

Who Is a “Terrorist” in Biden’s America?

Who Is a “Terrorist” in Biden’s America?

Far from being a war against “white supremacy,” the Biden administration’s new “domestic terror” strategy clearly targets primarily those who oppose US government overreach and those who oppose capitalism and/or globalization.

by [Whitney Webb](#), [The Last American Vagabond](#)

June 18, 2021

In the latest sign that the US government’s War on Domestic Terror is growing in scope and scale, the White House on Tuesday revealed the nation’s first ever [government-wide strategy](#) for confronting domestic terrorism. While cloaked in language about stemming racially motivated violence, the strategy places those deemed “anti-government” or “anti-authority” on a par with racist extremists and charts out policies that could easily be abused to silence or even criminalize online criticism of the government.

Even more disturbing is the call to essentially fuse intelligence agencies, law enforcement, Silicon Valley, and “community” and “faith-based” organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, as well as unspecified foreign governments, as partners in this “war,” which the strategy makes clear will rely heavily on a pre-crime orientation focused largely on what is said on social media and encrypted platforms. Though the strategy claims that the government will “shield free speech and civil liberties” in implementing this policy, its contents reveal that it is poised to gut both.

Indeed, while framed publicly as chiefly targeting “right-wing white supremacists,” the strategy itself makes it clear that the government does not plan to focus on the Right but instead will pursue “domestic terrorists” in “an ideologically neutral, threat-driven manner,” as the law “makes no distinction based on political view—left, right or center.” It also states that a key goal of this strategic framework is to ensure “that there is simply no governmental tolerance . . . of violence as an acceptable mode of seeking political or social change,” regardless of a perpetrator’s political affiliation.

Considering that the main cheerleaders for the War on Domestic Terror exist mainly in establishment left circles, such individuals should rethink their support for this new policy given that the above statements could easily come to encompass Black Lives Matter–related protests, such as those that transpired last summer, depending on which political party is in power.

Once the new infrastructure is in place, it will remain there and will be open to the same abuses perpetrated by both political parties in the US during the lengthy War on Terror following September 11, 2001. The history of this new “domestic terror” policy, including [its origins in the Trump administration](#), makes this clear.

It’s Never Been Easier to Be a “Terrorist”

In introducing the strategy, the Biden administration cites “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists” as a key reason for the new policy and a main justification for the War on Domestic Terror in general. This was most recently demonstrated Tuesday in Attorney General Merrick Garland’s [statement](#) announcing this new strategy. However, the document itself puts “anti-government” or “anti-authority” “extremists” in the same category as violent white supremacists in terms of being a threat to the homeland. The

strategy's characterization of such individuals is unsettling.

AG Merrick Garland: "In the FBI's view, the top domestic violent extremist threat comes from racially or ethically motivated violent extremists specifically those who advocate for the superiority of the white race."

pic.twitter.com/4JtruuMSv2

– Daily Caller (@DailyCaller) [June 15, 2021](#)

For instance, those who “violently oppose” “all forms of capitalism” or “corporate globalization” are listed under this less-discussed category of “domestic terrorist.” This highlights how people on the left, many of whom have called for capitalism to be dismantled or replaced in the US in recent years, could easily be targeted in this new “war” that many self-proclaimed leftists are currently supporting. Similarly, “environmentally-motivated extremists,” a category in which groups such as Extinction Rebellion could easily fall, are also included.

In addition, the phrasing indicates that it could easily include as “terrorists” those who oppose the World Economic Forum’s vision for global “stakeholder capitalism,” as that form of “capitalism” involves corporations and their main “stakeholders” creating a new global economic and governance system. The WEF’s stakeholder capitalism thus involves both “capitalism” and “corporate globalization.”

The strategy also includes those who “take steps to violently resist government authority . . . based on perceived overreach.” This, of course, creates a dangerous situation in which the government could, purposely or otherwise, implement a policy that is an obvious overreach and/or blatantly unconstitutional and then label those who resist it “domestic terrorists” and deal with them as such—well before the overreach can be challenged in court.

