Proposal Title: Dynamics of Sacred Values and Social Responsibilities in Governance and Conflict Management: The Interplay between Leaders, Devoted Actor Networks, General Populations, and Time.

Research Team: Lawrence Hirschfeld & Jeremy Ginges, New School for Social Research in collaboration ARTIS Research & Risk Modeling, Northwestern University, and Harris Manchester College of Oxford University

PROJECT SUMMARY: Most successful political and advocacy (e.g., environmental) groups must manage strong commitment to core values with the pressing responsibilities of governance or an implementation of advocacy issues. Perceived compromise over core values can undermine popular legitimacy, but practical compromise may be necessary to ensure the economic and social welfare of the people. How, then, do such groups maintain values yet meet responsibilities over time? Ever since Max Weber first posed this question as the fundamental moral and practical challenge for anyone having "a vocation for politics" (Weber 1919/1994:368), there has been relatively little systematic study or cumulative insight into a realistic answer. Although substantial work has been done on the instrumental side of decision-making, until recently there was little analysis of the values side. More recently, studies by our multidisciplinary and multinational research team, as well as work by others, has focused on protected or "sacred" values that drive ambitions, policies and actions independently of calculated costs, risks or expected outcomes (Ritov & Kahneman, 1997; Baron & Spranca, 1997; Rappaport 1999; Tetlock, et al., 2000; Varshney, 2003; Hoffman & McCormick, 2004; Haidt, 2007; Bowles & Polanía-Reyes, 2012). Still, there has been little serious study of the dynamic relationship between deontological and instrumental reasoning in general and, in particular, of how political and advocacy groups manage values and responsibilities over time.

From the vantage of national and international security, few problems may be more pressing than understanding this dynamic as it relates, for example, to the future course of the Arab Spring and the rise to political power of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. This was made clear to us by National Security Staff at our recent White House briefing (ARTIS, 2012) focusing on the implications of our theoretical and field research for potential developments in U.S. relations with Egypt and the wider region of the Middle East and North Africa. The theoretical and practical implications of the dynamic relationship between values and responsibilities potentially apply to a wide range of political and advocacy movements across the world, including in our own country.

In this proposal we concentrate on study populations in Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Spain, Ireland, India, and USA, chosen to balance pressing matters of national and international security with wider theoretical and practical understanding. We will explore 1) the role of time in influencing and managing evolving interactions between values and responsibilities, 2) sacred values spread within a population; including how preferences become sacralized and the relation between internalized values and collective norms by focusing on the dynamic relationship between devoted actors (leaders, followers and advocates) and general populations, and 3) situations where competing sacred values may be in play. Our interviews with leaders and networks of committed advocates (e.g., militants) in several cultural settings and conflict zones aim to reveal strategies for how these values become widespread and entrenched. We have designed experiments and surveys with the larger supporting populations to examine the process of sacralization of preferences: first as norms, and then (ideally) as internalized sacred values.

Our studies indicate that "Sacred Values" (SVs) define primary reference groups, "Who we are" (Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011; Atran & Ginges, 2012;cf. Hirschfeld, 2001). SVs drive actions independently of risks or expected outcomes, as in decisions to refuse political compromise whatever the consequences (Ginges, Atran, Medin & Shikaki, 2007; Ginges & Atran 2009), to engage in suicide terrorism and other acts of violent extremism (Atran 2003,2010a), or to initiate and sustain instrumentally irrational warfare (Ginges & Atran, 2011). Regardless of utilitarian calculations of terror-sponsoring organizations, for example, suicide terrorists as well as their leaders appear to act as "devoted actors" (Atran 2006) willing to make extreme sacrifices based on a deontological evaluation of "appropriateness" rather than an instrumental calculus. Indeed, we have evidence from neuroimaging studies that people tend to process sacred values in areas of the brain associated with rule-bound behavior rather than areas associated with assessments of costs and benefits (Berns et al., 2012). We also have evidence that moral judgment and decision-making can rely on a combination of value-laden and instrumental modes, which can be very sensitive to context and framing (Iliev et al., 2009; Bennis, Bartels & Medin, 2010). Our interviews with political and cultural leaders suggest that enduring political and advocacy groups re-frame and re-prioritize SVs according to changing circumstances, especially in conditions of conflict (Atran, Axelrod & Davis, 2007; Atran & Axelrod, 2008).

We conjecture that this allows these groups to maintain SVs as non-negotiable and absolute, even as the range of circumstances to which they can apply change. Understanding how this process plays out over time is a key to helping friends, thwarting enemies, and managing conflict. The ultimate goal of our work is to help save lives, resources and national treasure, keeping our people, our war fighters, and our potential allies out of harm's way by affording them psychological knowledge of how culturally diverse individuals and groups advance values and interests that are potentially compatible or fundamentally antagonistic to our own.