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# Trends. Personnel Security in an Age of Terrorism with Global Reach

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses what an appropriate level of commitment to a security bureaucracy might look like.

An important criterion in selecting, reevaluating, and managing people in security bureaucracies, including terrorist networks, is a sense of commitment to that bureaucracy. Not strong enough and even too strong, and there may be a significant security risk.

Part of assessing commitment within United States (US) security bureaucracies might involve identifying and delineating what it means to be an "American," even as employing this term just for US citizens smacks of ethnocentrism and hubris. To this end, a recently published study by Tsai et al. (2002) compares what being an American means for Asian Americans and European Americans. The relevance of the article bears not so much on what the specific findings are or on how finely honed the comparison groups should be. Instead, personnel security assessors should note that the meaning of commitment and that meaning's relationship with the psychodynamics and life narratives of individuals, as opposed to just degree of commitment, may help encourage prudent personnel selection. (See Bar-Tal, D. (1993). Patriotism as fundamental beliefs of group members. *Politics and the Individual*, 3, 45-62; Stern, P.C. (1996). Nationalism as reconstructed altruism. *Political Psychology*, 17, 569-572; Tsai, J.L., Mortensen, H., Wong, Y., & Hess, D. (2002). What does "Being American" mean? A comparison of Asian American and European American young adults. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 8, 257-273; Wilson, P.A. (1995). The effects of politics and power on the organizational commitment of federal executives. *Journal of Management*, 21, 101-118.) (Keywords: Bureaucracy, Identity, Security.)