



IDENTIFYING PREDICTIVE GRAY ZONE INDICATIONS THROUGH PEOPLE'S VALUES

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Background

Indications, by their very nature are behavioral – produced or communicated by people. The first approach to identifying Gray Zone indications should be to identify the key players in the Gray Zone, and assess their motivations, not just observe their behavior. Without understanding motivations, we may not be able to choose appropriate responses, and we will certainly not be able to get ahead of the game. It is interesting to note that many of our adversaries or potential adversaries seem to have serious visions for who they are and what they want to achieve. That puts them in positions to develop Gray Zone campaigns ahead of time:

China – to become the pre-eminent global superpower by 2049

Russia – to regain the land, power and status it had prior to 1917

ISIL – to establish a new Caliphate from Europe to Asia

Do we really understand what these visions mean for us and what we might do about them? We are already behind the curve, as we do not have a vision for ourselves, and so we will always be in a reactive mode. However, we may be able to create better thought-through responses if we understand motivations of the leaders and followers in both nation-state and non-nation state conflicts. Indications of Gray Zone activity are likely to be rather different, depending on whether it involves nation states or non-nation state actors. Let us look at non-nation state actors first.

Motivations and Indications for non-nation states

Many concepts that work well in the commercial world have failed miserably when translated into defense applications. However, there is one that is still to realize its full potential in the defense arena. That is the concept of individual and group values that underpin both motivations and propensities, and that enable much more reliable targeting and prediction. By their very nature, indicators have to be about behavior. But many different people may do the same things but for very different reasons. So understanding behavior is not enough. As a trivial example, three young guys with the same demographics may buy the same make and model of a sports car for different reasons. The first buys it because it's very safe, it hugs the road, and it's made with good, solid, German engineering. The second buys it because it looks good, and it has plenty of room for his fashionable girlfriend's luggage. And the third buys it because he loves the deep, throaty roar of the engine, it can corner at amazing speeds, and he loves the sense of freedom it gives with the top down and the feel of the elements around him. So if we are wanting to sell our car, the more we understand about motivation, the better we are likely to do. And since we know which group is growing and which is declining, we can predict the reasons for purchase, and change the marketing and advertising accordingly.

Another simple example - many years ago, when healthy eating began to emerge as a trend, we were working for Unilever, and they were wanting to know what was likely to be next in trends towards healthy eating. They didn't need to assess the entire population – only the people whose values gave

them a propensity towards healthy eating. And then they were able to discover their particular requirements, and then target those people with appropriate advertising.

The world is too large and complex to be able to take the time to assess every population everywhere, or even in countries or regions of interest, so the more we are able to narrow our focus on specific high propensity targets, the faster and more effective we will be

ISIL/AQ

Only a few years ago, who would have imagined that what appeared to be a rag-tag group of terrorists would have had such an impact on the US and allies? Who was Osama bin Laden? Who is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi? How did this seemingly quiet, scholarly man from Samarra gain such a command of the Islamic State, and persuade young men and women from around the world to join him?

The notion of a Caliphate has been around for a long time, and young men who see themselves looked down upon by the West and their own societies, and who see the riches in the West and in many of their own societies, compared to what they have, are ripe for a rebellion. When the “Moors” were kicked out of Spain in the period from 1492 to 1609, many of them took the keys to their houses, vowing that they or their descendants would return. And more recently, the Ottoman Empire, created by Turkish tribes in Anatolia (Asia Minor) grew to be one of the most powerful states in the world during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Ottoman period spanned more than 600 years and came to an end only in 1922, when it was replaced by the nominally secular Turkish Republic and various successor states in southeastern Europe and the Middle East. A Caliphate can seem a very real and current vision.