Another telling addition to this group of potential “terrorists” is “any other individual or group who engages in violence—or incites imminent violence—in opposition to legislative, regulatory or other actions taken by the government.” Thus, if the government implements a policy that a large swath of the population finds abhorrent, such as launching a new, unpopular war abroad, those deemed to be “inciting” resistance to the action online could be considered domestic terrorists.

Such scenarios are not unrealistic, given the loose way in which the government and the media have defined things like “incitement” and even “violence” (e. g., [“hate speech” is a form of violence](#)) in the recent past. The situation is ripe for manipulation and abuse. To think the federal government (including the Biden administration and subsequent administrations) would not abuse such power reflects an ignorance of US political history, particularly when the main forces behind most terrorist incidents in the nation are actually US government institutions [like the FBI](#) (more FBI examples [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

Furthermore, the original plans for [the detention of American dissidents](#) in the event of a national emergency, drawn up during the Reagan era as part of its “continuity of government” contingency, cited popular nonviolent opposition to US intervention in Latin America as a potential “emergency” that could trigger the activation of those plans. Many of those “continuity of government” protocols remain on the books today and can be triggered, depending on the whims of those in power. It is unlikely that this new domestic terror framework will be any different regarding nonviolent protest and demonstrations.

Yet another passage in this section of the strategy states that “domestic terrorists” can, “in some instances, connect and intersect with conspiracy theories and other forms of disinformation and misinformation.” It adds that the

proliferation of such “dangerous” information “on Internet-based communications platforms such as social media, file-upload sites and end-to-end encrypted platforms, all of these elements can combine and amplify threats to public safety.”

Thus, the presence of “conspiracy theories” and information deemed by the government to be “misinformation” online is itself framed as threatening public safety, a claim made more than once in this policy document. Given that a major “pillar” of the strategy involves eliminating online material that promotes “domestic terrorist” ideologies, it seems inevitable that such efforts will also “connect and intersect” with the censorship of “conspiracy theories” and narratives that the establishment finds inconvenient or threatening for any reason.

Pillars of Tyranny

The [strategy](#) notes in several places that this new domestic-terror policy will involve a variety of public-private partnerships in order to “build a community to address domestic terrorism that extends not only across the Federal Government but also to critical partners.” It adds, “That includes state, local, tribal and territorial governments, as well as foreign allies and partners, civil society, the technology sector, academic, and more.”

The mention of foreign allies and partners is important as it suggests a multinational approach to what is supposedly a US “domestic” issue and is [yet another step](#) toward a transnational security-state apparatus. A similar multinational approach was used to devastating effect during the CIA-developed [Operation Condor](#), which was used to target and “disappear” domestic dissidents in South America in the 1970s and 1980s. The foreign allies mentioned in the Biden administration’s strategy are left unspecified, but it seems likely that such allies would include the rest of the Five Eyes alliance (the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand) and

Israel, all of which already have well-established information-sharing agreements with the US for signals intelligence.

The new domestic-terror strategy has four main “pillars,” which can be summarized as (1) understanding and sharing domestic terrorism-related information, including with foreign governments and private tech companies; (2) preventing domestic terrorism recruitment and mobilization to violence; (3) disrupting and deterring domestic terrorism activity; and (4) confronting long-term contributors to domestic terrorism.

The first pillar involves the mass accumulation of data through new information-sharing partnerships and the deepening of existing ones. Much of this information sharing will involve increased data mining and analysis of statements made openly on the internet, particularly on social media, something already done by US intelligence contractors such as [Palantir](#). While the gathering of such information has been ongoing for years, this policy allows even more to be shared and legally used to make cases against individuals deemed to have made threats or expressed “dangerous” opinions online.

Included in the first pillar is the need to increase engagement with financial institutions concerning the financing of “domestic terrorists.” US banks, such as Bank of America, have already gone quite far in this regard, leading to accusations that it has begun acting like an intelligence agency. Such claims were made after it [was revealed](#) that the BofA had passed to the government the private banking information of over two hundred people that the bank deemed as pointing to involvement in the events of January 6, 2021. It seems likely, given this passage in the strategy, that such behavior by banks will soon become the norm, rather than an outlier, in the United States.

