology. In April 2008 he broadcast that "I want to say it again, and again, and again: Islam is not a religion, it is a political system meant on -- bent on world domination, not a religion. It masquerades as a religion, but the religion covers a worldwide attempt to exercise power and to subjugate the world to their way of thinking."²⁸ Influential conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh echoed Robertson in 2015 that "Islam is a conquest ideology. Not even a religion."²⁹

The underlying purpose of these claims has been to deny the status of Islam is "protected" status under the First Amendment of the United States constitution that *inter alia* provides that the Congress "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".³⁰ As American journalist and commentator on political and religious issues Steven Waldman observed in November 2016: "Conservative Christians have been attacking Islam since 9/11 – not only because of its connection to terrorism but because they believe Muhammed was a false prophet and paedophile. But they've also spent the last eight years arguing that religious freedom is under attack (because bakers are not allowed to refuse to make a cake for a gay wedding). This created a dilemma. How could they square their love of religious freedom with their desire to clamp down on one particular religion? So about a decade ago, a new idea arose in conservative Christian circles: Islam it is not a religion."³¹

Denial of Islam's status as a religion has been picked up by a growing number of right-wing US Republican figures. Jody Hice, another radio show host and right-wing Republican congressional candidate in Georgia, has claimed Islam isn't a religion, saying "Most people think Islam is a religion, it's not. It's a totalitarian way of life with a religious component. ... It's

[see-them-and-who-they-.html](#) and "How Americans Feel About Religious Groups", Pew Research Center, 16 July 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>

²⁷ "Robertson: 'Islam is not a religion. It is a worldwide political movement meant on domination'", *MediaMatters for America*, 12 June 2007, <http://mediamatters.org/research/2007/06/12/robertson-islam-is-not-a-religion-it-is-a-world/139073>

²⁸ "700 Club's Robertson: 'Islam is not a religion, it is a political system ... bent on world domination'", *MediaMatters for America*, 9 April 2008, <http://mediamatters.org/research/2008/04/09/700-clubs-robertson-islam-is-not-a-religion-it/143166>

²⁹ "Limbaugh: 'Islam Is a Conquest Ideology — Not Even a Religion'", *Breitbart News*, 24 December 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/video/2015/12/24/limbaugh-islam-is-a-conquest-ideology-not-even-a-religion/>

³⁰ First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States: See https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment

³¹ Steven Waldman, "Islam Is Not a Religion": The Real Reason Michael Flynn's Appointment is Ominous", *Washington Monthly*, 25 November 2016, <http://washingtonmonthly.com/2016/11/25/the-real-reason-michael-flynn-s-appointment-is-ominous-islam-is-not-a-religion/>

a geopolitical system that has governmental, financial, military, legal and religious components. And it's a totalitarian system that encompasses every aspect of life and it should not be protected [under the First Amendment to the US constitution]."³²

In the lead up to the 2016 US presidential election campaign evangelical Christian leaders stepped up their attacks on Islam and Muslims, calling for a ban on Muslim immigration and indeed for internment of Muslims along the lines of the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. Evangelist leader Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, declared that the United States was "under attack by Muslims at home and abroad" and called for a complete ban on Muslim immigration. "Every Muslim who comes into this country has the potential to be radicalised – and they do their killing to honour their religion", Graham said.³³

A ban on Muslim immigration into the United States has been advocated by President-elect Donald Trump. Trump has also not ruled out registration of Muslims in the United States.³⁴ In the course of the Republican Party primaries and the presidential election campaign Trump made a wide range of false or unsupported claims about Muslims including that he saw "thousands and thousands" of Muslims in New Jersey cheering the destruction of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001; that Muslim Americans were not assisting efforts to combat terrorism; and that even among "second and third generation" Muslims in the United States, "there's no real assimilation."³⁵

President-elect Trump's senior strategist, Breitbart News chief executive Steve Bannon, also has a long track record of strident anti-Muslim rhetoric and of promoting the views of anti-Muslim extremists as "experts" on Islam.³⁶