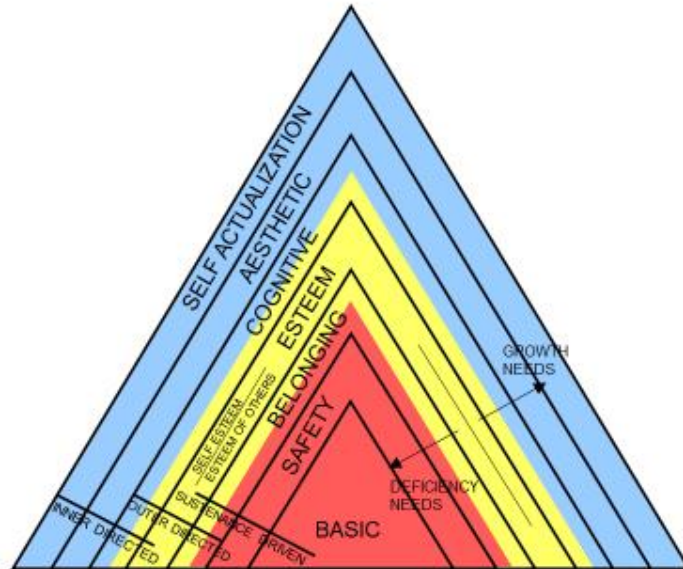
So what kind of person becomes a foreign fighter or terrorist for ISIL/AQ and for what reasons? Some have grievances – they feel shame and resentment because of who and what they are in a society. They want more – more status, more wealth, more honor and so they do it to gain power and status by demonstrating their prowess at fighting and killing. Some do it out of revenge for friends/family who have been killed or injured. Some see it as exciting and even romantic. And a few others will do it for ideological reasons. There is no “one size fits all.” Their propensities to do this are based on both circumstances and, more importantly, on their values.

Values

Values underpin every aspect of society, including its culture, politics, economy, industry, attitudes, and they provide the basis for understanding the context within which people live and operate. This paper discusses a values model of the Human Domain that has been used successfully in many countries around the world, that can identify the values of people with different propensities – to become terrorists, for instance. Values are long term, and underpin attitudes and lifestyles. Thus they can be used to forecast behavior much more reliably than models that use only extrapolation of behavior. Also, because values operate at a deep emotional level, messages that appeal to values are far more influential than messages that address attitudes or behavior. Values explain what makes people “tick.”

Our values model is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹, and augmented by the work of Shalom Schwartz, Geert Hofstede², Ron Inglehart³, Cultural Dynamics⁴ and others. Many people are familiar with Maslow's hierarchy, but there are two aspects of it that are often overlooked.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



The first is the deficit needs / growth needs barrier, and crossing it can be a difficult process. The second is the level of psychological maturity and locus of control of each of the different groups. The maturity and locus of control increase as one passes through the hierarchy from **Sustenance** to **Self-Actualization**. What this means is that people who are in the growth need part of the hierarchy have a greater locus of control and can exert influence on, and control, those with deficit needs.

We have called people with basic through belonging values **Sustenance Driven** – their focus is surviving and belonging, and they are pushing towards wanting the esteem of others. These people are dependent (on family, friends, government...) and have a group or collective orientation. Their focus is narrow and their locus of control is relatively small. Unless they or their families are affected by events, they just want to be left alone to get on with their lives.

The **Outer Directed**s span the esteem needs – seeking the esteem of others and developing self-esteem. Their whole orientation is about *Me*, and they see themselves as independent and focused on external measures of self-worth. Their focus is broader, but it is still all about themselves; their locus of control is also broader – they actively seek power and control over others. They want to be seen to be successful in terms of power, status and wealth, and so many leaders in business and politics have these values. If they are in situations where they see themselves as shamed, disadvantaged or lacking, then

¹ Maslow, Abraham, *Motivation and Personality*, Harper Row, NY 1954, 1987, pp15-45

² Hofstede, Geert, *Cultures and Organizations*, McGraw-Hill International (UK) 1991

³ Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1997

⁴ Cultural Dynamics Strategy & Marketing, a sister company, has provided the values and map data shown in this paper.

they will do anything they can to get out of those circumstances, including taking revenge. Their “teetering” between deficit needs and growth needs is what makes them uncertain and dangerous.