The second pillar is ostensibly focused on preventing the online recruitment of domestic terrorists and online content

that leads to the “mobilization of violence.” The strategy notes that this pillar “means reducing both supply and demand of recruitment materials by limiting widespread availability online and bolstering resilience to it by those who nonetheless encounter it.” The strategy states that such government efforts in the past have a “mixed record,” but it goes on to claim that trampling on civil liberties will be avoided because the government is “consulting extensively” with unspecified “stakeholders” nationwide.

Regarding recruitment, the strategy states that “these activities are increasingly happening on Internet-based communications platforms, including social media, online gaming platforms, file-upload sites and end-to-end encrypted platforms, even as those products and services frequently offer other important benefits.” It adds that “the widespread availability of domestic terrorist recruitment material online is a national security threat whose front lines are overwhelmingly private-sector online platforms.”

The US government plans to provide “information to assist online platforms with their own initiatives to enforce their own terms of service that prohibits the use of their platforms for domestic terrorist activities” as well as to “facilitate more robust efforts outside the government to counter terrorists’ abuse of Internet-based communications platforms.”

Given the wider definition of “domestic terrorist” that now includes those who oppose capitalism and corporate globalization as well as those who resist government overreach, online content discussing these and other “anti-government” and “anti-authority” ideas could soon be treated in the same way as online Al Qaeda or ISIS propaganda. Efforts, however, are unlikely to remain focused on these topics. As [Unlimited Hangout reported](#) last November, both UK intelligence and the US national-security state were developing plans to treat critical reporting on the COVID-19

vaccines as “extremist” propaganda.

Another key part of this pillar is the need to “increase digital literacy” among the American public, while censoring “harmful content” disseminated by “terrorists” as well as by “hostile foreign powers seeking to undermine American democracy.” The latter is a clear reference to the claim that critical reporting of US government policy, particularly its military and intelligence activities abroad, was the product of “Russian disinformation,” a now discredited claim that was used to heavily censor independent media. This new government strategy appears to promise more of this sort of thing.

It also notes that “digital literacy” education for a domestic audience is being developed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Such a policy would have previously violated US law until the Obama administration worked with Congress [to repeal the Smith-Mundt Act](#), thus lifting the ban on the government directing propaganda at domestic audiences.

The third pillar of the strategy seeks to increase the number of federal prosecutors investigating and trying domestic-terror cases. Their numbers are likely to jump as the definition of “domestic terrorist” is expanded. It also seeks to explore whether “legislative reforms could meaningfully and materially increase our ability to protect Americans from acts of domestic terrorism while simultaneously guarding against potential abuse of overreach.” In contrast to past public statements on police reform by those in the Biden administration, the strategy calls to “empower” state and local law enforcement to tackle domestic terrorism, including with increased access to “intelligence” on citizens deemed dangerous or subversive for any number of reasons.

To that effect, the strategy states the following (p. 24):

“The Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Department of Homeland Security, with support from the

National Counterterrorism Center [part of the intelligence community], are incorporating an increased focus on domestic terrorism into current intelligence products and leveraging current mechanisms of information and intelligence sharing to improve the sharing of domestic terrorism-related content and indicators with non-Federal partners. These agencies are also improving the usability of their existing information-sharing platforms, including through the development of mobile applications designed to provide a broader reach to non-Federal law enforcement partners, while simultaneously refining that support based on partner feedback."

Such an intelligence tool could easily be, for example, Palantir, which is already used by the intelligence agencies, the DHS, and several US police departments for "predictive policing," that is, pre-crime actions. Notably, Palantir has long included a "[subversive](#)" label for individuals included on government and law enforcement databases, a parallel with the controversial and highly [secretive Main Core database](#) of US dissidents.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas made the "pre-crime" element of the new domestic terror strategy explicit on Tuesday when he said in a statement that DHS would continue "developing key partnerships with local stakeholders through the [Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships](#) (CP3) to identify potential threats and prevent terrorism." CP3, which replaced DHS' Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention this past May, officially "supports communities across the United States to prevent individuals from radicalizing to violence and intervene when individuals have already radicalized to violence."