The specific claim that Islam is not actually a religion also found its way into the 2016 Presidential race with Republican presidential aspirant Ben Carson telling voters in Iowa to read up on Islam because he thought "you wouldn't call it a religion, you'll call it a life organisation system" with a "whole apocalyptic vision." Carson had previously

³²"Jody Hice : 'Most People Think Islam Is A Religion, It's Not'", *Huffington Post*, 24 April 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/jody-hice-islam_n_5523166

³³"In Wake of Chattanooga", Franklin Graham Wants to Shut US Borders to Muslims", *Charisma News*, 17 July 2015, <http://www.charismanews.com/us/50601-in-wake-of-chattanooga-franklin-graham-wants-to-shut-us-borders-to-muslims>

³⁴"What Trump Has Said About a Muslim Registry", *ABC News*, 18 November 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-muslim-registry/story?id=43639946>

³⁵Steven Waldman, "Islam Is Not a Religion": The Real Reason Michael Flynn's Appointment is Ominous", *Washington Monthly*, 25 November 2016, <http://washingtonmonthly.com/2016/11/25/the-real-reason-michael-flynn-s-appointment-is-ominous-islam-is-not-a-religion/>

³⁶"The Anti-Muslim Extremists Steve Bannon Thinks Are Experts On Islam", *Huffington Post*, 16 November 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/anti-muslim-hate-groups-steve-bannon_us_582b1cf0e4b0c4b63b0e70c3

expressed the view that Islam was "inconsistent with the values and principles of America."³⁷ Mr Carson is now President-elect Donald Trump's nominee as Secretary for Housing and Urban Development.

President elect Trump's pick as national security adviser, retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, has gone even further, delivering speeches in which he has called Islam a "vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people" that has to be "excised". Speaking to ACT! For America, an overtly anti-Muslim political lobby, Flynn declared "Islam is a political ideology. It is a political ideology. It definitely hides behind this notion of it being a religion. ... it's like a malignant cancer ... It has metastasised."³⁸

³⁷"Ben Carson Says Islam Is Not a Religion But a "Life Organization System", *Mother Jones*, 29 January 2016, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/01/ben-carson-islam-not-religion>

³⁸"Michael Flynn Called Islam "A Political Ideology" Hiding Behind "Being a Religion", *Politicususa*, 19 November 2016, <http://www.politicususa.com/2016/11/19/michael-flynn-called-islam-a-political-ideology-hiding-being-religion.html>

Origins of far-right arguments about Islam

Although the notion that Islam is not a religion has been increasingly widely articulated in evangelist Christian and right wing political circles in the United States, and is now expressed by One Nation in Australia, it is still a challenge to trace the writers who have fashioned arguments in support of such a proposition. The Internet both facilitates the rapid transmission of ideas and often obscures their point of origin, and as one veteran observer of Australian far-right politics recently observed “Facebook is awash with hundreds of pages and groups dedicated to propagating racism, fascism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and White nationalism.”³⁹ However, behind prominent American evangelical Christian figures such as Pat Robertson, it is possible to identify a handful of obscure far-right ideologists and writers who have argued the specific claim that Islam is not a religion.

One such source is Iranian-born Canadian ex-Muslim activist Ali Sina who is a savage critic of Islam, arguing that Islam is not a religion but rather an unreformable, violent, militant political cult.

On his Faithfreedom.org website Sina offers \$50,000 to anyone who can disprove his charge that the prophet Muhammad was "a narcissist, a misogynist, a rapist, a paedophile, a lecher, a torturer, a mass murderer, a cult leader, an assassin, a terrorist, a madman and a looter".⁴⁰

Sina argues that “With violent conquest and contempt for non-believers central to the tenets of the faith attempts to forge a moderate form of Islam are doomed... The only way to reform Islam is to throw away the Koran; 90 percent of it should be thrown away.”