The **Inner Directed**s are moving towards the values of self-actualization. They have the broadest systems perspective, even going so far as accepting a perspective of universal interdependence, and their focus and locus of control are broad. They have their own *internal* ideas of success, not external ones. Many of them are motivated by a desire to do good, to help people. In that sense, they are idealists, but when they perceive what they believe is some form of injustice, or things not going the way they think they should, they can become ideological. And, since they have the greatest span of locus of control, they can exert their power and influence over others. An Inner Directed “gone bad” can be very dangerous.

So why is all this of importance for the Gray Zone?

Values, Motivations and Propensities

Many years ago some British colleagues⁵ identified a group of values that they called the “Danger Zone” – see the values map below.



They discovered them while conducting a project on money-laundering, and have since observed them in almost every country. They are people who have propensities towards criminality, violence and more. These people (mostly young males), who can be found with the “Danger Zone” values, are not likely to be the leaders of the adversarial groups, but they are certainly likely to be close followers. They are people who are in transition between deficit needs and growth needs. They are leaving one set of

⁵ Cultural Dynamics Strategy & Marketing

values – and all their families and friends who share them – and are moving into the unknown, sometimes by choice, but often not. One critical idea here is that they still have the Sustenance need to belong to a group, which may lead them into terrorist groups, especially if those groups offer opportunity for success. They see the opportunities in the world “out there” but they have not yet developed the esteem of others that enables them to develop confidence and self-esteem. They have typical young men’s passion, drive and aggression. They want to make their mark in the world, be seen to be good at what they do, respected for their success and, if they have no conventional means for doing that, they may choose terrorism. In some respects this transition is a normal psychological state for young adult males who have not been socialized in a Western sense. It’s not an aberration, as many believe. By identifying these kinds of people in the general population through surveys and social media data collection, we can also identify their sources of information, their access to electronic and hard media, and their choices of physical and virtual hangouts and social media. Obviously we are unlikely to get terrorists to respond to surveys, but we can get people with similar values, and thereby learn more about their motivations and behavior. By understanding their values, we can identify the kinds of messages – content, tone, media ...and even music and color – that appeal to them.

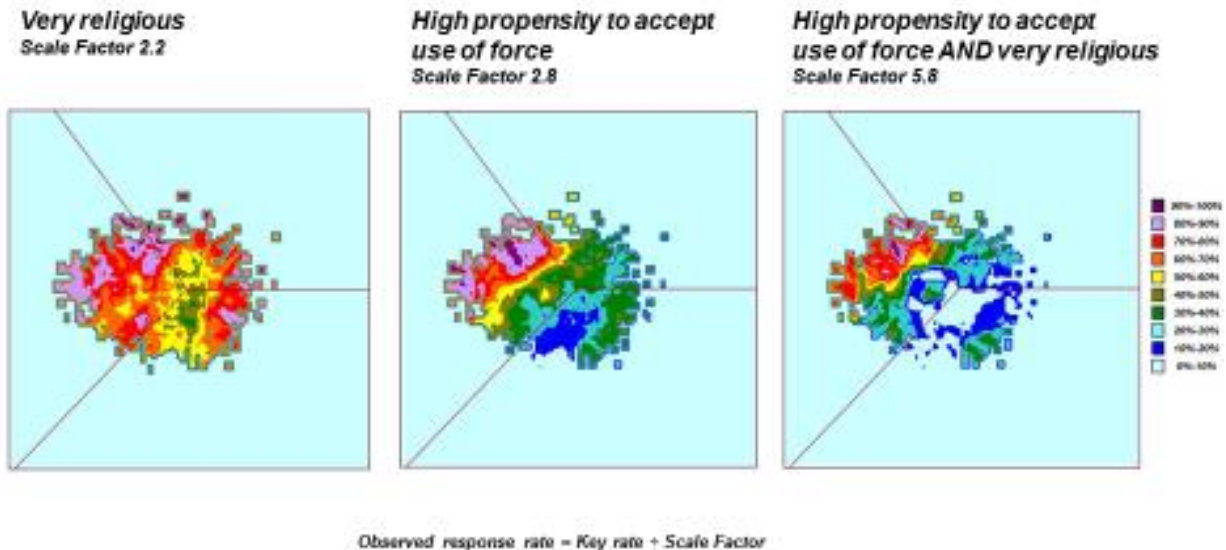
Their leaders are a different story – generally looking for power and success, for instance, or with ideals that have been thwarted and have thus embittered them, causing them to develop opposing organizations or movements. We have identified other zones on the map that are associated with power and ideology. The specific values of leaders can be estimated by examining and analyzing their speeches.