The fourth pillar of the strategy is by far the most opaque and cryptic, while also the most far-reaching. It aims to address the sources that cause "terrorists" to mobilize "towards violence." This requires "tackling racism in

America,” a lofty goal for an administration headed by the man who [controversially eulogized](#) Congress’ most ardent segregationist and who was [a key architect](#) of the 1994 crime bill. As well, it provides for “early intervention and appropriate care for those who pose a danger to themselves or others.”

In regard to the latter proposal, the Trump administration, in a bid to “stop mass shootings before they occur,” considered a proposal to create a [“health DARPA” or “HARPA”](#) that would monitor the online communications of everyday Americans for “neuropsychiatric” warning signs that someone might be “mobilizing towards violence.” While the Trump administration did not create HARPA or adopt this policy, the Biden administration [has recently announced plans](#) to do so.

Finally, the strategy indicates that this fourth pillar is part of a “broader priority”: “enhancing faith in government and addressing the extreme polarization, fueled by a crisis of disinformation and misinformation often channeled through social media platforms, which can tear Americans apart and lead some to violence.” In other words, fostering trust in government while simultaneously censoring “polarizing” voices who distrust or criticize the government is a key policy goal behind the Biden administration’s new domestic-terror strategy.

Calling Their Shots?

While this is a new strategy, its origins lie in the Trump administration. In October 2019, Trump’s attorney general William Barr [formally announced](#) in a memorandum that a new “national disruption and early engagement program” aimed at detecting those “mobilizing towards violence” before they commit any crime would launch in the coming months. That program, known as DEEP (Disruption and Early Engagement Program), is now active and has involved the Department of Justice, the FBI, and “private sector partners” since its

creation.

Barr's announcement of DEEP followed his unsettling "prediction" in July 2019 that "a major incident may occur at any time that will galvanize public opinion on these issues." Not long after that speech, a spate of mass shootings occurred, including the El Paso Walmart shooting, which killed twenty-three and about which many questions [remain unanswered](#) regarding the FBI's apparent foreknowledge of the event. After these events took place in 2019, Trump called for the creation of a government backdoor into encryption and the very pre-crime system that Barr announced shortly thereafter in October 2019. The Biden administration, in publishing this strategy, is merely finishing what Barr started.

Indeed, a "prediction" like Barr's in 2019 was offered by the DHS' Elizabeth Neumann during a Congressional hearing in late February 2020. That hearing was largely ignored by the media as it coincided with an international rise of concern regarding COVID-19. [At the hearing](#), Neumann, who previously coordinated the development of the government's post-9/11 terrorism information sharing strategies and policies and worked closely with the intelligence community, gave the following warning about an imminent "domestic terror" event in the United States:

"And every counterterrorism professional I speak to in the federal government and overseas feels like we are at the doorstep of another 9/11, maybe not something that catastrophic in terms of the visual or the numbers, but that we can see it building and we don't quite know how to stop it."

This "another 9/11" emerged on January 6, 2021, as the events of that day in the Capitol were quickly labeled as such by both the media and prominent politicians, while also inspiring calls from the White House and the Democrats for a "9/11-style

commission” to investigate the incident. This event, of course, figures prominently in the justification for the new domestic-terror strategy, despite the considerable video and other evidence that shows that [Capitol law enforcement](#), and potentially the FBI, were [directly involved](#) in [facilitating the breach](#) of the Capitol. In addition, when one considers that the QAnon movement, which had a clear role in the events of January 6, was itself likely a [government-orchestrated psyop](#), the government hand in creating this situation seems clear.

It goes without saying that the official reasons offered for these militaristic “domestic terror” policies, which the US has already implemented abroad—causing much more terror than it has prevented—does not justify the creation of a massive new national-security infrastructure that aims to criminalize and censor online speech. Yet the admission that this new strategy, as part of a broader effort to “enhance faith in government,” combines domestic propaganda campaigns with the censorship and pursuit of those who distrust government heralds the end of even the illusion of democracy in the United States.

[Connect with The Last American Vagabond](#)