The tone of much of Sina’s writing can be seen in the following quote from his website:

I find the word 'Muslim' very derogatory and insulting. It is synonymous to stupid, barbarian, thug, arrogant, brain dead, zombie, hooligan, goon, shameless, savage and many other ignoble things. I don’t know whether this most disgusting word elicits the same meanings in you or not. So when I want to show my despise [sic] of someone I call him 'Muslim'. But because Muslims

³⁹ Comment by Andy Fleming, “A (very) brief guide to the Australian far right (December 2016 Edition)”, 5 December 2016, <http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=40626>

⁴⁰ “Sina's challenge”, <http://www.faithfreedom.org/challenge.htm>

are stupid, they don't know all these things and they are proud of this name. This is a win/win situation because I insult them and they are happy and thank me for it. Isn't that smart?⁴¹

Sina's writing has guided much American far right writing on Islam. For example one of the more popular US "patriot" websites purporting to explain Islam observes:

The 'religion' of Islam is nothing short of a totalitarian political, economic, military, social and legal system that's camouflaged in religious garb. Their 'mandate' ... is to incorporate our country into a global Islamic caliphate. ... It is a totalitarian form of government that controls every aspect of the lives of its adherents. ... It masquerades as a monotheistic religion rooted in Old Testament principles, but more appropriately follows the thievery and murderous thuggery of its founder, Muhammad, a descendent of Ishmael, who came on the scene 600 years after Christ's ascension. Only their modern day tactics now include recruiting mentally ill, naive and gullible idiots who become suicide bombers. And Western countries indoctrinated with the lies of multiculturalism and political correctness—to their demise—have reluctantly turned a blind eye.⁴²

Sina's writing has also been quoted approvingly by the prominent far right Dutch politician Geert Wilders who has asserted that "Islam is not a religion, it's an ideology ... the ideology of a retarded culture".⁴³ Wilder also quotes the neoconservative American political scientist Mark Alexander who has written that "One of our greatest mistakes is to think of Islam as just another one of the world's great religions. We shouldn't. Islam is politics or it is nothing at all, but, of course, it is politics with a spiritual dimension ... which will stop at nothing until the West is no more, until the West has ... been well and truly Islamised."⁴⁴

Another point of origin for arguments that Islam is not, or at least is only partially a religion, appears to be Rebecca Bynum, publisher and managing editor of the British far-right *New English Review*. According to Bynum, "One thing we can definitely say about Islam is that is it not solely confined to a belief system. If it is a religion it is not a religion only. Islam is a total system of life and contains within itself a particular social

⁴¹ See <http://www.faithfreedom.org/debates/asadi60122.htm>

⁴² "Why Islam is NOT Protected Under the US Constitution!", <https://sites.google.com/site/islamicthreatsimplified/home/islam-is-not-a-religion>

⁴³ "I don't hate Muslims. I hate Islam,' says Holland's rising political star", *The Observer*, 17 February 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/17/netherlands.islam>

⁴⁴ Geert Wilders, "Islam: The Communism of Today", 3 October 2010, <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/73206/islam-communism-today-geert-wilders>

system, judicial system, and political system which includes geo-political aspirations - the conquest and administration of territory.”⁴⁵

Perhaps the most curious source for idea that Islam is not a religion is an obscure former professor of engineering Bill French, another American conservative who writes under the nom de guerre of Bill Warner and has self-published his ideas under the banner of his own “Centre for the Study of Political Islam”.⁴⁶

French holds a PhD in physics and mathematics and was a professor of engineering at Tennessee State University. Although apparently lacking recognised academic expertise in fields such as religion and theology, linguistics, political science or law, he has devoted himself to study of Islamic texts, arguing that “most of the *Islamic* doctrine is political, not *religious*. *Islam* is a political *ideology*.”⁴⁷

French's assertions about the nature of Islam –that it is not a religion, that it is irredeemably violent ideology incompatible with concepts of human rights and democracy, do not appear to be based on any deep theological, political or historical knowledge but rather rest on a highly questionable statistical analysis of the Koran and other Islamic texts.

In his essay “Statistics and the Meaning of Islam”, French sums up his methodology as an application of quantum physics and statistics to religious, political and historical understanding:

Islam is based upon contradictory statements. How do we sort them out to get the complete meaning? We measure the amount of text devoted to each side of the dichotomy. That is what we did with the question of which jihad is the real jihad. It gives a complete statistical answer.