Companies that scrape and analyze social media – some even in real time – can be focused or directed more precisely to look for people with these Danger Zone Values, their families, their leaders, and the others with whom they are associating, rather than scraping everything. We can analyze their messages on social media and, since we know their motivations, we can assess what they are likely to be doing next. Our messaging can be targeted more precisely, too, both to the Danger Zone individuals and their families. Messages that appeal to values go in “deeper” and last longer than those that appeal only to behavior.

If we look at Indonesia as an example – see the maps overleaf – we can examine the values of those who are both very religious and willing to use force. About 5% of the Indonesian population is in this dual, religious/use of force category. And, as can be seen from the heat maps, those values (indicated by purple and red) lie in and close to the Danger Zone. Does this group offer a threat – and to whom? If we anticipate that Indonesia could become an ally of AQ or ISIL, then this group is one that will be worth watching for several reasons: we could anticipate their future actions by watching their behavior and monitoring their communications, and use the results of those to identify their leaders. Could we influence that group? We could probably influence some of them, by offering other means to channel their energy and aggression, although it is not immediately clear what those might be. When thinking about this for another country, several people suggested opening factories to employ them. That will not work. These young men want to have excitement and a purpose in their lives, not just employment. High-tech companies, music and entertainment might work for them, but the investment might be difficult to acquire. Some kind of military or semi-military program that benefits them and the country might be an answer.

We might have more difficulty influencing the really hard-liners, or their leaders, who are likely to have different values as mentioned above, although by understanding their motivations, we may have a better chance. We could also influence those who are close to them, those in their families, or foreign sponsors through creative means.

Example – Indonesia



Motivations – Nation States

Nations have values based on the values of their populations. A nation that is predominantly **Sustenance Driven** (some African and Central Asian countries, for instance) will tend to be traditional, with well-developed customs, mores and ways of doing things. It is likely to be poorer and more agricultural than others. A nation that is **Outer Directed** will be seeking to grow and develop economically and socially, improving its educational systems and the skills and health of its population (China, India...). And, depending on the values of its leaders (most of whom are likely to be **Outer Directed**, also, it may want to expand through conquest. A nation that is Inner Directed (USA, Australia, Scandinavian countries) will be more concerned about fairness, justice and protecting not only its citizens, but those of other countries. Yet, at the present time, many of these countries have **Outer Directed** leaders. And there is another consideration here – the cultural dimensions identified by Geert Hofstede⁶, which may be a useful area for exploration. Hofstede has identified a dimension he calls “Masculinity” and we have called its opposite “Maternalism.” A high score (Masculine) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by

⁶ Geert Hofstede, *Op Cit*

competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner/best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organizational life.

A low score (Maternalism) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A Maternal society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. So while the USA, Australia and Scandinavian countries are all **Inner Directed**, the US and Australia are Masculine, and the Scandinavian countries are Maternal,

Taking **China**, for instance. More than 70% of the Chinese population is **Outer Directed** – and the rest is divided equally between Sustenance Driven and Inner Directed. Thus, as a nation, it has a huge desire for success, power, prestige and wealth. China has always been renowned for its long-term thinking and strategies. From some of Geert Hofstede's work, that can be >100 years, so it is willing to take its time to build that success. And from other Hofstede cultural dimensions, China is collective, hierarchical and now "masculine" – success oriented and driven. China will take a very authoritarian approach to its dealings with others, and it is likely to be actively aggressive, as we are seeing especially in the South China Sea. In other words, it is likely to push the bounds in Gray Zone conflict. We have not yet conducted a values analysis of the leaders, but it looks as though Xi Jinping is very much an Outer Directed, operating in a collective, rather than individual, society, but he appears to be seeking power for the nation, not just for his own personal power.

