



On February 23, 2021, CNA held the first event for its Inclusive National Security initiative—@InclusiveNatSec on Twitter—to explore the intersection of structural bias and national security. The event, held in partnership with Black Women in International Affairs (BWINTAF), focused on racism in terrorism and counterterrorism. The keynote speaker was Lieutenant General (Ret) Michael Nagata, a Strategic Advisor and Senior Vice President at CACI, and formerly the Director of Strategic Operational Planning for the US National Counterterrorism Center (2016 to 2019). The event moderator was Dr. Samer Shehata, Associate Professor in Middle East Studies in the Department of International and Area Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Below are some major takeaways from the discussion.

Reflections from LTG(R) Nagata:

- In the last few decades, US government actors have deployed to a staggering variety of countries, and too often we are unprepared to navigate the complex societies we encounter. Though unintentional in most cases, our ignorance and clumsiness are liabilities. At best they signal disinterest, and at worst they signal disrespect or bias. Terrorist groups can use these mistakes to incite everything from mistrust to hatred.
- Across administrations, a consistent and disabling decline in funding and personnel for the Department of State has hampered the US government's ability to recruit, train, and deploy the best possible Foreign Service personnel to further US interests amidst increasingly complex challenges.
- The US government has marginally improved pre-deployment training and education designed to address complex environments. However, it remains underinvested in these efforts, especially in so-called "soft skills" such as language proficiency, historical awareness, and cultural and political sophistication.
- In addressing the foreign terrorist threat over recent decades, it has become clear that we can't kill our way to victory, though we have become very good at saving lives. Similarly, in addressing domestic violent extremism, we won't be able to arrest our way to a solution, though we have become very good at such apprehensions. There is an urgent need for more scholarship on *why* people become violent extremists; the dearth of empirical research is dangerous, and fundamentally impairs efforts to prevent the growth of all forms of terrorism.
- The temptation to demonize that which we oppose is irresistible to some, no matter how unjust or strategically unwise. This has occurred in the past and is happening again with the demonization of China and other antagonists. Demonization "feels good" but is both intellectually lazy and foolish.
- Diversity and inclusion are complex challenges that require strategic patience to address. While organizational programs and training initiatives are important, enabling strong and effective leadership matters more. Effective leaders can change what people think, believe, and value.
- Having US military and diplomatic leadership better reflect the diversity of the American population is indeed helpful, but it is unclear how much positive change, and how quickly, this will effect, given the powerful national security currents and constructs that exist at the highest levels of decision-making.

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