There is nothing new here. Only single value state ideas can be measured by one number. Multi-state ideas must be evaluated by statistics that measure every state of the variable. If an idea has different manifestations, then instead of arguing which is the right manifestation, just measure all of the manifestations.

There is an exact analogy to the measurement of the state of the electron in an atom. Quantum physics does not give a single answer about the energy and position, but gives us the statistical probabilities of each possible state. The

⁴⁵ Rebecca Bynum, “Why Islam is not a religion”, Speech to ACT! for America Chapter in Memphis Tennessee, 18 October 2011, New English Review, November 2011, http://newenglishreview.org/Rebecca_Bynum/Why_Islam_is_Not_a_Religion/

⁴⁶ See <https://www.politicalislam.com/author/> and <http://www.cspipublishing.com/index.html#Author>

⁴⁷ Bill Warner (Bill French), “What is Islam”, <https://www.politicalislam.com/about/>

same is true about Islam. We need to know its total state, not something about one category.

In conclusion, statistics is a superior way to gain complete knowledge of the texts of Islam. Statistics allows us to explore Islam in its totality.⁴⁸

In French/Warner's view the United States is embroiled in "*a civilizational war and we will either defeat Islam or we will cease to exist as a nation.*"⁴⁹

It is unclear what French's statistical approach would make of the Bible, the Tora or Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. There is no evidence that his statistical analyses and conclusions have been peer reviewed, let alone enjoy any support from reputable scholars and experts on Islam, religion or across the social sciences more broadly. Nonetheless Warner appears to be another significant far-right source for the claim that Islam is not a religion.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Bill Warner (Bill French), "Statistics and the Meaning of Islam", 6 November 2008, <https://www.politicalislam.com/statistics-and-the-meaning-of-islam/>

⁴⁹ "Islamophobia Alert: Bill French to Visit Pinehurst", Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia, 6 May 2016, <http://merinc.org/islamophobic-incidents/bill-frenchs-visit-to-pinehurst/>

⁵⁰ Warner/French's papers and essays have been published on a range of right-wing websites in the United States and the United Kingdom, see for example the New English Review, http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm/frm/28244/sec_id/28244. French is one of a number of anti-Muslim speakers earning speakers fees from making presentations on Islam, Muslims and Sharia law to conservative Christian audiences. See "Anti-Muslim crusaders make millions spreading fear", *The Tennessean*, 24 October 2010, <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2010/10/24/antimuslim-crusaders-make-millions-spreading-fear/28936467/>

Behind One Nation's thinking

A week after the Federal election it was reported that One Nation had cut and pasted slabs of text for some of its policies – including those relating to halal certification, sustainable development and medicinal cannabis – from a range of far-right websites and other sources including Wikipedia.⁵¹ This suggests that some of the party's policy development lacks much depth. However it should be noted that One Nation is not without intellectual support from other Australian right-wing sources.

One pointer to links between One Nation and other Australian right-wing thinking on immigration, multiculturalism and Islam was provided by Queensland One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts who on 21 September 2016 appeared on The Project to defend his party's call for a ban on Muslim immigration. Asked to explain Senator Hanson's claim that Australia is being “swamped” by Muslim migration, he replied “We've got an adviser who goes into all of that called Frank Salter.”⁵²

Salter is an Australian “urban anthropologist and ethnologist” who first became involved in far-right political activity while a student at the University of Sydney in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Salter later undertook doctoral research at Griffith University in Brisbane and post-doctoral research in Germany in the mid-1990s. He has written extensively on claimed links between biology, genetics and race; in his own words studying “organisations and society using the methods and concepts of behavioural biology”, most notably producing a book entitled *On Genetic Interests: Family, Ethnicity, and Humanity in an Age of Mass Migration*.⁵³

Salter claims that discrimination against ethnic minorities is an “inborn response” all human have. *On Genetic Interests* “canvasses strategies and ethics for conserving our genetic interests in an environmentally sustainable manner sensitive to the interests of others.” Salter argues that “multiculturalism has a depressing effect on public altruism