For many years, the Chinese military has been speaking about "all available means" – military and non-military – and we are seeing this, not only with its current activities in the South China Sea, but with its purchase of strategic port facilities such as Long Beach, Seattle and Boston, Djibouti and Piraeus. China is becoming a master of Lawfare, described by Dunlap⁷ as "the use of law as a weapon of war." In addition, it is purchasing US toll-roads, US companies that are part of strategic industries, and is developing the new Silk Road⁸ to connect its economy to the rest of Asia, Middle East, Europe and Africa. China has also shipped vast quantities of micro-chips and electronic connectors to defense contractors in the US – some of which have been found to be counterfeit and some with back-door Trojan horses. And many people are not aware how much China is working to destabilize Africa through all kinds of activities from help (roads, industry) to hindering (ivory and rhino horn smuggling.) China recently pledged \$60 billion in aid to Africa, and as the Washington Post reported, when China gives aid to African governments, those governments generally become more corrupt and violent⁹.

We have been observing all these Gray Zone indications for years, so why have we not done more about them – especially those that are taking place in the US and allies' countries?

Russia clearly has some long-term strategies that have been cooking for some time. We do not have values data for Russia yet, but from observation, we would estimate that its population is significantly **Sustenance Driven**, with strong, **Outer Directed** leadership. While we have not analyzed Putin's personal values, from the images of him in the media (bare-chested on horseback, for instance) he seems to be an archetypal **Outer Directed** motivated by personal power that is strongly related to his

⁷ Dunlap, Law and Military Interventions: Preserving Humanitarian Values in 21st Century Conflicts (29 November 2001).

⁸ <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/03/28/china-lays-out-path-to-one-belt-one-road/>

⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/12/02/when-china-gives-aid-to-african-governments-they-become-more-violent/?tid=a_inl

own personal desires for national power. Outer Directed people can be quite thin-skinned, and when thwarted or shamed, can become very aggressive.

Hofstede suggests that the Russian society at large is very collective and hierarchical, but in a “Maternal” sense – which fits with a more **Sustenance Driven** society.

Only a few years ago, the US and NATO saw Russia as no longer a risk, and began to think about draw-down in Europe, even as they contributed to military conversion programs that, incidentally, enabled the technological modernization of Russia’s strategic nuclear triad in the name of “peace.” For a while in the early 1990s there was brief, but not serious, discussion of Ukraine and Russia joining NATO. However, Putin’s **Outer Directed** values are now really coming to the fore with his expansionist actions. His ultimate aim is to re-establish Russia’s rule over the lands it held before the 1917 revolution – which would include Finland, the Baltic States and part of Poland as well as the former Soviet Union – warns Ian Bond of the Center for European Reform. What about its ambitions in the Arctic, for which Russia is building a dozen new icebreakers to exploit mineral and oil wealth that it has claimed across the Arctic Ocean to North America? And now, General Sir Richard Shirreff, from Britain, who served at the second highest NATO military office in Europe between 2011 and 2014, has written a fictional book about a nuclear war with Russia in 2017 triggered by a dispute of the Baltic nations. Shirreff said the story is based on an “entirely plausible” scenario.

Again, there were many indications of Putin’s aggression that we ignored, and we still do not have in place a proper strategy for dealing with them. But we should observe carefully what is going on, assess its implications and be prepared to deal with whatever it is.

Conclusions

Values are the best way we know to understand *why* people (and therefore nations) are taking the actions they are taking. In all these cases, if we had understood more about the values of ISIL, China and Russia, and more about their leaders in values terms, we could have anticipated their actions better. It is still not too late to think about the future of all of these in both values and Hofstede terms. And it would be useful to consider other potential adversaries in these terms, too. Values can be used at tactical, operational and strategic levels – both to assess situations in terms of why they are happening, and to forecast them. Indeed one of the main ways we use values is to develop scenarios based on them, since we can game all the leadership’s and populations’ values to identify motivations as well as behavior. They can also provide very useful input into “all available means” conducted by us – including subversion, political and psychological warfare.