



## Inauguration Day Statement

*What happens next? How to respond to the attack on the U.S. Capitol.*

The events of January 6 — and subsequent threats against all 50 state capitols and Washington, DC — have been met with strong law enforcement and military response. Those responsible for January 6 must be prosecuted. But expanding surveillance, monitoring, and prosecution of extremist groups cannot be the only solution to rising extremist violence and radicalization. On this Inauguration Day, we urge the Biden Administration and others to think beyond this immediate crisis and develop critical, evidence-based approaches to counter radicalization, build community resilience, and prevent violent extremism. The Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University calls on the US government, its allies, and the private sector, to invest in infrastructure addressing four core issues:

- **Reduce vulnerability to disinformation and propaganda.** This includes the design, testing, and implementation of evidence-based prevention and intervention. Such programs should aim to improve media literacy and help people Americans of all ages recognize and avoid disinformation, misinformation, propaganda, and the persuasive techniques of terrorist and extremist groups as well as the roots of structural racism and its impact on extremist recruitment and radicalization.
- **Build off-ramps and deradicalization pathways for those ready to exit extremism.** Deradicalization and disengagement of committed extremists is difficult, but not impossible. But empirically supported best practices are few and far between, with insufficient standards, monitoring, and evaluation of programs. Attention should be focused both on developing new methods to deradicalize the hard core and to supporting empirically proven methods to deradicalize those flirting with extremist ideas.
- **Stop the spread of disinformation and propaganda.** Social media and technology companies can take the first step to sever ties with extremists and hate groups. We urge the tech sector to develop clearer and stricter moderation practices against hate and harassment. Algorithmic recommendations must be reworked to reduce incendiary propaganda. And technology companies, educators and policymakers need training and support to better recognize extremist symbols, codes and slogans.
- **Address far-right penetration of law enforcement, security services, the military, and veterans.** Data collection and reporting programs should be developed to determine the prevalence of extremism in our security services. Sanctions for participation in extremist groups should be expanded. We must also provide training and support to our military and veteran communities to help them recognize and address extremist radicalization and signs of extremism.

The events of January 6 embody a clear and present national security risk. As we focus on the immediate needs for safety and prosecution of those responsible, we must also focus on what lies ahead. Now is the time for investment in prevention, intervention, and training to interrupt radicalization.

For more information on projects PERIL has worked on or is currently working on, please visit [american.edu/PERIL](https://american.edu/PERIL) and follow along on Twitter [@PERIL\\_AU](https://twitter.com/PERIL_AU).