

rist Stefan Schmidt and later joined by Tony Harkin, is using reflexive theory – a branch of mathematical psychology developed by Vladimir Lefebvre and the Soviet military – to devise a quantitative way to help border patrols allocate personnel, and spread disinformation to the adversary. The US Army Research Lab, the US State Department, and a major defense contractor have been interested in applications of reflexive theory to military matters as well.

3 The Elephant: Politics

I am perhaps one of only two mathematicians in the world working on counterterrorism who have actually been targeted by terrorists (the other being fellow algebraist and former Iraqi Oil Minister Ahmed Chalabi). I became interested in developing mathematical methods in counterterrorism around the time I was forced to flee the US state of Tennessee, leaving many of my possessions behind, after receiving a few dozen death threats. (Gordon Gee, now president of Ohio State University, has written about the single death threat he received in the same episode; Vanderbilt University student Nia Tosmer received another.) I arrived at MIT and saw a flier for a talk entitled, “Modeling the Al Qaeda Threat.” The speaker was a Gordon Woo of Risk Management Solutions.

It was – like all his talks, I would learn – stimulating, and it led me to draft my first paper on this topic. If you will remember the climate in 2003, my mother and brother were afraid that even writing about counterterrorism would lead to reprisals. Regardless, I published the article in the journal *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* and, a year later, Mel Janowitz, associate director of the Center for Discrete Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science (DIMACS), Tony Harkin, Stefan Schmidt and I organized the first in a series of Conferences on Mathematical Methods in Counterterrorism.¹ Later Bernard Brooks joined us as an organizer. I am particularly glad we chose Nasrullah Memon, the driving force behind this volume, as one of our speakers. (I also appreciate the efforts of editors David Hicks and Torben Rosenørn, as well as Claus Atzenbeck of Aalborg University for his help with layout and typesetting, and Stephen Soehnle for the support of Springer Verlag.) As with this volume, my intention for the conferences (not always realized) was to have speakers talk about mathematical methods that could actually be applied, and not merely discuss theory, although interesting theoretical questions could conceivably arise.

For this reason, I have been pleased to have as speakers or participants at our conferences US Air Force majors, US Army colonels, a division head of the US Army Research Lab, and representatives of the Royal Dutch Defense Academy,

¹ Success breeds competition. In 2006, after initially promising to fund our third conference, the so-called “Center for Advanced Defense Studies” instead organized a competing conference at almost exactly the same time as ours in the same city. It was called “the Conference on Mathematical Models in Counterterrorism,” to distinguish it from our “Conference on Mathematical Methods in Counterterrorism.”