Crafty Bastards® Spotlights are occasional products of Kiernan Group Holdings (KGH) that provide clients analysis and insights on new developments and key topics of interest as they relate to the emerging analytic lines of the Crafty Bastards® Workshops.

Why "Dark Matter" Matters

"Dark Matter"—cultural factors, big ideas, "fuzzy" elements, and other intangibles—form the underpinning of Green that presents broad, motivational factors for Blue and Red in a complex and unpredictable way and complicates the assessment of Green. These elements, when used in systemic models, do not lend themselves to quantification and measurement. Unlike traditional variables, which are evaluated with an eye toward understanding their roles, values, and leverage points within a given system, Dark Matter elements have widespread, complex, and unpredictable effects across the system. Moreover, these fuzzy elements have the capability both to drive systemic ("simple") variables and to influence the behaviors of actors within that system.

Traditional Modeling Incomplete when Assessing Green

Traditional modeling, such as applying Net Assessment to the study of Blue, Green, and Red (BGR), tends to view conflicts as a struggle between two actors who are simultaneously influencing and influenced by external variables. However, Dark Matter complicates this paradigm by introducing and acknowledging elements into this model that cannot be quantified.

Identity as an influencer in Green. Historically, identity was irrelevant in modeling Blue/Red conflicts because membership was limited to either of the two groups. In the contemporary BGR conflict, in which Red and Blue are groups bonded by common values and ideologies rather than state-based allegiances, identity takes on an important and critically complex role.

Identity is not the only example of Dark Matter, which incorporates several biological, psychological, cultural, and societal imperatives and pressures that make up the larger landscape of human behavior. The case of identity does, however, illustrate how these fuzzy components fit into a large and complex system of modeling conflicts and, more importantly, why Dark Matter matters.

The ways in which identity can influence an individual to join Blue or Red are innumerable, and understanding the prevalent drivers of identity requires observers of the system to understand developments within Green (needs emerging, opportunities arising, dangers developing). Some of these drivers are static; for example, people might be tempted to join Blue if they perceive

themselves to be patriotic or if they desire to take on the identity of a "peacekeeper" or an enforcer of order.

- Conversely, others might be tempted to join Red if they perceive themselves as external to ordered society—if they are marginalized or feel disenfranchised—or wish to take on the identity of a *jihadist*. In either case, they are attempting to internalize an identity for any number of reasons, perhaps including the need to satisfy their internal perception of themselves (to feel validated) or to obtain an identity to project to others (to impress).

Identity's Emergent, Fluid Nature Confounds Prediction, Complicates Analysis

At the same time, there are less predictable elements of identity, such as the "adjacent possibles" formed at the intersection between Dark Matter and existing variables in Green. An example of one of these intersections is the expansion of cell phone use in African nations, where possession of a cell phone is both technologically beneficial (one can communicate more freely) and socially empowering. By offering this empowerment to recruits, extremist groups have been able to leverage the status symbol of cell phone possession to expand their influence.

- In this case, Blue or Red might have understood that identity is a form of Dark Matter that drives membership in either group, but that understanding is unlikely to have enabled the *prediction* that cell phone usage would become a factor in the establishment of identity, and consequently, terrorist recruitment.
- To connect the two, Blue or Red first would have had to understand an existing deficiency (lack of communication methods and access to technology in rural nations), identify developing opportunities (the expansion of cell phone networks in the area), and connect them to a tangible strategy through which to empower the local population.

Dark Matter's Pervasive Nature Requires Influence, Persuasion

The prevalence of Dark Matter throughout Green, as seen in the figure below, pervades the environment in which measurable, tangible factors—such as population, resources, and the economy—operate, yet Dark Matter's nature is the very element that needs to be understood and influenced in order to ensure the balance is tipped toward Blue.

Figure 1. Dark Matter in Environment of Blue and Red

Dark Matter

Blue

Red

Measurable Factors in Green
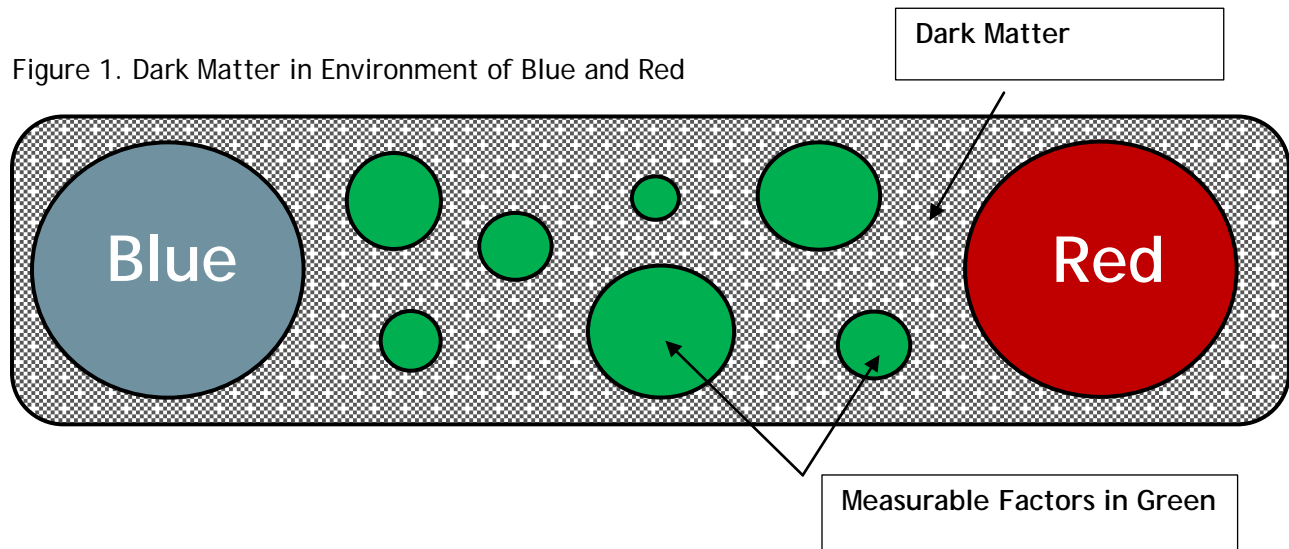
Creative art forms (film, literature, theater, etc.) have been used for centuries to influence behaviors and ideologies. The central tenet of messaging through the creative arts is to identify existing tensions in the ecosystem and evoke them via a consumable narrative that creates protagonists and antagonists with the goal of driving membership to the former to defeat the latter. Red has been using the opportunities presented by music to drive membership, and now Blue must either counter or embrace these same possibilities.