⁵¹ “Exclusive: Pauline Hanson's One Nation Has Allegedly Plagiarised A Bunch Of Their Policies”. *Junkee*, 11 July 2016, <http://junkee.com/exclusive-pauline-hansons-one-nation-has-allegedly-plagiarised-a-bunch-of-their-policies/81579> and “Pauline Hanson: Text slabs from One Nation party policies lifted from internet, including Wikipedia”, *ABC News*, 11 July 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-11/pauline-hanson-sections-of-party-policies-lifted-from-internet/7587652>

⁵² “Malcolm Roberts accuses Waleed Aly of condoning terrorism on The Project”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/malcolm-roberts-accuses-waleed-aly-of-condoning-terrorism-on-the-project-20160921-grlo56?deviceType=text>

⁵³ Frank Salter, *On Genetic Interests: Family, Ethnicity, and Humanity in an Age of Mass Migration*, Transaction Publishers, Somerset, NJ, 2006, <https://www.amazon.com/Genetic-Interests-Ethnicity-Humanity-Migration/dp/1412805961> A list of Salter's publications and presentations can be found at <http://socialtechnologies.com.au/publications-and-presentations/>

in most societies.” In his view monocultural societies are inherently “fitter” than multicultural ones, and that ethnic diversity leads to corruption, weak public services and a decline in government institutions. South Africa's former apartheid regime is described as an example of “aggressive social control” used to preserve the “fitness” of society.⁵⁴

Salter has been published numerous times by *Quadrant* magazine. In a 2010 essay he attacked what he described as “Australia's abandonment of traditionalist assimilationist immigration policy” in favour of “open borders, immigration unrestricted by consideration of all factors save for security.” According to Salter “the rapid transformation of Australia by mass Third World immigration has been a top down revolution in which exclusivist politicised circles with academia have been complicit by commission and omission.”⁵⁵ In a 2015 article on “Australian Conservatism After Abbott” contributed to the “Sydney Traditionalist Forum” (self-described as “an association of “old school” conservative, traditionalist and paleo conservative individuals ... [and] the only local group that embraces the political currents of contemporary dissident reaction and aspects of what is known overseas as the so-called “alt-right” (i.e. alternative right)), Salter accused former Prime Minister Tony Abbott of being complicit in the “cultural genocide of Anglo-Australia” with higher immigration rates under both the Howard and Abbott governments serving to “reduce Australia's Anglo and Western character” and introducing “many ills of diversity”.⁵⁶ Salter is also, unsurprisingly, a fierce critic of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of migration from the Middle East and Africa, provocatively subtitled one essay with the question “Could the Immigrant Influx 'End European Civilisation'?”⁵⁷

Sympathetic right-wing reviewers of Salter's writing have described it as “brilliant analyses of the plight of white majorities in all Western countries as they attempt to cope with displacement-level immigration and with sweeping changes in national identity and culture.”⁵⁸ Salter has attracted considerable attention within Australian

⁵⁴ “One Nation’s Adviser On Muslim Issues Thinks Diversity Makes Us “Corrupt”, *Junkee*, 22 September 2016, <http://junkee.com/one-nations-adviser-muslim-issues-thinks-diversity-makes-us-corrupt/85816>

⁵⁵ Frank Salter, “The Misguided advocates of open borders”, *Quadrant*, 1 June 2010, <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2010/06/the-misguided-advocates-of-open-borders/>

⁵⁶ Frank Salter, “ Australian Conservatism After Abbott: The Need for Social Movements”, Sydney Traditionalist Forum, 17 October 2015, <https://sydneytrads.com/2015/10/17/2015-symposium-frank-salter/>

⁵⁷ Frank Salter, “Germany's Jeopardy: Could Immigrant Influx End 'European Civilisation'?”, 6 January 2016, <http://socialtechnologies.com.au/germanys-jeopardy-could-the-immigrant-influx-end-european-civilization/>

