

Preface

Computation is being used in almost every discipline today—most of the sciences and engineering view computation as an indispensable tool in their efforts to understand one or more phenomena.

This book presents the first in-depth and comprehensive study of a real-world terrorist group using the same kind of “big data” analytic methodologies that have enabled companies like Google and Amazon to model the behaviors of customers and users of their Web services.

We chose Lashkar-e-Taiba as the subject for this rigorous computational analysis in early 2007. Although LeT has been around for over 20 years, outside of terrorism and South Asia specialists, LeT was only taken seriously in the west after the November 26, 2008 attacks in Mumbai.

We chose to conduct this study with a mix of computational science, social science, and public policy researchers, so that methodologies from these diverse disciplines would jointly inform our understanding of Lashkar-e-Taiba’s behavior and enable us to shape policies towards them.

We thank many people for their assistance with this work. First, we thank Stephen Tankel—the author of the first (excellent) book on LeT—for reading previous drafts and providing detailed comments. His insights and comments were invaluable. Second, we thank Animesh Roul also for going through the manuscript in detail, providing numerous corrections and references that we had overlooked.

On the technology side, we thank several people who worked on versions of the technology that were eventually used in this book. TP-rules were invented by V. S. Subrahmanian, together with his former Ph.D. student, Alex Dekhtyar. Algorithms to learn TP-rules automatically from data were developed by V. S. Subrahmanian and his former student, Jason Ernst. They form the technical backbone of much of this book. The use of mixed integer linear programming for generating policies was based on work by V. S. Subrahmanian with his then Ph.D. student Raymond Ng, Anil Nerode at Cornell, and Colin Bell at Iowa. We thank Damon Earp for setting up the database system through which our data were collected and stored. Dan LaRocque and LTG (Ret.) Charley Otstott also helped build systems to explore LeT’s network. Roy Lindelauf at the Netherlands

National Defense Academy (NLDA) has also been a valuable sounding board for terrorism-related studies.

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Lashkar-e-Taiba

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