

## Getting to Green (G2G) Workshop Introduction

### Background

Throughout our nation's history, we have faced significant challenges to understand, explain and predict terrorist behaviors and activities that threaten US interests. Although there is a plethora of theories and research, as seen in this link, "[theory of terrorism](#)," we have no agreed upon theory that informs coherent and consistent successes in combating terrorism directed against US interests at home and abroad, nor do we truly understand the environment in which actors involved in terrorism and counterterrorism interact.

Arguably, we have difficulty in visualizing a system of interdependent parts strengthened by an interconnected environment that facilitates successful terrorism behaviors or retards growth in some cases. As what is probably the world's best positioned actor to counter the emergence and outgrowth of terrorism threats, the US all too often finds itself underperforming in the clashes or misjudging the context of the conflict between terrorist adversaries and our way of life.

One of our most serious challenges seems to be that terrorists are more effective in coevolving against the forces that seek to prevent their behaviors than their targets or potential adversaries are. Practitioners of terrorism learn to harness the circumstances and surroundings that foster their success and adapt more quickly than we do, leaving the US blind to opportunities with little choice but to react and thus narrowing our strategic choices for affirmative adaptation and action.

Counterterrorism net assessment (CT-NA) offers us one of the most effective tools we have to understand the environment that enables terrorism and to learn how to mitigate and reduce its spread and influence in the most economical way possible.<sup>1</sup> CT-NA seeks to understand the entire system of terrorist behavior and the supporting environment through a holistic examination of as many of the components as we can identify and model the competition in a complex environment.

Traditionally, the US has thought of US-adversary interactions as reflected in the model of **Red** (adversary) versus **Blue** (US interests, the US homeland). This model is overly constraining when we consider violent non-state actors and terrorism. To help us overcome those constraints we hypothesize there is a "**Green**" environment in which **Red** and **Blue** exist and interact. This interaction of **Blue**, **Green**, and **Red** is conceptualized as a coevolutionary ecosystem of competing interests and ideas where threats and opportunities abound and where interactions generate new and unknown outcomes.

### Purpose of our Workshop

It is the purpose of our workshop at Krasnow Institute to explore the validity of our main hypothesis and adequately define several key terms and concepts that will guide the development of CT-NA and the US strategy that will operationalize these net assessments. We want to conduct this exploration in the context of an interdisciplinary science standpoint. This is not yet about policy, but about establishing a theoretical foundation from which to build the diagnostic CT-NA capability that will inform policy.

Simply stated, we wish to better understand how **Red** and **Blue** interact with and within this **Green** environment. Gaining a richer understanding of the **Green** Environment, its connectivity and its dependencies is

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<sup>1</sup> By the term "Net Assessment" we mean the "multidisciplinary approach to national security analysis that is comparative, diagnostic, and forward-looking" ([Skypek, 2010](#)).

our fundamental requirement to satisfy this goal. In order to enhance our study and articulation of the ecology of **Green**, we need simple constructs to show us the nuances of the interactions between them.

Simple concepts can guide and inform our understanding of the complexity of the environment in which the tactic of terrorism has thrived. An interdisciplinary science perspective can encourage us to apply some rigor in our exploration. To initially frame the discussions that will take place at Krasnow, we propose two main themes: *The Ecological Imperative*; and *Initial Conditions Matter*. We may adjourn concluding that these two themes are inappropriate, but this is where we'll start on the morning of 5 December!

1. By *The Ecological Imperative*, we will explore: a), are we accurate in proposing that the environment in which **Red** and **Blue** interact may be modeled as an ecological system in the spirit of typical definitions such as that offered by [Biology On-Line](#): "the science concerned with the interactions of living organisms with each other and with their environment"? ; and b), if this definition is adequate, can we characterize terrorism in the context of interactions, emergence, evolution (e.g., coevolution) and the environment in which it exists?

2. By *Initial Conditions Matter*, we propose to explore the baseline and framework from which terrorism behaviors emerge, coevolve and mutate among terrorist groups, their targets and the environment that sustains terrorism behaviors. If the emergence and coevolution of "Actuals" occur as a result of the instantiating initial conditions, can we better understand these conditions and the interactions that lead to higher-order behaviors (the emergences) such that we can better "predict" both "Actuals" and "Possibles"?

### **Anticipated Outcomes of the Workshop**

Using these two initial organizing constructs (or the constructs that do evolve from the workshop), we seek the following "initial conditions" for the rest of the work we have to do in assessing **Blue**, **Green** and **Red**. Below are the objectives and the outcomes we admittedly over-optimistically desire:

- Development of meaningful metaphors and models that help us explain more clearly how **Green** functions and nurtures or dampens terrorism
- Exploration and articulation of suitable and common definitions of words and terms for use across all levels of government and academia that help us describe the enabling environment of terrorism
- Articulation of a beginning model of the "Ecology of **Blue**, **Red** and **Green**" and how such a study might help us more clearly understand **Green** and its enablement - or retarding - of terrorism behaviors
- Exploration of techniques and forms of connectivity **Red** uses to exploit **Green** to adapt and coevolve novel techniques and how we might better anticipate that coevolution
- Identification of specific factors of **Green** that would contribute to **Blue** success against **Red**
- An operationally focused, but academic-level discussion of relevant factors that enable terrorism
- Assessment of techniques such as computational models that will help us more fully observe potential environmental interactions so we might better learn how to counter and/or mitigate terrorism
- Rich synergies with the ongoing larger-scale **Red**, **Blue** and **Green** workshops

We acknowledge we will not likely obtain closure on all of these objectives. We present them to demonstrate what we hope to achieve in terms of eventually better understanding the relationship of **Green** to **Blue** and **Red**. Our understanding of the environment that enables terrorism behaviors is currently too limited to contribute to net assessment activities required to counter and mitigate terrorist events in the US and abroad. This workshop will help us bring forth the scientific rigor we think is required to achieve greater understanding as we learn more about the sciences that explain both **Blue** and **Red** behaviors and the technologies that empower success in counterterrorism.