⁵⁸ Kevin Macdonald, “Frank Salter on Race and Nation in Australia”, *The Occidental Observer*, 11 October 2014, <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2014/10/frank-salter-on-race-and-nation-in-australia/>

far-right nationalist circles. Jim Saleam, Australia First leader and veteran of Australia's right wing fringe, who has written that "the essential works of Frank Salter should be consulted and widely read by all with the capacity to understand, not just in Australia, but internationally ... he cannot be ignored as a primary thinker in the culture war with globalist liberalism." However Saleam is also critical of Salter for being too narrowly "Anglo" in his outlook and not being accepting enough in terms of who counts as a "real Australian."⁵⁹

It remains to be seen what influence, if any, Salter may have on the further evolution of One Nation thinking on Islam and immigration. This may become more evident in 2017. To date, however, his contribution appears to have been quite modest. One Nation co-founder David Oldfield, once a close confidant to Hanson but now estranged, recently observed that "She just doesn't really read. She doesn't read serious material." Oldfield went on to claim that "it's hard enough to get Pauline to read a single paragraph let alone documentation that's research or scientifically based."⁶⁰

Salter's academic style is not obviously evident in Senator Hanson's statements or One Nation policy documents published so far. Instead the core elements of One Nation policies, especially the claim that Islam is not a religion, appear to be largely lifted from American far-right writings which have their origins in conservative Christian evangelist attacks on Islam and the intellectual contributions of a handful of far-right ideologues. Although One Nation is stridently in favour of "Buy Australian" policies, its core policy on Islam is a foreign import.

⁵⁹ Jim Saleam, "The Revolt Of The Anglophiles: The New Political Anglos And Frank Salter's Deconstruction of Australianity", January 2013, <http://home.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/franksalter.html>

⁶⁰ "One Nation co-founder David Oldfield slams Pauline Hanson for going 'soft on Muslims'", *Daily Mail*, 5 December 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4000070/One-Nation-founder-David-Oldfield-says-Pauline-Hanson-gone-soft-Islam.html#ixzz4Vh4LFmYU>

One Nation: A political portal for the international far-right

In early December 2016 Senator Hanson tweeted that in 2017 she will “continue to push for a ban on Muslim immigration & a crackdown on #halalcert [halal certification]” and urged the public to revisit One Nation's policies including the call for an inquiry or Royal Commission to determine if Islam is a religion or political ideology, stop further Muslim immigration and the intake of Muslim refugees and banning the Burqa and Niqab in public places.⁶¹ On 16 January 2017 Senator Hanson announced that One Nation will campaign in the Queensland state election for a complete ban on the burqa in all government buildings, schools and banks.⁶²

One Nation has repeatedly emphasised its belief that Australia is “a country built on Christian values”.⁶³ However Senator Hanson is also keen to emphasise Australia's secular form of government and the separation of church and state as “an essential component of our way of life, and anything that threatens that separation threatens our freedom.”⁶⁴ Asked about her own religious beliefs in 1996, Hanson replied "I'd call myself agnostic."⁶⁵

It is unclear whether Senator Hanson is aware of the origins of the idea that Islam is not a religion. She has presumably heard of Pat Robertson and Rush Limbaugh and is aware of the general thrust of American far-right political rhetoric. It is a moot point whether she is aware of the likes of Ali Sina and Bill French, but she is singing from

⁶¹ See Twitter @PaulineHansonOZ

<https://twitter.com/paulinehansonoz/status/806028372203552768?lang=en> and https://twitter.com/PaulineHansonOz/status/806028067168604160?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

⁶² Senator Hanson also said One Nation would "lead the way" in insisting Queensland prohibit women wearing the burqa from obtaining drivers licences. See "We will ban the burqa: Hanson", [skynews.com.au](http://www.skynews.com.au), 16 January 2017, <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/top-stories/2017/01/16/we-will-ban-the-burqa--hanson.html> As in other Australia states, Queensland road authorities have long required facial identification for drivers licences, stating that “If you wear headwear for religious reasons, it must be adjusted so that all facial features from the bottom of your chin to top of your forehead (including both edges of your face) are clearly shown.” See <http://www.factcheckonenation.com.au/face-covering-for-id.html>

⁶³ One Nation policy on Islam, <http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/islam>

⁶⁴ “Pauline Hanson's 2016 maiden speech to the senate: Full transcript”, Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/pauline-hansons-2016-maiden-speech-to-the-senate-full-transcript-20160914-grgitm.html>

⁶⁵ “Pauline Hanson's Bitter Harvest”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1996 (republished 17 September 2014), <http://www.smh.com.au/good-weekend/gw-classics/pauline-hansons-bitter-harvest-20140828-109dbf.html>

their hymn sheet. In her approach to Islam and religious freedom she is channelling some of the more extreme aspects of American far right politics into the Australian political landscape. In both the United States and Australia denial of Islam's status as a religion is intended to deny the constitutionally protected human right of freedom of religion and belief. If left unchallenged this has the potential to significantly undermine respect for freedom of religion and potentially give a green light to acts of overt discrimination and hostility towards Australian Muslims and other minorities.

The populist right of Australian politics conspicuously celebrated President-elect Trump's victory in the United States, with Senator Hanson and her colleagues toasting Trump's victory with champagne in the front of Parliament House.⁶⁶ Senator Hanson described a subsequent "invitation" to attend President Trump's inauguration as a "fantastic opportunity".⁶⁷

The idea that Islam is not actually a religion is now espoused by people who will occupy positions at the highest levels of the US Government. Many other elements of One Nation's outlook and policies – for example its attacks on the United Nations and the Agenda 21 sustainable development action plan – have their origins in American far-right thinking and activism. It is likely that One Nation will continue to draw much inspiration and adopt ideas and policies from the US "alt-right" for some time to come.

One Nation's presence in the Australian Senate, indications of increased voter support for the party, its positions on issues including immigration and multiculturalism, climate change and the environment, welfare and taxation, as well as the rise of the populist right in the United States and Europe, all make scrutiny of Pauline Hanson and her party vitally important. One Nation is likely to be a significant force in Australian politics with consequent influence on public policy and debate for some time to come.

It should also be understood that One Nation's policies and rhetoric are not static and will continue to evolve, with shifted in emphasis and focus, including potentially

⁶⁶ "One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson makes toasts to Donald Trump victory", *news.com.au*, 9 November 2016, <http://www.news.com.au/national/politics/one-nation-senator-pauline-hanson-makes-toasts-donald-trump-to-victory/news-story/5f21193fe75fcafb3f90e6877a0bae4b>

⁶⁷ Senator Hanson indicated she was unable to attend the inauguration owing to prior political commitments and nominated Senator Burston to attend in her place. "One Nation leader Pauline Hanson invited to attend Donald Trump's presidential inauguration", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 January 2017, <http://www.smh.com.au/federalpolitics/political-news/one-nation-leader-pauline-hanson-invited-to-donald-trumps-presidentialinauguration-20170115-gts12a.html> It was subsequently revealed that Senator Hanson's 'invitation' to the inauguration had been facilitated by the Australian Embassy in Washington in response to repeated representations from One Nation. "One Nation pestered Australian embassy officials for Trump inauguration tickets", *Canberra Times*, 19 January 2017, <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/one-nation-pestered-australian-embassy-officials-for-trump-inauguration-tickets-20170118-gtu3bb.html>

widening its current preoccupation with Islam and Muslims to attack other minority groups. Significantly Senator Hanson first entered politics attacking Australia's Indigenous communities. Nor has she stepped away from her 1996 claim that Australia is "in danger of being swamped by Asians". Political opportunism and changing international circumstances, for example possible tensions or conflict between the US Trump Administration and China, could see One Nation refocus on another group that they do not regard as truly Australian.

This report is the first of a series that will examine other aspects of One Nation, their policies and pronouncements.

For people who are listening to One Nation, and even more importantly negotiating with Senator Hanson and her Senate colleagues in parliament or reporting their statements and policies in the media; it's always worth asking just where their ideas and words coming from.